

‘WE ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE’:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THE READING OF,
AND ENGAGEMENT WITH,
MINORITY ETHNIC FICTION
IN UK PUBLIC LIBRARIES

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For Kamal, Leela and Rohan

Acknowledgements

The woman who has finished this thesis is different in many ways from the woman who started it – in name, age, mindset, BMI - and the journey from the first to the last sentence has deviated considerably from the original plan. Life has brought a number of changes, and these have affected the development of this research in a variety of ways.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic English language fiction in public libraries, focusing on materials written by Black British and Asian authors. In order to achieve this, a literature review and three empirical studies were conducted, using a mixed methods approach.

The literature review showed that previous research in the field of minority ethnic fiction had largely overlooked its readership, and furthermore that academic models of fiction reading had not considered this type of material.

The first study was a survey of the reading habits and attitudes of library users, conducted via a quantitative questionnaire and subsequent qualitative interviews. This was cross-sectional at the individual respondent level, but a longitudinal element was also included at the library level, which enabled analysis by community type, local ethnicity and class. The second study was a qualitative exploration of perceptions of reader ‘types’ using personal construct theory and the associated repertory grid technique, in order to generate and explore a series of constructs relating to the characteristics of fiction readers. The third, quantitative study also drew from personal construct theory, adapting the repertory grid to investigate in greater depth a group of readers’ beliefs, attitudes and intentions to read certain fiction genres.

A model of genre fiction reading is presented, based on the research findings. This identifies a new fiction reader profile and gives a causal ordering to the characteristics of the fiction reader which had previously not been achieved. The model is also demonstrably flexible to allow different types of factors to be included, and to further explore the interactions between these factors. Finally, the theoretical and professional contributions of the research are summarised, and recommendations are made for future research and the development within libraries and the book trade of minority ethnic fiction collections.

Publications arising from the thesis

To date, three publications have arisen from this thesis, one conference paper and two papers in peer-reviewed journals. As indicated below, two of these are based on the first study of the research, i.e. Chapter 4 of the thesis, and one on the second study, i.e. Chapter 5:

Study 1

Birdi, B. (2010). *'We are here because you were there': minority ethnic genre fiction in UK public libraries*. Presentation at the Joint Session of the Literacy and Reading and Library Services to Multicultural Populations Sections in Gothenburg, Sweden at the 76th World Library and Information Congress in August 2010. Retrieved April 14, 2014 from <http://www.ifla.org/en/ifla76>

Birdi, B., & Syed, M. (2011). Exploring reader response to minority ethnic fiction. *Library Review*, 60(9), 816-831.

Study 2

Birdi, B. (2011). Investigating fiction reader characteristics using personal construct theory. *Aslib Proceedings*, 63(2/3), 275-294.

Further publications are in progress, as described below:

Birdi, B. Genre fiction readers: a quantitative exploration of provided construct ratings. *Journal of Documentation*, accepted for publication subject to minor revisions. [Based on the findings of Study 3]

Birdi, B. An exploration of the changing 'genre' in genre fiction. *English Studies*, in progress. [Based on the model of genre fiction reading]

Birdi, B. The minority ethnic fiction supply chain: a review of the literature. *Library and Information Science Research*, in progress.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vii
Publications arising from the thesis.....	ix
Table of contents.....	xi
List of tables in the thesis.....	xiii
List of figures in the thesis.....	xv

CHAPTER 1

Introduction.....	1
1.1. The changing national cultural profile.....	1
1.2. Terminology.....	3
1.3. The nature of minority ethnic fiction.....	3
1.4. Reading minority ethnic fiction.....	5
1.5. The starting point for the thesis: a summary.....	6
1.6. Aims, research questions and objectives.....	6
1.7. The supply-demand model.....	8
1.8. Outline of the thesis.....	9

CHAPTER 2

The research context: review of the literature	11
2.1. Aims and objectives of the literature review.....	11
2.2. Terminology.....	12
2.3. Supply Chain Part I: the authorship of Black British and Asian fiction ..	17
2.4. Supply Chain Part II: the book trade.....	22
2.5. Supply Chain Part III: library suppliers	28
2.6. Supply Chain Part IV: public libraries.....	31
2.7. Supply Chain Part V: the readers of minority ethnic fiction	49
2.8. The significance of the empirical research.....	61

CHAPTER 3

Methodology	65
3.1. Research philosophy and paradigms.....	65
3.2. A mixed methods research approach	69
3.3. The role and impact of the researcher	71
3.4. Data collection methods.....	77
3.5. Data analysis	82
3.6. Establishing the reliability and validity of the data.....	89
3.7. The role of the model in the research process.....	91
3.1. Summary of methodological approach	93

CHAPTER 4

Study 1: an evaluation of the <i>black bytes</i> Black British fiction promotion	95
4.1. <i>black bytes</i> : the research context	95
4.2. Study 1 aim and objectives	97
4.3. Factors affecting the research.....	98
4.4. Research Method 1: questionnaire survey of reading habits.....	99

4.5. Research Method 2: interviews with library users.....	118
4.6. The findings of Research Methods 1 and 2.....	123
4.7. Investigating the effects of the <i>black bytes</i> intervention.....	151
4.8. Discussion	160

CHAPTER 5

Study 2: exploring perceptions of ‘reader types’ using personal construct theory	171
5.1. Introduction and aim and objectives of the second study	171
5.2. Theoretical framework: personal construct theory	172
5.3. The repertory grid	174
5.4. Use of the repertory grid in previous research	178
5.5. Building on previous research.....	182
5.6. The appropriateness of the repertory grid technique to the second study	184
5.7. Methodology	185
5.8. Study 2: findings.....	212
5.9. The contribution and limitations of the second study	255

CHAPTER 6

Study 3: a quantitative exploration of provided construct ratings	261
6.1. Introduction and aims of the third study	261
6.2. Theoretical framework.....	263
6.3. Methodology	264
6.4. The findings of the third study	271
6.5. The contribution and limitations of the third study.....	303

CHAPTER 7

Discussion of research findings	308
7.1. Restatement of research questions, aims and objectives	308
7.2. Research Question 1.....	312
7.3. Research Question 2.....	321
7.4. Research Question 3.....	332
7.5. Research Question 4.....	343
7.6. Theoretical contribution of the thesis: the model of genre fiction reading	346
7.7. Further theoretical insights.....	357
7.8. Limitations of the research.....	359
7.9. Recommendations for further research	360
7.10. The professional contribution of the research and practical recommendations	362
7.11. Concluding thoughts	369

REFERENCES.....	371
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APPENDICES	419
Appendix One: Study One	420
Appendix Two: Study Two.....	446
Appendix Three: Study Three	463

List of Tables in the Thesis

		Page
Table 2.1	Summary of three fiction reading models	54
Table 3.1	'A pragmatic alternative to the key issues in social science research methodology' (from Morgan, 2007, pp.71-3)	67
Table 3.2	Summary of quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis	84
Table 4.1	Summary of longitudinal and cross-sectional approaches	100
Table 4.2	Quantity of questionnaires issued per distribution in each of nine participating library services	112
Table 4.3	Valid responses to reading habits survey, as distributed at 2 time-points	112
Table 4.4	Number of survey libraries and valid responses (from each library) for each of the 3 variables 'community type', 'class', 'ethnicity'	115
Table 4.5	Number of control libraries and valid responses (from each library) for each of the 3 variables 'community type', 'class', 'ethnicity'	115
Table 4.6	Comparison of age bands of East Midlands Census respondents (2001) and reading habits survey respondents	117
Table 4.7	The frequency with which different types of books were chosen by respondents on the day they completed the survey [Question 1]	125
Table 4.8	Non-parametric chi-square analyses between the variables choice of genre 'today' and choice 'usually'	126
Table 4.9	Where in the library respondents looked for books [Question 2]	127
Table 4.10	Table to show where in the library Black British fiction and Asian fiction readers looked for their books [Question 2]	131
Table 4.11	Non-parametric chi-square analyses between the 'location' variable and Black British fiction/Asian fiction readers variables	132
Table 4.12	The frequency with which individual genres were 'usually' borrowed from the library [Question 3]	133
Table 4.13	Non-parametric chi-square analyses between 'usual' readers of Black British and Asian fiction [Question 3]	134
Table 4.14	Number of fiction genres respondents would 'usually' read [Question 3]	136
Table 4.15	The frequency with which individual genres would not be considered by reading survey participants [Question 4]	138
Table 4.16	The factors influencing respondents in their choice of library books, in order of popularity [Question 5]	143
Table 4.17	Chi-square analyses between the 'choice' variable and Black British fiction/Asian fiction readers variables	146
Table 4.18	Percentage change between the first and second questionnaire surveys, with significance levels (chi-square), for both experimental and control libraries	152- 153
Table 5.1	Mean and range of duration of the eliciting and rating phases of the repertory grid interviews	186
Table 5.2	Additional personal data requested of Study 2 participants	202
Table 5.3	Number of constructs elicited per respondent (of possible total 10 per respondent)	214
Table 5.4	Initial set of themes (factors) characterising the reader of	216

	genre fiction, with their frequencies	
Table 5.5	Perceived characteristics of the genre fiction reader: high-order and lower-order codes (themes) identified by thematic analysis, with their frequencies and thematic grouping	219-220
Table 5.6	Examples of two lower-order codes (themes) from the analysis template	221
Table 5.7	Openness trait pairs and their related themes and constructs	253-254
Table 6.1	Participant profiles for Study 3 (n=36)	266
Table 6.2	Additional data requested of Study 3 participants	269
Table 6.3	Emergent and polar constructs selected for Study 3, according to theme	270
Table 6.4	Study 3 participants' reading preferences for the 10 fiction genres	274
Table 6.5	Mean scores (and standard deviation) for 16 grouped constructs	277-278
Table 6.6	Wilcoxon signed rank tests to show the degree to which genre fiction readers differed significantly from the midpoint for 16 grouped constructs	280-281
Table 6.7	Intraclass correlations across all participants for each fiction variable	287
Table 6.8	Spearman's rank correlations to show the five significant correlations between the 'gender' grouped construct and all other grouped constructs	289
Table 6.9	Significant differences in ratings between younger and older respondents	292
Table 6.10	Significant differences in ratings between white respondents and respondents from minority ethnic groups	294
Table 6.11	Characteristics of minority ethnic fiction readers related to the Openness to Experience personality factor (statistical findings taken from Table 6.6)	296-297
Table 6.12	The dominant traits for the Openness to Experience personality factor, for each of the ten genre fiction readers	298
Table 6.13	Mean ratings for all fiction genres variables, and for the 'myself as reader' variable	302
Table 7.1	Research objectives, and how each is addressed in the thesis	309
Table 7.2	Summary of the reader profile for each of ten fiction genres, using demographic data from Study 1 and grouped constructs from Study 3	333
Table 7.3	Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived demographic profile of the reader (total n=6 categories)	336
Table 7.4	Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived reader behaviour (total n=2 categories)	337
Table 7.5	Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived nature of plot (total n=6 categories)	338
Table 7.6	Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: subject interests (total n=3 categories)	339
Table 7.7	Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived preferred genres (total n=2categories)	340
Table 7.8	Number of shared characteristics between Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers, for each of the five themes of the reader profile	344

List of Figures in the Thesis

		Page
Figure 1.1	Elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain	8
Figure 2.1	Elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain, with relevant sections of the literature review	12
Figure 2.2	Mathewson's 'Model of attitude influence upon reading and learning to read'	58
Figure 3.1	Summary of research design	79
Figure 3.2	'Levels of analysis'. (Silverman, in Seale, 2006, p.53)	92
Figure 4.1	Number of respondents within each age group of the survey	114
Figure 4.2	The percentage of respondents who stated that they would 'usually' choose Black British fiction, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points	154
Figure 4.3	The percentage of respondents who stated that they 'would not' choose Black British fiction, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points	155
Figure 4.4	The percentage of respondents who stated that they would 'usually' choose Asian fiction in English, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points	156
Figure 4.5	The percentage of respondents who stated that they 'would not' choose Asian fiction in English, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points	157
Figure 5.1	The number of years of public library work experience of Study 2 participants (n=15)	192
Figure 6.1	The age (band) of participants in Study 3 (n=36)	267
Figure 6.2	The number of years of public library work experience of Study 3 participants (n=36)	267
Figure 6.3	The ethnicity of Study 3 participants (n=36)	268
Figure 7.1	Five elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain	312
Figure 7.2	Summary of key findings from the review of reading models	321
Figure 7.3	Model of genre fiction reading	348
Figure 7.4	Model of Black British fiction reading	350
Figure 7.5	Model of Asian fiction (in English) reading	351
Figure 7.6	Model of Science fiction/Fantasy fiction reading	352
Figure 7.7	Mediating relationship between gender and the reading of Black British fiction	353
Figure 7.8	Expanded model of genre fiction reading, with book factors and external factors	356
Figure 7.9	The Asian fiction reader profile, with key to terms used	366- 367
Figure 7.10	The Science fiction/Fantasy fiction reader profile	368

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter overview

This chapter introduces the context of the research, considering first the changing national cultural profile, briefly summarising three main terms used in the thesis, before a brief exploration of the nature of minority ethnic fiction. The aims, research questions and objectives are then presented, before a description of the overall structure of the thesis.

1.1 The changing national cultural profile

Data from the most recent national Census – held on 27 March 2011 – showed the total population of England and Wales at that time to be almost 56.1 million (Office for National Statistics, 2014), a growth of 7% since the previous Census in April 2001. Of this total, 80% were white British, a reduction of 7% since the previous Census, and 11.9% belonged to ‘other ethnic groups’. Within this second group, the ‘Asian’ respondents (including Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi and ‘other Asian’) formed 6.8% of the total, and the ‘black’ respondents were 3.4% of the total, each representing population growths since 2001 of 2.4% and 1.2% respectively (Owen, 2012).

The changing cultural profile of the UK is not a new topic for discussion; indeed it was the main focus of the now infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech, made in April 1968 by the Rt. Hon. Enoch Powell, then Conservative Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South West. In this speech Mr. Powell proposed that mass migration to Britain would inevitably lead to segregation and widespread communal violence (Telegraph, 2007). Commenting on the fortieth anniversary of Powell’s speech, the BBC press office asked, ‘in the wake of riots and terror attacks many are asking: was Powell right to predict disaster?’ (BBC, 2008)

Certainly, it is now felt by many social commentators that the concept of ‘multiculturalism’, ‘the policy or process whereby the distinctive identities of the cultural groups within such a society are maintained or supported’ (OED, 2014), has not been entirely successful within the UK. In 2004

Trevor Philips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, asserted that the term ‘suggested separateness and had ceased to be useful in modern Britain’ (BBC, 2004), and three years later that ‘living separately means that different groups of people have their life experiences defined by their ethnicity rather than their ambitions, and this differentiation starts young’ (Commission for Racial Equality, 2007). Author and former radical Islamist Ed Husain described the impact of multiculturalism as ‘mono-cultural outposts in which the politics of race and religion were now being played out before my eyes’ (Husain, 2007, p.282), and Muslim journalist Kenan Malik similarly proposed in 2006 that ‘Multiculturalism...fostered a more tribal nation, created a grievance culture...in the name of combating racism’ (Malik, 2006).

UK Government research suggests that society in the twenty-first century is increasingly affected by segregation and minimal contact between communities in the UK (BBC, 2006). A study of the ‘decline of Britishness’ found that white focus group participants referred to a ‘perceived separation’ between British Muslims and the white British population, and again to ‘parallel worlds’ they inhabited (ETHNOS, 2006, p.10). In the wake of terrorist attacks in the previous decade, few would deny that relations between some Muslim and white communities became quite strained. Yet the issue is equally relevant to all British minority ethnic communities (ETHNOS, 2006). Sociologist Grillo (2007, p.979) refers to an overall ‘incompatibility of different ways of living’, and cites Sartori’s (2002) description of an ‘excess of alterity’ within Western society.

However, in stark contrast to these perceptions is Kwei-Armah’s perception that British society has successfully absorbed what he describes as ‘new Britain’ and ‘old Britain’, arguably overcoming the ‘incompatibility’ and ‘separation’ described above:

‘...I think that the centre of the black diasporic world used to be Harlem, used to be America, used to be New York, and consequently our children and our intellectuals always look abroad when they want inspiration. And I think, actually, that we’re at a moment in history where we, here in Britain, we are world leaders: we are miles ahead of Europe, in my opinion, we’re further than

America. We've still got a long way to go...however, I'm terribly proud of the progress that we have made...and I think that one of the beautiful things about living in Britain right now is that the new Britain and the old Britain can co-exist, it can co-exist and co-exist comfortably.' (Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 2011)

Which of these different perspectives of British society is reflected in the reading of the literature emerging from its minority ethnic communities? Are such texts produced and enjoyed only in Husain's 'mono-cultural outposts', or is there felt to be a wider reading audience for a work which does indeed 'co-exist comfortably' with all English language fiction? Before these questions can be answered, it is necessary to begin to explore the nature of minority ethnic fiction, as described in this thesis.

1.2 Terminology

Three terms are frequently employed in this thesis, and are defined as follows:

- 'Minority ethnic English language fiction' describes any work of fiction produced by a member of a minority ethnic community, who chooses to write in the English language
- 'Black British fiction' is defined as fiction written by an author of African-Caribbean or African heritage, living and publishing work in Britain
- 'Asian fiction in English' is defined as fiction written in the English language by an author of Indian subcontinent heritage, living and publishing work in in Britain.

The nature of minority ethnic fiction is explored below, and a detailed exploration of the terminology used in relation to this subject area is included in **2.2**.

1.3 The nature of minority ethnic fiction

The design of this thesis requires the deliberate separation of so-called 'minority ethnic fiction genres' from other fiction genres in order to compare their readers to those of other genres. Whereas many works of

fiction fall perhaps more comfortably into accepted fiction ‘genres’ because of their obvious plot and character similarities – Romance, Crime, Fantasy, etc.– it is not so straightforward to consider as a group all works of fiction by ‘black British’ authors, for example. Is it appropriate to describe such works as a genre, when they could arguably belong in several genre classifications, depending on the subject matter? Related to this, it was also a concern that separating these titles in this way would somehow reinforce a perception that the books should not be regarded as part of the ‘mainstream’ body of English language fiction.

Five decades since the main waves of immigration to the UK from countries in (for example) the West Indies and Indian subcontinent, is it indeed commonplace to regard the fiction written by members of these often long-settled communities as removed from the mainstream? As recently as 2013, UK journalist Hirsch asked the question, ‘Why does it take a white face to keep us interested in African stories?’ (p.35), observing that Hollywood films set in Africa will always feature white Americans in the leading roles. Similarly, in 2011 Johnson asked where Britain’s black writers could be found, suggesting, ‘It seems our stories are truly acknowledged only when coming from the pen of white writers’. Even in the twenty-first century there is perceived to be a strong, white bias in mainstream popular culture, and an apparent reluctance to raise the status of works of fiction by black authors to equal that of white authors.

Despite these concerns, it is relatively common for a number of the key stakeholders in this thesis – publishers, booksellers, library suppliers and public libraries – to use the terms listed in **1.2** and related terms in promoting the relevant titles to the reading public. The primary intention of grouping ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction in English’ - as distinct from any other fiction genre - was to facilitate their examination for this thesis, using terms with which the research participants would hopefully be familiar, or would at least be able to understand. The author shares the view of Goebel and Schabio (2013) that fiction genres ‘do not exist *a priori*, but in the texts themselves and in the interpreters’ heads’ (p.1). It could be argued that any of the books perceived by the participants in the three

studies in this thesis could be classified in a number of different ways. Another notable point regarding the grouping is that all genres are strongly felt to have a limited life-span (Fowler, 2002; Goebel and Schabio, *ibid.*), corresponding to what Goebel and Schabio (*ibid.*) describe as ‘long-term dispositions in societies, reflecting on social structures, communal vs. individualised concepts of interaction, ontological beliefs, forms of self-fashioning, and...on shortcomings and tensions within a given society.’ (p.1). This societal influence is of particular relevance to a body of literature which originated from the direct descendants of colonial rule.

To develop this point further, in the preface to a volume commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the arrival of the SS Empire Windrush in Tilbury in June 1948 (Wambu, 1998), novelist E.R. Braithwaite writes of the ‘black men and women’ who ‘continued to write of the agony and ecstasy of living in a society which had long been conditioned to view them as less than equal’. In doing so, he adds, ‘they wrote of the British society as they found it, distressingly alien, yet painfully familiar’ (p.17). More recently, in a study of what is termed ‘British Asian fiction’, Murphy and Sim (2008) describe such fiction as that which recounts authors’ ‘personal experiences of negotiating multiple British identities’ (p.218). Finally, in an article reporting on an Arts Council England initiative to attract more people from black and minority ethnic communities to the publishing industry, Neel (2006) lists authors Monica Ali, Diana Evans and Tash Aw as examples of writers ‘whose experience of coming from two worlds forms an essential backdrop to their work.’ Each of these demonstrates the identity conflicts which, in combination, have arguably helped to shape minority ethnic fiction as we understand it today.

1.4 Reading minority ethnic fiction

As will be further explored in **2.6.3**, there is a body of research which supports the role of fiction reading in developing empathy, and increasing intercultural understanding. This has tended to focus on children and young people as readers, and the perceived positive effect of engaging with particular texts on empathy and tolerance.

However, when considering fiction specifically written for adult readers, a second key point explored in the literature review (2.2) is that the label used to describe a particular genre – Black British fiction or Asian fiction in English – does not, and should not, necessarily reflect its readership. Although fiction reading has been studied at relative length (see 2.7.1), comparatively little is known about the readers of individual fiction genres, and less still about the readers of so-called minority ethnic fiction genres (see 2.7).

1.5 The starting point for the thesis: a summary

In summary, this thesis originates from the perceived complexities inherent in a multicultural society, the potential impact of fiction reading on increasing empathy and understanding between different cultural groups, and the lack of previous research into the readership of fiction written by members of minority ethnic communities. The UK public library service has been selected as the primary context for this research, firstly because of its mission to provide an environment in which ‘individuals and communities live together in mutual respect and tolerance’ (CILIP, 2013), and secondly for its perceived role in ameliorating relations between communities (MLA, 2005).

1.6 Aim, research questions and objectives

The overall aim of the thesis is to investigate the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic English language fiction in public libraries, with a particular focus on materials written by Black British and Asian authors.

1.6.1 Research questions

In order to achieve this aim, four principal research questions have been devised, which will serve as the framework for the thesis and will be addressed by a combination of conceptual discussion and empirical fieldwork:

Research Question 1: *What do we understand about the nature of minority ethnic fiction, in relation to each element of the supply chain from the author to the reader?*

Research Question 2: *What characteristics differentiate the readers of different fiction genres?*

Research Question 3: *What are the perceived characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, and to what extent do these differ from those of the readers of other fiction genres?*

Research Question 4: *Are the readers of different minority ethnic fiction genres perceived as sharing the same profile?*

1.6.2 Research objectives

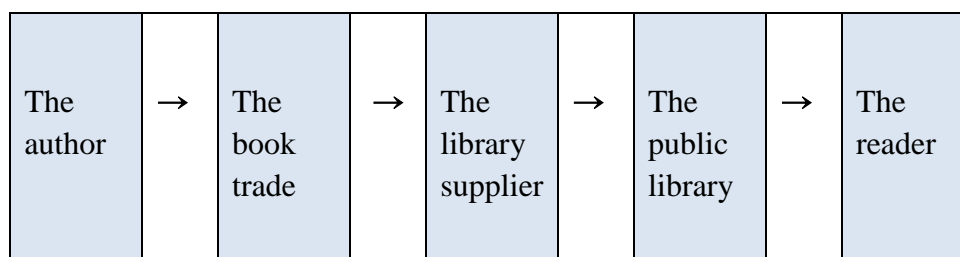
In order to answer the research questions in full, a series of five thesis objectives has been devised:

1. To critically review the literature pertaining to the nature, supply, promotion and readership of minority ethnic fiction
2. To investigate the reading habits of public library users and their attitudes towards a range of fiction genres, with a particular focus on minority ethnic fiction
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of a public library minority ethnic fiction intervention on reading preferences and behaviour, and on attitudes towards such reading material
4. To investigate those concepts underlying different fiction reader 'types', in order to generate a series of perceived characteristics of genre fiction readers
5. To develop a detailed profile of the minority ethnic fiction reader, in comparison to the reader of other fiction genres.

1.7 The supply-demand model

The design of this thesis has been informed by the supply-demand model: strictly a model used by economists to determine unit price in a (necessarily) competitive market, the basic premise is that a market balance is achieved when the extent of the demand is equal to the amount supplied (Henderson, 1941, p.18). In planning the research, it was felt that Henderson's model would be an aid to understanding the position of each stakeholder involved in the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic English language fiction: elements of the research were therefore designed to investigate both the extent to which minority ethnic fiction is made available to its readers (the *supply*), and the extent to which it is required by the different agencies in the supply chain, be they authors, publishers, booksellers, library staff or, in particular, the readers (the *demand*). The five elements of the supply chain are illustrated below:

Figure 1.1 Elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain



The **literature review** (Chapter 2) is structured according to the five elements of the supply chain, and focuses primarily on *supply* – the provision of minority ethnic fiction, and the involvement in that provision of each of the stakeholders illustrated in Fig. 1.1. It also makes an initial exploration of *demand*, i.e. the readership of minority ethnic fiction. The **empirical research** of the thesis (Chapters 4-6) focuses primarily on *demand* – the readership of minority ethnic fiction, given the lack of previous research in this area.

1.8 Outline of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter the thesis is organised into six further chapters, which can be summarised as follows:

Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of the literature on minority ethnic fiction, and its supply, promotion and readership. A review is then provided of previous reading models and frameworks, which concludes with a summary of the significance of the empirical research to follow.

Chapter 3 considers the methods and methodologies used in the thesis, including a brief consideration of the role of models in the research process.

Chapter 4 presents the first study, a mixed methods survey of the reading habits and attitudes of library users in the UK East Midlands. The analysis includes an evaluation of a black fiction intervention, and an exploration of the findings not only per individual respondent, but also per community type, predominant local ethnicity, and predominant local class.

Chapter 5 presents the second study, a largely qualitative exploration of perceptions of reader ‘types’ using personal construct theory and the associated repertory grid technique.

Chapter 6 presents the third and final study, a quantitative exploration of provided construct ratings, again using personal construct theory as a framework.

Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the research findings, taking each of the four research questions in turn and describing the extent to which they have been answered by the literature review and the empirical research. The theoretical contribution of the thesis is described, and a new model of genre fiction reading is presented.

Chapter 2

The research context: review of the literature

Chapter summary

In order to understand the context for the empirical research, this chapter presents an extensive review of the literature regarding the nature of minority ethnic fiction, and its supply, promotion and readership. Following an initial exploration of the diverse terminology used to describe these books, the main body of the review is structured according to the five potential elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain – the author, the book trade, the library supplier, the public library, the reader – with an attempt to bring together the principal academic and professional texts published on each subject. Following this, a review is presented of previous reading models or frameworks, firstly at a general level and then looking more specifically at models of motivation to read or attitudes to reading. The final section describes the significance of the empirical research in relation to the literature.

2.1 Aim and objectives of the literature review

Aim:

- To review the literature relating to the nature, supply, promotion and readership of minority ethnic fiction.

Objectives:

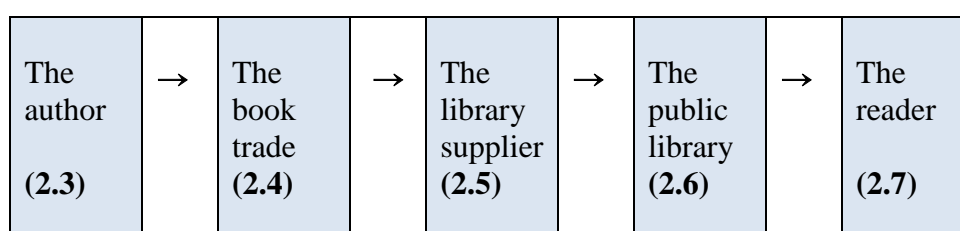
- To determine the nature and profile of minority ethnic fiction, and an appropriate terminology in discussing that material
- To explore attitudes held by the book trade towards minority ethnic fiction, and the social and cultural contexts in which the provision of that material is made
- To consider the nature of the public library service in a culturally diverse society, and its provision of reading materials for and concerning diverse communities
- To investigate the supply to, and provision and promotion by public libraries of minority ethnic fiction
- To explore the readership of minority ethnic fiction
- To review previous reading models and frameworks.

N.B. The literature directly relating to specific studies and their methodologies is also included in the individual study chapters 4, 5 and 6.

As explained in Chapter 1 (1.7), the design of the thesis has been informed by the supply-demand model, the basic premise of which is that a market balance is achieved when the extent of the demand is equal to the amount supplied (Henderson, 1941, p.18). The main focus of the literature review is on the ‘supply’ of minority ethnic fiction, although an initial exploration is also made of its ‘demand’ (or readership), which has been the subject of only limited previous research. The three study chapters of this thesis (4, 5 and 6) focus on this under-explored area of research.

The review is structured according to the five perceived elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain, as shown in Fig. 2.1:

Figure 2.1 Elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain, with relevant sections of the literature review



2.2. Terminology

It has already been stated (1.2) that the terms ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction in English’ will be used throughout the thesis to describe the two primary subjects of the research. These labels were determined following a series of discussion between the researcher and the project group for Study 1 (see 4.4.2), and were felt to appropriately describe the texts in question. It must be acknowledged, however, that the selection of culturally appropriate terms to describe a body of literature is by no means straightforward, and certain issues must be taken into account when doing so. Indeed, in their Introduction to a recent collection of postcolonial literature, Goebel and Schabio (2013) agree that it is ‘difficult to introduce a

new terminology after so many centuries of Eurocentric aesthetic and narratological reflection' (p.3).

Both 'Black British fiction' and 'Asian fiction in English' could be described as sub-genres of a larger body of work, variously referred to as 'Commonwealth literature', 'new literatures in English' or 'post-colonial [or postcolonial] literature'.

The term 'Commonwealth literature' emerged in the 1960s, and was relatively widely accepted and used by academic communities. Although the term would seem to describe 'a collection of national literatures united by a past or present membership of the British Commonwealth' (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p.22), in fact it came to have a wider definition which also 'postulated a common condition across all former colonies' (idem), such as India or Africa. In his essay "'Commonwealth literature" does not exist', Rushdie (1992) describes his objection to that term, finding it to be 'unhelpful and even a little distasteful' (p. 61), commenting that if such labels did not exist, 'we could discuss literature in terms of its real groupings, which may well be national, which may well be linguistic, but which may also be international, and based on imaginative affinities' (p. 70). Niven (1998, p.41) agrees with Rushdie that there is 'no such thing as Commonwealth literature', but states that there are many writers from 'post-colonial environments' whose work has 'manifestly changed attitudes to fiction and our knowledge of the world', even suggesting that as a result of our exposure to this body of literature, 'we have come to understand better the multi-cultural nature of our society'.

Several attempts were made to determine a more politically and theoretically appropriate term than 'Commonwealth literature', one such example being 'new literatures in English'. This does avoid any reference to colonialism, but it has been argued that it is instead 'implicitly privileging a European perspective in areas like India or Africa' (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p.22). An alternative is offered by Jussawalla (in Shaffer, 2007, pp.96-7), who uses the term 'world literatures written in English'.

The term 'colonial literature' has also been used, and certainly this does focus on the shared nature of the texts, but it should be noted that any contemporary use of the word 'colonial' can be politically unacceptable to nations which are now independent. For this reason, 'post-colonial literature' has emerged as the more commonly used term, implicit in which is both the acknowledgement of the historical reality which cannot be denied, and an emphasis on 'that relationship which has provided the most important creative and psychological impetus in the writing.' (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p.23). More focused on the future than the past, the addition of the word 'post' is felt by many to result in a more positive and culturally sensitive term.

Whichever term one chooses to describe this large, ever-increasing body of literature in the English language, it should be acknowledged that although its general position is anti-empire, as Jussawalla (in Shaffer, 2007, p. 97) states it is nonetheless 'a literature born of empire and one influenced by English literature', emerging both directly and indirectly from a long tradition of British literature. It is this 'Britishness' which provides the focus for the literature explored in this thesis, namely that which is written by 'Black British' authors, and that which is written by 'Asian' (i.e. of Indian subcontinent heritage) authors, both writing in the English language.

Introducing an anthology of specifically 'black British writing' in the fifty years since the SS Empire Windrush brought 492 West Indian emigrants to British soil, Procter (2000, p.5) justifies his selection of that term: '*black*, within the context of this text, refers to an "imagined community" comprising Caribbean, African and South Asian experience in Britain'. Deliberately employing the lower case initial letter 'b', Procter - and others with similar beliefs - use the term 'black' in a political sense, moving beyond its original biological or racial meanings. A related view is presented by Mercer (1994, p.291) who explains: '...the naturalized connotations of the term *black* were disarticulated out of the dominant codes of racial discourse, and rearticulated as signs of alliance and solidarity among dispersed groups of people sharing a common historical experience of British racism.'

In the introductory chapter of a collection of Black British writing, Sesay (2005, p.15) argues that the term 'Black British' has emerged as a more appropriate way to describe the generation of writers who may be happy to be described as 'post-colonial', but who are perhaps more likely to accept this alternative term, given that they were born and educated in Britain and may therefore have a different perspective from postcolonial writers of a previous generation. With a non-British heritage and parentage but an entirely British upbringing, they may feel what Sesay describes as an 'alienness', an 'otherness' (p. 16) which is different from that experienced by previous post-colonial writers. More recently, in the introduction to a companion to contemporary black British culture, Donnell (2013) cites Mercer (1994), who describes 'a collective identity predicated on political and not biological similarities...alliance and solidarity among dispersed groups of people sharing common historical experiences of British racism' (p.291). In response to this, Donnell (2013) suggests that the term 'black' signifies 'this collectivity and alliance under a political identity, and encompasses people of African, Caribbean and South Asian descent' (p.9).

For other critics, however, the difficulty with the label 'black British' or 'Black British' is that it is too 'homogenizing', a convenient term which ignores the plurality of nationalities and cultures within the apparent group (Enwezor, 1997, p.87; Dabydeen & Wilson-Tagoe, 1997). Gunaratnam (2003, p.30), considering the use of specific racial categories, asks 'what effects does such homogenization have upon the economic, social, political, interpersonal and emotional lives of people identified as being in that group?' Indeed, Hall's (1988) essay entitled 'New Ethnicities' strongly questions this 'all-encompassing' nature of the term 'Black British', referring instead to the 'extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category "black"' (p. 268). Similar perspectives can be found regarding the homogenizing nature of the term 'British Asian': writing in the *Manchester Evening News* (2007) one journalist comments, 'there is, of course, no one "Asian community" in Britain. It is fissured along lines of origin, Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani, and, increasingly, along lines of social status and class.'

Later in this chapter the concept of ‘incorporation’ will be discussed (2.3), referring to a body of work written by post-colonial authors which has been appropriated as ‘British’. It should equally be noted that certain authors - generally those who are living in Britain but have a South Asian or African heritage - choose to identify themselves as ‘British’, and deliberately not ‘British Asian’ or ‘Black British’ respectively, in part as a political statement. Williams (1999, p.2) cites Hanif Kureishi and Caryl Phillips as two such examples, explaining that for Phillips, the use of the term ‘Black writer’ or ‘Caribbean writer’ lets people off the hook, because they don’t want to then reconsider, to reconfigure, Britain in their minds’. However, Williams’ interpretation of their adoption of such a label is that it merely serves to reinforce their marginalization as ‘those not recognized as part of the dominant culture’s discourse’.

Evidently, ‘Black fiction’ is not exclusively produced by post-colonial authors either living in Britain or in their formerly colonized homelands; fiction written by African American authors will also be described using this term. Dawson and Van Fleet (2004) describe the genre as having a ‘shared perspective unique to African Americans of a worldview of a minority status within a dominant white American mainstream culture’ (p. xii). They suggest that the term be used only to refer to works by African American author who have ‘spent their formative years in the United States’, as ‘growing up black in America is a unique experience’ (p. xv). Similarly, the terms ‘Black British’ and ‘Asian’ are used in this research to respectively describe authors of African-Caribbean or African heritage, or of Indian subcontinent heritage, who are now resident in Britain.

An important point regarding appropriate terminology is that the label used to describe the genre should not necessarily reflect its readership. In a study of Black fiction written by African American writers Thompson (2006) emphasized that although the genre is directly related to ethnicity and racial identity, it is not necessarily the case that every African American will read it, nor that it is unavailable to members of other communities. Similarly, in a British study Peters (2000) found that members of the British African Caribbean community are likely to read books by white and other authors,

and that non-African Caribbean readers are likely to read books by African Caribbean authors. As she states, 'the definition of *African Caribbean fiction* must be more to do with stocking books *by* African Caribbean authors, *about* African Caribbean people, regardless of who reads them' (p. 14). In a guide to West Indian and Black British literature, Dabydeen and Wilson-Tagoe (1997, p.10) claim that the term 'Black British' refers to material that has been 'created and published in Britain, largely for a British audience, by black writers either born in Britain or who have spent a major portion of their lives in Britain'. Williams (1999, p.4) suggests that 'rather than being a dangerously essentializing ethnic and nationalist term, *Black British* actually becomes more useful because of the shifting nature of what each word signifies'.

It is in recognition of these viewpoints that the terms 'Black British fiction', 'Asian fiction in English' and the combined term 'minority ethnic fiction' will be used within this thesis, albeit acknowledging the controversial nature of any labels to describe such a complex and diverse range of books.

2.3. Supply Chain Part I: the authorship of Black British and Asian fiction

Historically, fiction in the English language was almost exclusively canonical in nature and Western in focus, a body of work that was central to the cultural dominance of the British Empire. Authors from other cultures writing in the English language who were felt to threaten the exclusive nature of this literature were essentially forced to 'immerse themselves in the imported culture, denying their origins in an attempt to become *more English than the English*' (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p.4).

This cultural hegemony is felt to exist even today, as although Britain has lost much of its global power, the continued recognition of the literary canon means that 'the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world' (idem, p.7). However, the form of this dominance is changing and, as it is no longer possible to deny the achievements and impact of post-colonial authors - in particular from South Asia and Africa - there has been a move to incorporate their work

within the Western body of literature. As Ashcroft et al (1989, p.7) suggest, 'employing Eurocentric standards of judgement, the centre has sought to claim those works and writers of which it approves as British'. This idea of 'incorporation' is taken further by Salman Rushdie in an essay written in 1983 (Rushdie, 1992, p.61), in which he writes of the 'ghetto' into which he and other authors felt themselves to have been placed, writing in the English language, but 'occupying... a position on the periphery' of the body of English literature. Related to this, in a study of the classification of ethnic minority fiction authors in American, Dutch and German anthologies and history books, Berkers (2009) reports a finding that 'nearly all ethnic minority authors have somehow been labeled as *ethnic*', and suggests that ethnic boundaries remain, 'even in the case of ethnic minority authors who made it to the top of the literary hierarchy' (p.435). Yet Young (in Sesay, 2005, p.14) would argue that incorporation should only go so far, as 'laying claim to a... literary tradition is particularly important for us [Black British people] in racially stratified societies where the acquisition of a certain kind of skill with the written word and an identifiable intellectual progression are seen as key markers of a civilised culture.'

Even though many post-colonial authors are writing in the English language, it has been observed that their use of the language has changed, and even, as Dissanayake (1985) suggests, that 'English is no longer an English language' (p.233). In other words, Dissanayake comments that some Indian novelists writing in English are attempting 'to capture the deeper structure and configurations of native cultures, and make English a more authentic instrument of exploration of the consciousness and sensibility of people' (ibid.). He relates this description to Rushdie's own phrase to 'decolonize English', which had been employed three years previously in an article in the *Times* newspaper:

'The language, like much else in the newly independent societies, needs to be decolonized, to be made in the other images, if those of us who use it from positions outside Anglo-Saxon cultures are to be more than artistic Uncle Toms. And it is this endeavor that gives the new literatures of Africa, the Caribbean and India much of their present vitality and excitement.' (Rushdie, 1982: 8)

In summary, the English language and literature we have today is inevitably a hybrid of European and indigenous cultures and forms (Ashcroft et al, 1989; Williams, 1999). Given the global impact of colonisation it would be reasonable to assert that the literature which originates from a post-colonial author or nation would be affected by the process in some way. Cooper (2013) illustrates this by referring to a ‘postcolonial imperative’ felt by many postcolonial African writers to ‘use language differently’ when writing in European languages, in order to ‘make it express their realities’.

For the purposes of the present research, therefore, we can assume that authors who are defined by the publishing industry as ‘Black British’ or ‘(British) Asian’ would have been similarly affected by colonisation, and that they would be more likely than white British authors to reflect, in their writing, on issues of ethnicity. This complex idea is crystallised by Mercer (1994, p.7) in a critique of Black cultural studies, in which he writes: ‘The postcolonial diaspora is not simply immigration into Britain from other places, as for example immigration into the United States...but is instead a constant reminder that *we are here because you were there*’.

2.3.1 Authenticity and the burden of representation

For the post-colonial author writing in the English language there can be what Mercer (in Procter, 2000, p.7) describes as a ‘burden of representation’, meaning that he or she may feel obliged to attempt to redress the balance of previous Eurocentric work, in which the non-white communities may have been marginalised and misrepresented: ‘This has created a burden of representation in which the narration of black Britain feels problematic pressure to delegate, or “speak for” the whole of that imagined community (idem).’

This image of an author carrying a burden was similarly described by Hundal (2007), speaking at a book trade seminar aimed at reaching new consumer markets from minority ethnic communities. Hundal suggested that there were two main issues when considering ‘BME authors’, namely authenticity and representation: ‘If you’re an ethnic novelist, there would be an extra [pressure] on you to be authentic and representative...there’s a real

feeling that only Asian authors can represent Asian authors...when new authors come on the scene, they're seen as "the voice of multicultural Britain", but they're actually just trying to represent themselves.' A similar perspective is described by Bhanot (2011), who suggests that, for many British Asian authors, 'the only alternative to writing the British Asian story has been to write about an exotic India or political Pakistan, regardless of their knowledge and experience of those places' (p.ix). This viewpoint is not only expressed by the authors themselves, but by the academic audience who research their work: as Goebel and Schabio (2013) recently suggested, the field of postcolonial studies is dominated by 'questions of subversion, of parody, and mimesis' (p.1).

In a survey conducted with members of the British Asian community, Syed (2008) found that respondents did not generally feel that they were fairly represented in fiction concerning their culture. Common complaints were that it focused on irrelevant and now clichéd issues such as unhappy arranged marriages, culture clashes and identity issues. The danger, therefore, is that well-intentioned readers from outside the community may believe they are learning something about another culture when, in reality, they are reading a highly dramatized version of the truth. Authors have written of the pressure they feel to present an accurate depiction of their own cultural community: Ghuznavi (2013), for example, describes her approach to compiling an anthology of short stories by and featuring Bangladeshi women, stating her intention to avoid 'prevailing stereotypes about its [Bangladesh's] people', and to 'make it clear that there is no simple, reductive story to tell about Bangladeshi women or their struggles'. However, even without the 'reductive' story, writer and journalist Onyekachi Wambu (2011) suggests that much of the literature from 'people who originated from the ex-British Empire' has been with 'this troubled quest for identity and liberty'.

Hundal (idem) proposes that minority ethnic authors can be overlooked by publishers if they choose not to focus on their ethnicity in their writing: referring to Monica Ali's (2006) second book, 'Alentejo Blue', set in Portugal, which received far less media attention than her first, 'Brick Lane'

(Ali, 2003), he proposed that ‘publishers are guilty of not paying attention to these writers if they don’t write about their background...why can’t they just write about what they want to write about?’ (op. cit.). Sanderson (2001, p.26) quotes an Asian reader, who asks, ‘Why can’t there be a British Asian thriller writer, romance novelist or biographer? It’s not about catering towards the Asian customer, it’s about recognising the talents of British Asian authors and helping them succeed in the mainstream market’. Similarly asking if we are ‘devaluing the imagination’ by expecting novels to draw on ‘authentic’ experience, Cummins (2007) suggests that the British reading public prefers it ‘when an English-Bangladeshi novelist tells us about multicultural Britain, and not Portuguese village life...not so much write what you know, as write what you’re expected to know?’ In addition to publishers and the reading public, a study of literary critics’ reference to authors’ race and ethnicity (Chong, 2011, p.80) found that critics who identify writers in racial or ethnic terms ‘do so to position authors as ethno-racial “insiders” emphasizing a book’s authenticity.’

It has been suggested that the work of Black or Asian authors who describe their own culture in their writing will be more scrutinised by UK publishers and the media than would be the case for that of White authors writing about Black or Asian communities. Manzoor (2006) gives two examples of contemporary authors, one White (Tony White) and one Asian (Gautam Malkani), each writing about young Asian communities and each using a combination of vernacular, slang and patois to portray their language. Manzoor states that White’s recent novel ‘Foxy-T’ (2003) was praised by critics for its ‘skilfully sustained use of Bangladeshi idiom’, whereas the writing of Malkani’s novel ‘Londonstani’ (2006) was dismissed as ‘an almost impenetrable gibberish that claims to be the vibrant language of today’s Asian youth’. He suggests that critics appear to expect – perhaps reasonably - that an Asian author’s portrayal of an Asian community will be more authentic than a similar account by a White author. Black author Andrea Levy, for example, claims that her novel ‘Small Island’ (2004) does reflect ‘the reality of Black lives’ (Naughtie, 2005), and the ‘black British experience in Britain’ (Levy, 2010). However, given that many of the writers who succeed in obtaining publishing contracts are ‘atypical – either

Oxbridge-educated, mixed race, in mixed-race relationships or all of the above', Manzoor (idem) argues that 'the media demands diversity and authenticity but writers are rarely capable of fulfilling this expectation.'

Certainly, author Salman Rushdie (1992, p.67) writes of the 'bogy of Authenticity', suggesting that the concept is only applied to the work of authors writing within the 'ghetto' into which 'Commonwealth writers' are automatically placed by the West. As he suggests, 'the term ['Authenticity']...would seem ridiculous outside this world. Imagine a novel being eulogized for being "authentically English", or "authentically German". It would seem absurd. Yet such absurdities persist in the ghetto'. Similarly, Ashcroft et al (1989, p.40) refer to four authors (Janet Frame, Dennis Lee, Robert Kroetsch, Wole Soyinka) for whom the notion of an 'authentic experience' portrayed in a novel is 'false', that only that which is inauthentic and marginal could in fact be described as 'real'.

2.4. Supply Chain Part II: the book trade

A study of the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic fiction within the public library service should also take into account the publishing industry from which the books originate and, to a lesser extent, the bookselling industry with which it shares a readership. As Ishida (2009, p.9) observes: 'among all potential partner organizations, only the book trade shares the same primary aim with public libraries: that is, to encourage the public to read.' Book trade commentator Dennys writes (in *Bookseller*, 2006, p.3), 'The emergence of Britain as a multicultural, multi-ethnic society clearly has implications for the nation's publishers and booksellers, in terms of both what they produce and how they sell it'. He refers to the 'growing and important market' for 'progressive' publishers and booksellers, and the 'huge potential source of writing talent' from within the minority ethnic communities. Korte and Sternberg (2004, p.9) suggest that black and Asian cultural 'products' have recently enjoyed 'widespread appeal both to majority audiences in Britain and audiences abroad', referring to the 'unprecedented success of black and Asian fiction on the book market'. Writing from a US perspective, librarian Van Fleet (2003, p.70) observes that although 'work by authors of color' was previously

difficult to identify and acquire [from publishing houses], it has now increased substantially in ‘number of titles, popularity, and availability’.

Certainly, Sanderson (2001, p.26) suggests that with ‘a growing number of black and Asian titles on the shelves it would be easy to conclude that ethnic literature had finally escaped the publishing ghetto’, and Neel (2006) comments that a visitor to a mainstream bookshop ‘might think that cultural diversity in the UK publishing sector is alive and well’. And based on what she describes as the ‘visible success’ of bestselling authors such as Monica Ali, Andrea Levy and Zadie Smith, Bury (in Bookseller, 2006, p.8) proposes that ‘talented writers have an equally good chance of commercial success regardless of their ethnicity’.

However, Bury (in Bookseller, 2006, p.6) admits that ‘authors from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups wrote only 50 of the top 5,000 bestselling books during the 13 weeks to 1st April [2006], in other words, 1%.’ Reporting the results of a survey conducted by trade journal The Bookseller in the same year to investigate the commissioning by UK publishers of BME authors, she notes that although most publishers perceive that there is a black and minority ethnic audience for the books they produce, ‘the majority (72%) avoid commissioning books specifically for any ethnic group’ (idem).

This perceived lack of market segmentation is in line with the opinion of sociologists Wood and Landry (2008, p.153), who write of the ‘increasing standardization’ in the retail market as a whole, ‘especially by mass chains who seek to acculturate their diverse customers to a common standard and uniform level of product’. Yet in the US, Nelson (2006, p.5) reports that ‘most major [publishing] houses have now started African-American and/or Latino...imprints, with distinct editorial missions’, and Thompson (2006) states that by 2001 there were seven imprints of major publishers specifically dedicated to Black fiction. Nelson (idem) nonetheless acknowledges that ‘none [of these imprints] wants to be ghetto-ized on, say, a separate bestseller list’. Pauli (2006) suggests that the UK book trade is ‘missing a trick by ignoring the potential of the black and minority ethnic

(BME) market’, and Sylge (1997, p.28) points to ‘an unwillingness to publish and promote solely for and to black readers’. Similarly, Crow and Main (1995, p.28) observe that ‘Black customers are hungry for books reflecting their own experience, but the record of publishers in serving this market has been patchy.’ Furthermore, Ariaratnam (in Bookseller, 2006, p.12), reporting the findings of a second survey of 250 readers of trade journal *The Bookseller*, observed that the majority (61%) of bookseller respondents had organised no events at all with a black or minority ethnic author in the previous year, and quotes a member of a black reading group who felt that ‘bookshops have not yet discovered diversity. They are far too Euro-monocentric’ (ibid., p.7).

In a study of African Caribbean library services, Alexander (1982, p.13) observed that the main UK publishing houses ‘continue to be in Euro-American control, protecting the cultural interests of the majority of the book buying public’, and therefore that insufficient attention was paid to the Black cultural perspective. Unfortunately, this viewpoint can still be found in the twenty-first century: Peters (2000) interviewed a Chief Librarian who felt that British-based African Caribbean authors were still having difficulty finding a publisher for their work, suggesting that publishers ‘publish what they *think* they can sell and...more of what they *know* they can sell’ (p. 48). A further issue compounding this problem is described by Leemans (1988), whose study of literary book purchase found that 52% of respondents bought books mainly from well-known publishers. Research conducted into the factors influencing new book purchase by D’Astous et al (2006, p.143) found that the reputation of the publisher ‘had a positive and significant impact on consumer interest’. Clearly, if book buyers are tending to choose books from well-known publishing houses, it is potentially more difficult for the minority publishers and authors to establish themselves.

Critics write that the UK publishing industry is not only predominantly white in terms of its booklists, but also its personnel: a 2007 report revealed that 92.3% of employees in the UK industry are from a white background, and further that few black or minority ethnic staff are in editorial roles. These issues in combination are, perhaps logically, felt by some to reinforce

the ‘whiteness’ of the industry: as *The Independent* newspaper noted at the time the above report was published, ‘Despite industry soul-searching, Britain’s book business remains determinedly Caucasian’ (Independent, 2007). As recently as 2013, the ‘Publishing Equalities Charter’ of Equip, an organisation established ‘to promote equality across UK publishing, bookselling and agenting’ (Equip, 2013a) describes the ‘lack of ethnic diversity within publishing’ (Equip, 2013b, p.16). Writing from a US perspective, Young’s (2006) monograph ‘Black writers, white publishers’ describes a ‘marked power imbalance between white editors and publishers and African American authors’ (p. 3), even suggesting that the ‘predominantly white publishing industry reflects and often reinforces the racial divide that has always defined American society’ (p. 4). Similarly, Machet (1993) reports that publishing in South Africa does not reflect the ‘demographic make-up’ of the country, that it has been ‘largely financed and controlled by whites’ and that ‘until recently little effort has been expended on the black readership’.

At a radical black publishing conference in 2007 (see Busby, 2007), members of a publisher panel commented on the current state of Black and Asian publishing in the UK. It was noted that there is some mainstream publishing of Black and Asian authors’ work, but that this is by no means widespread. This perspective was similarly described by Berkers et al (2013) who, writing a comparative study of the classification of Dutch, German and American minority ethnic authors in newspaper reviews, suggested that ‘Dutch and German ethnic minority authors – similarly to their American counterparts – have recently received some mainstream recognition, being ‘discovered’ by mainstream publishing houses and the reading public, receiving state support, and being included in national literary histories’ (p.2). However, despite this tentative optimism the authors conclude that the general reality of the publishing market is not so positive, and that ‘ethnic minority authors themselves have few options to facilitate their entry into the literary mainstream since writing about majority themes, having their publisher classify them as mainstream authors or publishing with a mainstream publisher seem to have little effect.’ (p.13).

Another issue raised at the above-mentioned radical black publishing conference (see Busby, 2007) was that the difficult present political situation meant that black publishing should ‘reassert itself’ in order to raise the positive profile of the black communities. Indeed, Sanderson (2001, p.27) comments that the ‘energy and commitment of these black and ethnic publishers are clear. All proudly believe that their work has forced mainstream publishers to sit up and open their eyes to black and ethnic writers.’ However, members of the publisher panel at the conference listed above reported that a number of black authors did not want to have their books published by black publishers, choosing instead ‘to avoid the ghetto’, in other words the marginalization of their work to an exclusively black audience. Similarly, it was observed that black authors will take their work to a black publisher for their first book, but will then move to a larger, mainstream publisher when their reputation is established. A related view is given by author Verna Wilkins, who established her own black publishing house for children’s books in 1998, and states that Tamarind Books was created in response to ‘the filtering that takes place in publishing – they can’t see beyond what they view as mainstream’ (Elkin, 2003, p.133). In a later interview Wilkins (in Horn, 2008) reports that until recently, ‘if you had a black face on a [book] cover, people thought it wouldn’t sell.’ Even today, independent publisher Rosemarie Hudson (in Tivnan, 2008, p.19) refers to the ‘error’ still made by the larger publishing houses who assume that ‘nobody’s going to read black writers’, or ‘there is no such thing as black writing’. And Young (2006, p.20) suggests that in the US market there will always be a clear distinction between publications from minority ethnic and majority ethnic authors.

Exploring the notion of ‘mainstream’ a little further, Atton (1994) differentiates between ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ publishers, the former being ‘the major publishing houses whose logos are as familiar to us as their titles’ (p.57), and the latter which ‘often provide publications...never found on library shelves or, for that matter, never even dreamed of by many people’ (idem). Although his investigation was broader than the present research on minority fiction, his argument nonetheless echoes those presented by black publishers above, that ‘by limiting ourselves to the

publications of the mainstream we might be unwittingly sustaining a status quo, fostering an information elite, restricting access to aspects of culture and politics that tend to be disregarded by mainstream publishers and the mass media in general' (idem). As he summarises, the value of works produced by these smaller publishers lies in their 'providing interpretations of the world which we might not otherwise see and information about the world that we simply will not find anywhere else' (idem, p.60). Certainly, Rickett (2008a, p.22) states that it is 'received wisdom' in the book trade that the larger publishers are 'lumbering forward, obsessed by big-name authors', while the smaller independent publishers 'nip past and pick up overlooked gems'.

What, then, is the role of the Black or minority ethnic publisher? For Busby (2007), whether mainstream or subsidiary, those in the publishing industry should demonstrate a commitment not only to showing black and minority ethnic characters in its books, but also to supporting black and minority ethnic authors. As she states, 'Blackness is not monolithic...we need many kinds of publishers to reflect the range of black experiences and people'. Certain attempts have been made to address these issues within the book trade, such as the establishment of DIPNET (the Diversity in Publishing Network), 'to promote the status and contribution of social groups traditionally underrepresented within publishing' (Editorial Training, 2010) and the development of a positive action awards scheme by Arts Council England to select graduates from BME backgrounds for a one-year salaried placement at participating mainstream publishing houses such as Random House, Bloomsbury and HarperCollins. It is argued (Neel, 2006) that the scheme both 'encourages more people from black and ethnic minorities to consider careers in publishing, and forces those in publishing to recognise the benefits of a diverse workforce'. Apart from the inclusive aspect of such an initiative, the commercial incentive has been explained as 'you need people in-house who can understand the potential market' (Ashley, in Davies, 2008, p.29).

2.5 Supply Chain Part III: library suppliers

The two principal methods of current stock selection for public libraries are supplier selection, where the library supplier selects the stock for the library in accordance with specifications drawn up by the library authority, and online approvals, where the library staff select materials from a list provided via the supplier's website. Library suppliers have long been involved in providing the more popular authors and titles to library authorities across the UK, but in recent years far more selection decisions have been delegated to these agencies than before, with an increasing number of library services requesting that the supplier selects the majority of – or even all - materials on their behalf.

It has been argued that the greater use of suppliers by library services increases public library staff time to spend on other aspects of their work (Goulding, 2006, p.315; McMenemy, 2009, p.66; Van Riel et al, 2008, p.13), and Goulding (2006, p.314) gives the positive example of one library service who claimed that the 'range and depth of coverage of adult fiction on those areas of stock selected by their supplier (independent publishers and male appeal) were impressive.' However, criticisms frequently made of this method of stock selection are that it may lead to an unbalanced collection, favouring certain subject areas over others (Chapman et al, 2000), that the breadth of the stock will generally be reduced (Cole and Usherwood, 1996; Curry, 1997; Damiani, 1999; Usherwood, 2007) and that selection decisions are taken 'out of the hands of staff trained to provide a varied stock' (Goulding, 2006, p.315). As a result, public libraries could suffer from 'unadventurous stock selection' (Usherwood, 2007, p.28) and a resulting 'conservative range of books' (McKearney, in Goulding, 2006, p.315). Damiani (1999, p.112), while claiming that the librarian's 'ideal' would be 'to reach a wide representation of subjects, genres and styles in the stock', observes that if library suppliers continue to bias their selection to the more 'popular' (i.e. best-selling) titles, the tension between 'the ideal of a varied and representative stock and the reality of limited choices' may never be resolved. For the selection of titles written by minority ethnic authors, many of which will be published by the smaller, less 'mainstream' publishing houses, the above issues could be particularly problematic.

The provision of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans)-related fiction has been shown to face similar issues to that of minority ethnic fiction, in that each can be regarded as of minority interest, is likely to be overlooked in stock purchasing policies, and is often published by smaller publishers. Research conducted by Chapman (in Chapman & Birdi, 2008, p.8) found that in the provision of LGBT-related fiction for under-18s, respondents felt that ‘material from smaller publishers [was] unlikely to appear on suppliers’ lists’. As the authors observe, a limited supplier selection is ‘not necessarily a problem as long as librarians use other methods of procuring stock and maintaining their awareness’ (idem), but Chapman’s research found that although 17 of 33 responding authorities had a clause within their supplier contract that allowed them to purchase materials elsewhere ‘if the supplier could not provide an adequate range’, in reality just 4 said that their service had used specialist bookshops and publishers to supplement supplier provision. As Chapman and Birdi conclude, ‘One is forced to consider the possibility that librarians are satisfied with supplier provision because they are not aware of other items’ (idem, p. 9).

Atton (1994, p.61) similarly suggests that a lack of library staff awareness of minority stock is part of the problem as, he argues, ‘the small press cannot compete with the mainstream publisher in bringing their publications to the attention of librarians’. Citing a library supplier who refers to the ‘sales and marketing failures’ of these smaller presses as the reason for titles being omitted from library supplier lists, he proposes that there are ‘far from “a few titles” missed by library suppliers’(idem). Atton also gives an additional reason for titles being excluded, namely that many titles from smaller publishers are ‘not spined, or do not meet other standards of presentation...photocopied and stapled booklets are unlikely to get past a shop’s buyer or a library supplier’ (idem), a view which is also reflected in Akhtar (1984, p.121). Related to this, Van Riel et al (2008, p.119) describe library stock policies in which ‘the most precise definitions [of quality] referred to what is most easily measurable, for example, the quality of paper and the quality of the binding, while avoiding any engagement with the content between the covers!’

Usherwood (2007, pp.172-3) presents responses to a statement included in a survey he conducted of professional library staff and postgraduate librarianship students, 'All but a very small amount of materials should be selected by library suppliers'. He reports, 'Only a small number of respondents supported this statement', and cites comments such as the following:

'For smaller authorities with very tight budgets, selection by staff who have a much greater insight into the needs and requirement of local communities is preferable to supplier selection, however good the profiles are.'

'Ideally there'd be a system in place that library staff could select most of the stock...Less emphasis on commercial supplies...which ultimately serve only the mainstream people in society.'

However, Usherwood (*idem*, p. 28) also comments that respondents emphasized 'the need for good specifications' and argued that 'selection by library suppliers can only be as good as the specification provided by the library authority.' Certainly, Van Riel et al (2008, p.137) suggest that 'when a service comes to write the specification for book supply, this needs to be more than a list of approved authors.' In their view, it would be far more effective to adopt a reader-centred (rather than entirely book-centred) approach when preparing supplier specifications which could include 'a percentage of materials for particular audiences, for example, action thrillers for audiences aged 15-30, 30-65 and over 70, or literary fiction for readers who are prepared for a bit of a stretch but nothing too taxing'. In this way, they argue, 'if a new author with a particular audience appeal is published, the supplier can add that title in to library provision as soon as it becomes available', and the overall result will be 'more satisfied customers and more exciting collections'. The viewpoints of both Usherwood and Van Riel et al could be valuable in devising an appropriate strategy for developing a balanced collection of minority ethnic fiction.

2.6. Supply Chain Part IV: public libraries

Data collected on behalf of DCMS (2010), based on surveys with a representative sample of 5000 people in England aged 15 and over, indicated that 41% of Black respondents used public libraries, 38% of Asian respondents, 49% of respondents of ‘mixed origin’, and 39% of White respondents. This would point to a higher use of public libraries by minority ethnic communities than had been indicated by data collected by CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) in 2002. These data showed that 9.1% of library users were not white, which was at the time ‘roughly comparable’ to the percentage of non-white people in the total population of the UK (CIPFA, 2002).

The ‘official’ non-white British population increased from 6.6 million in 2001 to 9.1 million in 2009, which is almost one in six people (Guardian, 2011), so a significantly greater proportion than had been reported in 2002. Furthermore, it is inevitable that statistics regarding minority ethnic communities living in the UK (and using public library services) will be higher than recorded via, for example, census data and by CIPFA, as we must also take into account our asylum seeker and refugee communities. The most recent Home Office figures (Home Office, 2013) showed that 23,765 applications for asylum were made in July to September 2013, and it is not currently known how many destitute asylum seekers (those whose applications have been rejected) are currently living in the UK (Refugee Council, 2013).

In terms of library use, writing in 2001 Hawkins et al report that ‘members of ethnic minorities...[are] more active users than their proportion of the population would suggest’ (p.261), and in 2002 Skot-Hansen describes the public library as ‘undoubtedly the cultural institution with which most representatives of ethnic minorities are in touch’ (p.12). Furthermore, Atkins (1988, p.573) argues that public libraries have ‘progressed in their thinking’ in order to become ‘responsive to the client [*every person who lives within the catchment area of the library*] rather than the user [*the person who actually enters the library*].’ These comments are in contrast, however, to Alexander’s (1982, p.6) view that ‘librarianship’s previous

failure to respond positively and effectively to Black settlers was in part due to the indifference of sectors of that community to public library provision'; to Roach and Morrison's (1997, p.433) reporting of an 'ambivalent attitude towards the library service' by minority ethnic people surveyed for their research; to Usherwood and Linley's (2000, p.78) finding that elected members believed that minority ethnic communities 'under-used the library'; and to Pateman's (2008) more recent comment that public libraries were actively used by a minority of the population which is 'predominantly middle-class, female, white and middle-aged' (p.5).

One of the earliest references to library services to minority ethnic communities was by Lambert (1969), who reports findings of survey sent to 50 public library authorities in 1967 to investigate the extent of, and attitudes towards, provision for communities from India and Pakistan. At that time, 33 of the 50 responding authorities were making some provision of Indian language books, and of those not making any provision an unspecified number were 'emphatic' that 'in the interest of encouraging integration rather than segregation books in the mother tongues should not be supplied' (p.42). In an edited volume entitled 'Library services to the disadvantaged', Croker (1975) again focused specifically on South Asian immigrants. The first large-scale piece of research into the provision of public library services for all minority ethnic communities in Britain was conducted shortly afterwards by Clough and Quarmby (1978), who included participants from a diverse range of backgrounds in their study. They aimed to produce a national picture of services, but acknowledged cultural differences between the participants, separating the major communities and providing background cultural information for each. Both texts were produced a relatively short time after a period of major immigration, and as a consequence focused almost exclusively on participants who were born outside the UK. Croker, for example, refers to her subjects as 'newcomers', and considers that ethnic minority provision at the time is regarded as a temporary affair, with library staff believing that demand will eventually 'taper off' (1975, p.127).

In 1981, Coleman writes when library staff are starting to address the permanence of the issue. She recognizes that there are concerns particular to members of minority ethnic communities who were born in the UK, suggesting that there can be ‘an increasing emphasis placed on traditional culture, the mother-tongue, and religion’ (1981, p.25). She also begins to formulate the notion, touched upon by Clough and Quarmby (1978), that minority ethnic service provision has a role not just for the communities themselves, but also for white people. Despite this more progressive view, in 1984 it was still being reported (Henry, 1984, p.9) that library services to minority ethnic communities were being ‘marginalised’ and ‘isolated’ from the mainstream service. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that librarianship has not successfully celebrated incoming cultures, but has instead focused its efforts on assimilating immigrants into mainstream culture (Berry, 1999), in their traditional role as ‘agents of acculturation’ (Mercado, 1997, p.119).

In the 1990s, Alexander (in Alexander and Knight, 1992, p.2) wrote that the policies and strategies of public libraries should enable ‘legitimate and “free” access to the range of services required by our communities, and that those very same services reflect the cultural diversity of modern society’. Dewjee (in Alexander and Knight, 1992, p.47) also offers that ‘multi-cultural library services do not benefit only Black people; they are equally important for White people’. Similarly, in 2003 Elkin quotes the Head of Community Libraries for Birmingham Library Services at the time, who suggests that the public library service should be ‘pushing at people’s awareness and perceptions of society, promoting thinking on diversity and cultural awareness, and ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to read broadly’ (p.137). Despite this description of the ‘ideal’, Elkin writes, this librarian feels that today’s service is not engaging with this role, ‘reflecting the national lack of interest in promoting the strengths of a multicultural society’ (p.137), and Nilsson (2003, p.14) describes public libraries as ‘in reality a far cry from integration’. And although authors such as Davies (2008, p.5) state that ‘Libraries should reflect the society that they serve and should be welcoming places to all sections of the community’, Audunson (2005) nonetheless describes the significant challenge faced by today’s

public library service of ‘achieving cultural community and accepting and promoting cultural diversity’ (p.432). More recently, Vincent (2009) reflected on developments in public library provision for Black and minority ethnic communities during the 40 years since Lambert’s previously mentioned 1969 article. He observed that some of the problems identified by Lambert remain today, including ‘the lack of real communication with parts of our communities’ (p.144).

2.6.1 The diversity of public library staff

Could it be said that the public library workforce reflects the population proportions given in 2.6? Certainly Williams and Nicholas (2009) would suggest not, stating that ‘it is recognized in the library and information services (LIS) profession that there is under-representation of black and other minority ethnic staff in this sector’ (p.4). A 2012 survey revealed that 93.4% of the library, archive, records and information management services workforce were white, which compared unfavourably to the UK workforce as a whole, which was at the time 90.1% white (LSIS, 2012).

Cultural diversity amongst public library staff has been an issue of close scrutiny for some time. Datta and Simsova (1989) and, later, Jewell (1999) have commented that there is an underrepresentation of minority ethnic communities throughout the public library service in the United Kingdom. Within the South African library and information profession, Ocholla (2002) observes that workplace diversity suffers from a degree of complacency, and a priority to placate existing staff members rather than thinking of future workforce development.

A social inclusion consultation project undertaken by the public library service of Nottinghamshire County Council, found that users often felt ‘pre-judged’ by library staff meaning that staff were, consciously or unconsciously, presenting barriers for certain people and groups, a finding that was informed by discussion with respondents from one of the most deprived social housing estates in the county (Wright, 2002). Pateman (2002a, 2002b) notes the ‘failure’ of public library leaders in the UK to reflect race and class in their equal opportunity statements and their staff

recruitment, development and service improvement strategies, and the failure of public library services to reflect the diversity of their communities. This raises interesting questions regarding the definition of cultural diversity with reference to social inclusion, and the capacity of the public library service to have a representative workforce.

A national study by Wilson and Birdi (2008) found that library staff participants generally felt that culturally diverse staff profiles are difficult to achieve, as any professional grouping will have its own 'typical' culture and demographic identity, and that within any professional service culture the underlying ethos should be empathic, irrespective of one's own cultural background. Despite this there was a suggestion that it is human instinct for staff to associate with – and perhaps better serve – people they know and can recognize. A direct correlation was made between living and working in the same community, with the suggestion that this would facilitate a greater understanding of community characteristics and values. This finding was also reflected in Tso's (2007) study of library services to UK Chinese communities, although Hoxeng (2000, p.15) warns: 'Library patrons should feel free to relate to all staff members, not just those who share their same ethnic or linguistic heritage'. Furthermore, Jewell (1999, p.109) reports research findings that suggest that those specifically recruited from minority ethnic communities can have a 'disproportionately increased [workload] because of either an inability or lack of will on the part of white librarians to deal effectively with ethnic community concerns'.

2.6.2 Institutional racism and the public library service

At a societal level, social psychologists Watt et al (2007, p.441) observe that 'during the past 50 years, Western societies have increasingly disapproved of racial prejudice', yet they acknowledge that research continues to find 'prejudice that is expressed subtly and in ambiguous situations'. The MacPherson report, produced after the murder in 1993 of teenager Stephen Lawrence, considered the issue of institutional racism in the public sector, defining the concept as 'the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and

behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.’ The report concluded that much remains to be done in terms of combating racism within those institutions which serve the public (MacPherson, 1999). Writing in the national press at the same time, Gentleman and Wilson (1999) agree that all public-serving institutions had been ‘forced into an uncomfortable assessment of their own attitudes to race’.

It is the stated intention of the UK public library service to equally support all members of society (Berggren and Byberg, in Zielinska and Kirkwood, 1992; Hillenbrand, 2005; IFLA, 2009; Train et al, 2000; Vårheim, 2007), as a socially inclusive service (Kerslake and Kinnell, 1998) which provides ‘a public space that brings together diverse populations into one community to learn, gather information and reflect’ (Goulding, 2004, p.4). However, for many the service is still regarded as a white institution, even that it is institutionally racist (Durrani, 1999; Durrani 2002; Elliott, 1999; Henry, 1984; Josey and Abdullahi, 2002; Khan, 2000). As DeFaveri (2005, p.1) observes, ‘for every person who finds the library safe and pleasant there is another person who feels uncomfortable and unwelcome.’ US author Berry (1999) cites behavioural scientist Bernard Berelson who, in 1949 had reported: ‘The public library serves the middle class, defined either by occupation or by economic status, more than either the upper or the lower classes...and whites more than Negroes’ (p.112). Alexander (1982, p.14) reports that black communities living in the UK had low expectations of library service provision, as libraries were perceived by some as ‘institutions serving the needs of the white majority and remain associated with Anglo-Saxon culture and notions of superiority’. Rait (1984, p.123) describes 15 ways in which racism manifests itself in libraries, including ‘by keeping ethnic services in low priorities’ and ‘by keeping the services as *tokenism*, *goodwill gesture* or a matter of prestige.’

In their well-publicized 1998 study, Roach and Morrison acknowledged that public libraries have recognized some of the ‘challenges’ of ethnic diversity, but suggest nonetheless that the insularity of a library is a barrier,

concluding that ‘there is little evidence that libraries have developed strategic programmes in response to ethnic diversity’ (1998, p.167). Replacing ‘multiculturalism’, which for the authors implies the management of a problem by a white majority, with a consideration of ‘ethnic diversity’ and ‘anti-racism’, their research consisted of an audit and extended case studies encompassing ethnic minority involvement in policy, communication with minority ethnic communities, marketing and promotion, and the identification of good practice in library services. Such an approach was deeper than Clough and Quarmby’s 1978 study, but was still focused primarily upon libraries ‘in ethnically diverse settings’ (Roach and Morrison, 1998, p.10).

In the late 1990s, after the Labour Government 1997 General Election victory and in the aftermath of Roach and Morrison’s study, the literature describes a different approach to the topic, considering that libraries should not only improve their provision of services to minority ethnic communities, but that they may have a role to play in building a society that is more aware and understanding of differences between cultures. It becomes a library’s role to introduce people to ‘communities other than their own’ (Train et al., 2000, p.487), or to assist in ‘the creation of a more equal, tolerant and pluralist society’ (Roach and Morrison, 1999, p.113), thereby contributing to ‘harmony and to social enrichment’ (Sturges, 2004, p.300).

Peters’ 2000 study of multicultural public library services explored the extent to which library staff felt that public libraries suffered from institutional racism. In her findings she referred to a Chief Librarian who had suggested that services were racist in their approach, as ‘just because a library thinks it has provided a few books for an ethnic minority group, they have done their bit’, and further that institutional racism was ‘a kind of inherent tendency to...[make] assumptions about people without verifying or checking’ (p.58). Dolan (in Alexander and Knight, 1992, p.24) reflects a similar perspective, that even ‘white people with the best intentions’ need ‘to integrate, to open their minds and to change’, and that such change will not occur unless library staff work with black communities to develop their services to minority ethnic communities. Malone (2000, p.77) presents a

stronger view that the literature portrays the US public library as ‘supporting the hegemony of the dominant culture’. However, also writing from a US perspective Elturk (2003, p.5) puts forward an alternative idea that institutional racism ‘is not something we need to feel guilty about, nor should we be held responsible for the situation as long as we are working to end these injustices.’

More recently, in a study he conducted of public library services for minority ethnic communities in predominantly white areas, Mansoor raised this complex issue, citing one librarian he interviewed who referred to ‘an element of prejudice amongst the old guard of staff, it’s a kind of institutional thing in a way’ (Mansoor, 2006, p.46).

2.6.3 The provision of materials for diverse communities

Datta and Simsova (1989, p.43) commented that readers from minority ethnic communities felt that the library service ‘does not care or that it lacks the competence necessary to supply them with the books they want’, and Berry (1999, p.112) later emphasised the importance of delivering a ‘culturally competent’ library service, suggesting that minority cultures are not understood in any depth by library staff, and that in addition staff ‘seldom learned the languages or collect the literature of these minorities’. Delaney-Lehman (1996, p.29) suggests that ‘traditionally, library collections have been rather one-sided, leaning heavily towards the works of white European males’. In the same year, Pettingill and Morgan (1996) tested the ethnic composition of a library’s stock by comparing the library’s holdings against titles listed as ‘multicultural texts’ in bibliographies. Whilst such a method is fairly limited in its approach, it nonetheless raises questions as to the nature and composition of minority ethnic stock collections, and whether or not they should match the profile of the local community.

In 1996 Tyerman found that the provision of a multilingual library service was considered to be essential by some ethnic minority groups, and certainly Tso’s later (2007) study of library services to Chinese communities found that non-Chinese speaking library staff ‘usually leave

the task of understanding Chinese users' library service needs such as exploring popular fiction choice to [the] Chinese librarians' (p.28). However, in a study of Danish libraries Berger (2002) concludes that it is mainly older members of minority ethnic communities who request materials in their mother tongue, and that younger users generally prefer to read in English. As Birdi et al (2012, p.126) state, 'today's minority ethnic communities...may speak the languages of their mother countries, but their greater command of the English language as a result of having been through the UK education system means that foreign-language reading may no longer be a priority.' With the focus having shifted from the linguistic to the cultural, the priority of the second, third and even fourth generation minority ethnic communities may now be 'to satisfy their curiosity to explore the culture of their mother country', but also 'to see their experiences of a multi-ethnic Britain reflected in books they read' (idem, p.126). This view is supported by Mercado (1997, p.120) who summarises: 'Integration with the civic culture of a nation does not mean the wholesale rejection of the culture, attitudes, values and language of the nation from which one has emigrated'.

Knight (in Alexander & Knight, 1992, p.12) makes an interesting point regarding the above-mentioned paradigm shift from the linguistic to the cultural, when he describes a recognition that although the 'Asian language collection' was regarded as a successful part of the service, the emphasis had always been on providing materials in the Asian languages and not in English. When the management team had agreed that the same attention should be given to the African Caribbean community in the area, it was recognised that the stock did not represent 'the cultural background and heritage of the borough's black population', and it was agreed that this would be a focus of future service delivery, both for the black and Asian communities. This proposal would appear to go against the recommendation made 20 years previously by Edgar (1972, p.242) that 'There are many Asian readers with a good command of English, whose needs are no different from those of the indigenous population.'

In the 1970s, it was suggested that the provision of materials for diverse communities could be divided into two categories, 'those which are aimed at meeting the needs of minority groups and those consciously designed to reflect a multi-cultural society' (Library Advisory Council, 1977). In line with the theory of multiculturalism that society becomes richer as one's cultural horizons are expanded (Parekh, 2000; Sturges, 2004), it has also been suggested that there may be a benefit to all members of the community of being exposed to materials about other ethnic cultures, as part of the reflection of a culturally diverse society (Elkin, 2003; Guereña and Erazo, 2000). Birdi et al (2012, p.126) propose that such an exposure would help to establish the 'community networks' and the sense of 'community identity' described by social capital theorists such as Percy-Smith (2000).

Referring in particular to the South Asian communities, Akhtar (1984, p.120) offers that those books which are 'aimed at acquainting the host population with the cultural, religious and historical backgrounds of ethnic minorities, have the potential to enable libraries to succeed where others have not made much headway.' Such material has the capacity not only to build 'a bridge of understanding between different communities' but, he feels, have also 'given Asian readers a sense of pride and security'. Simsova (in Zielinska and Kirkwood, 1992, p.31) also refers to the capacity of material 'about the old country in the new language' as 'a kind of bridge'. Even in the 1960s, the importance had already been noted of providing children with 'access to good books about their own countries, as well as some books in their own languages': Lambert (1969, p.52) termed this 'psychological continuity'. Related to this, however, Barter (1996, p.13) warns that library staff and teachers should not fall into what he describes as the 'particularist' trap, whereby an assumption is made that the only role of 'multicultural literature' is 'to bolster esteem and cultural pride' among their students.

Research into the capacity of fiction reading to increase intercultural understanding and/or to reduce racial prejudice has frequently focused on children and young people as readers. One of the most frequently cited attempts to classify multicultural books for young readers was produced by

Sims Bishop in 1982. This was a taxonomy of cultural specificity as reflected in multicultural books, in this case focusing on African American culture. As Sims Bishop's co-author Cai (2002) explains, the classification she developed 'reflects two ways to approach an individual culture in literature: to focus either on peculiarities that are unique to an individual culture or on similarities that are shared by other cultures' (p.22). Under the first approach would be grouped 'culturally specific' books, and under the second would be grouped 'generically American' and 'culturally neutral' books (pp.23-4).

Although in 1976 Haney et al (1976, p.183) offered that 'reading is apt to have little effect on reducing prejudice', as 'closed-minded people appear to have such rigid belief systems that they cannot easily assimilate new or discrepant information', many other examples can be found of writing and research to contradict this perspective. To Nikolajeva (2013), 'the main attraction of fiction is the possibility of understanding other people in a way impossible in real life' (p.95). Triggs (1985, p.4) claims that the reading by children of multicultural fiction provides a 'route into empathy', and that 'if books reflect society, they are also one of the forces which shape it'. Mar et al (2006, p.708) suggest that fiction reading is a 'tool' with which to educate children and adults 'about understanding others', and Sullivan (2002, p.41) that it enables librarians and teachers to 'engage readers in discussions about our nation's past and our contemporary realities'. Similarly, Cuperman (2013) proposes that 'children's identity is constructed through images that surround them, but also with the stories they hear'. She continues, 'images and stories provide the basis for their imagination and, when understood and used effectively, give meaning to their social reality' (p.136). Finally, Gopalakrishnan (2011) writes specifically of multicultural children's literature, and the need for such books to permeate the school curricula, 'to give children a way to validate their feelings and experiences; to create understanding, empathy, and tolerance; to break debilitating stereotypes; to give equal voice and representation' (p.34).

More urgently, Brown (1990, p.8), then Co-ordinator of the Early Years Trainers Anti-racist Network, stated: 'If we do not acknowledge the

contribution of Black people, their cultures, lifestyles and languages, we will continue to present our children and students with a false view of the world around them.' This difference between the fictional and real world is also referred to by Rice (1986, p.14), who compares the 'Eurocentric and ethnocentric view of the world' in children's literature to the 'multiracial and multicultural' world in which the young readers are living. Similarly, Talbot (1990, p.502) cites a Community Relations Officer surveyed for her research into multicultural library services who talked of the value of fiction by black writers in terms of the 'transmission of culture', and another who underlined the need to 'combat the negative images of black people which are often presented in the media'. Indeed, during the months immediately after the September 11th terrorist attacks in the US, Glick (2001, p.13) reports that school librarians were creating lesson plans and booklists intended to provide students with 'good fiction and non-fiction about Muslims and Arab-Americans'. A US state university library conducted research to assess the diversity of its collection, with the underlying assumption that 'in order for students to survive in a pluralistic society, they need an awareness and understanding of the nature and contributions of the diverse cultures which compose our society' (Delaney-Lehman, 1996, p.30).

In a UK study of library services in predominantly white areas, Mansoor (2006) found that public library staff from areas with a diverse ethnic profile agreed that library stock should reflect all cultures, but that the views of staff from areas with predominantly white populations were more divided. Interestingly, an evaluation of the Stock Quality Health Check (a tool devised by reader development agency Opening the Book to evaluate the quality of public library fiction stock, Van Riel et al, 2008) revealed that such tools have been used by library staff as a 'national standard' to support them in more innovative stock selection choices which may include minority ethnic fiction, 'particularly if the staff feel rightly or wrongly that we don't get people like that coming in' (Simmons and Train, 2007, p.10).

Overall, however, Mansoor (op. cit.) found that the concept of multiculturalism, or pluralism, whereby 'incoming' cultures sit alongside existing cultures, was welcomed by respondents as a notion of public library

service and stock provision, in particular because of its perceived capacity to increase mutual tolerance and understanding of cultures. This idea had previously been expressed by Whitehead (1988, p.3), who stated the need for libraries to present fiction from other cultures ‘to long established British residents’, thereby ‘challenging long-held prejudices and enlarging their sympathies and understanding beyond the narrow range of merely personal experience’, and Peters (2000, p.56) agreed that such material ‘should be aimed at all users’. Kendall’s (1992) exploration of multiculturalism in UK public libraries also suggested that stereotyped views in predominantly white areas can be challenged by the provision of fiction by black authors. In the US, Davis (2004, p.399) described how although some white female viewers of Oprah Winfrey’s televised *Book Club* programmes demonstrated a ‘problematic “color blindness” with imperialist overtones when discussing the black women’s fiction they had been reading, others experienced what she describes as ‘transformative identifications with black subjects and a reflective alienation from white privilege’. However, Whitehead (idem) also warns the reader of ‘multicultural fiction’ that such material ‘is distanced from real life...experience is ordered, organised and explained in a novel. In real life it cannot be so easily manipulated’ (p. 250).

At a general level, Usherwood and Toyne (2002) reported in a study of the value and impact of reading imaginative literature that readers interviewed for their research felt that reading improved their ability to relate to other people, even that it had increased their understanding of people from other backgrounds and cultures.

2.6.4 The provision and promotion of Black British and British Asian fiction in public libraries

Although Van Riel et al (2008, p.132) suggest that the ‘demand for Black writers [and gay writers] is lower in most libraries than in bookshops’, book trade journal *The Bookseller* reports the findings of research into bookselling and diversity claims in fact that ‘librarians are more directly in touch with black and minority ethnic readers than most other book trade professionals’ (Denny, in *The Bookseller*, 2006, p.10). Writing in 2003, Van Fleet comments that ‘the work of authors of colour’ tended in the past to be

included in a public library collection only if it was classified as 'literary fiction', today such collections were including a broader range of 'genre fiction by authors representing other cultural points of view' (p. 67).

Denny (idem) further reports that the London borough of Wandsworth holds collections of 'black and Asian interest books' in each of its 12 libraries, and that an 'African Caribbean Community Library' and an 'Asian Community Library' have both been in existence in the borough for almost 30 years (at the time), each of which is described as 'successful' by the Library Service Development Manager. The African Caribbean Community Library is stated to be 'building up a selection of books by black British writers, supplemented with novels from black American authors'. In the same article, members of Walsall Library's Black Reading Group in the West Midlands refer to 'a shortage of black writers in Britain', a lack of books by black authors and of 'black-oriented books' on audio tape or CD (e.g. for the visually impaired). The group is also reported as agreeing that its members 'would like to see sections focusing on black writers'.

Although this last comment was made with specific reference to the organisation of stock in bookshops, it does raise the issue of whether or not specific collections of black and Asian writing should be created in libraries and bookshops, or whether a more appropriate approach would be to integrate such titles with the general fiction stock. In common with the view expressed above by the members of the Black Reading Group, focus group participants in Peters' (2000) research were generally in favour of having separate collections, largely to help borrowers find their books more easily. Woodward (2005, in Thompson, 2006, p.7) also suggests that an integrated approach may make it more difficult for a patron 'who may already feel alienated from the library institution'. Reader development agency *Opening the Book* (2006b) recommends to library staff that a separate collection would enable them to 'showcase the work of Black writers to show the range you have', but warn that a separate section must include sufficient stock: 'there is nothing worse than a sad collection of tatty out-of-date "ethnic" material.' This view is echoed by Skrzyszewski (1992, p.37) who, writing of 'multicultural promotion', states that 'marketing and public relations techniques should be utilized only when you have a service

deserving of promotional effort'. In a wider study of the value of fiction classification schemes in general, Baker (1988, p.375) reports that 'physical separation [of fiction genres] will increase use *substantially more* than the simple labeling of genre fiction titles'.

However, a minority of Peters' (op. cit.) respondents were in favour of integrating the stock in order to increase access to all members of the community (i.e. not only those from minority ethnic communities), and a Chief Librarian also felt that wider use across the population would emerge from distribution within the general stock 'so you can actually find it serendipitously' (p. 51). Interestingly, Peters found that one library authority had decided to establish two collections of black fiction, one which was integrated within the general fiction stock and therefore (it was felt) more accessible to the entire population, and one which was separated from the general stock and specifically labelled 'black fiction'. The main reason for this decision was financial; they claimed that if all fiction had been integrated they could not have produced separate figures for black fiction, and thus would have been unable to justify greater expenditure from the materials budget for such books.

Clough and Quarmby (1978, p.298) would agree with this dual approach described above, while acknowledging that this may be too expensive in the short term. They also warn of the need to reconcile the demand for a separate collection and the fact that separating material in this way could be regarded as discriminatory. Talbot (1990, p.503) also writes of the 'inherent danger of marginalization and tokenism' of the separate approach. For Datta and Simsova (1989, p.35) the solution seems no less clear, as a separate collection would help minority communities to feel more 'at home', while at the same time perhaps deterring the general population from reading what they feel 'is not for them'. A clear argument against the separate collection, however, is put forward by Alexander (1982, p.48), who claims 'the argument for separate collections on ethnic grounds is rather a spurious one', and suggests that they can be created by library staff who 'feel that they must pay lip service to multi-culturalism' and 'find this the least disruptive and cheapest way of providing minimal services to Black

communities'. Similarly, Thompson et al (1986, p.11) are clear that a separate collection would be 'insulting to our users', asking 'Are we implying that we support separate development?' In Alexander and Thompson's view, an integrated stock approach would attract a larger proportion of the overall population than a separate collection. In the book trade, the issue is no more easily resolved: Sanderson (2001, p.28) cites a bookshop manager whose separate 'Black interest' section has been both complimented and criticized by customers, some of whom have 'accused us of marginalizing their interests by keeping black and ethnic books separate'. Book trade commentator Horner (2008) suggests that the use of any genre categorizations 'actively divides consumers', even that it is 'commercial suicide', and Hicks and Hunt (2008, p.40) argue for 'mainstreaming rather than segregation in special sections [in bookshops]'

A possible compromise is offered by Talbot (1990, p.503) who suggests that 'all or some' of the stock could be integrated, but that staff could 'highlight black perspective materials', for example by using coloured spot stickers on the spines of the books (also suggested by Brown, 1997); by devising booklists of relevant titles; and/or by installing regular and prominent displays of books within the library. (Regarding the latter, Thompson (2006, p.49) suggests that 'revolving or ongoing book displays' would be an alternative to labelling or separating titles from the main collection.) As Trott and Novak (2006, p.38) state, library staff 'should do everything we can to provide the entry points into the collection that patrons are looking for'. Furthermore, Gundara and Warwick (1981, p.73) argue that 'if librarians accord Black writers the recognition they deserve, readers will be more amenable to diversify their reading habits'. And this last comment could feasibly apply to both minority ethnic readers and readers from the population as a whole.

The promotion of minority ethnic fiction faces the same issue as the provision of same, in terms of determining the potential audience: are minority ethnic communities to be specifically targeted in the promotion of such books, or should libraries and the book trade attempt to reach the entire population?

To give an initial example from the book trade, the 2007 Books for All promotion was devised by the decibel programme of Arts Council England – an initiative which aims to increase the profile of African, Asian and Caribbean artists – in order to promote black and minority ethnic authors in UK bookshops. decibel Director Samenua Seshier described the difficulty of devising a promotion ‘in a way that made sense so that the books were not seen as for African, Asian and Caribbean readers only but for a much broader constituent group’ (in *The Bookseller*, 2007, p.4). Reportedly the first time that booksellers had made ‘an organized, collaborative effort’ to promote such titles in this way (Holman, *idem*, p. 10), Bury (*idem*, p. 5) reports that booksellers were both ‘nervous’ and ‘cautious’ in promoting the books, ‘in a way that would not alienate one group while attracting another’.

It should not be assumed that public libraries develop fewer initiatives than the book trade to promote minority ethnic fiction; Denny (in *The Bookseller*, 2006, p.10) argues the contrary, in fact, stating that 65% of librarians surveyed by *The Bookseller* trade journal had run at least one BME fiction promotion, and that 47% had organized an author event ‘designed to appeal to a black or minority ethnic audience’. Durrani et al (1999) describe the work of the Black and minority Ethnic Stock Group (BSG) which was formed in Hackney Libraries in order to redress the ‘decline in the quality and quantity of service provision to black communities’ (p.18), and made a deliberate attempt to promote all black material to these communities, including BME adult fiction in English. In their evaluation of the DCMS/Wolfson Public Libraries Challenge Fund 2000-1, Wallis et al (2004) report on three reader development projects which specifically targeted minority ethnic communities, the ‘Bangladeshi Link’, ‘Black Inc’ and the ‘Turkish Community Readers’ Project’, which ‘all met or exceeded their targets and raised the profile and use of the library service with the targeted minority community’ (p.19).

The following three examples of promotions differ from the approach described by Durrani et al (1999) and Wallis et al (2004) above, in that they

were specifically designed to reach not only members of BME communities, but also the population as a whole.

Launched in 1998 by reading promotion agency Well Worth Reading (now The Reading Agency), the 'Made in Britain' promotion of Black and Asian fiction and poetry aimed to work with public libraries both to showcase newer writers and to work with what it describes as 'library "blind spots" – areas of stock which have traditionally been understocked and under promoted' (Wyatt, 1998, p.85). The promotion was clearly intended to reach all readers, not only those from the same minority ethnic communities as the authors, with the objective 'to show that these stories speak to all of us who live in modern Britain' (idem).

Brumwell and Hodgkins (2003) describe the 2003 reading promotion 'black bytes' (see Study 1, Chapter 4), devised by reader development agency Opening the Book to promote the work of Black British writers in libraries in the East Midlands. Train (2003b) reports the findings of a user survey which indicated that after the *black bytes* promotion had been installed in libraries 'Black British fiction was 4.3% less unpopular... which could suggest that the black bytes promotion had affected their [respondents'] response' (p.40).

Beginning with a pilot phase in 2004-6, The Reading Agency brokered a national partnership between public libraries and the book trade, 'Reading Partners', via which to develop the market for fiction reading. In 2007 the focus of this initiative was the provision to, and development of, a minority ethnic readership in the UK, in a promotion called 'Reaching Readers', which aimed to help libraries and the book trade to 'understand the reading habits and market gaps for BME readers' and 'to inspire readers to widen their reading horizons and read British BME writers' (Reading Agency, 2008).

Although the promotions described within this section have focused on writers and/or readers from minority ethnic communities, Jamal (2003) warns of the danger of pigeonholing potential consumers simply because of

their ethnicity, arguing that they are not likely to confirm either as a group or to a particular category: ‘the notion of treating consumers as a homogeneous market segment becomes questionable’ (pp.1614-15). The negative impact of ‘homogenizing’ has already been discussed in this chapter (see **2.1**), in terms of the use of terminology which ignores the plurality of nationalities and cultures within the apparent group. Danish authors Elbeshausen and Skov (2004, p.131) also refer to the need to avoid ‘cultural determinism or cultural projection’ when delivering and promoting services, in other words to avoid making assumptions of what members of a minority ethnic group would want simply based on preconceptions regarding their culture of origin, rather than taking into account the ‘alien context’ in which they now live.

A reasonable approach to the promotion of minority ethnic fiction could therefore be to cease regarding such titles as additional to the overall library stock, or ‘of minority interest’, but instead to incorporate books by Black and Asian authors in any fiction promotion, as standard practice. As *Opening the Book* (2006a) recommends to library staff: ‘In any promotion that you do, you should plan to include a percentage and a range of work by Black and Asian writers’.

2.7 Supply Chain Part V: the readers of minority ethnic fiction

Previous sections in this chapter have pointed to a certain confusion regarding the authorship, publishing, location (in a library or bookshop) and promotion of minority ethnic fiction. The most confusing of all, however, appears to be the question of its readership: who is the intended and actual reader of Black British and Asian fiction in English, and what are the factors which influence his or her decision to read those books?

Writing about the state of black publishing, Sylge (1997, p.28) describes the experience of Tony Fairweather, director of the Write Thing, a promoter of black writers, who was told by a prominent employee of a large publishing house that his business would not survive as ‘the UK trade only sold books to white people because “black people don’t read”’. Multicultural publisher Wilkins (in Horn, 2008) talks of a similar experience: ‘people say “black

people don't buy books, but that's crazy – it's wrong.' Fortunately, the literature confirms that this perspective is entirely inaccurate, and that people from minority ethnic communities not only read, but read widely. During the course of the Books for All promotion of black and minority ethnic authors in bookshops (see also **2.5.4**), book trade analyst Book Marketing Ltd. conducted interviews with 627 BME shoppers in 11 bookshops across London and Birmingham. Asked about their response to the promotion, 95% of participants felt that it was a good idea to promote the BME writers featured 'because they did not normally get enough publicity' (Holman, in Bookseller, 2007, p.13). Reporting that two-thirds of participants were 'drawn to' books of African, Asian or Caribbean interest or background, it was noted 'Of course they buy other books too, but marketing books to people specifically based on their cultural background may prove to be a sound investment' (idem). The editor of *Asians in Media* magazine, Hundal (2007a) writes in the Guardian newspaper of the importance of newspapers attracting audiences from all backgrounds, arguing that journalists 'cannot ignore the different lifestyles of their readers or treat them as monolithic blocks.' He concludes, 'Newspapers need to write not just about minorities but for them'. A similar viewpoint is expressed by Simsova (in Zielinska and Kirkwood, 1992, p.29), who suggests that 'ethnic readers...like reading new literature written by authors of their own community living in the new homeland, because such literature embodies their own present experience, as literature from the old homeland cannot.' This relates to Squire's theory (1994) that 'response [to a text] is affected by prior knowledge and experience' (p. 640), that 'emotional involvement with a text is critical to understanding' (p. 641) and to Rosenblatt's (1983) theory that the reader brings to a book his or her own personality traits, memories, preoccupations and mood. It also relates to Appleyard's (1994, pp.9-10) more cyclical idea that the reader brings to the text a series of 'expectations derived from a literary and life experience', and that the text then 'feeds back these expectations or it does not'. In this way, argues Appleyard (1994), there will be a sense of 'identification with the characters and the situations they are in' (p. 102).

In 2008 Hicks and Hunt reported the findings of research conducted with 514 members of the Harper Collins online Reader Panel (of mixed ethnicity) and 497 members of a second online consumer panel, all of BME origin. Based on the data collected, the authors claim, 'It is not true to say that BME readers read BME books per se' (p. 40), suggesting in fact that BME readers will most frequently read general bestselling titles. At the same time, Hicks and Hunt also suggest that their research points to an opportunity for the book trade to 'expand the range of books featuring characters, places and issues relevant to communities of BME readers, written by authors from these communities but also with appeal to the general readership' (idem, p. 40). Although inevitably driven to an extent by a financial imperative to increase sales, book trade commentator Sanderson (2001, p.28) writes that in future the BME book market must grow 'beyond the confines of the specialist shop or section, even to the extent of targeting white readers.' Indeed, in a study of the African American novel, Thompson (2006) explores this idea of readership, suggesting that although Black fiction is inevitably linked to racial identity, it is not necessarily the case that every African American will seek to read the genre, nor that non-African American readers would not be interested in reading it. As he states, 'race could be among a variety of factors why a patron would want to enjoy reading Black fiction' (p.46).

This relates to the idea expressed by some that British society has become more accepting of minority ethnic fiction as part of the mainstream culture: Val McDermid (2010) cites fellow lesbian author Sarah Waters, who speaks of 'a shift in people's perceptions of what constitutes British literature in the past few years', to the extent that 'it's not only lesbian and gay voices that have been welcomed into the mainstream, it's a range of ethnic voices too'. Waters attributes this paradigm shift to 'an opening up of British culture and a relaxing of British society'. Olden et al (1996, p.16) suggest that just as British tastes in travel and food have developed in recent years, 'similarly taste in reading has widened'. Even in 1992 Kendall reported that adult fiction by Caribbean and African authors was a popular reading choice of white, middle-class readers. More recently, Hicks and Hunt (2008, p.40) underline the importance of recognising that authors from BME

communities are also popular with the general reading market. At a more general level Ruppin (2009, p.4), addressing the book trade, suggests that the reading public is now more willing than before to move away from the generic authors ‘who dominate the charts’, provided that they are given ‘some guidance and encouragement’.

As we have seen, the literature is divided as to the identity of the minority ethnic fiction reader. Young (2006, p.20) summarises the issue, writing of ‘the problem of the double audience’, by which he is referring both to those readers who are from the same ethnic group as the author (the ‘insiders’) and those who are not. As illustrated in **2.5.4**, a divided readership could be encouraged by the way in which books are shelved, whether as a separate ‘black interest’ (or similar) section, or as part of the overall collection. Yet proponents of the reader development approach would argue that all books are potentially for all readers, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, culture, or sexuality. Van Riel et al (2008, p.61) refer to the role of reader development to encourage the reader to let go of his or her ‘prejudices and defences’, including those ‘rooted in a sense of difference of culture...’, and thereby to ‘open up a wider choice’. As Hicks and Hunt (2008, p.40) argue, ‘It is important to recognize that BME authors are popular with the reading market. Many well-known BME authors appeal strongly to non-BME readers interested in literary fiction and reading about other cultures’.

2.7.1 Previous theoretical approaches and reader models or frameworks

The findings of the three empirical studies (Chapters 4, 5, 6) will, in combination, form the basis of a model to show those factors which influence an individual’s intention to read a minority ethnic fiction book. Before this model can emerge, it is first necessary to consider previous theoretical approaches and examples of models or frameworks in this or related subject areas.

In the field of reading research, the main focus of modelling has been to describe the linguistic and cognitive processes required in order to decode texts, and the relationships between these processes. Singer and Ruddell

(1985) describe a reading model as a graphic attempt ‘to depict how an individual perceives a word, processes a clause, and comprehends a text’. Early models took the form of unidirectional flow diagrams which depicted, for example, the progression from symbol to sound to eventual meaning (Carroll, 1964) or, more simply, from print to meaning (Smith, 1971). Later reading models have drawn from scientific and psychological disciplines, to include a greater investigation of, for example, eye movements and the roles of memory and attention in reading. As Samuels & Kamil (1998) suggest, these newer versions have tended to be more interactive than previous examples, no longer just one-way diagrams of a linear process. In a more interactive model, the reader provides input as well as the printed word, interacting with the text and interpreting ‘cues’ as necessary in order to construct meaning (Goodman, 1982).

The concept of ‘interaction’ as part of the activity of reading is very much in line with **reader response theory**, a branch of literary theory which focuses on the ‘reader’ and his or her experience of a literary work, in contrast to other theories which focus primarily on the author or the content and form of his or her work. Reader response theory recognizes the reader as an active participant in the reading process, completing the meaning of a literary work through his or her interpretation of it. It developed in the 1960s-70s, in direct opposition to the previous theories of New Criticism which had been popular in the previous decade, and which deliberately excluded the reader’s response (as well as the author’s intention or any historical/cultural context) from the analysis of a text, in an attempt to ‘focus critical attention on literature itself’ (Searle, 2005, in Groden et al, 2012). New Criticism incorporates Formalism, which claims that a text can be interpreted objectively, where the reader is immune to culture, status, personality, and so on. Each of these approaches goes directly against reader response theory.

With reader response theory, therefore, the fiction reader is situated within a clear relationship with the text, replacing the former examinations of a text ‘in-and-of-itself’ with ‘discussions of the reading process, the “interaction” of reader and text’ (Mailloux, 1982, p.20). For leading reader-response

theorist Rosenblatt (1994) it is necessary to break down that reading process into less ‘impersonal, mechanistic terms’ (p.1065) than she felt had been the case in previous research, and to describe instead a *transactional* model of reading and writing which, ‘instead of mainly treating reading as a compendium of separate skills or as an isolated autonomous activity’, should in fact ‘center on the human being speaking, writing, reading and continuously transacting with a specific environment in its broadening circles of context’ (p.1085).

In an examination of the role of the reader in the study of American fiction, Mailloux (ibid.) attempts to classify the mass of literary theory relating to reader response criticism into three reading models, psychological, intersubjective and social, summarised briefly in the table below:

Table 2.1 Summary of three fiction reading models (adapted from Mailloux, 1982, Chapters 1-2)

Psychological model <i>Based on subjective criticism</i>	Intersubjective model <i>Based on phenomenology</i>	Social model <i>Based on structuralism</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No objective text independent of a reader (Bleich, 1975; Fish, 1980) • Reading is a function of personality (Holland, 1975) • Favours individual interpretation over collective (idem.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interaction takes place between the reader and the text – while the reader is manipulated by the text (‘affective stylistics’) (Fish, 1970) • No ‘message’ to extract from a text, rather a meaning assembled by the reader (Iser, 1978) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Reading communities’, ‘interpretive communities’, rather than individual readers as subjects • Communication takes place between the author and the reader via shared reading conventions (Culler, 1975) • A structuralist perspective dictates that the reader and text are no longer independent (Fish, 1980)

The *psychological model* is based on subjective criticism, which places meaning in readers, rather than in texts. Bleich (1975) rejects the notion of an objective text existing completely independent of the reader, suggesting

that for the reader, 'the interpretation is the response to his reading experience' (p.754). Similarly, Fish (1980) proposes that the text does not exist before its interpretation by the reader, and Holland (1975) emphasises the individual over the group, that reading is a function of personality. For Holland, the 'close analysis of what readers actually say about what they read' (p.814) is the most important means of fully understanding the reading process.

The *intersubjective model* builds on the idea of subjective criticism, proposing that on the one hand there is an interaction between the reader and the text, and on the other hand that the text in some way manipulates the reader. In 1970, Fish claimed that a sentence within a text is not 'a thing-in-itself, but an *event*, something that *happens* to, and with the participation of, the reader'; he describes the reader as 'informed', having the ability to understand the text and to have the experience the author intended him to have. In this process of 'affective stylistics', the reader is forced to perform certain cognitive acts, is 'manipulated' by the text. Moving away from traditional writer and text-centred approaches to literature, Iser's (1978) phenomenological theory introduced the concept of the reader as co-author, regarding the text as a series of marks of little significance in their own right, needing 'the creative imagination of the reader...to fill in the gaps in the framework and so complete the work of the writer' (Walsh, 1993, p.16). As Mailloux (1982, p.42) summarises, '[Iser's] reading model emphasises not a message extracted from a text, but a meaning assembled and experienced by a reader'.

The *social model* differs from the psychological and intersubjective models in that its subjects are 'reading communities', not 'individual readers'. As Mailloux (1982, p.40) explains, 'social accounts of reading employ models based on intersubjective categories and strategies shared by members of a group.' Culler's (1975) definition of 'structuralist poetics' describes a communication which takes place between the author and the reader (with agreement among readers), via 'a shared system of reading conventions...the author makes use of these conventions in his writing and his intended readers use them to understand his text' (Mailloux, *ibid.*, p. 42). In 1980 Fish revised his 'affective stylistics' as described above, replacing

them with a theory of interpretive strategies and thereby moving from a phenomenological to a structuralist position which, as Mailloux describes, presents ‘the underlying systems that determine the production of textual meaning and in which the individual reader and the constraining text lose their independent status’ (ibid., pp. 22-3). Exploring the term ‘interpretive community’ Tompkins (1980) similarly suggests that ‘since all sign systems are social constructs that individuals assimilate more or less automatically...an individual’s perceptions and judgements are a function of the assumptions shared by the group he belongs to.’ (p.xxi)

Although the word ‘social’ is used to describe this third (and aspects of the second) model of reading, it is important to note that such models are social in the sense of a communication they describe between the author and the reader and of reading communities, but not in the wider sense of ‘society’. Indeed, the creators of these models have been criticised for their general inattention to sociological detail, in other words that any external factors – economic, political, socio-cultural, etc. – were not perceived as having a direct effect on the process of reading and interpreting a text. Reviewing Iser’s (1978) work ‘The act of reading: a theory of aesthetic response’, Hawkes (1980) wonders, for example:

‘Quite how Iser’s texts, prized free from their historical context, finally engage the attention of readers who apparently float somewhere beyond the constraints of economics and politics, remains a slight mystery...’ (p.560)

The notion of the ‘sociology of literature’ or ‘sociology of reading’ was subject to exploration some time before the work of the late-twentieth century critics mentioned above, and as Poulain (2009, p.4882) comments, the field has gradually ‘gained in sophistication and rigor’. In 1958 the French sociologist Robert Escarpit presented a new model combining literary theory and sociology, in response to what he described as an ‘absence of a real sociological perspective...in even the best traditional textbooks of literary history’ (in Escarpit, 1971, p.1). He suggested that ‘writers are sometimes conscious of a social dimension which they try to represent, but, lacking a rigorous method adapted to that end, they often remain immured in the classical framework of the man and his work’ (ibid.).

However, introducing the second edition of Escarpit's work in 1971, Bradbury (in Escarpit, 1971, p. 20) described the French author's model as 'too tight and constricting', suggesting that a sociologist 'would doubtless like to see more room made in the discussion for consideration of broader social forces'. Leenhardt (1980, p.224) writes of the importance of understanding the 'social function' of literature.

In considering an appropriate model for this thesis, it was felt that these wider sociological factors should be taken into account. This moves beyond the more usual notion of the 'sociology of literature' which refers primarily to the role of literature to depict contemporary society (Hall, 1979), towards instead a consideration of the effects of that society on the literature, its authors and, eventually, its readers. This approach is in line with the view of critics such as Mailloux (1982), for whom reading does not take place 'in a social vacuum independent of economic and political forces' (p. 41). He refers to economic factors which determine the availability of books and the material circumstances in which they are read, to political structures which affect the motives for and effects of the act of reading, and also to larger social forces such as class or gender [or age], each of which could affect audience interest and literary taste. As he suggests, 'a complete sociological model of reading would have to take all these factors into account' (p. 41).

2.7.2 Previous models of attitudes towards reading or motivation to read

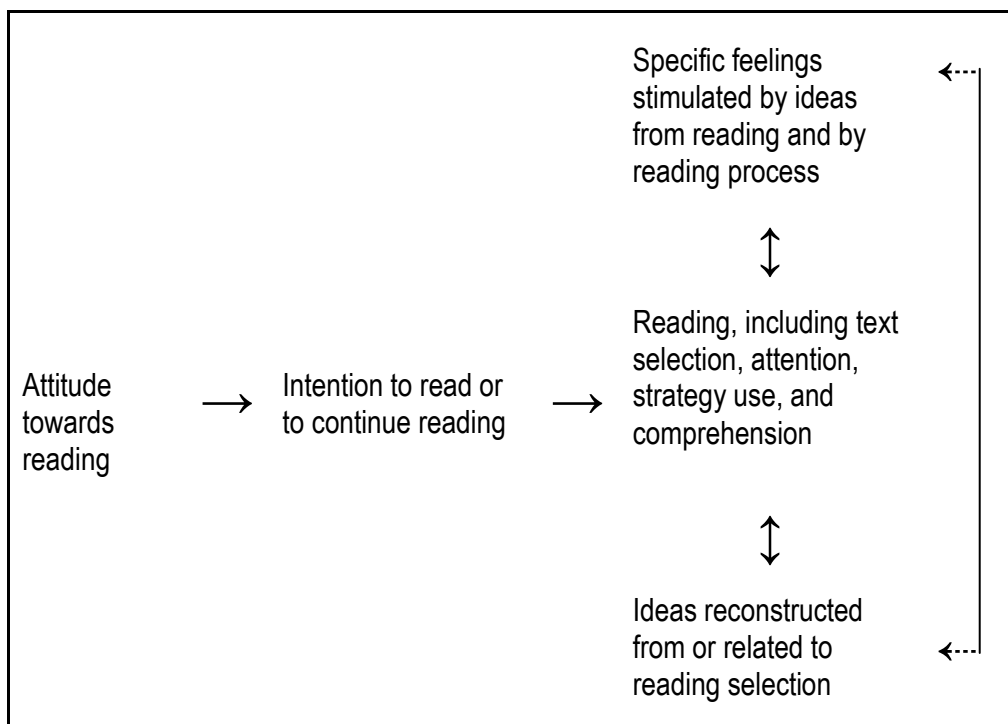
A primary focus of this research is to investigate the factors which influence the reading of minority ethnic fiction. A consideration of previous models focusing on readers' motivation to read, and/or on general attitudes to reading, is therefore helpful.

In the field of reading research, historically the investigation of a reader's motivation to read has been strongly linked to the child's learning process, and to changing patterns in reading and learning throughout the school years. Guthrie and Wigfield's model of reading engagement (in Kamil et al, 2000) proposes that there are both intrinsic and external motivators for reading. The former relate to a child's 'curiosity, involvement and

preference for challenge’ (p. 407), and the latter refer to his or her desire to receive ‘external recognition, rewards or incentives’ (idem).

Mathewson (1994) presents a model of ‘attitude influence upon reading and learning to read’, which implies that the reader looks to read a text which affirms ‘cherished values, goals and self-concepts’ (pp.1148-9), and will avoid text that does the opposite. Although again this model was specifically designed to understand pupil motivation, there are elements which could apply to the adult fiction reader, namely that the overall attitude to reading, and the intention to read or to continue reading a book could be directly affected by feelings aroused by the reading process, and ideas linked to reading selection. This is illustrated in Figure 2.2 below, adapted from Mathewson’s full model.

Figure 2.2 Mathewson’s ‘Model of attitude influence upon reading and learning to read’ (adapted from Mathewson, 1994, pp.1149)



Moving from the child reader towards the reader in general, Escarpit (1971, p.90) famously writes of motivation in terms of two perceived roles of the text: a ‘medicinal’ role (to help the reader to sleep or to occupy his/her preoccupied mind), and a ‘relaxation’ role (to help the reader to obtain certain distracting sensations, be they pleasurable, emotive or erotic). He

also proposes a series of factors affecting an individual's 'availability' to read, which will be determined by the extent to which 'life in society absorbs [the individual]' (p. 93). For example, a young person may read avidly and passionately, but because he or she will have 'numerous other distractions' the breadth of choice may be relatively narrow. A person aged 35 or over will start to read more widely, as 'the pressure of existence makes itself less actively felt' (p. 93).

Appleyard (1994, p. 163) later suggested that there were three motives for reading fiction, namely 'to escape from the intractable problems of everyday life, to enlarge their [readers'] consciousness of the world, to discover images that have power and meaning for their lives'. The second and third of these, in particular, relate to sources previously cited (2.7) regarding the perceived benefits of reading fiction by authors from countries other than one's own, or by authors from one's country of origin.

More recently, D'Astous et al (2006) also offered that the act of reading a book is associated with one or all of three motivations, more wide-ranging than those previously proposed by Appleyard: utilitarian (e.g. increasing one's knowledge), hedonic (enjoying oneself), and symbolic (e.g. feeling that one is an intellectual). They suggest that the act of choosing a book to read can be 'highly involving', as books serve to 'define one's identity' (p. 135). They also argue that the limited research available on book choice indicates that there are three 'relatively important' attributes used by readers when choosing a book, namely the author (his or her reputation and readers' past experience of reading his or her books), the reputation of the publisher, and the book cover. Finally, they suggest that the genre of the book chosen is likely to reflect different reading motivations, for example 'a novel for relaxation versus a technical book for learning' (p.135).

Cultural economists Leemans and Stokmans (1992) present a sequential hierarchical model of consumer decision-making for book purchase. This involves six sequential phases: problem recognition, information acquisition, information evaluation, choice, purchase, and post-purchase evaluation. The authors argue that the decision process begins with the

recognition of a problem, which could simply be the emergence of a desire to read or own a book, then involves an internal (memory and existing knowledge based) and external (book reviews, personal or professional recommendations) search for information, before reviewing that information, making an informed choice, buying the book and then finally reflecting on one's purchase. However, they acknowledge that this six-stage process will inevitably be affected by the consumer's prior reading experiences and knowledge of fiction, which will vary considerably from one individual to another.

In the field of library and information science, Ross (2001) offers a 'model for the process of choosing a book for pleasure' (p.16), which applies directly to public library users rather than to potential book consumers. This was based on an analysis of readers' statements, and describes five elements which are interlinked, namely:

1. 'Reading experience wanted: the 'what mood am I in?' test
2. Alerting sources that the reader uses to find out about new books
3. Elements of a book that readers take into account in order to match book choices to the reading experience desired
4. Clues on the book itself used to determine the reading experience being offered
5. Cost in time or money involved for the reader in getting intellectual or physical access to a particular book' (pp. 17-19).

Although there are similarities between this and previous models, this is the only example which addresses the role of a third party – in this case, the librarian – in supporting the reader as he or she chooses a book to read.

In summary, models have previously been developed to present aspects of reading engagement among young people (Guthrie & Wigfield, in Kamil et al, 2000), and of general factors influencing a child's reading and how he or she learns to read (Mathewson, 1994). For readers of all ages, authors have used models to explore one's motivation to read in general, and to read particular genres (Escarpit, 1971; Appleyard, 1994; D'Astous et al, 2006). Two models were also found which present factors affecting a reader's

decision to buy, or to choose from a library, a particular book (Leemans & Stokmans, 1992; Ross, 2001).

Although of value in providing a starting point from which we can begin to understand how we read, none of these models has looked in any significant detail at *why* we read what we do, and what attitudes we may have towards particular genres, for example minority ethnic fiction. None of them have reflected in detail on the effect of the age and gender of the reader on his or her engagement with a particular book or genre, or indeed the community in which he or she lives. A further omission in previous models is the influence not only of individual or text-related factors on a reader's intention to read, but also of broader societal factors.

2.8 The significance of the empirical research

This chapter has reviewed both academic and professional literature regarding the nature of minority ethnic fiction, and its supply, promotion and readership. A summary of key findings follows, with a brief discussion of how they relate to the present research.

The literature shows that the terminology used to describe what we might term 'minority ethnic fiction' has been the subject of relatively widespread academic debate, with no real consensus having been reached. Certain authors (e.g. Thompson, 2006; Peters, 2000) express the view that the label applied to a particular genre should not necessarily reflect its readership. Much of the literature relating to the authorship of Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English is concerned with the question of authenticity; that authors from minority ethnic communities often feel obliged to reflect these communities in the fiction they write, rather than having the freedom to present a totally imagined setting for their work. Regarding the book trade, the vast majority of the literature about minority ethnic fiction originates from within the book trade itself, in professional journal articles and reports. This reveals the relatively low profile of this type of fiction in both the publishing and bookselling industries, despite certain 'breakthrough' texts by more well-known authors. It proved difficult to find material written from a more objective perspective, and certainly to find academic research

on the subject. Both academic research and the professional literature suggest that library suppliers are not always playing their role in providing minority ethnic fiction for public libraries, although some authors (Usherwood, 2007; Van Riel et al, 2008) argue that library staff can also damage the supply chain with poor or ill-informed stock specifications.

The main body of academic literature in this field relates to the public library service, its provision of services to minority ethnic communities, the limited diversity – and sometimes limited tolerance - of its staff, and the supply of materials to minority ethnic communities. Certainly, previous research in the field of public librarianship and minority ethnic communities has tended to focus on the services for non-vernacular speaking communities (Clough and Quarmby, 1978; Roach and Morrison, 1998; Vaagan, 2003). More recent research by the author (Birdi et al, 2012) has emphasised the role of public libraries in supporting members of minority ethnic communities for whom language may no longer be an issue, but for whom culture may still remain a primary concern.

The present research therefore builds on previous studies, with an emphasis on the cultural, rather than the linguistic, aspects of minority ethnic fiction stock provision and use (the context of this paradigm shift is given above [2.6.3]). As indicated above, opinion pieces and news items – rather than empirical research - form the main body of existing work on the subject of minority ethnic fiction in general, whether in the context of public libraries specifically, or within the book trade as a whole, so an academic investigation into the subject was felt to be timely.

Furthermore, the final part of the supply chain used in this review – the reader – has not been addressed to any significant extent by previous research, and in terms of academic models of reading there has been little or no empirical research in the specific field of minority ethnic fiction. These are significant omissions, and the present research therefore comprises an investigation of the readership of minority ethnic fiction by all readers, whatever their ethnic origin. By triangulating the findings of the three empirical studies with the findings of this literature review the outcome of

the research will be the development of a new model of reading engagement, to present those factors which influence an individual's intention to read a work of minority ethnic fiction.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter overview

This chapter presents the methodology and methods used in the thesis. It begins with a description of the author's epistemological position and overall methodological approach, an exploration of the role and impact of the researcher, before briefly introducing the individual research methods and illustrating how the methods as a whole are interrelated. This is followed by a description of the data coding and analysis techniques used for both qualitative and quantitative data, an exploration of the ways in which the reliability and validity of the data were established, and finally a consideration of the role of the model in the research process.

The sections which follow outline the overall philosophy underpinning the research, the methodological approach taken and the research design and methods employed.

3.1 Research philosophy and paradigms

Methodological writing has often focused on two major research paradigms, *constructivism* (also termed 'interpretivism' and 'naturalism') and *positivism*. In the 1980s the now widely cited work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) described the philosophical and methodological aspects of these two paradigms as so distinct that what is now known as the 'incompatibility thesis' emerged, whereby qualitative (constructivist) research would be entirely antithetical to quantitative (positivist) research (Lancy, 1993). For example, in ontological terms, the nature of reality perceived by a constructivist researcher would be 'multiple, constructed, holistic' (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p.86), subject to multiple interpretations, whereas a positivist version of reality would acknowledge the existence of only a single, tangible truth. Similarly, the epistemology of the interpretive approach would be as 'practical' as positivism is 'instrumental', whereby the former 'aims to include as much evidence about the subject, the research process and context as possible to enable understanding of others' lifeworlds and experiences', and the latter perceives that 'knowledge

represents reality, is stable and additive' (Cecez-Kecmanovic and Kennan, 2013, p.123).

Furthermore, the axiology of a constructivist paradigm would support a value-laden research process, whereas that of a positivist paradigm would be entirely value-free (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009).

It has been suggested that the research landscape has become more complicated since the late twentieth century as the number of research methods significantly increased, particularly in the Social Sciences (O'Leary, 2004). Alternative theoretical frameworks have consequently become more commonly applied by researchers than would previously have been the case, expanding the philosophical underpinnings of the research process. For example, the *postpositivist* paradigm is associated with the new theories of uncertainty and probability which were expounded by scientists such as Karl Popper in the late 1950s and early 1960s and is, as Pickard (2007) argues, 'rooted in the premise that any perception of reality cannot be an objective picture but is drawn from empirical observation and existing theory' (p.10).

Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009) describe the development of research paradigms in terms of an 'evolution' (p.86), and present five major paradigms for consideration in the current research context, namely positivist, constructivist and postpositivist as previously mentioned, and also pragmatist and transformative, which will now be considered in the light of the present thesis.

Pragmatism as a principle of philosophical enquiry was first defined by Peirce in 1878 in an essay entitled 'How to make our ideas clear', in which he suggests that human beings draw conclusions about particular phenomena via their own experience, stating 'how impossible it is that we should have an idea in our mind which relates to anything but conceived sensible effects of things. Our idea of anything *is* its sensible effects' (p.288). The pragmatist paradigm as used in research methodology today still contains this experiential aspect, but as illustrated by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) the objective of the pragmatist approach is 'to find a

middle ground between philosophical dogmatism and scepticism and to find a workable solution...to many longstanding philosophical dualisms about which agreement has not been historically forthcoming' (p.18). The 'dogmatism' and 'dualism' to which Johnson and Onwuegbuzie refer are described by Teddlie and Tashakkori describe as the 'either-or choice between constructivism and (post)positivism' (p.86), and the similarly binary choices between (for example) 'rationalism vs. empiricism, realism vs. antirealism...subjectivism vs. objectivism' (p.74).

Pragmatism as a research approach can therefore be characterised both in terms of its rejection of this previous binary approach, and also in its search for the 'workable solution' (see above), a series of practical answers to research questions. Clearly, it is not sufficient simply to reject previous approaches; the new paradigm needs to have a clear approach of its own. Morgan (2007) helpfully clarifies how the researcher would take the above-mentioned 'middle ground' between quantitative and qualitative research, as shown in Table 3.1 below:

Table 3.1 'A pragmatic alternative to the key issues in social science research methodology' (from Morgan, 2007, pp.71-3)

	Qualitative approach	Quantitative approach	Pragmatic approach
Connection of theory and data	Induction	Deduction	Abduction (<i>e.g. assessing inductive inferences through action</i>)
Relationship to research process	Subjectivity	Objectivity	<i>Intersubjectivity (e.g. taking into account both subjective and objective points of view)</i>
Inference from data	Context	Generality	<i>Transferability (e.g. considering 'how much of our existing knowledge might be useable in a new set of circumstances' (p.72))</i>

Each of the three 'alternatives' – abduction, intersubjectivity and transferability – is achieved by what Morgan describes as a 'back and forth' movement between the qualitative and quantitative version, finding what he would term 'useful points of connection' (p.71) between the two and

thereby avoiding problems caused ‘by treating these broad tendencies as absolute’ (p.73).

A move away from absolutism leads to a primary focus on the research problem (Creswell, 2003), and therefore to the selection of data collection and analysis methods according to their likelihood ‘to provide insights into the question’ (p.11), arguably with no fixed loyalty to a specific philosophy or paradigm (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006).

The fifth major paradigm to be considered here is the *transformative* paradigm. In common with the pragmatist paradigm it emerged in part due to a dissatisfaction with the two main research paradigms, but also because of perceived limitations of (post)positivist and constructivist research to address discrimination and oppression, and to advocate for social justice (Mertens, 2010). Mertens presents four characteristics of the transformative paradigm which would distinguish it from the postpositivist and constructivist alternatives:

1. It places central importance on the lives and experiences of the diverse groups that, traditionally, have been marginalised.
2. It analyses how and why inequities based on gender, race or ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic classes are reflected in asymmetric power relationships.
3. It examines how results of social inquiry on inequities are linked to political and social action.
4. It uses a transformative theory to develop the research approach. (from Mertens, 2010, p.21).

3.1.1 Research paradigms for the present research

This mixed methods research has been conducted primarily from a pragmatist perspective, but has also been informed by elements of a transformative paradigm (see below). A research approach underpinned by two different paradigms would not be supported by those authors who write of ‘paradigm boundaries’ (Pickard, 2007, p.6), and who describe one major research paradigm as entirely separate from another (Lincoln and Guba,

1985). However, the present author would argue that the pragmatist paradigm is indeed compatible with the transformative paradigm, as they share the axiology that values are important in the interpretation of data (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009, p.88), and furthermore that each enables the researcher to develop ‘more complete and full portraits of our social world through the use of multiple perspectives and lenses’ (Somekh and Lewin, 2005, p.275).

In conducting this research, the researcher takes the stance that the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic fiction are potentially beneficial and transformative to readers and to the public libraries they use. It is not transformative research in that the results are not deliberately linked to ‘wider questions of social inequity and social justice’ (Mertens, 2003, p.140), but it is hoped that an outcome of the research will be a contribution to improving the provision and promotion of minority ethnic fiction by public library services in the UK and beyond. For example, the model of genre fiction reading (7.6) will also be adapted in order to help both readers and staff to understand, work with and enjoy minority ethnic fiction (7.10).

3.2 A mixed methods research approach

As indicated in the previous section, the methodology for this thesis comprises a mixed methods approach. Critics would argue that quantitative and qualitative strategies cannot be combined, as they have ‘fixed epistemological and ontological implications’ (Bryman (2012, p.630). Smith (1983) and Smith and Heshusius (1986) propose that no combination of the two strategies should take place, as the procedures and epistemological implications of each are so different, and Guba (1990) further asserts that ‘accommodation between two paradigms is impossible...we are led to vastly diverse, disparate, and totally antithetical ends’ (p.81).

In contrast, advocates of the approach suggest that the arguments described above lack precision, are contradictory, and even that they are potentially harmful to the development of theory (Weaver and Gioia, 1994; Schultz and Hatch, 1996). In an attempt to resolve these issues, Bryman (2012) suggests

that there are two separate, conflicting approaches from which the researcher can choose, namely the *epistemological* approach, via which quantitative and qualitative research are perceived as grounded in ‘incompatible epistemological principles’ and so should not be combined; and the *technical* approach, which recognizes the ‘distinctive epistemological and ontological assumptions’ of the two types of research, but sees each specific method as autonomous. Quantitative and qualitative methods are therefore ‘capable of being fused’ (p.631).

In line with the pragmatist research paradigm, the present thesis has adopted the second approach, not simply adopting both methodologies for their own sake, but consciously adopting those methods which are felt to be most appropriate for the purposes of the research. This approach is very much in line with Bryman’s argument that ‘the contrast between quantitative and qualitative research should not be overdrawn’ (Bryman 2012, p.615), that no specific methodology is intrinsically linked to a particular paradigm and that the researcher should design his or her research for technical reasons, rather than for a particular loyalty to any such paradigm (Bryman, 1988; James and Vinnicombe, in Partington, ed.,2002). Denscombe (2003, p.231) agrees, stating that ‘the assumptions associated with the two approaches are frequently shared, frequently overlap and basically do not fall either side of a clear dividing line’. As Frankel neatly summarises (in Crabtree and Miller, 1999, p.343), ‘The research question should always determine the method and not the other way around’. In adopting this approach, suggest Ponterotto and Grieger (in Kopala and Suzuki, 1999, p.54), the researcher develops a competence and understanding in both quantitative and qualitative philosophies and methods and acquires what they term a ‘bicultural research worldview’.

Assuming, therefore, that the second, ‘technical’ approach is practicable, we need to determine which multi-method strategy to employ. Hammersley (2002) refers to three approaches to multi-method research, which can be summarised as follows:

- Triangulation – whereby quantitative research is employed to corroborate qualitative findings (or vice versa)
- Facilitation – whereby one research approach is used in order to aid research using another approach
- Complementarity – whereby the two research strategies are employed in order to ‘dovetail’ different aspects of the investigation.

Although elements of each of the three approaches are present in the overall design of the present thesis, the qualitative elements within both Studies 1 and 2 were felt to be of particular value in corroborating the quantitative survey findings, and likewise the qualitative and quantitative methods as a whole were seen as complementary to one another, so the first and third approaches have therefore been adopted in the thesis. It was felt that these would, in combination, enable a more in-depth investigation to be conducted, as it was intended to enhance the validity of the data, and thereby improve the quality of the research, in two ways. Firstly, they offered the opportunity to consider the issues in question from different perspectives, and ‘to understand the topic in a more rounded and complete fashion than would be the case had the data been drawn from just one method’ (Denscombe 2003, p.132). Secondly, research data can be questioned and corroborated by comparing one dataset to another (Rudestam and Newton, 2001; Gorman and Clayton, 2005).

3.3 The role and impact of the researcher

‘Researchers, no matter how comprehensive their studies are, can only hope to tell one part of the story, or one story among many others that could be told.’ (James and Vinnicombe, in Partington, ed., 2002, p.87).

The issue of bias should not be ignored in any research, and certainly not in research which focuses on a racial or ethnic issue. As a white researcher conducting a study of minority ethnic fiction, it was necessary to take a number of issues into consideration when designing the thesis, in order to increase the validity of the data collected. Consideration should be given not only to those aspects of the methodology which relate to the instruments

themselves, but also to the wider contextual issues and one's own role as a white researcher, both of which potentially affect participants' perception of – and response to - the research instruments.

To summarise the primary areas of concern, the thesis was potentially affected by the following factors:

1. The 'whiteness' of research and the research context
2. The ethnicity of the researcher.

Attempts made to address these issues within the research design and implementation, are described below.

3.3.1 The 'whiteness' of research, and of the research context

Ladson-Billings (in Denzin and Lincoln, eds., 2003) cites Scheurich and Young (1997), who identify, she states, an 'epistemological racism that exists in the research paradigms that dominate academic and scholarly products' (p.402). It is often felt that this racism exists in the cultural bias of research, frequently termed the 'eurocentric paradigm' (ibid., p.400), whereby the preponderance of white researchers and white research participants has a recognised effect on the outcomes of that research. Hunter (2004), directly arguing with those who claim that 'science allows us to neutralize any outside influences on the research process', contends instead that 'racism and power are not outside of the research process at all...they affect nearly every aspect of how researchers conduct their research from the choice of research questions to the interpretation of their data' (p.119).

Specifically within the field of Librarianship and Information Science, this issue of racist academic research is no less prevalent, although it would appear to be under-explored, as Honma (2005) agrees:

'Why is it that scholars and students do not talk openly and honestly about issues of race and LIS? Why does the field have a tendency to tiptoe around discussing race and racism... Why is the field so glaringly white yet no one wants to talk about whiteness and white privilege?' (p.1)

In an attempt to move beyond this lack of engagement, Harris (1986, p.522) calls for a ‘debate on both epistemological and normative issues surrounding the research endeavour in library science’, and Honma (ibid.) agrees that such discussion is necessary in order to understand ‘the foundational prejudices that have shaped the construction of libraries and LIS’. Indeed, Andersen (1993, p.43) clearly states that white researchers who conduct investigations with a specific racial or ethnic focus should ensure that they ‘examine self-consciously the influence of institutional racism and the way it shapes the formulation and development of their research, rather than assume a colour-blind stance’.

The public library service – the context for the present thesis – has been frequently described as non-judgemental, with an ‘equity of access...irrespective of age, gender, race or class’ (Train, in Elkin et al, 2003, p.30). Yet descriptions of this nature have been questioned as ‘idealized visions of a mythic benevolence’, which ‘conveniently gloss over the library’s susceptibility in reproducing and perpetuating racist social structures found throughout the rest of society’ (Honma, 2005, p.2). Whatever the extent to which we subscribe to the above viewpoint, it is reasonable to suggest that with a predominantly white workforce operating within an ethnically diverse society (see **2.6.1**) any research which takes place within a public library service could be affected by this ‘misalignment’ and, given the user figures given in **2.6**, that it would be difficult to obtain a sample size from within the non-white communities that is representative of the overall non-white population.

A further issue is raised by Cannon, Higginbotham and Leung (1988, p.450), who suggest that research – particularly qualitative research which tends to involve a greater degree of interaction with research participants than its quantitative counterpart – is frequently biased by the greater willingness of white, middle class subjects to participate in research. As Andersen (1993, p.41) agrees, ‘Because dominant groups have less reason to expect they will be exploited by researchers, they are more likely to volunteer as research subjects’. This idea of mistrust is expressed by a

number of researchers, such as Gwaltney, a black anthropologist who writes of black men and women he interviewed who made comments such as ‘I wouldn’t want to talk to any anthropologist or sociologist or any of those others if they were white because whatever I said they would write down what they felt like, so I might just as well save my breath’ (Gwaltney, 1980, p.xxv).

Given the lack of non-white users and staff in the public library service in the United Kingdom, and the fact that accusations of institutional racism have been made against the service, the observations of the authors as stated above are even more pertinent. For the present research, in consultation with the advisory group it was decided that Study 1 survey respondents would be asked merely to state their gender and age (within specified ranges), and would be required to provide their names and contact details only if they were prepared to be contacted over the telephone for a subsequent interview. Respondents’ ethnicity was only referred to during these optional interviews, and only if raised by the interviewee. Asking respondents not to state their ethnicity was intended to enable them to comment freely on their reading choices, without feeling that their ethnicity – or that of the author whose book they were reading – would be a subject for analysis. However, as noted in **4.8.3**, this did mean that it was unclear how representative the respondent population was of the wider East Midlands population. For Studies 2 and 3, the recording of participants’ ethnicity was regarded as beneficial to the data analysis, but this data collection was felt to be less invasive than the previous example would have been, as the ethnicity of each participant was already known by the researcher, who first checked with each that he or she agreed with the suggested categorisation.

It is perhaps unsurprising that only a small minority of respondents from Studies 2 and 3 were non-white (see **5.7.3** and **6.3.1** for population sample details), and it is reasonable to assume that the picture would be similar for the Study 1 respondents whose ethnicity was not recorded. In order to collect further data regarding the respondents, the project representative for each of the nine participating local authorities was asked to define each of

the 21 library communities according to certain variables, including the predominant ethnicity of that community. 16 of the 21 were described as ‘predominantly white’, with the remaining five as ‘predominantly mixed’, i.e. comprising members of white, black and Asian communities. Although a fairly superficial finding, this would nonetheless concur with the assumption made above that the majority of Study 1 participants were assumed to be white.

3.3.2 The ethnicity of the researcher

‘..all researchers need to be reflexive so that their research has rigour and validity – we need to understand that written research is not just an outpouring of one’s prejudices onto paper in the guise of objective study.’ (James and Vinnicombe, in Partington, ed., 2002, p.85)

In an exploration of race, class and gender in qualitative research, Andersen (1993) asks the essential questions ‘How can white scholars contribute to our understanding of the experiences of racial groups? Can dominant groups comprehend the experiences of outsiders and, if so, under what conditions and with which methodological practices?’ (p.40). Similarly, Stanfield (1993) refers to ‘the basic question of whether or not Euro-Americans can penetrate the intersubjectivity of people of color and, if so, what strategies they should follow to minimize inevitable biases flowing from being reared in a different, dominant racial or ethnic population’ (p.9). In response, Andersen (1983) suggests that ‘Minority scholars are...less likely to experience distrust, hostility and exclusion within minority communities’ (p.41), and Gunaratnam (2003, p.54) refers to the beneficial effects of the ‘ethnic matching’ of the researcher and participant. On a practical level, Stanfield (1993) also feels that racial and ethnic research conducted by a white researcher can be negatively affected for the following reason:

‘Because subjective experiences constitute the paramount data to be extracted from human beings under study, effective qualitative researchers spend much of their time worrying about rapport with subjects and the impacts their values have on the research process’ (p.8).

The present thesis is not an ethnographic investigation in that it did not begin with the holistic intention of researching peoples and their cultures. However, in developing appropriate research instruments via which to investigate minority ethnic fiction, it would nonetheless be wrong not to consider the issues regarding ethnicity-related research as conducted by a white researcher. In an attempt to address this, a number of steps were taken, as explained below.

For Study 1, it was decided that the survey (although not the subsequent interview) would be a quantitative instrument, giving respondents a range of options to tick or ignore (Appendix 1b). The two genres 'Black British fiction' and 'Asian fiction (in English)' were added to a list of eleven further genres (excluding 'Other'), so that participants would not feel that the focus of the survey was exclusively on these two. The title of the survey did not refer to the *black bytes* promotion being evaluated, but was simply entitled 'What do you like to read?' Similar measures were taken in the interview, as attitudes towards all genres were explored, and questions asked were based on the respondent's original survey responses. Although it is anticipated that the majority of library staff in participating libraries would have been white, the survey was not distributed by any particular member of staff, as borrowers were given a copy to complete by any member of library staff as they were having their library books (not necessarily books from the *black bytes* promotion) issued to them. The name of the researcher was only stated at the foot of the information sheet which was made available to all respondents (Appendix 1c), and her ethnicity was not stated either in the survey documentation or in the subsequent telephone interviews.

For Studies 2 and 3, the same general focus was given to the design of the repertory grid interview (Study 2) and construct ratings (Study 3), with a slightly reduced version of the previous list of genres (n=10), but maintaining the same wide range of genres in order to avoid an obvious focus on ethnicity. The ethnicity of the researcher was already known to all participants.

Interestingly, and at odds with earlier arguments presented in the field (Blauner and Wellman, 1973; Baca Zinn, 1979), Andersen (1993) and Collins (1991) suggest an alternative approach to be taken by the white researcher, one that Andersen (1993, p.43) describes as ‘a fundamentally different posture from that advocated by the norms of *unbiased, objective* research, in which one typically denies the influence of one’s status... in the shaping of knowledge’. Such commentators recommend instead that the researcher sees him or herself as ‘situated in the action of our research’ (Rapp, in Andersen, 1993, p.43), examining ‘our own social location, not just that of those we study’ (Andersen, 1993, p.43).

A tentative conclusion to this highly complex argument would be that the white researcher can effectively conduct research into minority ethnic cultural issues, but only if acknowledging his or her own position of privilege as a white person. As Andersen (1993) states:

‘I am convinced that this self-reflective method of constructing knowledge is more compelling and reliable than standard, detached ways of knowing...As whites learn to see the world through the experiences of others, a process that is itself antithetical to the views of privileged groups, we can begin to construct more complete and less distorted ways of seeing the complex relations of race, class and gender’ (pp.50, 52).

Similarly, Armstrong (1991), acknowledging the difficulties of commenting on aspects of a culture other than one’s own, nonetheless proposes that ‘the first step...must be to become aware...of the problematics of the representational act itself’ (p.157).

3.4 Data collection methods

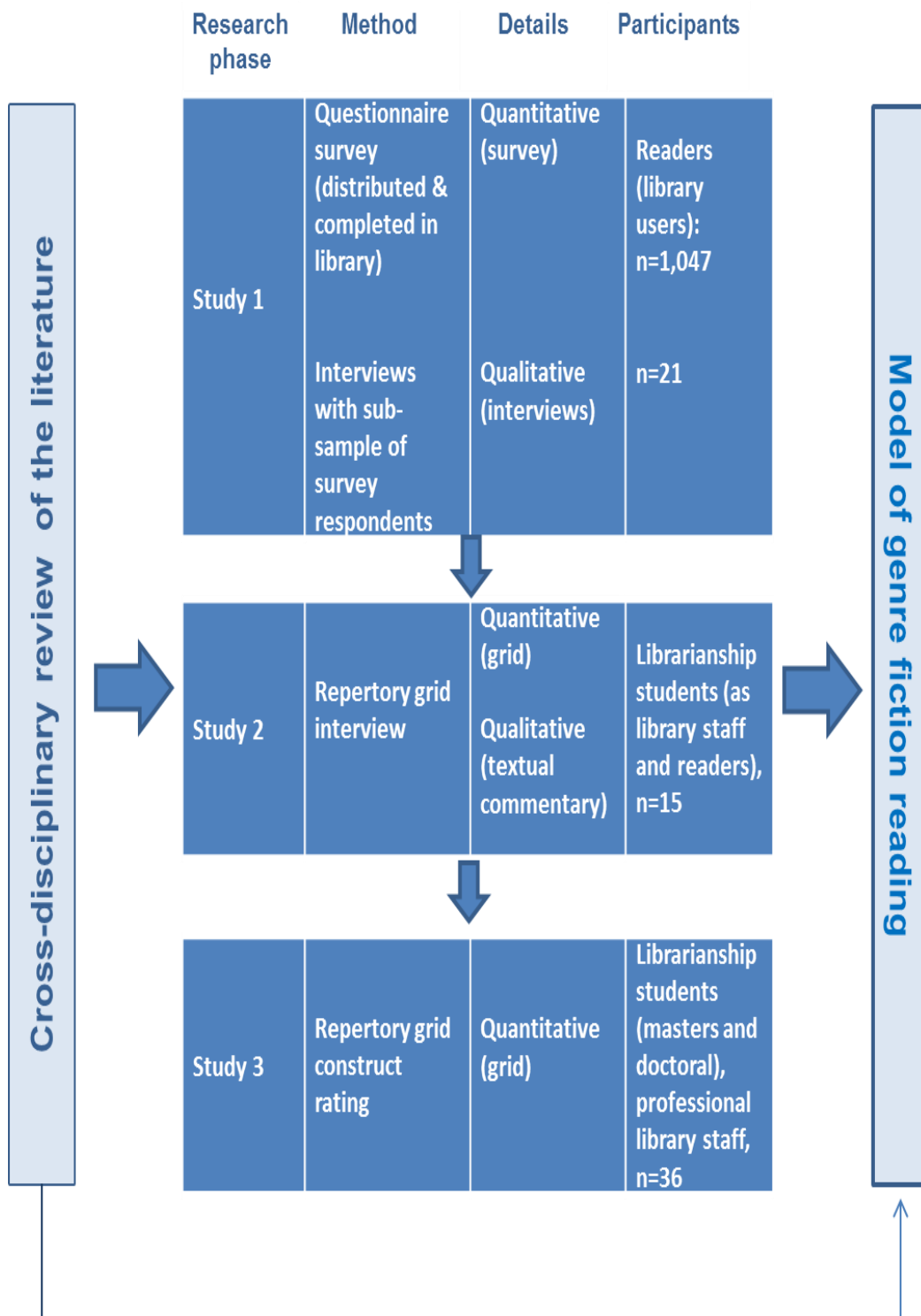
The research approach and methods used in each of the four studies in this thesis are briefly summarised below, in Table 3.2. A detailed discussion of the design and implementation of these methods is given in the relevant study chapters. The sequential, mixed methods design is such that the literature review and the three studies in combination (**Chapters 4, 5, 6**) enable the development of a *model of genre fiction reading*, showing those factors (individual, textual, library-related, societal) which influence an

individual's intention to read a minority ethnic fiction book. The Discussion (**Chapter 7**) presents the model, and shows how it can be applied.

The sequence of the methods was important to the overall design of the thesis: the findings and limitations of the first, quantitative study directly informed the development of the second, qualitative study, the data for which then formed the framework for the third and final quantitative study.

Sections **3.4.1** and **3.4.2** will briefly describe each of the main research methods used in the thesis.

Figure 3.1 Summary of research design



3.4.1 Review of the literature

An initial cross-disciplinary review of the literature was undertaken prior to the studies outlined in the table above, and was continued on an ongoing basis throughout the research. As Bryman (2012) observes, any literature review conducted before data collection should be regarded as provisional, suggesting that the researcher ‘may want to make quite substantial revisions...towards the end of writing up [his or her] work’ (p.100). Given the length of time between the start and completion of the present thesis, this was particularly important to ensure that the thesis was consistently informed by recent research in the field.

As previously mentioned in the Introduction (Chapter 1), the thesis was informed by Henderson’s (1941) Supply-Demand model, investigating both the extent to which minority ethnic fiction is made available to its readers (the *supply*), and the extent to which it is required by all agencies in the supply chain (the *demand*). The main focus of the literature review is on the first of these, given the lack of previous research on the second, although an initial exploration is made of the readership of minority ethnic fiction.

Monographs, published articles, reports and other publications were consulted from disciplines including Library and Information Science, Social Psychology, Sociology, Cultural Studies and English Literature. This review of literature relating to the supply, promotion and readership of minority ethnic fiction has facilitated a theoretical foundation for the empirical research under the following themes:

- The nature and profile of minority ethnic fiction
- Professional attitudes held towards minority ethnic fiction, and the social and cultural contexts in which its provision is made
- The nature of the public library service (and its materials) in a culturally diverse society
- The supply, provision and promotion of minority ethnic fiction
- The readership of minority ethnic fiction.

3.4.2 Summary of empirical research methods used in the thesis

The first empirical study was designed to collect data from a population of public library users in the East Midlands, in order to understand the demographic profiles and reading habits of the readers of different genres. A large-scale, quantitative questionnaire was necessary in order to collect representative profiling data, and this was distributed using a stratified sampling approach to a total of 1,150 readers in 16 experimental libraries and five control libraries within the nine participating local authorities (1,047 valid responses were received: see **4.4.6** for a full account of the sample population).

Although mainly quantitative, the first study also had a qualitative element, with brief semi-structured interviews conducted with a purposive subsample (n=21) of the questionnaire respondent population. As explained in **4.5.1**, those who had stated in the questionnaire that they were willing to be interviewed (n=333) were then filtered according to whether they were from one of the sixteen experimental libraries (n=255), then whether they belonged to the two youngest age groups from the questionnaire, i.e. 16-19 and 20-39 (n=63). This group of 63 was then further refined by cross-tabulating 5 additional variables (gender, age, participating library, nature of local community, predominant class and ethnicity of community), resulting in a total of 21 respondents.

The large-scale nature of the first study had not facilitated an in-depth understanding of the nature of the concepts underlying different reader 'types', so for the second study it was necessary to adopt a qualitative approach in order to generate a series of perceived characteristics. This was achieved by using the repertory grid technique, an established method from the discipline of Social Psychology. Interestingly, given the pragmatic paradigm underpinning this thesis, the repertory grid has been associated with both quantitative and qualitative research. The present author's view is that it is primarily a qualitative method, in that the constructs elicited from the process comprise entirely qualitative data, but of course the ratings of those constructs will in turn generate quantitative data, from which 'patterns, themes and categories' (Marsden & Littler, 2000, pp.829-830)

will emerge. A purposive and essentially strategic method was employed in order to reach the most relevant sample population, i.e. those for whom there was an anticipated relevance of the elements (fiction genres) and concepts (fiction reading) contained within the study, within the overall context of librarianship. The repertory grid interview is a time-consuming and demanding process for both participant and researcher, and the sample sizes will necessarily be quite small. The 42 students on the MA Librarianship programme in the relevant academic year (2007-8) were invited to participate, and 15 agreed to do so, giving an overall response rate of 35.71%.

Having gained an understanding of the reader constructs, and of the values and attitudes underpinning them, the third and final study returned to quantitative methods in order to test the capacity of the elicited constructs to differentiate between the readers of different fiction genres. Whereas in the previous study participants were asked to elicit their own constructs before rating them in the repertory grid, the third study used a number of provided constructs which were then rated by the new sample population. Data were collected from an additional population which included the original 15 participants of the second study, and 21 further participants. As was the case for the previous study, a purposive sampling method was used, with the specific intention of reaching a population similar to that of the previous phase. The participants (n=36) therefore included the same 15 Masters students from the first study (n=15), 9 further Masters students from the following academic year (in which the third study was conducted), n=9, all doctoral public librarianship students in the Department of Information Studies during the academic year 2008-9 (n=3), members of the editorial board for the Public Library Journal (n=4), and a group of academic or research staff within the Social Sciences faculty (n=5) (see **6.3.1**).

3.5 Data analysis

Although a degree of overlap has been identified between quantitative and qualitative research (**3.1**), clearly the analysis of methods within the two approaches requires different techniques. At its simplest, the distinction between the two is that quantitative research will use numbers as the basic

unit for analysis, whereas qualitative research will use words. As Denscombe (2003, p.232) explains:

‘The obsession of quantitative approaches... is with generating data that are numerical, with transforming what is observed, reported or recorded into quantifiable units. On the other hand, qualitative research relies on transforming information from observations, reports and recordings into data in the form of the written word, not numbers.’

Although the precise means of data analysis will differ between the two approaches, the sources of information from which they are collected need not differ at all. In the present thesis, for example, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected using the same repertory grid technique (Studies 2 and 3).

As previously argued, the complementary and corroboratory aspects of the qualitative and quantitative data have arguably enhanced the overall research design and analysis, by enabling the exploration of multiple issues from different perspectives, and by comparing one dataset to another. Adopting the ‘complementarity’ approach as described in **3.2**, it was decided that certain research issues could only be effectively explored using qualitative research, and others using only quantitative research. The design and implementation of the quantitative and qualitative methods used in the present thesis has taken into account the primary distinctions between, and advantages of, each of the two methodological approaches. These are summarised in simple form in the table below:

Table 3.2 Summary of quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis

Quantitative research	Data collection methods	Qualitative research	Data collection methods
Analysis of numerical data	Survey of reading habits (Study 1) Personal construct ratings (Study 3)	Analysis of the written or spoken word	Literature review Interviews with library users (Study 1) Repertory grid interview (Study 2)
Comparisons and correlations of numerical data		Descriptive, detailed description of research subjects	
Larger-scale analysis		Smaller-scale, in-depth investigation	

The following two sections describe in further detail the specific analysis of the quantitative (3.4.1) and qualitative (3.4.2) data used in this thesis.

3.5.1 The statistical analysis of quantitative data

As illustrated in Figure 3.1 and Table 3.2 above, quantitative and qualitative methodological approaches were used in this mixed methods thesis in order to investigate different aspects of the research.

In both Studies 1 and 3, basic descriptive statistics were used in order to draw out certain key data, such as the demographic details of the sample population, or the genre choice of research participants. These were of value in providing valuable contextual details, but it was clear that more in-depth statistical analyses would enable further interpretation of the data, and would increase the generalisability of conclusions drawn. In doing so, as Denscombe (2003, p.251) states, the researcher can ‘move beyond individual interpretations of the data towards some more *universal criteria* for assessing key facets of the data’.

In the first study, a large-scale survey (n=1,047) was undertaken, which generated a body of quantitative data regarding the reading choices and attitudes of a large population of readers. These were then statistically analysed using non-parametric (or ‘distribution-free’) tests, as the data collected in Study 1 were not normally distributed but were nominal and binary, i.e. had only a ‘yes’/ ‘no’ response, without a range of possible responses. As explained in **4.6.1**, the chi-square test for independence enables the researcher to establish how confident she can be that a relationship exists between two categorical, nominal variables in the sample population, for example male and female respondents. For analyses with more than two categories such as for minority ethnic fiction reading choices and age, a Pearson chi-square test was used. Where the variables had only two categories – resulting in a 2 by 2 table – the correction value Yates’ Correction for Continuity was also used, to compensate for any overestimation of the Pearson chi-square value.

In the third study, the construct ratings were analysed using a wider range of statistical tests than had been the case for the first study. As explained in **6.4**, the findings reported in Chapter 6 are also based on non-parametric tests: although the distribution of the Likert scale-based data is spread more widely than had been the case with the binary data of the first study – and, as shown in 6.4, have been analysed with parametric tests in a number of high-profile studies - it was felt that assumptions could not confidently be made regarding a normal distribution with ordinal data. Following the guidance of Pallant (2004) it was therefore decided to adopt a cautious approach and to report only non-parametric tests in the final version of the thesis. Interestingly, the parametric equivalent of each of the tests described below (given in parentheses) was also conducted and revealed very little difference, with all significant findings remaining as such.

- Wilcoxon signed ranks tests – to determine whether or not the mean ratings for a particular genre varied significantly from the midpoint of 4 on the Likert scale 1-7. (Parametric equivalent: paired samples t-test)

- Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient – to investigate any significant relationships between the constructs. (Parametric equivalent: Pearson product-moment correlation).
- Independent sample Mann-Whitney U tests – to investigate the extent to which ratings varied between two independent groups, e.g. those who had never worked in a public library and those who had some experience of this type of work (Parametric equivalent: independent sample t-test)

The findings of all statistical tests are presented in full in the relevant study chapters (Chapters 4 & 6).

3.5.2 The thematic analysis of qualitative data

The qualitative data collected for this research (primarily for Study 2) were analysed using *template analysis*. This form of analysis, also known as *thematic analysis*, is a widely used approach in qualitative research, and although it has been applied to work of a positivist perspective (Miles and Huberman, 1994), it is also felt to be equally appropriate for research adopting a more constructivist position such as that of the present thesis wherein, as King (2004, p.256) suggests, ‘...the researcher assumes that there are always multiple interpretations to be made of any phenomenon, which depend upon the position of the researcher and the context of the research.’ In fact, the present author would agree with Bazeley (2013) and Kvale and Brinkmann (1996) that the main issue with interpreting qualitative data is to derive meaning rather than to discover a particular, positivist ‘truth’ and, as Gorman and Clayton (2005) suggest, to bring ‘order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data’ (p.206). Similarly, Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as involving ‘the searching across a data set...to find repeated patterns of meaning’ (p.86), and Charmaz (2001) describes coding as the link between data collection and an explanation of their meaning.

A code, defined by Saldaña (2013), is ‘a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data’ (p.3).

Thematic analysis involves the coding of what can be a large body of text into a series of conceptual themes which are then clustered to produce broader categories which can themselves be reduced as many times as necessary to form subordinate categories. The process of analysis continues with the reading and re-reading of the data to enable the modification, deletion or addition of these codes (themes), until the researcher is satisfied that he or she has identified the most relevant primary and subordinate themes which represent the original dataset as fully as possible. The intention is that the broader, primary codes provide a useful overview of the themes contained in the data, whereas the more specific, subordinate codes enable more detailed differentiations to be made both within and between cases (King, 2004).

A further point regarding coding is that thematic analysis facilitates not only hierarchical coding (as described above), but also parallel coding, which involves the classifying of the same piece of data within two or more different codes. Whereas this would clearly not be appropriate for positivist research, it is felt to be potentially helpful in work of a constructivist perspective, where multiple interpretations of the same data are possible. As will be explored in **5.8.3**, this approach is particularly useful in the analysis of repertory grid constructs containing multiple aspects ('combined constructs'), of which a number were perhaps inevitably collected in the second study.

Although computer software can be used to effectively sort and retrieve coded text, equally common is to conduct a straightforward 'code count' which is very similar to quantitative or basic content analysis (Morgan, 1993; Crabtree and Miller, 1999), and involves the simple frequency count of code occurrences as a means of identifying key areas for the analysis. This latter approach has been adopted for the present thesis (see **5.8** onwards). However, it must be noted that a frequency count generally means, as Crabtree and Miller (1999, p.169) suggest, that 'codes with a large number of segments become the focus of the analysis and are used to make connections'. Whereas this may be entirely appropriate in other research cases, the present thesis uses as part of its framework personal

construct theory, which as its name suggests centres on the individual, and not the aggregated response. As explained in further detail in 5.8.4, a pragmatic decision has therefore been taken in the present thesis to aggregate data to a certain extent as above, while maintaining an interest in range as well as frequency.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.78) argue that thematic analysis provides a ‘rich and detailed, yet complex, account of the data’. Yet a potential limitation of using thematic analysis is that certain data can be ‘missed’ in the qualitative coding process, and further that the researcher ‘runs the danger of not looking beyond the codes’ (Crabtree and Miller, 1999, p.177). The design of the present thesis has taken these potential errors into account, by including a quantitative, statistical element to the data analysis, both in the second and (primarily) the third studies.

3.6 Establishing the reliability and validity of the data

3.6.1 Quantitative data

In quantitative research, the term ‘reliability’ relates to the stability of the measures used, and whether each item of data collected is measured consistently. The ‘validity’ of a study is usually interpreted as measurement validity, in other words whether or not the measures are accurate. Examples for either reliability or validity from each of the three studies are given below.

In the first study construct validity was examined by looking at the relationship between the item ‘What type of books would you *usually* borrow from the library?’ and the items ‘During your visit to the library *today*, what type(s) of book were you looking for?’, and ‘In the following list), are there any types of book that you would *not* consider reading?’ This enabled the researcher to consider the convergent validity of the measures that formed the basis of the analysis, from which a pattern of reading behaviour was starting to emerge (see also 4.6.2 and 4.6.4).

In the second study, an academic colleague from another department within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield was asked to

code the list of 128 constructs, using the initial set of 29 themes but without seeing first how they were rated by the researcher (see also 5.8.2). This is an example of a test of inter-rater (or inter-coder) reliability, which Bryman (2012) defines as ‘the degree to which two or more individuals agree about the coding of an item’ (p.712).

The third and final study used the intraclass correlation to examine inter-rater reliability, in this case to measure the reliability of participant ratings of elicited constructs. This test was used to give a more precise measurement of agreement – the extent to which participants rated each construct similarly – than would have been possible with only the means of construct ratings (see also 6.4.4).

3.6.2 Qualitative data

The concepts of reliability and validity have different implications in research with a qualitative element than in entirely quantitative research. The primary focus of quantitative research will inevitably be on the measurement of certain phenomena, whereas this will not be of particular concern to the wholly qualitative researcher. Guba and Lincoln (1994, in Bryman, 2012) develop this idea and argue that the concepts of reliability and validity simply should not be applied to qualitative research, as the criteria ‘presuppose that a single absolute account of social reality is feasible’ (p.390).

However, in an attempt to provide an appropriate framework for the present thesis which contains elements of both quantitative and qualitative research, the advice can be taken of previous researchers, who advocate a reduced focus on measurement issues, and instead that concepts such as generalisability should be considered (Bryman, 2012). As Mason (1996, p.21) argues, these revised concerns are ‘different kinds of measures of the quality, rigour and wider potential of research, which are achieved according to certain methodological and disciplinary conventions and principles’. And in moving away from the more rigid, quantitative interpretations of reliability and validity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994, in Bryman, 2012, p.390) evaluate the

characteristics of qualitative research and propose alternative primary criteria by which it can be assessed, which they term 'trustworthiness'. These four related criteria are explored below, in the context of their relevance to the second study. Each maps on to criteria within quantitative research, as shown in parentheses.

1. *Credibility* (internal validity) – The credibility of research largely depends on the extent to which it is conducted according to conventions of good practice, and that findings are fed back to those who were studied, in order to confirm that the researcher has correctly understood their social world. Often referred to as respondent validation, this is a primary concern in the design and administration of the thesis, as explored within individual study chapters.
2. *Transferability* (external validity) – Although not inevitably, qualitative research is often concerned with smaller sample populations than its quantitative counterpart. The question of transferability, in other words the potential application of the findings to other contexts, is a particular concern in establishing the overall validity of the research. Bryman (2012, p.390) proposes that qualitative findings 'tend to be oriented to the contextual uniqueness and significance of the aspect of the social world being studied', but others recommend that a more detailed account of the context - or 'thick description' - can provide the reader with sufficient data to consider the transferability of the findings (Geertz, 1973; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).
3. *Dependability* (reliability) – For Guba and Lincoln (1994) the concept of 'dependability' is strongly related to auditing, in that the researcher should maintain clear records of all phases of the research process and be prepared to subject these records to scrutiny by appropriate people. Ford (2004, p.1169) agrees that 'an essential defining criterion of research is that it is open to, and bears, scrutiny'. In Study 2, for example, full transcripts of repertory grid

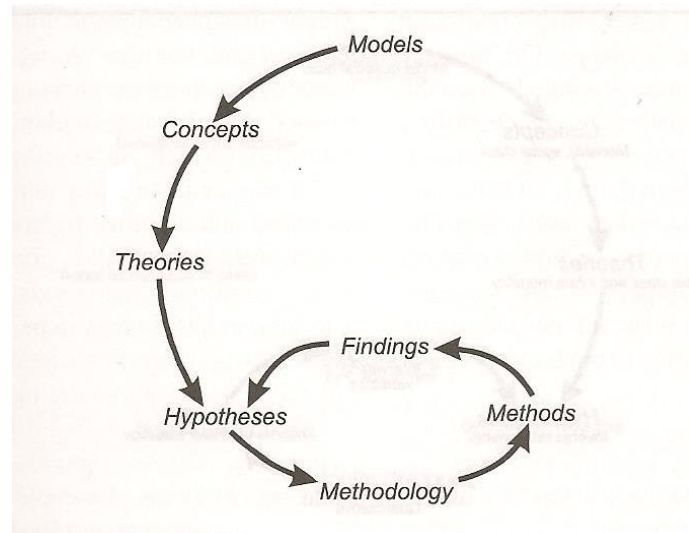
interviews were fed back to one third of participants, and questions asked of them regarding the way in which the research was conducted (see **5.7.13** for further details).

4. *Confirmability* (objectivity) – The fourth and final criterion is also linked to the conduct of the researcher and the issue of scrutiny: can it be demonstrated that he or she ‘has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to sway the conduct of the research...’ (Bryman, 2012, p.391)? Ford (2004, pp.1180-1181) notes that the researcher should ensure that appropriate scrutiny is brought to bear to expose and, as far as possible, empirically test...our own implicit assumptions and methodological tautologies where these occur...’. As explored above (**3.2**), the present author is aware of the extent to which her own background and experience could affect the research process, in particular in her role as a white researcher, and has taken a number of steps to limit this. In the second study, for example, the respondent validation phase is again an example of the way in which these issues have been taken into account, and a means of ensuring that the participants have an opportunity to assess the overall validity of the research.

3.7 The role of the model in the research process

As stated in **3.3**, the three empirical studies of this research have been designed to facilitate the development of a model of influence, showing those factors which influence an individual’s intention to read a minority ethnic fiction book. In an exploration of research terminology, Silverman (in Seale, 2006, p.52) describes the model as ‘an overall framework for looking at reality’, and suggests that it tells us ‘what reality is like and the basic elements it contains.’ Presenting in diagrammatic form the different levels of analysis involved in the research process and how each relates to the others, he proposes that the researcher looks first at models in the appropriate field, from which concepts are then derived in order to define the research question, or problem. (S)he would then have the tools with which to develop the specific theoretical framework and hypotheses for the empirical research, as shown in **Figure 3.2** below:

Figure 3.2 ‘Levels of analysis’. (Silverman, in Seale, 2006, p.53).



Silverman’s diagram implies that models, concepts and theories develop in a linear fashion, while hypotheses, methodology, methods and findings are part of a cyclical ‘feedback mechanism’ (ibid., p.53) via which hypotheses can eventually be modified. However, research can be regarded as a cyclical and iterative process, one which could begin with a consideration of different frameworks, or models, but which could equally go on to develop revised versions not only of hypotheses, but also of the models themselves. These revised models could then be used as a starting point to inform the development of new concepts, theories and hypotheses in future empirical research. This thesis has been structured with this approach in mind, and each individual study designed to reveal certain factors from which a new model can emerge.

This perception of research as a cyclical, rather than linear, process is generally in line with the viewpoint of authors such as Klein and Zedeck (2004), Weick (1989) and Bourgeois (1979). Yet for such authors even this approach can be limited in terms of facilitating the development of new theoretical perspectives, as theory is not necessarily generated from sequential thinking, but often from a more ‘simultaneous parallel processing’ of ideas (Weick, 1989, p.519). It is for this reason that this thesis regards the development of the model not as a simple conclusion to the research – or solution to the problem - but instead as one of the

processes via which to illuminate and make sense of the subject under investigation.

Samuels & Kamil (1998) argue that a good model always has three important characteristics, namely that it can summarise the past, can help us to understand the present, and that it can predict the future. This suggested structure has been used in devising the model for this thesis. The first step was therefore to review previous models and their components (2.7.1), in order to determine those key findings which would help to build the new version; the second step to focus on the essential aspects of those findings in order to present the new model clearly, showing how each component functions and interrelates (7.6) and the third step is to demonstrate how the model can be applied in practice (7.10).

3.8 Summary of methodological approach

In summary, a multi-method approach has been adopted for this research, and a pragmatic, or ‘technical’ approach to the research design and implementation has been taken, which includes elements of both triangulation and complementarity. In doing so, the researcher acknowledges the potential value of fusing qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to more effectively achieve the aims and objectives of this thesis.

Chapter 4

Study 1: an evaluation of the *black bytes*

Black British fiction promotion

Chapter overview

The first study is an evaluation of a Black British fiction promotion, conducted within nine public library authorities in the East Midlands in 2003. A general survey of the reading habits and attitudes of library users was conducted, consisting of a quantitative questionnaire and subsequent qualitative, semi-structured interviews with a sample of the overall population. The survey was methodologically interesting in its focus on both positive and negative reading choices, and an exploration is made of previous attitudinal studies, and of the measures taken to address their findings within this study. The research findings are then presented, and appropriate statistical analyses included with the qualitative data. The survey findings were not only analysed per individual respondent, but also in terms of community type, predominant local ethnicity, and predominant local class. A further analysis was made of the impact of the black bytes intervention, by investigating the variance in data between the first and second distributions of the survey. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the contribution and limitations of the study, and how the latter will be addressed in subsequent studies.

4.1 *black bytes*: the research context

black bytes was a public library fiction promotion of fifty titles (in the first instance) written in the English language by BME authors, in particular those of a Black British background. The original book list for the promotion was devised at a training day (12.09.02) for library staff across the East Midlands region who were intending to install the *black bytes* promotion (see **Appendix 1a** for book list). As an intervention it aimed to increase, using reader development methods, the readership of Black British fiction by both minority and majority communities. The term ‘Black British’ is defined for this purpose as identifying an author of African-Caribbean or African heritage, living in Britain. The promotion was developed in 2002 as part of the three-year EMERALD [East Midlands Reader and Library Development] initiative, funded by each of the nine East Midlands public library authorities (see below) and the Arts Council East Midlands, and

managed by Opening the Book Limited, a UK-based reader development agency.

Van Riel (Director of Opening the Book Limited) and Fowler (in Stewart, 1996, p.1.02) state that promotion is ‘the key to helping the majority of borrowers who don’t know what they want find something they are willing to try’. Train (2003) suggests that there are two main approaches to reader development, i.e. the passive and active approaches. The former takes into account that some people prefer to be left alone in their choice of reading materials, ‘enjoying the solitary and serendipitous pursuit of browsing’ (Towey, 2001, p. 135). This does not mean that they would not necessarily appreciate the intervention of the library staff, who can use a promotion such as *black bytes* to make ‘unspoken’ suggestions using such ideas as pre-selected displays, groups or highlighted selections of texts, presentations of staff or reader comments about a particular book. Readers then have the freedom to accept or reject a title on display.

The target audiences of the *black bytes* promotion were described in 2002 by Van Riel as follows:

‘people who think books by Black writers are not for them;
people who think books by Black writers are all the same;
people who don't know where to start with Black British writing;
people who are not aware of the full range of Black British writing
(this includes Black readers)’(p.1).

The nine East Midlands public library authorities are given below, and a representative from each of these formed the project advisory group:

1. Derby City Council (Authority A)
2. Derbyshire County Council (Authority B)
3. Leicester City Council (Authority C)
4. Leicestershire County Council (Authority D)
5. Lincolnshire County Council (Authority E)
6. Northamptonshire County Council (Authority F)
7. Nottingham City Council (Authority G)

8. Nottinghamshire County Council (Authority H)
9. Rutland County Council (Authority J).

The *black bytes* promotion was launched in 2003 in 16 public libraries throughout the East Midlands region. These libraries (hereafter, the ‘experimental’ libraries) were selected by the Project Manager and the advisory group, as ‘those libraries that haven’t taken part in this kind of promotion before’ (British Council, 2007).

The author was employed by Opening the Book Ltd. to devise a means of evaluating the promotion, according to her own design but always in consultation with the project advisory group. This chapter therefore presents relevant findings of that evaluation and of related research conducted by the author in 2003 (Train, 2003a; Train, 2003b), with further analysis conducted later, for the purpose of this thesis.

4.2 Study 1 aim and objectives

The overall aim of Study 1 was to conduct a general survey of the reading habits and attitudes of library users in the East Midlands region, with a particular focus on the Black British and British Asian genres. Although the titles within the promotion itself were uniquely Black British, the focus of the study was expanded to include British Asian authors writing in English, in order to broaden the investigation of attitudes towards British minority ethnic fiction.

Within the above stated aim, the research had the following objectives:

1. To devise and analyse a brief reading habit survey, to be distributed at issue points in one library in each of the nine participating local authorities prior to, and towards the end of, the installation of the *black bytes* promotion.
2. To interview a sample of respondents to obtain further information concerning their reading habits and preferences, and to investigate perceptions of the *black bytes* promotion.

3. To repeat points 1 and 2 in a sample of control (i.e. non-experimental) libraries.
4. To statistically compare the impact of the promotion in different types of libraries, i.e. in rural/suburban/urban areas, in different minority ethnic communities, and in different socio-economic communities.

4.3 Factors affecting the research

As stated above, the *black bytes* promotion featured only titles written by BME authors. As all titles were originally written in the English language, a key objective of the project was to enable all English-speaking library users to borrow and enjoy the books, whatever their cultural background, thereby developing their own reading choices and habits. This is reflected in Van Riel's definition of reader development:

‘Reader development means active intervention to: increase people’s confidence and enjoyment of reading, open up reading choices, offer opportunities for people to share their reading experience, raise the status of reading as a creative activity’. (Opening the Book, 2014)

The requested focus of the original evaluation was on the impact of the *black bytes* promotion on the reader. However, with the above definition in mind and in order to reduce the likelihood of conducting too narrow a study, the author (in consultation with the project advisory group) decided to broaden the focus of the evaluation from Black British fiction alone to a wider range of library genres, for three main reasons:

1. to enable a broader investigation of reading choices, and factors that may affect these choices;
2. to enable the comparison of readers’ attitudes towards different minority ethnic fiction genres and, in turn, to compare these with attitudes towards a wider range of genres.
3. to hopefully reach a broader and larger sample: given the perception in the literature that there is such limited publishing and promotion of minority ethnic fiction (Alexander, 1982; Crow and Main, 1995; Pauli, 2006; Sylge, 1997), one concern was that fewer people would be interested in completing a survey with questions focusing entirely

on minority ethnic fiction – or would feel sufficiently knowledgeable to do so.

This decision to increase the focus of the research is therefore reflected in the aim and objectives given above.

4.4 Research Method 1: questionnaire survey of reading habits

A predominantly cross-sectional approach was taken to the design of a questionnaire survey of reading habits and attitudes, distributed to 1,150 respondents (see **Appendix 1b**). Cross-sectional instruments enable the collection of a quantifiable body of data pertaining to multiple cases, in connection with multiple variables. In this way, patterns of association – or the relationships between variables – can be detected and explored (Bryman, 2012). The findings of this approach are presented in section **4.6**.

As stated in **4.2**, the survey was designed to be distributed at library issue points at two separate time-points, i.e. prior to, and towards the end of, the installation of the *black bytes* promotion. This was cross-sectional at the individual respondent level (as all potential respondents were asked not to complete the questionnaire at Time-point 2 if they had already completed the version at Time-point 1, see **4.4.6**), but also longitudinal at the library level (as data are collected on two occasions from the same library). This is an acceptable form of social research design, as its form in this area of research will usually be ‘an extension of survey research based on self-completion questionnaire or structured interview research within a cross-sectional design’ (Bryman, 2012, p.63). The findings of this second approach are presented in section **4.7**, and a summary of the two approaches is shown in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1. Summary of longitudinal and cross-sectional questionnaire approaches

LONGITUDINAL	Experimental libraries	Time-point 1	428
		Time-point 2	377
	Control libraries	Time-point 1	124
		Time-point 2	118
CROSS-SECTIONAL			1,047

4.4.1 Justification of the questionnaire method

The main potential weakness of a questionnaire is that its format necessitates the interpretation of the questions by the respondent him/herself, whereas a structured interview would enable the interviewer to clarify both question meaning and completion guidelines. However, given the size and geographical distribution of the study population (see 4.5.3 below), it was felt that a questionnaire survey would be more appropriate for this study (Kumar, 2005). Although a questionnaire can be designed for qualitative or quantitative research, the format lends itself to the generation of large quantities of quantitative data that can then be statistically analysed. Furthermore, given the potential breadth of coverage of a questionnaire, it is more likely than other methods to generate data from a representative sample of the overall population (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002).

The decision was taken not to post the questionnaire, but to administer it via the participating and control libraries (see 4.5.3). As the questionnaire was so brief, respondents were asked not to take them home, but to complete them while in the library. The advantage of this form of distribution was that it enabled the library staff to explain the purpose of the study to potential respondents, or to answer questions regarding the information sheet. Although this method can be time-consuming – requiring input from the researcher in training library staff, and from the library staff in

administering the questionnaire – it can facilitate a very high response rate (Kumar, 2005), as was indeed the case with this study.

Two further issues related to questionnaire surveys need to be considered when designing a research study, namely the accuracy of the responses and the ‘depth’ of the data collected. Resource constraints will mean that it is unlikely for the researcher to verify the accuracy of responses provided, and the format tends to prevent the collection of particularly detailed data on the topic under investigation (Denscombe, 2003). In an attempt to address each of these issues, the study was designed to include a follow-up interview with a sample of the respondent population (see 4.5).

4.4.2 The questionnaire format

The above issues having been taken into account, a brief reading habit survey was devised and distributed by library staff at issue points in a total of 16 libraries in the nine participating authorities before, and a time after, the installation of the *black bytes* promotion. This survey would only require respondents to provide their names and contact details if they were happy to be contacted at a later stage for a telephone interview. The first distribution of the survey took place for 3-21 February 2003 inclusive, and the second from 12-30 May inclusive, i.e. each for three full working weeks.

The questionnaire consisted of five questions:

1. During your visit to the library *today*, what type(s) of book were you looking for?
2. Where did you look for these books?
3. What type of books would you *usually* borrow from the library?
4. (In the following list), are there any types of book that you would *not* consider reading?
5. What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books?

Following each question there was a series of options, and respondents were asked to tick as many as were relevant to them. For each question, measures were scored as 1 for a positive response (a ‘tick’), and 2 for a negative

response (a box left blank). For Questions 1, 3 and 4 respondents were given as options the same list of 13 genres (excluding ‘Other’), the names of which were the result of a series of discussions between the researcher and the project group, and were agreed to represent a wide range of the stock available in a typical library in the East Midlands:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Science fiction/fantasy | 8. Crime fiction |
| 2. Gay/lesbian fiction | 9. ‘Chick Lit’ e.g. Lisa Jewell, Jane Green, Marian Keyes |
| 3. Black British fiction | 10. Asian fiction in English* |
| 4. Family sagas | 11. Audio books (books on tape/CD) |
| 5. Non-fiction | 12. Literary fiction |
| 6. Romance fiction | 13. War/spy/adventure |
| 7. ‘Lad Lit’ e.g. Nick Hornby, Irvine Welsh, Mike Gayle | |

*The term ‘Asian fiction’ is frequently used in this and subsequent studies as an abbreviation of the full term ‘Asian fiction in English’, and does not refer to fiction written in South Asian languages.

For Questions 2 and 5, respondents were given five and nine possible variables (excluding ‘Other’) respectively, as below:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| <i>Question 2</i> | <i>Question 5</i> |
| 1. Displays of new books | 1. Display in the library |
| 2. The returns trolley | 2. I saw it/them on the returns trolley |
| 3. The library catalogue | 3. Internet |
| 4. Other displays or promotions | 4. Newspaper/magazine/TV review |
| 5. On the shelf | 5. I saw it in a bookshop |
| | 6. Library staff recommendation |
| | 7. Friends’ recommendation |
| | 8. Current events |
| | 9. ‘Prizewinners’ e.g. Orange prize, Man Booker prize |

In the survey itself, variables for each question were listed randomly in order to emphasise to the respondent that all choices were equally significant, and that no judgment was implicit in the survey. Random listing was also intended to remove any potential ordering effects: Krosnick and

Alwin (1987), for example, found that responses to their study of adult values for child qualities were ‘determined in part by the order in which response choices are offered to respondents’, to the extent that ‘placing an item among the first three on the list increased the likelihood that it would be chosen as one of the three most important qualities...’ (p.215).

4.4.3 The assessment of attitudes

The survey was specifically designed to focus both on positive and negative reading choices, as it was felt that an exploration of attitudes towards particular genres should investigate not only respondents’ preferences, but also their potential prejudices. As Van Riel states in her observation of the data, ‘Black British fiction, Asian fiction and gay/lesbian fiction cover a huge range of kinds of reads and have no literary qualities or characteristics exclusively in common with each other. What’s at work here is not just a reading preference’ (Van Riel, 2003).

In devising the research instrument, previous studies were consulted to ensure that an appropriate method was used. As it was the author’s intention for the study to explore both negative and positive attitudes towards particular genres, it was helpful to examine the work of Twomey (2003), who conducted a series of focus groups with members of existing reading groups, asking them to consider their attitudes and values towards fiction reading. Although her research focused on fiction reading in general, rather than considering specific genres, participants were asked if there was any type of fiction they would actively choose not to read, or any author whose work they deliberately avoided.

Also relevant to this research is Fiedler’s (1964) ‘Least Preferred Co-Worker’ scoring, which asks leaders first to think of a person with whom they worked that they would like least to work with again, and then to score the person on a range of scales between positive factors (friendly, helpful, cheerful, etc.) and negative factors (unfriendly, unhelpful, gloomy, etc.). On a scale of 1 to 8, respondents are asked to describe this person on a series of bipolar scales such as those given below:

Unfriendly 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Friendly
Uncooperative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Cooperative
Hostile 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Supportive
Guarded 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 Open

Three factors are then identified about the leader, the member and the task, as per the following categories:

- Leader-Member relations
- Task structure
- Leader's position-power.

This approach seeks to identify the underlying beliefs about people, in particular whether the leader sees others as positive or negative.

With reference to the present study, there is a similarity between Fiedler's approach and that of the reading habit survey. Asking respondents to consider the individual they would least like to work with requires a similar line of thought to considering a type of book they would not like to read, in other words to begin with a positive question (who you would like to work with, what you would like to read), and then to move to a negative question (who you would not like to work with, what you would not like to read).

On the other hand, Fiedler's model incorporates both positive and negative aspects at the same time (see examples of scales above), whereas the reading habit survey first asks an entirely positive question (what type of books would you usually borrow from the library?), then on the next line asks an entirely negative question (...are there any types of book that you would not consider reading?).

In previous studies the exploration of both positive and negative attitudes towards the same issue has tended to be conducted within the same measure, directly asking the research participant to give just one response to the question or statement. Ajzen (1988) describes this as 'direct assessment'

(p.8), and cites various examples of studies which used single item and multi-item measures ‘to ask respondents to report directly on their own attitudes or personality traits’ (p.8). For example, he gives the example of Lord et al. (1984) who, says Ajzen, ‘asked respondents to rate, on a 10-point scale, how likeable they found the typical homosexual’ (p.9). Ajzen suggests that the scale they developed could have looked as follows:

‘Homosexuals are:
 extremely likeable : ... : ...: ... : ... : ... : ... : ... : not at all likeable’ (p.9)

The most significant potential drawback of the single-item attitude measure is its reliability, with responses ‘leading to low correlations between repeated observations’ (p.10). It is therefore considered preferable to use multi-item measures.

A frequently used multi-item measure is the ‘semantic differential’ (Osgood et al, 1957). This consists of a set of bipolar evaluative adjective pairs, as illustrated below:

‘Homosexuals are:
 pleasant : ... : ...: ... : ... : ... : ... : ... : unpleasant
 harmful : ... : ...: ... : ... : ... : ... : ... : beneficial
 good : ... : ...: ... : ... : ... : ... : ... : bad’
 (Adapted from Ajzen, 1988, p.11)

As Ajzen proposes, ‘Direct measures of dispositions that rely on multiple items have fewer problems of reliability than single-item measures. Clerical mistakes and other incidental factors that affect the score on one item but not on the others will have little systematic impact on the overall score...the greater the number of items used...the more reliable the score will tend to be.’ (1988, p.12)

However, it is recognized that a weakness of these multi-item measures is that they are felt to ‘elicit relatively superficial responses’ (Ajzen, 1988, p.13). Participants who respond in a certain way to a simple checklist of terms as per a standard multi-item survey question, may feel that there may be particular situations in which they would not behave in the way stated.

With the present study, therefore, it was intended to develop a questionnaire that would firstly be straightforward and rapid to complete, and secondly would be accessible to as many library users as reasonably possible, whatever their age, gender, socio-economic or ethnic background.

4.4.4 Questionnaire design: standard and advanced measures

Taking this into account and acknowledging the above potential methodological limitation, a number of 'standard' and 'advanced' measures were taken in designing the instrument, details of which are given below.

Standard measures

1. The adoption of Basic Skills Agency (2006) guidelines for the creation of written text for a wide range of readers. The following issues relating to the design of a text were all considered: the quantity of white space on the page, the use of line spacing, font choice and size, use of upper and lower case, page layout and page breaks, paper choice and paper colour.
2. Consultation was undertaken with the advisory group regarding the most appropriate (widely understood) terms to use for book categories.
3. Optional respondent anonymity to maximize the accuracy of responses.
4. The survey was piloted on 33 respondents: see below.
5. Training was provided by Opening the Book and the author to all library staff involved in the distribution and collection of the survey, and to members of the senior management team.
6. An information sheet was made available to all respondents, with 2 separate information sheets (one for each phase) for all library staff

involved in the distribution and collection of the survey
(**Appendices 1c, 1d, 1e**).

Advanced measures

1. The original focus of the research was on the impact of the *black bytes* promotion on the reader. However, for the reasons explained in **4.3**, the decision was taken to give the evaluation a broader and more general focus, investigating people's reading choices, and the factors that may affect these choices.
2. The survey was distributed at issue points in 16 libraries in the nine participating authorities before, and at a time after, the installation of the *black bytes* promotion, in order to investigate its impact over time.
3. The survey was distributed twice to five control libraries, libraries that did not participate in the promotion, each in a different EMRALD authority. The aim of this was to avoid any anomalies in the findings of the evaluation, for example it could have been that other factors had influenced respondents' answers, factors that bore no relation to the promotion itself.
4. Questions 1 and 3 - *During your visit to the library **today**, what type(s) of book were you looking for?* and *What type of books would you **usually** borrow from the library?* - were designed to differentiate between 'today's visit' and 'a typical visit'. Presenting two possible cases in this way was intended to guide the respondents to think differently about the books that they have in their hand on that day, and those that they might usually choose. This reduces the likelihood of collecting the atypical response that may skew the results in some way.

4.4.5 Reading habit survey: pilot study

As Bell (1998) and Wisker (2001) suggest, it is always advisable to conduct a pilot study before finalizing and distributing any research instrument, whether qualitative or quantitative. This is both in order to verify that questions and instructions (where appropriate) are clear and will elicit useful data, and to ensure that the instrument as a whole functions well. This is particularly relevant for a self-completion questionnaire such as the reading habit survey for this study, as the researcher will not be available to provide support at the time of completion (Bryman, 2012).

A draft questionnaire was designed according to the Basic Skills Agency guidelines [see Standard Measures, point 1 above], and passed to the project advisory group for comment. Prior to distributing the questionnaire a pilot study was conducted, the purpose of which was to assess respondents' experiences of completing the questionnaire rather than to test the data collected. Participants were asked to give feedback on questionnaire content, design and structure.

The revised questionnaire instrument was distributed to the appropriate member of the advisory board in seven of the nine participating local authorities. Each was asked to randomly administer the survey to library users from libraries that had not been selected to participate in the *black bytes* evaluation. Bell (1998, p.84) claims that pilot research should be conducted on 'a group similar to the one that will form the population of your study', and certainly in this case it was hoped that the proposed method would ensure that pilot respondents would be from similar populations to the actual sample population. However, Bryman (2012, p.264) states that a pilot study should ideally not be conducted using 'people who might have been members of the sample that would be employed in the full study', and for this reason the pilot population was not taken from the libraries participating in the final survey.

Between three to six respondents from each local authority, selected at random by the librarian, took part in the pilot phase, being asked not only to

complete the survey but also to comment on its overall usability considering, for example:

- Clarity of instructions for questionnaire completion
- Effectiveness of overall structure of the questionnaire
- Clarity of individual questions (phrasing used)
- Level of complexity of individual questions
- Appropriateness of presentation (e.g. font size, spacing, etc.)
- Appropriateness of the information provided on the information sheet.

In total, 33 questionnaires were returned to the author for analysis (excluding 3 void), and appropriate changes were made to the form and content of the survey instrument. A summary of the main changes is given below:

- The Staff Information Sheet was revised to emphasise the need for respondents to complete the questionnaire on site, to avoid non-return.
- On the questionnaire itself, the tick boxes were moved slightly closer to the responses to avoid potential confusion across the two columns.
- The genre 'War/spy/adventure' was refined to 'War/spy', and the genre 'Gay fiction' was broadened to 'Gay/lesbian' fiction', as respondents felt that these were more appropriate and accurate descriptions of the subject matter.

4.4.6 Reading habit survey: sample population

A stratified sampling method was employed for the distribution of the survey, conducted during a three-week period in February 2003 (prior to the installation of the *black bytes* promotion), and May 2003 (following its installation) respectively. As Denscombe (2003, p.13) states, a stratified sample is one in which 'every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected *in relation to their proportion within the total population*'. The advantage of this form of sampling over entirely random

sampling is that the researcher has more control over the selection of the sample, so that it includes particular factors, and is thereby a more proportionate sample from which generalization should be easier (Denscombe, *ibid.*).

Each of the 16 libraries participating in the *black bytes* promotion (the ‘experimental’ libraries) was selected for both phases of the survey data collection, and a further five libraries – one from each of five of the nine participating local authorities – were selected as ‘control libraries’, in discussion with the project advisory group (see ‘Advanced Measure 3’, **4.4.4**). Using the stratified sampling approach, the control libraries were deliberately selected to represent populations comparable to those of the main survey sample, representing three of the four unitary authorities and two of the five non-metropolitan county authorities. The community profiles of these five libraries were also comparable to those of the experimental libraries, as shown in **Table 4** (below).

Following the selection of the 16 experimental libraries and of the five control libraries, staff in each of the 21 libraries were given either Staff Information Sheet 1 (for February 2003) or Staff Information Sheet 2 (for May 2003), which gave general guidance regarding the distribution of the survey, and explained the approach to take when distributing it to members of the public (**Appendices 1d, 1e**). These details had also been explained in a presentation given by the author at a Staff Training Day in January 2003 (Train, 2003c). In order to increase the validity of the data collection, both information sheets emphasised the importance of ensuring that all respondents were recruited voluntarily, and that nobody completed the questionnaire twice. In addition, staff were asked to give each potential respondent a Borrower Information Sheet, which gave a full description of the research process and its aims and objectives (**Appendix 1c**). No distinction was made between control and experimental libraries in this document, which made no direct reference to the *black bytes* promotion and described only the broader nature of the questionnaire, as follows:

‘The questionnaire is a brief survey of library users’ reading habits and choices, containing five short questions which should only take a couple of minutes to answer. We would like to know what sort of books you like and don’t like to borrow from your public library, where in the library you look for them, and how you choose them.’

The period during which the questionnaire was distributed was strictly controlled, on each occasion. The Staff Training Day (cited above), the Staff Information Sheets and regular email correspondence with the author all reminded staff of the need to keep to the three-week distribution period (or a shorter period if all questionnaires were completed before then). This ensured that in February 2003 the respondents had not seen the *black bytes* promotion, and that in May 2003 they had potentially been exposed to it, thereby enabling an assessment of its impact. Staff were also requested to distribute the questionnaire at different times of the day, in an attempt to include all user groups, such as working people and older people.

A total of 575 surveys were allocated to the nine participating library services for each phase of the study, giving a total allocated number of 1,150, as follows:

Table 4.2. Quantity of questionnaires issued per distribution in each of nine participating library services

Participating library service	Quantity of questionnaires issued per distribution	Total (for 2 distributions)
Derby City	50 + 25 control (2 libraries)	150
Derbyshire	25+25+25 control (3 libraries)	150
Leicester City	25+25+25 control (3 libraries)	150
Leicestershire	25+25 (2 libraries)	100
Lincolnshire	25+25 (2 libraries)	100
Northamptonshire	25+25+25 control (3 libraries)	150
Nottingham City	25+25+25 control (3 libraries)	150
Nottinghamshire	25+25 (2 libraries)	100
Rutland	50 (1 library)	100
Total number distributed		1150

As shown in **Table 4.3** below, of the 1,150 questionnaires distributed a total of 1,047 valid responses were received, 552 in February 2003 (Time-point 1) and 495 in May 2003 (Time-point 2). The response rates for each were 96.0% and 86.1% respectively (participating and control libraries combined), with an overall rate of 91.0%.

Table 4.3. Valid responses to reading habits survey, as distributed at 2 time-points

	Time-point 1 (response rate)	Time-point 2 (response rate)	Combined total (response rate)
Experimental libraries	428	377	805
Control libraries	124	118	242
Total	552/575 (96.0%)	495/575 (86.1%)	1,047/1,150 (91.0%)

Most surveys, however carefully they are developed and administered, will attract a certain rate of non-response, although opinions are divided as to 'expected' response rates: Bryman (2012, p.199) suggests that an 80% rate could be anticipated, whereas Denscombe (2003, p.20) states that a large-scale postal questionnaire survey may elicit only a 10-15% rate. How significant a problem is non-response to the researcher? For Moser and Kalton, 'non-response is a problem because of the likelihood – repeatedly confirmed in practice – that people who do not return questionnaires differ from those who do!' (1971, pp.267-8).

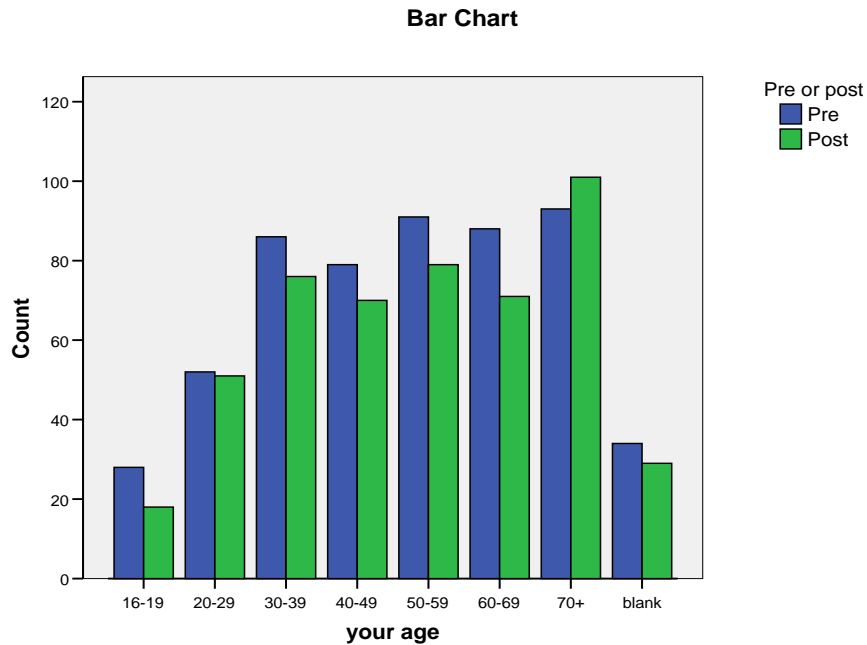
Certainly, higher response rates are generally valued because they inevitably increase the likelihood of obtaining balanced results. For this study, therefore, the high rate for each questionnaire is particularly encouraging, enhances the validity of the findings and enables us to gain a more representative view of the population than would otherwise have been possible.

A further issue in considering the appropriateness of a sample is that of its heterogeneity. Bryman suggests that 'the greater the heterogeneity of a population, the larger a sample will need to be' (2012, p.200). It would be reasonable to expect that the population for a study which, within a stratified sample, randomly recruits members of a public library service – open to all members of the public – would be fairly heterogeneous and representative of the population of public library users as a whole, however given the concerns raised in **3.2.1** this should by no means be automatically assumed. The large sample size and high response rate therefore compensate, to some extent, for these concerns. Further evidence as to the representative nature of the sample population is that national library use by gender at the time of the survey was predominantly female (CIPFA, 2002), and that older people (65+) were among the most frequent library users (Hawkins et al, 2001), as per the survey population.

Of the 1,047 respondents, 277 (26.4%) were male, 572 (54.6%) were female, and 198 (18.9%) chose not to state their gender. As **Figure 1** shows, there was a fairly similar number of respondents in each of the age groups

over 30 (slightly more in the 70+ group, the mode), and considerably fewer for the 16-19 and 20-29 groups.

Figure 4.1. Number of respondents within each age group of the survey



In order to collect further data pertaining to the nature of the survey sample, the project representative for each of the nine participating local authorities was asked to define each of the libraries participating in the *black bytes* evaluation (both control and participating) according to the following variables:

- The nature of the community (rural/urban/suburban)
- The predominant ethnicity of the community (White/Black/Asian/mixed)
- The predominant class of the community (middle class/working class/mixed) in which the library is situated.

Table 4.4. Number of survey libraries and valid responses (from each library) for each of the 3 variables ‘community type’, ‘class’, ‘ethnicity’

Community type	Number of survey libraries	Number of valid responses
Rural	3	192
Urban	10	457
Suburban	8	398
Total	21	1,047
Predominant community ethnicity	Number of participating libraries	Number of valid responses
White	16	811
Black	0	0
Asian	0	0
Mixed	5	236
Total	21	1,047
Predominant community class	Number of participating libraries	Number of valid responses
Working class	7	308
Middle class	5	260
Mixed	9	479
Total	21	1,047

Table 4.5. Number of control libraries and valid responses (from each library) for each of the 3 variables ‘community type’, ‘class’, ‘ethnicity’

Community type	Number of control libraries	Number of valid responses
Rural	0	0
Urban	3	144
Suburban	2	98
Total	5	242
Predominant community ethnicity	Number of control libraries	Number of valid responses
White	4	198
Black	0	0
Asian	0	0
Mixed	1	44
Total	5	242
Predominant community class	Number of control libraries	Number of valid responses
Working class	3	144
Middle class	0	0
Mixed	2	98
Total	5	242

4.4.7 Comparison of sample population to national census data

When the reading habits questionnaire was distributed, the most recent national census had been conducted in 2001. How did the sample population compare to the East Midlands regional Census population as a whole? The region as a whole comprises six regions, namely: Derbyshire (10 local councils), Leicestershire (9 local councils), Lincolnshire (8 local councils), Northamptonshire (8 local councils), Nottinghamshire (9 local councils) and Rutland (1 local council). Each of these regions was represented in the sample population for this study.

Gender

The Census (Office for National Statistics, 2003) recorded 4,172,174 residents in the East Midlands in 2001, of whom 49.1% (2,048,858) were male and 50.9% (2,123,316) were female. In this study, there were 26.5% (277) male and 54.6% (572) female respondents (the remaining 198 respondents chose not to state their gender). This difference is unsurprising: as stated above, women are statistically far more likely than men to use public libraries (CIPFA, 2002).

Age

The age of national Census and reading survey respondents can also be compared, as shown in **Table 4.6** below:

Table 4.6. Comparison of age bands of East Midlands Census respondents (2001) and reading habits survey respondents

Survey age band	East Midlands Census data		Reading habits survey data	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
16-19*	260,104	7.7	46	4.4
20-29	499,468	14.8	103	9.8
30-39	638,271	18.8	162	15.5
40-49	563,415	16.6	149	14.2
50-59	549,328	16.2	170	16.3
60-69	393,826	11.6	159	15.2
70+	484,201	14.3	194	18.5
Not stated	N/A	N/A	64	6.0
Totals	3,388,613	100.0	1047	100.0

* National census age range for this group is 15-19, not 16-19 as per reading habits survey.

The proportions for each age group are not particularly similar, with the exception of the 50-59 age group (16.2% in the census data, compared with 16.3% in the reading habits survey). In line with the previously mentioned comment made by Hawkins et al (2001) that older people are the most frequent public library users, a higher proportion of survey respondents fall into the three older age bands than those in the national Census.

Community type

In the East Midlands region, 29.5% of people were recorded as living in rural areas, with the remaining 70.5% of people living in ‘non-rural’, i.e. urban or suburban areas (Defra, 2004). In this study, three of the 21 libraries were classified as rural, i.e. a much lower 14.3% of the total. However, it is of course the case that more library buildings are situated in urban (and suburban) areas than in rural areas, which are often served only by a mobile library service.

Ethnicity

In the East Midlands, 93.5% of people were recorded in the 2001 census as 'white', a higher proportion than in England and Wales as a whole (91.3%). The largest minority ethnic groups were South Asian in origin (2.9%). This is comparable to the reading habits survey population, of which the majority of the 21 libraries (n=16) were classified as 'white', the remaining five as 'mixed'.

Class

Interestingly, Government research into regional deprivation found that the East Midlands has a similar number of regions in the 20% least deprived areas of England as in the 20% most deprived areas (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007). To some extent this is comparable to the survey population, in that seven of the communities of the 21 libraries were described as 'working class', five as 'middle class' and the remaining nine as 'mixed' (i.e. a combination of the two).

4.5 Research Method 2: interviews with library users

As discussed in 3.2, the methodology for this thesis comprised a multi-method approach, and the final element of the investigation was to conduct, in June-July 2003, a series of qualitative interviews of a sample of respondents to the reading habits survey, in order to elicit further information concerning their reading habits and preferences. As Wisker (2001, p.165) suggests, the interview can facilitate the collection of 'in-depth or [a] variety of responses following the broader information produced in a questionnaire'.

A commonly used technique for conducting 'systematic social inquiry', the interview is a means of generating a body of empirical data about aspects of the world in which we live. While different forms of interview exist, ranging from the unstructured, conversational format to the highly structured, pre-coded series of closed questions, many social scientists believe that all interviews are in some way 'interactional', in that the researcher will inevitably play an 'active' role in eliciting the information

from the interviewee (Holstein & Gubrium, in Silverman, 2006, pp.140-141). The role of the researcher and his or her impact on the research is felt to be a valid consideration for the present study, particularly given the issues explored in **3.2.2**. Efforts made by the author to avoid unnecessary bias in both the survey and the interview are described in the same section.

Taking the above issues into account, an interview instrument was devised (**Appendix 1f**), which sub-divided the issues for discussion into two areas, namely:

1. General reading choices (exploring the respondent's survey responses in more detail)
2. The *black bytes* promotion:
 - book promotions and/or displays in general
 - specific titles within the *black bytes* promotion.

Although the questionnaire was designed to avoid a sole focus on minority ethnic fiction (**4.3**), the interview included questions regarding the *black bytes* promotion in order to further understand its impact on the participants. As explained in **4.1**, this was a requirement of the author's original piece of work which has formed the basis for this first study.

In quantitative research, the format of interviews tends to be very structured, in order to facilitate the standardization of both questioning and of recording the responses to those questions, giving each respondent exactly the same interview stimulus as any other. In qualitative research, however, the interview format will be more flexible, allowing for more or less deviation from the original schedule and having a 'much greater interest in the interviewee's point of view' (Bryman, 2012, p.470).

It could be argued that the rigid format of the former can only reflect the concerns and agenda of the researcher, whereas the latter approach has the capacity to demonstrate a greater concern for the interviewee's opinions and perspectives, and is therefore more appropriate for this strand of the present research.

It was felt that the *semi-structured* interview would be the most appropriate means of conducting interviews for this study. With this approach, the interviewer has a clear list of issues to be addressed, yet he or she can be flexible in terms of the order in which topics are considered, and can allow the interviewee to explore his or her ideas and speak more widely on the issues raised than would be possible with a structured format. While the questions asked from interviewee to interviewee will be very similar, the interviewer can ask additional questions in response to the interviewee's comments (Denscombe, 2003; Bryman, 2012).

While conducting the interview, the researcher had a copy of the participant's completed questionnaire in front of her, so that the questions asked were directly related to the original responses, and so that the participant could be reminded of his or her original responses, where required. The first part of the interview used the structure of the questionnaire to frame the questions, under the following headings:

1. Books you usually borrow
2. Where you normally borrow your books from
3. Layout and display of books within your library
4. Books you do not like to read
5. The range of books in your library
6. Factors influencing choice of library books.

An example of such a question under the second heading ('Where you normally borrow your books from') is as follows:

'Bearing in mind the type of books that you say you usually borrow from the library, and the places from which you borrow them, would you tend to look in a particular area of the library for a particular type of book? For example, would you always choose your [example of fiction they gave] fiction from [example of location they gave]? [Prompt for reasons/explanations.]'

The second part of the interview instrument contained a number of open-ended elements which gave interviewees the opportunity to provide a more

detailed response to prior closed questions regarding book promotions and displays, including the *black bytes* promotion. Examples of such ‘combined’ questions are given below:

‘Have you noticed any new displays of books in your library recently? [closed] Please give details.[open]’

‘Did you borrow books from the *black bytes* promotion? [closed] If so, did you borrow any books that you perhaps wouldn’t normally borrow? [open] Why was this? [open]’

The potential disadvantage of this type of exploratory question is that the interviewer may fail to make a note of everything said, may embellish or even entirely misinterpret responses given. In order to reduce the likelihood of this occurring, questions of this kind were kept to a minimum, and all interviews were recorded and transcribed. However, given that an instrument consisting only of closed questions can itself fail to adequately offer the appropriate range of possible responses (Wisker, 2001, p.168; Bryman, 2012), it was felt that an appropriate combination of the two would result in a more effective means of data collection.

The findings of the 21 qualitative interviews with questionnaire respondents (presented below) served to explore aspects of the original survey data in more depth, in terms of the rationale for individual responses to specific questions. In addition, via an investigation of reasons for the non-selection of particular genres, and of respondents’ views of the *black bytes* promotion, they contributed to the broader issues under examination in this thesis overall, namely respondents’ attitudes towards minority ethnic fiction and its promotion.

4.5.1 Interview sample

The questionnaire survey asked participants to state if they were prepared to take part in a subsequent telephone interview to further explore their ‘reading habits and choice of books from the library’.

In order to select the most appropriate respondents, a purposive sampling method was devised. As Bryman suggests, ‘The goal of purposive sampling

is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed.’ (2012, p.418).

Combining the results of the first and second questionnaires, a total of 333 respondents (n=184 and n=149 respectively, 31.8% of the total group) said that they would be willing to take part in such an interview. Respondents to both questionnaires were included in the sample, as the interviews took place in June-July 2003, after the installation of the *black bytes* promotion, so all potential interviewees would have had the opportunity to see it. Given the intended partial focus on the *black bytes* promotion, it was decided that only willing respondents from experimental libraries should be included in the sample (n=255, 24.36% of the total group).

A further filter was applied in consultation with the advisory group, which meant that only willing respondents from experimental libraries who were also from the 16-19 and 20-39 age groups were included in the sample (n=63), as these are two of the ‘groups’ thought to be the least frequent library book borrowers (Opening the Book, 2006; Train, 2003, p.52).

This resulted in a total of 11 male and 52 female respondents, from which the interviewees were selected by cross-tabulating the following variables:

- Gender
- Age
- Participating library
- Nature of local community (rural/suburban/urban)
- Predominant class and ethnicity of community local to library.

A total of 21 respondents were interviewed in June-July 2003, of whom:

- All were aged 16-39
- 8 were male, 13 were female
- All used libraries that had displayed the *black bytes* promotion.

The final sample was therefore representative of the overall group of respondents.

N.B. The coding used for survey respondents is included as **Appendix 1g**, and the identical sequences were used for interviewees.

4.6 The findings of Research Methods 1 and 2

As discussed in **4.4.6** and **4.5.1**, a stratified sampling method was used to select the population of the questionnaire survey, from which the interview population was thereafter selected. Although the use of a stratified method does not guarantee a representative sample, as Denscombe (2003, p.13) argues, the fact that it enables the researcher to ‘assert some control over the selection of the sample... obviously helps the researcher when it comes to generalizing from the findings of the research.’ Yet even if we are to assume that our sample population is representative, we need to clarify that it is not necessarily representative of readers in general, but of the population of readers from which it was selected. As Bryman (2012, p.176) states, ‘Strictly speaking, we cannot generalize beyond that population’.

Before considering the findings of the ‘What do you like to read?’ survey, it is therefore important to note that it would not be appropriate to make generalisations as to universal attitudes towards different book genres and their selection and promotion within the library service, based only on these data. However, they could be regarded as an indicator that research with a similar methodology, conducted under similar conditions, would produce comparable results.

4.6.1 Notes for statistical analyses

All quantitative data collected for this first study are binary, i.e. have only two response categories ‘yes’ or ‘no’, and are non-parametrically distributed, so a chi-square test was deemed to be most appropriate to determine statistically meaningful differences in the distribution of the variables.

Chi-square tests for independence have enabled the researcher to establish how confident she can be that there is a relationship between two categorical (nominal) variables in the sample population, for example male and female respondents. The test calculates an expected frequency or value – ‘that is, one that would occur on the basis of chance alone’ (Bryman, 2012, p.349). The value of chi-square is then determined by calculating the differences between the actual and expected values for each cell in the table and then, in simple terms, by adding together those differences. For analyses with more than two categories such as for minority ethnic fiction reading choices and age, a Pearson chi-square test was used. However, as in many analyses both variables have only two categories, resulting in a 2 by 2 table, the additional correction value Yates’ Correction for Continuity has also been used, ‘to correct or compensate for what some writers feel is an overestimate of the chi-square value when used with a 2 by 2 table’ (Pallant, 2004, p.257).

Statistical analyses for this first study are based on a sample size of 1,047, with only a small variation per analysis. Given the large overall sample population for this survey the decision was made to look for a significance level of 0.01 rather than 0.05: the larger the sample size, the more likely we are to find a significant relationship between two variables. This is helpfully clarified by Labovitz (1968, p.220):

‘...with a large N a small difference is likely to be statistically significant, while with a small N even large differences may not reach the predetermined level. Therefore, small error rates (.01 or .001) should usually accompany large N’s and large error rates (.10 or .05) should be used for small N’s.’

4.6.2 Respondents’ reading choices ‘today’

The purpose of including both Questions 1 and 3 (‘During your visit to the library *today*, what type(s) of book were you looking for?’ and ‘What type of books would you *usually* borrow from the library?’) within the questionnaire was to distinguish between the respondent’s visit on that day only, and his or her typical visit to the library. The intention of asking both questions was to guide respondents to think differently about the books that

they had in their hand on that day, and those that they might usually choose, thereby avoiding the atypical example that may skew the results in some way. The responses to both Questions 1 and 3 are reported in this chapter, but with more analysis conducted for the latter, as this should provide a more generalisable indicator of borrowing patterns.

The table below shows the number of responses to Question 1 for each genre, listed in order of the frequency of response:

Table 4.7. The frequency with which different types of books were chosen by respondents on the day they completed the survey. [Question 1]

Popularity ranking	During your visit to the library <i>today</i> , what type(s) of books were you looking for? (1=yes, 2=no)	Combined results (% of total 1,047)
1	Non-fiction	497 (47.5%)
2	Crime fiction	396 (37.8%)
3	Family sagas	274 (26.2%)
4	Literary fiction	215 (20.5%)
5	War/spy/adventure	216 (20.6%)
6	Romance fiction	215 (20.5%)
7	Science fiction/fantasy	169 (16.1%)
8	Audio books	80 (7.6%)
9	Chick Lit	70 (6.7%)
10	Black British fiction	32 (3.1%)
11	Lad Lit	32 (3.1%)
12	Asian fiction in English	22 (2.1%)
13	Gay/lesbian fiction	5 (0.5%)

It could be anticipated that the books respondents were looking for ‘today’ might not be the same as those they would ‘usually’ look for (i.e. on a habitual basis). However, chi-squared analyses showed that the genre choice ‘today’ was in fact strongly related to the genre choice ‘usually’, for all genres (chi-square=250 to 641, all $p < .001$). The inclusion of Question 1 in

the survey arguably helps to support the validity of Question 3, as the analysis has demonstrated that asking people what they are looking for on a single visit to the library is very strongly correlated to what they are looking for on a typical visit.

Table 4.8. Non-parametric chi-square analyses between the variables choice of genre ‘today’ and choice ‘usually’

‘During your visit to the library <i>today</i> , what type(s) of books were you looking for?’ (1=yes, 2=no) compared with ‘During your visit to the library <i>usually</i> , what type(s) of books were you looking for?’ (1=yes, 2=no)		
	Genre	Chi-square
1	Non-fiction	514.67***
2	Crime fiction	250.00***
3	Family sagas	360.65***
4	Literary fiction	641.46***
5	Romance fiction	345.70***
6	War/spy/adventure	548.85***
7	Science fiction/fantasy	499.68***
8	Audio books	533.35***
9	Chick Lit	504.13***
10	Black British fiction	429.79***
11	Lad Lit	387.51***
12	Asian fiction in English	359.47***
13	Gay/lesbian fiction	409.61***
*** p<.001		

4.6.3 Preferred location for selecting books

Table 4.9. Where in the library respondents looked for their books [Question 2]

Popularity ranking	Where did you look for these books?	Combined results (% of total 1,047)
1	On the shelf	777 (74.2%)
2	Displays of new books	510 (48.7%)
3	Returns trolley	464 (44.3%)
4	Other displays or promotions	175 (16.7%)
5	Library catalogue	164 (15.7%)

In addition, four respondents using the ‘other’ option for this question stated that they would use ‘staff help’ when looking for library books, and one more generally stated, ‘I enjoy foraging in the library’.

As **Table 4.9** illustrates, the data collected regarding respondents’ preferred location in the library for selecting books showed that almost three-quarters of the total sample of 1,047 respondents (74.2%) looked on the library shelves, in other words in the traditional A-Z sequence. At first glance this seems to be a discouraging finding in terms of promotion planning: if library users prefer to go directly to the shelves, why should library staff make the effort to devise specific promotional displays? However, given that respondents were asked to tick as many options as were relevant to them, in many cases the library shelves were just one of a number of locations they selected. Approximately half of respondents selected ‘displays of new books’ (48.7%), although far fewer selected ‘Other displays or promotions’ (16.7%), both findings of obvious relevance to the present investigation of attitudes towards minority ethnic fiction and its promotion.

Given these results, it would appear that respondents were more interested in displays of new books than in themed displays. However, it should be taken into account that respondents could have interpreted the question in

different ways. For example, there could be some confusion between ‘new’ books that have recently been published, and ‘new’ books that are simply new (often paperback) copies of previously unpublished books. If a display and display materials have been recently installed in a library, they could be regarded as ‘new’ books.

Exploring the issue further in the subsequent interviews, for some participants a display (particularly a display of new books) would either be a starting point, a way in which to obtain ideas for book choices before moving to the shelves, or would be consulted after the initial browsing among the shelves. For others, the more traditional options of book selection (from the shelf, or the returns trolley) were preferred.

‘I would probably use the library catalogue to locate books that I specifically wanted...and then I would look at displays of new books, and promotions, for further ideas.’ [Selected all options] (BA23[1])

‘Yes, I would [normally just go straight to the shelves], and browse through authors that I recognize or anything new that jumps out at me.’ [Selected ‘the returns trolley’, ‘on the shelf’] (GB11[2])

‘I think displays, probably: I would see these first...then it would be more on the shelf that I would go.’ [Selected ‘displays of new books’, ‘on the shelf’] (HB1[2])

‘I would only look at displays if the theme interests me...it would be more ‘on the shelf’ that I would go to.’ [Selected ‘library catalogue’] (HB1[2])

A number of interviewees commented on their browsing habits when in a library. Did they enter the library having made a decision as to the books they were going to borrow?

‘I tend to go to the library with an agenda, or a particular idea in mind, based on newspaper reviews and friends’ recommendations, and consequently I don’t feel the need to ask staff when I’m there, because library staff don’t necessarily know me, whereas friends do, and I’ve made my own decisions based on newspapers and internet sites and so on.’ (BA23[1])

‘You know, I do have an idea of some things that I like, but if I come across something that’s different, that looks interesting, even if I don’t know anything about it, I’ll just go for it.’ (HA6[2])

‘When I come through the door, I haven’t really got a set idea of what I’m going to take out, not always.’ (GA25[2])

‘It’s pretty much seeing what’s there, really, although I might have it in the back of my head about authors I’ve been told about, really. So it’s very much dependent on what I see.’ (HA6[2])

Interviewees were asked to comment on any displays they had seen in their local library, or more generally on the value of book displays. On the whole, people liked to see books displayed thematically, taken out of the usual A-Z sequence on the shelves:

‘I’d prefer them to be displayed by type, thematically...if they’re [only] in alphabetical order of the authors, you’ve got to read the blurb of each one to find out what type of book it is!’ (CB15)

‘...I think they had a stand in the library not so long back for wartime, 40s, 50s books, fiction during the war, and I thought that was really good because I went there and I think I got about 3 or 4 books out at one go, because it was a subject rather than an author. I do like wartime books but to be honest with you sometimes I can’t be bothered to look through all the shelves looking for books that are about wartime...’ (FB24[2])

‘...I would rather see them done in that way [books set aside in a thematic display], I must admit, I don’t like a-z! I’ve got four children, so I haven’t always got time to spend hours in there.’ (FB24[2])

Considering the quality of displays they had seen, interviewees underlined the importance of:

- striking the right balance between displaying and not displaying books
- ensuring that the display is relevant to the local library, and that the stock is regularly maintained
- ensuring that the theme of each display is clearly signposted.

‘I think that sometimes when there’s too many displays it can be off-putting...’
(DA8)

‘I have seen some displays, they didn’t seem adequately connected to the books...there seemed to be lots of posters for a particular subject area...so yes, it wasn’t adequately connected to the stock in the library...it just seemed to be something that wasn’t integrated, because it seems to me that if you have a display it should integrate with the local collection strongly. It’s tremendously frustrating if something inspires you to go and read it, and then you find that the library doesn’t have it, or that there’s a tremendously long waiting list.’ (BA23[1])

‘...for example the wartime one, it was very obvious as you walked in and went past it what it was, that it was something I was going to be interested in, so then I looked at all the books and took 2 or 3 off...[it’s important,]the way it’s displayed. I can look at one in science fiction/fantasy, and you instantly know what it is by the way it’s displayed, and I think ‘I’m not going to waste my time on that, because I know I’m not interested’, basically!’ (FB24[2])

A primary reported benefit of library displays was their potential to increase reading choices, the primary objective of any reader development activity:

‘If that display [*black bytes*] wasn’t there, I would never have known of those authors, I would never have known of those books.’
(FB12[2])

‘...if they [library staff] displayed something different, it might make people read things that they wouldn’t normally go and physically look for...to sort of evolve, as it were.’ (HB1[2])

‘They [displays] should draw your attention more to the different areas of books...different genres.’ (JA33[2])

‘And if the library gets it right...then yes I’m quite happy to borrow from displays, and I like seeing them. I like the way in which they open up new avenues for reading books I wouldn’t necessarily have gone in to choose, that weren’t on reviewed lists, or friends’ recommendations. I think that’s interesting and good.’ (BA23[1])

Commenting on the results to this second question in the reading habits questionnaire, Van Riel et al (2008, p.59) observed:

‘For staff involved in reader development, it was very encouraging to find that how the stock is displayed in the library was the most important factor influencing choice.’

Table 4.10. Table to show where in the library Black British fiction and Asian fiction readers looked for their books [Question 2]

Where did you look for these books?	Popularity ranking	Black British fiction readers (% of total 36)	Popularity ranking	Asian fiction readers (% of total 29)
On the shelf	1=	28 (77.8%)	1	21 (72.4%)
Displays of new books	1=	28 (77.8%)	2	14 (48.3%)
Returns trolley	2	15 (41.7%)	3	7 (24.1%)
Other displays or promotions	3	10 (27.8%)	5	5 (17.2%)
Library catalogue	4	6 (16.7%)	4	1 (3.4%)

A total of 36 respondents stated that they would ‘usually’ borrow Black British fiction, and a total of 29 respondents that they would ‘usually’ borrow Asian fiction. A cross-tabulation was conducted of these two groups and their preferred location for selecting books. The results show that the most frequently selected options for Black British fiction readers are ‘displays of new books’ and ‘on the shelf. The two most frequently selected options were the same for Asian fiction readers, although with a higher proportion of readers choosing the library shelves. The library catalogue was a similarly unpopular choice for each group.

Overall, the data would suggest that both Black British and Asian fiction readers look in a wide range of locations for their books. An explanation of this could simply be that fewer titles tend to be available in these categories than in the more ‘popular’ genres, such as crime fiction. It would therefore be reasonable to suggest that both minority fiction genres should be promoted using a wide range of display methods.

Chi-square tests were conducted in order to calculate the strength of the relationship between each of the variables ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction’, and the five possible locations ‘displays of new books’, ‘returns trolley’, ‘library catalogue’, ‘other displays or promotions’ and ‘on the shelf’. The resulting correlations can be used to inform us of the statistical significance of relationships within the sample populations described above,

but also enable a comparison between these populations and the entire respondent population (those who answered Question 2 of the survey, ‘Where did you look for these books?’), in order to investigate whether the patterns of popularity are the same across each category of respondent.

Table 4.11. Non-parametric chi-square analyses between the ‘location’ variable and Black British fiction/Asian fiction readers variables

Where did you look for these books? (1=yes, 2=no)	Black British fiction readers (n=36/1,047)	Asian fiction readers (n=29/1,047)
Displays of new books	11.05*	0.00
Returns trolley	0.04	4.26
Library catalogue	0.00	0.00
Other displays or promotions	2.39	2.92
On the shelf	0.05	.01
* p< .01		

As shown in **Table 4.11**, the only significant finding was that Black British Fiction readers were more likely to look at displays of new books when searching for their books (chi-square = 11.05, $p < .05$). This was not the case for Asian Fiction readers. This underlines that it should not automatically be assumed that the two readers will have similar patterns of reading behaviour, as they can in fact have different characteristics.

4.6.4 Respondents’ ‘usual’ reading choices

Responses to Question 3 (‘What type of books would you *usually* borrow from the library [please tick all that apply]?’) are analysed in more detail than those to Question 1 (‘During your visit to the library *today*, what type(s) of books were you looking for [please tick all that apply]?’), as they are more likely to accurately represent respondents’ reading choices in general, not only those choices they may have made on one particular visit (*today*) to the library. **Table 4.12** (below) shows the number of responses given for each genre, listed in order of the frequency of response.

Table 4.12. The frequency with which individual genres were ‘usually’ borrowed from the library [Question 3]

Popularity ranking	What type of books would you usually borrow from the library?	Combined results (% of total 1,047)
1	Non-fiction	550 (52.5%)
2	Crime fiction	452 (43.2%)
3	Family sagas	308 (29.4%)
4	Literary fiction	276 (26.4%)
5	Romance fiction	264 (25.2%)
6	War/spy/adventure	250 (23.9%)
7	Science fiction/fantasy	198 (18.9%)
8	Audio books	106 (10.1%)
9	Chick Lit	89 (8.5%)
10	Black British fiction	36 (3.4%)
11	Lad Lit	44 (3.2%)
12	Asian fiction in English	29 (2.8%)
13	Gay/lesbian fiction	10 (1.0%)

In addition, respondents using the ‘other’ option for this question listed a range of alternative genres they would ‘usually’ borrow, the most popular being ‘historical fiction’ (n=15), then ‘horror’ (n=8), ‘humour’ (n=4), ‘westerns’ (n=3), ‘graphic novels’ (n=3), ‘poetry’ (n=3), ‘cult/contemporary fiction’ (n=2), ‘family sagas’ (n=1), and ‘international fiction in translation’ (n=1). Two further respondents indicated that they were not particularly concerned with genre ‘labels’: ‘any that appeals’, ‘whatever takes my fancy at the time’.

As illustrated in **Table 4.12**, the most popular reading choice was non-fiction (52.5%). It is notable that more than half the respondents selected this option, as national data and professional opinion would appear to contradict this, indicating that more fiction is borrowed from public libraries than non-fiction (Van Riel, 2003; CIPFA, 2011. One possible explanation

for the popularity of non-fiction could be that respondents were including in their responses any non-fiction material they may read while in the library such as reference works, magazines and newspapers, even online texts. Commenting on the findings of the present study, Van Riel (2003) also suggests that although non-fiction tends to be the category towards which people express the least negative feeling, it is also ‘an area where most people actually read less’. As she states, ‘An absence of perceived problem with non-fiction does not translate into an increase of readership’.

Table 4.12 also shows that crime fiction was the most frequently cited response among the fiction genres (43.2%), with the other ‘established’ fiction genres – family sagas, literary, romance, war/spy/adventure – similarly popular to each other (29.4%, 26.4%, 25.2%, 23.9% respectively).

The minority fiction genres included in the survey (Black British fiction, Asian fiction in English, gay/lesbian fiction) were three of the four least frequently cited genres. Just eight respondents (0.8%) indicated that they would ‘usually’ read both minority ethnic fiction genres Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English. A statistical chi-square test was conducted, in order to calculate the strength of the relationship between Black British and Asian fiction variables for Question 3. If a person ‘usually’ reads the former category, would he or she be likely to ‘usually’ read the latter?

Table 4.13. Non-parametric chi-square analyses between ‘usual’ readers of Black British and Asian fiction [Question 3]

What type of books would you <i>usually</i> borrow from the library? (1=yes, 2=no)	Black British fiction (n=36)
Asian fiction	44.69**
** p<.001	

The chi-square (44.69, p<.001) demonstrates that the two variables are in fact strongly related, and that the ‘usual’ reader of Black British fiction

would also be likely to be a 'usual' reader of Asian fiction in English. This could be of value to those working to raise interest in Black British and Asian fiction material, as it would appear that the two could reasonably be promoted together.

A cross-tabulation of the data by gender and genre variables indicates that a higher proportion of male questionnaire respondents stated that they would 'usually' read Black British fiction (4.7%, n=13) than was the case for the female respondents (3.4%, n=19). For 'usual' Asian fiction readers, the findings appear to be reversed, with just 1.4% (n=4) of male readers, and 3.7% of female readers (n=21) choosing the genre. However, chi-squared tests for each of these show that the differences were not significant either for Black British fiction (0.60), or for Asian fiction in English (2.5).

Further chi-square tests were conducted for the age and genre variables, and it was found that younger readers were significantly more likely than older readers to 'usually' read Asian fiction (chi-square 18.43, $p < .01$). This was not the case for Black British fiction (chi-square 10.86, ns).

Analysis was conducted to see how many of the twelve fiction genres (excluding 'non fiction') were selected by respondents to Question 3, ('What type of books would you *usually* borrow from the library [please tick all that apply]?'), and the results are shown in **Table 4.14** below.

Table 4.14. Number of fiction genres respondents would ‘usually’ read [Question 3]

No. of genres selected	Frequency	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
0	115	11.1	11.1
1	288	27.7	38.8
2	324	31.2	70.0
3	193	18.6	88.6
4	70	6.7	95.4
5	33	3.2	98.6
6	10	1.0	99.5
7	2	0.2	99.7
8	2	0.2	99.9
12	1	0.1	100.0
Total	1038	100.0	
Missing	112		
Total	1150		

As **Table 4.14** indicates, the mode number of genres chosen was two, and the majority (70%) of respondents ‘usually’ selected one or two fiction genres. If we consider broader reading habits, just 4.6% of respondents selected four or more genres. Although this is a small percentage of the overall sample population, this nonetheless represents 118 respondents who would ‘usually’ choose four or more of the twelve fiction genres when choosing books from the library. The motivation to read such a diverse range of material is further explored in **4.8.1**.

4.6.5. Genres that respondents would not consider reading

As **Table 4.15** (below) illustrates, the genre ‘gay/lesbian fiction’ was respondents’ least popular reading choice (63.6%, n=666). The second least popular genre was Asian fiction in English (44.7%, n=468), whereas interestingly Black British fiction was less unpopular, but would nonetheless not be considered by 32.3% (n=338) of the overall group of respondents.

‘Non-fiction’ was the least unpopular reading choice, with just 4.3% of respondents (n=45) stating that they would not consider reading this type of

material. Perhaps unsurprisingly, non-fiction was also the category most frequently selected in response to Question 3 ('What type of books would you usually borrow from the library?'). Certainly in recent years, the genre 'narrative non-fiction' has become increasingly popular, and titles from this category are frequently featured in lists of best-selling books. Downes (2001, p.160) defined this relatively new publishing trend as follows:

'This type of writing takes a different approach to non-fiction than the simply informational... The authors are attempting to make a contract with their readers in the way that fiction authors do – to engage the interest, seduce the intellect, shock the sensibility and demand that the reader participates as an equal in the adventure of a good read.'

Just five respondents used the 'other' option for this question, three citing 'horror' as a genre they would not read, one respondent very specifically stating that he would not choose 'some very "modern" stories which have no meaning for me', and a fifth using the opportunity to express her (generally) open-minded attitude to fiction selection:

'I don't believe in NOT considering reading anything, apart from Jackie Collins!'

Table 4.15. The frequency with which individual genres would not be considered by reading survey participants [Question 4]

Unpopularity ranking	...are there any types of book that you would <i>not</i> consider reading?	Combined results (% of total 1,047)
1	Gay/lesbian fiction	666 (63.6%)
2	Asian fiction in English	468 (44.7%)
3	Science fiction/fantasy	438 (41.8%)
4	Romance fiction	373 (35.6%)
5	Chick Lit	369 (35.3%)
6	Black British fiction	338 (32.3%)
7	Lad Lit	316 (30.2%)
8	Audio books	284 (27.1%)
9	War/spy/adventure	234 (22.3%)
10	Family sagas	179 (17.1%)
11	Crime fiction	151 (14.4%)
12	Literary fiction	134 (12.8%)
13	Non-fiction	45 (4.3%)

It is interesting that there appeared to be less reluctance to read Black British than Asian fiction. Nonetheless, a chi-square test revealed that if a person stated that they would not read Asian fiction, it is also highly likely that he or she would not read Black British fiction (chi-square = 278.61, $p < .001$). As minority genres such as these vary considerably in subject matter, we could infer that large numbers of respondents are choosing not to read these books not because of their content, but because of the cultures or lifestyles that they represent. This issue was explored further in the interviews, as discussed below.

A cross-tabulation of the data by gender and genre variables indicates that a higher proportion of male questionnaire respondents stated that they would not read Black British or Asian fiction (38.6%, $n=107$ and 54.5%, $n=151$ respectively) than was the case for the female respondents (30.4%, $n=174$

and 43.7%, n=250 respectively). Chi-square tests showed that the differences were not in fact significant for Black British fiction and gender (chi-square = 5.76, p=.016, ns), but that they were significant for Asian fiction and gender (chi-square=9.08, p<.01), suggesting a more negative attitude towards the Asian fiction genre by male participants.

Further chi-square tests showed that older respondents were significantly more likely not to read either Black British fiction (chi-square =75.38, p<.001) or Asian fiction (chi-square = 44.48, p<.001). This suggests that younger readers are less likely to avoid minority ethnic fiction genres when selecting their books.

In response to Question 4, 91 survey respondents (8.7%) had listed no category that they would not consider reading. Four of the interviewees were from this group, and further comments given during the interviews included the following:

‘I would try any book at all.’ (GA25[2])

‘Well, I think it’s like anything, if you see a paragraph on the front of the book that interests you, or it’s something different, then yes, you might pick it up.’ (DA8)

The remaining interviewees were asked to explain why they would choose not to read particular types of book. Each of the people who had listed at least one category that they would not read cited a lack of interest as the primary reason: (genres selected listed in parentheses after each comment)

‘I have tried them, and I just don’t find them very interesting.’ [Chick lit, Asian fiction, audio books] (GB11[2])

‘That’s just the books that I wouldn’t specifically go and look for...they don’t really interest me.’ [Science fiction/fantasy, Gay/lesbian, Lad Lit] (HB1[2])

‘No, I don’t really find those interesting. I’m not saying there wouldn’t be the odd one...that I think “oh this looks really good”, but generally speaking, no.’ [Science fiction/fantasy, family sagas, Lad Lit, Chick Lit, Asian fiction, War/spy/adventure] (FB24[2])

‘Yes, none of those things interest me really... Perhaps I should broaden my horizons, but I haven’t.’ [Science fiction/fantasy, Gay/lesbian fiction, Lad Lit, War/spy/adventure] (FB12[2])

Interestingly, a number of interviewees felt compelled to qualify their lack of interest, perhaps in order to assure the interviewer that their reason was not due to any particular prejudice. In almost all cases, the types of book that they were discussing were gay/lesbian, Asian or Black British fiction:

‘It’s not that I’m against reading them, if I picked one up and it looked interesting, I might, but it’s not something that I’d go and specifically look for to read.’ [Asian fiction and Black British fiction] (HB1[2])

‘Romance and gay & lesbian, not because I’m homophobic or anything, just because really it’s something that doesn’t interest me in the slightest.’ [Romance, Gay/lesbian] (JA33[2])

‘I just haven’t even been interested in it; I haven’t ever experienced anything in these books. They’re not topics that are relevant to me, so I haven’t bothered to even go there.’ [Science fiction/fantasy, gay/lesbian, Lad Lit, War/spy/adventure] (FB12[2])

‘I don’t try to take anything too heavy or too deep, because I haven’t got the time to focus on that, of course! [Interviewee had three young children]’ [Science fiction/fantasy, Gay/lesbian, Lad Lit, War/spy/adventure] (FB12[2])

‘Science fiction I don’t like full stop, I don’t like it on telly, I don’t like it in books: you either do or you don’t!’ [Science fiction/fantasy] (FB24[2])

In 2003 Twomey conducted an investigation of the attitudes of reading group members towards fiction reading, and asked the question of focus group participants ‘Is there any fiction you would never choose to read?’ Unlike the present study, participants were not offered a choice of genres from which to select, so responses made related not only to specific genres but also to general characteristics of plot (‘no sexual content, nothing explicit’) and style (‘really thin, bad characterising’) (pp.18-19). Interestingly, participants who listed a particular genre predominantly cited either ‘romance fiction’ or ‘chick lit’, referring to the books’ ‘irritating’ or formulaic characteristics. Twomey’s sample population (six focus groups were conducted, with between three and twelve members each) was

considerably smaller than that of the present study (n=1,047) and is therefore by no means representative of the population from which the sample was selected. However, it is of interest that a related study revealed no antipathy whatsoever towards minority genre fiction (Black British fiction, Asian fiction, gay/lesbian fiction). One possible interpretation of this would be that focus group members may be subject to the effects of group participation, for example that they may be more likely to express 'culturally expected views' than they would in a more 'individual' form of data collection such as the questionnaire survey for the present study (Bryman, 2012, p.518; Morgan, 2002). Indeed, in their practitioner handbook 'The reader-friendly library service', Van Riel et al (2008, p.61) suggest that the large number of negative responses to the fourth question 'clearly evidence the success of this approach as there is a high level of honesty in the responses – no-one is made to feel ashamed or to give what they think is the *right* answer.'

4.6.6 Analysis of minority ethnic fiction genre choices by age

As previously discussed (2.7.1), the critic Mailloux (1982, p.41) commented that the act of reading is potentially affected by 'larger social forces', of which age and gender were two such examples.

Taking the data for Questions 1, 3 and 4 Pearson Chi-square tests were therefore conducted to determine whether a respondent's age and/or gender were likely to be factors in his or her readership of the two minority ethnic fiction genres, Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English.

For reading choices 'today', there was no significant difference for age and Black British fiction (chi-square = 3.16, p=.788, ns), but a very significant difference for age and Asian fiction in English (chi-square – 24.52, p<.001): 77.7% of respondents who had chosen the genre 'today' were aged below 40 years, compared to just 30.6% of those who had not chosen it. Younger respondents were therefore significantly more likely than older respondents to be borrowing an Asian fiction in English book 'today'.

For ‘usual’ reading choices, again there was no significant difference for age and Black British fiction (chi-square = 10.89, $p=.09$, ns), and again there was a significant difference for age and Asian fiction in English (chi-square = 18.43, $p=.005$): 68% of Asian fiction readers were aged below 40 years, compared to just 30% of those who were not ‘usual’ readers of the genre. Again, younger respondents were therefore significantly more likely to borrow an Asian fiction in English book ‘usually’.

The analysis for the fourth question – regarding the genres respondents would *not* consider reading – was very interesting. There was a very significant difference for age and both Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English (respectively, chi-square = 75.38, $p<.001$; chi-square = 43.62, $p<.001$). 19% of respondents aged below 40 years indicated that they would not read Black British fiction compared to 38.4% who did not indicate this. 23.3% of respondents aged below 40 years would not read Asian fiction in English compared to 39.1% who did not indicate this. Younger respondents were therefore very significantly less likely not to choose minority ethnic fiction genres. Younger respondents, therefore, appeared to be more open-minded and less likely not to choose either of the two minority ethnic fiction genres.

4.6.7 Analysis of minority ethnic fiction genre choices by gender

Next, Chi-square tests were conducted to see if the gender of the respondent was a significant factor in his or her readership of the two minority ethnic fiction genres, again taking the data for Questions 1, 3 and 4.

For reading choices ‘today’, there was no significant difference either for gender and Black British fiction (chi-square = .886, $p=.347$), or for gender and Asian fiction in English (chi-square = .886, $p=.347$). For ‘usual’ reading choices, again there was no significant difference for gender and either genre (chi-square = 0.60, $p=.44$; chi-square = 2.54, $p=.11$ respectively).

As in the previous analysis by age, analysis of the data for the fourth question yielded the most interesting results. Regarding the genres respondents would *not* consider reading, there was there was a marginally

non-significant difference for gender and Black British fiction (chi-square = 5.76, p=.016): 38.1% of respondents who would not read this genre were male, compared to 29.6% of respondents who did not tick this box. For gender and Asian fiction, the difference was significant (chi-square = 9.08, p=.003): 37.7% of respondents who would not read this genre were male, compared to 27.7% who did not tick this box. Female respondents appeared, therefore, to be more open-minded and less likely not to choose either of the two minority ethnic fiction genres.

4.6.8 Factors affecting choice of library books

The fifth and final question in the reading habits survey explored those factors influencing participants' choice of reading material. **Table 4.16** (below) presents the findings.

Table 4.16. The factors influencing respondents in their choice of library books, in order of popularity [Question 5]

Popularity ranking	What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books?	Combined results (% of total)
1	Display in the library	682 (57.6%)
2	Friends' recommendation	483 (46.1%)
3	Newspaper/magazine/TV review	464 (44.4%)
4	I saw it in a bookshop	407 (38.9%)
5	I saw it/them on the returns trolley	403 (38.5%)
6	Library staff recommendation	215 (20.6%)
7	'Prizewinners' e.g. Orange prize, Man Booker prize	181 (17.3%)
8	Current events	172 (16.4%)
9	Internet	82 (7.8%)

The 'other' option was far more popular for this question than for the previous four, with respondents giving a wide range of alternative factors which affected their choice of library books. By far the most frequently cited of these was the author (n=22), after which the 'blurb on the back cover' (n=5), the title (n=3), and the book cover (n=3). Two further

respondents listed described an ‘open’ approach to book choice: ‘If it’s in print, I’ll read it!’, and ‘Pot luck – I just see something that looks interesting’. One male respondent cited a particularly interesting factor of influence, bearing in mind the overall objectives of the research;

‘Centrality/pertinence to the Western canon and its context’.

This respondent listed only ‘non-fiction’ and ‘literary fiction’ as genres he would ‘usually’ read, and put a line through the question ‘Are there any types of book that you would NOT consider reading?’, perhaps indicating an open-mindedness to reading, or (taking into account his ‘usual’ reading choice), perhaps more likely pointing towards his lack of engagement with the question.

The data would strongly suggest that the effectiveness of stock promotion is enhanced if the potential influence of display is not overlooked. More than half of respondents (57.6%) said that their choice of reading materials was affected by the ‘display in the library’. In other words, the presentation of books in the library building itself can influence a reading choice more than any other internal or external factor.

When considering person-to-person recommendations, **Table 4.16** shows that friends’ recommendations (46.1%) were revealed to be a stronger influence than a recommendation made by library staff (20.6%). Given that five of the nine possible categories had a higher response rate, this was a relatively low result.

Asked to consider their responses to Question 5 in more detail, interviewees explored the reasons for this higher degree of influence:

‘Friends’ recommendations...because some of my friends haven’t got children, they have more time to read, so they’ve had the opportunity to say that’s something you could pick up on, [first name of interviewee], and then I’d have a look.’ (FB12[2])

‘I would [be affected] by friends’ recommendations. I know that me, my mum and my sister tend to swap books around, and we all like the same sort of thing.’ (JA30[2])

Nonetheless, interviewees’ responses also revealed that serendipity played as important a role in their search for reading material as any other factor:

‘It’s pretty much seeing what’s there, really...’ (HA6[2])

‘It’s probably equal between friends, and just going to have a look myself, and seeing what I fancy.’ (GA25[2])

Just two interviewees cited library staff as an influential factor:

‘...if a librarian recommended one to me, if she knew what kind I liked, I would take her opinion.’ (JA30[2])

‘...the staff are absolutely spot-on, they’re really friendly, it’s the personal touch...’ (FB24[2])

An interesting comparison can be made between the findings of this library-based survey and those of relatively recent consumer research into the main drivers for book sales, as presented in book trade journal *The Bookseller* (Rickett, 2008b, p.7). Rickett reported that of 1,000 people surveyed more than a quarter of people (26%) choose books based on in-store or in-library displays (compared with a far higher 57.6% in this survey), 14% were equally inspired by newspaper and magazine reviews, and 13% by television or radio promotion (a combined 44.4% in this survey). Recommendations from friends and family were chosen by 12% (46.1% in this survey), 9% relied on internet recommendations (7.8% in this survey), and just 2% on the advice of bookselling or library staff (a far higher 20.6% in this survey). Findings for this final variable are clearly quite different, suggesting that book borrowers rely considerably more than book buyers on staff advice and recommendations. For Rickett (*idem.*), the notable finding of the book trade survey is that the findings ‘overturn conventional wisdom that word of mouth is the most powerful tool for creating bestsellers’, and that the figure for friend and family recommendations had been a far higher 25% in a similar survey conducted in 2005.

The author does not state if respondents were able to select more than one option as in the reading habits survey (and it is unclear why the percentages given above do not total 100), but these findings are still of interest in enabling a basic comparison of the data for this study with those of other surveys, and of the wider book trade.

Chi-square tests were conducted in order to calculate the strength of the relationship between each of the variables ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction’, and the nine possible ‘choice’ factors influencing readers in their choice of library books.

Table 4.17. Chi-square analyses between the ‘choice’ variable and Black British fiction/Asian fiction readers variables

What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books? (1=yes, 2=no)	Black British fiction readers (n=36)	Asian fiction readers (n=29)
Display in the library	11.14* +	.00
I saw it/them on the returns trolley	2.42	2.57
Internet	12.37** +	9.93* +
Newspaper/magazine/ TV review	0.61	1.88
I saw it in a bookshop	2.24	0.19
Library staff recommendation	4.34	1.98
Friends’ recommendation	3.86	3.99
Current events	4.12	6.94*+
‘Prizewinners’ e.g. Orange prize, Man Booker prize	7.62* +	6.15
+ indicates that the direction of the relationship is positive		
* p< .01		
** p< .001		

Table 4.17 illustrates that Black British fiction readers are significantly more likely than readers of other genres to be positively influenced by displays in the library, prizewinning titles and, in particular, by material they have viewed on the Internet. Asian fiction readers are also likely to be

influenced by the Internet (although to a lesser extent than Black British fiction readers), and by current events, but not necessarily by prizewinning titles or displays in the library.

As in previous analyses, the reading behaviour and choices of the Black British fiction and Asian fiction readers are by no means identical. Interestingly, the former again seem to be more influenced than the latter by displays in the library (see also **Table 4.10**). It is also notable that the readers of Black British fiction are significantly more likely than Asian fiction readers to look for prizewinning titles when searching for their books. Could an interpretation of this be that fewer prizewinning titles are perceived to have been written by (British) Asian writers than Black British writers? This would be relatively surprising, as although both Black British and Asian writers have featured in (for example) Man Booker and Orange prizewinning long and shortlists, representation from either ‘group’ is not yet commonplace. In 2007 the bookseller Waterstone’s devised a list of 25 ‘future greats’ (Brown, 2007), relatively new authors who it felt to be the ‘next generation of superstars (Hoyle, 2007). Of this list of 25, just 1 was black (British Nigerian author Helen Oyemi) and 1 was British Asian (Gautam Malkani), in total less than a representative percentage of the overall non-white population. As reported in the Independent newspaper in 2007, it would appear that ‘Britain’s book business remains determinedly Caucasian’. More recently, the longlist of 13 titles for the 2013 Man Booker Prize was described by the Chair of the Judges as ‘surely the most diverse longlist in Man Booker history’ (Masters, 2013). Interestingly, however, although the list contained authors of Malaysian, Zimbabwean and Indian origin, this ‘diversity’ was then clarified in terms of ‘geography, form, length and subject’, and not in terms of the ethnic diversity of the author.

4.6.9 Comparison of libraries of different types

As noted in **4.4.6**, a project representative for each of the nine local authorities participating in the research was asked to define each of the 21 libraries in terms of its community type (rural/suburban/urban), its predominant ethnicity (white/black/Asian/mixed), and the predominant class of its residents (working/middle/mixed). Table 4.4 (above) shows the

number of participating libraries and valid responses (from each library) for each of the 3 variables 'community type', 'ethnicity', 'class'. The analysis below concentrates on minority ethnic fiction, but tables to show full survey responses by community type, ethnicity and class are included as **Appendix 1h**.

Although there are obvious limitations of such a measure, in that it is inevitably approximate and based on subjective description of communities, rather than on valid statistical data, it is nonetheless a useful means of comparing data collected from individual libraries within the overall sample population, and of obtaining further information as to the nature of the minority ethnic fiction reader.

a. Analysis by community type

Descriptive data revealed that a greater proportion of respondents from urban communities (5.2%, n=24) than from either suburban (1.8%, n=7) or rural communities (2.6%, n=5) stated that they would 'usually' read Black British fiction. However, chi-square tests indicated that these differences were not significant (chi-square = 8.17, ns). For the Asian fiction variable, more respondents from urban communities (4.6%, n=21) stated that they would 'usually' read Asian fiction than from either suburban (1.3%, n=5) or rural communities (1.6%, n=3). In this case, chi-square tests showed that these differences were significant (chi-square = 9.94, p<.01).

Respondents from urban communities were therefore more likely to read Asian fiction than respondents from rural or (in particular) suburban communities.

b. Analysis by community ethnicity

Chapter 2 (2.7) explored the concept of 'readership' for Black British and Asian fiction (in English), and the literature revealed a certain agreement that the readers of minority ethnic fiction would be from both minority and majority communities (Mercer, 1994; Thompson, 2006). Although the ethnicity of survey respondents was not collected at an individual level, noting the predominant ethnicity of a local community provides valuable contextual data.

As **Table 4.4** illustrates, although project representatives were given four choices of ethnicity with which to describe the local community of each participating/control library ('predominantly white'/'predominantly Black'/'predominantly Asian'/'mixed'), in total just two options were selected ('predominantly white' and 'mixed'). This is not particularly surprising, given that the estimated total percentage of non-white people in the population of England and Wales today is approximately 14% (Office for National Statistics, 2013), and therefore by no means a majority. However, in understanding the context for the present study it is important to note that the East Midlands, the region from which the data were collected, is particularly ethnically diverse: of the eight other English political regions, just London and the West Midlands are known to have a higher proportion of non-white British residents. It is anticipated that the city of Leicester (from which three libraries are included in this research) will by 2015 become the first city in Europe with a majority non-white population, and that no other location in Britain has proportionally fewer 'White British' residents (Commission for Racial Equality, 2008; Brown, 2010).

Cross-tabulating the data by community type and genre variables, we can see that more respondents from communities described as 'mixed' will 'usually' read Black British or Asian fiction than is the case for those from 'predominantly white' communities. For Black British fiction, 2.6% (n=21) of respondents from 'predominantly white' communities (n=811), and 6.4% (n=15) of respondents from 'mixed' communities (n=236) 'usually' selected that genre. For Asian fiction, 1.5% (n=12) of respondents from 'predominantly white' communities (n=811) and 7.2% (n=17) of respondents from 'mixed' communities (n=236) would usually select books from the genre. Chi-square tests showed that these differences were marginally non-significant for Black British fiction (chi-square = 6.72, p=.01), but very significant for Asian fiction (chi-square = 20.16, p<.001).

A second cross-tabulation of community type with respondents who selected that they would not read either Black British or Asian fiction indicates that 33.5% (n=272) of those from 'predominantly white'

communities (n=811) and 28.0% (66) of those from 'mixed' communities would not read Black British fiction, and that 46.5% (n=377) of those from 'predominantly white' communities and 38.6% (n=91) of those from 'mixed' communities would not read Asian fiction. However, chi-square tests showed that these differences were not statistically significant for either Black British fiction or Asian fiction (chi-square = 2.42, ns and 4.54, ns respectively).

c. Analysis by class

A cross-tabulation of the data by community class and genre variables shows that respondents from predominantly 'working class' areas of the East Midlands are more likely to 'usually' read Black British or Asian fiction than is the case for those from predominantly 'middle class' or 'mixed' areas. For Black British fiction, 6.5% (n=20) of those from 'working class' areas (n=309), 2.3% (n=6) of respondents from 'middle class' areas (n=259) and 2.1% (n=10) from 'mixed' areas (n=479) would 'usually' select that genre. For Asian fiction, 6.5% (n=20) of those from 'working class' areas, 1.5% (n=4) of those from 'middle class' areas, and 1.0% (n=5) of those from 'mixed' areas would 'usually' select that genre. Chi-square tests showed that respondents from 'working class' areas were significantly more likely to 'usually' read either Black British fiction (chi-square = 12.11, $p < .01$) or (in particular) Asian fiction (chi-square = 20.06, $p < .001$).

Interestingly, a second cross-tabulation of community type with respondents who selected that they would not read either Black British or Asian fiction appears to contradict the above findings for the Black British fiction variable. This indicates that a slightly higher proportion of respondents from 'working class' communities would not read the genre (33.3%, n=103) than is the case for 'mixed' communities (32.3%, n=338) or 'middle class' communities (30.9%, n=80).

For the Asian fiction variable, the results of the cross-tabulation would appear to correspond to the findings for the 'usual' reading habits: 40.1% (n=124) of 'working class' readers, 42.1% (n=109) of 'middle class'

readers, and 49.1% (n=468) of readers from ‘mixed’ communities, would not choose to read books from that genre.

Given the uneven distribution of respondents within each of the three sub-categories of ‘class’, it is helpful to conduct statistical tests to investigate the significance of these apparent differences. Further chi-square tests showed that these differences were not significant for either Black British fiction (chi-square = 0.55, ns) or Asian fiction (chi-square = 6.67, ns).

4.7 Investigating the effects of the *black bytes* intervention

As described in 4.4, there was a longitudinal element of the methodology for Study 1, not at the individual respondent level but at the library level, as the questionnaire survey was distributed to 16 libraries at two separate time-points, before and after the installation of the *black bytes* promotion. A key aspect of the longitudinal evaluation was the inclusion of five ‘control’ libraries in addition to the 16, i.e. libraries in which the *black bytes* promotion would not be installed. 25 questionnaires were given to one library in each of five of the nine participating authorities, and were distributed on the same two occasions as the libraries with the promotion. In combination, these two measures enabled an investigation as to whether *black bytes* had a noticeable impact on the fiction borrowing habits of the library user.

One could argue that the changes in minority ethnic fiction reading preferences were due to a simple change in demographic details, such as an increased proportion of women being sampled in the post period. However, Chi-Square tests showed that there was no significant difference in age or gender distribution when comparing the pre-sample to the post-sample or between those libraries participating in the promotion and the control libraries. This supports the idea that the difference in reading preferences was more likely due to the promotion than to age or gender demographic changes. No such tests can be conducted for the class or community variables, as they were based not on individual respondents but on a simple classification by the researcher of the libraries participating in the study.

Table 4.18 shows the percentages of change (positive or negative) between the first and second distributions of the questionnaire, for both participating and control libraries. This was calculated by subtracting the percentage of participants responding positively at the second distribution from the percentage of participants responding positively at the first.

Table 4.18. Percentage change between the first and second questionnaire surveys, with significance levels (chi-square), for both experimental and control libraries

Question no.	Variables	% change (+/-) experimental libraries	Significance level (chi-square) (experimental)	% change (+/-) control libraries	Significance level (chi-square) (control)
1. During your visit to the library today, what type(s) of books were you looking for?	Science fiction/fantasy	+1.8	ns	+3.3	ns
	Gay/lesbian fiction	+0.8	ns	-1.7	ns
	Black British fiction	+2.7	p=.056, marginally ns	-0.8	ns
	Family sagas	+1.9	ns	+12.5	p=.056, marginally ns
	Non-fiction	-6.7	ns	-6.6	ns
	Romance fiction	+5.9	p=.045, marginally ns	+5.0	ns
	Lad Lit	+1.4	ns	+3.3	ns
	Crime fiction	-1.3	ns	+0.9	ns
	Chick Lit	+2.1	ns	+4.1	ns
	Asian fiction	+0.6	ns	-2.5	ns
	Audio books	-0.7	ns	-2.5	ns
Literary fiction	+3.3	ns	+9.2	ns	
War/spy/adventure	-0.3	ns	+10.0	ns	
2. Where did you look for these books?	Displays of new books	-0.7	ns	+10.8	ns
	The returns trolley	-2.6	ns	+9.9	ns
	The library catalogue	+2.5	ns	+2.2	ns
	Other displays or promotions	-0.1	ns	+8.9	ns
	On the shelf	-3.5	ns	-3.5	ns
3. What type of books would you usually borrow from the library?	Science fiction/fantasy	+1.7	ns	+6.0	ns
	Gay/lesbian fiction	+1.4	ns	+0.9	ns
	Black British fiction	+4.1	7.365, p<.01	+1.7	ns
	Family sagas	+2.7	ns	+8.0	ns
	Non-fiction	-6.2	ns	-1.7	ns
	Romance fiction	+4.2	ns	+3.0	ns
	Lad Lit	+1.1	ns	+1.7	ns
	Crime fiction	+0.2	ns	+4.0	ns
	Chick Lit	+1.3	ns	+1.9	ns
	Asian fiction	+1.2	ns	+0.1	ns
	Audio books	+0.3	ns	-6.4	ns
Literary fiction	+0.4	ns	+7.0	ns	
War/spy/adventure	+5.6	ns	+8.7	ns	

4. In the following list, are there any types of book that you would <i>not</i> consider reading?	Science fiction/fantasy	-2.8	8.811, p<.01	+0.9	ns
	Gay/lesbian fiction	-3.8	ns	-1.1	ns
	Black British fiction	-7.8	p=.026, marginally ns	+1.0	ns
	Family sagas	-1.7	ns	-3.8	ns
	Non-fiction	-0.8	ns	-1.7	ns
	Romance fiction	-6.5	ns	-2.4	ns
	Lad Lit	-9.6	7.831, p<.01	+3.7	ns
	Crime fiction	-2.0	ns	-0.3	ns
	Chick Lit	-8.7	p=.015, marginally ns	-4.8	ns
	Asian fiction	-6.2	ns	-12.0	ns
	Audio books	-5.1	ns	+1.2	ns
	Literary fiction	-0.3	ns	-3.7	ns
	War/spy/adventure	-3.6	ns	-0.4	ns
5. What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books?	Display in the library	-6.3	ns	+7.5	ns
	I saw it on the returns trolley	-3.2	ns	-10.3	ns
	Internet	+1.3	ns	-5.3	ns
	Newspaper/magazine/TV review	-6.1	ns	-1.6	ns
	I saw it in a bookshop	-7.7	p=.037, marginally ns	+3.7	ns
	Library staff recommendation	-0.4	ns	+8.1	ns
	Friends' recommendation	-2.9	ns	+6.9	ns
	Current events	-1.0	ns	+0.6	ns
	'Prize winners'	-0.8	ns	+6.7	ns
N.B. A positive percentage change for a variable in Questions 1, 2, 3 or 5 would suggest that more respondents to the second questionnaire had selected the variable than those who had completed the first. However, a positive percentage change for Question 4 would suggest that <i>fewer</i> respondents of the second questionnaire had selected the variable than those who had completed the first.					

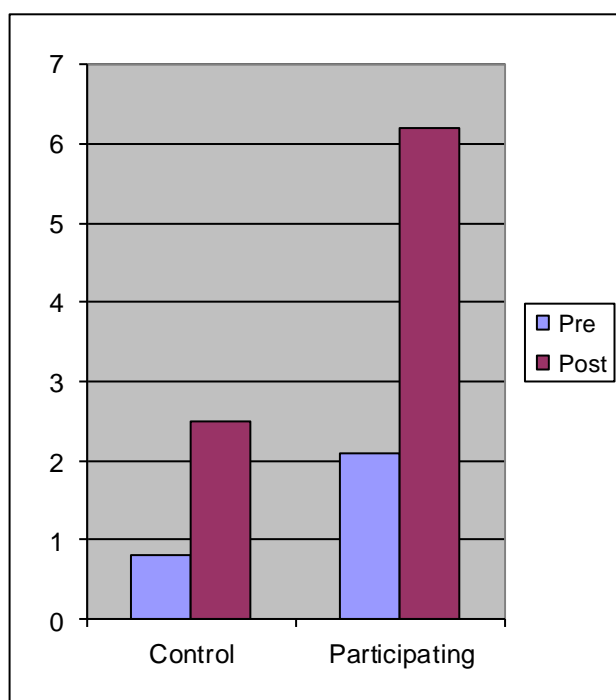
The discussion of the findings presented in **Table 4.18** focuses on the two minority ethnic fiction genres (see below), but as the table shows there are also two other significant findings (and four marginally non-significant findings) relating to other fiction genres. For example, there was a smaller number of respondents from experimental libraries who, following the *black bytes* promotion, would not deliberately avoid reading Science fiction/fantasy and Lad Lit fiction. It is possible that promotions of books within these genres were running in some or all of the experimental libraries at the same time as the *black bytes* promotion, but the researcher was not aware of such initiatives at the time of her data collection.

4.7.1 Black British fiction

In order to investigate the potential impact of the *black bytes* intervention on survey respondents, we can look in particular at the ‘Black British fiction’ variable for Questions 1, 3 and 4. Were more people choosing to read these titles – or fewer people choosing *not* to read them – after having been potentially exposed to the promotion?

Considering, for example, the books that respondents chose ‘today’, there was an increase of 2.7% in the number of people from experimental libraries reading Black British fiction between the first and second time-points, and a decrease of 0.8% in those from the control libraries. As stated in 4.6.1, analysis of the third question should give a more generalisable indicator of borrowing patterns, as it asks respondents to consider their habitual (‘usual’) borrowing, not only borrowing on a specific occasion (‘today’). For this third question relating to respondents’ ‘usual’ reading choices, there was an increase for both control and experimental libraries between each time-point, and again the increase was greater for the latter, as Fig. 4.2 below illustrates:

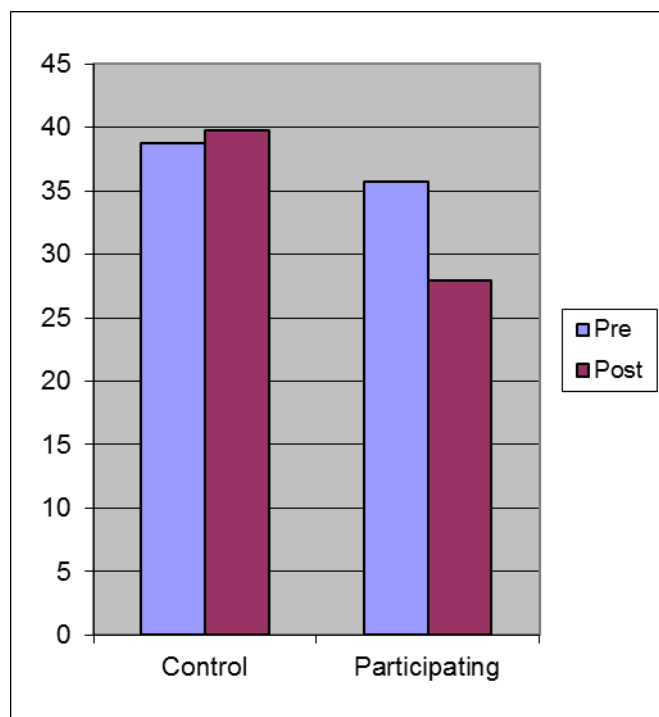
Figure 4.2. The percentage of respondents who stated that they would ‘usually’ choose Black British fiction, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points



Chi-square tests showed that there was a significant increase in respondents from experimental libraries reporting that they were ‘usual’ readers of Black British fiction after the intervention had taken place (chi-square = 7.37, $p < .01$), whereas the control group showed no significant change between the two time points (chi-square = 0.27, ns).

For the fourth question, there was a 7.8% reduction between the two time-points in the number of respondents from experimental libraries who would not choose to read the genre, whereas the proportion of respondents from control libraries who would choose not to read Black British fiction had increased slightly (1.0%). This indicates that those respondents from experimental libraries were now less likely than before not to choose the genre, after the *black bytes* promotion had taken place.

Figure 4.3. The percentage of respondents who stated that they ‘would not’ choose Black British fiction, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points



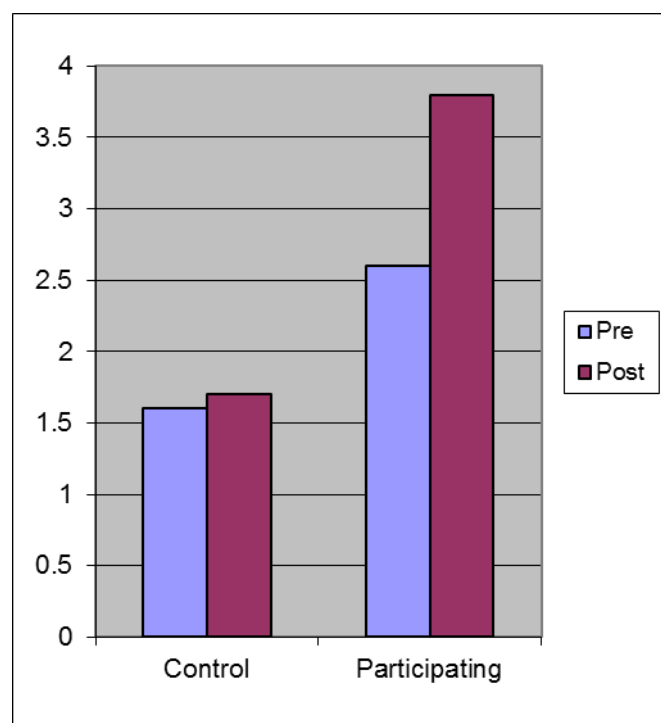
However, Chi-square tests comparing data from the first and second questionnaire for experimental libraries showed that this difference was marginally non-significant for Black British fiction (chi-square = 4.98, $p = .03$, ns).

4.7.2 Asian fiction in English

Interestingly, Chi-square tests were conducted for the Asian fiction variables, and revealed no significant differences over time, or between control/experimental libraries. As Asian fiction was not a focus of the *black bytes* promotion, this finding supports the argument that the intervention positively affected reading habits and attitudes in the specific area of Black British fiction. Figures 4 and 5 are included below for illustrative purposes.

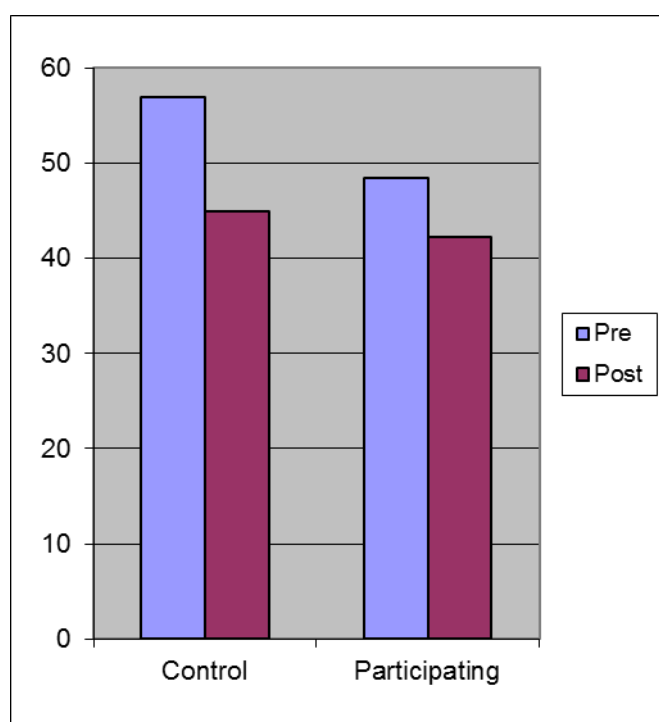
For the first question regarding the Asian fiction in English books chosen by respondents ‘today’, there was an increase of 0.6% between the first and second time-points for experimental libraries, but a decrease of 2.5% in those from the control libraries. For the third question relating to respondents’ ‘usual’ reading choices, there was a similar increase for experimental libraries of 1.2% between each time-point, but an increase for those from the control libraries of just 0.1%, as the chart below illustrates:

Figure 4.4. The percentage of respondents who stated that they would ‘usually’ choose Asian fiction in English, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points



For the fourth question, there was a 6.2% reduction between the two time-points in the number of respondents from experimental libraries who would not choose to read the genre, but interestingly the proportion of respondents from control libraries who would choose not to read Asian fiction in English had also decreased by a greater 12%, as illustrated below:

Figure 4.5. The percentage of respondents who stated that they ‘would not’ choose Asian fiction in English, for both control and experimental libraries at the two time-points



4.7.3 Overall attitudinal changes to fiction genres

Continuing to investigate potential changes in attitudes towards fiction reading as a result of the intervention, it would appear to be encouraging that the number of respondents who listed no particular genre that they would not consider reading (i.e. selected no response for Question 4) increased from 42 (7.1% of 519) at the first distribution, to 62 (10.5% of 481) at the second. A Chi-square test showed that there was a marginally non-significant reduction in the number of genres in Question 4 selected by respondents from experimental libraries, i.e. that they selected fewer genres that they would not read (chi-square = 4.51, $p=.03$, ns). Encouragingly, for control libraries there was no such change (chi-square = 0.84, ns).

Finally, Chi-square tests were also conducted for the ‘display in the library’ variable, in order to calculate whether or not the *black bytes* intervention had increased the likelihood that respondents would be affected by a display in the library when choosing their library books. However, these revealed no significant differences either over time (between the first and second distribution of the questionnaire), or between participating and control libraries (Chi-square = 2.85, ns for experimental libraries; Chi-square = 1.08, ns for control libraries).

4.7.4 Response to the *black bytes* promotion: summary of interview findings

The interviews conducted with 21 questionnaire respondents (see 3.6.1) revealed that one third of the interviewees (n=7) had seen the *black bytes* promotion in their local library. This is a relatively low figure, for which there could be two possible reasons:

- That respondents had not visited the library during the promotional period
- That the promotion had not been prominently displayed.

Nevertheless, the response to the promotion from those who had seen it was largely positive, in some cases extremely so:

‘I recently had some books from there [my local library] to do with Black culture, which was excellent, because I kept thinking it’s hard to find stuff related to my culture, and that was brilliant...the books were fabulous. If I’d had more time, I would have read them all.’ (FB12[2])

‘Yes, I think the last time I went in there was a section on Black writers...there was a good diversity, they did have some African writers coming under the umbrella of ‘British’ if they’re residing in the UK...I was interested in the books it was promoting, I did flick through, I didn’t borrow but I had a look.’ (DA8)

The intended target audience of the *black bytes* promotion – as determined by the author in consultation with the project advisory group - was that it should have general appeal across the communities, and not specifically

target Black readers (see 3.1). This idea is supported within the literature on multicultural librarianship. Barter (1996:13), for example, writes of the benefits of exposing all readers (particularly children and young people) to ‘a pluralistic world’, and questions the claim made by educators and librarians that the sole purpose of multicultural books is to create ‘cultural pride’ among minority ethnic communities.

Further exploring the issue of intended readership, interviewees were asked to state whether they felt that the promotion had a specific target audience, and comments made suggested that it would have a general appeal. This supports the finding of Mansoor (2006), who noted that the concept of pluralism in public library service and stock provision was welcomed by respondents to his research, as a means of potentially exposing all communities to a wide range of cultural experiences:

‘I think the idea would be for a more general appeal, because it probably just highlights, shows that there are talented Black writers, and this is what they’ve got to offer, so it wouldn’t just be for Ethnic.’ (DA8)

‘...it [the promotion] had a general appeal, because I think that everybody needs to be made aware of how Black culture is influenced by English culture in this country. It is a multicultural society, and I really think that people need to be made aware of how we feel within that culture, of how that has affected us...I think that anybody, once they had picked up a book [from the *black bytes* promotion] and started to read it, they would probably find it really interesting.’ (FB12[2])

One interviewee felt that other library users would, like her, be interested in seeing future displays of books written by authors from different cultures. When asked if she would like to see more displays like *black bytes*, she responded:

‘Oh yes, and from all different cultures, not just from Black culture, but from Asian culture, or Polish culture, or whatever. Because in [town], especially, there’s a huge Polish community, but there doesn’t seem to be that much about how they perceive being in this multicultural society, or how it has affected them...that would be good, if there were any authors that have done anything like that.’ (FB12[2])

As discussed in **2.6.3**, this perception of literature as a tool with which to increase intercultural understanding is widely supported by previous research (Mar et al, 2006; Syed, 2008; Triggs, 1985; Tso, 2007; Usherwood & Toyne, 2002).

4.8 Discussion

This study is a piece of research in its own right, providing valuable data as to the reading habits and attitudes of a large population of readers within the East Midlands region. However, it is also important that it is viewed in the context of the overall research, as the first of three studies, each of which is intended to build upon the previous one.

4.8.1 The theoretical contribution of the first study

As per its original aim (**4.2**), this study has investigated the profile of the minority fiction reader, and those factors affecting his or her choice to read (or not read) those genres, in particular Black British and Asian fiction in the English language. As discussed in Chapter 3, it was felt that the most appropriate way in which to do this was via a general, quantitative survey of the reading habits and attitudes of library users within the East Midlands, distributed both before and after their potential exposure to a Black British fiction promotion, and via a subsequent qualitative interview with a smaller sample of survey respondents. In this way it was also possible to measure the extent to which the intervention of a promotion can affect reading choices and attitudes.

The large respondent group for the survey (n=1,047 in total) enabled the collection of a more representative view of the population of library users within the East Midlands than would otherwise have been possible with a smaller sample group. The findings provide data as to both the impact of the *black bytes* intervention on respondents' reading habits, and the profile of readers using East Midlands libraries, with – more pertinently to the overall research – a focus on the profile of the minority fiction reader.

The questionnaire survey developed for the study consisted of five simple, closed questions, each of which focused on the respondent's choice, of

location within the library for finding his or her preferred books, to read or not read a particular genre, or those external factors influencing his or her choice of library books.

In drawing comparisons between responses and attitudes towards thirteen different genres (including twelve fiction genres and non-fiction as a separate ‘genre’), it has been possible to draw initial conclusions about the readers – and, interestingly, the non-readers – of Black British and Asian fiction. The data revealed that the two variables are strongly related, in that if a person ‘usually’ reads from one genre, he or she is significantly highly likely also to read from the other (see **Table 4.13**). However, of particular interest is the clear finding that despite this apparent link it should not be assumed that the reader of each minority ethnic fiction genre will always have similar patterns of reading behaviour, or similar attitudes towards fiction selection or reading.

For example, those who usually read Black British fiction are quite different from those who do not, in that they are significantly more likely to look for their books from displays of new books or other displays and promotions, whereas those who usually read Asian fiction in English appear to use these promotional tools no more than those who do not (**Table 4.10**).

A further example to illustrate the differing characteristics of the readers of each genre can be found in the analysis of negative attitudes, whereby 12.4% more respondents stated that they would not consider reading Asian fiction than was the case for Black British fiction (see **Table 4.15**). However, statistical tests also showed that if a person stated that he or she would not read Asian fiction, it is also highly likely that he or she would not read Black British fiction.

Statistical analysis by age and gender of respondents’ choice to read – or not to read – Black British and Asian fiction in English showed that younger people (below 40 years) were more likely to read Asian fiction, and were less likely to avoid either of the two genres. Female respondents were less

likely to avoid either genre when choosing their books, appearing to be more open-minded than their male counterparts.

Evidently, it would be wrong to assume that all Black British and Asian fiction is identical in subject matter and style, or that the ethnicity referred to in its label should automatically reflect its intended (or actual) audience. As previously discussed in **2.2**, the use of any label or classification is problematic, and terms such as 'Black British' or 'Asian' will inevitably carry with them certain cultural, ethnic and racial characteristics and stereotypes. However, if those who would make a deliberate choice to avoid one genre would behave in the same way towards the other, does this suggest that these individuals are doing so because of the cultures or lifestyles that they perceive 'minority ethnic fiction' to represent, and how different they feel them to be from their own? Despite the apparent lack of intended readership for minority ethnic fiction, do some white people perhaps feel that these genres are not relevant to them, being more comfortable identifying themselves with other genres?

Just 8.7% (n=91) of questionnaire respondents had listed no category that they would not consider reading, in other words that 91.3% of respondents would deliberately avoid at least one genre when selecting reading material. When asked to provide reasons for their choice not to read certain genres (see **4.6.4**), interviewees repeatedly referred to their lack of interest in the material or, perhaps more significantly, to its lack of relevance to their own lives ('They're not topics that are relevant to me, so I haven't bothered to even go there'). They preferred to stay within their 'comfort zone' of reading material, apparently identifying more with one genre than another. These findings are also supported by Mathewson (1994) who, as stated in **2.7.2**, suggests that the reader will choose a book which affirms 'cherished values, goals and self-concepts' (p.1141).

Exploring this idea a little further, we can look to social identity theory, which considers the behaviour of members of groups and how this relates to their self-conception as group members. Hogg states that people feel a need to identify with a particular group in order to reduce their own insecurities,

or ‘subjective uncertainty’. In doing so, a ‘minimal group effect’ can take place, whereby members of one group will ‘strive to favour themselves over relevant out-groups’ (Hogg, 2000, p.21; Hogg & Vaughan, 2005, p.407). The choice to read, or not to read, would therefore appear to be partly informed by previous habit, and partly by a desire not to leave one’s comfort zone of a genre or genres with which one identifies, and which is somehow ‘relevant’ to his or her life.

However, the data for Study 1 have also revealed an openness on the part of many respondents to read from a wide range of genres, and to try new material. Interestingly, the number of respondents who listed no particular genre that they would not consider reading slightly increased from the first to the second distribution, suggesting that there had been a positive change in attitudes towards fiction reading as a result of the *black bytes* intervention (see 4.7). Specifically looking at attitudes towards Black British fiction, there was a significant increase in the number of respondents from experimental libraries who stated that they were ‘usual’ readers of this genre after the intervention had taken place.

Reader response theory, and the related concept of reader development, can help us to explain this second pattern of respondent behaviour; in reader response theory the reader plays a critical role, participating in a ‘triangular relationship’ between ‘reader, text and the interaction between the two’ (Appleyard, 1994, p.6), even acting in some sense as co-author (Iser, 1978). The term ‘reader-centred practice’ (Train, 2003, pp.35-6) has become frequently used in the application of reader response theory to library and information science, now commonly described as ‘reader development’. In line with reader response theory, the concept of reader development has as its stated objectives to raise the status of reading as a creative act, to increase people’s confidence in their reading, and to bring isolated readers together (Van Riel, 1992, p. 4). An accepted definition is that it is an ‘active intervention to increase people’s reading confidence and enjoyment of reading, open up reading choices, offer opportunities for people to share their reading experience, and raise the status of reading as a creative activity’ (Opening the Book, 2014). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that

certain survey respondents appear to have indeed opened up their reading choices, perhaps even increased in reading confidence as a result.

Bearing in mind the above interpretations, social identity theory and reader response theory would appear to contradict each other: the first would suggest that readers will stay within their comfort zone and read genres that reflect characteristics of their (self-identified) group, whereas the second infers that readers will want to broaden their horizons, deliberately choosing to read something ‘new’.

Essentially, whatever categorisation or labelling we choose to apply to any sample population, alternative patterns of behaviour within that population will inevitably emerge. Some readers will actively seek to follow others in their ‘group(s)’, whereas others will deliberately choose to behave differently.

In this first study, 118 respondents (4.6%) indicated that they would ‘usually’ read four or more of the twelve fiction genres (see **4.6.3**). What could explain this motivation to read from such a diverse range of material? A second theoretical approach from social psychology, this time taken from personality theory, could help us to further understand the characteristics, or *traits*, of the multi-genre fiction reader. A ‘personality trait’ is defined as an individual characteristic that ‘exerts pervasive influence on a broad range of trait-relevant responses’, and which describes ‘response tendencies in a given domain, such as the tendency to behave in a conscientious manner, to be sociable, to be self-confident, etc.’ (Ajzen, 1988, pp.2, 7). Many studies have been conducted in order to categorise these personality traits (e.g. Cattell, 1947; Eysenck, 1953; Jackson, 1967), but there tends to be agreement as to a group of five main factors, known as the ‘Big Five’, as listed below with examples of trait pairs that are representatives of each:

1. extraversion (or surgency): talkative-silent, frank-secretive, adventurous-cautious, social-reclusive
2. agreeableness: good-natured-irritable, gentle-headstrong, cooperative-negativistic, not-jealous-jealous

3. conscientiousness (or dependability): tidy-careless, responsible-undependable, scrupulous-unscrupulous, persevering-quitting
4. emotional stability: calm-anxious, composed-excitable, poised-nervous, not hypochondriacal-hypochondriacal
5. **culture (or openness)**: artistically sensitive-insensitive, imaginative-simple, intellectual - non-reflective, narrow interests-broad interests, uncurious-curious, unadventurous-daring, prefer routine-prefer variety (Ajzen, 1988; Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987).

A number of measures have been devised with which to score individuals according to each of these traits, awarding them percentile scores which will vary on a continuum. For the purpose of the present research, the fifth trait (culture, or openness) can be of use in attempting to further understand readers' attitudes towards different fiction genres. McCrae & Costa (1987), preferring to use the term 'openness', suggest that this factor would include an individual's 'preference for variety and imaginativeness' (p.85), and use adjectives such as 'original, imaginative, broad interests, and daring' (p.87) to define it further.

The second study will also explore this issue, with the repertory grid interview providing an opportunity to investigate the extent to which constructs elicited reflect the 'openness to experience' personality trait.

4.8.2 Practical implications of the first study

In addition to its theoretical contribution, there are also certain practical implications to be drawn from this study. Encouragingly, the contribution of the study to reader-centred work in public libraries has been noted by Van Riel et al (2008) in their discussion of the present author's evaluation of the *black bytes* Black British fiction promotion (on which this first study is based) in their reader development practitioner handbook, 'The reader-friendly library service'.

Firstly, and in quite general terms, Van Riel et al (2008) recommend to practitioners – in particular those involved in reader development - that the research instrument devised to investigate the reading habits of library users in the East Midlands is 'a good example of how a questionnaire can be

used' (p.57). The evaluation of the *black bytes* fiction promotion was deliberately designed not only to focus on readers' responses to the books in the promotion, but also to have a more general focus to 'avoid giving leading questions and obtaining biased responses' (p.58). In collecting data pertaining to a wide range of genres, Van Riel et al recommend that the results therefore provide 'a good picture of the reading habits of library borrowers in the first years of the 21st century' (2008, p.59).

A second implication relates to the specific focus of the thesis as a whole on minority ethnic fiction. The relatively low overall numbers of readers of both Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English, and the relatively high numbers of people who would not choose to read either genre could, as Van Riel et al (2008, p.61) warn, 'be used to justify low levels of provision of Black British, Asian and gay and lesbian fiction'. Clearly, this would not be the desired outcome of a piece of research which is, as stated in **3.1.1**, 'a contribution to improving the provision and promotion of minority ethnic fiction by public library services in the UK and beyond' (2). A more positive contribution the study could make would be, as Van Riel et al (ibid.) argue, 'to highlight the importance of high profile purchase and promotion in these areas [Black British, Asian and LGBT fiction] in order to overcome the barriers that exist around them.'

With the transformative paradigm in mind (see **3.1.1**), the second of these approaches has therefore been chosen to inform the development of the model presented in Chapter 7, as a tool via which practitioners and researchers can understand a range of factors affecting a reader's intention to read a particular fiction genre.

A third practical implication of this study relates to the contribution of the findings to the 'wider debate about the importance of reader development in the cultural role of libraries' (Van Riel et al, 2008, p.61). The findings have demonstrated that most readers would not consider any title from certain genres when choosing books to read, revealing some form of prejudice which has long been a subject of exploration within reading research. Van Rees et al (1999) have suggested that literary fiction, for example, tends to

be more highly regarded than certain genres such as Crime fiction or Romance fiction, and similarly Carey (1992) states that many of the genre fiction categories included in the first study would be regarded by an ‘intellectual’ as unappealingly simple and basic. As Van Riel et al (2008, p.61) propose, ‘Clearly large numbers of library borrowers do not want to read these books not because of what they are but because of what they represent.’

On the one hand, therefore, are the varying forms of reading prejudice, and on the other hand are the principles underpinning reader development that the reader is entirely free to make reading choices free of judgement (Train, 2003, p.35), and that reader development can help us to overcome our reading prejudices and to take risks with unknown titles and genres. Van Riel et al (2008) claim that the findings of the first study provide evidence of the need, when introducing new titles to readers, and encouraging them to step out of their reading comfort zone, ‘to respect people’s choice not to read them, and to tempt rather than preach’ (p.62).

4.8.3 Limitations of the first study

Inevitably, during the course of the first study certain limitations were noted of aspects of the methodology and individual methods, which were either addressed at the time (**a, c**), or have been addressed in the second and third studies (**a, b, c, d, e**), in order to improve and develop the research methodology, and to increase the validity of the research as a whole. A brief exploration of these is included below.

a. Ethnicity of respondents

For the first study it was decided (in consultation with the advisory group, see **4.1**) not to request the ethnicity of questionnaire or interview respondents, as an additional measure to avoid ethnicity being too ‘obvious’ a focus of the research. The limitation of this omission is that it is unclear how representative the sample population is of the wider population of East Midlands library users, particularly given the concerns raised in **2.6**. However, basic community profile data were collected regarding the predominant community ethnicity (see **Table 3**), and this was compared in

general terms to East Midlands 2001 Census data (see 4.4.7). In addition, the large sample size (n=1,047), the very high response rate (91.0%) and the random distribution of the questionnaire (see 4.4.6), have each contributed to the overall representativeness of the sample population.

For Studies 2 and 3, it was decided that it would be of value to the research to record the ethnicity of each interviewee.

b. Respondents' demographic profile

Study 1 questionnaire respondents were asked to state their gender and age (within one of six possible ranges), and the majority (81.1% for gender, 94% for age) provided these valuable additional data. A primary objective of the survey was to take as little of participants' time, and to be as non-invasive, as possible, so these two questions were felt at the time to provide sufficient demographic data.

However, for the second study it was felt that it would be helpful to collect further demographic data, in order to more fully understand the context in which participants' responses were given. Questions were therefore devised in order to ask a participant's age (in bands), ethnicity, occupation, and experience of working with Black British, Asian and LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender] fiction genres and of providing library services to individual members of those communities.

c. Ranking of responses

For ease of completion, questionnaire respondents were simply asked to tick all responses that applied to them, for each of the five questions. They had, for example, thirteen separate genres from which to select for the three genre-related questions (Questions 1, 3 and 4), and each was given equal priority. With no form of 'ranking', or prioritisation, it is impossible to know which of the variables would be the most, or least popular choice for the individual respondent. An example of this in practice is the data collected for Question 2, 'Where did you look for these books?', which appears to indicate that more respondents would go to the library shelf for their books than is the case for all other options, but as Van Riel (2003)

suggests in her observation of the data, ‘Many people say they look on the library shelves...but I think this is largely an automatic box-ticking – offered a question which says do you look on the library shelves, it would be an odd person who says no, never!’ As respondents were asked to tick as many variables as were relevant to them, the library shelves were generally just one of a number of locations selected, and it would have been helpful to know how they would have prioritised their responses.

As shown in **4.5**, the issue was further explored in the subsequent interviews, which provided qualitative data as to the ‘order’ in which respondents would approach different location variables, for example whether they tended to go to a book display as a starting point before moving to the shelves, or whether they initially browsed the shelves in order to obtain ideas for book selection.

Overall, the binary ranking system used in Study 1 was felt to be quite limited, so for the quantitative element of Studies 2 and 3 (the repertory grid) it was therefore decided to use a Likert scale of 1-7. Details of statistical tests used in these later studies are given in **3.5.1**.

d. Selection of genres

The selection of thirteen genres for Study 1 was made by the author, in consultation with the project advisory group, members of which were currently working in the public library service and were therefore likely to have an understanding of the most appropriate genres – and labels – to use. It is impossible to cover each respondent’s reading choices within a brief (space-restricted) list, and certainly the relatively frequent reference to ‘historical fiction’ and ‘horror’ (among others) made in the ‘other’ option for Question 3, would seem to confirm that this was the case. However, the final list was felt to represent a wide range of reading interests, including ‘literary fiction’ for those who preferred not to read what is often described as ‘genre fiction’; the more established genres such as ‘romance fiction’, ‘family sagas’, ‘War/spy/adventure’, ‘Science fiction/fantasy’ and ‘Crime fiction’; the newer genres such as ‘Chick lit’ and ‘Lad lit’; ‘Gay/lesbian fiction’, ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction (in English)’ as examples

of minority genre fiction; ‘audio fiction’ for those who choose to use alternative formats; and finally, ‘non-fiction’, a broad but popular category.

As the report has indicated, the analysis of the survey using these thirteen variables has resulted in a large quantity of valuable data, but for the second study it was nonetheless decided to refine the list, focusing on fiction only and removing alternative formats and ‘family sagas’, as many characteristics of the latter reader were noted in the first study to be the same as those for the reader of romance fiction. The labels used for the remaining ten genres were also refined, where appropriate, resulting in a revised list of 10 elements (see **5.7.4**).

e. Use of terminology

Although full details as to the nature of the research were given in the information sheets for both questionnaire respondents and supporting library staff, no definitions were provided for the thirteen genres listed in Questions 1, 3 and 4. With hindsight this was a weakness of the research method, and as a consequence it is unclear whether each respondent had the same understanding of the terms. In order to address this, each Study 2 participant was asked to read a glossary of each genre used in the repertory grid method before the interview began, and to ask the interviewer any questions relating to these definitions. Similarly, Study 3 participants were also provided with the same glossary before completing the questionnaire survey.

4.8.4 First study: final thoughts

As the first study is concluded, a number of the characteristics of the minority ethnic fiction reader are clearly emerging. This is beginning to address the omission in previous research and reading models as demonstrated in **2.7.2**, not only of individual factors such as age and gender, but also of environmental and societal factors such as the community in which readers live. As explained in **4.8.1** the remaining two studies will build on these initial methods and findings in a more in-depth exploration of the profile of both minority ethnic fiction genres and their readers, in order to develop a new reading model.

Chapter 5

Study 2: exploring perceptions of reader ‘types’ using personal construct theory

Chapter overview

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the second study and the research questions it addresses. The main theoretical framework underpinning the study, namely personal construct theory, is then considered alongside relevant literature, before moving on to a specific consideration of the repertory grid technique, its use in previous research and its application to the present study. This is followed by a description of the largely qualitative methodology used to accomplish the aims of this study. The research findings are then presented, using a coded framework of thematic analysis, and the chapter ends with a discussion of the results, and of the contribution and limitations of the methods employed in the study.

5.1 Introduction and aim and objectives of the second study

The first study conducted for this thesis was an initial attempt to explore the profile of the minority ethnic fiction reader, and to investigate the extent to which an intervention (a Black British fiction promotion held in public libraries in the East Midlands region) can affect an individual’s reading choices and attitudes. The two data collection instruments were a brief questionnaire survey consisting of five closed questions, which was completed by a large sample of 1,047 library users in the East Midlands, and a series of 21 telephone interviews which were conducted with a small sample of the survey respondents.

These initial findings provided valuable data as to the reading choices and attitudes of a large population of readers, enabling the creation of the first part of a model of engagement with minority ethnic English language fiction.

The overall aim of the second study is to build on the findings of Study 1 in order to explore in greater depth the concepts underlying different reader ‘types’, and thereby to form a more detailed profile - a *richer picture* - of the reader of minority ethnic English language fiction. And whereas the first

study obtained the views of members of the fiction reading public, the present study collected data from a group of library and information science postgraduate students, each of whom had varying experience of working with a cross-section of that reading public. Building on the data collected for Study 1 (Chapter 4), this will be achieved via the following objectives:

1. To apply personal construct theory and the associated repertory grid technique in order to generate a series of perceived characteristics of genre fiction readers
2. To expand upon these characteristics in relation to the readers of two minority ethnic English language fiction genres.

The previous study drew from reader response theory from the discipline of English literature, in order to help to explain the behaviour of readers who appeared to be reading more widely and more confidently after the *black bytes* intervention. The framework for this second study is a psychological theory, namely personal construct theory, the role and application of which are explained below (5.2). Although the two theories are from very different disciplines, the present author regards them as quite complementary, given that each focuses on the individual, and the subjective reality of that individual, and each can be used to understand the characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction. This idea of theoretical complementarity is further explored in 5.6.

5.2 Theoretical framework: Personal Construct Theory

Originally presented by George Kelly in 1955 in his ground-breaking work ‘The psychology of personal constructs’ and then developed in the context of clinical psychology, the significance of this approach is today widely acknowledged. Tyler (1981), for example, refers to the book’s publication as a ‘landmark event in the opening toward individuality’ (p.8), and Fransella and Neimeyer (in Fransella, 2005, p.9) describe Kelly’s work as ‘a radical departure in psychological theory’.

Underpinning the new ‘personal construct theory’ (Fransella, 2005, p.67) was the idea that ‘a person’s processes are psychologically channelized by

the ways in which he anticipates events' (Kelly, as cited in Fransella, idem.). In his work Kelly describes this constructivist approach, by which there is no such thing as objective reality. He writes of a subjective reality in which we all exist, and which is 'based on the meanings we have attached to previous experiences' (Banister et al, 1994):

'People are neither prisoners of their environment nor victims of their biographies, but active individuals struggling to make sense of their experiences and acting in accordance with the meaning they impose on those experiences' (Kelly, 1955, p.15).

The principle underpinning this second study, therefore, is that our perceived meaning, or interpretation, of these experiences is the influential aspect, and not the event itself. As Banister et al (1994, p.73) suggest, 'Kelly's focus is on the individual as the maker of meaning'. And to summarise the principle from a researcher's perspective, Burr and Butt (1992, p.3) state that the clue to understanding an individual 'lies in understanding their particular construction of the world'.

Exploring this constructivist approach in a little more detail, we can look to what is now described as 'constructive alternativism', which acknowledges that there are different ways of seeing, of interpreting the same event, and that others are likely to interpret, or construe those events differently from ourselves. The researcher can therefore explore individuals' construct systems and judge them according to their usefulness in explaining the situation, and not in terms of an absolute truth which, Kelly would argue, does not exist in any case.

Related to this idea of the individual interpretation of events, Fransella and Neimeyer (in Fransella, ed., 2005, pp.3-13) refer to the 'value free' orientation of personal construct theory, and a brief exploration of their critique can be helpful in understanding the context of the present study. In presenting his new theory Kelly did not produce a list, or framework, of human characteristics - their 'needs, motives, conflicts or ideals' - that could be applied to all people, but instead focused on 'the general processes by which people made sense of, and navigated, the social world'. Fransella

and Neimeyer state that this ‘abstractness’ results in a theory of personality which is as value-free as any theory could be, and as such is a means of allowing the observer to ‘*step inside* the outlooks of those persons they seek to understand’ (op.cit., p.9). As Kelly himself stated (1955, p.608):

‘In the broadest sense we are restating here the philosophy of constructive alternativism. In a narrow sense we are describing the value system of the clinician (or psychologist more generally) as a kind of liberalism without paternalism. The clinician is not only tolerant of varying points of view...but he is [also] willing to devote himself to the defence and facilitation of widely differing patterns of life. Diversity and multiple experimentation are to be encouraged’ (p.608).

However, this view is not without its critics, and authors such as Mair (1985) and Walker (1992) have suggested that values are inevitably implicit in personal construct theory, as for example the encouragement of diversity (in the above quotation) is in itself a value. It is perhaps more appropriate to suggest, therefore, that personal construct theory is not absolutely value-free, but that it allows us to explore the values of others by recognising the values present in our own constructs and interpretation of those constructs. This interpretation is helpful in the context of the present study, an exploration of the concepts underlying different reader ‘types’, of which a key part is the exploration of the diversity of individual perspectives.

5.3 The repertory grid technique

Initially described as the ‘role construct repertory test’, the repertory grid is the most well-known aspect of Kelly’s personal construct theory. In brief, this method is based on three interlinked processes, conducted in the order as stated:

1. The definition of a set of elements
2. The eliciting of a set of constructs to differentiate between those elements
3. The relating of the elements to the constructs (Fransella, 2005, pp. 68-70).

Repertory grids are generally administered using either dyads (pairs of elements) or triads (groups of three elements), and requesting of the respondent either the difference between, or the opposite of, combinations of these elements. To explain this a little more, elements are defined by Kelly (1955, p.137) as ‘the things or events which are abstracted by a construct’, and as Banister et al recommend, are ‘anything that give rise to construing’ (1994, p.75). The elements in Kelly’s original repertory grid were roles, for example ‘someone I compete with’, ‘someone I respect’, etc. Critically, elements must also be personally relevant to the participant, and relevant also to the subject under investigation (Banister et al, 1994; Bell, in Fransella, ed., 2005).

As stated above, the repertory grid technique will ask the respondent to describe either a perceived difference between, or the perceived opposite of, combinations of elements. It was Kelly’s belief that all constructs are bipolar, in other words that an individual never affirms something without simultaneously denying something else. There are obvious similarities to be drawn between Kelly’s work and another notable study of the period, Osgood et al’s 1957 study of semantic differentiation. Here, the authors’ technique is to present the respondent with a series of semantic scales, consisting of pairs of polar adjectives, such as ‘happy – sad’, ‘hard – soft’, ‘fast – slow’. The respondent would then note his or her response to the adjectives in relation to a particular construct on a positive to negative continuum (see examples given in 4.4.3). In doing so, as Johnson (2012) describes, the respondents ‘differentiate their meaning of the concept in intensity and in direction (in a ‘semantic space’)’. Certainly, the repertory grid and semantic differentiation are both based on this notion of bipolarity which, as Fransella et al state, ‘makes the notion of a construct quite different from the notion of a concept...It is in the contrast that the usefulness of the construct subsists’ (2004, pp.7-8). However, although the two approaches are strongly related, there is a fundamental difference between them: on the one hand, as Osgood et al (1957) describe semantic differentiation, ‘the larger or more representative the sample, the better defined is the space as a whole’ (p.25), whereas the results of a repertory grid interview have been described as a ‘map of the construct system of the

individual' (Fransella et al, 2004, p.4). As Fransella et al continue, the grid data are 'a kind of idiographic cartography as contrasted with, say, the nomothetic cartography of the semantic differential' (ibid.).

To illustrate the strength of this idiographic approach using an example, two participants who each give the construct 'is a younger reader' may, when asked to express the polar construct, give quite different responses, such as 'is an elderly reader', or 'is a middle-aged reader'. In contrast, a perceived limitation of the semantic differential is that it ignores the range of convenience rule, in other words that any construct will operate within a specific context, and that there will always be a limited number of elements to which a construct can be applied by an individual at a particular time point. Fransella et al (1994) suggest that this led Osgood et al to make 'some interesting statements about precisely those constructs which have the *most enormous ranges of convenience*' (p.9), and by way of illustration cite Brown's (1958) question in relation to the semantic differential: 'Is a boulder sweet or sour?' (p.1139).

In practice, this could mean that an interviewee may not be able to rate certain elements against a particular construct. (Fransella et al, 2004). In conducting the interviews, the present author therefore ensured that she was aware of this 'range corollary', and as recommended by Goffin (in Partington, 2002), noted on the grid the few instances where elements fell outside the range of convenience of a particular construct, by entering 'N/A' for 'not applicable'.

The design of this thesis has taken advantage of both the idiographic nature of repertory grid data (Study 2) and, in using an identical series of bipolar constructs elicited in the second study for participants to rate (Study 3), the more nomothetic nature of semantic differentiation.

5.3.1 Dyadic and triadic elicitation of constructs

Previous research has been conducted into the effectiveness of using dyads or triads in the repertory grid process, and of asking for the 'difference' or the 'opposite' when eliciting constructs (Caputi & Reddy, 1999; Hagans et

al, 2000). Four specific methods of element usage were considered by Neimeyer et al (2002), namely:

- Triadic difference – whereby 3 elements are presented at a time, with the question ‘How are two alike in some way, but different from the third?’ The way in which the third is felt to be different will also be requested.
- Triadic opposite – whereby 3 elements are presented, with the question ‘How are any two of these alike in some way?’, with a second question ‘What is the opposite of that?’
- Dyadic difference – whereby 2 elements are presented, with the question ‘How are these two alike or different?’ If a difference is given, this will be the construct pole, or if a similarity is offered, the respondent will be asked to look at the remaining elements to find a difference.
- Dyadic opposite – whereby 2 elements are presented, with the question ‘How are these two alike or different?’ Again, a difference would indicate the polar construct, and a respondent giving a similarity would be asked to state its opposite.

Kelly’s original repertory grid design was based only on triadic methods, and the dyadic elicitation of constructs was a later development by researchers such as Ryle and Lunghi (1970), Landfield (1971) and Keen & Bell (1983). The triadic method was felt to be too complex for certain subjects, such as young children, those with learning difficulties, or even the hearing impaired (Fransella et al, 2004). However, this perceived complexity has been questioned by certain critics, such as Maynard & McKnight (2002) who noted that no such difficulty with triadic elicitation had been experienced by young participants in their own repertory grid study. Furthermore, given that the intended respondent population was a group of Masters-level Librarianship students whose work experience and education directly related to the elements selected, this was not felt to be an issue for the second study. Moreover, the ‘triadic difference’ relates directly to Kelly’s original ‘minimum context’ form of construct elicitation - whereby the respondent is presented with sets of three elements and is asked

to specify a way in which two of the elements are alike (the emergent construct) and thereby different from the third (the polar construct) – and was therefore felt to be a reliable and authoritative method to adopt. A final point in support of this method is that by requesting participants to describe a ‘difference’, rather than an ‘opposite’, it was felt to be more likely to prevent their automatically thinking of a widely accepted contrast, maintaining the intended focus of the grid on the personal constructs (Banister et al, 1994). An example of the value of this in the present study is that of a participant who, stating ‘looking for a predictable plot’ as her construct, then described the polar construct not as ‘looking for an unpredictable plot’, but as ‘looking for an experimental plot’, thereby illustrating her own framework rather than that of society.

5.4 Use of the repertory grid in previous research

There is a considerable body of research into the use and value of the repertory grid technique and the wider application of personal construct theory, and aspects of this work can be reviewed in order to inform and justify the present study.

As stated above, the origin of the repertory grid is in the field of clinical psychology, and it is therefore unsurprising that much of its previous use has been within this field. The grid is felt to be particularly useful in enabling the psychologist, or psychotherapist, to understand how a patient views aspects of the world in which he or she lives, or how he or she regards his or her own behaviour in comparison to that of others. Hewstone et al (1981) used a repertory grid on a longitudinal basis in order to measure psychological change in depressed patients, and found that as patients became less depressed they rated themselves on the grid as more similar to others. A second study from the same year (Parker, 1981) used the grid to investigate the perceived differences between suicide-related elements by patients who had either previously attempted suicide, or who were apparently serious in their intent to commit suicide. In comparing the constructs and subsequent ratings of each group, it was possible to note clear differences in the perceptions the two groups.

Specifically within the field of psychotherapy, the repertory grid has been used with therapy group members, both in patients rating themselves as individuals, and in rating themselves and the other members of the group. Watson (1970), for example, found that the grid could be used to elicit information regarding characteristics of individual group members, the relationships between members of the group and, if administered on multiple occasions, the changes taking place in individual attitudes as a result of the therapy process.

This previous use of the grid to explore our perceptions of others – in comparison to our perception of ourselves – is of particular relevance to the present study, which is investigating how participants perceive other readers, and how they view themselves as readers. Also of direct relevance is Fransella's finding (in Bannister, 1977) that evidence from her own repertory grid work revealed that many people will dissociate themselves from a stereotype presented to them. As many of the constructs elicited for the present study are based on stereotypical perceptions, it will be of interest to investigate whether this finding can also be applied to the readers of different genres of fiction (see **5.8.6**).

Beyond the fields of clinical psychology and psychotherapy, the repertory grid has also been used in a wide range of disciplines, not only in clinical settings but also in (for example) education, market research, management studies and the arts. Some of these additional applications of the method are of direct relevance to the present study, as briefly explored below (**5.4.1**).

In considering the purpose and use of the repertory grid, it is important to note the extent to which this technique enables us to 'elaborate our construing' (Fransella et al, 2004, p.151), essentially to generalise from conclusions drawn. If constructs are repeated across participants, for example, can it be argued that this is a commonly held perception across a larger population? The same authors propose that while it is unreasonable 'to argue that grids do not measure relationships between constructs', instead 'we can argue about the ways in which they measure such

relationships and the types of prediction we can derive from such measurements' (ibid., p.144).

If we go back to the method's creator for his view, Kelly also describes the role of the grid as enabling us to 'predict' a pattern of behaviour, although with the following disclaimer:

'Accurate prediction, then, can scarcely be taken as evidence that one has pinned down a fragment of ultimate truth, though this is generally how it is regarded in psychological research. The accuracy confirms only the interim utility of today's limited set of constructs. Tomorrow's genius will erect new dimensions...' (Kelly, 1969, p.33).

The present author prefers Fransella et al's term 'anticipate' rather than Kelly's 'predict', which seems a more measured way to draw conclusions. As the former authors argue, 'it is in terms of its capacity to enable us to anticipate that we measure the validity of our technique' (Fransella et al, 2004, p.151). A repertory grid study is generally small-scale, but as will be shown it can generate a large number of repeated constructs, thereby providing a solid basis for a larger-scale study.

5.4.1 Education and reading development

Personal construct theory has been applied to educational psychology, with investigations undertaken both from the learners' and teachers' perspectives. In the field of reading development, studies have been conducted using repertory grids to investigate readers' perceptions of authors. Taking the children's author Roald Dahl as the subject, Maynard and McKnight (2002) used the grid to identify those elements which determine an author's popularity, from the perspective of young readers. The technique was felt to be well-suited to young participants, as 'it was thought important to discover the opinions of the young readers in their own language...[enabling] the children to be free to use their own terms when describing contexts'. This reflects the previously stated idea (5.2) that personal construct theory is value-free, or that it is a means of exploring the diversity of individual perspectives. In addition, it relates to reader response

theory and the idea that the reader has an active role to play in the relationship between the author and the text (Walsh, 1993).

5.4.2 The Arts

Miall (1988), for example, conducted a study regarding student response to poetry, using aspects of the poems as elements for the repertory grid. Davis (1976) used the grid to investigate the ways in which members of an orchestra regard each other, and found that members of different sections had certain stereotypical views of those in other sections, such as that string players are seen by brass players as ‘oversensitive’ and think themselves to be ‘God’s gift to music’, whereas brass players are viewed by string players as less intelligent and even as ‘clowns’. Exploring in this way both textual response and the perceptions of one group of another is of value in informing the present investigation of perceptions of the readers of different fiction genres.

5.4.3 Information Science

The main application of personal construct theory in Information Science has been in information retrieval research. In addition to the previously mentioned study investigating readers’ perceptions of authors (Maynard & McKnight, 2002) McKnight has also used the repertory grid technique and personal construct theory in a number of studies, for example in investigating six researchers’ perceptions of texts, and the ways in which they construed those texts (Dillon & McKnight, 1993), and as a means of ‘externalising an individual’s view of information space’ (McKnight, 2000, p. 730). This second study used eleven possible information sources as the elements, asking the participant to elicit constructs based on a series of ten triads, and then to rate each construct using a 1-5 scale. Although just one participant was involved in this initial experiment, McKnight reports that the repertory grid is an effective means of obtaining ‘an individual’s view of the various information sources that make up his information space’ (McKnight, 2000, p.732).

Zhang & Chignell (2001) conducted a US/Canadian study that investigated the effects of user characteristics on users’ own models of information

retrieval systems. The repertory grid was felt to be relevant to research into mental models as it 'identifies individual constructions of experience as the source of a person's behaviour' (p.447), and enabled an investigation of the ways in which different types of users had different mental models, an issue which the authors felt had not been addressed in previous studies. In the UK, Crudge & Johnson (2004, 2007) evaluated the use of the repertory grid technique in eliciting a user's mental model of search engines, and concluded that it is an appropriate technique for 'user-centred determination of evaluative constructs' (p.794). Furthermore, due to the users' own formulation of constructs, the method was felt to be an effective means of reducing 'unacceptable levels of bias' (2004, p.802).

5.5 Building on previous research

As section 5.4 demonstrated, personal construct theory and the repertory grid technique have provided a framework for research conducted within the field of information retrieval into the characteristics of information users, and within the fields of education and reading development into readers' perceptions of other authors. Each of these applications has informed the design of this second study.

Moving beyond personal construct theory, also informative in the development of this study has been previous research in fiction reading, both within the fields of information science and librarianship, and English literature. Spiller (1980) and Yu & O'Brien (1999) investigated public library fiction borrowers (n=500 and n=300 respectively), and each found that a prior knowledge of the author and, to a lesser extent, the genre, were the main considerations in book selection. Jennings and Sear (1986) also identified the author and genre as major considerations, but instead suggested that the genre was more likely to drive the book selection than the author. Outwith the public library environment, Ross (2001) conducted a study of 194 'enthusiastic readers for pleasure' (p.7), and similarly found that 'the single most important strategy for selection that readers used was to choose a book by a known and trusted author' (p.14). Graham (2007) explored such findings in her investigation of fiction choice among 114 people aged 18-35, considering issues such as the importance of the author,

genre and publisher in readers' choice. Survey respondents were asked to rank seven variables in order of their relevance to their fiction selection, namely author, book cover design, publisher, genre, sample page, title and summary. Graham found, for example, that just 12.3% of respondents (n=14) rated 'genre' as the most important aspect in their choice of fiction, although this finding was not explored in detail.

The present study will build on previous research in three principal ways. Firstly, it is investigating in greater depth both the attitudes of the individual reader towards different fiction genres, and the perceptions people have of the readers of those genres, acknowledging the complexity of each of these. Moving beyond an exploration of single factors such as the author or book cover, the study is using personal construct theory in order to conduct a more reflexive, holistic investigation of the profile of the reader of genre fiction (in particular minority ethnic English language fiction). As Yu & O'Brien (1999, p.37) observe:

'...reading habits are not simply determined by any single factor, nor can individual readers' reading behaviour be neatly cast to the affinities of single-factor divided classes. Far from it: different factors often compound in complex ways within individual readers, resulting in highly individualistic approaches to fiction reading.'

Secondly, although studies such as those referred to above include a reasonably large sample population, many repertory grid studies have involved a relatively small group of participants (sometimes as small as n=1). The research design for the present thesis involves a complete repertory grid interview with construct elicitation and rating (n=15) for Study 2, and the rating and analysis of the most frequently cited or relevant constructs by a second group of participants (n=21) for Study 3 (see Chapter 6), in order to increase the validity of the data and to enable more helpful statistical analyses.

Thirdly and finally, previous research has not tended to combine the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data in order to investigate reader attitudes and perceptions. However, this second study has been designed

with an additional qualitative element of the textual commentary which can be used alongside the quantitative data, in order to explore these attitudes and perceptions in far greater depth, and to understand in more detail the process by which each participant elicited and rated each construct. In addition, this enabled the researcher to investigate potential conflicts between the 'raw' data and the commentary (i.e. where constructs/ratings appear to contradict the commentary).

5.6 The appropriateness of the repertory grid technique to the second study

It was felt that the repertory grid was a highly appropriate method to employ for the second study of this research, for two reasons. Firstly, the essential nature of personal construct psychology is its reflexivity, in other words that it requires reflection, interaction and construction on the part of both researcher and participant: the objective of a repertory grid is to attempt to understand the subjective reality of the participant, rather than to impose a pre-defined objective reality into which that of the participant must 'fit'. In this sense the approach is necessarily democratic, and crucially the constructs elicited should not be changed or adapted in order to map onto the researcher's framework, but will form part of a new framework. The previous study briefly explored the concept of 'white research', whereby cross-cultural research conducted by a white researcher will inevitably be affected to some extent by the ethnicity of the researcher and the biased environment in which he or she conducts that research. Using a method in which the participant him/herself defines a subjective reality, such bias should be significantly reduced.

Related to this, a second reason for the appropriateness of the repertory grid technique is the closeness of an element of personal construct theory to reader response theory. As explained above, key to our understanding of the repertory grid is the concept that the individual's interpretation of experiences is of more value in understanding the individual than the experience itself. Similarly, reader response theory (and the related library and information science concept of reader development) can help us to understand the reading behaviour of an individual, and that he or she plays

an active role in interpreting a text, creating in a sense a new narrative from the interaction between the individual reader and the 'unique' text (Walsh, 1993, p.16). As Denham (2003, p.60) suggests, this approach 'is not so much concerned with what happens and how it happens but with the outcome in the fact that there is an engagement, an interaction, between the reader and the text that in some way benefits the reader' (see also **2.7.1**). With each placing the individual at the centre, contributing to the creation of a new 'subjective reality', the repertory grid technique is felt to complement reader response theory very well, in an attempt to further understand the characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction.

5.7 Methodology

Study 2 consisted of a series of repertory grid interviews which were conducted in February-March 2008 with fifteen Librarianship Masters students from the academic year 2007-8 (see **Appendix 2a**). Each interview involved the elicitation and rating of personal constructs, plus a subsequent discussion of the experience of participating in the process, and of aspects of the participant's previous public library work. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and one third of participants were involved in a subsequent member checking process (explained at **5.7.12**).

The mean duration of these interviews was 52:06 minutes, ranging from 37:36 minutes to 1 hour 13:34 minutes. Although the research instrument used in each was identical, the variation in duration was due to the differing amount of time taken by each participant to elicit and/or rate constructs, as illustrated in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1. Mean and range of duration of the eliciting and rating phases of the repertory grid interviews

	Time taken to elicit constructs (minutes:seconds)	Time taken to rate constructs (minutes:seconds)	Duration overall (hrs:mins:secs)
RG01	27:00	11:00	0:46:15
RG02	08:45	16:45	0:45:21
RG03	36:57	18:47	1:03:15
RG04	17:00	24:30	0:46:52
RG05	41:01	16:29	1:09:30
RG06	17:09	10:06	0:38:02
RG07	23:55	17:03	0:52:40
RG08	38:20	12:22	0:59:03
RG09	27:19	18:37	0:53:15
RG10	22:08	19:21	0:49:36
RG11	24:07	44:37	1:13:34
RG12	20:57	10:40	0:37:36
RG13	32:39	13:13	0:59:27
RG14	19:01	13:29	0:44:28
RG15	20:00	12:15	0:42:40
Mean	25:52	17:21	0:52:06

5.7.1 A quantitative or qualitative method?

An examination of previous use of the repertory grid technique revealed that it has been associated with both qualitative and quantitative research.

Banister et al (1994) suggest that the grid is ‘most commonly dealt with quantitatively and often with scant regard for its theoretical background, in a somewhat free-floating fashion’ (p.72), whereas other commentators refer to it as a qualitative method (Marsden & Littler, 2000; Procter, 2002). In fact, the technique can be applied both quantitatively and qualitatively, and a repertory grid can contain both qualitative and quantitative data. As Fransella (2005) states:

‘The identity of the elements and the nature of the constructs may provide qualitative information while the relationships between the

constructs and elements may be interpreted as quantitative data.’
(p.68)

Selected in part for its versatility, the repertory grid was employed both qualitatively and quantitatively, as follows:

- *Qualitatively*: as a means of facilitating a qualitative interview and exploring the emerging themes (constructs) and the participant’s perceptions of those themes. [Study 2]
- *Quantitatively*: as a means of enabling participants to distinguish quantitatively between constructs, and of enabling the researcher to calculate (for example) the frequencies of construct elicitation, and the mean of the various construct ratings [Study 3]

The technique can therefore provide a basic framework for the exploration of elements and constructs, but it can be adapted for different research purposes. For example, Crudge & Johnson (2004) reported on their quantitative application of the technique and recommended that a further piece of research be conducted in order to explore qualitative data ‘arising from construct explorations during the interviews’, thereby providing ‘more detail regarding perception of features, in addition to insight into the emotional responses’ (p.802). In a study of the use of the repertory grid technique in consumer research, Marsden & Littler (2000) similarly state that it ‘incorporates the virtues of both qualitative and quantitative analyses’ as it enables the qualitative exploration of the individual’s ‘motivations, decision making processes and values’, but also the ‘patterns, themes and categories’ in the quantitative data (pp.829-830).

Taking such comments into account and the perceived advantages of multi-method research (see 3.2), Study 2 was designed to include a further qualitative element in addition to those listed above. A digital recording was therefore made of each of the fifteen interviews (with the full signed consent of each participant), and the transcriptions of these interviews were used as a means of further exploring the perceptions underpinning the constructs and ratings of the repertory grid. Using this additional element the

researcher can understand in more detail the process by which each participant elicited and rated each construct and, crucially, can investigate tensions arising between the ‘raw’ data in the repertory grid and the commentary, for example considering where constructs or ratings appear to contradict the commentary.

5.7.2 Pilot study

It was considered vital to pilot the second study, particularly as the present author had not previously used the repertory grid technique in her research. In addition, the method was being adapted from its usual format to include a qualitative, textual commentary which needed to be tested alongside the grid itself. Bryman (2012) logically states that piloting provides the interviewer with experience of using the method and, in doing so, can increase their overall confidence with the process. Furthermore, as participants were not expected to have any previous knowledge of the repertory grid technique, it was also useful to conduct a pilot study in order to evaluate the information and instructions given to participants in completing both stages of the process (eliciting the constructs to differentiate between the elements, and rating the elements to the constructs).

Four participants were selected for the pilot study, none of whom would normally have been part of the main sample population, but as academic or research staff within the Social Sciences faculty – three of whom were qualified librarians - they could be described as comparable to members of the population from which the main sample group were taken (see **5.7.3**). This approach to pilot sampling is endorsed by Bryman (2012). Each was sent the participant information sheet and consent form prior to the interview (see **Appendices 2b, 2c**) and each was asked to read a glossary giving brief genre descriptions at the start of the process (see **Appendix 2d**).

Unlike the approach taken for the pilot phase of Study 1 (see **4.4.5**), certain aspects of the method were adapted as each pilot interview was conducted. Examples of these are given below:

- The first pilot interview (P1) tested the binary ranking as originally used by Kelly (1955), asking the interviewee to give a ‘tick’ or a ‘cross’ as per the response. However, it was felt that this approach did not allow the researcher to explore the data as fully as would be possible with a scale of 1-7.
- In P1 and P2 the same thirteen elements were used as in Study 1, but this was felt to be too many and the list of elements was revised to ten for the remaining pilot interviews (and kept as such in the final version of the grid).
- In order to understand the context in which responses were given, it was felt after P1 and P2 that it would be helpful to collect certain demographic participant data from participants (age, work experience, experience of supporting readers of minority ethnic fiction, experience of working with minority communities, etc.).
- Following P1, P2 and P3 a significant adaptation of the method was made to include a form of ongoing member checking, whereby participants were asked to comment on their experience of the process, both in terms of difficulties faced and emotions felt while participating. This is explored further in **5.7.12**.
- Although an information sheet was given to each pilot interview participant prior to attending the interview, and a glossary giving descriptions of each genre was provided to each participant at the start of the interview, it was felt by the P4 participant that the verbal introduction by the researcher should be revised to emphasise that there was no ‘right answer’ or ‘wrong answer’ either in eliciting or rating the constructs. The introduction was revised as suggested, and it was felt that this helped to reassure participants.
- P3 and P4 participants reported that they found it difficult to remember to focus on the *reader* of each fiction genre, rather than the genre itself, in forming their constructs. The element cards (used to present the triads to participants) were therefore revised to clearly state ‘reader of romance fiction’ (for example), rather than simply ‘romance fiction’. This appears to have helped the study participants in the elicitation process.

5.7.3 Sample population

Previous research was taken into account in considering an appropriate sample size for Study 2. Kelly (1955) originally developed the repertory grid for use with a single participant, and certainly it has been used to good effect in this way in more recent studies (Botterill, 1989; Botterill & Crompton, 1987). However, later researchers have also noted the flexibility of the technique in collecting and analysing group data (Bannister & Fransella, 1971; Pike, 2003).

Patton (1990) states that there is no rule regarding the number of participants in repertory grid research, but in an attempt to find a purposeful sample size it can be noted that groups of 10,15 and 25 participants are frequently used (Dunn et al, 1986; Ginsberg, 1989; Tan & Hunter, 2002). Tan & Hunter (2002, p.9), for example, propose that a sample size of between 15 and 25 participants within a population is likely to 'generate sufficient constructs to approximate the *universe of meaning* regarding a given domain of discourse'. Dunn et al (1986) report that a study involving 17 subjects generated 23 constructs, but that the full list of 23 was complete after only the tenth interview, the final seven adding nothing new to the list. Certainly, a recognised advantage of the technique is that a large sample is not required in order to reach this point of 'redundancy' (Frost & Braine, 1967; Young, 1995).

A purposive sampling method was used for the repertory grid interviews of Study 2, conducted during a 3-week period in February-March 2008. As noted in 3.4.2, this form of sampling is essentially strategic, being employed in order to reach the most relevant sample population. As Study 1 had investigated public library users' perceptions of different genres, the second study was seeking to investigate the perceptions of librarianship postgraduate students, both in terms of their experience as library and/or bookselling staff (each of them had previously worked in an academic, special and/or public library, or in a bookshop, for at least one year) and their own perceptions as readers. Their appropriateness as participants related to the anticipated relevance to them of the elements (fiction genres)

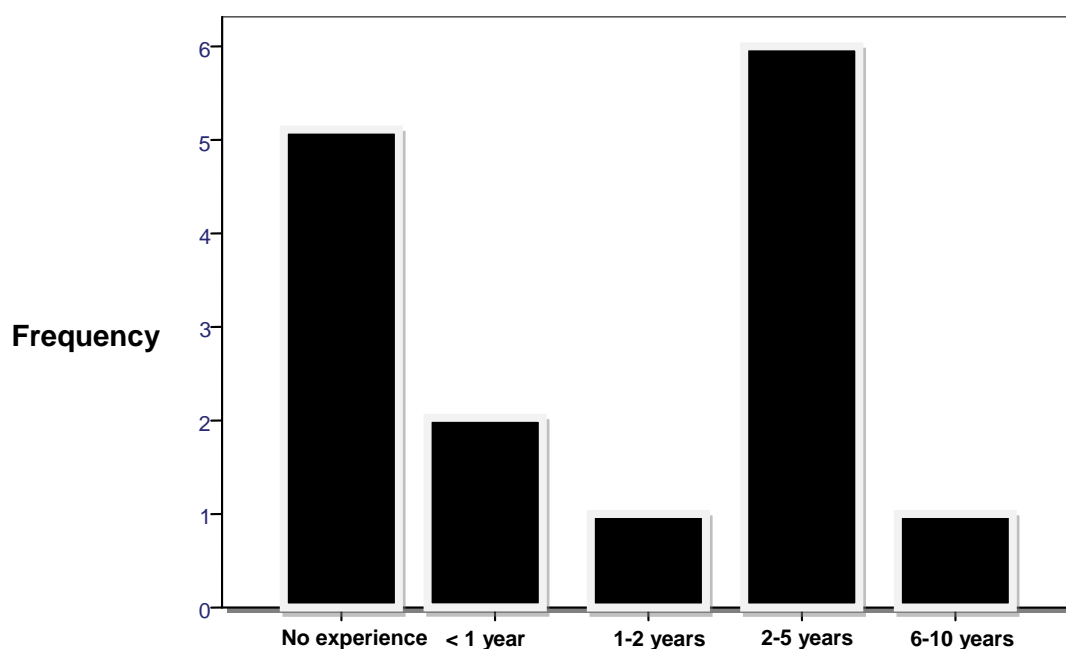
and the concept of fiction reading, within the overall context of librarianship. As Banister et al (1994) recommend:

‘...elements need to be personally relevant to the participant, even if they appear strange to outsiders, and both appropriate to and representative of the topic explored’ (75).

The sample population was therefore all students on the MA Librarianship programme at Sheffield University in the academic year 2007-8, both full-time (n=29) and part-time (n=13). An email was sent by the present author to the distribution list for each of the programmes, asking if students would be interested in participating in the research project. It was emphasised that participation was voluntary, and that no link was made between participation and their progress on the course(s). Taking into account previous research findings as noted above, the intended sample size was 10-15, and fifteen students agreed to participate in the interviews (14 full-time, 1 part-time), giving an overall response rate of 35.71%. Demographic data regarding the participants and their previous public library work experience are given below, and in Figure 5.1:

- **Gender** – 5 participants (33.3%) were male, 10 participants (66.7%) were female
- **Age (band)** – 12 participants were aged 20-29, 3 participants were aged 30-39.

Figure 5.1. The number of years of public library work experience of Study 2 participants (n=15)



Ethnicity of participants

As noted in the exploration of the limitations of Study 1 (3.10.2), all participants in the second study were asked to state their ethnicity, either in the repertory grid interview or when submitting the construct ratings. Unfortunately, the sample was fairly homogenous, with predominantly white British participants and a very small number of overseas students. 14 of the 15 Study 2 participants described themselves as ‘White British’, and 1 as ‘Japanese’. The ethnicity of participants of both Studies 2 and 3 is described in the following chapter (6.3.1).

5.7.4 Elements selected for the repertory grid

Whereas certain repertory grid studies have used ‘personal elements’, whereby the interviewee is asked to identify his or her own list of elements before eliciting constructs, the present study used ‘provided elements’, in other words a list provided by the interviewer for consideration by the interviewee. This method was felt to be more appropriate for Study 2, as the grids can be more easily compared when elements are identical across each interview (Goffin, 2002; Fransella et al, 2004).

Guidelines for the appropriate selection of elements were found to be useful in devising the second study (Goffin, 2002, p.203), as summarised below:

1. *Elements should be specific and discrete in order to avoid confusing the interviewee* – each element was the reader of a specific fiction genre
2. *Simple, clear elements support effective interviewing* – the genre labels were felt to be clearly stated, but an additional glossary was used to aid the interviewee's understanding
3. *The set of elements should be relatively homogeneous* – as stated above, each element was the reader of a specific fiction genre
4. *Elements should avoid any value judgements* – ‘the reader of x fiction genre’ was felt to be sufficiently value-free
5. *The interviewee must be familiar with the elements* – all Study 2 participants were either in training to be professional librarians, or were already professionally qualified, and would therefore be well placed to understand the differences between fiction genres. The glossary provided further information
6. *The elements must be appropriate to the topic being studied* - although the specific focus of the study was on minority ethnic fiction, it was felt that it would be helpful to broaden the enquiry to genre fiction in general, in order to conduct a more effective (and comparative) investigation of reading attitudes.

Following these guidelines, eleven elements were used for the repertory grid in both Study 2 and the following Study 3, namely ‘the reader of’ ten fiction genres (listed below) and ‘myself as reader’ as the final element, used for rating purposes only and not within the triads. The fiction genres were each used in the previous Study 1, but following the analysis of the first study and the pilot research for the present study (see 5.7.2) the original list of thirteen elements was reduced to ten for Study 2. The elements removed were ‘family sagas’, non-fiction’ and ‘audio books’, and the final list therefore focused on fiction only and removed alternative formats and ‘family sagas’: characteristics of the latter reader were noted in the first

study to be the same as those for the reader of romance fiction. The ten genres chosen are given below:

- Reader of Science Fiction/ Fantasy fiction
- Reader of LGBT fiction
- Reader of War/Spy fiction
- Reader of Romance fiction
- Reader of Lad Lit fiction
- Reader of Crime fiction
- Reader of Chick Lit fiction
- Reader of Asian fiction (in English)
- Reader of Literary fiction
- Reader of Black British fiction.

The wording of the elements was critical to the overall success of the study; as Fransella et al (2004) suggest, the majority of previous repertory grid research has employed role titles for its elements. Similarly, Wright & Lam (2002) found that elements were more effective when worded as ‘-ing words or doing words’ (p.113), so as actions rather than as abstract concepts which may not be as easy for the participant to understand, or to relate to. The decision was therefore taken to word the elements as roles with specific actions related to them, for example ‘Reader of Literary fiction’.

5.7.5 Triads selected for the repertory grid

Section 5.3.1 above explored the use of triadic and dyadic elements, and stated that a *triadic difference* approach would be used for the present study. Having decided the overall approach, it was then necessary to determine the means of presenting the triads to participants. In presenting his ‘Minimum Context Form’, Kelly (1955) originally recommended the random selection of elements for each elicitation. However, bearing in mind that with 10 elements there would be 120 possible triads (Goffin, 2002, p.205), clearly this random selection cannot continue until the process has been exhausted. In a study in which the repertory grid was used to investigate the personal construction of information space, McKnight (2000) reported that the triads

had been chosen in order that no pair of elements would appear in more than one triad. His justification for this was that it would ‘maximize the participant’s opportunity to present different constructs’ (p.731).

Given that the focus of the present research is on minority ethnic fiction, it was important that the triads offered to Study 2 participants included sufficient representation of the elements ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Reader of Black British fiction.’ As Banister et al (1994) suggest, the elements can be chosen either randomly or systematically, and in this case a systematic approach was adopted by which all participants were given the same set of ten triads. The purpose of doing so was to ensure that all elements were sufficiently rotated and that there was sufficient inclusion of the minority fiction genres, and to increase the consistency of the overall approach. The triads are listed below, in the order that they were presented to participants:

1. Reader of: Crime/Black British/Romance fiction
2. Reader of: Lad Lit/Crime/Chick Lit fiction
3. Reader of: Black British/Asian fiction in English/Literary fiction
4. Reader of: Lad Lit/War & Spy/Crime fiction
5. Reader of: Asian fiction in English/Black British/LGBT fiction
6. Reader of: Black British/Literary/Science fiction & Fantasy fiction
7. Reader of: Science fiction & Fantasy/Asian fiction in English/Lad Lit fiction
8. Reader of: LGBT/Romance/War & Spy fiction
9. Reader of: Asian fiction in English/Black British/Science fiction & Fantasy fiction
10. Reader of: LGBT/Chick Lit/Romance fiction.

It was felt that ten triads would be an appropriate number to use, in order to elicit a reasonable number of constructs and also to prevent the participant from tiring in what is undeniably a demanding cognitive process. Previous research would suggest that this is an effective number of constructs (Banister et al, 1994; Goffin, 2002; Fransella et al, 2004).

As each triad was presented to the participant, he or she was asked to describe a way in which two of the three elements were alike in some way, but different from the third. Having elicited this construct (the implicit construct), the polar construct was then requested, in other words a way in which the third element is perceived to be different from the other two. The bipolarity of personal constructs – and the importance of requesting a ‘difference’ rather than an ‘opposite’ - is further explored above (5.3).

During the elicitation process, the implicit and polar constructs were recorded in the grid by the researcher, and when all triads had been presented and all constructs noted down, the grid was passed to the participant so that each construct could be rated (see below, 5.7.8).

5.7.6 The use of examples in the elicitation process

When repertory grid interview participants have no previous experience of the grid as an interview technique – as was the case in the present study - researchers have previously described a need to provide examples for participants as a guide when eliciting constructs (Reeve et al, 2002; Neimeyer & Tolliver, 2002). Reeve et al (2002) reported the significant impact that giving different types of examples could have on the nature of the constructs elicited: factual constructs (e.g. tall vs. short) ‘tended to elicit more neutral, objective, and less personally revealing construct dimensions than did the use of more personally descriptive examples (e.g. safe vs. afraid)’ (p.122). Neimeyer & Tolliver (2002) referred to the limitation of the Reeve et al (2002) study, namely that the sample size had been too small for valid statistical analysis (n=8). They therefore extended the study to a larger population (n=30), and similarly found that the types of examples can have a ‘significant influence on the nature of the personal constructs that are elicited’ (p.124).

For the present study, the issue of giving examples was carefully considered in the light of previous research. It was decided that no example would be given in the elicitation process itself, largely in order to avoid influencing the participant in his or her response. As Phillips (1989) argues:

‘...the whole essence of elicitation of personal constructs is that it should be the individual’s language and ways of contrasting which are to be elicited and the researcher has to embrace the style of interviewing where words are not put into the client’s mouth’ (p.216).

However, in explaining the complex process of rating the constructs, an example was given based on the participant’s own first construct. This is illustrated below:

RG01 – first construct given ‘Has a specialist interest’ (implicit), ‘Does not have a specialist interest’ (polar). Example given to participant therefore ‘Before we continue, I’d like you to rate your responses for each of the categories on the table, on a scale of 1-7, where 1= for example, ‘Has a specialist interest’, and 7 = ‘Does not have a specialist interest’. The scales relate to your strength of opinion on the matter, not to a knowledge you have or do not have.’

In adopting this technique for each part of the interview, and combining it with the information sheet and glossary described above (5.7.2), it was found that participants had little difficulty in understanding the instructions.

5.7.7 Laddering

A process known as ‘laddering’ is frequently used during the elicitation of personal constructs. The technique originated in Kelly’s (1955) personal construct theory and was further developed by Hinkle (1965, in Fransella et al, 2004) in his doctoral thesis. Hinkle described the process as a means of clarifying the relations between the elicited constructs, and organising them into hierarchical relations. The central idea underpinning the technique is that whereas the basic (‘minimum context’) form of a repertory grid gives each construct elicited an equal prominence, laddering facilitates the elicitation of ‘progressively higher order constructs’ (Fransella et al, 2004), thereby enabling the investigation of ‘more global aspects of the respondents’ construct system’ (Rugg & McGeorge, 1995). In simpler terms, Burr & Butt (1992, p.124) describe the process as ‘a technique devised to ascend a construct system from relatively subordinate to relatively superordinate constructs.’ In practice, therefore, the process could involve first eliciting constructs in the usual way, and then asking the participant to state by which pole of each construct they would prefer to be

described. The response is used as another construct which is superordinate to the first (Fransella et al, 2004).

However, the laddering technique has been noted to be ‘far more flexible than originally described’, and as resembling ‘a highly-structured form of interview’ (McGeorge & Rugg, 1992, p.150). In its simplest form, it involves the careful use of questioning to enable the participant to elaborate on the elicited construct, and as such is of value in conducting the present study. If conducted as originally intended, laddering would use a series of standardised questions, or ‘probes’ (Corbridge et al, 1994, p.316), in order to move both upwards towards superordinate constructs via a question such as ‘why is that important to you?’, and downwards towards subordinate constructs via a question such as ‘how is it different?’ (Crudge & Johnson, 2007, p.264).

Although it is still widely used in personal construct research, this aspect of the technique which relates to superordinacy and subordinacy has been questioned by a number of researchers as confusing and even unhelpful (ten Kate, 1981; Caputi et al, 1990). A modified version is proposed by Tan and Hunter (2002), who suggest that during construct elicitation the researcher can use the procedure as a means of ‘drilling down into the construct in order to determine the research participant’s underlying assumptions and interpretations of the label associated with the construct’ (p.47). This straightforward process of ‘drilling down’ was therefore used in the repertory grid interviews for Study 2, and was found to be very helpful in the elaboration of constructs, as the following examples are intended to illustrate:

Participant RG04 [considering Science fiction & fantasy/Asian/Lad Lit fiction triad]: ‘I think again that these [indicates Science fiction/fantasy and Lad Lit fiction] are comfort zones, but this [Asian fiction in English] is more experimental.’
BB – asks if the participant regards ‘experimental’ as different from the ‘challenging’ description she had used when eliciting the previous construct.
Participant RG04: ‘Yes, I don’t think it’s necessarily challenging, but it might reflect experiences that are different to your own, whereas these are – well, you’re not going to have had these

experiences, but I think you want something a bit more predictable, in your comfort zone’.

Final construct used in the repertory grid = ‘looking for a more predictable read’, with the polar construct ‘looking for a more experimental read’.

‘**Participant RG05** [considering Black British/Asian/Literary fiction triad]: ‘Yes, I think things that either represent their experiences in different countries, or maybe in countries where they’ve got family... I’m assuming that the reader’s (for example) Asian, but it didn’t say that [in the glossary of genre descriptions].’

BB – asks whether this construct is not simply focusing on ethnicity, but focusing on minority ethnicity.

Participant RG05: ‘‘Yes, definitely, I’m assuming that this [Literary fiction] is catering for a larger group of the population.’

Final construct used in the repertory grid = ‘See themselves as part of a minority group’, with the polar construct ‘more likely to be white, part of a majority group’.

5.7.8 The eliciting and rating of constructs

As is the case with the elements used in the repertory grid interview, constructs can be either ‘personal’ or ‘provided’. With ‘personal constructs’, the interviewee elicits his or her own constructs in response to the triads, with no input from the interviewer. With ‘provided constructs’ the interviewer gives a list of constructs to the interviewee, following which no further constructs are elicited. It was decided to use ‘personal constructs’ in the interviews conducted for Study 2, in order to identify the most common and/or pertinent constructs, which could then be used as provided constructs in the rating process of Study 3.

As previously stated in **5.7.2** Kelly’s original repertory grid used a binary ranking system, by which the participant would be asked to tick each element to which the construct applied. However, this approach has been found to limit the data analysis (Bannister, 1959; Fransella et al, 2004), and certainly the pilot research for this study would confirm this.

A second possible means of rating the constructs is the rankings method, by which participants are asked to allocate a number within a stated range (e.g. 1-10 if 10 elements in the grid) to each element in order to indicate strength of feeling. Yet this method can also be restrictive in that it can ‘force the

elements to be uniformly distributed across the construct' (Fransella et al, 2004, p.59), by insisting that participants use each number only once. Pope & Keen (1981) also suggest that ranking the constructs can be tedious and time-consuming for participants.

For the present study and the third study it was therefore decided to use an ordinal scale, whereby participants are given a number within a range such as 1-3, 1-5, 1-7, etc. Unlike the previous method, different elements can be given the same number for the construct in question, and other numbers may not be selected at all. Banister et al (1994, p.77) report that the use of a scale in this way can lead to a 'slightly more subtle picture' in the data analysis, as the figures selected will be more relevant to the individual. For Metzler et al (2002) the scale size, in particular the use of 'severely-restricted scales (such as the 3-point scale)' (p.106) can affect the validity of the findings, and recommend the use of a 7-point or 13-point scale, which they found to be equally effective. On the other hand, Goffin (in Partington, 2002) suggests that the longer, 11 or 13-point scales can unnecessarily increase the time taken to complete the rating process, which will be tedious for interviewee. Bearing in mind the above points, the 7-point ordinal scale was selected, with possible values ranging from 1 to 7 inclusive.

It is important to note that the numbers selected by the participants have no meaning in themselves, but provide a means by which to position elements in relation to each of the constructs, thereby resulting in 'a slightly richer picture' (Banister et al, 1994, p.77).

5.7.9 Direction of rating

In many investigations using repertory grids participants are asked to rate each construct on all elements in turn as per Kelly's original method (1955), whereas other studies have asked participants to rate each element on all constructs in turn. Opinion is divided as to both the preferred approach and whether the direction of rating is likely to affect the data at all. Costigan et al (1991) and Epting et al (1992) found that differentiation levels were lower where participants were asked to rate all elements according to each construct before moving to the second construct, but in 2002 Neimeyer &

Hagans suggested that previous research in this area had been inconclusive. Given this and the recommendation by Fransella et al (2004, p.64) to continue to use Kelly's original rating method 'until such a time as research indicates that the direction of rating definitely makes a difference', it was decided that it would be appropriate to ask Study 2 and Study 3 participants to rate each construct on all elements in turn.

5.7.10 'The self' as an element in the rating process

In addition to the ten genre-specific elements listed above (5.7.4), it was decided to include 'Myself as a reader' as an eleventh element for use in the construct rating part of the interview (not in the elicitation process). Participants were asked to rate themselves according to each construct, for example 'reader is looking for an easy read'/'Reader is looking for a challenging read', unless the construct in question was agreed to be inappropriate (e.g. 'Reader is more likely to be male'/'Reader is more likely to be female').

As the primary focus of this second study is on the qualitative data collected from the repertory grid interviews, the methodological contribution and findings of this additional element are explored in Study 3 (6.4.2).

5.7.11 The research context: collecting additional participant data

It is usual for research with a qualitative element to include the collection of demographic and personal data from all participants, where appropriate. These additional descriptive data can help the researcher to understand the context in which responses are given. Bryman (2004) suggests that qualitative research may at first glance appear to contain 'apparently trivial details', indeed that some researchers become too 'embroiled in descriptive detail' (p.280), and similarly Loftland & Loftland (1995) warn that this contextual information can overwhelm or even inhibit the analysis of data.

Bearing the above warnings in mind, it was nonetheless decided that an investigation of human behaviour, choices and attitudes such as this could be enhanced by the collection of certain descriptive details. As Bryman

(2012) acknowledges, ‘it is often precisely this detail that provides the mapping of context in terms of which behaviour is understood’ (p.401).

All Study 2 participants were therefore asked to provide certain additional personal data, some of which were collected during the interview, and some of which were requested afterwards via email. Information regarding these data for Study 2 is given in Table 5.2 below, and that for Study 3 is given in 6.3.2. All additional questions were carefully considered, discussed with pilot study participants, and only included where they were considered to add to the overall data analysis. Points 1-4 are reported in 5.7.3, points 5-7 below and point 8 in 6.4.1.

Table 5.2. Additional personal data requested of Study 2 participants

Study 2: repertory grid interview
<p>Collected during interview (1-4, see 5.7.3; 5-7, see below):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Gender2. Age (within a range)3. Ethnicity4. Whether he/she had previous public library work experience – and if so, how many years5. Whether he/she had specific experience of supporting readers of LGBT/Black British/Asian fiction6. Whether his/her public library employers had installed promotions of LGBT/Black British/Asian fiction7. Whether he/she had specific experience of supporting LGBT/Black British/Asian public library users.
<p>Collected after interview, via email (see 6.4.1):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">8. Which of the ten fiction genres used in the repertory grid he/she read on a regular basis.

Participants’ experience of working with minority fiction (points 5-7)

Of the ten Study 2 participants with public library work experience, just one (RG11) answered positively to all 3 questions, stating that he had ‘specific

experience of supporting readers of LGBT/Black British/Asian fiction in English', that he had worked in libraries which had installed promotions of these books, and that he had 'specific experience of supporting LGBT/Black British/Asian public library users'. He was also the only participant to state that he had experience of supporting readers of minority fiction. Four of the ten described fiction promotions they were aware of in the libraries they had worked in, but each of these promotions was only focused on black rather than Asian or LGBT fiction, either to celebrate Black History Month in October of each year, or to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 2007. Overall, participants had relatively little experience either of working with minority fiction, or of promoting it to public library users.

However, nine of the ten participants with public library experience observed that they had supported Black and Asian public library users, and the participant who said she had not (RG09) had only previously worked in a Japanese public library where, she said, '...there was a corner for other languages, English, Chinese, but I didn't really see people using it.' Given the ethnic diversity of the population in the UK it would be expected that participants would be accustomed to working with minority ethnic groups, even if they were less confident of working with fiction by minority ethnic authors.

A person's sexuality is obviously not 'visible' in the same way as their ethnicity often is, so it is perhaps understandable that just one participant (RG11) specifically stated that he had supported LGBT library users:

'...if, say, they [LGBT public library users] came back and said they really liked this LGBT book, can you recommend any more, I'd use the Internet to try to find more of that kind of thing. So I try to help them with their reader development.'

Participant RG11 had considerably more experience of working in public libraries than any other respondent in Study 2, so his greater claimed knowledge of minority fiction, promotion and minority groups is perhaps

unsurprising and atypical, certainly of a population comprising postgraduate librarianship students.

5.7.12 Respondent validation

Study 2 was designed to include a stage of respondent validation, or member checking as it is also known. This is a process via which data pertaining to individual research participants (interview transcripts, research reports, etc.) are fed back to a sample of participants, so that they can ‘indicate their agreement or disagreement with the way in which the researcher has represented them’ (Seale, 2006, p.78). Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.314) describe this process as ‘the most crucial technique for establishing credibility’. Also recognising its contribution to the research process, Bryman (2012, p.391) lists three alternative forms of respondent validation, namely:

1. ‘The researcher provides each research participant with an account of what he or she has said to the researcher...or of what the researcher observed’
2. ‘The researcher feeds back to a group of people...his or her impressions and findings in relation to that group’
3. ‘The researcher feeds back to a group of people...some of his or her writings that are based on a study of that group...(for example, articles, book chapters)’.

Certain limitations of the respondent validation process have been noted, such as Bryman’s suggestion that it may elicit ‘defensive reactions...and even censorship’ (2004, p.274). Alternatively, critics have also expressed concern that as certain qualitative research methods may result in participants becoming well acquainted with the researcher, this may lead to a reluctance on their part to make negative comments regarding the research process (Bloor, 1997). With particular reference to the third suggested form of respondent validation (above), a further potential limitation is that research participants may simply be unable to validate the research findings, due to a lack of expertise or knowledge. As Bryman (2012, p.391) suggests, ‘it is unlikely that the social scientific analyses will be meaningful to

research participants'. Similarly, Walsh (in Seale, 2006, p.236), in an exploration of forms of validation in ethnographic research, suggests that the participants 'may not know things; they may not be privileged observers of their own actions or consciously aware of what they do and why.'

Bearing these issues and concerns in mind, Study 2 adopted the first of the three forms of respondent validation, as it was felt that validation would be more appropriate with individual participants rather than groups, in an investigation of personal constructs. As previously explored in (5.7.3), masters students in librarianship were felt to be an entirely appropriate sample population for the study, not only because of their subject knowledge and previous work experience, but also because they would have a certain understanding of the research process. The validation incorporated two phases, the first at the end of the interview itself, and the second some time afterwards. After eliciting and rating the constructs, each of the fifteen participants were asked the following three questions:

- *Now that you have completed the grid, how did you feel while taking part in this interview?*
- *Were there any difficulties you faced, or anything that made you feel at all uncomfortable?*
- *Looking again at the constructs you developed and your rating of them, do you feel that the grid is an accurate representation of your views?*

With the signed consent of the participants, a digital recording was made of each of the fifteen interviews, and a transcription was then made by the researcher in order to further explore the participants' perceptions underpinning their elicited constructs and construct ratings. As the second part of the respondent validation, the first five participants (RG01 to RG05 inclusive) were emailed an electronic copy of the grid they completed, plus a transcript of the overall process, with a request for the following:

- To read through the transcription and grid and to confirm that they were an accurate representation of the interview.

- To let the author know if there were any details he or she would like to be amended or clarified before their use in the data analysis
- To state if he or she had any further comments to add, regarding the research instruments or the research process as a whole (see **Appendix 2e** for email text).

The findings of this initial validation phase are presented below.

During the interview

Asked towards the end of the interview how they had felt while taking part in the process and if they had experienced any difficulties or discomfort, participants raised a wide range of issues.

Five felt that the exercise had been more difficult because of their own lack of knowledge of certain of the ten fiction genres. Interestingly, in each case the specific genre cited could be described as ‘minority fiction’ (Black British fiction, Asian fiction in English, LGBT fiction):

- RG04: ‘I don’t know if I consciously read, I’m struggling to think of any Black British fiction that I have read, that I identified as such...so I found that one tricky.’
- RG06: ‘And then there’s like LGBT where I don’t really know, I couldn’t really tell you who reads it. Because in the public libraries where I’ve been a lot of them don’t actually have that deliberate section anyway, so I don’t really know who reads that.’
- RG09: ‘I’m not really sure if it’s accurate for all genres, because I found it difficult to give numbers for some points, especially for LGBT, which I don’t really know...’
- RG12: ‘I don’t really know who reads what, really, I’m just going on preconceptions of the genre, like Black fiction, just describing that I don’t really know any Black fiction, so it’s quite hard to comment on a group of people I don’t know.’
- RG15: ‘[BB – Was it easier to rate for those genres that you usually read?] ‘Probably, yes, or the ones that I have at least read some... for example I don’t think I have ever read any Black British fiction,

which is quite a surprise to me when I think about it, but actually I don't think I have.'

For three others, the difficulty of the process lay in their understandable attempt to relate their responses to their own experience of working in a public library:

- RG01: '...you find you're sort of relating to your own experience, trying to think of who you know has perhaps taken things or mentioned things.'
- RG05: 'I think it's a combination of experience, being in the library and seeing what people are taking out, seeing which people are browsing which shelves, and funnily enough that's what was going through my head, at [name] public library, my first library where I grew up, walking round the shelves, and I remember the War and Spy thriller sections, and seeing the old boys there, and I think it was near the Westerns, and the non-fiction war books, and I sort of associate it with that. So I think that probably when I was looking at these words on the card I was thinking, 'What image comes into my head, and what picture do I get?'
- RG11: 'It's difficult, because...I'm trying to think of all the community which I serve, and how they would perceive them [the genres], and it's really hard to get an average for that, of each thing. It's interesting, though, it really is interesting, and it's interesting to think of how I know my borrowers.'

At a deeper level, seven participants described their unease during the construct eliciting and rating processes, as they were concerned that their responses revealed a level of prejudice towards certain readers. Again, in all except one case, the specific genres cited were minority fiction genres, as illustrated in the examples below:

- RG02: 'It wasn't amazingly easy, having to make judgements about what people would read, and then I wasn't particularly comfortable with the judgements that I made...'
- RG03: 'I felt I kept having to go along with stereotypes and prejudice, rather than what I know to be reflected within those genres....'
- RG05: 'I was feeling quite uncomfortable at having to make assumptions and stereotype people. That was an unpleasant thing to do, really. I found myself thinking that because he's an Asian reader,

a reader of Asian fiction, that they were Asian, because they were reading Black fiction that they were black, and you know that everyone else is white... Yes, so I think that was part of the discomfort. I've obviously subconsciously made those judgements about people in each of those categories.'

- RG08: 'Yes, I didn't like, yes, my immediate reaction to the Romance/Chick Lit/LGBT, I didn't enjoy that very much. And it's difficult to think about Black British fiction, Asian fiction and LGBT as a collection to think about and to separate, that was a bit tricky, because you don't want to differentiate based on race, sexuality, but that's what it was demanding, to a certain extent.'
- RG12: 'Yes, to kind of define them, and to say like "All Asian people read Asian fiction", or "All Asian fiction is read by Asian people", I don't really know. It's a bit, well, you can't really say that.'

In three of the above examples (RG03, RG05, RG08) the participants implied that they felt somehow 'forced' to elicit constructs pertaining to stereotypical descriptions of the readers of certain genres. The issue of stereotyping is explored later in the chapter (5.8.6, 5.8.7), but it is interesting to note here that the repertory grid interview instrument (see **Appendix 2a**) clearly emphasises the openness of the process:

'This interview will explore your perceptions of the characteristics of readers of different fiction genres. In the first part of the interview I'll ask you to look at combinations of three cards, each of which will represent the reader of a particular genre, and will ask you to tell me a way in which two are similar to each other, but different from the third. There is no right or wrong answer, I'm just interested to know your opinion.'

Two participants described their awareness of the difficulties of generalising across groups, but nonetheless felt that some form of categorisation was appropriate:

- RG03: '...to say anything you've got to make generalisations, and think your initial thoughts, and you know that they are probably off the mark, and it probably applies to very few people, but then if I said 'there's no such thing as a typical reader of Romance fiction', then we wouldn't get anywhere... you know they're not accurate, but they're the generalisations that you make'.

- RG04: ‘So it didn’t sit too comfortably, but...there are trends you can draw on. Having worked in libraries and bookshops, I’m fairly comfortable that those opinions do reflect what mostly is the case.’

Each of the 15 participants believed the completed grid to be an accurate representation of their views, to a greater or lesser extent, as the following examples illustrate:

- RG01: ‘I think it’s pretty spot on...’
- RG04: ‘It’s a snapshot, yes I think you’d probably get very similar results on a different day, actually’.
- RG05: ‘Yes, I’ve maybe thought a bit more about it [in the time since rating the constructs]. But yes, I think this is fine, and it’s accurate for what I’ve said, and the reasons I gave.’
- RG07: ‘Fairly. I think it’s a representation of my free association version.’
- RG12: ‘Of my views? Well, yes, I mean my views at this present time, I mean my preconceptions and that kind of thing, yes.’

Three participants appeared to feel that they should qualify their ratings in some way, again confirming their unease with an inevitably generalising process, as demonstrated in the examples below:

- RG03: ‘This is the most generalised end of my views, I don’t know, it’s horrible because I’m aware that it’s like, that it’s not right...it’s definitely not an accurate picture of these readers, you can’t fit anybody into these pigeonholes, can you, but then if I have to make generalisations, then that’s what I think [the data within the grid].’
- RG08: ‘Yes. There’s an awful lot I don’t know, and I can see a trend out of these grids, that somehow LGBT, Literary, Asian, Black British, and to an extent, War & Spy, they seem to have similar ratings, but the only one of those that I would feel confident talking about would be Literary fiction. So I think, why am I importing my...it’s not based on genuine, empirical knowledge, any of it, so there’s possibly some positive prejudice in there, as in that’s what I hope, rather than that’s what I think.’

- RG09: ‘I’m not really sure if it’s accurate for all genres, because I found it difficult to give numbers for some points, especially for LGBT, which I don’t really know, and it depends on the context, by who and for who it is written. So when it is quite clear, the context, like War/Spy or Crime, it’s ok.’

Following the interview

Despite the perceived difficulties of participating in the interview process as stated above, comments were received via email from each of the participants RG01-RG05, to confirm that they were happy with the accuracy of the transcript and grid, that there were no specific details that they wished to be amended or clarified, and that they had no further points to add regarding the instruments or the process. Illustrative comments from each are given below:

- RG01: ‘...just to clarify that I am happy the notes are an accurate representation of the interview, that there are no details I would like to amend/clarify and that I have no further comments to add.’
- RG02: ‘I’ve read through the notes and I agree that they are an accurate representation of the interview. I still agree with what I said, so I have nothing else to add or amend.’
- RG03: ‘I’m happy that the notes are an accurate representation of the interview.’
- RG04: ‘Phew! I can see that there’s been a lot of work gone into this; I now have a much deeper appreciation of the hard work involved in research! Yes, that all looks like my comments. Good luck with it.’
- RG05: ‘I’m happy with it all - nothing to amend as far as I can see.’

Both stages of the respondent validation phase have arguably increased the overall validity of the research process, and while it is acknowledged that validation is different for research with a qualitative element than for entirely quantitative research, it is nonetheless an important part of the process, and one which adds to the overall ‘trustworthiness’ of the data collected, and the subsequent analysis of those data.

5.7.13 Limitations of the repertory grid technique

Before exploring the research findings for the second study it is helpful to consider the potential limitations of using the repertory grid technique, and the extent to which it has been possible to overcome these, or to take them into account, in the present study.

Perhaps the most obvious limitation is that it is inevitably time-consuming; as noted in **5.7** the mean duration of the repertory grid interviews for Study 2 was 52:06 minutes. However, each participant was warned in advance in the initial email and attached Participant Information Sheet that they would need to give approximately one hour of their time for the interview, so this was not unexpected. Furthermore, by using an interview script and the systematic selection of the same 10 triads for each participant, no unnecessary time was wasted.

Goffin (in Partington, 2002, p.219) warns of the potential ‘halo effect’ during the rating process, which describes ‘the influence respondents themselves have on ratings...a rating is not objective and its value tells us something about the interviewee as well’. Similarly, Burr & Butt (1992, p.119) warn of the danger in reifying constructs just as...with traits and personality’. This subjectivity of the ratings was taken into account in the data analysis of Study 2 with, for example, the inclusion of the ‘myself as reader’ element in the ratings process. However, it is of less concern than it would have been in another context, as the second study is investigating a *perceived* profile, which will inevitably be largely formed from subjective data.

Related to this point, Banister et al (1994, p.88) warn that the constructs themselves ‘oversimplify experience’, and that the researcher should be aware of this when interpreting them. It is also important to acknowledge a further frequently reported problem of analysing repertory grid data, which Banister et al (1994, p.88) describe as ‘reification...believing that we have accessed some objective truth’. Based only on one interview and one set of subsequent constructs and ratings, it is impossible to fully understand an individual’s complete construct system or world-view. However, if used

appropriately, the repertory grid can help to reveal the participant's understanding and perception of complex issues (Goffin, 2002), and is therefore a valuable tool for the present study.

5.8 Study 2: findings

The research findings presented in this chapter consist of the grid data - namely the constructs elicited during the repertory grid interviews, and their grouping and ratings – and the qualitative data collected during the interviews as a whole.

The data analysis for the second study is largely descriptive, consisting of frequency tables and thematic analysis; the majority of the statistical analysis will be conducted for the third study (**Chapter 6**), when data from the two phases will be combined in order to investigate generalisability across the selected sample groups.

As explained in Chapter 3, thematic analysis involves the development of a coding template that identifies a series of hierarchical (and parallel) themes in the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts. As shown in Table 5.5, the themes have been organised into high-order and low-order codes, the first which correspond to broader themes in the data, and the second which represent more narrowly focused themes. As explained in **5.8.4**, equal emphasis has deliberately been placed on the range as well as frequency of themes, in line with the intended focus of personal construct theory.

5.8.1 Response to the triads

It is not usually necessary to record which element is selected by the participant as 'different from' the other two, the elicited constructs and their ratings being more relevant to the data analysis. However, given the systematic use of the same ten triads for each participant and the intentionally unequal distribution of elements in the triads because of the emphasis of the research on the minority fiction genres, it was considered useful to briefly consider the elements selected by each of the 15

participants, in order to see if any observations could be made which would inform the data analysis as a whole.

Appendix 2f shows the element selected as ‘different’ by each participant RG01 to RG15 inclusive, with the overall frequencies shown in the column to the right.

Firstly, although distribution was by no means even across the three elements for any of the fifteen triads, no individual element was selected as ‘different’ by each of the 15 participants (although ‘Reader of Science fiction/Fantasy fiction’ was twice selected by 13 participants). Where ‘Reader of LGBT fiction’ was included in a triad (3 times), it was each time selected as ‘different’ from the other two elements by the highest number of participants.

Looking in particular at the triads which contain either or both of the ‘Reader of Black British fiction’ and ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ elements, it is interesting that where the two elements were included in the same triad (3 times), they were regarded by the highest number of participants (n=9, n=8, n=13 respectively) as ‘similar’ to each other in some way. Where the triad combined the readers of Asian fiction in English, Black British fiction and LGBT fiction, it is interesting that three participants were unable to distinguish between the three elements, as their comments illustrate:

‘That’s another hard one...I don’t feel I can offer a great deal of insight...they all come together as a genre about a specific social minority, unless it was out of literary interest, or trying to broaden your social scope. Possibly if you wanted something that spoke to you personally as a member of that minority, I’m not quite sure, but I would have difficulty separating one specific one out of those on that basis...there isn’t a stereotype in my head of people who read that kind of book, no.’ (RG07)

‘Now, this is a tricky one! Could the two not be, I don’t know, for example, could a book not be classed as both of those [Asian/LGBT]? I mean, I suppose these [BBF/Asian] are odd as well, because Black British could equally be literary, and a critically acclaimed author, but so could Asian fiction be LGBT. And in fact

to say that something's Black British fiction doesn't really tell you anything, doesn't necessarily tell you anything, because it doesn't tell you anything about what the storylines are going to be. I have absolutely no idea.' (RG10)

'[Laughs]. Hmm, yes. Well, I mean [pauses] I can't see something different at all, but I'd probably say that the readers would be similar in that it's quite a minority genre, if you like. I couldn't really say how the readers would be different, really...I can't really see anything there, in terms of difference.' (RG12)

An initial finding would therefore appear to be that the readers of Black British fiction and Asian fiction – and, to a lesser extent, the readers of LGBT fiction - are regarded as sharing certain characteristics. The main data analysis will explore this in further detail.

5.8.2 Initial exploration of constructs elicited

From the fifteen repertory grids that were administered a total of 128 constructs were provided of a possible total of 150, with a mean number of constructs of 8.5 per interviewee, as illustrated in the table below:

Table 5.3. Number of constructs elicited per respondent (of possible total 10 per respondent)

Respondent	No. of constructs
RG01	5
RG02	10
RG03	10
RG04	9
RG05	8
RG06	9
RG07	8
RG08	10
RG09	9
RG10	7
RG11	8
RG12	7
RG13	8
RG14	10
RG15	10
Total	128
Mean no. of constructs	8.5

A full list of constructs provided for each of the fifteen participants is included as **Appendix 2g**. In order to manage and interpret this large volume of data, thematic analysis was used to group constructs initially by codes relating to similarity of meaning, and then to count the frequency of different code occurrences as a means of identifying key areas for the analysis (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). The first set of codes and their frequencies are presented in Table 5.4 below.

A measure that was taken in order to reduce the likelihood of researcher bias or misinterpretation was to ask an academic colleague from the Faculty of Social Sciences (but not from the Information School itself) to code the list of 128 constructs, using the initial set of themes (n=29) but without seeing first how they had been rated by the author. After his initial grouping of the constructs, there was 91.6% agreement (116 of 128 constructs) between his version and the author's version. This was an encouragingly high level of agreement: Camuffo and Gerli (2005, p.29) recommend the use of blind coding of repertory grid interview data to achieve a higher level of reliability, and suggest that 'inter-judge agreement for well-trained coders is in the range of 74% to 80%'. Following a brief discussion in which each of the 12 non-identical coding pairs was briefly examined, the academic agreed that the author's pairs were more relevant than his own, in 11 of the 12 cases (99.2% agreement). For the twelfth, it was agreed that the author's and the academic's choices were equally relevant (grouping 'Interest in British colonial heritage' under both 'Interest in ethnicity' and 'Interest in historical novels'), so the total number of construct frequencies was changed from n=149 to n=150 to include both themes.

5.8.3 Combined constructs

Perhaps inevitably, a number of the constructs elicited contained multiple aspects, such as 'Would tend to be a middle-aged woman', which could be grouped either under 'age' or 'gender'. Where possible and where appropriate, this multiplicity was reduced via the laddering process and a request to refine the construct. However, for some triads it was clearly very difficult for participants to prioritise in this way, and they felt that each aspect was of equal importance in expressing the construct. For the

grouping of such cases, it was felt to be misleading to simply ‘remove’ part of the construct, and where such a construct could reasonably be assigned to more than one category, it would be ‘dual categorized’, as per the recommendation of Cassell and Walsh (2004, p.66). It is for this reason that the total number of construct frequencies given in the analysis is 150, rather than 128.

Table 5.4 Initial set of themes (factors) characterising the reader of genre fiction, with their frequencies

Themes	
Gender	21
Looking for an easy read (non-challenging)	14
Age	13
Interested in escapism (not reality)	12
Minority (not majority) group member, ethnicity	9
Interested in ethnicity	8
Looking to identify with the plot/characters	8
Interested in multiple genres	7
Looking for a light read (for pleasure)	7
Interest in romantic novels	6
Looking for a predictable plot	6
Looking for a happy ending	4
An avid reader	3
Browsing habits	3
Interest in other people	3
Interest in societal issues	3
Looking for a mainstream read	3
Others’ perceptions of this reader	3
Class	2
Feels obliged to follow fashion in reading choices	2
Interest in contemporary novels	2
Looking for thrills/entertainment	2
Perceived income of reader	2
Would define him/herself as a fan/specialist of a genre	2
Education	1
Interest in historical novels	1
Interest in myth/fantasy	1
Interest in sexuality	1
Looking for a humorous plot	1
Total (n=29)	150

As the table illustrates, the themes to emerge from this study expand considerably upon those of the first study, in which only certain

demographic data were collected. For the present study, information have now been collected regarding the perceived social and reading interests, preferred plot and wider reading choices of the reader of genre fiction, thereby starting to build a far more detailed profile.

5.8.4 Breadth and depth in construct analysis

It is important to note that the analysis of constructs should not only take into account the most frequently elicited, but should also consider the breadth of participants' views. Goffin (2002, p.218) makes the point that 'the most frequently mentioned constructs are not necessarily the most important', and in their study of barriers to women's progression in the publishing industry, Cassell & Walsh (2004, p.66) describe concerns they felt when using the frequency of constructs as an indicator of relevance:

'...this raises an issue of how we were using numbers in that we were assuming that because a construct was used by a larger number of interviewees it had more salience to the respondents as a whole...But where does this leave us epistemologically?'

Adopting a constructivist approach as per Kelly's original theory (Kelly, 1955) the focus of the analysis of repertory grid data should remain on the individual and how he or she construes the world in which he or she lives. As Cassell & Walsh (2004, p.66) suggest, 'it could be argued that aggregating responses to be able to say things about groups does deviate from Kelly's stance'. However, for the analysis of the present study, a pragmatic decision has been made to continue to aggregate data in order to interpret the large number of responses collected, while at the same time maintaining an interest in range as well as frequency (a number of the less frequently elicited constructs will be explored below, in **5.8.7**). As will be shown in Study 3, the constructs used for the second repertory grid were selected not only according to frequency of elicitation, but also according to their relevance to the research as a whole, even if they were initially elicited by as few as three participants.

5.8.5 Further construct groupings

In an attempt to understand the range of constructs elicited and what they can reveal about the perceived characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, further thematic analysis identified five broad themes (high-order codes), within which more narrow and focused subordinate themes (lower-order codes) were also identified. The first of these themes relates to the demographic profile of the reader, the second to the approach he or she might take to the act of reading, the third relates to the experience he or she might be looking for (or the emotions he or she might hope to derive) from reading, the fourth to specific subjects he or she might be interested in reading about, and the fifth to genres he or she might be interested in choosing.

The sections which follow (**5.8.6, 5.8.7**) will present each theme and its respective codes with supporting data from the interview transcripts and construct ratings, further sub-dividing the constructs into ‘common’ (i.e. elicited by the majority of participants, $n \geq 8$) and ‘idiosyncratic’ themes.

In conducting this analysis, care was taken to avoid wrongly grouping constructs which may use similar terms, but have quite different meanings. For example, a distinction was made between the descriptions of readers as ‘looking for an easy read’ and those who were ‘looking for a light read’: the polar construct of ‘easy’ was ‘challenging’, whereas that of ‘light’ was ‘serious’, which clearly relate to two quite distinct aspects of fiction reading. The resulting series of characteristics is given in Table 5.5 below:

Table 5.5. Perceived characteristics of the genre fiction reader: high-order and lower-order codes (themes) identified by thematic analysis, with their frequencies and thematic grouping

Themes	Frequency (constructs)	Frequency (participants)*	Thematic grouping
PERCEIVED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE READER			
1. Gender	21	12	Major
2. Age	13	6	Minor
3. Membership of a minority group, ethnicity	9	7	Minor
4. Class	2	2	Idiosyncratic
5. Income	2	2	Idiosyncratic
6. Education	1	1	Idiosyncratic
PERCEIVED APPROACH TO READING			
1. Is an avid reader	3	3	Idiosyncratic
2. Others' perceptions of this reader	3	3	Idiosyncratic
i. <i>Is highly thought of by other readers</i>			
ii. <i>Would experience prejudice in searching for a book</i>			
iii. <i>Is likely to be a 'geek'</i>			
3. Browsing habits	3	2	Idiosyncratic
4. Looking for a mainstream read	3	2	Idiosyncratic
5. Interest in contemporary novels	2	2	Idiosyncratic
6. Would define him/herself as a fan/specialist of a genre	2	1	Idiosyncratic
7. Feels obliged to follow fashion in reading choices	2	1	Idiosyncratic
PREFERRED NATURE OF PLOT			
1. Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read	14	9	Major
2. Interest in escapism (not reality)	12	9	Major
3. Looking for a light read (for pleasure)	9	6	Minor
4. Looking to identify with the plot/characters	8	4	Minor
5. Looking for a happy ending	6	2	Idiosyncratic
6. Looking for a predictable plot	4	3	Idiosyncratic
7. Looking for thrills/entertainment	2	2	Idiosyncratic
8. Looking for a humorous plot	1	1	Idiosyncratic
SUBJECT INTERESTS			
1. Interest in ethnicity	8	7	Minor
i. <i>Interest in other cultural backgrounds</i>			
ii. <i>Concern for</i>			

<i>author's cultural background</i>			
2. Interest in other people i. <i>Interest in another person's lifestyle</i> ii. <i>Interest in personal issues and complex relationships</i>	3	3	Idiosyncratic
3. Interest in societal issues	3	2	Idiosyncratic
4. Interest in sexuality i. <i>Interest in plots with homosexual characters</i>	1	1	Idiosyncratic
PREFERRED GENRES			
Interest in multiple genres	7	6	Minor
Interest in romantic novels	6	6	Minor
Interest in historical novels	1	1	Idiosyncratic
Interest in mythical/fantasy novels	1	1	Idiosyncratic
Total**	150		
<p>* 'Frequency (participants)' refers to the number of participants eliciting constructs relating to each theme at least once. ** Total number of constructs elicited for each theme (including dual categorisations).</p>			

Examples of two of these lower-order themes are shown below, in Table 5.6.

Table 5.6. Examples of two lower-order codes (themes) from the analysis template

Theme	Constructs	Polar constructs
Interest in societal issues	Is likely to be from, and interested in, British society Is interested in societal issues Is interested in society	Is not likely to be from, or interested in, British society Is not interested in societal issues Is not interested in society
Interest in multiple genres	Looking to identify with the plot and/or characters Would read other genres too, would not necessarily be looking to identify with content Looking for identification, rather than a mainstream read Looking for a book to reflect their experiences Looking for a reflection of his/her life Reading interests related to his/her lifestyle Looking for a book which reflects his/her lifestyle Looking for a plot/characters they can identify with	Not necessarily looking to identify with plot and/or characters Would tend to read only this genre, would be looking to identify with content Enjoys a good plot, and a mainstream read Looking for other non-self-related experiences Looking for escapism Reading interests not related to his/her lifestyle Not looking for a book which reflects his/her lifestyle Not looking for a plot/characters they can identify with

For the purposes of the analysis it was decided to group the themes into 3 categories, namely Major themes, Minor themes, and Idiosyncratic themes. A ‘major theme’ is defined as a theme related to which the majority of participants ($n \geq 8$) elicited one or more constructs. A ‘minor theme’ is one related to which between four and seven participants elicited one or more constructs, and an ‘idiosyncratic theme’ is one related to which between one and three participants elicited one or more constructs. Even if a theme has a high frequency of constructs – for example ‘age’ ($n=13$) – it has not been coded as ‘major’ if eight or more participants did not elicit a related construct. It was felt that this was a clearer way to show response patterns across the participant group as a whole. The frequencies of both constructs and participants, with their thematic grouping, are shown in Table 5.5 above.

5.8.6 Major themes

As Table 5.5 illustrates, just three of the themes were elicited by the majority of participants ($n \geq 8$), namely:

- Gender ($n=12$)
- Looking for an easy/challenging read ($n=9$)
- Interest in escapism/reality ($n=9$).

Before considering the perceived demographic profile of the reader, it is useful to consider definitions of the wider term ‘stereotype’, which is described by Tagiuri (1969, p.422) as a means of categorising an individual ‘according to some easily and quickly identifiable characteristics such as age, sex, ethnic membership, nationality or occupation, and then to attribute to him qualities believed to be typical to members of that category’, and later by Hogg & Vaughan (2005, p.47) as ‘widely shared assumptions...based on group membership, for example ethnicity, nationality, sex, race and class’. Given these and similar definitions, it is also unsurprising that in addition to gender the concepts of ethnicity, age and class were also included in the constructs elicited.

PERCEIVED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE READER

Gender

A total of 21 constructs directly relating to the perceived gender of a particular fiction reader(s) were elicited by 12 Study 2 participants. This is the largest group of constructs from the second study, both in terms of the frequency of constructs and of participants: in some cases multiple constructs were elicited by the same respondent (e.g. ‘More likely to be male’, ‘Reader could be either male or female’, RG12). It is perhaps unsurprising that gender was so frequently considered by participants, given that it is one of the primary factors by which we categorise ourselves and others in society. As Gross (2005, p.620) states:

‘Often the first thing we notice about other people is whether they’re male or female. The importance of sexual identity to our self-concept and our interactions with others is a reflection of the fact that every known culture distinguishes between male and female.’

In addition, although gender stereotypes have been found to have little empirical support (Durkin, 1995; Gross, 2005), research suggests that they remain prevalent in many societies. A substantial study of 30 countries, for example, suggested that there appeared to be a high level of agreement regarding the characteristics associated with each gender group (Williams & Best, 1994).

Specifically in the field of fiction reading, previous research has suggested that gender is frequently used to differentiate between reading groups. Tepper (2000, pp.255-256) reports, for example, that reading is ‘a pastime that is closely linked to gender...men and women have different preferences for the types of books they read’, and that there remains today ‘a large gender gap in reading...the gap is striking when we examine fiction reading’. In a brief review of research into fiction reading Yu and O’Brien (1999) observed, ‘Surveys on reading habits have unanimously shown that women are still greater fiction readers than men. Women are also found to have different reading tastes from those of men.’ (p.36).

The findings from this second study would concur with those of the literature: 12 of 15 participants had an impression of the perceived gender of the readers of a number of fiction genres. For two of the more traditional fiction genres – Romance fiction and War/Spy fiction – participants clearly felt that these were read by female and male readers respectively:

‘I’d say that those two [Black British, Romance] are more likely to be women, I think.’ (RG06)

‘I suppose I’m thinking about females, the reader of Romance fiction I suppose, generally speaking may be female (RG13)

‘Right, I’m going to admit to a prejudice now! Lad and War, blokes...’ (RG08)

‘I’d say more male readers possibly would appreciate War/Spy fiction’ (RG13)

For the readers of Crime fiction, however, there was more disagreement:

‘In my experience the readers of Crime fiction and the readers of Romance fiction tend to be middle-aged, or older women...’ (RG02)

‘...Crime fiction, there are female writers, but maybe I associate it more with a male reader.’ (RG13)

‘Yes, because I know male and female people who read Crime, so I wouldn’t say that was for one gender...’ (RG12)

Unsurprisingly – given the intended cross-gender nature of the genre - participants’ separation of triads and their accompanying comments suggested that they regarded LGBT fiction readers as both male and female. Participants’ opinions were slightly more divided as to the gender of the readers of the two minority ethnic fiction genres, although the most frequently cited perspective was that they could each attract both male and female readers:

‘...middle-aged, or older women...won’t necessarily pick up Black British fiction.’ (RG02)

‘I’d say that those two [Black British fiction, Romance fiction] are more likely to be women, I think.’ (RG06)

‘I’m saying that they [Crime/Black British fiction] could be male or female...’ (RG12)

‘... I would associate the readers of Asian fiction as being male or female’(RG10)

Interestingly, research conducted with 497 members of a BME consumer panel (Hicks and Hunt, 2008) found that just 12% of male respondents said that they had recently bought or borrowed a book by a BME author, compared to 30% of female respondents, suggesting that women were slightly more likely to read fiction by BME authors.

PREFERRED NATURE OF THE PLOT

Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read; Interest in escapism (not reality)

Nine participants elicited constructs relating to ‘Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read’ (n=14) and ‘Interest in escapism (not reality)’ (n=12). Although participants were asked to focus on the reader of each of the ten fiction genres, in considering the triads each considered not only the perceived profile of those readers but also a range of other characteristics, in

terms of the reader, his/her wider interests and the plot of the novels he/she would choose to read.

Fourteen participants elicited the construct 'Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read', the second most frequently elicited. Romance fiction, Chick Lit, Lad Lit and, to a slightly lesser extent, Science fiction/fantasy and Crime fiction, were the genres most likely to be described by participants in this way, with comments such as the following:

'Science fiction, Fantasy fiction and Lad Lit all seem to attract the same type of audience, in my experience...Easy reading, looking for light entertainment but not heavier fiction.' (RG02)

'Could be just a housewife [Chick Lit/Romance reader], or looking not to think too much, just to enjoy for the simple pleasure of reading.' (RG09)

'And it's easy reads, isn't it, like Crime fiction as well, you get quite absorbed in it...?' (RG13)

'Romance is safe, and if you've read that for a long time, I tend to find that at work [in a public library], they [readers] just tend to stick with that, it's an easy read, it's not too challenging, you don't have to think about it too much.' (RG14)

The finding that some genre fiction categories are thought to be somehow 'easier' than others relates to the findings of previous research. Carey (1992) suggests that many genre fiction categories are still perceived to be mass-produced, often simple texts for a mass audience, and in her study of reading group readers Twomey (2003, p.19) found that 'genre, theme or subject area were sometimes perceived as indicators of a text's likely aesthetic or intellectual qualities', and further that the specific genres Romance fiction and Chick Lit fiction were 'widely and strongly derided' for being particularly 'basic'.

Twelve constructs were elicited pertaining to 'escapism', examples of the textual commentary relating to which are given below:

'...if you're reading Science Fiction it's very much more for yourself, there's nothing, there's nothing towards self-improvement,

or trying to understand the world better, it's just – maybe I shouldn't say 'just' – but it is escapism, and that whole fantasy thing is purely for pleasure, rather than any other agenda.' (RG01)

'I think this is a split between escapism [Romance/War and Spy] and reflecting your own life' (RG04).

'...yeah, escapism, that's what I'm thinking about. And it's easy reads, isn't it, like Crime fiction as well, you get quite absorbed in it, it's quite escapist.' [Crime fiction/Chick Lit]. (RG13)

Genres specifically cited under the heading 'escapist' corresponded to those described above as 'easier' fiction. In their study of public library book reading, Toyne and Usherwood (2001) found that when describing the contribution that fiction reading made to their lives, most respondents included the word 'escapism' in their initial comments:

'It demonstrates that escapism is the most conscious perception that people have of what they derive from the act of reading' (p.26).

As the authors state, this response is in line with previous 'uses and gratifications' studies into the functions of reading, the hypothesis being that people use different media in order to obtain specific gratifications. Blumler and Katz (1979) designed a model which brought together five areas of 'gratification' in media texts for audiences, each of which has been widely applied to fiction reading, namely escape, social interaction, identity, information/education, entertainment. Each of these is present in one or more of the constructs elicited in the repertory grid interviews for Study 2.

5.8.7 Minor themes

As illustrated in Table 5.5, seven of the themes were elicited by between four and seven participants, namely:

- Age (n=6)
- Membership of a minority group (n=7)
- Looking for a light read (for pleasure) (n=6)
- Looking to identify with the plot/characters (n=4)
- Interest in ethnicity (n=7)
- Interest in multiple genres (n=6)

- Interest in romantic novels (n=6).

PERCEIVED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE READER

Age

Another frequently elicited construct related to the perceived age of the readers of different fiction genres: a total of thirteen constructs were elicited by six participants. The readers of ‘Lad Lit’, ‘Chick Lit’, ‘Science fiction/Fantasy fiction’, ‘LGBT fiction’ and, to a lesser extent, ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction in English’, were most commonly described as more likely to be younger, whereas the readers of the more established fiction genres – ‘Crime fiction’, ‘Romance fiction’, ‘War/spy fiction’ were usually described as more likely to be older, as the following comments illustrate:

‘The perception I guess I’d have of the Lad Lit reader is that they’d be younger themselves, and therefore relating more directly to the characters, if it’s about young, single, afraid to commit men then I’d imagine that people that are like that would be more likely to read it...’ (RG01)

‘Again, I think in some ways those two [Black British/Asian] are more likely to be younger, actually...and again, that [Literary fiction] would be a mixture of ages, I would think.’ (RG06)

‘In my experience the readers of Crime fiction and the readers of Romance fiction tend to be middle-aged, or older women, who won’t necessarily pick up Black British fiction.’ (RG02)

‘I think I’d probably put these two [Romance/War & Spy] together. Bizarrely, the first thing that came into my mind when I saw these two was Grandma and Grandad going into the library and him getting a war book, and her getting some romance fiction, so I suppose I see them as a couple, quite a sweet old couple.’ (RG05)

The findings of Study 1 showed that younger readers were significantly more likely than older readers to ‘usually’ read Asian fiction in English, whereas this was not necessarily the case for Black British fiction. The repertory grid interviews of Study 2 participants, however, have not strongly supported this, suggesting that the readers of either genre could be younger *or* older. Similarly, Hicks and Hunt’s (2008) research with BME readers revealed that when asked if they had recently bought or borrowed a book by

a BME author, there was little difference in the responses of the three recorded age groups within the exclusively BME panel: 17% of the ‘Under 35’ group, 25% of the ‘35-55’ group, and 23% of the ‘Over 55’ group gave a positive response (p.25). This issue is further explored in Study 3 (6.4.7).

Membership of a minority group

Nine constructs elicited by seven participants related to the reader of the particular fiction genre being either a member of a minority group, or being specifically ‘non-white’. In one case, the minority described was sexual *or* ethnic (RG14), and in eight cases was exclusively ethnic. Eight of the nine constructs described the readers of ‘Asian fiction in English’ or ‘Black British fiction’ in terms of belonging to a minority group, which is unsurprising given the above definitions of stereotyping. Interestingly, however, when presented with the triad ‘Reader of: Asian fiction in English/Black British/LGBT fiction’, RG14 separated ‘Reader of LGBT fiction’ as she felt that the main prejudice would be towards this reader and not towards the reader of the first two:

‘I would say that [LGBT], I think, because I think a lot of people are still quite prejudiced and a bit afraid of trying it, and if they’re not gay themselves they’ll probably think “Oh no, I’ve got nothing in common with that”. I think again someone reading those [Asian/BBF] could be from that background or, you know, an outside person, not in that group but would probably read those out of interest and would want to find out, but I still think there’s quite a lot of prejudice around gay literature and things like that, and while stereotyping, the people who would read that are probably within that, you know, group, whereas these two [BBF/Asian] probably more people from other groups would try.’

Overall, participants’ comments regarding the readers of Black British and/or Asian fiction in English and their membership of a minority ethnic group corresponded to the findings of the first study, in that more respondents from communities described as ‘mixed’ (i.e. including Black and/or Asian people in addition to white people) claimed to ‘usually’ read Black British or Asian fiction than was the case for those from ‘predominantly white’ communities (see 4.6.9).

PREFERRED NATURE OF PLOT

Looking for a light read (for pleasure)

As stated previously (5.8.5), the analysis distinguished between an ‘easy read’ and a ‘light read’, the polar construct of the former being ‘challenging’, whereas that of the latter was perceived to be ‘serious’, obviously two quite different concepts. Six participants elicited seven constructs referring to a ‘lighter read’. In three cases the word ‘serious’ was specifically used in the polar construct, in others the focus was on a move away from enjoyment (‘not primarily looking for enjoyment in a book’, RG14) - or towards ‘heavier’ subjects (‘issue-based stories’, RG02). For example, one participant (RG14) felt that the Black British fiction and Literary fiction readers were ‘not looking primarily for enjoyment in a book’, as was the case for the Science fiction reader. A second (RG09) suggested that Lad Lit and Chick Lit fiction were less ‘serious’ than Crime fiction, and were read ‘more for pleasure, or for killing time’ than the latter.

These descriptions are in line with those presented by Spiller (1980), who when writing about the categorisation of fiction in public libraries, repeatedly uses the term ‘light fiction’ as opposed to a ‘serious novel’, stating that publishers of light fiction very often issue their books in an identifiable genre package’ (p.240). Presenting the results to a survey of public library staff regarding their provision of fiction, Spiller reports a categorisation of ‘light fiction’ by one library service as ‘mysteries [crime fiction], science fiction, romances and westerns’ (p.251). He also cites one respondent who stated that this area of stock is bought ‘by the yard’ (p.250), supporting its perceived status as lower than the so-called ‘serious’ titles. Spiller’s work was published before the emergence of reader development in the UK in the 1990s, during which time there was a move to reduce a perceived prejudice towards ‘lighter’ fiction, acknowledging its role in the reading experience:

‘...it is possible to have a deep and satisfying reader experience with a book which is actually quite light, which may not be a book of all time, but which just happens to speak to you at a particular point in your life.’ (Opening the Book, 2013)

And writing in 2010, in an *Observer* newspaper article entitled ‘Forget ‘serious’ novels, I’ve turned to a life of crime’, crime fiction author Stephanie Merritt suggests that ‘the landscape has shifted, and such genre snobbery has been significantly eroded by the marketplace.’ (Merritt, 2010).

Looking to identify with the plot/characters

Four participants elicited a total of eight constructs relating to the reader’s identification with a fictional plot and/or character(s). Three participants suggested that the reader of Black British fiction would be interested in identifying with the characters or lifestyle represented in those books, with the following constructs:

- ‘Looking to identify with the plot and/or characters’ (RG03)
- ‘Looking for a book to reflect their experiences’ (RG04)
- ‘Looking for a plot/characters they can identify with’ (RG15).

Interestingly, opinions were more divided regarding the reader of Asian fiction in English: two participants thought that this reader would be ‘interested in finding out about another person’s lifestyle’ (RG14) or, as in the example given above, ‘looking for a plot/characters they can identify with’ (RG15). However, the other two saw Asian fiction as distinct from Black British fiction, in that the reader of the former was, unlike the reader of the latter and of Literary fiction, ‘not necessarily looking to identify with plot/characters’ [the polar construct] (RG03), or that whereas the readers of Black British fiction and LGBT fiction were ‘looking for the book to reflect their experiences’, in fact the reader of Asian fiction was ‘looking for other, non self-related experiences’ [the polar construct] (RG04).

In a study of young people’s reading and the factors contributing to their ‘liking’ of a story, Jose and Brewer (1984) found that ‘reader identification increases with greater perceived similarity between character and reader’, and that the ‘overall liking of story increases with greater identification’ [among other factors] (p.911). This thesis has previously presented (2.7) theories relevant to the concept of reader identification, namely Squire’s theory (1994) that ‘response [to a text] is affected by prior knowledge and experience’ (p. 640), and that ‘emotional involvement with a text is critical

to understanding' (p. 641), and also to Rosenblatt's (1983) theory that the reader brings to a book his or her own personality traits, memories, preoccupations and mood. This complex theme will be explored further in the third study.

SUBJECT INTERESTS

Interest in ethnicity

Seven participants elicited a total of eight constructs pertaining to the fiction reader's perceived interest in ethnicity. This moved away from the reader's own perceived ethnicity to his or her interest (not necessarily as a member of a minority ethnic group) in finding out about other cultures:

'I'd put Asian fiction and Black British fiction together ... because they both deal with ethnicity and things ... it could be [an identification issue], but equally I'd say those two readers would be similar because they'd be ... looking for fiction that deals with ethnicity issues, but with a read that made them think...' (RG03)

'... the translation of foreign texts into English might pull people out, people who are interested in the Asian way of life, maybe, in a different country, they might be interested in that... It might be that they're interested in another culture.' (RG11)

'I think that someone who reads the Black British fiction is probably more likely to be either Black or someone who's interested in the Black culture...' (RG12)

'... these two [Black British/Asian fiction] are interested in ethnic identity' (RG13)

In addition to the readers of Black British or Asian fiction, the findings of this study also suggest that participants also found Literary Fiction readers to be likely to have an interest in ethnicity and different ethnic cultures. Participant RG13 felt that the readers of Literary fiction 'may be more likely to read something which has been written by someone who has come from a place where there was a connection, once', in other words that he or she may be 'interested in British colonial heritage' (the emerging construct). Similarly, participant RG04 made the following comment:

'I think this [Literary fiction/Asian fiction] is more world fiction, and that's [Black British fiction] more British, really. I think that

incorporates a lot of cultures, Literary fiction, as does the Asian...I think it's [Literary fiction/Asian fiction] more culturally diverse.'
(RG04)

Related to this finding, in a study of the value and impact of public library book reading, Toyne and Usherwood (2001, p.44) found that respondents believed that reading 'increased their understanding of people from other backgrounds or cultures'. Similarly, Syed (2008) studied readers from the British Indian community, who referred to the potential of fiction to arouse their interest in cultures other than their own, making comments such as '[I read to learn] about the world I live in', and 'When I was younger, I liked fiction related to different cultures' (p.33).

PREFERRED GENRES

Interest in multiple genres

Six participants elicited a total of seven constructs relating to the theme of multiple genre readership, in other words where they felt that the readers of certain genres would be more likely to read only that genre, and where they felt that he or she would be interested in reading this and other genres, too.

The reader of Science fiction and fantasy fiction was separated from the Black British fiction and Literary fiction readers by three participants, each time because the former was perceived as 'interested only in one genre' (RG13), and the latter would be 'more interested in fiction in general' (RG09). The Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers were distinguished from the Science fiction and fantasy fiction reader by participant RG02, who observed:

'I'd be inclined to put readers of Black British and Asian fiction together, because they're more likely to try something different, whereas I still think that readers of Science fiction and Fantasy fiction totally focus on that genre, if they like it.'

Other fiction genre readers described in similar terms to the Science fiction and fantasy reader include Crime fiction, Romance fiction and War and Spy fiction:

‘I could easily imagine a reader of Crime fiction to read nothing but Crime’ (RG03)

‘[The Crime fiction and War and Spy fiction reader] would tend to read only one genre, would be looking to identify with content’ (RG03)

‘Crime fiction readers will not read Romance fiction, and exactly the same the other way, Romance readers will not read Crime...[in my library service] I’ll have sole readers of Romance, I’ll have sole readers of Crime fiction...’ (RG11).

Proponents of the reader development movement (previously described in 2.7) would concur that many fiction readers ‘tend to drift into comfort zones, always reading the same authors or the same genres and limiting their reading adventure by cutting off whole areas: “I only read factual books”, “I never read American books”, “I hate science fiction”’ (Opening the Book, 2013). This perspective is supported by the findings of Yu and O’Brien (1999), who devised a typology of seven groups of fiction borrowers, the first of which are ‘readers of particularism’, whose ‘reading scope was almost exclusively confined to books by a very small number of particular authors and whose reading tastes would change little over time’ (p.46).

Interestingly, six of the seven triads used in the elicitation included the reader of Black British fiction, and on each occasion this reader was described in terms of having an interest in multiple genres, with comments such as:

‘I’d just say that these [Black British fiction and Romance fiction readers] were ‘readers’, whereas I’d say that these were readers of Crime fiction, I don’t know if that makes any sense.’ (RG05)

‘I think that people who read Science fiction tend to read only Science fiction...and these [the readers of Black British fiction/Literary fiction] could be any, they’re more interested in fiction in general.’ (RG09)

Returning to Yu and O’Brien’s (1999) study, at the other end of the scale from the ‘readers of particularism’ are the ‘readers of frequent universalism’, who are ‘more likely to be shelf browsers who often claimed to know their way around or to be able to recognise interesting books on the

shelf...perhaps the heaviest readers in the library...almost always able to find something interesting to read' (p.47). While the present author is not suggesting that the readers of Black British fiction, Asian fiction in English and Literary fiction are necessarily readers of multiple genres, the participants of this second study do seem to have distinguished between them and the readers of the more 'traditional' fiction genres such as Crime fiction, Romance fiction, Science fiction and fantasy and War and spy fiction.

Interest in romantic novels

Six participants elicited a total of six constructs pertaining to readers' perceived interest in romance in the books they chose. Entirely unsurprisingly, each of the six described the reader of romance fiction as having such an interest. Five participants described LGBT fiction in the same terms, although one separated LGBT fiction from Chick Lit and Romance fiction, observing:

'There's a more obvious overlap, I think, between Romance and Chick Lit fiction. I tend to think of Chick Lit as being sort of Romance fiction updated...this is going to sound incredibly patronising, but probably the same reader of different generations...boy meets girl.' (RG07)

The construct developed for the repertory grid was therefore 'Looking for a boy meets girl novel'.

It is interesting that LGBT fiction and Romance fiction were grouped together under this theme: as Distelberg (2010) suggests, there is more to the LGBT fiction genre than 'romance', rather a need to focus on 'gay life and reality' (p.406). As an example of this Distelberg cites literary critic Rogers, who describes author Paul Monette's 1978 gay novel 'Taking Care of Mrs. Carroll' as 'a good, contemporary novel about gay men' that would take [him]...back into the daily business of getting on with life' (p.405).

5.8.8 Idiosyncratic themes

As stated above ('Breadth and depth of construct analysis'), the analysis of constructs for the second study has taken into account not only the more frequently elicited (Major and Minor) constructs, but also the full range of participant constructs - however idiosyncratic or atypical they may be - as per the intended original focus of Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory.

As Table 5.5 illustrates, many constructs were elicited by a small number of participants – in seven cases by one participant only - but are nonetheless of potential relevance to the overall interpretation of findings, and to the development of the model of influence. The majority of the themes (n=19) were elicited by between one and three participants, as listed in the relevant section below.

PERCEIVED DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE READER

- Class, income, education (n=2,2,1 respectively)

Regarding the reader's profile, two participants referred to his/her perceived class, two to his/her perceived income and one to his/her perceived educational attainment, with the following constructs:

Class

'More likely to be middle-class' [Asian/Black British fiction, not LGBT fiction] (RG06)

'Would tend to be middle-class, white, middle-aged' [LGBT fiction, not Romance/War & Spy fiction] (RG02).

Income

'Is likely to be (younger), with a reasonable income' [Chick/Lad Lit, not Crime fiction] (RG05).

'(Not looking for humour,) not likely to be SINK [Single Income No Kids]' [Chick/Lad Lit, not Crime fiction] (RG08).

Education

'More likely to be educated to degree level or higher' [Literary fiction, not Black British or Sci-Fi/fantasy fiction] (RG12).

The term 'class' is a complex one which has been interpreted in many ways, and as society has developed, so too has the model of the class structure. For

Marx (2001 [1848]), 'class' was described as the difference between the exploiter (the industrialist or capitalist) and the exploited (the working class, or 'proletariat'); Weber (1979) had a more multidimensional view which included additional economic factors such as income and qualifications (one's 'market position'); and Wright (1985) devised a still broader model which added a third group(s) to the capitalist and working classes, i.e. the managers and white-collar workers, now termed 'middle classes'. For Wright, these latter groups are differentiated from the other two by their relationships towards authority, their earning capacity and their skills and expertise.

Considering the five constructs listed above, each could be described as referring either directly to class, or to one or more of the factors determining an individual's perceived class status. It is notable that one third of participants in Study 2 saw a relationship between fiction reading and class, which may at first appear to be two quite unrelated concepts. However, a body of research has been conducted into the 'sociology of reading' which provides some empirical evidence of this relationship: Sharon (1974, in Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999, p.205), for example, found that US readers from higher socio-economic status groups 'preferred more complex and prestigious genres, like biographical and historical novels, whereas the lowest status groups were more interested in religious reading and romantic fiction.' A French study conducted by Bourdieu (1984) suggested that Romance fiction and Crime fiction were popular among working class people, whereas those from the upper classes preferred more literary fiction. Similarly, Van Rees et al (1999, p.354) suggest that 'literary books' and 'popular books' (traditional genres such as Romance fiction or Crime fiction) refer to 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow' reading respectively. In an attempt to determine why readers from 'the higher social strata' are perceived as preferring 'more complex and prestigious books' than those from the lower classes, Kraaykamp and Dijkstra (1999, p.228) conducted a national survey of Dutch fiction reading, and found unsurprisingly that readers with a higher educational attainment (one of the indicators of class) read more complex books than those who did not. Perhaps more interestingly, they found that social motives and status were meaningful for

book reading preferences, indicating that the reading of ‘complex and prestigious books...serves as an alternative pathway used to gain social status’ (p.228).

Although three of the above constructs were not elicited with specific reference to Asian or Black British fiction, in developing the profile of the minority ethnic fiction reader it is useful to look at the grid ratings for these two elements by each of the five participants. Participant RG06 felt that the readers were equally likely to be middle class, giving each genre a ‘5’ rating, where 1 is ‘not likely to be middle class’, and 7 is ‘very likely to be middle class’. Similarly, RG02 felt that the readers were equally likely to be ‘middle class, white and middle-aged’, also giving each genre a ‘5’ rating. Interestingly, these findings somewhat contradict those of Study 1, in which a cross-tabulation of the data by community class and genre variables indicated that respondents from predominantly ‘working class’ areas are significantly more likely to ‘usually’ read Black British or Asian fiction than is the case for those from predominantly ‘middle class’ or ‘mixed’ areas. However, it must be noted that the analysis of Study 1 data by class cannot necessarily be regarded as entirely accurate, as the data were analysed only according to the predominant class of the community in which the particular library was situated, and not according to the data provided by individual respondents.

Regarding the perceived income of the two readers, RG05 gave both a ‘4’ rating, suggesting that they were each no more likely to have a particularly low or high income. Focusing on a different aspect of income, RG08 suggested that the two readers were not particularly likely to be ‘SINK’ (Single Income, No Kids), giving each a ‘3’ rating, where 1= ‘Not likely to be SINK’, and 7 = ‘Very likely to be SINK’.

Interestingly, Participant RG12 gave quite different ratings for each of the two minority fiction genres for the construct ‘More likely to be educated to degree level or higher’: where 1 is ‘Not likely to be educated to degree level or higher’ and 7 is ‘Very likely to be educated to degree level or higher’, he rated ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ as ‘1’, and ‘Reader of Black

British fiction' as '4'. This is perhaps surprising, given the perceived links in the findings of the second study between literary fiction and minority ethnic fiction (examples below), and the perceived relationship in previous research between literary fiction reading and class/education, as described above and by Kraaykamp and Dijkstra (1999, p.204), who noted that 'educational attainment is often regarded as the most important factor underlying the reading of books':

'I think a lot of Asian fiction comes under the blanket of Literary fiction...' (RG03)

'I'd put those two together, Literary fiction and Black British fiction, I think readers of those would again be interested in gaining something other than just plot and entertainment from a book... it might be more challenging on your ideas and things [to read BBF/Literary fiction]...' (RG03)

'I think this [Science fiction/fantasy] reflects a comfort zone for the reader, and these two [Black British fiction, Literary fiction] are possibly more experimental and challenging.' (RG04)

'I suppose again with stereotypes that would make me consider that those [Black British fiction, Literary fiction] are more sort of literary and middle class again, whereas that's [Science fiction/fantasy] considered less well, in some ways. I mean, I don't think like that, but... I suppose 'highbrow' is the word I'm looking for, yes. I mean, I don't think like that but I think that would be the perception...' (RG06)

'To be honest, most of the Asian fiction in English and the Black British fiction that I could say I was familiar with, they kind of cross over into Literary fiction.' (RG07)

PERCEIVED APPROACH TO READING

A total of 18 constructs were elicited regarding the reader's perceived approach to the act of reading, grouped into lower-order codes (themes) as listed above. Each of these was elicited by just two or three participants. However, from a qualitative perspective each is of value in informing our understanding of the minority ethnic fiction reader:

- Is an avid reader (n=3)
- Others' perceptions of this reader (n=3)
- Browsing habits (n=2)

- Looking for a mainstream read (n=2)
- Interest in contemporary novels (n=2)
- Would define him/herself as a fan of the genre/specialist (n=1)
- Feels obliged to follow fashion in reading choices (n=1)

Is an avid reader

Three participants elicited constructs relating to the likelihood of certain fiction readers to be ‘avid’ (RG03) or ‘established’ (RG14) readers.

Participant RG03 chose to separate ‘Reader of Lad Lit’ from ‘Reader of Science fiction and Fantasy fiction’ and ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’, as she felt that the former was ‘fiction for people who don’t read’, whereas the latter two ‘might be generally more interested in reading’. Similarly, Participant RG07 described both Lad Lit and Chick Lit as ‘kind of targeted at people who don’t...necessarily list reading as one of their hobbies’. Thirdly, Participant RG14 felt that the Lad Lit reader would not tend to be an established reader, but could be ‘someone who was wanting a really easy read, to start off on’.

Others’ perceptions of this reader

Three participants referred to others’ perceptions of the readers of particular minority genres when eliciting constructs, as follows:

‘Would not experience prejudice in searching for a book’ (RG08)

‘Is highly thought of by other readers’ (RG11)

‘More likely to be a geek’ (RG12)

Participant RG08 separated ‘Reader of LGBT fiction’ from ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Reader of Black British fiction’ in an exploration of prejudice, as he felt that the first would have experienced a different form of prejudice from the latter two:

‘These are people who have experienced prejudice, all the time, and it’s great that the libraries are committed to promoting it, even if it is saying “we have a collection, and we’ve siphoned it off from the

general collection, here we are promoting it””, and that’s brilliant. It’s difficult separating one from the other, except one group would suffer from homophobia, regardless of race, and one group might suffer from racism, regardless of sexuality.’ (RG08)

However, in considering the issue further, RG08 suggested that the Reader of LGBT fiction would differ from the other two readers in that he or she may experience greater prejudice in accessing reading material ‘in a public environment’:

‘I think that’s more so than these two, yes. If you’re investigating sexuality, and you’re using fiction to investigate it, you might experience anxiety or whatever, to taking those first steps to finding out about it, and then to be confronted with ‘LGBT’, which I suppose not everybody would understand, but to go to that section in the library, at least you know it’s there, it’s great that you know it’s there, but would you want to be browsing? I suppose it’s more difficult for access, if you’re in the process of finding out.’

[BB – So these two would experience less prejudice in searching for a book?]

‘Actually in the book section, yes.’

Expressing a different viewpoint, RG11 separated ‘Reader of Sci-Fi/fantasy fiction’ from ‘Reader of Black British fiction’ and ‘Reader of literary fiction’, as he felt that the reader of the first would be less well thought of by other readers than the readers of the latter two:

‘...someone who would normally read the Literary fiction, the old classics, would tend to stay away from the Science Fiction...If there’s a sole reader of that type of Literary fiction, he’s not really interested in Science fiction, but they would on occasion take out Black British fiction.

[BB – So the Black British fiction reader could be interested in either of these [Literary/Sci-Fi], whereas it’s unlikely, you think, that this person [Literary] would also read this [Science fiction]?]

‘Yes.’

Commenting on the seventh triad ‘reader of Science fiction & Fantasy/Asian fiction in English/Lad Lit fiction’, Participant RG12 suggested that the reader of Science fiction/Fantasy fiction would be more likely than the other two to be ‘a bit of a geek...a bit less sort of sociable and sort of, you know, reads a lot, that kind of thing.’ The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) defines ‘geek’ as ‘any unsociable person obsessively

devoted to a particular pursuit’: it is therefore interesting that this participant appeared to suggest that the ‘Asian fiction in English’ reader would not possess these characteristics, and would not be an ‘obsessive’ reader. Consistently with this view, his ratings of both ‘Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Black British fiction’ show that RG12 rated the former as ‘2’ and the latter as ‘3’, where 1 is ‘Not likely to be a geek’ and 7 is ‘Very likely to be a geek’.

Browsing habits

Participant RG06 separated ‘Science fiction and Fantasy’ from ‘Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Black British fiction’ as the former genre would always have a specific section within the library, whereas the latter two refer to ‘the kind of books you might pick up, basically, or pass, and think “Oh, that looks good”, so not necessarily somebody would go looking for that’. For this participant, the second two readers would therefore be ‘more likely to be a browser’. Interestingly, however, a slightly different view was given by Participant RG03, who separated ‘Reader of LGBT fiction’ from ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Reader of Black British fiction’ as she felt that LGBT fiction was ‘more peripheral’ than the other two genres, ‘so a reader of this [LGBT fiction] would probably be someone who was more ready to dig about for fiction, and not just go to what’s on the shelf per se.’ She continues, ‘...when I forced myself to think about LGBT fiction...I thought that they’re actually not as *on the shelf* as Black and Asian fiction.’

Looking for a mainstream read

Two participants (RG03, RG10), considering the first triad ‘Reader of: Crime/Black British/Romance fiction’, separated the Black British fiction reader from the other two, as they regarded him/her as less likely to be looking for a ‘mainstream’ novel. In her construct ratings, RG03 felt that both readers were equally likely to be ‘less mainstream’, with a rating of ‘5’ on a scale where 1 is ‘More interested in plot than style, looking for entertainment’, and 7 is ‘More interested in style than plot, not so mainstream’. Having described the Black British fiction reader as less likely to be looking for a mainstream novel, RG10 changed her mind when rating all elements for this construct, giving both genres a mid-point rating of ‘4’.

As she commented while rating the element ‘Asian fiction in English’ for the construct ‘Looking for a mainstream novel’ (1) / ‘Not looking for a mainstream novel’ (7):

‘It’s difficult, because it doesn’t tell you anything about what the story’s about, just knowing that it’s Asian fiction... what’s mainstream to them isn’t necessarily mainstream to someone else. So it’s really hard, Briony! I’m going to give it a really non-committal ‘4.’

A third participant (RG11) felt that Black British fiction was ‘a bit more mainstream’ than Asian fiction in English, although the final stated construct was that the Asian reader ‘Is more likely to be a member of a minority group’ than the readers of Black British fiction or Science fiction/Fantasy fiction:

‘...[BB – So do you see this [Asian] as more of a minority genre?]
‘Yes, definitely.’
[BB – So the reader of Asian fiction is more likely to be of a minority group, whether this means ethnic minority or just minority?]
‘Yes, I’d say. There isn’t much call in my particular library for this type of fiction [Asian fiction].’
[BB – So you’d see Black British fiction as a bit more mainstream?]
‘Yes.’

It is not possible to draw any conclusions based on just three responses, however it could be noted that neither Black British fiction nor Asian fiction in English were regarded as clearly belonging to ‘mainstream’ fiction. Yet what is ‘mainstream’, in this context? Two not entirely unrelated interpretations seem to emerge from the above repertory grid interviews (RG03, RG10, RG11): firstly, the term could describe a novel which is more concerned with plot and entertainment than literary style – more in line, perhaps, with the traditional genres of Romance fiction, Crime fiction, War & Spy fiction, etc. Certainly, Nicholls (1995) would agree that mainstream fiction can be distinguished from other fiction of ‘seriousness’ (p.2), although a US fiction guide for booksellers and librarians, subtitled ‘A guide to mainstream fiction, 1990-2001’ (Pearl, 2002, p.ix) gives an alternative name for ‘mainstream fiction’ as ‘literary fiction’, which ‘may

have genre elements (e.g. historical, adventure)', but may equally be more complex in terms of plot and/or style. Interestingly, Pearl (2002, p.xviii) also comments on the 'recent trend' in mainstream fiction of 'the appreciation for literature exploring other cultures and countries, including the immigrant experience', a grouping into which both Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction could reasonably be incorporated.

The second apparent interpretation is that 'mainstream' could refer to the reading material of the 'majority', whether in terms of an ethnic majority or simply its overall popularity with the reading public as a whole. This would be in line with the Oxford English Dictionary (2014), which defines the term as 'the prevailing trend of opinion, fashion, society, etc.', and certainly this would be in line with the interpretation of Participant RG11.

Interest in contemporary novels

Two participants (RG02, RG14) elicited constructs which related to the reader's interest in 'contemporary' novels:

'Would prefer a more contemporary, more accessible novel' (RG02)

'Looking for a contemporary novel' (RG14)

Although RG02 was specifically describing the readers of Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English as preferring 'more modern' novels (than the reader of Literary fiction), in fact the ratings of both RG02 and RG14 for the above constructs showed that the readers of Asian fiction in English were regarded as no more or less likely to be looking for a contemporary novel, with midpoint ratings of '4' per element for each construct. A third participant (RG08), considering the same triad, similarly separated the reader of Literary fiction from the readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction, stating that 'literary [fiction] is historical, perhaps, and goes back hundreds of years', whereas the other two genres are 'more modern, but with a [cultural] heritage.' He rated the two minority genres as '3', where '1' is 'Looking for a historical novel, a *classic* text'.

Given that all three participants gave relatively midpoint ratings for the reader of Literary fiction, we could perhaps infer that again the two minority fiction genres are perceived as sharing similar characteristics to Literary fiction, a broad genre which includes both classic (older) and contemporary novels.

Would define him/herself as a fan/specialist of a genre

Participant RG01 separated the 'Reader of Science fiction and Fantasy fiction' from the 'Reader of Black British fiction' and 'Reader of Asian fiction in English' as he suggested that the former reader would be more likely to define him/herself as a 'fan' of the genre than would be the case for the latter two. Considering another triad, however, he also suggested that the 'Reader of Black British fiction' differed from the readers of Crime and Romance fiction in that the former 'has a specialist interest':

'I always imagine someone making a more special effort for that, to be honest, either they'd be perhaps from the Black community and taking an interest in it, I wouldn't like to guess at the reasons, or if they're from outside the community then you'd imagine them to be going out of their way...to find it, to look for it, to take an interest in it, whereas these [Romance and Crime fiction] are a lot more general, and certainly in the libraries I've worked at they're a lot more widespread...' (RG01)

Feels obliged to follow fashion in reading choices

One participant (RG07) elicited two constructs which related to the reader's feeling of obligation to 'follow fashion' in the reading choices he or she made:

'Looking to read something they feel *should be read*' (Reader of Literary fiction)

'Is aware of what people are talking about [current fashion]' (Reader of Asian fiction in English and Lad Lit fiction)

In rating the two minority fiction elements for the first of the above constructs, RG07 felt that both the 'Reader of Black British fiction' and the 'Reader of Asian fiction in English' were no more or less likely to look for a book they feel 'should be read', rating each as '4'. Perhaps slightly

contradictorily, she later separated ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Reader of Lad Lit’ from ‘Reader of Science fiction/Fantasy fiction’, with the following explanation:

‘I would possibly pick out Asian and Lad Lit fiction as more likely to be fashionable...[The reader] is perhaps more aware of what people are talking about, not necessarily that they would have to read what everybody is talking about, but it’s more likely they’ll be reading it because they’ve read about it in the paper, or something like that.’

In rating the elements for this second construct she implied that the readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction would be equally highly aware of the ‘current fashion’ in selecting his or her books, rating each as ‘6’ where ‘1’ is ‘not aware of what people are talking about [current fashion]’.

These small-scale findings are nonetheless in line with previous research, for example Kraaykamp and Dijkstra (1999) whose Dutch national survey data indicated that our reading choices are not only affected by individual characteristics, but also by a series of complex social influences:

‘Book preferences proved not only to be affected by individual characteristics of cultural competence. Our analysis clearly showed that social motives were meaningful for book preferences as well.’
(p.228)

PREFERRED NATURE OF PLOT

Notwithstanding the two previously discussed major themes ‘Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read’ and ‘Interest in escapism (not reality)’ and the minor theme ‘Looking for a light read (for pleasure)’, a total of 13 further constructs were elicited regarding the readers’ perceived plot preferences.

These have been grouped into five themes, as follows:

- Looking for a happy ending (n=2)
- Looking for a predictable plot’ (n=3)
- Looking for thrills/entertainment (n=2)
- Looking for a humorous plot (n=1).

Looking for a happy ending

Two participants separated LGBT fiction from Chick Lit and Romance fiction, expressing the opinion that the reader of the latter pair would be more likely to be looking for a happy ending in their books than the reader of the former. This corresponds with the view of US readers' advisory writer Saricks (2001) that the readers of all kinds of romance novels (including male romance, i.e. 'Lad Lit') 'expect a happy ending' (p.28), and of Dubino (1993) who refers to the development of the romance fiction genre with its focus on 'love and a happy ending' (p.104). Interestingly, Saricks (ibid.) also attributes the same expectation of a happy ending to crime fiction readers.

In eliciting this construct, participants RG05 and RG08 each also referred to the formulaic nature of Chick Lit and Romance fiction, and the reader's requirement of a happy ending:

'I'd probably assume that their plot is very similar, you know, that people who read these types of books [Chick Lit/Romance] are interested in that kind of plot, you know, the happy ending, so that means that they have some really similar ideas about the content of the literature.' (RG05)

'...they all end up happy ever after, and it feels like there needs to be a heroine, two possible love interests, one who's bad, one who's good, and fortunately it's usually the good guy who wins, who gets the girl.' (RG08)

In rating the constructs, the two participants consistently rated the readers of Romance fiction and Chick Lit fiction as very strongly likely to look for a book with a happy ending, whereas the readers of LGBT Black British, Asian and Literary fiction were perceived as far less likely to do so.

Looking for a predictable plot

Strongly linked to the above theme is the theme 'looking for a predictable plot': three participants elicited a total of four constructs relating to this theme. Constructs included 'Looking for something more predictable', with its polar construct 'Looking for a more experimental read' (RG04), and 'Looking for predictable characters with a definite outcome' (RG08).

Genres specifically described as ‘predictable’ were Chick Lit and Romance fiction, Crime fiction and War and Spy fiction, whereas the three minority fiction genres – Black British fiction, Asian fiction and LGBT fiction – were each distinguished from these genres as being experimental, ambiguous, unpredictable.

Participant RG04 separated Black British fiction from Crime and Romance fiction, suggesting that the latter pair ‘are very much born out of habit, if you’re wanting a predictable outcome’. Similarly, participant RG08 divided the triad in the same way, observing:

‘I’d link those two if anything because they’re fanatical about resolution so they might be more formulaic, whereas Black British could be thematic, a different style...so Crime and Romance [are] in a kind of formula, if you like.’

Participant RG04 also separated Asian fiction from Science fiction/fantasy and Lad Lit, commenting that their reader is looking for ‘something a bit more predictable, in your comfort zone.’

The finding that certain types of genre fiction are predictable and/or formulaic is not surprising at all: Indian writer Parameswaran (1999), for example, aligns romance novels with vernacular Indian films, describing both as ‘formulaic, mass-produced entertainment’ (p.97). Futas (1993) suggests that genre fiction is primarily referred to – ‘in the scholarly world’ – as ‘popular literature or formula literature’, and in defence of its value to the public library collection, describes it as ‘not just popular and formulaic’ (p.39).

Looking for thrills/entertainment

Both participants RG03 and RG04 elicited constructs which polarised the concepts of entertainment or excitement and literary style or complexity:

‘More interested in plot than style, looking for entertainment’ (polar construct, ‘More interested in style than plot, not so mainstream’) (RG03)

‘Looking for more thrills or excitement in a book’ (polar construct,
‘Looking for a more mind-exercising read’ (RG04)

RG03 rated both readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction as equally likely to be ‘more interested in style than plot’, with ratings for each of ‘5’. Similarly, RG04 rated the two readers as equally highly likely to be looking for ‘a more mind-exercising read’, giving each a rating of ‘6’. Here again, the two genres are perceived as sharing similar characteristics both to each other and to literary fiction.

Looking for a humorous plot

Participant RG08 felt that the readers of Chick Lit and Lad Lit would be more likely than the reader of Crime fiction to be ‘looking for humour’ in the plot of novels they chose. In her 2007 book on ‘romance writing’ Pearce describes the writers of Lad Lit fiction in the following terms:

‘Excusing themselves with large doses of self-deprecating humour, these literary lads explore the forces that have prevented them succeeding in long-term relationships, vis-à-vis which lifestyle activities such as football and music become mysterious totems.’ (p.184).

Harzewski (2006) suggests that the Chick Lit genre ‘deliberately aims for a humorous effect’, referring by way of illustration to the eponymous heroine of two novels by Helen Fielding:

‘Bridget Jones’s popularity stems in part from her ability to laugh at her self-improvement quests.’ (p.38).

Is an interest in humour a concept associated with the readers of minority ethnic fiction? Although this participant saw a clear link between humour and the genres Lad Lit, Chick Lit, Romance fiction and Crime fiction, he felt that it was not particularly likely that the reader of either Asian fiction in English or Black British fiction would be interested in humorous plots, giving both a rating of ‘5’, where ‘7’ is ‘not looking for humour’.

SUBJECT INTERESTS

- Interest in other people (n=3)
- Interest in societal issues (n=2)
- Interest in sexuality (n=1).

Interest in other people

Three participants elicited constructs describing certain fiction readers' interest in reading about other people's lives. The Asian fiction reader and Black British fiction reader were separated from the reader of Science fiction/fantasy as being 'more interested in issues and relationships' (RG08). For a second time the Asian fiction reader (with the reader of Lad Lit fiction) was again distinguished from the Science fiction/fantasy reader as being 'interested in finding out about another person's lifestyle' (RG14). Finally, the reader of Black British fiction was, with the reader of Romance fiction, described as more 'interested in personal issues' (RG15) than the reader of Crime fiction.

Interest in societal issues

Related to the previous theme, two participants differentiated between fiction genre readers in terms of their perceived interest in broader societal issues. In contrast to the above comment defining the Black British fiction reader as 'interested in personal issues' (RG15), participant RG09 separated that reader from the Crime fiction and Romance fiction reader, stating that the former 'seems to be directed to society', whereas the latter pair 'is more personal, I think'. The same participant stated of the Black British fiction and LGBT fiction readers, 'it could be that they're interested in British society', whereas she felt that the reader of Asian fiction would not share that interest. However, participant RG15 in fact paired together the Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers, suggesting that they differed from the reader of Science fiction/fantasy by being 'interested in issues in society'.

No particular conclusions can be drawn from such minor findings, but it is worth reflecting that as Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English

have emerged from the work of post-colonial authors either living in Britain or in previously British colonies, their work often contains a recognised focus on cultural identity and – in the case of those resident in Britain – that which Sesay (2005, p.16) has described as an ‘alienness’ or ‘otherness’ perceived in their position within British society.

Interest in sexuality

A minor observation regarding the subject interests of fiction readers relates to their perceived interest in sexuality; considering the fifth triad ‘Reader of: Asian fiction in English/Black British/LGBT fiction’, Participant RG11 interestingly separated the first reader from the second and third, making the following observation:

‘...I don’t remember anyone who’s been reading Asian fiction to take out any LGBT fiction at all. I really can’t remember anyone taking out that combination before, although I have seen the reader of Black British fiction and LGBT fiction in the same pile before. So it might be a cultural difference between the Asians and the gay community, maybe. I’ve never, ever seen them in the same pile at all...I don’t know why that is, I wouldn’t put them together, although I have put those together [Black British fiction/LGBT fiction], especially when it’s Black History Month’.

In rating the elements for the construct ‘Is interested in plots with homosexual characters’ (where a higher number relates to a stronger interest), RG11 rated ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ as ‘1’, whereas ‘Reader of Black British fiction’ was a midpoint ‘4’. Given the above comment, it could be inferred that this participant is here assuming that the reader of Asian fiction in English will be a member of an Asian community, and furthermore that he may also be subconsciously tracing a stereotypical relationship between certain Asian cultures and homophobic behaviour. Beckett and Macey (2001, p.309), for example, write of ‘the violence against gay and lesbian people which is sanctioned by some cultural and religious [Asian] traditions...’, and this apparent intolerance has undoubtedly reached Western media and thinking. However, it should also be noted that homophobia is also a phenomenon sometimes associated with Western religions, in particular with Christianity (Plugge-Foust & Strickland, 2000; Hicks, 2003).

PREFERRED GENRES

- Interest in historical novels (n=1)
- Interest in mythical/fantasy novels (n=1)

Interest in historical novels

One participant (RG08) felt that Literary fiction differed from Black British and Asian fiction, in that the former had a more historical focus. This was not a straightforward distinction, however, as he explained:

‘I suppose it’s difficult not to consider literary fiction as the separate genre, because of the audience, and because of the traditions that are addressed by writers of Black British and Asian fiction, and literary is historical, perhaps, and goes back hundreds of years... Yes, I think [Black British and Asian fiction are] perhaps more modern...but with a heritage.’

The emerging construct was therefore ‘Looking for a historical novel, a ‘classic’ text’. Without inferring too much from the comments of just one participant, this is nonetheless an interesting observation as it somewhat reinforces the perspective presented in 2.3 that the post-colonial authors writing in the English language were essentially forced to ‘immerse themselves in the imported culture’ (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p.4), finding it difficult to lay claim to their own literary tradition and heritage (Young, in Sesay, 2005, p.14). Perhaps in the mind of participant RG08 the ‘Literary fiction’ genre relates more closely to the historical and canonical Western body of literature, whereas the two minority ethnic fiction genres are regarded as newer, ‘occupying’, as Rushdie (1992, p.61) has suggested, ‘a position on the periphery’ of the larger body of English literature?

Interest in mythical/fantasy novels

Participant RG13, asked to separate the triad Asian fiction in English/Black British fiction/Science fiction and fantasy fiction, felt that Black British fiction differed from the other two for the following reason:

‘Maybe those two [Asian/Sci-fi] are similar... because I suppose I’m thinking about the mythic tales set in Asia and how that would also

link in with the Fantasy of Science Fiction, and the faraway worlds... Yes, and all those like Ali Baba tales, and that sort of thing. Because even something like 'Midnight's Children' [book by Salman Rushdie], that's quite fantastical, that could appeal to a reader of Sci-Fi.'

This is certainly an interesting perspective. In a paper about the creativity of South Asian fiction authors, Dissanayake (1985) explores Rushdie's writing style in 'Midnight's Children', suggesting that in Rushdie's narrative, 'as indeed in traditional Indian stories, myth and reality, fantasy and actuality, are combined by the force of his imagination.' (p.240). Considering the importation of the novel to Asia from the West, Dissanayake further comments:

'...as the art of fiction progressed and newer territories were being claimed by the novel in terms of human experience and fictional technique, fantasy, lyricism, and non-naturalistic portraiture began to gain prominence.' (p.234).

5.8.9 The culture or openness personality trait

In the first study the culture (or 'openness') personality trait of the 'Big Five' was briefly discussed (4.8.1), in terms of its potential value in understanding readers' attitudes towards different fiction genres. It was noted that it could help to explain a reader's interest in reading widely, and in having an openness to try new reading material.

In this second study, the constructs elicited by repertory grid interview participants can be examined to consider the extent to which they relate to aspects of the openness trait. Using a combined set of trait pairs (adapted from Ajzen, 1988, Goldberg, 1990 and McCrae & Costa, 1987), the following list emerges:

- artistically sensitive-insensitive
- imaginative-simple
- intellectual - non-reflective
- narrow interests-broad interests
- uncurious-curious

- unadventurous-daring
- prefer routine-prefer variety.

Using this list as a template, it is possible to devise a table showing which of the lower-order codes (themes) and individual constructs relate to each of these trait pairs:

Table 5.7. Openness trait pairs and their related themes and constructs

Trait pair	Related theme	Related construct (examples)
Artistically sensitive-insensitive	1. Looking for mainstream novel 2. Looking for a predictable plot	1. More interested in style than plot, not so mainstream (RG03) 2. Is more open to where the book will lead him/her (RG04)
Imaginative-simple	1. Interest in escapism (not reality) 2. Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read	1. Is not interested in real-life issues (RG09); Is interested in exploring outside reality (RG09)
Intellectual-non-reflective	1. Others' perceptions of this reader 2. Looking for a light read (for pleasure) 3. Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read	1. Is highly thought of by other readers (RG11) 2. Looking for light reading (RG13); Looking primarily for enjoyment in a book (RG14) 3. Is not looking for a 'literary', acclaimed text (RG12); Not necessarily looking for a book to challenge their ideas' (RG03); Less likely to be looking for a literary, high-brow read (RG06)
Narrow interests-broad interests	1. Looking for a mainstream novel 2. Interest in ethnicity 3. Interest in multiple genres	1. Looking for a mainstream novel (RG10) 2. Looking for a more culturally diverse book (RG04); 'Is interested in

		different cultural backgrounds (RG14)
Uncurious-curious	1. Browsing habits 2. Interest in ethnicity Interest in other cultural backgrounds 3. Interest in other people	1. Would be prepared to look hard for a book, wants an obscure read (RG03) 2. Looking for fiction dealing with ethnicity, a book to make you think (RG03) 3. Interested in finding out about another person's lifestyle (RG14)
Unadventurous-daring	1. Looking for a mainstream novel 2. Looking for a predictable plot 3. Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read 4. Looking for thrills/entertainment 5. Interest in multiple genres	1. Looking for a mainstream novel (RG10) 2. Looking for a formulaic read (RG08); 'looking for something more predictable' (RG04) 3. Not necessarily looking for a book to challenge their ideas (RG03) 4. Looking for more thrills or excitement in a book (RG04) 5. Would not be keen to try other genres (RG02)
Prefer routine-prefer variety	1. Looking for a predictable plot 2. Interest in multiple genres	1. Looking for a formulaic read, with a happy ending (RG08) 2. Would be keen to try other genres (RG02); Is interested in all genres of fiction (RG09)

As the table illustrates, Study 2 participants elicited a number of constructs related to the culture or openness personality trait when considering the genre fiction reader and his or her perceived approach to reading, preferred nature of plot, subject interests and preferred genres. It would be reasonable to suggest that the reader with a high rating for the positive constructs and a low rating for the negative constructs listed in the table, would be more likely to have this personality trait than readers who do not.

The third study will therefore build on the findings of the first two studies to consider the mean ratings of grouped constructs, so from this it will be

possible to consider which fiction genres are more likely to have readers who score highly in this trait.

5.9 The contribution and limitations of the second study

The second study has enabled a detailed investigation of the characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, using personal construct theory and the associated repertory grid technique.

Repertory grid interviews were conducted with fifteen participants, from which 128 discrete constructs were elicited. Although the conflict between constructivist theory and the aggregation of personal constructs was acknowledged, a pragmatic decision was taken to group the data in order to interpret this otherwise unmanageable quantity, concentrating on the range as well as the frequency of responses. An adapted version of thematic analysis was used to subdivide the data into 29 themes, of which four were Major (elicited by eight or more participants), six were Minor (elicited by between four and seven participants), and nineteen were Idiosyncratic, elicited by between one and three participants). These themes were then presented as a set of potential characteristics of the genre fiction reader.

Three of the themes appeared to correspond to definitions of stereotyping given in the literature (Tagiuri, 1969; Hogg & Vaughan, 1995), with particular reference to the genre fiction reader's perceived gender, age and membership of a minority group. Interestingly, although clear views emerged regarding the gender and age of the more 'established' fiction genres such as Romance fiction, Crime fiction and War/Spy fiction, Study 2 participants indicated that the readers of minority ethnic fiction genres Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction would be almost equally likely to be male as female, which broadly corresponds to the findings of the first study (4.6.6).

In terms of the perceived age of minority ethnic fiction genres, the first study had found that younger respondents (specifically, aged below 40 years) were significantly more likely than older readers to be usual borrowers of Asian fiction in English, and interestingly the findings of this

second study also revealed a perception that the Asian fiction reader was more likely to be younger than older. However, whereas the first study found that the usual readers of Black British fiction were significantly no more likely to be younger than older, the findings of the second study did not support this, indicating instead that the readers of this genre could be younger or older. As previously stated, this issue is further explored with statistical analysis in the next study.

Unsurprisingly, clearer views emerged from this study regarding minority ethnic fiction readers' membership of a minority group, and as in Study 1 a link was frequently – although not inevitably - made between minority ethnicity and one's preference for minority fiction.

The 29 grouped themes (lower-order codes) were further rearranged into five new categories (high-order codes) according to certain characteristics of the reader, related either to his or her personal profile or to his or her reading interests and preferences. The deeper level of investigation facilitated by the repertory grid technique used in this second study revealed far more about both the reader of genre fiction than had been possible in the previous study. In an attempt to understand not only the frequency but also the range of constructs elicited and what they can reveal about the readership of minority ethnic fiction, a further qualitative exploration was then made of the idiosyncratic constructs elicited as per each of the five groupings. This stage of the analysis was felt to be more in line with Kelly's (1955) original personal construct theory than the previous, aggregated approach to analysis.

Findings regarding the perceived demographic profile of the reader were similar to those reported in previous sociological research, indicating for example that a relationship was perceived by one third of participants between fiction reading and class. A lack of certainty again emerged regarding the readers of genres 'Asian fiction in English' and 'Black British fiction' and their class membership (including levels of income and education), but it does appear that the link made in previous research between a higher social class/educational attainment/income and Literary

fiction is also perceived by some to exist with reference to these two minority fiction genres.

New constructs emerged regarding the perceived characteristics of the reader, for example that neither Black British fiction nor Asian fiction in English were regarded as clearly belonging to ‘mainstream’ fiction, whether the term was interpreted as ‘non-serious’ fiction such as the more established genres Romance fiction, Crime fiction, etc., or as ‘majority’ fiction, enjoyed by the reading public as a whole. In order to obtain more clarity on this issue, a further exploration will be made of the reading of ‘mainstream’ fiction with a larger population in the third study.

In exploring the readers’ preferred plot it can be inferred that, given the similar ratings frequently made across the constructs to the two genres and Literary fiction, the minority fiction genres are perceived as sharing similar characteristics to a more established, perhaps culturally broader genre which includes both classic (older) and contemporary novels. All three readers were felt to be likely to be looking for a more ‘challenging’, ‘mind-exercising’ reading experience, and to be generally more interested in literary style than the plot itself.

Although not inevitably the case, the two ethnic minority fiction genres were generally perceived as sharing similar characteristics. This issue will be further investigated in the following chapter.

As the literature had suggested, this study – and in particular the respondent validation phase – has revealed that participation in a repertory grid interview is a demanding cognitive process. Although the sample population was selected for its assumed level of knowledge of the subject area, a number of participants nonetheless felt uninformed in the specific field of minority ethnic fiction, and even expressed concern that the interview had revealed a degree of prejudice towards certain readers, particularly minority ethnic fiction readers, of which they had previously been unaware. Some discomfort was also felt in the process of generalising which this particular form of interview inevitably demands.

Clearly it was never the intention of the research to cause participants to feel any discomfort or unease during, or as a result of, the repertory grid interview, but as Hiller and DiLuzio (2004) observe, during any research interview a 'process of self-discovery can occur that can make the interview an intense experience for the interviewee' (p.20). Furthermore, they suggest that the participant who is perhaps more open to discussing his or her attitudes and behaviour, can find in the interview 'the opportunity to explain, refine and reorganize an experience in all its complexity, thereby providing the researcher with a better window on the behaviour under examination' (p.21).

Despite the demanding nature of the interview, all participants confirmed that the constructs they had both elicited and rated were an accurate representation of their views, thereby indicating the value of this method in investigating this field of research.

In conclusion, this second study has demonstrated that the repertory grid is an effective means of generating and exploring a series of constructs relating to the characteristics of fiction readers. By examining tables of constructs and their frequencies, the study has facilitated the understanding of those constructs and the values and attitudes underpinning them.

Valuable in qualitative terms, this research method is an acknowledged means of anticipating a pattern of behaviour (Fransella et al, 2004, p.151), and of providing a solid basis for a larger-scale study. However, the main limitations of this research have been the difficulty of comparing participant ratings given that so many different constructs were elicited (n=128 before grouping), that there was a relatively small number of repeated constructs, and that the sample size (n=15) was too small for meaningful statistical analysis.

In order to statistically investigate the actual significance of potential trends and apparent relationships between data, further research is required. This involves the rating of a series of identical (provided) constructs by a larger number of participants, in order to test the extent to which the constructs differentiate between individual readers and genres. The next stage of the

research will progress from a qualitative investigation of the idiosyncracies of individual participant response, to a quantitative testing of similarities and differences of constructs across a larger sample. A third study has therefore been designed with new objectives and a larger participant population, as presented in **Chapter 6**.

Chapter 6

Study 3: a quantitative exploration of provided construct ratings

Chapter overview

This chapter begins by introducing the third study, how it builds on the previous study and its specific aim and objectives. In exploring the theoretical framework, a brief discussion is included of the effectiveness of using provided, rather than elicited, constructs in the repertory grid technique. The quantitative methodology is introduced, including an exploration of the selection of elements and constructs for this phase of the research. The findings are then presented of the statistical and descriptive analyses conducted in order to investigate participant agreement across construct ratings, the means of grouped constructs, the rating of genre fiction readers on a construct continuum, and finally the impact of experience, age and ethnicity on participant response. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings, and of the contribution of this third study to the thesis as a whole.

6.1 Introduction and aims of the third study

Study 2 enabled the exploration of the nature of personal constructs elicited by the repertory grid interview participants, examining tables of constructs and their frequencies, and also facilitated the understanding of these constructs and the values and attitudes which were underpinning them. Although valuable in qualitative terms, the main limitations of this first phase of the study were that it was difficult to compare participant ratings given that so many different constructs were elicited (n=128 before grouping), that there was a relatively small number of repeated constructs, and that the sample size was too small for meaningful statistical analysis (n=15).

A third study was therefore designed and conducted in October 2008, seven months after the previous phase of the research, which required a further group of participants to complete a repertory grid containing grouped constructs from the analysis of Study 2. These provided constructs had been chosen for their frequency of elicitation, and/or for their direct relevance to the research objectives of the thesis as a whole. As previously stated in 5.3,

the two stages of the research are entirely complementary, as Study 2 elicited and explored participant beliefs via the idiographic repertory grid interview. The most salient of these beliefs is then tested in Study 3, drawing from the more nomothetic approach of semantic differentiation. In other words, as stated in 5.9, this new study progresses from a qualitative investigation of the idiosyncrasies of individual participant response to a quantitative testing of similarities and differences of constructs across a larger sample.

The aim of Study 3 was to adapt the repertory grid approach in order to investigate in greater depth a group of readers' beliefs, attitudes and intentions to read certain fiction genres. Whereas the previous study had been primarily descriptive and qualitative in nature, the third is more analytical and quantitative, with the following specific objectives:

- To investigate the extent to which there is participant agreement across construct ratings for genre fiction readers
- To evaluate where on average genre fiction readers are rated on a construct continuum
- To investigate the extent to which participants' previous public library experience affects their perceptions of the readers of genre fiction.

Data were collected from an additional population, larger than that of Study 2, in order to combine datasets and to conduct further statistical analyses than was initially possible with the previous study's sample population of 15. Details of this new sample population are given below (6.3.1).

This additional phase of the research not only added further data for analysis, but also increased the validity of the overall investigation. Previous research has found this combined method to be particularly effective (Frost & Braine, 1967; Goffin, 2002).

6.2 Theoretical framework

As explored in the previous chapter (5.2), both the second and third studies use as the main theoretical framework an adaptation of Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (1955). This facilitates the exploration of those values implicit in our own and other readers' construing of different reader 'types', and of the diversity of individual perspectives.

Whereas in the previous study participants were asked to elicit their own constructs before rating them in the repertory grid, the present study uses a number of these as 'provided constructs' which are then rated by the new sample population. To what extent does the process of rating provided constructs differ in effectiveness from the rating of one's own elicited constructs? It could appear that this second method is removed from Kelly's original personal construct theory, in which the primary focus is on the individual and his or her construction of events. However, it could equally be argued that the provided construct is merely a label which will be interpreted by each individual in a different way, according to his or her own personal construct. As Fransella et al (2004) observe, 'All constructs are *personal* in the sense that the person is able to place them over events and make something of them' (p.46). Indeed, Kelly's original 'Individuality Corollary' states that 'persons differ from each other in their construction of events...no two people can play precisely the same role in the same event, no matter how closely they are associated' (1955, p.55).

Further exploring the value of using provided constructs in the repertory grid technique, Fransella et al (2004) suggest that in some cases it is even preferable to the research outcome to supply, rather than to elicit, constructs. It may be, for example, that the objective of the research is to compare the relationship between specific 'verbal labels' (p.46), in order to explain a particular aspect of behaviour. In the present study, it was certainly the intention to investigate the ways in which a group of participants interpreted certain provided constructs, to see the extent to which there was participant agreement in this interpretation.

Of course, if participants are required to rate a series of provided constructs, these must be meaningful and relevant to each individual. Adams-Webber (1998) found that the constructs he supplied to his university student participants were more meaningful when they had been selected (even randomly) from a list of constructs that were previously elicited from students at the same university at another time. Similarly, Fransella et al (2004, p.46) make the following recommendation:

‘If you are in doubt about what kind of constructs are applicable to a certain group of people, it is common practice to collect a sample of constructs from a comparable group or from the group itself. You are then fairly safe in assuming that the most commonly used constructs for that group will be meaningful to the individuals.’

Taking into account these findings and recommendations of previous research, the provided constructs used in the present study were supplied by a population similar to, and in 15 cases identical to, the sample population for Study 2 (see 6.3.1 for further details).

6.3 Methodology

As presented in the previous chapter, the second study consisted of a complete repertory grid interview with construct elicitation and rating (n=15). Details of the eliciting and rating process were given in the previous study (5.7.8).

In order to increase the overall validity of the data collected and to enable more helpful statistical analyses, the third study combines the data collected for Study 2 with data collected from an additional 21 participants, who rated the most frequently cited and/or relevant constructs from the second study. Unless stated otherwise, the analyses for this study are therefore based on a sample group of n=36.

The 21 new respondents were contacted by email in order to ask if they would consider participating in the study, and were sent as attachments the grid itself, a Participant Information Sheet and a glossary of brief genre descriptions in order to assist them in the process and to increase the validity

of data collected (see **Appendices 3a and 2d**). The email text also gave a brief explanation of the rating process (including the ‘myself as reader’ element), a guarantee of anonymity and reference to the University of Sheffield Ethics Review process, and details of planned research dissemination channels (see **Appendix 3b**).

6.3.1 Sample population

As stated above, the population for this third study comprised 36 participants, including the 15 original participants of Study 2 and 21 further participants. As was the case for the previous study, a purposive sampling method was also used for Study 3. In order to maintain consistency and increase the validity of the overall process, the intention was to reach a population similar to that of the previous phase. The sample population was therefore all students on the MA Librarianship programme in the Department of Information Studies at Sheffield University in the academic year 2007-8, both full-time (n=29) and part-time (n=13), and all full-time students on the same programme in the following academic year 2008-9 (n=26). Again, an email was sent by the present author to the distribution list for each of the programmes, asking if students would be interested in participating in the research project, and again it was emphasised that participation was entirely voluntary, and that no link would be made between participation and their progress on the course(s). In addition, all MPhil/PhD public librarianship students in the Department of Information Studies in the academic year 2008-9 (n=3), all members of the editorial board for the Public Library Journal (n=6), and a group of academic or research staff within the Social Sciences faculty (n=5) - all groups consisting of qualified librarians - were asked to complete the grid.

The minimum intended overall sample size for this study was 20 participants, and a total of 36 responses were collected, comprising:

- 15 Masters students (2007-8)
- 9 Masters students (2008-9)
- 3 MPhil/PhD students
- 4 members of the Public Library Journal editorial board
- 5 academic or research staff

Of the 36 participants, 10 (27.8%) were male, and 26 (72.2%) were female.

Details of further demographic data collected from each participant are given in Table 6.1 and Figures 6.1 and 6.2 below:

Table 6.1. Participant profiles for Study 3 (n=36)

No.	Participant	Gender	Age (band)	Ethnicity	Public library work experience (years)
Studies 2 & 3					
1	RG01	M	20-29	White British	2.5
2	RG02	F	20-29	White British	2.5
3	RG03	F	20-29	White British	0.25
4	RG04	F	30-39	White British	0
5	RG05	M	20-29	White British	0
6	RG06	F	20-29	White British	0.25
7	RG07	F	20-29	White British	0
8	RG08	M	30-39	White British	0
9	RG09	F	30-39	Japanese	3
10	RG10	F	20-29	White British	1.25
11	RG11	M	20-29	White British	8
12	RG12	M	20-29	White British	0
13	RG13	F	20-29	White British	3
14	RG14	F	20-29	White British	2
15	RG15	F	20-29	White British	3
Study 3 only					
16	RGb01	F	20-29	White British	0
17	RGb02	F	20-29	White British	0
18	RGb03	F	20-29	White British	0.25
19	RGb04	F	40-49	White British	0
20	RGb05	F	20-29	White British	0
21	RGb06	F	20-29	White British	0
22	RGb07	M	20-29	Chinese	0.25
23	RGb08	F	20-29	White British	0
24	RGb09	F	20-29	White British	0
25	RGb10	F	20-29	White British	0.5
26	RGb11	F	20-29	White British	4
27	RGb12	F	30-39	Japanese	0
28	RGb13	M	40-49	White British	20
29	RGb14	M	30-39	White British	8
30	RGb15	F	40-49	White British	6
31	RGb16	F	50-59	White British	25
32	RGb17	F	30-39	White British	0
33	RGb18	M	40-49	British Asian	0
34	RGb19	F	30-39	White British	2
35	RGb20	F	30-39	White British	0
36	RGb21	M	60-69	White British	29

Figure 6.1. The age (band) of participants in Study 3 (n=36)

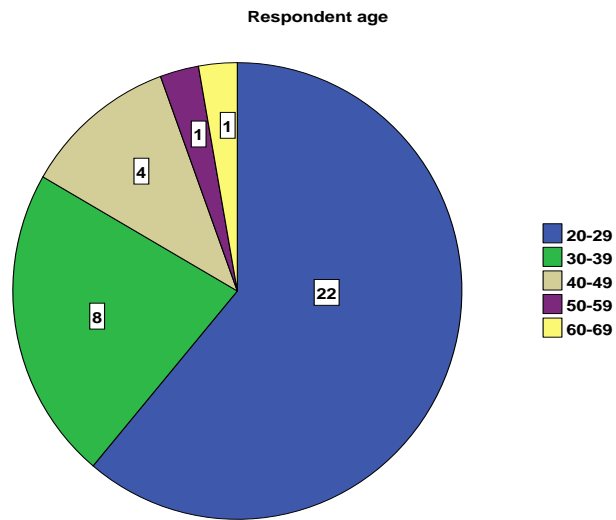
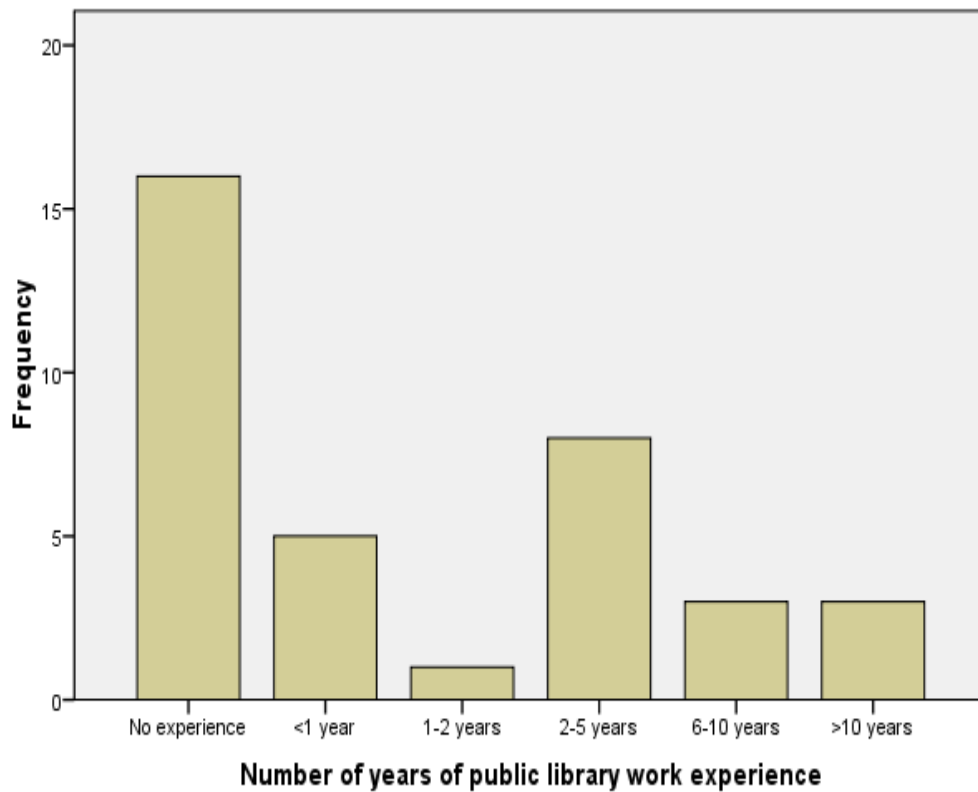


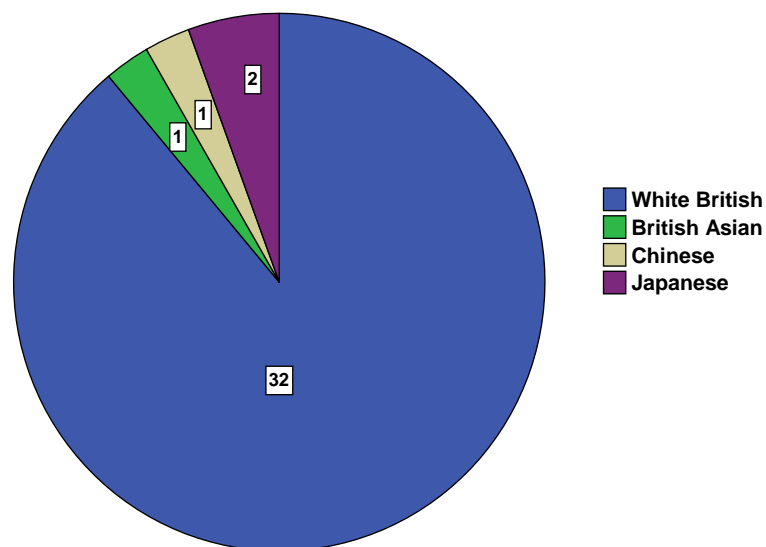
Figure 6.2. The number of years of public library work experience of Study 3 participants (n=36)



Ethnicity of respondents

As was the case for the previous study (see 5.7.3), the sample population of the third study was fairly homogenous (32 White British, 1 British Asian, 2 Japanese, 1 Chinese participant), as Figure 6.3 illustrates. 11.1% of the population were non-white, which although a small proportion is nonetheless larger than the finding of the CILIP Equalities Audit (Batty, 2009) that just 2% of the LIS workforce was from a BME background, compared to (at that time) 8% of the population as a whole.

Figure 6.3. The ethnicity of Study 3 participants (n=36)



Despite the relative homogeneity of the sample population, these descriptive data pertaining to the profile of the participants provide valuable contextual information when conducting the analysis of each study, and of the combined data.

6.3.2 The research context: collecting additional participant data

As discussed in 5.7.12, both the second and third studies involved the collection of additional participant data, in order to further understand the context in which responses were made. All additional questions were carefully considered, discussed with pilot study participants, and only included where they were considered to add to the overall data analysis.

Some of the data were collected at the same time as the completed grids, and some were requested afterwards via email, as illustrated below.

Table 6.2. Additional data requested of Study 3 participants

Study 3: construct rating only
<p>Collected as grid completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender • Ethnicity • Age (within a range) • Whether the participant had previous public library work experience – and if so, how many years.
<p>Collected afterwards (via email):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which of the ten fiction genres used in the repertory grid the participant regularly read.

6.3.3 The selection of elements and constructs

As stated in 5.7.4, the same eleven elements were used for the second and third studies, namely the reader of ten fiction genres plus ‘myself as reader’. Using an identical list in this way increased the generalisability of the data collected.

The 21 new participants of Study 3 (i.e. those who had not participated in the previous study) were given a repertory grid containing 16 provided constructs, with no opportunity to elicit further constructs. These had been selected using the original list of 128 elicited constructs (see Appendix 2g) which were then grouped according to frequency of response (see Table 5.4), and then according to subject area, using five themes, as presented below:

Table 6.3. Emergent and polar constructs selected for Study 3, according to theme

Theme	Emergent construct	Polar construct
Perceived demographic profile of the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is more likely to be male • Reader is more likely to be younger • Reader is likely to be a member of a minority group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is more likely to be female • Reader is more likely to be older • Reader is likely to be a member of a majority group
Perceived approach to reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is not likely to be an avid reader • Reader is not looking for a mainstream read 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is likely to be an avid reader • Reader is looking for a mainstream read
Preferred nature of plot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is looking for an easy read • Reader is more interested in reality • Reader is looking for a light read • Reader is not looking to identify with the plot/characters • Reader is not looking for a predictable plot • Reader is not looking for a happy ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is looking for a challenging read • Reader is more interested in escapism • Reader is looking for a serious read • Reader is looking to identify with the plot/characters • Reader is looking for a predictable plot • Reader is looking for a happy ending
Subject interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is not interested in ethnicity as subject matter • Reader is not interested in others & their relationships (when selecting a book) • Reader is not interested in societal issues (when selecting a book) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is interested in ethnicity as subject matter • Reader is interested in others & their relationships (when selecting a book) • Reader is interested in societal issues (when selecting a book)
Preferred genres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is interested in one fiction genre only • Reader is not interested in romantic novels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader is interested in multiple genres • Reader is interested in romantic novels

As stated in 6.1, the above constructs were selected for use in the third study for their frequency of elicitation in the first instance, and then for their direct relevance to the research objectives of the thesis as a whole. For example, as the focus of the research is on minority ethnic fiction, any construct relating to ethnicity or culture – either of the reader or of the plot – was included.

Constructs were deliberately selected from each of the five high-order themes identified by thematic analysis in Study 2, in order to build on a large proportion of the original dataset, and to increase the likelihood of generalisability across the sample population.

6.4 The findings of the third study

The research findings presented in this section are based on the combined quantitative data from Studies 2 and 3. In other words, where Study 2 respondents elicited and rated one of the sixteen constructs subsequently used in Study 3, their response would be added to the data for analysis. The combined quantitative dataset was analysed using SPSS software (for further details of the analysis, see **3.5.1**), and the values of ratings from the first phase were reversed if necessary, in order to ensure consistency across the two respondent groups. For example, if a participant in Study 2 had elicited the construct ‘Is predominantly female’ with the polar construct ‘Is predominantly male’, adding them to the repertory grid where a score of 1 is predominantly female and 7 predominantly male, these values would be reversed in the SPSS file so that all gender-related constructs would have the score of 1 for ‘male’ and 2 for ‘female’. For clarity, participants in the repertory grid interview were coded as RG01-15, and participants in the construct rating process only were coded as RGb01-21.

Further details of the data analysis for all three studies are given in **3.4.1**, but it is worth explaining here why only the findings of non-parametric tests have been reported within this chapter.

The Likert scale is used to measure attitudes and opinions, generally where a response is given to a question or statement by selecting one of a number of options, typically (although not exclusively) via scales with five or seven response categories. There is some dispute regarding the nature of the data originating from Likert scales, and whether they should be analysed using parametric or non-parametric statistical tests. Cohen et al (2000), for example, propose that it is not legitimate to interpret the difference between ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘disagree’ as equivalent to that between all other consecutive categories on a Likert scale. Pett (1997) and Hansen (2003)

agree that the data from a Likert scale should always be treated as ordinal, in other words that the different response categories have a rank order, but that the intervals between each of the categories should not be presumed to be equal. Knapp (1990), however, proposes that sample size and distribution are more important than the level of measurement when making a decision as to the appropriateness of parametric statistics. Jamieson (2004) cites *Medical Education* journal authors Santina and Perez (2003) and Hren et al (2004) who each used parametric analyses with Likert scale data, and certainly Blaikie (2003) agrees that it has become common practice to assume that Likert scale categories constitute interval-level measurement, and are therefore frequently analysed with parametric tests.

Pallant (2004) helpfully suggests that where the researcher is uncertain that the assumptions for the required statistical technique(s) can be met, three options are available, as paraphrased below:

1. To use the parametric technique anyway, providing justification from other researchers to support the decision;
2. To manipulate the data so that the assumptions are met – e.g. transforming variables – again with justification;
3. Using a non-parametric technique, as these tend to be less sensitive in detecting significance (pp.98-9).

Although the distribution of the Likert scale-based data is spread more widely than had been the case with the binary data of the first study, it was felt that assumptions could not confidently be made regarding a normal distribution. It was therefore decided to adopt the more cautious approach, i.e. the third of Pallant's options. However, it is interesting to note that the parametric equivalent of each of the statistical tests contained within this study was also conducted with the data from the study (details given in **3.5.1**) and showed very little difference, with all significant findings remaining as such. This arguably increases the robustness of the findings of this third study.

6.4.1 Genre choice of Study 3 participants

As previously stated in **6.3.2**, participants were asked via email after the interview/grid completion to state which of the ten fiction genres used in the repertory grid they had regularly read. It was felt that this additional information would be of interest in analysing participant attitudes towards different genres. All except one respondent (n=35) provided these data, which are shown below in Table 6.4.

Table 6.4. Study 3 participants' reading preferences for the 10 fiction genres

Respondent	Asian fiction in English	Black British fiction	LGBT fiction	Sci-fi /fantasy fiction	Romance fiction	Lad Lit fiction	Crime fiction	Chick Lit fiction	War/spy fiction	Literary fiction	Total genres read per respondent
RG01	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	5
RG02	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	10
RG03	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	7
RG04	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	√	7
RG05	X	X	X	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	5
RG06	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	7
RG07	√	√	X	√	X	X	X	√	X	√	5
RG08	√	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	√	√	5
RG09	√	X	X	√	√	√	X	√	X	√	6
RG10	X	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	√	√	6
RG11	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	√	9
RG12	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	3
RG13	√	√	X	√	√	X	X	√	X	√	6
RG14	X	X	X	√	X	√	√	√	X	√	5
RG15	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	4
RGb01	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	√	4
RGb02	X	X	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	3
RGb03	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	3
RGb04	√	√	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	4
RGb05	X	X	X	√	√	X	√	X	X	√	4
RGb06	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	√	3
RGb07	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	2
RGb08	X	X	X	√	√	X	X	√	X	X	3
RGb09	X	X	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	3
RGb10	X	X	√	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	3
RGb11	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	X	√	√	8
RGb12	√	√	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	6
RGb13	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	2
RGb14	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	√	√	5
RGb15*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
RGb16	√	√	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	√	3
RGb17	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	X	√	9
RGb18	√	X	X	√	X	X	X	X	X	√	3
RGb19	X	X	X	√	√	X	√	√	X	√	5
RGb20	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	√	X	√	5
RGb21	X	X	X	√	X	X	√	X	X	√	3
Mean genres selected per participant											5
Total respondents 'regularly reading' each genre	19	12	9	27	11	9	26	15	10	33	

Key

√ = genre 'regularly read' by participant

X = genre *not* 'regularly read' by participant

* = participant failed to respond to (repeated) additional data request.

As illustrated in the table above, the mean number of genres read per respondent was five. The most popular genre was Literary Fiction (n=33), and the least popular were LGBT fiction and Lad Lit fiction (n=9 respectively). Just one reader ‘regularly read’ each of the ten genres. If we consider the two minority (ethnic) fiction elements, Asian fiction in English is claimed to be more regularly read by participants than Black British fiction (n=19 and n=12 respectively), being the fourth most popular and sixth equal most popular genres respectively. Each of the 12 Black British fiction readers is also a reader of Asian fiction in English.

Although these findings could not be regarded as particularly conclusive in themselves, they nonetheless provide useful contextual data, and when combined with data from the ‘myself as reader’ rating within the repertory grid, can be used to see if participants viewed themselves as ‘typical’ readers of the genres in question. To repeat the example given in **5.7.11**, if an interviewee/respondent states that he or she usually reads Black British fiction, we can look at the ratings he or she gave to each construct for that particular element, to see where similarities and differences lie.

A further way in which the above data can be used in the analysis of the combined Study 2 and Study 3 data is in comparison to respondents’ ratings of the readers of different fiction genres: does (for example) the Crime fiction reader as perceived by respondents share similar characteristics to the respondent who describes him/herself as a Crime fiction reader? This continues the exploration of stereotypes begun in the previous study, and this and the above issue is explored further in **6.4.2** (‘The *myself as reader* variable’).

6.4.2 The means of grouped constructs

The data from Study 3 can be analysed using a measure of central tendency, in this case the mean, in order to inform us where the respondent focuses his or her ‘range of convenience’ between the two poles of the construct (Fransella et al, 2004, p.83). As the elements for the study are located on constructs by ratings between 1 and 7, the midpoint would be 4. Having calculated the means, we can therefore consider the extent to which ratings

are asymmetrical, or ‘lopsided’, in the sense that one pole is used substantially more than another.

Table 6.5 shows the individual and overall mean scores (with standard deviation in brackets) for each of sixteen grouped constructs, where constructs were elicited by 23 or more participants. Although there were additional constructs elicited by multiple participants, it was not considered appropriate to combine ratings for all grouped constructs, as the original intended meanings were not always the same. For example, the grouped construct ‘Browsing habits’ included quite different concepts, such as ‘Is more likely to be a browser’ (RG06), ‘Would be prepared to look hard for a book...’ (RG03), the ratings for which would evidently not be directly comparable.

Table 6.5. Mean scores (and standard deviation) for 16 grouped constructs

Construct	n=	Reader of Asian fiction in English	Reader of Black British fiction	Reader of LGBT fiction	Reader of Sci-Fi /Fantasy fct.	Reader of Romance fiction	Reader of Lad Lit fiction	Reader of Crime fiction	Reader of Chick Lit fiction	Reader of Literary fiction	Reader of War/Spy fiction	Myself as a reader	Mean (SD)
Perceived profile of the reader													
Gender (1=male)	33	4.18	4.21	4.18	2.33	6.61	2.30	4.06	6.27	4.30	2.09	N/A	4.05 (0.32)
Age (1=younger)	28	3.82	3.79	3.36	3.07	4.75	2.82	4.50	0.96	4.50	5.00	N/A	3.86 (0.52)
Minority (1=minority)	27	2.52	2.67	2.63	4.48	5.00	4.74	4.96	4.96	4.78	4.93	(n=22) 5.23	4.24 (0.45)
Perceived approach to reading													
Avid reader (1=not avid)	34	4.13	4.25	3.75	5.00	5.29	2.75	4.92	3.79	5.33	4.46	(n=23) 5.91	4.50 (0.49)
Looking for mainstream read (1=not looking)	23	2.78	2.52	2.48	3.09	5.91	5.04	5.70	5.87	4.09	4.83	3.90	4.18 (0.45)
Perceived nature of the plot													
Looking for an easy read (1=looking)	28	4.50	4.64	4.18	3.64	2.21	2.32	3.46	2.14	5.75	3.64	4.68	3.74 (0.43)
Interest in escapism (1=not interested)	28	3.25	3.07	3.46	5.82	5.71	4.25	4.46	5.32	3.86	4.79	4.29	4.39 (0.61)
Looking for a light read (1=looking)	25	4.56	4.64	3.96	3.40	1.92	2.40	3.84	1.76	6.04	4.44	4.36	3.76 (0.42)
Looking to identify with plot /characters (1=not looking)	25	4.76	5.08	5.44	2.88	4.84	5.04	3.04	5.60	3.80	3.44	4.29	4.38 (0.54)

Looking for predictability (1=not looking)	²³	3.39	3.30	3.65	3.43	6.35	4.74	3.96	5.70	2.83	4.57	2.91	4.08 (0.54)
Looking for a happy ending (1=not looking)	²⁴	3.75	3.42	3.79	3.17	6.63	4.88	3.88	6.29	3.08	3.46	3.46	4.16 (0.63)
Subject interests													
Interest in ethnicity (1=not interested)	²⁶	5.65	5.88	3.65	2.85	3.00	2.81	3.08	2.77	3.58	3.46	(n=25) 4.16	3.72 (0.73)
Interest in other people (1=not interested)	²⁴	4.79	4.92	5.33	2.71	5.92	3.96	3.63	5.75	4.46	3.29	4.70	4.50 (0.76)
Interest in societal issues (1=not interested)	²³	5.35	5.35	5.26	2.96	3.00	3.09	4.26	3.35	4.89	4.00	4.83	4.21 (0.59)
Preferred genres													
Interest in multiple genres (1=not interested)	²⁶	4.69	4.73	4.42	2.38	2.81	3.58	3.38	3.31	5.12	3.31	5.23	3.91 (0.79)
Interest in romantic novels(1=not interested)	²⁷	4.04	3.93	4.96	2.00	6.70	3.30	3.04	5.96	4.11	2.56	4.00	4.05 (0.43)

Findings from Table 6.5 are discussed in the following section (6.4.3).

6.4.3 The rating of genre fiction readers on a construct continuum

In order to evaluate where on average genre fiction readers were rated by participants on a construct continuum, a series of Wilcoxon signed ranks tests was conducted. Using these tests it was possible to determine whether or not the mean ratings for a particular genre varied significantly from the midpoint of 4 on the scale 1-7. This statistical test is a more effective means of investigating this issue than a simple observation of mean ratings, as previously conducted (6.4.2), and enabled the specific analysis of the readers of each of the fiction genres.

Table 6.6. Wilcoxon signed rank tests to show the degree to which genre fiction readers differed significantly from the midpoint for 16 grouped constructs

Construct	n=	Reader of Asian fiction in English	Reader of Black British fiction	Reader of LGBT fiction	Reader of Sci-Fi /Fantasy fict.	Reader of Romance fiction	Reader of Lad Lit fiction	Reader of Crime fiction	Reader of Chick Lit fiction	Reader of Literary fiction	Reader of War/Spy fiction	Myself as a reader	Mean (SD)
Perceived profile of the reader													
Gender (1=male)	33	4.18	4.21*	4.18	2.33***	6.61***	2.30***	4.06	6.27***	4.30*	2.09***	N/A	4.05 (0.32)
Age (1=younger)	28	3.82	3.79*	3.36*	3.07***	4.75**	2.82**	4.50*	0.96***	4.50**	5.00***	N/A	3.86 (0.52)
Minority (1=minority)	27	2.52***	2.67***	2.63***	4.48*	5.00***	4.74**	4.96***	4.96***	4.78**	4.93***	(n=22) 5.23*	4.24 (0.45)
Perceived approach to reading													
Avid reader (1=not avid)	34	4.13	4.25	3.75	5.00**	5.29***	2.75***	4.92**	3.79	5.33**	4.46*	(n=23) 5.91***	4.50 (0.49)
Looking for mainstream read (1=not looking)	23	2.78***	2.52***	2.48***	3.09*	5.91***	5.04**	5.70***	5.87***	4.09	4.83*	3.90	4.18 (0.45)
Perceived nature of the plot													
Looking for an easy read (1=looking)	28	4.50*	4.64*	4.18	3.64	2.21***	2.32***	3.46*	2.14***	5.75***	3.64	4.68**	3.74 (0.43)
Interest in escapism (1=not interested)	28	3.25**	3.07**	3.46	5.82***	5.71***	4.25	4.46*	5.32**	3.86	4.79**	4.29	4.39 (0.61)
Looking for a light read (1=looking)	25	4.56*	4.64**	3.96	3.40*	1.92***	2.40***	3.84	1.76***	6.04***	4.44	4.36	3.76 (0.42)

Looking to identify with plot /characters (1=not looking)	25	4.76*	5.08**	5.44***	2.88**	4.84*	5.04**	3.04**	5.60***	3.80	3.44*	4.29	4.38 (0.54)
Looking for predictability (1=not looking)	23	3.39**	3.30**	3.65	3.43	6.35***	4.74**	3.96	5.70***	2.83***	4.57	2.91**	4.08 (0.54)
Looking for a happy ending (1=not looking)	24	3.75	3.42**	3.79	3.17**	6.63***	4.88*	3.88	6.29***	3.08**	3.46*	3.46	4.16 (0.63)
Subject interests													
Interest in ethnicity (1=not interested)	26	5.65***	5.88***	3.65	2.85**	3.00**	2.81**	3.08**	2.77**	3.58	3.46	(n=25) 4.16	3.72 (0.73)
Interest in other people (1=not interested)	24	4.79**	4.92**	5.33***	2.71***	5.92***	3.96	3.63	5.75***	4.46	3.29**	4.70*	4.50 (0.76)
Interest in societal issues (1=not interested)	23	5.35***	5.35***	5.26***	2.96**	3.00**	3.09**	4.26	3.35*	4.89**	4.00	4.83**	4.21 (0.59)
Preferred genres													
Interest in multiple genres (1=not interested)	26	4.69*	4.73*	4.42	2.38***	2.81**	3.58	3.38*	3.31*	5.12**	3.31*	5.23**	3.91 (0.79)
Interest in romantic novels(1=not interested)	27	4.04	3.93	4.96**	2.00***	6.70***	3.30*	3.04**	5.96***	4.11	2.56***	4.00	4.05 (0.43)
<p>* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001</p> <p>red = value below the midpoint 4 green = value above the midpoint 4</p> <p>Note – the statistical tests included in the table are based on median rather than mean values (using a Wilcoxon signed rank test), but the mean values are included for accuracy, and to give a fuller account of the data.</p>													

Perceived demographic profile of the reader

As the findings show, participants felt that the readers of Romance fiction (mean = 6.61, $p < .001$) and Chick Lit (mean = 6.27, $p < .001$) were far more likely to be female than male. Conversely, the readers of Lad Lit (mean = 2.30, $p < .001$), War/Spy fiction (mean = 2.09, $p < .001$) and Science-fiction/Fantasy fiction (mean = 2.33, $p < .001$), were more likely to be male than female.

Participants had less strong feelings regarding the Crime fiction reader, and the readers of LGBT fiction and Asian fiction in English, where no significant result was found. For the reader of Black British fiction, it was felt that he or she was significantly more likely to be female, but only by $p < .05$ (mean = 4.21). These findings generally correspond to previous research in the field (Kraaykamp & Kijkstra, 1999; Tepper, 2000).

For the grouped construct 'age' the readers of Romance fiction, Crime fiction, Literary fiction and War/Spy fiction were perceived as more likely to be older, whereas the opposite is true for readers of Black British and LGBT fiction, Science fiction and fantasy fiction, Lad Lit and Chick Lit. Respondents showed no significant preference for the reader of Asian fiction to be older or younger (mean=3.82, ns).

As might have been expected, the readers of the three genres which could be described as 'minority fiction' were each rated as far more likely to be members of a minority group than not, each $p < .001$ (Asian fiction mean = 2.52, Black British fiction mean = 2.67, LGBT fiction mean = 2.63). This is an interesting finding, as the qualitative repertory grid interview data from Study 2 indicated that while there was a certain ambiguity regarding the ethnicity of the readers of both Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction (whether or not they would be from the particular minority communities represented within the fiction), this did not appear to be the case with the readership of LGBT fiction:

'I think that these readers [Black British fiction and Asian fiction in English] might be more similar, in that they're [pauses]...I can

imagine these readers may be thinking “there’s not much for me here” [within ‘Literary fiction’], so they’re more likely to keep to their own culture.’ (RG05)

‘[Considering the triad ‘Black British fiction/Asian fiction in English/Literary fiction] These two [BBF/Asian] are for the group of people from these communities, and this [Literary] is more for the people, for the people from the majority.’ (RG09)

‘[Considering the triad ‘Black British fiction/Asian fiction in English/Literary fiction] That’s where it becomes difficult, because it’s easy to separate out the fictions, but it’s not easy to separate the actual people who are reading them.’ (RG10)

‘...I read fiction by, you know, it doesn’t matter about their background, but would I deliberately go to the LGBT section and consult the shelves, or Black British, do I feel that I’m able to, or entitled to?’ (RG08)

‘...I still think there’s quite a lot of prejudice around gay literature and things like that, and while stereotyping, the people who would read that [LGBT fiction] are probably within that, you know, group, whereas these two [Black British fiction/Asian fiction in English] probably more people from other groups would try.’ (RG14)

‘...I always think of those books [LGBT fiction] as, not necessarily graphic, but quite definitely designed for the lesbian or gay markets...’ (RG15)

Perceived approach to reading

The readers of Lad Lit fiction were felt to be the least ‘avid’ readers (mean = 2.75, $p < .001$), and the readers of Romance fiction were regarded as the most ‘avid’ (mean = 5.29, $p < .001$). There was no clear opinion regarding the readers of the three minority fiction genres, who were considered equally likely to be ‘avid’ as not (Asian fiction mean = 4.13, ns; Black British fiction mean = 4.25, ns; LGBT fiction, 3.75, ns).

Readers of the three minority fiction genres were considered highly likely *not* to be looking for a mainstream read, each $p < .001$ (Asian fiction mean = 2.78, Black British fiction mean = 2.52, LGBT fiction mean = 2.48), with the reverse being the case for readers of Romance fiction (mean = 5.91, $p < .001$), Crime fiction (mean = 5.70, $p < .001$), Chick Lit (mean = 5.87, $p < .001$) and, to a lesser extent, Lad Lit (mean = 5.04, $p < .01$) and War/Spy fiction (mean = 4.83, $p < .05$).

Perceived nature of the plot

The readers of Chick Lit, Romance fiction and Lad Lit were felt to be significantly more likely to be looking for an 'easy read' than for something more challenging (means = 2.14, 2.21, 2.32, respectively, $p < .001$ for each), whereas the readers of Literary fiction were felt to be equally highly likely to be looking for something more challenging when selecting a book to read (mean = 5.75, $p < .001$). The readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction were also felt to be more likely to look for a challenging read than an 'easy' one (means = 4.50 and 4.64 respectively, $p < .05$).

The readers of the three minority fiction genres and Literary fiction were perceived as significantly more interested in reality than escapism in the plots of novels they read (means = 3.25, 3.07 respectively, $p < .01$ for each), whereas those of Science fiction/Fantasy fiction, Romance fiction (means = 5.82, 5.71 respectively, $p < .001$) and Chick Lit (mean = 5.32, $p < .01$) were felt to be significantly more interested in escapist plots.

A broader range of opinions was expressed across the genres regarding whether or not the readers were looking for a 'light' or 'serious' read (mean ratings from 1.76 for Chick Lit to 6.04 for Literary fiction). Despite this, the readers of both Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction were felt to be significantly more likely to be looking for a serious novel (means = 4.56, $p < .05$, and 4.64, $p < .01$ respectively).

Whereas the readers of Crime fiction (mean=3.04, $p < .01$), Science fiction/Fantasy fiction (mean=2.88, $p < .01$) and Romance fiction (mean=4.84, $p < .05$) were not felt to be likely to identify with the plot or characters in the novels they chose, this was not the case for the readers of the three minority fiction genres Asian fiction, Black British fiction or LGBT fiction (means = 4.76, $p < .05$, 5.08, $p < .01$, and 5.44, $p < .001$ respectively), or for Chick Lit (mean = 5.60, $p < .001$).

The readers of Black British and Asian fiction (mean = 3.39 and mean = 3.30 respectively, both $p < .01$), plus those of Literary fiction (mean = 2.83, $p < .001$), were not felt to be looking for a predictable plot, whereas the

readers of the three 'romantic' genres (Romance fiction, Chick Lit and Lad Lit) were strongly felt to be looking for predictability (means = 6.35, 5.70, $p < .001$ for Romance fiction and Chick Lit respectively; mean = 4.74, $p < .01$ for Lad Lit). The same three genres were also perceived as looking for a happy ending in their books (means = 6.63, 6.29, $p < .001$ for Romance fiction and Chick Lit respectively; mean = 4.88, $p < .05$ for Lad Lit), whereas the readers of Black British and Literary fiction, Science fiction/fantasy and War/Spy, were not regarded as having this particular priority (means = 3.42, 3.08, 3.17, $p < .01$ for Black British fiction, Literary fiction and Science fiction/fantasy respectively; mean = 3.46, $p < .05$ for War/Spy).

Subject interests

As would be expected, the readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction were felt to be highly likely to have an interest in ethnicity in the books they read (means = 5.65 and 5.88 respectively, $p < .001$).

Interestingly, given that the readers of Literary fiction were given similar ratings for many constructs, findings were non-significant for the readers of this genre (mean = 3.58, ns).

A limited interest in other people and their lifestyles was felt to be held by the readers of Science fiction/fantasy and War/Spy fiction (means = 2.71, $p < .001$ and 3.29, $p < .01$ respectively), whereas the readers of Romance fiction and Chick Lit were regarded as significantly likely to be interested in finding out about others (means = 5.92 and 5.75 respectively, $p < .001$). The readers of the three minority genres Asian fiction, Black British fiction and LGBT fiction would also be significantly more likely than not to share this interest (means = 4.79 and 4.92, $p < .01$, and mean = 5.33, $p < .001$ respectively).

The three minority genre fiction readers were felt to be the most likely of all genres to have an interest in societal issues (means = 5.35 for Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction, 5.26 for LGBT fiction, all $p < .001$), with the readers of Literary fiction also more likely than not to have such an interest (mean = 4.89, $p < .01$).

Preferred genres

The reader of Literary fiction was regarded as the most likely to be interested in reading other genres (mean = 5.12, $p < .01$), and the readers of Asian fiction and Black British fiction were also felt to be likely to have such an interest (means=4.69 and 4.73 respectively, $p < .05$). No other readers were regarded as particularly sharing this interest.

Regarding the readers' potential interest in novels with romantic plots, the readers of LGBT fiction, Romance fiction and Chick Lit were felt to have this interest (means=4.96, $p < .01$, 6.70 and 5.96, $p < .001$ respectively). It is interesting that LGBT fiction and Romance fiction were grouped together under this theme: as Distelberg (2010) suggests, there is more to the LGBT fiction genre than 'romance', rather a need to focus on 'gay life and reality' (p.406). The findings for the readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction were not significant (means = 4.04 and 3.93 respectively, ns).

6.4.4 Participant agreement across construct ratings

The means of construct ratings for fiction variables are useful in telling us whether, on average, there tends to be participant agreement across the constructs. Although this is useful in itself, mean scores can conceal great variation in rating, whereas a second test – the intraclass correlation (ICC) - can be conducted to overcome this. A descriptive statistic, the ICC is a measure of the reliability of ratings, so can be used to take into account any such variation in ratings, and instead gives a more precise measurement of agreement (i.e. the extent to which participants rated each construct similarly).

Table 6.7 below presents the findings of this test, conducted for each of the ten fiction variables.

Table 6.7. Intraclass correlations across all participants for each fiction variable

Variable	icc (2) (average measure)	p
Asian fiction in English	.163	.156
Black British fiction	.193	.088
LGBT fiction	.135	.209
Science fiction/fantasy	.297	.027*
Romance fiction	.17	.024*
Lad Lit	.55	.000***
Crime	.496	.001**
Chick Lit	.124	.122
Literary fiction	.094	.276
War/spy fiction	.404	.005**
n=21		
* p<.05		
** p<.01		
*** p<.001		

The correlations indicate that there was significant agreement across five of the ten fiction genres, with the greatest agreement for the ratings of Lad Lit fiction (icc=.55). Interestingly, four of the five genres (Science fiction/fantasy, Romance fiction, Crime fiction, War/spy fiction) could be described as the more ‘established’ genres, almost inevitably present within a public library fiction collection.

Given the agreement in ratings for Lad Lit fiction, it is perhaps surprising that the ratings for the comparable Chick Lit genre were not more similar. One possible explanation for this could be that the majority of Study 3 respondents (n=26, n=10 male) were female and therefore from the target group for this genre, so perhaps had more varied views regarding its readers, whereas their views of the male-marketed Lad Lit fiction could be more stereotypical (and more consistent).

The remaining four non-significant variables were Literary fiction and the three minority fiction genres Asian fiction in English, Black British fiction and LGBT fiction. Given the frequent description by interview participants of Literary fiction as sharing similar characteristics to minority genre fiction, this particular similarity is not altogether surprising. Looking specifically at the three minority fiction genres, we can see that there is less agreement across the participants, particularly regarding LGBT fiction ($p=.209$), although ratings for the readers of Black British fiction are slightly more similar ($p=.088$). A lower inter-rater reliability indicates a greater diversity of opinion among participants regarding the profile of the reader of minority fiction. Indeed, a reliable series of ‘typical reader profiles’ for each of the ten fiction genres would be difficult to devise from the findings of this study alone. It is for this reason that the profiles presented and discussed in the following chapter (Table 7.1) will be based on the triangulated findings of the three studies in this thesis, which will therefore support their accuracy.

6.4.5 Investigating correlations between the constructs

So far this study has been considering differences within the constructs; however a decision was also made to investigate any notable relationships between the constructs themselves. Non-parametric correlations were therefore conducted using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient; of 120 correlations nine were found to be significant, i.e. 7.5%, a slightly higher proportion than could reasonably be expected to occur by chance (Bryman, 2012, p.349). Interestingly, five of the nine significant correlations relate to gender, and furthermore one-third of the 15 gender correlations ($n=5$) were significant, as shown in Table 6.8 below.

Table 6.8. Spearman’s rank correlations to show the five significant correlations between the ‘gender’ grouped construct and all other grouped constructs.

Grouped constructs	Spearman’s rho with gender
Looking for an easy read (1=looking)	.45*
Looking for a light read (1=looking)	.45*
Interested in ethnicity (1=not interested)	.48*
Interested in multiple genres (1=not interested)	.53**
Interested in romantic novels (1=not interested)	.59**
* p<.05 ** p<.01	

As the table illustrates, the two strongest findings relate to female readers’ perceived interest in multiple genres, and in reading romantic novels. The second of these findings is unsurprising, and clearly supported by the literature (Goldman, 1993; Yu & O’Brien, 1999) and by the findings of the second study, where participants strongly felt that Romance fiction was more likely to be read by female than male readers. Other significant correlations are perhaps less predictable, suggesting that female readers would be more interested in reading multiple genres and in reading about ethnicity than their male counterparts. It is also implied that female readers would be less likely to be looking for either an easy (non-challenging) or a light (not serious) novel than male readers.

The remaining four significant correlations suggest the following:

- That the readers who are more likely to look for a predictable plot are also more likely to be looking to identify with the plot/characters in a book ($r = .209, p < .05$)
- That the readers who are more likely to be interested in romantic plots are also more likely to be looking to identify with the plot/characters in a book ($r = .437, p < .05$).

- That the readers who are more likely to be looking for an ‘easy read’ are also more likely to choose their books from multiple genres ($r = .516, p < .05$)
- That the readers who are interested in other people are also more likely to be interested in societal issues ($r = .563, p < .01$).

These significant relationships between constructs will be of value in developing the profiles of fiction readers, as discussed further in **Chapter 7**.

6.4.6 Investigating the impact of public library experience on responses

Although it was not feasible to statistically investigate the impact of previous public library experience on participant response with the small sample sizes from Study 2 alone, the present study has been designed in order to usefully explore the differences in ratings for the readers of each of the three minority fiction genres Asian fiction in English, Black British fiction and LGBT fiction, between those participants with previous public library work experience and those without.

Whereas all participants had previous work experience in an academic, special and/or public library for at least one year, those without any public library experience at all would be less likely to have worked in the selection and/or promotion of minority genre fiction and would not necessarily have a greater understanding of the field than any member of the general public. The potential value of conducting this correlation is in informing the investigation of the attitudes of public library staff towards minority genre fiction.

As illustrated in Figure 6.3 above, 17 participants had no experience at all, and 19 had between a few months and more than 10 years of experience. For the purposes of analysis the population was divided into two groups, those who had never worked in a public library ($n=17$) and those who had some experience of this type of work ($n=19$).

Independent sample Mann-Whitney U tests, ‘used to test for differences between two independent groups on a continuous measure’ (Pallant. 2004,

p.260), were conducted in order to see if ratings varied between the two groups described above. Given the focus of the thesis, the tests focused on the three minority fiction genres ‘Asian fiction in English’, ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘LGBT fiction’.

Following the analysis for each of the three genres across the sixteen constructs, just one significant example was found, namely the reader of Asian fiction in English and the construct ‘looking for a light read’. Here, the reader is perceived by those participants with previous public library experience to be less likely to be looking for a light read than by those without such experience ($z=-2.202$, $p<.05$).

Based on the findings, it would appear that those with public library work experience have similar perceptions of the readers of different genres. However, it should be noted that the above example is just one of 48 analyses conducted to investigate these two groups, so the significance could be entirely due to chance: it is important to be cautious about drawing conclusions based on this finding alone. Indeed, if we consider the qualitative data from Study 2 the participants with previous public library experience ($n=9$ of 15 total) would not necessarily support this finding with specific reference to Asian fiction in English, although two considered Black British fiction to be a ‘challenging’ genre:

Participant RG03 felt that the readers of both Black British fiction and Literary fiction ‘would...be interested in gaining something other than just plot and entertainment from a book’, and that ‘it might be more challenging on your ideas and things [to read these types of fiction].’ Similarly, Participant RG14 suggested that many readers would regard Black British fiction as ‘more challenging’, even that ‘they couldn’t associate with it’ in the same way as they might with the more traditional fiction genres Crime and Romance fiction.

However, a third participant, considering the triad ‘Black British fiction/Asian fiction in English/Literary fiction’, suggested that the Literary fiction reader may differ from the two minority genres in that he/she may be

‘...reading [it] because perhaps they think they should read it...[it’s] a bit more challenging, maybe.’ (RG15)

6.4.7 Investigating the impact of age on responses

A second series of Mann-Whitney U tests was conducted in order to investigate the impact of participant age on responses made in the construct rating process. As Figure 6.2 illustrates, although the majority of participants were aged between 20-29 years, the range of ages included in the sample was far wider, ranging between 20-29 and 60-69 years. It was therefore decided to recode the participants into two groups, namely those below and above the age of 30 years (n=22 and n=14 respectively), in order to divide the population a little more evenly and to facilitate the analysis. It was not possible to have a more even distribution, as the majority (61%) of participants belonged to a single age band, i.e. 20-29 years. Table 6.9 below shows which of the findings were significant.

Table 6.9. Significant differences in ratings between younger and older respondents

Variables	Mann-Whitney U test z	Sig. (2-tailed)	Means: participants <30 years n=14	Means: participants ≥30 years n=22
Age/Black British fiction reader	-2.38	.017*	4.12	3.27
Easy read/Black British fiction reader	2.25	.024*	4.2	5.15
Escapism/Asian fiction in English reader	-2.17	.030*	3.73	2.69
Ethnicity interest/LGBT reader	2.23	.026*	3.07	4.33
p < .05				

As the table illustrates, participants aged below 30 years were more likely than those aged 30 years or above to think that the reader of Black British fiction would be older (z=-2.38), whereas they were less likely to think that the same reader would be looking for a challenging read (z=2.25).

The younger group of participants were more likely than the older group to regard the Asian fiction in English reader as having a greater interest in reality than escapism in the fiction he or she reads ($z=-2.17$).

Finally, the older group of participants were more likely than the younger group to perceive the LGBT fiction reader as having an interest in ethnicity in the fiction he or she selects ($z=2.23$).

Again, it should be noted that the four examples above are the only significant relationships to be found in 48 analyses, and for this reason should be regarded with caution. As in the previous example, we can consider the qualitative data from Study 2 to illuminate certain findings in further detail.

If we look at the transcripts for those Study 2 participants aged below 30 years ($n=12$), certainly Participant RG06 felt that the reader of LGBT fiction was ‘a younger reader’, whereas the readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction were ‘more mixed’, in other words that they were, in her view, just as likely to be younger as older. However, Participant RG02 felt that the reader of Black British fiction could be separated from the Crime and Romance fiction readers as he or she would tend not to be female, middle-aged or older women’.

Did the qualitative transcripts suggest that the younger participants were less likely than the older group to think that the reader of Black British fiction would be looking for a challenging read, or that the reader of Asian fiction in English would have a greater interest in reality than escapism? In fact, both groups appeared to regard the minority fiction genres as more ‘challenging’ than certain other fiction genres. RG01 separated Science fiction/fantasy from Black British and Literary fiction as he described the former as ‘escapism...purely for pleasure’, whereas the latter two were read more as a ‘learning, edifying experience’.

Further comments from the younger group relating specifically to escapism suggest that the readers of both minority fiction genres were indeed perceived to be more likely to be interested in reality-driven plots, rather

than the more escapist fiction of, for example, the Science fiction/fantasy genre. Participant RG03 described Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction as ‘fiction...to make you think’, whereas she separated Science fiction/fantasy from the pair as it was ‘a more plot-driven, escapist read’. RG07 stated that she regarded the reader of Science fiction/fantasy as being ‘more escapist, rather than the reader of the Black or Asian fiction as wanting something that speaks about reality, possibly. It’s almost a different reaction to life, I suppose...’ Considering the same triad, RG14 described the same readers as ‘kind of related to the world we live in’. And finally, RG15 suggested that Science fiction/fantasy was ‘more of escapism, whereas this [Black British fiction/Asian fiction in English] is more likely to be real.’

No individual comments were made by either group regarding the LGBT fiction reader and his or her potential interest in ethnicity, as this finding came only from the construct ratings process.

6.4.8 Investigating the impact of ethnicity on response

A third and final series of Mann-Whitney U tests was conducted in order to investigate the impact of participant ethnicity on the construct rating process. As shown in Fig. 6.3 above, just four participants were not white, but given the focus of this thesis on minority ethnic fiction, it was felt to be of value again to recode the participants into two groups, those who were white and those who were from minority ethnic groups (n=32 and n=4 respectively). Table 6.10 below shows which of the findings were significant.

Table 6.10. Significant differences in ratings between white respondents and respondents from minority ethnic groups

Variables	Mann-Whitney U test z	Sig. (2-tailed)	Means: white participants n=32	Means: minority ethnic participants n=4
Minority/Black British fiction reader	-2.44	.015*	2.87	1.50
Predictable/Black	-2.10	.036*	3.45	2.33

British fiction reader				
Romantic interest/Black British fiction reader	-2.20	.028*	4.96	5.00
* $z < .05$				

The table indicates that participants from minority ethnic groups were more likely than white participants to perceive the Black British fiction reader as being from a minority ethnic group ($z=-2.44$). They were also slightly more likely than white participants to regard this reader as someone who was *not* looking for a predictable plot ($z=-2.10$). Finally, the participants from minority ethnic groups were very slightly more likely than the white participants to see the Black British fiction reader as having an interest in romantic plots ($z=-2.20$).

Once again, the small number of significant examples, coupled with the sample size, means that these findings are not particularly conclusive, although they are more useful when triangulated with other data sources.

6.4.9 The Openness to Experience personality factor

As previously discussed in the first and second studies (**4.8.1** and **5.8.9** respectively), the ‘Openness to Experience’ personality factor has been considered for its role in understanding wide reading interests, and a reader’s perceived openness to try new reading material. The second study suggested a series of individual constructs and themes which could be related to a combined set of seven trait pairs, as shown in Table 6.11.

This thesis is particularly interested in the characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, so we can examine the mean ratings given to those two genres for each of the eight grouped constructs from the third study which were listed as related to the trait pairs in the second.

Table 6.11. Characteristics of minority ethnic fiction readers related to the Openness to Experience personality factor (statistical findings taken from Table 6.6)

Trait pair	Related theme	Asian fiction	Black British fiction
Artistically sensitive-insensitive	Looking for mainstream novel (1= not looking, artistically sensitive)	2.78*** Artistically sensitive	2.52*** Artistically sensitive
	Looking for a predictable plot (1=not looking, insensitive)	3.39** Artistically sensitive	3.30** Artistically sensitive
Imaginative-simple	Interest in escapism (not reality) (1=not interested, simple)	3.25** Simple	3.07** Simple
	Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read (1=looking, simple)	4.50* Imaginative	4.64* Imaginative
Intellectual-non-reflective	Looking for a light read (for pleasure) (1=looking, non-reflective)	4.56* Intellectual	4.64** Intellectual
	Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read (1=looking, non-reflective)	4.50* Intellectual	4.64* Intellectual
Narrow interests-broad interests	Looking for a mainstream novel (1=not looking, broad interests)	2.78*** Broad interests	2.52*** Broad interests
	Interest in ethnicity (1=not interested, narrow interests)	5.65*** Broad interests	5.88*** Broad interests
	Interest in multiple genres (1=not interested, narrow interests)	4.69* Broad interests	4.73* Broad interests
Uncurious-curious	Interest in ethnicity (1=not interested, uncurious)	5.65*** Curious	5.88*** Curious
	Interest in other people (1=not interested, uncurious)	4.79** Curious	4.92** Curious
Unadventurous-daring	Looking for a mainstream novel (1=not looking, daring)	2.78*** Daring	2.52*** Daring
	Looking for a predictable	3.39**	3.30**

	plot (1=not looking, daring)	Daring	Daring
	Looking for an easy (non-challenging) read (1=looking, unadventurous)	4.50* Daring	4.64* Daring
	Interest in multiple genres (1=not interested, unadventurous)	4.69* Daring	4.73* Daring
Prefer routine- prefer variety	Looking for a predictable plot (1=not looking, prefer variety)	3.39** Prefer variety	3.30** Prefer variety
	Interest in multiple genres (1=not interested, prefer routine)	4.69* Prefer variety	4.73* Prefer variety
* p<.05 ** p<.01 *** p<.001 green = characteristic related to Openness to Experience personality factor red = characteristic not related to Openness to Experience personality factor			

Table 6.11 shows that for each of the seven trait pairs the readers of Asian and Black British fiction are both perceived to possess characteristics relating to the Openness to Experience personality factor. The two readers were both felt to have unrelated characteristics in just one of seventeen cases, namely in their relatively low perceived interest in escapism.

What does this tell us? Essentially, it helps us to understand a little more the likely tendencies and characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction. It would certainly appear that both the Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers are strongly felt to be far more likely than not to have the Openness to Experience personality factor. Furthermore, they are also regarded as more likely to have the trait than the readers of any other genre considered for this thesis. To illustrate this, Table 6.12 briefly shows how other readers compare to the minority ethnic fiction reader:

Table 6.12. The dominant traits for the Openness to Experience personality factor, for each of the ten genre fiction readers

Trait pair	Reader of Asian fiction in English	Reader of Black British fiction	Reader of LGBT fiction	Reader of Sci-Fi /Fantasy fict.	Reader of Romance fiction	Reader of Lad Lit fiction	Reader of Crime fiction	Reader of Chick Lit fiction	Reader of Literary fiction	Reader of War/Spy fiction
Artistically sensitive-insensitive	Artistically sensitive	Artistically sensitive	Artistically sensitive	Artistically sensitive	Insensitive	Insensitive	Insensitive	Insensitive	Artistically sensitive	Insensitive
Imaginative-simple	Simple	Simple	N/A	Imaginative	Either	Simple	Either	Simple	Imaginative	Imaginative
Intellectual-non-reflective	Intellectual	Intellectual	N/A	Non-reflective	Non-reflective	Non-reflective	Non-reflective	Non-reflective	Intellectual	N/A
Narrow interests-broad interests	Broad interests	Broad interests	N/A	Narrow interests	Narrow interests	Narrow interests	Narrow interests	Narrow interests	N/A	Narrow interests
Uncurious-curious	Curious	Curious	Curious	Uncurious	Curious	Uncurious	Uncurious	Curious	N/A	Uncurious
Unadventurous-daring	Daring	Daring	N/A	N/A	Unadventurous	Unadventurous	Unadventurous	Unadventurous	Daring	Unadventurous
Prefer routine-prefer variety	Prefer variety	Prefer variety	N/A	Prefer routine	Prefer routine	Prefer routine	Prefer routine	Prefer routine	Prefer variety	Prefer routine
Total no. of characteristics related to Openness to Experience factor	6	6	2	2	1	0	0	1	5	1
<p>green = characteristic related to Openness to Experience personality factor red = characteristic not related to Openness to Experience personality factor</p> <p>N.B. Terms used in the table were selected according to the most significant findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where one of two findings were significant this determined the term used • where just one of three/four findings were significant 'N/A' was used • where findings were equally significant 'either' was used 										

Table 6.12 clearly shows that the only reader regarded as similarly likely to have the Openness to Experience personality factor is the reader of Literary fiction. This is an unsurprising finding, given the frequent similarity of ratings for these three readers (see 6.4.3). The reader of LGBT fiction is only perceived to have two clearly related characteristics, but interestingly is also felt to have no unrelated characteristics, given the lack of significant findings: this indicates that participants had no clear perception of the personality traits of this reader. The readers of each of the other fiction genres were not felt to be likely to possess this personality factor, in particular the readers of Lad Lit and Crime fiction.

It must be noted that although this brief exploration of the Openness to Experience personality factor reveals an interesting pattern in the findings related to the ten fiction genre readers, this is just one of the ‘Big Five’ factors, so without a broader examination of the remaining four traits we should not attach too much significance to an exploration of this one. Furthermore, drawing from the Big Five is just one way of investigating reader characteristics. It is for this reason that this particular analysis must be viewed in combination with all other analyses conducted for this thesis.

6.4.10 The ‘myself as reader’ variable

In rating the constructs all participants were asked to rate themselves as readers, using the same 1-7 Likert scale. The inclusion of this additional element in the rating process has two main advantages. Firstly, it adds depth to the research data, enabling the researcher to understand a little more about the sample population, how participants view themselves as readers and the context in which they frame their responses. Secondly, the participants’ own ratings can be compared with their ratings of all readers, to see if they viewed themselves as ‘typical’ readers of the genres in question.

Mean ratings are given in the final variable column of Table 6.5 above, and indicate unsurprisingly that participants regard themselves as the following:

1. members of minority groups (mean=5.23, $p<.05$)

2. avid readers (mean=5.91, $p<.001$)
3. *not* looking for an ‘easy read’ (mean=4.68, $p<.01$)
4. *not* looking for predictability in plots (mean=2.91, $p<.01$)
5. interested in other people (mean=4.70, $p<.05$) and societal issues (mean=4.83, $p<.01$)
6. interested in reading multiple genres (mean=5.23, $p<.01$).

Participants’ genre choices as collected after the interview/grid completion (6.4.1) would support the last of these findings, given that participants ‘regularly read’ on average 5 of the ten possible fiction genres.

Interestingly, participants felt that they would be very unlikely to look for a predictable plot when selecting a book to read (mean = 2.91, $p<.01$), although many described themselves as regular readers of those genres they had previously described and rated as highly ‘predictable’, in particular Romance fiction and Chick Lit.

The range of mean scores for each of the ‘myself as reader’ construct ratings is from 2.91 to 5.91, which suggests that participants did not regard their own reading habits as particularly extreme.

Of the 21 participants of Study 3 only, five stated that they ‘regularly read’ both Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction. If we look at these five readers of the two genres and their perception of themselves as readers as compared to their perceptions of the readers of the two genres, of the 14 relevant constructs they were asked to rate (i.e. excluding Age and Gender), the mean number of identical responses was just 5.2 of 14 (37.1%) for Black British fiction, and 5.4 of 14 (38.6%) for Asian fiction in English. This appears to indicate that the Study 3 participants did not see themselves as particularly similar in reading habits to the readers of the genres they chose to read.

However, if we take the above list of six characteristics which participants attributed to themselves as readers, a simple comparison of the mean scores for the 16 grouped constructs (Table 6.5) suggests that they are most similar

to Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers, being perceived as likely to share five of the six characteristics (1,3,4,5,6), and to share three characteristics (3,4,6) with the reader of Literary fiction.

We can also investigate how the mean ratings for the ‘myself as reader’ variable compare to those for all fiction genres, to see the extent to which participants’ views of their own reading habits and attitudes were in agreement with their views of other readers. Wilcoxon signed rank tests were conducted in order to investigate the difference between participants’ ratings of themselves, and the level at which they rated readers across the genres. Table 6.13 below shows the combined mean rating for all 10 fiction variables, and again the mean rating for the ‘myself as reader’ variable:

Table 6.13. Mean ratings for all fiction genres variables, and for the ‘myself as reader’ variable

Construct	n=	Mean of all 10 fiction genres variables	Mean of ‘Myself as a reader’ variable only	Wilcoxon signed rank test z
Gender (1=male)	33	4.05	N/A	/
Minority (1=minority)	22	4.28	5.23	-2.37*
Age (1=younger)	28	3.86	N/A	/
Avid reader (1=not avid)	23	4.53	5.91	-3.86***
Looking for mainstream read (1=not looking)	23	4.18	3.70	1.72
Looking for an easy read (1=looking)	28	3.74	4.68	-3.68***
Interest in escapism (1=not interested)	28	4.39	4.29	.84
Looking for a light read (1=looking)	25	3.76	4.36	-3.07**
Looking to identify with plot /characters (1=not looking)	24	4.38	4.29	.56
Looking for predictability (1=not looking)	23	4.08	2.91	3.74***
Looking for a happy ending (1= not looking)	24	4.16	3.46	2.48*
Interest in ethnicity (1=not interested)	25	3.70	4.16	-1.28
Interest in other people (1=not interested)	24	4.50	4.71	-1.45
Interest in societal issues (1=not interested)	23	4.21	4.83	-2.63**
Interest in multiple genres (1=not interested)	26	3.90	5.23	-3.60***
Interest in romantic novels (1=not interested)	27	4.06	4.00	1.13
* p<.05				
** p<.01				
*** p<.001				

As the table illustrates, the findings suggest that participants perceived themselves to be different from the readers of the ten fiction genres in the following ways:

- less likely to belong to a minority group
- more likely to be avid readers
- more likely to be looking for a challenging but also predictable and light read, with a happy ending
- more likely to be interested in societal issues
- more likely to be interested in reading multiple genres.

For all other grouped constructs, we can infer that participants did not see themselves as significantly different from the ‘average’ reader.

6.5 The contribution and limitations of the third study

In using a larger population than the previous study, the third empirical phase of the research has facilitated the statistical analysis of the ratings of sixteen provided constructs, and in doing so has provided further findings relating to the perceived characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction.

For this investigation the construct ratings of the fifteen Study 2 participants were combined with those of 21 new participants from a deliberately similar population, and analysed as one group. The potential difficulty of using provided constructs (rather than elicited constructs, as in the previous study) and its effect on the research outcome was acknowledged, although given the similarity of the two populations and the consequent relevance of the constructs to all participants, it was felt that this would nonetheless be an appropriate technique to use.

Investigating the means of grouped constructs within the five previously assigned categories, or higher-order codes, as in the previous study it was found that the readers of Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction were similarly rated, both in terms of their personal profile and their reading interests and preferences. Certain exceptions were noted, however, for example regarding their perceived interest in identifying with the plot and/or characters of reading material selected, in that the Asian fiction in English reader was felt to be less concerned by this when selecting books.

Analysing the rating of genre fiction readers on a construct continuum also revealed similar patterns across all three minority fiction genres (including LGBT fiction) for five of the 16 grouped constructs, with just one significant difference between the three genres, namely the extent to which the reader in question was perceived to be an avid reader.

An analysis was conducted of the 'myself as reader' variable used in the construct rating process, and an investigation made of the extent to which the mean ratings for this variable compared to those for all fiction genres. It was noted that participants generally regarded themselves as similar or very similar to other genre fiction readers, with a variance of 0.5 or less. This consistency would appear to support the validity of the construct ratings as a whole.

Significant correlations were revealed between female readers and five other grouped constructs, suggesting that women are perceived as more likely than men to look for challenging and serious fiction, thereby contradicting a perceived stereotypical view of women as readers of so-called lighter fiction genres, such as Romance (Yu & O'Brien, 1999). However, the gender imbalance within the sample population may need to be considered when extrapolating from these data.

Following initial discussions in the first two studies, the Openness to Experience personality factor was examined in more detail in this study, by examining the mean ratings given to each genre for each of eight grouped constructs related to the Openness to Experience trait pairs. It was found that the Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers were regarded as having similarly high levels of openness – higher than those of any other genre reader - with the Literary fiction reader scoring only slightly lower.

Further statistical tests investigated the impact of public library experience and participant age and ethnicity on response, and found in each case that there was only minimal difference between the two groups. However, one valuable finding is that both the quantitative data from the present study and the qualitative data from the previous study appear to indicate that the

minority fiction genres were generally regarded as more ‘challenging’ than certain other genres (with the exception of Literary fiction), and that their readers would be more interested in realism than escapism. Dividing the sample population by ethnicity, it was found that white participants regarded the two readers as equally unlikely to be looking for a predictable plot or characters. Further research could group participants into more discrete work experience, age and ethnicity categories, to provide a stronger basis for investigating their impact on response.

Despite these findings, intraclass correlations indicated that while ratings were consistent for the more established fiction genres, in fact there was relatively little agreement among participants regarding each of the three minority fiction genres, although slightly more for the reader of Black British fiction than for the reader of either Asian fiction in English or LGBT fiction. There would appear to be two possible explanations for this lack of generalisability for each of the minority fiction genres, namely:

1. That it is very difficult to ‘define’ the reader of minority genre fiction, as he/she could have any of a wide range of characteristics
2. That participants are simply unfamiliar with the genres, and therefore have no stereotypical view of the reader(s) in question.

Both arguments are entirely feasible, although given the significant levels of agreement across participants regarding the more ‘established’, traditional genres (Crime fiction, Romance fiction, Science fiction/fantasy, War/spy fiction) which would be given a clear section within any public library collection, there appears to be considerable evidence to support the second argument in particular. It is easier to stereotype the readers of more established genres, as they are well-known to us, frequently read by the general public and some participants could clearly imagine a ‘typical’ reader of those genres without difficulty:

‘I found that I had quite a clear picture of that one [of the reader of Lad Lit], I can imagine who I’d think would take that sort of thing.’
(RG01)

‘... funnily enough that’s what was going through my head, at [name] public library, my first library where I grew up, walking round the shelves, and I remember the War and Spy thriller sections, and seeing the old boys there, and I think it was near the Westerns, and the non-fiction war books, and I sort of associate it with that. So I think that probably when I was looking at these words on the card I was thinking, ‘What image comes into my head, and what picture do I get?’ (RG05)

‘If there’s a sole reader of that type of Literary fiction, he’s not really interested in Science fiction, but they would on occasion take out Black British fiction... It’s quite interesting, trying to going back through my mind about what people take out.’ (RG11)

In the case of the three minority fiction genres, however, public libraries would by no means inevitably have a separate section for each one, and their popularity with the reading public is arguably less. This was illustrated to some extent in the findings of Study 1, where a sample population of 1,047 library users contained just 29 (2.8%) readers of Asian fiction in English, 36 (3.4%) readers of Black British fiction and 10 (1%) readers of LGBT fiction.

As with all research, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of any study, and the notable limitation of this exercise has been the ethnic homogeneity of the sample population. Given the focus of the thesis on minority *ethnic* fiction, this limitation has potentially reduced the scope and impact of the findings. As previously explored (**Chapter 3**), measures were taken in the design and implementation of the research to avoid undue bias relating to ethnicity, but this may still have been a factor.

A second, perhaps less striking, limitation is the gender imbalance in the population sample. This applies to the data collection for each of the three studies, and certainly it would have been preferable for data analysis to have a more balanced sample. Although the sample size for the present study was larger than that of the previous study, it would nonetheless be preferable to have a larger population, with greater diversity in ethnicity and gender.

Thirdly, as stated in **6.3.1**, each of the groups represented in the sample population included student librarians or professional librarians (all with

experience of working in a library), a deliberate strategy to maintain a relative homogeneity in terms of professional knowledge and experience. This consistency of participant profile was felt to be an advantage to the quality of the research data, in that participants were able to draw from a wider experience of interaction with readers of different fiction genres than would necessarily have been possible with respondents who were simply members of the general public. Indeed, while eliciting constructs a number of interview participants referred to readers they had known or observed as having particular characteristics, for example:

‘I get a feeling that they would not necessarily just read it [the Science Fiction genre], but I can think of a lot of people who are regular borrowers who come in and that’s pretty much all they would take.’ (RG01)

‘I have [in the library I work in] quite a few of these older men who won’t read American Crime fiction, but they would read British Crime fiction, and it’s usually the elderly community who read the War/Spy fiction, although some of the twenty year olds may also have been reading some of the Andy McNabb type things as well, but a lot of the elderly read the World War 2 type of fiction...’ (RG11)

Interestingly, five of the fifteen participants also reported that their lack of knowledge of minority fiction genres Black British fiction, Asian fiction and LGBT fiction had made it difficult to give a response regarding their perceived readers (see 5.7.14). In future research it could be of interest to have a wider cross-section of professions represented in the sample population, to investigate if the perceptions and level of knowledge of those from non-library professions - or even those in related professions such as bookselling or publishing - differ from those of library staff.

Despite these perceived limitations, the findings of this study provide statistically valid evidence with which to inform the development of a series of fiction reader profiles and a reading model showing those factors which could influence a reader’s intention to select a minority ethnic fiction book. The Discussion chapter (**Chapter 7**) will present these, by firstly triangulating the findings of each of the three studies conducted in this thesis.

Chapter 7

Discussion of research findings

Chapter overview

This chapter begins by restating the research questions, aims and objectives of the thesis, before taking each of the four questions in turn and describing the extent to which they have been answered by the literature review and the empirical research. The theoretical contribution of the thesis is then explored, and a new model of genre fiction reading is presented. A brief summary of the limitations of the research is provided, before moving on to the recommendations for further research, and finally a description of the professional contribution of the thesis, with practical recommendations.

7.1 Restatement of research questions, aims and objectives

The overall aim of this thesis was to investigate the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic English language fiction in public libraries, with a particular focus on materials written by Black British and Asian authors. In order to achieve this aim, four principal research questions were devised, which have served as the framework for the thesis:

Research Question 1: *What do we understand about the nature of minority ethnic fiction, in relation to each element of the supply chain from the author to the reader?*

Research Question 2: *What characteristics differentiate the readers of different fiction genres?*

Research Question 3: *What are the perceived characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, and to what extent do these differ from those of the readers of other fiction genres?*

Research Question 4: *Are the readers of different minority ethnic fiction genres perceived as sharing the same profile?*

Each of these research questions has been addressed by a combination of conceptual discussion and empirical fieldwork, which is summarised later in the chapter. In order to answer them in full, a series of five thesis objectives

was devised. These are listed in the table below, with the phase(s) of the research which addresses each one indicated in the final column.

Table 7.1 Research objectives, and how each is addressed in the thesis

Objective 1	To critically review the literature pertaining to the nature, supply, promotion and readership of minority ethnic fiction	<i>Literature Review</i>
Objective 2	To investigate the reading habits of public library users and their attitudes towards a range of fiction genres, with a particular focus on minority ethnic fiction	<i>Study 1</i>
Objective 3	To evaluate the effectiveness of a public library minority ethnic fiction intervention on reading preferences and behaviour, and on attitudes towards such reading material	<i>Study 1</i>
Objective 4	To investigate those concepts underlying different fiction reader ‘types’, in order to generate a series of perceived characteristics of genre fiction readers	<i>Study 2 Study 3</i>
Objective 5	To develop a detailed profile of the minority ethnic fiction reader, in comparison to the reader of other fiction genres	<i>Literature Review Studies 1, 2, 3</i>

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the supply-demand model has been used to inform the thesis, as an aid to understanding the position of each stakeholder involved in the reading of, and engagement with, minority ethnic English language fiction.

Firstly, a review of the literature was conducted (Chapter 2) in order to investigate the nature of minority ethnic fiction and its supply, promotion and readership. The review was structured according to the five perceived elements of the minority ethnic fiction *supply* chain – the author, the book trade, the library supplier, the public library, the reader – examining the provision of minority ethnic fiction, and found that the readership of minority ethnic fiction was the subject of only very limited previous research. A review was also made of previous reading models or frameworks, with a specific focus on motivation to read and attitudes to reading, and a number of omissions were identified which the empirical research would then address.

Three empirical studies (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) were then conducted to go beyond previous research in terms of their focus on the *demand* element of

the supply-demand model, investigating the readership of, and engagement with, minority ethnic fiction by public library users.

Study 1 (Chapter 4) comprised a brief survey of the reading habits and attitudes of a large number of public library users (n=1,047) in 21 libraries based in nine local authorities within the East Midlands region. 552 quantitative questionnaires were collected by library staff prior to, and 495 were collected following, the installation of a Black British fiction promotion (*black bytes*) in 16 of the 21 libraries. A sample of respondents (n=21) was selected for a further interview, to explore the respondents' survey responses in more detail, and to investigate perceptions of the *black bytes* promotion. The survey data were analysed per individual respondent, and also by community type, predominant local ethnic group, and predominant local class. A further analysis was conducted of the impact of the *black bytes* intervention, by investigating the percentage change in response between the first and second distributions of the survey. The objectives of this study are reviewed below:

1. To devise and analyse a brief reading habit survey, to be distributed at issue points in one library in each of the nine participating local authorities prior to, and towards the end of, the installation of the *black bytes* promotion.
2. To interview a sample of respondents to obtain further information concerning their reading habits and preferences, and to investigate perceptions of the *black bytes* promotion.
3. To repeat points 1 and 2 in a sample of control (i.e. non-participating) libraries.
4. To statistically compare the impact of the promotion in different types of libraries, i.e. in rural/suburban/urban areas, in communities of differing ethnic profiles, and in different socio-economic communities.

Study 2 (Chapter 5) aimed to build on the findings of Study 1 in order to explore in greater depth the concepts underlying different reader 'types', and thereby to form a more detailed profile of the reader of minority ethnic

English language fiction. Its main theoretical framework is personal construct theory, and the constructivist approach which allows us to explore the values of others by recognising the values present in our own constructs and interpretation of those constructs. The objectives of the second study were as follows:

1. To apply personal construct theory and the associated repertory grid technique in order to generate a series of perceived characteristics of genre fiction readers
2. To expand upon these characteristics in relation to the readers of two minority ethnic English language fiction genres.

Study 3 (Chapter 6) was a quantitative analysis of provided construct ratings which built on the previous phase of the research (Study 2) and involved a further group of participants (n=21) completing a repertory grid containing grouped constructs from the analysis of the second study. These data were combined with those from the second study, so the analyses were based on a sample group of n=36. Study 3 progressed from investigating the idiosyncracies of individual participant response to an examination of a larger population response. Whereas the previous study had been primarily descriptive and qualitative in nature, the third was more analytical and quantitative, having the following research objectives:

1. To investigate the extent to which there is participant agreement across construct ratings for genre fiction readers
2. To evaluate where on average genre fiction readers are rated on a construct continuum
3. To investigate the extent to which participants' previous public library experience affects their perceptions of the readers of genre fiction.

The research findings and implications of each individual study were discussed in the relevant chapters, but this chapter will draw together some of the main investigative themes, using as its structure the four research questions listed above.

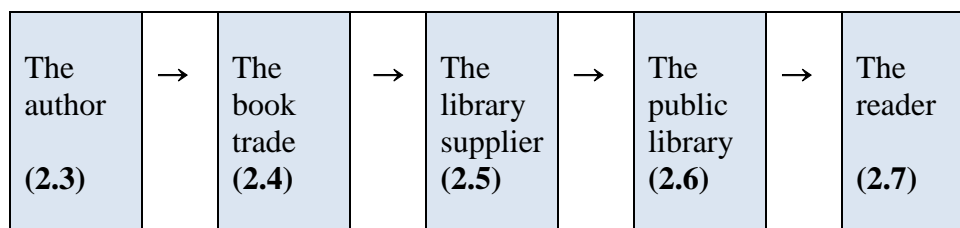
7.2 Research Question 1: *What do we understand about the nature of minority ethnic fiction, in relation to each element of the supply chain from the author to the reader?*

This question has been answered by the literature review, the findings of which are presented in Chapter 2. This initial part of the research process was an invaluable form of preparation for the empirical research, and raised two main issues to support the development of the thesis:

1. Very little empirical research has been conducted into minority ethnic fiction – in particular regarding its readership - so an academic investigation was timely.
2. Any previous research has tended to focus on linguistic aspects of minority ethnic fiction stock provision and use, rather than on cultural aspects. It was decided that this omission would be addressed in the present thesis.

Significant points to emerge from the review regarding the nature of minority ethnic fiction are discussed below for each of the five elements in the supply chain, as shown in Figure 7.1 below.

Figure 7.1 Five elements of the minority ethnic fiction supply chain



7.2.1 The author

As the literature review demonstrated, in order to understand the authorship of minority ethnic English language fiction it is first necessary to consider the status of its authors within the Western body of literature. In the post-colonial age, black and South Asian authors who were also British immigrants were often involved in a highly complex struggle to find their place: did they reside in Rushdie’s ‘ghetto’ (Rushdie, 1992, p.61), incorporated to an extent within literary society but with their work always

just outside of the culturally hegemonic literary canon, or did they ignore their cultural heritage to be make incorporation more likely?

More recently, it would seem that writing in the English language has moved away from the legacy of the British Empire and its cultural dominance, towards a more hybrid form of literature. Yet even in this new landscape there is evidence to suggest that the ‘post-colonial’ author is aware of a pressure to be ‘authentic’ and ‘representative’ in his or her writing, to introduce an accurate portrayal of his or her culture, in a sense to redress the balance of previous Eurocentric literature. Furthermore, it is felt that the publishing houses can also add pressure by expecting minority ethnic authors to focus on ethnicity in the books they write, with a perception that this is meeting the expectation and demand of the reading public. This again implies that the ‘ghetto’ is still very much in existence for such authors.

Certainly, the findings of the second and third studies supported these perceptions: in the second study, a grouped construct theme elicited by seven of fifteen repertory grid participants was ‘interest in ethnicity’. The subject of this interest was the reader and not the author, but each of the eight individual constructs – and the repertory grid interview process - indicated that the seven participants primarily associated either Black British fiction or Asian fiction (or both) with ethnicity as a subject matter. One participant gave the polar construct to ‘looking for a more culturally diverse book’ as ‘looking for a more specifically British book’ (RG04) which does seem to reinforce the previously described notion of minority ethnic fiction as removed from the British body of literature. Statistical tests conducted for the third study showed that the readers of both Black British fiction and Asian fiction were perceived as significantly highly likely to have an interest in ethnicity. Given the finding of the literature review that Black British or British Asian authors are more likely than white British authors to reflect on issues of ethnicity in their writing (2.3, 2.3.1), it is perhaps unsurprising that the empirical research then showed that the readers of these two genres are also perceived as likely to be interested in ethnicity.

The literature review also revealed the perceived capacity of fiction reading to increase intercultural understanding and/or to reduce racial prejudice, providing what Triggs (1985, p.4) calls a ‘route into empathy’ for both children and adults. Works of fiction by minority ethnic authors could therefore be a powerful tool to help readers to understand and empathise with people from other cultures. On the other hand, this does potentially reinforce the burden of representation previously mentioned, whereby the author feels a sense of duty to write culturally sensitive and representative fiction. This role was described by a Study 1 interviewee as follows:

‘...in [town], especially, there’s a huge Polish community, but there doesn’t seem to be that much about how they perceive being in this multicultural society, or how it has affected them...that would be good, if there were any authors that have done anything like that.’
(FB12[2])

7.2.2 The book trade

The literature review revealed that there was a divergence of opinion within the book trade regarding the state of minority ethnic fiction publishing. On the one hand, a number of commentators feel that the abovementioned ghetto has all but disappeared (Sanderson, 2001; Neel, 2006), and that authors have an equal chance of their book succeeding, whatever their ethnicity (The Bookseller, 2006). On the other hand, it is also reported (within the book trade) that minority ethnic fiction is still not particularly visible in best-selling book charts (Bury, in The Bookseller, 2006), and that in fact minority ethnic authors could even have difficulty finding a publisher for their work, perceived as being too removed from the more profitable ‘mainstream’ (Alexander, 1986; Peters, 2000). If the latter is the case, it follows that minority ethnic cultural perspectives will not be widely represented in published fiction, but will often be at a remove from the larger publishing houses. Certainly, the repertory grid interviews in the second study suggested that both Black British and Asian fiction could be regarded as outside the mainstream, and statistical tests conducted for the third study also showed that both readers were perceived as highly unlikely to be looking for a mainstream read when searching for their books. Related to this is the complex subject of market segmentation, and the disputed issue of whether publishers should target specific groups of

readers, such as minority ethnic communities, or whether a more standardised approach to publishing – whereby books are promoted to a general public audience – is the most effective way of reaching their customers. Commentators have described a uniform approach to book marketing, whereby mass publishing houses (in particular) are attempting to reach all potential customers with the same approach (Wood and Landry, 2008), however it is also felt that this is not necessarily reaching the minority ethnic market (Crow & Main, 1995; Pauli, 2006; Sylge, 1997).

The question of readership will be considered shortly, but it is important to note here that publishing houses do exist with the specific remit of promoting Black and/or Asian authors and their books, and further that the link is often made between the minority ethnic reader and minority ethnic fiction. The role of the Black or minority ethnic publisher is perceived both as promoting fiction reflecting minority ethnic cultures, and supporting authors from minority ethnic communities (Busby, 2007).

7.2.3 The library supplier

With a growing number of library services using a library supplier to source much (or even all) of their stock, the literature review found that some positive outcomes of using such a service had been reported, such as increasing staff time to spend on alternative activities. However, a frequently cited criticism related to the perceived imbalance in the library service stock resulting from supplier selection, whereby both breadth and depth could be compromised, in favour of the more popular (best-selling) and mainstream titles. The relevance of this criticism to the provision of minority ethnic fiction is again related to its perceived position on the periphery of publishing, produced by smaller publishing houses whose titles would not necessarily be picked up by a library supplier. Furthermore, research into the provision of LGBT stock by Chapman and Birdi (2008) found that although local authorities kept a specific clause within their supplier contract to allow them to purchase materials from other sources if the range supplied was felt to be inadequate, in fact very few were actually contacting specialist bookshops and publishers to supplement supplier provision.

Another finding of the literature review is that the blame for perceived limitations in supplier selection may lie with library staff themselves, who have not provided a sufficiently wide-ranging specification on which the stock selection is based (Usherwood, 2007; Van Riel et al, 2008). It certainly seems logical to assume that the more detailed the specification provided by a library service, the more relevant the stock would be to the needs and interests of the users of that service. If this is indeed the case, it could be argued that any fiction could still be sourced, whether or not the local authority uses the service of a library supplier.

7.2.4 The public library

An interesting comparison can be drawn between the literature review finding related to the incorporation of minority ethnic writers into the Western body of literature, and the perceived attempt by public library services to assimilate immigrants into mainstream Western culture (Berry, 1999; Mercado, 1997), rather than to promote cultural diversity. Even in the twenty-first century a major challenge for the public library is still identified as accepting - and celebrating - such diversity, while at the same time achieving some form of 'cultural community' (Audunson, 2005, p.432). Developing the above comparison further, the current provision of library materials for minority ethnic communities is also felt not to be 'culturally competent' (Berry, 1999, p.112), that it does not sufficiently reflect the variety and interests of ethnic cultures living in the community, but instead focuses in the main on 'the works of white European males' (Delaney-Lehman, 1996, p.29).

The literature review also explored the paradigm shift from the linguistic to the cultural, whereby many members of minority ethnic communities today prefer to read in the English language, but at the same time may still wish to read about their mother country and to see a culturally diverse Britain reflected in the fiction they choose (Birdi et al, 2012; Mercado, 1997). The provision of such minority ethnic fiction in the English language could then have the added benefit of reaching all members of a culturally diverse society, potentially increasing mutual understanding and respect (Birdi et al, 2012; Elkin, 2003; Guerena and Erazo, 2000; Usherwood and Toyne, 2002).

During the past three decades the perception that a person's inaccurate or stereotypical views of other ethnic cultures can be challenged, and even changed, by the engagement with fiction reflecting these cultures, has repeatedly been linked to a call for public libraries to promote minority ethnic fiction to all their users (Kendall, 1992; Mansoor, 2006; Peters, 2000). There is certainly evidence to suggest that many local authorities have made a sustained effort to develop substantial collections of books by (for example) Black British, Black American, Asian and South Asian authors (Denny, in *The Bookseller*, 2006; Van Fleet, 2003), and a number of critics have observed that these books should be promoted more widely than the minority communities they will often depict (Elbeshausen and Skov, 2004; Jamal, 2001). Examples of specific promotions that aimed to promote writers from minority ethnic communities to all potential readers were also found in the literature (Brumwell and Hodgkin, 2003; The Reading Agency, 2008; Train, 2003b; Wyatt, 1998).

The question of which audiences to promote minority ethnic fiction to will inevitably raise the issue of where to house such material within the public library; should there be separate collections of (for example) Black writing, or should all titles be integrated with the general fiction stock? The literature review found a relatively large body of material to support each perspective, with perceived benefits of the separate collection including the following:

- Ease of locating the books when presented as a 'collection' (Peters, 2000; Woodward, in Thompson, 2006)
- Helping minority communities to feel comfortable with the collection (Datta and Simsova, 1989; Peters, 2000).
- Opportunity for the library to 'showcase' the collection (*Opening the Book*, 2006b; Skrzyszewski, 1992)
- Higher loan figures for a separate collection (Baker, 1988).

Arguments in favour of a more integrated approach can be summarised as follows:

- Greater access of titles by minority ethnic writers to all members of the community (Alexander, 1982; Peters, 2000; Thompson, 1986)

- Higher loan figures due to the ‘serendipitous’ location of stock within the general collection (Peters, 2000)
- Reducing (actual or perceived) marginalisation of certain books and reader groups (Hicks and Hunt, 2008; Horner, 20008; Sanderson, 2001).

Two main attempts to resolve this issue have been reported or recommended within the literature, as summarised below:

1. To establish two collections of (for example) Black fiction, one integrated within the general fiction stock and a second separated from the general stock and specifically labelled ‘black fiction’ (Peters, 2000). This would arguably increase access to the materials (and would result in separate issue figures of minority ethnic stock to justify purchase), but it would be costly, perhaps prohibitively so (Clough and Quarmby, 1978).
2. To integrate stock whilst highlighting minority ethnic authors, e.g. using coloured spot stockers on the spines of the books (Brown, 1997; Talbot, 1990), or devising regular booklists of specific titles (Talbot, 1990), or installing regular and prominent displays within the library (Talbot, 1990; Thompson, 2006).

A small number of participants of the first and second studies of this thesis commented on the separateness of minority ethnic (specifically Black) collections or promotions in public libraries, generally supporting the views of the above-mentioned writers that materials can be difficult to find, but could – and do - have a wider appeal than minority ethnic communities:

‘I think the last time I went in there was a section on black writers...I think the idea would be for a more general appeal, because it probably just highlights, shows that there are talented Black writers, and this is what they’ve got to offer, so it wouldn’t just be for Ethnic.’ (Study 1, DA8)

‘It [the black bytes promotion] was a general appeal, because I think that everybody needs to be made aware of how black culture is influenced by English culture in this country...I think that anybody, once they had picked up a book [from the promotion] and started to read it, they would probably find it really interesting.’ (Study 1, FB12)

‘...certainly in libraries, it [Black British fiction] always seems to be a separate collection, obviously there are other genres that are separate collections as well, but I always imagine someone making a more special effort for that, to be honest, either they’d be perhaps from the Black community and taking an interest in it...or if they’re from outside the community then you’d imagine them to be going out of their way...to find it, to look for it, to take an interest in it’ (Study 2, RG01).

Interestingly, *Opening the Book* (2006b) and Skrzyszewski (1992) both warn of the potentially negative impact of producing any separate materials, displays or promotions if the collection is not sufficiently large or wide-ranging, and if the books themselves are not in good condition.

7.2.5. The reader

The literature review indicated that the question of the readership of minority ethnic fiction raises more issues than it resolves, and that the identity of its reader and his or her reading choices remain subjects of much debate. One underlying issue is whether or not members of minority ethnic communities are themselves the main readers of titles by minority ethnic writers, and therefore the target audience for the marketing campaigns. Several writers have commented on the consideration of one’s cultural background when devising book marketing strategies (Hundal, 2007; Simsova, in Zielinska and Kirkwood, 1992), which certainly relates to ideas underpinning reader response theory that readers are more likely to respond to a text they can relate to (Appleyard, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1983; Squire, 1994).

There is also the concept of the ‘double audience’ (Young, 2006, p.20), whereby some of the readers of a minority ethnic fiction title would be from the same ethnic group as the author, and some would not. How, then, should this book be marketed, and how should it be shelved in our bookshops and libraries? Hicks and Hunt (2008) argue that any author could potentially be of interest to any member of the reading market.

However, research has also shown that members of minority ethnic communities are not necessarily looking to read minority ethnic fiction

(Hicks and Hunt, 2008; Thompson, 2006), and that readers beyond these communities may also want to read these books (Sanderson, 2001; Thompson, 2006). Related to this point is the perception that British readers from all cultural backgrounds generally have wider reading tastes (Olden et al, 1996; Ruppin, 2009), and are now more accepting of - and interested in - reading fiction reflecting ethnic cultures other than their own (Kendall, 1992; Hicks and Hunt, 2008; McDermid, 2010).

7.3 Research Question 2: *What characteristics differentiate the readers of different fiction genres?*

The review of the literature included an examination of previous models of attitudes towards fiction reading or motivation to read fiction, as summarised in Figure 7.2:

Figure 7.2 Summary of key findings from the review of reading models

<p>A reader's overall attitude to reading could be directly affected by feelings aroused by the reading process, and by ideas linked to reading selection (Mathewson, 1994).</p>
<p>A reader's choice of book could be driven by a 'medicinal' role (to help him/her to relax or be distracted from preoccupations), or by a 'relaxation' role (to help the reader to have pleasurable, emotive or erotic sensations) (Escarpit, 1971, p.90). Other potential motivations to read fiction include escape from problems, increasing awareness of the world, and discovering meaningful images to apply to one's life (Appleyard, 1994). Ross (2001) agrees that the reader's mood is important in making the most appropriate reading selection.</p>
<p>Factors motivating the reading process could be summarised as <i>utilitarian</i> (e.g. increasing one's knowledge), <i>hedonic</i> (enjoying oneself) and <i>symbolic</i> (e.g. feeling that one is an intellectual); the books chosen may help to define a reader's identity (D'Astous et al, 2006).</p>
<p>A younger reader (<35 years) may be an avid reader, but because of other distractions may not read widely; an older reader (>35 years) may read more widely (Escarpit, 1971).</p>
<p>External factors potentially affecting reading choice could include the author, the publishing house, and the book cover (D'Astous et al, 2006), and book reviews, personal or professional recommendations (Leemans and Stokmans, 1992). Choice could also be affected by the cost in time or money required to gain (intellectual or physical) access to the book (Ross, 2001).</p>

From the literature, therefore, we have a clearer understanding of the fiction reading process in general and what may motivate an individual fiction reader to choose a book. However, this previous research does not differentiate between the readers of different fiction genres, and also fails to provide a profile of these readers, taking into account the individual, text-related and societal factors potentially influencing the reading choices they make.

The primary focus of the empirical research conducted for this thesis was on the reader of minority ethnic fiction, but given the nature of the research design it has been possible to investigate the characteristics of the reader of a number of different fiction genres. This has provided a far richer profile of fiction genre readers than in previous research, which as illustrated above has tended to have a less specific focus on 'the fiction reader' in general terms, whatever his or her preferred genre(s). Not only has this resulted in a narrower description of the reader, but the empirical research has also indicated that very few readers would describe themselves as readers of all types of fiction. Firstly, of the twelve fiction genres included in the first study, 87.2% (n=805) of those respondents who would 'usually' read at least one fiction genre (n=923) stated that they would only choose three or fewer of the twelve listed genres. Secondly, of the 1,047 questionnaire respondents in Study 1, 91.3% (n=956) stated that they would deliberately avoid at least one fiction genre when selecting reading material.

The first study collected data pertaining to the gender, age and class of the readers of different genres. Although the focus of the analysis was on the reader of minority ethnic fiction, the findings nonetheless indicated that there are indeed notable variations across the genres in these three areas. For example, the readers of Science fiction/fantasy and War/Spy/Adventure fiction were strongly felt to be male (chi-square = 20.57, $p < .001$; chi-square = 56.11, $p < .001$ respectively), whereas the readers of Family Sagas, Romance fiction and Chick Lit were strongly felt to be female (chi-square = 70.90, $p < .001$; chi-square = 71.23, $p < .001$; chi-square = 34.75, $p < .001$ respectively). The readers of Science fiction/fantasy were strongly felt to be younger (chi-square = 63.02, $p < .001$), whereas the readers of Crime fiction were felt to be older (chi-square = 17.06, $p < .01$). The readers of Black

British and Asian fiction were strongly felt to be from working class backgrounds (chi-square = 12.11, $p < .01$; chi-square = 22.37, $p < .001$ respectively), whereas those of Literary fiction were felt to be from mixed (i.e. working class and middle class) areas (chi-square = 10.07, $p < .01$). (For demographic analyses for each Study 1 genre, see Appendix 1i). These and the above findings regarding genre choice would appear to strengthen the claim that the readers of different fiction genres will have differing characteristics, which will not be recognised when all genres are combined, as has frequently been the case in previous research. This will be further explored under RQ3, which explores in particular detail the characteristics of minority ethnic fiction genre readers.

Whereas the first study collected data from individual library users regarding their reading attitudes and habits, the second study used as its participants a group of librarianship masters students, each with experience of guiding members of the public in their reading choices. As explained in **5.7.3** it was felt that their combined work experience would help with the development of a profile of the readers of different fiction genres.

Indeed, the second study facilitated a far richer conceptualisation of fiction readers, not only the readers of minority ethnic fiction (Asian fiction in English and Black British fiction), but also those of each of the following eight genres:

- Chick Lit fiction
- Crime fiction
- Lad Lit fiction
- LGBT fiction
- Literary fiction
- Romance fiction
- Science Fiction/ Fantasy fiction
- War/Spy fiction.

Ten triads were presented in turn to fifteen repertory grid interview participants, the order of which was identical for each one. As each triad

was presented, participants were asked to describe a way in which two of the three elements were alike in some way, but different from the third. The resulting constructs (and their polar construct, as defined by the participant) were recorded by the researcher, and a total of 128 constructs emerged, with a mean of 8.5 constructs per participant (see **5.8.2**). Following the dual categorisation of any constructs eliciting multiple aspects, thematic analysis was used to group the new total of 147 constructs by codes relating to similarity of meaning, and then to count the frequency of code occurrences in order to identify key areas for the analysis. An initial set of 29 themes (or factors) characterising the reader of genre fiction was thereby produced.

Whereas the data collected in the first study related only to demographic (and basic socio-economic) details of the genre fiction reader, the themes to emerge from this second study expanded considerably upon those, with the 29 themes relating to (for example) his or her perceived social and reading interests, preferred plot and wider reading choices. The four most frequently cited constructs – those elicited ten or more times – related to the reader's perceived gender (n=18), age (n=13), whether or not he/she was looking for an easy (non-challenging) read (n=14), and his or her perceived interest in escapism (n=12). Despite the relatively high frequency of these four themes, the overall modal values of constructs relating to each theme were 2 and 3, with 17 of the 29 themes based on just three or fewer constructs. However, as noted in **5.8.4**, Goffin (2002) and Cassell & Walsh (2004) support Kelly's original (1955) theory that the focus of the analysis of repertory grid data should remain on the individual, so in analysing a group of repertory grid responses 'the most frequently mentioned constructs are not necessarily the most important' (Goffin, 2002, p.218). Indeed, the 16 grouped constructs selected for the third study (Chapter 6) included four which were each based on just three constructs ('an avid reader', 'interest in other people', 'interest in societal issues', 'looking for a mainstream read').

The initial grouping of constructs was of interest in its own right, but in order to develop a more useful series of reader characteristics some further thematic analysis was conducted. This identified five broad themes, or 'high-order codes', within which more narrow and focused subordinate themes, or 'lower-order codes' were also identified. Simply stated, the first

two of these high-order codes relate directly to the personal profile of the reader, and the remaining three to his or her reading interests and preferences (the full list of codes and themes is included in **5.8.5**):

1. Perceived demographic profile of the reader (6 themes, total n=45 constructs)
2. Perceived reader behaviour (7 themes, total n=18 constructs)
3. Preferred nature of plot (8 themes, total n=54 constructs)
4. Subject interests (4 themes, total n=15 constructs)
5. Preferred genres (4 themes, total n=15 constructs).

7.3.1 Perceived demographic profile of the reader

12 of the 15 repertory grid participants had an impression of the perceived **gender** of the readers of a number of different fiction genres, and these 12 elicited a total of 20 constructs relating to gender, which was the largest group of constructs from the second study. This emphasis on gender was unsurprising, given that previous research (e.g. Tepper, 2000) had suggested that gender is frequently used to differentiate between fiction readers, and that women and men have different reading tastes (Yu and O'Brien, 1999). Equally unsurprising was the frequent reference to the **age** of the fiction reader, with a total of 13 constructs elicited by six of the fifteen participants. Participants frequently separated the triads according to the perceived age of the readers, commenting that one reader would be younger or older than the other two. Similarly, the French academic and social commentator Robert Escarpit (1971) famously distinguished between younger and older adult readers, proposing that the former were 'avid' readers but with narrow taste, whereas the latter would read more widely. Interestingly, the findings of the first study revealed a slight trend in terms of older readers choosing fiction from a greater number of genres (Spearman's non-parametric $r = .07$, $p = .02$). The remaining four themes relating to the reader's perceived demographic profile were perhaps less predictable than age and gender, and certainly less frequently found in previous research. Nine constructs were elicited relating to the reader's perceived membership of a **minority group**, which in eight of nine cases referred to an ethnic group. Unsurprisingly, these constructs

generally emerged from a consideration of triads including the readers of Black British and/or Asian fiction.

A total of five constructs were elicited by five participants regarding the fiction reader's perceived **class**, **income** and **education**. Some previous research has been conducted into what is termed the 'sociology of reading', an aspect of which can be very baldly summarised as indicating that readers from higher socio-economic status groups would be more likely to read more literary, complex novels than working class people, who would be inclined to choose traditional genres such as Romance fiction and Crime fiction (Bourdieu, 1984; Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999; Van Rees et al, 1999). This theory seems to divide potential reading material into two areas, with essentially what might be termed 'Literary fiction' on one side, and all other fiction genres on the other. However, the present thesis has unpicked this grouping of fiction genres and considered instead the perceived characteristics of each individual genre.

7.3.2 Perceived reader behaviour

The empirical research found a total of seven themes relating to the perceived reading behaviour of the fiction reader. The first of these, 'is an **avid reader**', differentiates between the person who identifies him or herself as a 'reader', enjoying reading as a hobby, and the person who does not. We can look again to Escarpit (1971, p.93), who specifically uses the term 'avid' to describe the younger (adult) reader with a passionate (although sometimes narrow) reading habit. The Oxford English Dictionary (2014) defines 'avid' as 'keenly interested or enthusiastic', and other authors have tended to use the term 'avid' in this sense to denote an enthusiastic reading habit, with for example Jamieson (2009) suggesting that 'women are more avid readers of books than men'. Related to this is the theme 'would define him/herself as a **fan of a genre/specialist**', which was elicited twice by one Study 2 participant. It is perhaps surprising that just one participant considered this as a means of differentiating between the readers of different fiction genres, given the perceived 'highly involving' nature of choosing a book to read, and the way in which books help to 'define one's identity' (D'Astous et al, 2006, p.135).

Two further perceived means of differentiating between fiction readers were whether or not they were likely to look for a '**mainstream**' read, and whether they had an interest in '**contemporary**' novels. As illustrated in **5.8.8**, a 'mainstream' novel has been variously interpreted as one which is more concerned with plot and entertainment than literary style, but also as the reading matter of the 'majority', whether an ethnic majority or the reading public as a whole. Constructs elicited for the second study would suggest that both interpretations were considered by the repertory grid interview participants. The term 'contemporary' was combined by one participant with the term 'accessible', implying that older (perhaps 'classic') fiction would be less accessible to the reader. Similarly, Sharon (1974, in Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999, p.205) suggested that a non-contemporary ('historical') novel was more likely to be part of 'complex and prestigious' genres.

One of the more obvious aspects of reader behaviour relates to **browsing habits**; how does a reader look for the book he or she wants to read? Study 2 participants elicited constructs describing different aspects of browsing behaviour, ranging from the person who knows what he or she is looking for when choosing a book (whether or not he or she is a 'browser'), to the person who would be happy to spend time looking for an 'obscure' (RG03) book. This range of behaviours is supported by Spiller (1980) and Jennings and Sear (1986) who identified respectively five and four different methods of searching, including looking for the author's name, a particular category or title, and a more random browsing behaviour.

One participant elicited two constructs related to the reader's perceived obligation to **follow fashion** in making his or her reading choices. Although this may not seem the most likely aspect of reader behaviour, in fact previous research has suggested that our reading choices are not only affected by our own characteristics, but also by various complex social influences (Kraaykamp & Dijkstra, 1999).

Perhaps the most predictable social influence relates to other people and how we think they perceive us. Three participants elicited constructs describing **others' perceptions** of the readers of particular fiction genres.

Interestingly, one perceived that some readers could be ‘highly thought of by other readers’ (RG11) while other readers would not: this again relates to Van Rees et al’s (1999) division of ‘highbrow’ and ‘lowbrow’ books, and to the finding of Kraaykamp and Dijkstra (1999, p.228) that the reading of ‘complex and prestigious books...serves as an alternative pathway used to gain social status’.

This idea of external influential factors is also developed in elements of the ‘subject interests’ theme, considered later in this section.

7.3.3 Preferred nature of plot

Two of the most frequently cited themes relating to the reader’s (perceived) preferred nature of fiction plot were ‘looking for an easy read’, and ‘looking for a light read’. As noted in **5.8.5**, there is an important distinction between these two themes, as the polar construct of the first is ‘challenging’, whereas that of the second is ‘serious’, so two quite different concepts were considered here. After ‘gender’, the second most cited theme in the second study was ‘looking for an **easy read**’, with 14 constructs elicited by 9 of 15 participants. Previous research has indicated that certain genre fiction categories are perceived to be simple texts for a mass audience, lacking intellectual rigour (Carey, 1992; Twomey, 2003), and this idea has certainly been supported by the second study conducted for this thesis.

Six participants elicited seven constructs referring to genre fiction readers’ interest in a ‘**lighter read**’. As noted in **5.8.7**, there has long been a perception within the book trade and the library profession that the traditional fiction genres such as Science fiction, Romance fiction, Crime fiction and Westerns are ‘light fiction’ in the sense of being less ‘serious’ or less highly regarded than the more ‘literary’ novels (Spiller, 1980:240). In recent years, there has been a move to reduce the perceived prejudice towards this ‘lighter’ fiction, via which it is nonetheless ‘possible to have a deep and satisfying reader experience’ (Opening the Book, 2013), with some believing that the paradigm shift has occurred, with such ‘genre snobbery’ having been ‘significantly eroded by the marketplace’ (Merritt, 2010). The findings of the empirical research would suggest, however, that

the perception of genre fiction as ‘lighter’ than literary fiction does remain, at least to an extent.

One of the major themes of the second study was the reader’s **interest in escapism**, referred to by nine participants in a total of 14 constructs. Toyne and Usherwood’s (2001) study also found that the word ‘escapism’ was one of the most frequently used by survey respondents to describe the contribution of reading to their lives, even describing the construct as ‘the most conscious perception that people have of what they derive from reading’ (p.26). The author would prefer to agree with Blumler and Katz (1979) that a broader description of the reading experience would apply, drawing for example from the five areas of ‘gratification’ in media texts of which escapism is just one (the remaining four being social interaction, identity, information/education, entertainment. As stated in **5.8.6**, each of these is present in the list of grouped constructs devised for Study 2.

Blumler and Katz’s (1979) third area of gratification was ‘identity’, which strongly relates to the second study theme ‘looking to **identify with the plot/characters**’. Given the findings of previous research that readers often respond better to a text if they identify with the plot or characters (Jose and Brewer, 1984; Rosenblatt, 1983; Squire, in Ruddell et al, 1994), it is perhaps surprising that just four respondents each elicited between one and three constructs relating to this theme.

A common descriptor of genre fiction in practice and research relates to its formulaic nature (Futas, 1993; Parameswaran, 1999), so it is unsurprising that repertory grid participants referred to fiction readers’ search for ‘**a predictable plot**’ (n=3) and ‘**a happy ending**’ (n=2), with a total of four and six constructs respectively. In line with the research of Dubino (1993) and Saricks (2001) the primary genres singled out as providing happy endings were the three romance genres Romance fiction, Chick Lit and Lad Lit.

The fifth area of gratification for the fiction reader (Blumler and Katz, 1979) is ‘entertainment’, and the final two subordinate themes within the broad theme regarding the reader’s preferred type of plot were ‘**looking for thrills/entertainment**’ and ‘**looking for humour in a plot**’. However, it is

interesting that relatively few respondents considered these themes when eliciting their constructs (n=2 and n=1 respectively), certainly in comparison to the major themes ‘looking for an easy read’ and ‘interest in escapism’.

7.3.4 Subject interests

The triads offered to each repertory grid interview participant were, as stated in 5.7.5, deliberately chosen to include sufficient representation of the two minority ethnic fiction elements ‘Reader of Asian fiction in English’ and ‘Reader of Black British fiction’. Of the ten triads, six contained at least one of the two elements, so it was not surprising that the most common of the ‘subject interests’ theme was **‘interest in ethnicity’**, for which eight constructs were elicited by seven participants. Previous research (Syed, 2008; Toyne and Usherwood, 2001) has also found that fiction readers often report having an interest in reading fiction about other cultures and their inhabitants, although this is not normally such a frequently reported theme as in the present research. Related to this theme are the less frequently elicited **‘interest in other people’** and **‘interest in societal issues’**, which recall two of Blumler and Katz’s (1979) five gratification areas of ‘social interaction’ and ‘information/education’. The final theme within this group is **‘interest in sexuality’**, which was only elicited by one participant with one construct, which was perhaps surprising given that three of the ten triads contained the element ‘reader of LGBT fiction’.

7.3.5 Preferred genres

Perhaps one of the less predictable themes to emerge from the second study was **‘interest in multiple genres’**, which was elicited by six participants of the repertory grid study. As noted in 5.8.7, the reader of Black British fiction was interestingly described in six of the seven constructs as having an interest in multiple genres. This finding was related to Yu and O’Brien’s (1999) study, which used the term ‘readers of frequent universalism’ (p.47) to describe those who would happily move around the library from genre to genre when choosing their books, as opposed to the ‘readers of particularism’ who would remain loyal to one genre or even one author. The remaining three themes related to the specific genre preferred, with ‘interest in romantic genres’ elicited by six participants, and ‘interest in

historical context’ and ‘interest in myth/fantasy’ by just one participant each.

7.3.6 Summary

Having explored some of the perceived characteristics of the readers of different fiction genres, a new framework (or profiling template) for understanding the fiction reader started to emerge, with elements of a basic demographic profile emerging from the first study, then a much fuller series of themes from the second study, via which readers’ choices and behaviour can be understood, and distinguished from one another. Returning to the five elements of the supply chain (author/book trade/library supplier/public library/reader), these findings have, in combination, supported a more detailed examination of the target audiences for multiple fiction genres than had previously been available. This provided a series of stepping stones to the third study, and the response to the third research question.

7.4 Research Question 3: *What are the perceived characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, and to what extent do these differ from those of the readers of other fiction genres?*

Whereas the literature review revealed a lack of clarity as to the identity of the readers of individual fiction genres, emerging from the empirical research is a clearer profile of the more traditional genres (Science fiction and fantasy, Romance, Crime, Literary and War/Spy), and even of the more recently established genres Lad Lit and Chick Lit. Still less data had previously been available regarding the characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction, but research conducted for both the first and third studies (in particular) have also facilitated an investigation of their profile. Using the same five broad themes identified in the discussion of the previous research question, **Table 7.2** triangulates the data from the first and third studies to summarise the main characteristics of the perceived reader profile for each of the ten fiction genres studied for this thesis. In doing so, it is also possible to compare the extent to which the readers of the two minority ethnic fiction genres differ from those of other genres.

Where the data from the two studies were triangulated for the characteristics 'gender' and 'age', it is interesting to consider the extent to which there is agreement between the participant groups of Studies 1 and 3. For the genres Black British fiction, Literary fiction and Lad Lit, respondents of Study 1 had a less clear view of the **gender** of the reader, whereas in each case those of Study 3 appeared to have a gender in mind, perceiving the readers of Black British fiction and Literary fiction as more likely to be female, and the reader of Lad Lit as more likely to be male. Exploring the possible reasons for these differences of opinion, it could be that the findings are highlighting the difference between the reality, as shown in the data collected by the readers themselves (the library users surveyed for Study 1), and the perceptions of librarianship students, library staff and academics (as interviewed for Study 3), which may have been informed by stereotypical judgements of who reads a particular genre. The same theory could apply to the four examples of findings related to the age of the readers of Asian fiction, Black British fiction, Romance fiction and Literary fiction, where opinion differed across the two groups.

Table 7.2 Summary of the reader profile for each of ten fiction genres, using demographic data from Study 1 and grouped constructs from Study 3

Characteristic	Reader of Asian fiction in English	Reader of Black British fiction	Reader of LGBT fiction	Reader of Sci-Fi /Fantasy fict.	Reader of Romance fiction	Reader of Lad Lit fiction	Reader of Crime fiction	Reader of Chick Lit fiction	Reader of Literary fiction	Reader of War/Spy fiction
Perceived demographic profile of the reader										
Gender (S1, S3)	Either (S1,S3)	Either (S1) Female* (S3)	Either (S1, S3)	Male*** (S1, S3)	Female*** (S1, S3)	Either (S1) Male*** (S3)	Either (S1, S3)	Female*** (S1, S3)	Either (S1) Female*(S3)	Male*** S1, S3)
Age (S1, S3)	Younger** (S1) Either (S3)	Either (S1) Younger* (S3)	Younger**(S1), Younger* (S3)	Younger*** (S1,S3)	Either (S1) Older**(S3)	Younger *** (S1) Younger**(S3)	Older** (S1) Older* (S3)	Younger*** (S1,S3)	Either (S1) Older**(S3)	Older*** (S1,S3)
Minority (S3)	Minority***	Minority***	Minority***	Majority*	Majority***	Majority**	Majority***	Majority***	Majority**	Majority***
Class (S1)❖	Working class ***	Working class**	Any	Any	Any	Any	Any	Any	Mixed**	Any
Community ethnicity (S1)❖❖	Diverse ethnic community***	Diverse ethnic community†	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community	Any ethnic community
Community type (S1)❖❖❖	Urban**	Any community type†	Any community type	Any community type	Any community type	Any community type	Any community type	Any community type	Any community type	Any community type
Perceived reader behaviour (All S3)										
Avid reader	Either	Either	Either	Avid**	Avid***	Not avid***	Avid**	Either	Avid**	Avid*
Looking for mainstream read	Not mainstream***	Not mainstream***	Not mainstream***	Not mainstream*	Mainstream***	Mainstream**	Mainstream***	Mainstream***	Either	Mainstream *
Perceived nature of plot (All S3)										
Looking for an easy read	Challenging*	Challenging**	Either	Either	Easy***	Easy***	Easy*	Easy***	Challenging***	Either
Looking for a light read	Serious*	Serious***	Either	Light	Light	Light	Either	Light	Serious	Either

Interest in escapism	No escapism**	No escapism**	Either	Escapism***	Escapism***	Either	Escapism*	Escapism**	Either	Escapism**
Looking to identify with plot /characters	Identify*	Identify**	Identify***	Not identify**	Identify*	Identify**	Not identify**	Identify***	Either	Not identify*
Looking for predict-ability	Unpredictable**	Unpredictable**	Either	Either	Predictability***	Predictability**	Either	Predictability***	Unpredictable***	Unpredictable**
Looking for a happy ending	Either	Not happy**	Either	Either	Happy***	Happy*	Either	Happy***	Not happy**	Not happy*
Subject interests (All S3)										
Interest in ethnicity	Ethnicity***	Ethnicity***	Either	Not ethnicity**	Not ethnicity**	Not ethnicity**	Not ethnicity**	Not ethnicity**	Either	Not ethnicity**
Interest in other people	Interest in people**	Interest in people**	Interest in people***	No interest in people***	Interest in people***	Either	Either	Interest in people***	Either	No interest in people**
Interest in societal issues	Societal***	Societal***	Societal***	Not societal**	Not societal**	Not societal**	Either	Not societal*	Societal**	Either
Preferred genres (All S3)										
Interest in multiple genres	Multiple*	Multiple*	Either	Single***	Single**	Either	Single*	Single*	Multiple**	Single*
Interest in romantic novels	Either	Either	Romantic**	Not romantic***	Romantic***	Not romantic*	Not romantic**	Romantic***	Either	Not romantic***
<p>* p<.05 ** p<.01 † p=.01 *** p<.001 ❖ ‘working class’ - is perceived to be from a working class community; ‘mixed class’ – is perceived to be from a community comprising members of different socio-economic groups ❖❖ ‘diverse ethnic community’ – is perceived to be from an ethnically diverse community; ‘any ethnic community’ – could be from a predominantly white or an ethnically diverse community ❖❖❖ ‘urban’ – is perceived to be from an urban community; ‘any community type’ – could be from an urban/rural/suburban community</p>										

Table 7.2 appears to illustrate the inaccuracy of the implication of much previous research into the reading process (see **7.3** and **2.7.2**) that ‘fiction readers’ are a homogenous group: looking at the ten complete profiles, each one is perceived to be different from all the others, to varying degrees. However, it is interesting that when the five broad themes are considered individually, a number of patterns seem to emerge from which certain observations can be made. For example, looking at the perceived demographic profile of the reader, the last four of the six characteristics indicate that the readers of most fiction genres would tend to be regarded as belonging to a ‘majority group’, and would not tend to be associated with any particular socio-economic class, ethnic community, or community type (rural, urban, suburban). Readers of five of the six ‘traditional’ fiction genres (Science fiction/fantasy, Romance, Crime, Literary and War/Spy fiction) are perceived as ‘avid’ readers, and a slightly different group of five (readers of Romance, Lad Lit, Crime, Chick Lit and War/Spy fiction) are regarded as looking for a ‘mainstream’ read. At least four of the readers of these genres can also be grouped according to their desire to find each of ‘easy’, ‘light’ and ‘escapist’ reads, to be less likely to have an interest in ethnicity as a chosen subject matter, or in reading books from multiple genres at a time. The association of five of these six characteristics with the genre fiction reader is a generally unsurprising finding, as explored in the previous section (**7.3.2** to **7.3.5**). It is interesting, however, that the more ‘traditional’ fiction genre readers were not regarded as particularly likely to have an interest in ethnicity as subject matter: as stated in **7.3.4** this interest has not been frequently reported in previous research, although authors such as Syed (2008) and Toyne and Usherwood (2001) have reported this to be the case with their own fairly small-scale studies of reading interests.

To explore these patterns in more detail, **Tables 7.3** to **7.7** show the extent to which each of the ten genres is similar to each of the other nine. Using the previous **Table 7.2** as the basis, they show the total number of characteristics each pair of genre readers are perceived as sharing, for each of the five broad themes of the fiction reader profile. The tables were first produced in a single version across all 19 categories, but it was then felt that it would be more meaningful to consider each of the five themes separately.

Table 7.3 Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived demographic profile of the reader (maximum possible score for each cell = 6)

N.B. The figure given in brackets denotes the average similarity rating for each genre

	Asian (\bar{x} = 1.2)	Black (\bar{x} = 2.4)	LGBT (\bar{x} = 3.3)	Sci-fi (\bar{x} = 4.1)	Crime (\bar{x} = 3.6)	War (\bar{x} = 3.6)	Lit. (\bar{x} = 3.1)	Rom. (\bar{x} = 3.7)	Chick (\bar{x} = 4.0)	Lad (\bar{x} = 3.8)
Lad	1	2	4	6	4	5	3	4	5	
Chick	1	3	4	5	4	4	5	5		
Rom.	0	2	3	4	5	5	5			
Lit.	0	2	2	3	4	4				
War	0	1	3	5	5					
Crime	1	1	4	4						
Sci-fi	1	4	4							
LGBT	3	3								
Black	4									
Asian										

It should be noted that where **Table 7.2** shows the findings from the two studies to be different (i.e. for the first two characteristics ‘gender’ and ‘age’) the most statistically significant of the two has been used in **Table 7.3**. Also, the tables do not take into account the potential overlap of findings within the two Study 1 characteristics ‘Community ethnicity’ and ‘Community type’, but report only the exact wording: for example, the description ‘any community type’ could include an ‘urban’ community, but the table would report these two terms as different from one another.

Table 7.3 shows that just two of the ten readers share the same perceived demographic profile, the Lad Lit and Sci-fi/fantasy readers, both of whom are perceived as male, younger, members of a majority, from any socio-economic class, ethnic community or community type. With the exception of the readers of Black British, Asian and LGBT fiction each of the other

genres is regarded as strongly related (sharing five of six characteristics) to at least one other fiction reader, in demographic terms.

Just three reading ‘pairs’ are regarded as sharing no similar demographic characteristics, and in each case one of the readers is the Asian fiction reader, whose average similarity rating overall is just 1.2. The Asian reader is regarded as sharing either zero or one characteristic with seven genres, the remaining two being the Black British fiction reader (n=4) and the LGBT fiction reader (n=3).

The Black British fiction readers have slightly higher average ratings of 2.4, sharing zero or no characteristics with five genres, and either one or two with the remaining four.

All other fiction genres have average ratings of between 3.1 (for Literary fiction) and 4.1 (for Science fiction/Fantasy fiction).

Table 7.4 Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived reader behaviour (maximum possible score for each cell = 2)

	Asian (\bar{x} = 0.7)	Black (\bar{x} = 0.7)	LGBT (\bar{x} = 0.7)	Sci-fi (\bar{x} = 0.8)	Crime (\bar{x} = 0.9)	War (\bar{x} = 0.9)	Lit. (\bar{x} = 0.4)	Rom. (\bar{x} = 0.9)	Chick (\bar{x} = 0.8)	Lad (\bar{x} = 0.4)
Lad	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	
Chick	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1		
Rom.	0	0	0	1	2	2	1			
Lit.	0	0	0	1	1	1				
War	0	0	0	1	2					
Crime	0	0	0	1						
Sci-fi	1	1	1							
LGBT	2	2								
Black	2									
Asian										

The highest level of perceived similarity appears to be across the genres Romance fiction, Crime fiction and War/Spy fiction, the readers of which are all perceived to be ‘avid’ and ‘looking for a mainstream read’. The readers of Black British, Asian fiction and LGBT fiction are also regarded as similar to each other, in that none of them is felt to be likely to look for a mainstream read, and that each could be just as likely to be an avid reader as not.

Table 7.5 Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: perceived nature of plot (maximum possible score for each cell = 6)

	Asian (\bar{x} = 1.8)	Black (\bar{x} = 1.7)	LGBT (\bar{x} = 1.8)	Sci-fi (\bar{x} = 1.8)	Crime (\bar{x} = 1.8)	War (\bar{x} = 1.7)	Lit. (\bar{x} = 1.2)	Rom. (\bar{x} = 2.1)	Chick (\bar{x} = 2.1)	Lad (\bar{x} = 1.9)
Lad	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	5	5	
Chick	1	1	1	2	2	1	0	6		
Rom.	1	1	1	2	2	1	0			
Lit.	3	4	1	0	0	2				
War	1	2	2	3	3					
Crime	1	0	3	4						
Sci-fi	1	0	3							
LGBT	2	1								
Black	5									
Asian										

Regarding the perceived nature of the plot, although the average similarity ratings for each genre are less wide-ranging than for the demographic profile (from 1.2 for Literary fiction to 2.1 for Chick Lit and Romance fiction), there appears nonetheless to be a predictably high level of agreement across the established genres Crime fiction, Romance fiction, Science fiction (and Chick Lit). This supports the previously stated perception of the genre fiction reader enjoying formulaic, predictable books

(see 7.3.3), but interestingly the similarity is far less evident between the readers of Black British, Literary, Asian and LGBT fiction with each of the other genres. A separation appears to be emerging between these four readers and the other six genres.

Table 7.6 Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: subject interests (maximum possible score for each cell = 3)

	Asian (\bar{x} = 0.9)	Black (\bar{x} = 0.9)	LGBT (\bar{x} = 0.9)	Sci-fi (\bar{x} = 1.0)	Crime (\bar{x} = 1.2)	War (\bar{x} = 0.8)	Lit. (\bar{x} = 0.7)	Rom. (\bar{x} = 1.4)	Chick (\bar{x} = 1.6)	Lad (\bar{x} = 1.1)
Lad	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	2	2	
Chick	1	1	1	2	3	1	0	3		
Rom.	1	1	1	2	2	1	0			
Lit.	1	1	2	0	1	0				
War	0	0	0	2	2					
Crime	0	0	0	1						
Sci-fi	0	0	0							
LGBT	2	2								
Black	3									
Asian										

Again, the genres sharing most perceived characteristics with the other genres are the more traditional Romance fiction and Crime fiction, plus Chick Lit. Literary fiction is the genre perceived as less similar to the others in terms of subject interests, and each of the three minority fiction genres share an average similarity rating of 0.9. The readers of Black British fiction and Asian fiction are regarded as likely to share all three characteristics, having a perceived interest in ethnicity, other people and societal issues in the books they read.

Table 7.7 Total number of shared characteristics per reader pair: preferred genres (maximum possible score for each cell = 2)

	Asian ($\bar{x}=0.4$)	Black ($\bar{x}=0.4$)	LGBT ($\bar{x}=0.3$)	Sci-fi ($\bar{x}=0.8$)	Crime ($\bar{x}=0.7$)	War ($\bar{x}=0.7$)	Lit. ($\bar{x}=0.4$)	Rom. ($\bar{x}=0.7$)	Chick ($\bar{x}=0.7$)	Lad ($\bar{x}=0.4$)
Lad	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	
Chick	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	2		
Rom.	0	0	1	1	1	1	0			
Lit.	2	2	0	0	0	0				
War	0	0	0	2	1					
Crime	0	0	0	2						
Sci-fi	0	0	0							
LGBT	0	0								
Black	2									
Asian										

Finally, the readers of Black British, Asian and Literary fiction can again be grouped together in their interest in reading multiple genres, and in both romantic and non-romantic titles. The two minority ethnic fiction genres share these preferences with no other genre readers. Across the main fiction genres there is more perceived similarity regarding the readers' interest in just one genre and romantic novels (Romance fiction and Chick Lit), and just one genre and 'not romantic' novels (War/Spy, Crime and Science fiction/Fantasy fiction).

The initial **Table 7.2** and the five subsequent **Tables 7.3 - 7.7** have illustrated that there is often a perceived grouping of the readers of the four traditional genres (Science fiction/fantasy, Crime, Romance, War/spy) and of the two newer genres (Lad Lit and Chick Lit. This grouping does not always apply to the readers of Literary fiction and LGBT fiction, and rarely applies to those of Black British and Asian fiction. LGBT fiction readers seem more closely related to the two minority ethnic fiction genres in terms

of their perceived demographic profile and reader behaviour, whereas Literary fiction readers are more closely related to them in terms of preferred genres, and all four readers appear to have reasonably similar profiles in terms of the perceived nature of the plot.

From this we can surmise that the readers of the two newer fiction genres Lad Lit and Chick Lit seem to be regarded in a number of similar ways as those of the more traditional, established genres Romance fiction, Crime fiction, Science fiction/Fantasy and War/Spy fiction. Although the profiles of each reader are different overall, when those profiles are broken down into different series of characteristics certain patterns emerge, which suggest that the participants in each stage of the empirical research saw a number of similarities between them.

The remaining four genres (Literary fiction, LGBT fiction, Asian fiction and Black British fiction) were often perceived as removed from the above genre grouping, but in a number of ways similar to each other. The most statistically significant findings reinforce the perception of each of the three minority fiction genre readers as very likely to be from a minority group and to have non-mainstream interests, and the Literary fiction readers to share with each of the other three an interest in people and societal issues, with all four readers looking to identify with the characters in the books they read. As the literature review showed (2.5), Literary fiction readers have frequently been regarded as enjoying ‘challenging’, ‘serious’ fiction, which also mirrors the perceptions of the readers of Black British and Asian fiction in the empirical research. This finding strongly supports both Van Fleet’s previously cited (2.6.4) comment from 2003 that literary fiction collections in public libraries were starting to include ‘genre fiction by authors representing other cultural points of view’ (p.67), and Hicks and Hunt’s (2008) finding that minority ethnic authors ‘appeal to [the] non-BME reader’ who is interested in ‘literary fiction’ and has a ‘curiosity about other cultures’ (p.24). Given the perceived overlap between these three genres in particular, it would seem reasonable to consider grouping together both minority ethnic and literary fiction in a library collection.

This section has explored in some detail the characteristics of the readers of ten fiction genres, and the extent to which those of the two minority ethnic fiction genres differ from the other eight. The empirical research has also indicated their profiles are similar to each other in a number of ways, but in order to complete this research this perceived similarity needs to be considered further.

7.5 Research Question 4: *Are the readers of different minority ethnic fiction genres perceived as sharing the same profile?*

This thesis has examined the readership of two different types of minority ethnic fiction, which for the purposes of the research have been termed ‘Black British fiction’ and ‘Asian fiction in English’. Notwithstanding the complex issue of terminology, ‘Black British fiction’ is defined as identifying fiction written by an author of African Caribbean or African heritage, living in Britain. ‘Asian fiction in English’ refers to fiction by an author of Indian subcontinent heritage who may or may not live in Britain, who is writing in the English language. The literature review briefly explored the impact of colonisation and the post-colonial world on the Western body of literature in the English language (2.3), its findings suggesting that the body of so-called ‘post-colonial authors’ – to which the two types defined above would belong – would each be likely to reflect this impact in their work. The review also concluded that authors defined as ‘Black British’ or ‘(British) Asian’ would be more likely than white British authors to reflect on issues of ethnicity in their work. Two types of fiction with shared themes, perhaps, but does this similarity extend to their readers?

In its answer to the third research question, the previous section considered the perceived grouping of the minority ethnic fiction genre readers with either or both of the LGBT fiction and Literary fiction readers. The summary of the reader profile for each of the ten genres (Table 7.2), plus the five tables (Tables 7.3 - 7.7) showing the total number of shared characteristics per reader pair, clearly indicate that the readers of Black British fiction and Asian fiction form the most strongly-related pair within the ten fiction genres considered for this thesis. However, they are not an identical pair, and it is worth considering where perceived differences lie, in order to draw the most helpful conclusions to the research. Table 7.8 below shows in which of the five themes of the reader profile the main areas of difference lie:

Table 7.8 Number of shared characteristics between Asian fiction and Black British fiction readers, for each of the five themes of the reader profile

Theme from reader profile	No. of shared characteristics	Total no. of characteristics per theme
Perceived demographic profile	4	6
Perceived reader behaviour	2	2
Perceived nature of plot	5	6
Subject interests	3	3
Preferred genres	2	2
Total	16	19

As the table illustrates, there is felt to be complete agreement between the two readers in terms of perceived reader behaviour, subject interests and preferred genres. The differences between them are perceived only in terms of the demographic profile and the perceived plot type for the readers of the two genres, which are considered in turn below.

7.5.1 Perceived demographic profile of the minority ethnic fiction reader

As **Table 7.3** shows, both minority ethnic fiction genres are perceived as sharing fewer similar characteristics than the other eight genres, but with an average similarity rating of 1.2 the Asian fiction reader is seen as more different than the Black British fiction reader ($\bar{x}=2.4$). Comparing them to each other, the two share four of six demographic characteristics, but there are slight differences in terms of their perceived gender and age: each reader could be either male or female, or younger or older, but the Black British fiction reader is regarded as slightly more likely to be female than male, and the Asian fiction reader as slightly more likely to be younger than older.

7.5.2 Perceived nature of plot in the books chosen by the minority ethnic fiction reader

Although the Romance fiction and Chick Lit readers have identical profiles for this theme and each shares five of six characteristics with the Lad Lit reader, the two minority ethnic fiction readers are also perceived as sharing five of a possible six characteristics. The only area of difference is related to their likelihood of looking for a ‘happy ending’ when choosing a book to read: the Asian fiction reader is regarded as just as likely to look for a happy ending as not, whereas the Black British fiction reader is felt to be more likely not to look for a happy ending.

It is also worth remembering that the intraclass correlations conducted for the third study (6.4.4) revealed very little agreement among participants regarding the nature of the readers of Asian fiction in English and, to a slightly less extent, the readers of Black British fiction. It was suggested (6.5) that this could be explained by participants’ difficulty to define the reader of a minority fiction genre, given that he or she could have any of a wide range of characteristics, but it was felt that it was more likely to be simply due to participants’ unfamiliarity with the genres, resulting in a lack of stereotypical perspective of the reader(s) in question.

7.5.3 Summary

To summarise, although the two minority ethnic fiction genre readers chosen for examination in this thesis are perceived to have many strongly similar characteristics, there does not appear to be complete agreement across the two reader profiles, which is a point worth taking into account when promoting such titles. This point relates to the recommendations in 7.9 and 7.10.

7.6 Theoretical contribution of the thesis: the model of genre fiction reading

The review of the literature conducted for this thesis identified a number of omissions in previous reading models which the empirical research has addressed, in order to develop a revised model of genre fiction reading.

These were summarised in 2.7.2 as follows:

‘Although of value in providing a starting point from which we can begin to understand how we read, none of these models has looked in any significant detail at *why* we read what we do, and what attitudes we may have towards particular genres, for example minority ethnic fiction. None of them have reflected in detail on the effect of the age and gender of the reader on his or her engagement with a particular book or genre, or indeed the community in which he or she lives. A further omission in previous models is the influence not only of individual or text-related factors on a reader’s intention to read, but also of broader societal factors’ (p.61).

The proposed model takes each of these perceived omissions into account, with **Figure 7.3** below depicting the model for the reading of genre fiction as a whole, based on the findings of the empirical research conducted for this thesis. It illustrates how the five broad themes of the original fiction reader profile interrelate, giving them more of a causal ordering than had previously been possible, or than would have been possible with just one of the empirical studies conducted for this thesis. The second study alone, for example, simply revealed the different characteristics of the fiction reader and not how they might affect one another. Having been developed after triangulating the findings of each of the three research studies, the model facilitates the examination of the individual characteristics, enabling a deeper understanding of the relationships between these characteristics, thereby building on previous reading models which would have tended to consider each one separately.

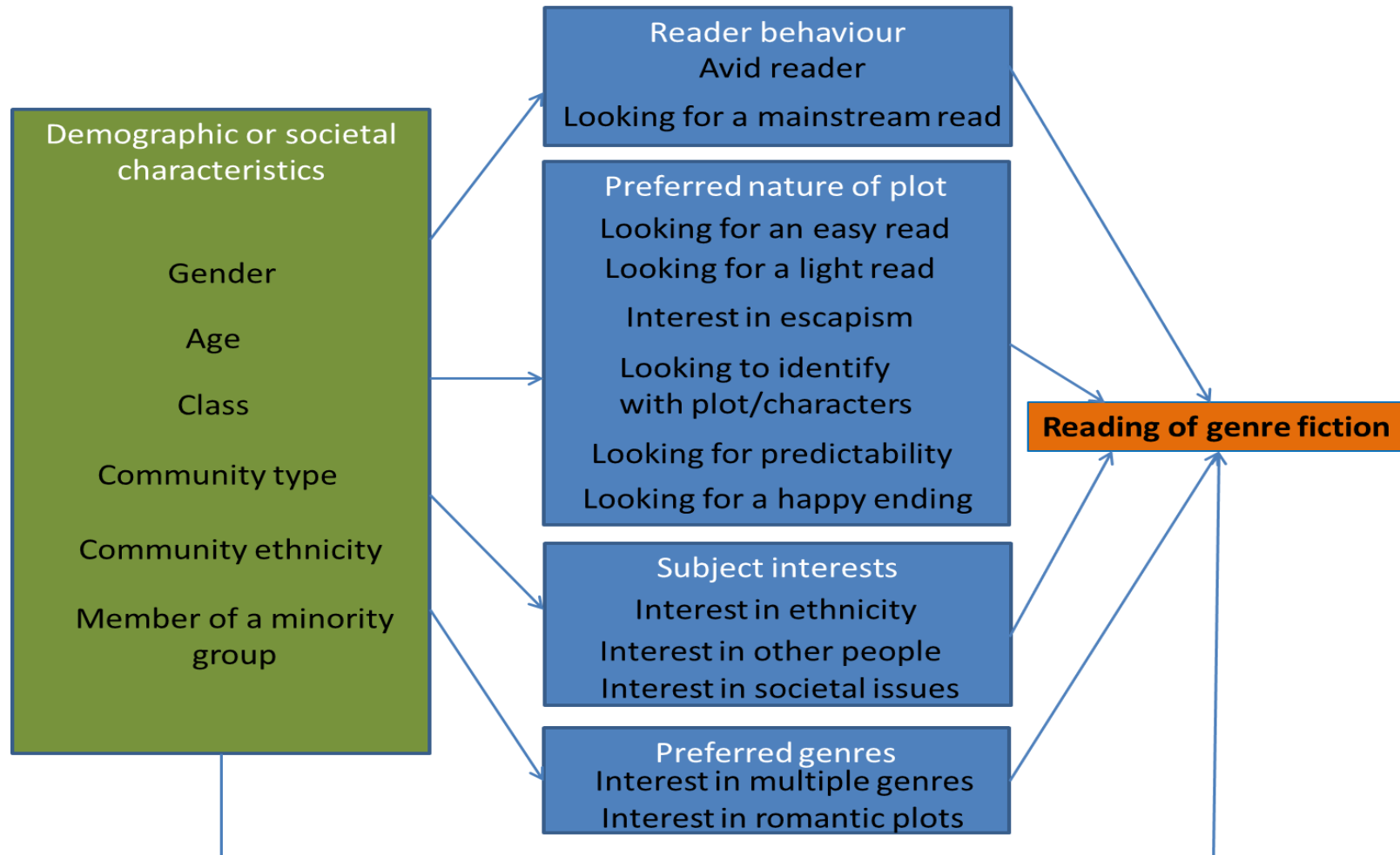
The ‘demographic or societal characteristics’ box on the left-hand side contains those more stable characteristics which may influence the characteristics within the four attitudinal boxes, and/or may directly influence the reading of genre fiction. Presenting the characteristics in this way also helps to explain why demographic or societal characteristics could

directly affect reading choices, for example that those readers with less of an interest in romantic plots are more likely to be male than female, or that those readers from working class communities are more or less likely to be interested in a particular fiction genre.

To further support the reading of the model, the following examples describe one of the significant relationships illustrated by each of the arrows:

1. Older readers of Black British fiction are more likely than younger readers of Black British fiction to be avid readers.
2. Male readers are more likely than female readers to be looking for a 'light read'.
3. Female readers are more likely than male readers to be interested in ethnicity.
4. Female readers are more likely than male readers to be interested in multiple genres.
5. Younger readers are more likely than older readers to read Asian fiction in English.
6. The reader of Crime fiction is more likely to be an avid reader than not.
7. The reader of Romance fiction is more likely to be interested in escapism than not.
8. The reader of Chick Lit is less likely to be interested in societal issues than not.
9. The reader of Literary fiction is more likely to be interested in reading multiple fiction genres than just one genre.

Figure 7.3 Model of genre fiction reading



The following 3 figures (Fig. 7.4 to 7.6 inc.) show how the model can be adapted to different fiction genres, taking as examples the reading of Black British fiction (Fig. 7.4), Asian fiction in English (Fig. 7.5), and Science fiction/Fantasy fiction (Fig. 7.6). After each characteristic the +/- indicate whether the data indicated that the reader of this particular fiction genre is statistically likely (or not) to have that particular characteristic. For example, 'member of a minority group (+)' indicates that the reader of Black British fiction is more likely to be a member of a minority group than not. For those demographic characteristics without an obvious positive or negative aspect, a key is given below.

Figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6: explanation of positive/negative relationships shown for demographic characteristics

Gender: (+) denotes that this reader is statistically more likely to be female than male); (-) that he or she is more statistically more likely to be male than female.

Age: (+) denotes that this reader is statistically more likely to be older than younger; (-) that he or she is statistically more likely to be younger than older.

Class: (+) denotes that this reader is statistically more likely to be from a working class community; (-) that he or she is statistically more likely to be from a community comprising members of different socio-economic groups.

Community type: (+) denotes that this reader is statistically more likely to be from an urban community; (-) that he or she could be from an urban/rural/suburban community.

Community ethnicity: (+) denotes that this reader is statistically more likely to be from an ethnically diverse community; (-) that he or she could be from a predominantly white or an ethnically diverse community.

Figure 7.4 Model of Black British fiction reading

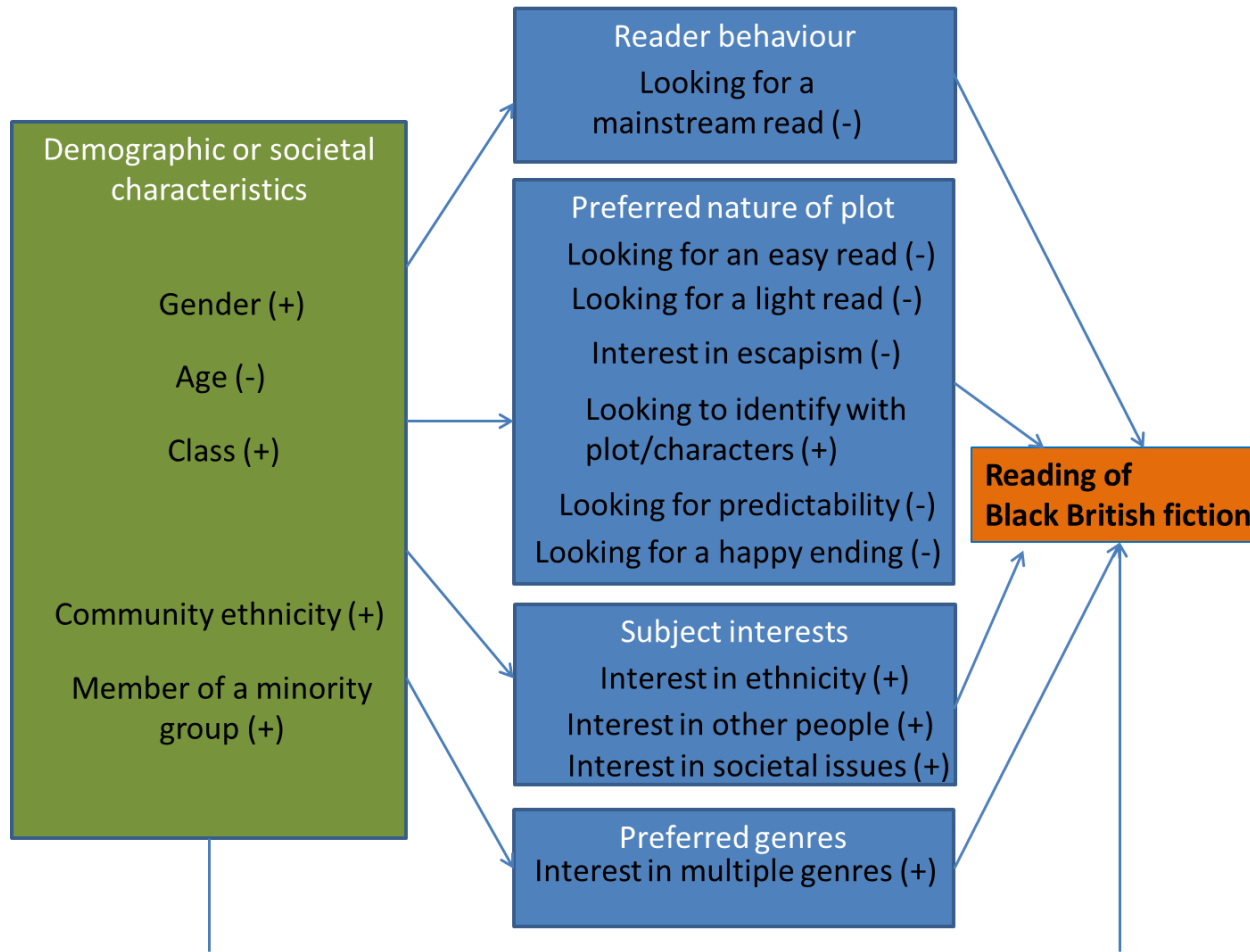


Figure 7.5 Model of Asian fiction (in English) reading

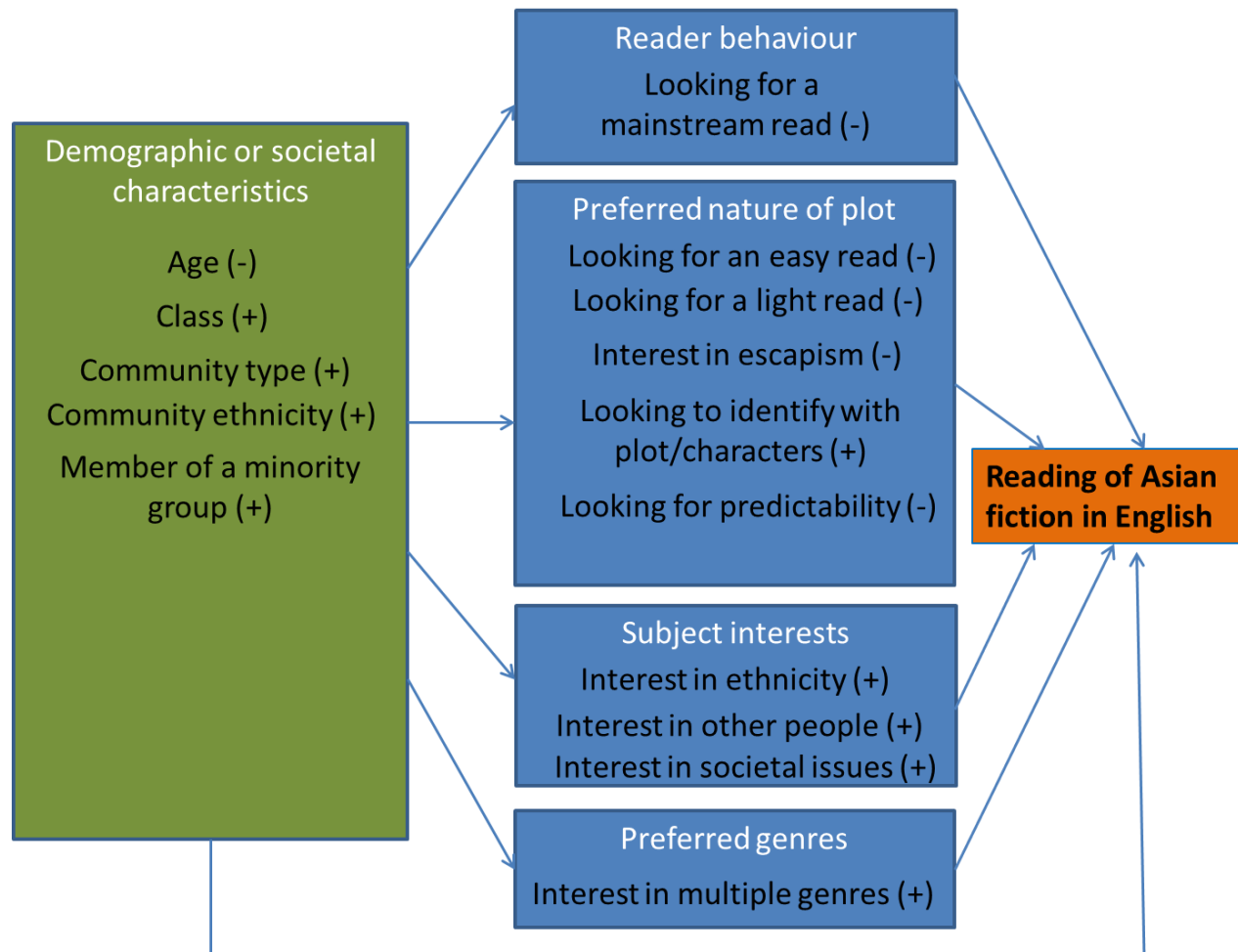
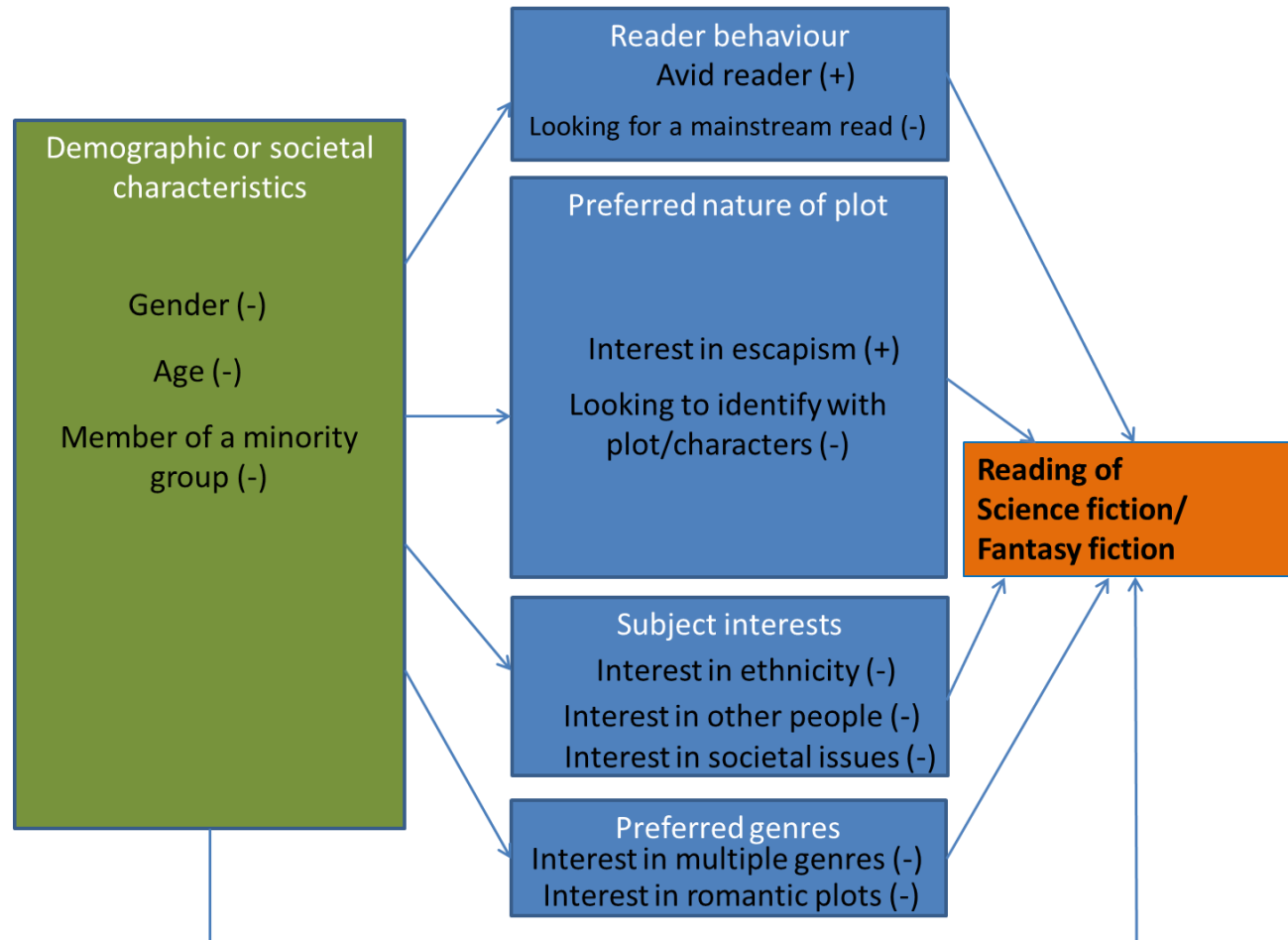


Figure 7.6 Model of Science fiction/Fantasy fiction reading



7.6.1 The contribution of the model

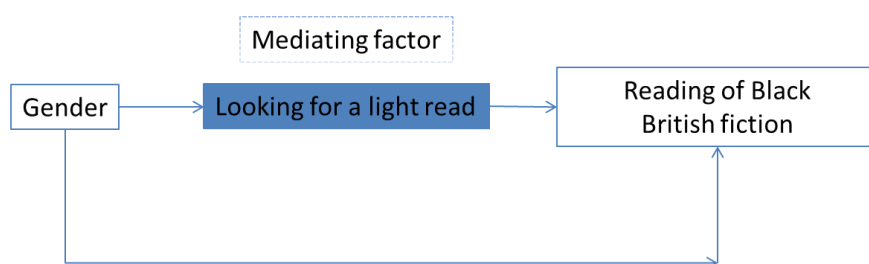
The contribution of the model to the field of reading research can be summarised in four principal ways:

1. Identifying reader characteristics
2. Illustrating the relationships between factors
3. Having the flexibility to build in different types of factors
4. Enabling the further exploration of interactions between these factors.

1. The model identifies a series of demographic and attitudinal characteristics of the readers of fiction as a whole, and of a series of individual fiction genres.

2. It clearly shows that some factors – demographic or attitudinal – can influence other factors and can, in turn, influence the reading of a particular fiction genre or genres. To illustrate this, we can look at an example of a proposed mediating relationship emerging from the data, to try to explain why gender is related to the reading of Black British fiction:

Figure 7.7 Mediating relationship between gender and the reading of Black British fiction



In the example above, we know from the empirical data that female readers are less likely to be looking for a light novel than male readers (Study 3); that Black British fiction readers are less likely to be looking for a ‘light’ novel than a ‘serious’ one (Study 3); and that Black British fiction readers are more likely to be female than male (Study 1, Study 3).

3. The empirical research conducted for this thesis has focused on the individual characteristics of the reader, as illustrated in the previous model(s). However, drawing from the literature review and aspects of the first study it is also possible to expand the model beyond these original factors to add additional factors, shown in **Figure 7.5** as ‘book factors’ and ‘external factors’. Regardless of the profile or attitudes of the fiction reader, this second version of the model indicates that there may be a series of additional factors which could influence his or her reading choices. Examples of these are given below.

Book factors

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter 2), previous reading research has explored different motivations potentially affecting a reader’s choice of book. D’Astous et al (2006), for example, proposed that the following three elements would affect the process:

- Author – the reader’s previous experience of books by this author, or of knowledge of his or her profile/reputation as an author
- Publisher – the reader’s previous experience of titles from this publishing house, or of knowledge of its profile/reputation
- Book cover - the visual impact of a book cover; this would be more likely to affect choice when part of a book display.

Similarly, Ross (2001) refers to the ‘clues on the book itself used to determine the reading experience being offered’ (p.18).

External factors

These were each included in the questionnaire survey for the first study as potential factors influencing respondents in their choice of library books, and each was found to have some effect on the selection process (see **4.6.7**). Individual elements of the following list of factors were also included in previous reading models described in the literature review (**2.7.2**), in particular by D’Astous et al (2006), Leemans and Stokmans (1992), Mailloux (1982) and Ross (2001):

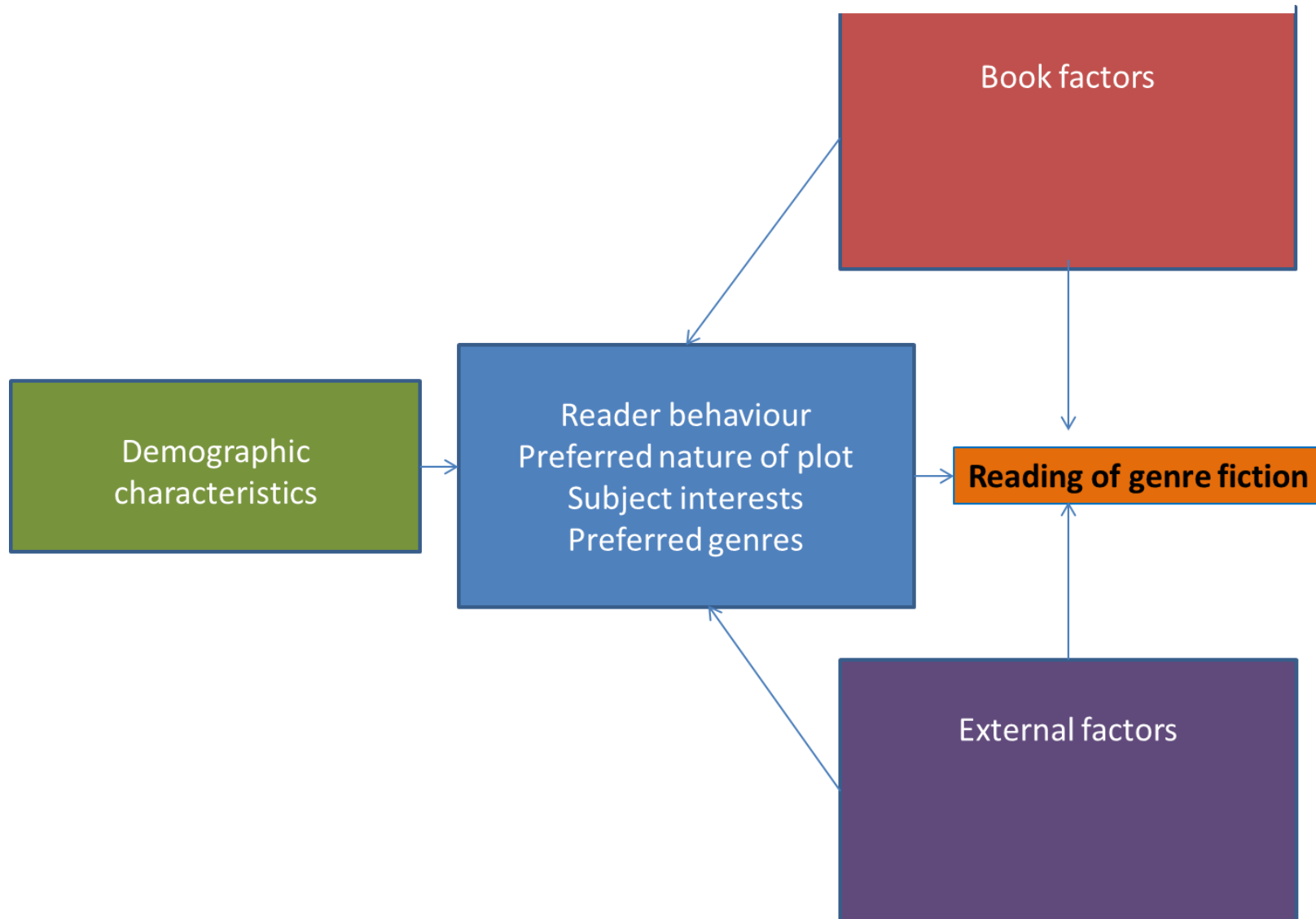
- Economic factors – determining ‘the availability of books and the material circumstances in which they are read’ (Mailloux, 1982,

p.41); such availability could depend on the author (whether he/she writes the book), the book trade (if a publisher chooses to publish a book), the library supplier (whether a library supplier chooses to supply the book), and public libraries/bookshops (whether they choose to stock and promote the book)

- Marketing campaigns for specific titles or authors – whether local, national or international
- Library promotional displays – thematic, and/or of new books purchased by the library (could equally be displays within a bookshop)
- Location of books within the library sequence, and in the classification of stock
- Title seen on the library book returns trolley
- Library staff recommendation – spoken or written, e.g. staff book reviews (could equally be recommendations by bookshop staff)
- Prizewinning titles – Man Booker prize, Orange Prize for Fiction (since 2013 the Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction), etc.
- Media book review or coverage (TV, radio, newspaper, magazine, online)
- Current events (influencing reading choices)
- Friends’ book recommendations.

4. As indicated above, previous research and the empirical data from Study 1 provide some evidence of the potential interaction between the ‘External’ and ‘Book’ factors on the reading of genre fiction. The expanded model (**Figure 7.8**) facilitates the further exploration of interactions between these factors, showing where further research would be helpful to test these relationships further and to investigate the interactions, for example considering the extent to which individual factors interact with external factors.

Figure 7.8 Expanded model of genre fiction reading, with book factors and external factors



7.7 Further theoretical insights

In order to answer the research questions for this thesis it has been necessary to draw from a number of subject domains – primarily, Library and Information Science, English Literature and Social Psychology - and this in turn has led to the consideration of a number of quite different theoretical perspectives. The following sections contain a brief summary of the main theoretical insights which have supported the development of the ideas presented in this thesis.

7.7.1 The apparent contradiction of reader response theory and social identity theory

Reader response theory focuses on the relationship between the reader and the text, and what Appleyard (1994, p.6) describes as ‘the interaction between the two’. The relationship can be highly creative, with critics such as Iser (1978) even describing the reader as a co-author in the process. The frequent association in Library and Information Science of reader response theory with reader development reinforces the focus of reader development on raising the status of reading as a creative act, increasing people’s confidence in their reading and broadening their reading choices (Van Riel, 1992, 1998). Interestingly, social identity theory, which describes an individual’s need to identify with a particular group to reduce his or her own insecurities, would seem to support the idea that reading choice is informed both by habit, and by a desire not to leave the comfort zone of a genre or genres with which one identifies.

Are the two theoretical perspectives contradictory, suggesting on the one hand that readers are looking to broaden their horizons and try new materials, and on the other hand that they prefer to read genres that reflect characteristics of a self-identified group? In fact, as the three empirical studies have shown – and as proposed in the discussion of the first study (4.8.1), it could be argued that they provide a helpful interpretation of the varying patterns of behaviour across a diverse group of fiction readers: some readers prefer to follow others within a group, whereas others will deliberately break away from the majority group, choosing to read something new, or different.

7.7.2 The complementarity of personal construct theory and reader response theory

The most well-known aspect of personal construct theory as described by Kelly in 1955, the repertory grid technique used in Studies 2 and 3 has been a particularly appropriate method to employ for research into the nature of fiction reading. As stated in 5.6, the essential aspect of personal construct theory is its reflexivity, in other words that it requires reflection, interaction and construction on the part of both researcher and participant, with the elicited constructs forming part of a new framework. It was discovered in this thesis that this participative, democratic approach could be related to reader response theory, which helps us to understand the active role a reader plays in interpreting a text, in the same way creating a new narrative from the interaction between the individual reader and the text (Walsh, 1993).

Each theoretical approach places the individual at the centre, contributing to the creation of a new ‘subjective reality’, and it is felt that bringing them together in the empirical research has helped to develop a understanding of the characteristics of the readers of minority ethnic fiction.

7.7.3 The Openness personality trait of the ‘Big Five’

Each of the three empirical studies has drawn from the culture, or openness factor of the ‘Big Five’, one of a series of five personality traits contained in the ‘Five Factor Model’, published by McCrae and Costa in 1987. Although criticised as a model by some for having little basis in underlying theory (Block, 2010; Eysenck, 1992), there is widespread agreement that the five factors - extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability and openness – represent five major domains of human personality. For this thesis it was found that the openness (or ‘openness to experience’) trait was of value in further understanding the characteristics of the multi-genre fiction reader, the extent to which he or she has ‘wide’ reading interests, and his or her perceived openness to try new reading material. A series of individual constructs and themes from the second study were then related to a combined set of seven trait pairs linked in previous research to the openness trait (Ajzen, 1988, Goldberg, 1990 and McCrae & Costa, 1980). Given the focus of the research on minority ethnic fiction genres Black

British and Asian fiction, an examination was then conducted of the mean ratings given to the readers of these two genres, for each of the eight grouped constructs from the third study which were listed as related to the trait pairs in the second. This revealed that the readers of the two genres were very strongly perceived to possess characteristics of openness, more so than the readers of any other genre considered for this thesis.

Although a useful tool to undertake a broader examination of reader personality traits than would have been possible without it, this aspect of the Big Five model is only one means of investigating reader characteristics, so as noted in 6.4.9 it should be ‘viewed in combination with all other analyses conducted for this thesis’.

7.8 Limitations of the research

The limitations of the three empirical studies have already been discussed in the relevant study chapters (see 4.8.3, 5.9, 6.5). In the case of the first and second studies, most of these were then addressed in the design of subsequent studies. However, certain limitations were identified at the end of the third and final study which may have affected the thesis as a whole:

- The ethnic homogeneity and gender imbalance of the sample population which have potentially reduced the scope and impact of the findings.
- Most of the research participants in the second and third studies were deliberately selected as librarianship students or professional librarians. Although this meant that they were able to draw from experience of interaction with readers of different genres, it did ignore the potential contribution of those from other, related professions such as bookselling or publishing.

Each of these is explored in the following section of recommendations for further research (7.9).

It is worth commenting that although the data collected for the first study lacked the depth of those collected for the second and third, the large sample size of the first study arguably compensated for the smaller populations used in the other two. Viewed as a whole, therefore, there is a synergy between the three studies.

7.9 Recommendations for further research

As the present research comes to its conclusion, it is helpful to bring together a number of points which would merit further investigation. These relate in part to the limitations identified above, but also to new ideas which have emerged but which have not been possible to develop within the timeframe and scale of the thesis.

7.9.1 To investigate fiction readers' ethnicity

Previous research described in the literature review (2.4, 2.7) has indicated that although white readers enjoy books written by minority ethnic authors, it can also be the case that black readers are attracted to novels reflecting their own ethnicity. Whereas the large-scale reader survey conducted for the first study of this research did not collect data pertaining to respondents' ethnicity, it is recommended that further research be conducted into reading attitudes and choices which does record this information, in order to enable a wider investigation of the profile of the reader of minority ethnic fiction.

7.9.2 To conduct further research with readers

The repertory grid was an effective technique via which to build a rich profile of perceptions of the fiction reader, and drawing from the experience of a group of librarianship students and professionals facilitated the development of a series of perceived reader characteristics. However, it was clear from the second and third studies that some participants found it difficult to describe the readers of the minority ethnic fiction genres in particular, so it would be of interest to conduct the same study with a group of the readers of Black British fiction, and Asian fiction in English, to see how the two datasets compare. Furthermore, given that the perceived profiles of the readers of the two genres were not identical, it would also be useful to extend the research to the readers of other minority ethnic fiction titles in the English language, such as the growing collection of books by Polish authors who have moved to the UK in recent years.

Related to this, and given the effectiveness of the second study in eliciting a detailed series of constructs relating to fiction reader profiles, a questionnaire could be devised which uses some of these constructs as a

basis for questions measuring the readers' own attitudes and behaviour. Alternatively, further research could test the proposed mediating relationships emerging from the empirical data of the present thesis (see **7.6.1**), via a questionnaire survey administered to a large sample of fiction readers.

Each of these would address the limitations of the first study which drew from a large sample but without exploring the reasons for the relationships between the different reader characteristics, and the third study which did address these issues but using a relatively small sample size.

7.9.3 To extend the research to each element of the supply chain

The empirical data collection of this research was based in the public library context, drawing its data from its staff and readers. However, given the relevance of the book trade to the subject of minority ethnic fiction reading, an extension of the three studies to book buyers, booksellers and publishers would be a valuable contribution, not only in comparative terms, but also in developing a more comprehensive profile of the reader of minority ethnic fiction genres and the context in which they read.

7.9.4 To draw further from the 'Big Five'

As stated above (**7.7.3**), the Openness trait of the 'Big Five' was helpful to understand the characteristics of the fiction reader. In order to expand the profile of the fiction reader – and the extent to which the readers of different genres have similar profiles – it would be useful to conduct a similar investigation for each of the remaining traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability).

7.9.5 To conduct the second and third studies again with a BME researcher

As the ethnicity of the researcher was known to all participants of the second and third studies, and in the interest of conducting unbiased, objective research, it would be worthwhile to run the studies a second time with identical research instruments and similar participants, but this time using a BME researcher to conduct them.

7.10 The professional contribution of the research and practical recommendations

In his consideration of the philosophical underpinnings of research design, Chia (2002) comments that whereas the researcher seeks primarily to ‘*understand and explain*’, the priority for the practitioner is to know the ‘*consequences and instrumental effects*’ of the research process (p.3). As he continues:

‘Justification, for the practitioner, does not come by way of empirical verification or conceptual rigour, but by way of desired outcomes – the ends often justify the means...the practitioner is essentially a pragmatist – what *works* is more important than what is *true*.’ (p.3)

As the focus of this thesis has remained firmly grounded in practice, whether in the context of the public library or the wider book trade, it seems important to conclude this thesis with a brief summary of its practical implications and application.

At a general level, the overall findings of the research could be used to inform the development of the fiction section within the overall library or bookshop collection: whereas previous research has not tended to consider the readers of individual fiction genres, the findings of the three studies have enabled a detailed examination of the reader profiles of ten fiction genres, and of the extent to which these overlap.

More specifically, the statistical findings relating to fiction reader profiles and attitudes which have been presented in this thesis can be adapted for professional use, in the following ways:

- By helping library and booktrade staff to understand the characteristics and motivations of different fiction genre readers, in selecting and promoting such materials
- By providing a tool to support the promotion of specific fiction genres
- By providing a stimulus for the readers themselves in selecting their fiction.

Figures 7.9 and **7.10** show two examples of how the data summarised in **Table 7.3** can be presented in more user-friendly form, with **Fig. 7.9** presenting the profile for the Asian fiction in English reader, and **Fig. 7.10** showing the profile of the Science fiction/Fantasy fiction reader. As the first of these examples shows, this could be a 2-sided postcard or leaflet for individual use by staff or readers, with the ‘key to terms used in the profile’ on the reverse side. Equally, as shown in the second example the main page of the profile could be used as a poster to be positioned near to the relevant stock collection, as a promotional tool. Although the data underpinning these profiles are based on three separate empirical studies, presented in this summarised and simplified way the intention is to render them more accessible to a larger, and broader, audience.

7.10.1 Developing the fiction collection

In order to increase the readership of minority ethnic fiction and to better reflect the reading interests of all members of the local community, it is recommended that more effort be invested in bringing these titles firmly into the mainstream, and more visible to all readers. The following specific recommendations are made to library staff in order to achieve this:

- **To promote minority ethnic fiction more widely**

Previous research has indicated that the public library is still regarded by many as a white institution whose services do not fully reflect the interests all members of its local community (2.6.2), and certainly the empirical research would not appear to contradict this in terms of its provision of minority ethnic fiction. The findings of the first study indicated that minority ethnic fiction does not have a particularly large readership in public libraries, and those of the second and third studies showed that the minority ethnic fiction reader chooses books outside the ‘mainstream’ collection and that library staff and librarianship students do not have a particularly clear profile of the readers of these genres. It would be reasonable for these points to lead to the conclusion that changes should be made to existing practice.

Encouragingly, however, the findings of the first study also revealed that a deliberate attempt to promote minority ethnic fiction titles can be successful in developing its readership, apparently with both white and minority ethnic communities. It is therefore recommended that public library staff ensure that minority ethnic fiction books are regularly included in stock promotions, not only those specifically related to ethnicity (e.g. Black History Month, Diwali celebrations, etc.), but also in the overall programme of promotions for the library service as a whole. This echoes the recommendation of reader development agency *Opening the Book*, that any promotion should include ‘a percentage and a range of work by Black and Asian writers’ (2006a).

- **To exercise caution when using supplier selection**

With only limited mainstream publishing of black and Asian authors’ work (2.4), the relatively low readership of Black British and Asian fiction by respondents of the first study is unsurprising. As the literature review showed (2.5), a number of authors have expressed concern that the supplier selection process tends to focus on new titles by the larger publishing houses, their lists being less likely to include those books published by smaller, more specialised (for example specifically black or Asian) publishing houses. This could then lead to a narrower stock collection which is less representative of the wider interests of the reading population (Cole and Usherwood, 2007; Curry, 1997; Damiani, 1999; Goulding, 2006; Usherwood, 2007), thereby reinforcing the perception of Black British and Asian fiction as ‘outside the mainstream’, and certainly not increasing its appeal with white or minority ethnic readers.

The findings of this research provide a new perspective of the fiction reading population and how different one fiction reader and his or her reading choices could be from another, which could arguably help practitioners to produce better and wider-ranging specifications for the supplier selection process. It is also recommended that library staff maintain an awareness of publishing trends in order to provide a more detailed brief to the library supplier of areas and authors to include, and furthermore that they use alternative methods of procuring stock, such as

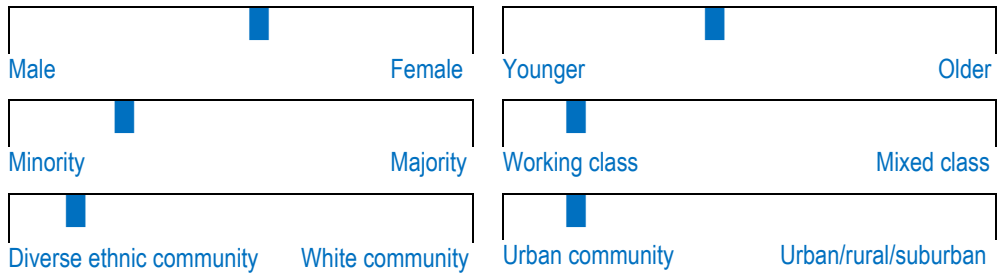
specialist publishers and bookshops.

Fig.7.9 The Asian fiction reader profile, with key to terms used

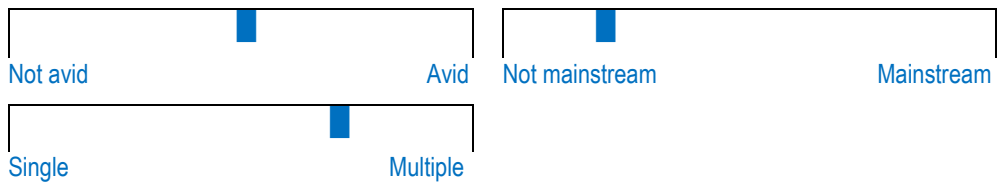
ASIAN FICTION (IN ENGLISH) READER PROFILE



MY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

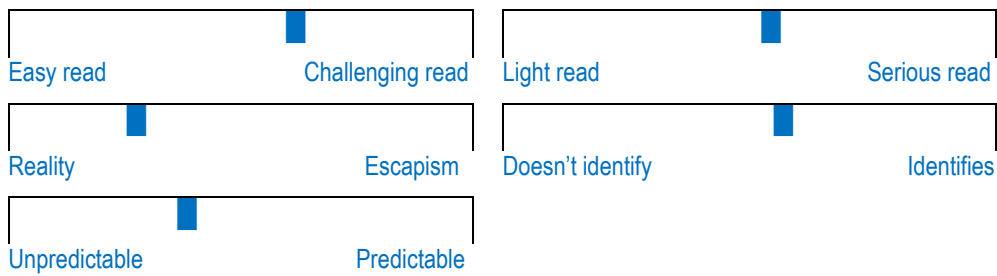


THE TYPE OF READER I AM

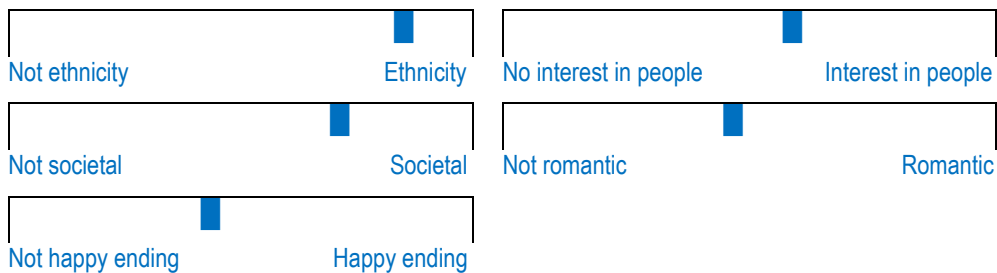


THE KIND OF BOOKS I'M

LOOKING FOR



THE TYPE OF PLOTS THAT INTEREST ME



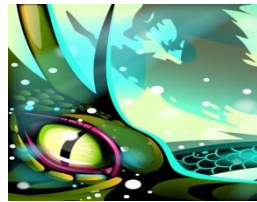
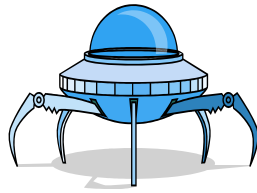
PLEASE TURN OVER

KEY TO TERMS USED IN THE PROFILE

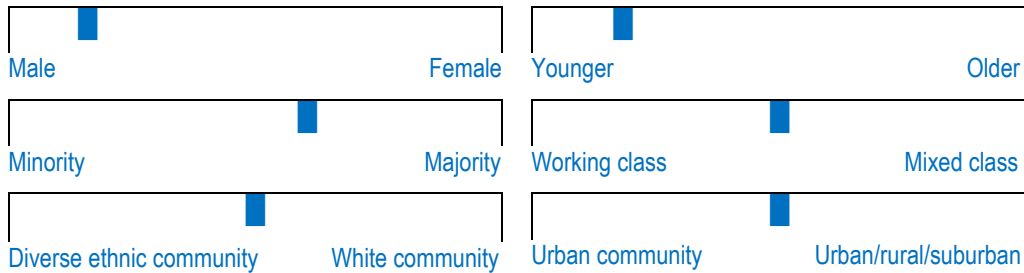
 Male – female	 Male – female
 Younger – older	 Younger – older
 Minority – majority	 Is a member of a minority group – is a member of a majority group
 Working class – mixed class	 Is from a working class community – is from a community comprising members of different socio-economic groups
 Diverse ethnic community – any community	 Is from an ethnically diverse community – could be from a predominantly white or an ethnically diverse community
 Urban community – urban/rural/suburban	 Is from an urban community – could be from an urban/rural/suburban community
 Not avid – avid	 Is not an avid reader – is an avid reader
 Not mainstream – mainstream	 Is not looking for a mainstream novel – is looking for a mainstream novel
 Single - multiple	 Is interested in reading only one fiction genre – is interested in multiple genres
 Easy read – challenging read	 Is looking for an easy read – is looking for a challenging read
 Light read – serious read	 Is looking for a light read – is looking for a serious read
 Reality – escapism	 Is interested in real-life issues – is interested in escapism
 Doesn't identify - identifies	 Doesn't look to identify with the plot/characters – looks to identify with the plot/characters
 Unpredictable – predictable	 Is not looking for a formulaic, predictable plot – is looking for a predictable plot
 Not ethnicity - ethnicity	 Is not interested in books focusing on ethnicity – is interested in books focusing on ethnicity
 No interest in people – interest in people	 Is not interested in plots about personal issues/relationships – is interested in plots about personal issues/relationships
 Not societal – societal	 Is not interested in societal issues - is interested in societal issues
 Not romantic - romantic	 Is not interested in romantic plots – is interested in romantic plots
 Not happy ending – happy ending	 Is not looking for a happy ending – is looking for a happy ending

Fig.7.10 The Science fiction/Fantasy fiction reader profile

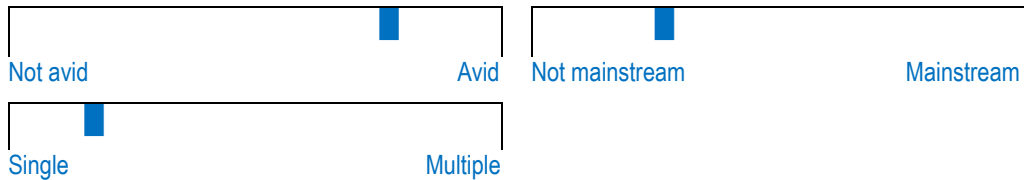
SCIENCE FICTION/FANTASY FICTION READER PROFILE



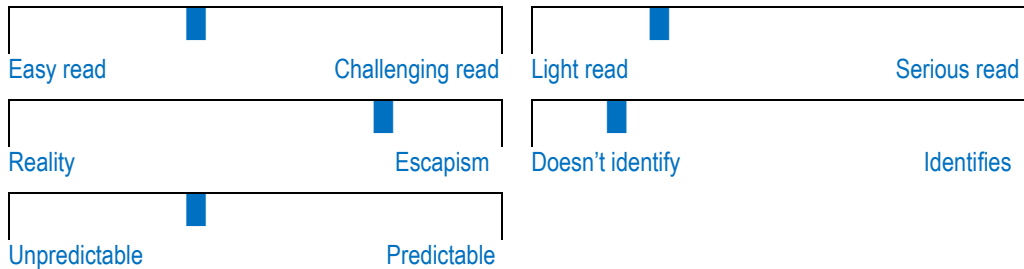
MY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE



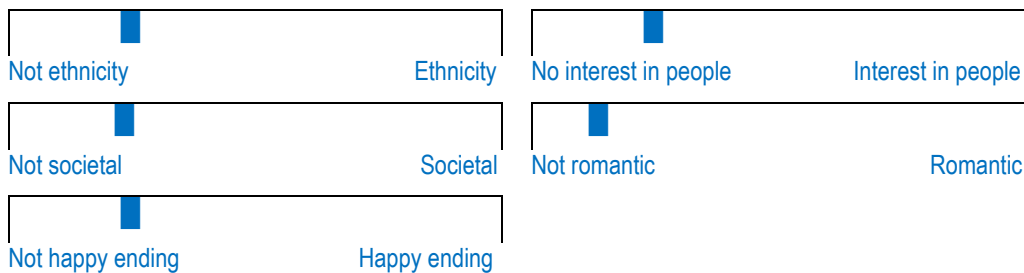
THE TYPE OF READER I AM



THE KIND OF BOOKS I'M LOOKING FOR



THE TYPE OF PLOTS THAT INTEREST ME



7.11 Concluding thoughts

The previous section (7.10.1) made recommendations based on the research findings to increase the visibility of minority ethnic fiction to all readers and to broaden the range of stock collections. It seems appropriate to conclude this thesis with an insight from a minority ethnic fiction author, Salman Rushdie:

‘There’s a beautiful image in Saul Bellow’s latest novel, *The Dean’s December*. The central character, the Dean, Corde, hears a dog barking wildly somewhere. He imagines that the barking is the dog’s protest against the limit of dog experience. “For God’s sake”, the dog is saying, “open the universe a little more!” And because Bellow is, of course, not really talking about dogs, I have the feeling that the dog’s rage, and its desire, is also mine, ours, everyone’s. “For God’s sake, open the universe a little more!”’ (Rushdie, 1992, p.21)

Although the book to which Rushdie refers in the above comment was written neither by a ‘Black British’ nor a ‘British Asian’ author, it has been included at this final point of the thesis for two reasons. Firstly, because Rushdie regards a book by a white, Canadian-born American author as important and highly relevant to his own life as an Indian-born British writer, and secondly because it could very easily contain the plea of so many authors from minority ethnic communities whose work has been the subject of this thesis: a plea to other authors, to publishers, booksellers, library suppliers, librarians and readers, to open their collective universes and to ensure that their interpretation of terms such as ‘fiction’ and ‘literature’ are as broad and all-encompassing as they could be.

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Appendices

Appendix One

Study One

Page no.

- 1a. Original book list for *black bytes* promotion
- 1b. Questionnaire survey of reading habits and attitudes
- 1c. Information sheet for questionnaire respondents
- 1d. Information sheet for library staff
(1st distribution)
- 1e. Information sheet for library staff
(2nd distribution)
- 1f. Interview instrument
- 1g. Coding used for survey respondents and interview participants
- 1h. Tables to show full survey responses by community type, ethnicity, class
- 1i. All genre demographic analyses (gender, age, community type, community ethnicity, class)

**Original book list for *black bytes* promotion
EMERALD Top 50
Black British authors**

Author	Title	Publication date	ISBN	Price
Aboulela, Leila	Coloured lights	May 2001	0748662987	8.99
Adebayo, Diran	My once upon a time	June 2001	0349114420	6.99
Adebayo, Diran	Sperm bandits	May 2002	1902934180	6.99
Agard, John	Weblines	June 2000	1852244801	9.95
Agbabi, Patience	Transformatrix	April 2000	0862419417	7.99
Anthony, Ray	All woman	November 2000	1902934067	6.99
Blackman, Malorie	Noughts and crosses	April 2002	0552546321	5.99
Breeze, Jean	'The arrival of brighteye' and other poems	July 2000	1852245387	7.95
Brodber, Clyde	Rastafarian journey	October 2001	1857564316	7.85
Byers, R.K.	Horny	November 2000	1902934083	6.99
Dennis, Ferdinand	Voices of the crossing	January 2000	1852425830	11.00
Dhondy, F.	Run	May 2002	0747550085	5.99
Emecheta, Buchi	The new tribe	September 2000	0435912046	6.50
Evaristo, Buchi	The Emperor's babe	April 2002	0140297812	6.99

Eze-Anyika, I.	Canteen culture	March 2000	0571200796	9.99
Flake, S.G.	The skin I'm in	August 2001	0552547638	4.99
Gayle, Mike	Dinner for two	February 2002	0340767952	6.99
Gilroy, Beryl	The green grass tango	September 2002	1900715473	10.89
Gurnah, A.	By the sea	July 2002	0747557853	6.99
Headley, Victor	Off duty	April 2002	0340770244	6.99
Headley, Victor	Seven seals, seven days	September 2002	0340770260	10.99
Hodges, Jo	The girl with brains in her feet	June 2000	1860496326	6.99
Johnson, Linton	Mi revalueshanary fren	May 2002	0141186984	6.99
Kalu, P.	Yard dogs	September 2001	1874509964	6.99
Kay, Jackie	Trumpet	August 1999	0330331469	6.99
King, Naomi	Sleeping partners	March 2001	19029340914	7.99
Levy, Andrea	Fruit of the lemon	February 2000	0747261148	6.99
Mapanje, Jack	Skipping without ropes	June 1998	1852244127	6.95
Markham, E.A.	A rough climate	February 2002	085646337x	8.95
Murray, Millie	Jade	June 2000	0704349671	5.99
Newland, Courttia	Society within	September 2000	0349111804	6.99
Newland, Courttia	Snakeskin	April 2002	0349115095	6.99
Pemberton, Joe	Forever and ever amen	October 2000	0747262411	6.99
Phillips, Mike	A shadow of	May 2001	000651197x	6.99

	myself			
Ross, Jacob	A way to catch the dust	October 1999	1902294084	8.99
Ross, Leone	Orange laughter	June 2000	1862300704	5.00
Roy, Jacqueline	Fat lady sings	September 2000	0704346478	9.99
Scally-Clarke, M.	I am young	March 2001	1901927083	10.00
Shillingford, Ron	No glove no love	May 2000	1902544005	6.99
Sissay, Lemn	Fire people	September 1998	0862417392	9.99
Sissay, Lemn	Rebel without applause	April 2000	1841950017	7.99
Smith, K.	Moss Side massive	June 1999	1874509093	6.99
Smith, Rommi	Moveable type	July 2000	1901927113	10.00
Smith, Zadie	White teeth	January 2001	0140276335	6.99
Sutherland, Luke	Sweetmeat	February 2002	0385602324	9.99
Traynor, Joanna	Bitch money	July 2001	0747547920	9.99
Thompson, Stephen	Missing Joe	November 2001	0340751487	10.99
Williams, Charlotte	Sugar and slate	March 2002	0954088107	6.95
Zephaniah, Benjamin	Refugee boy	March 2002	0747550807	4.99

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What do you like to read?

1. During your visit to the library TODAY, what type(s) of book for yourself were you looking for (*please tick all that apply*)? Please exclude any music CDs, DVDs or videos.

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Science Fiction/fantasy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Crime fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gay/lesbian fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | 'Chick lit'e.g. Lisa Jewell, Jane Green, Marian Keyes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black British fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian fiction (in English) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family sagas | <input type="checkbox"/> | Audio books (books on tape/CD) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Literary fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Romance fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | War/spy/adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 'Lad lit' e.g. Nick Hornby, Irvine Welsh, Mike Gayle | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please give details)..... | |

2. Where did you look for these books (*please tick all that apply*)?

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Displays of new books | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other displays or promotions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The returns trolley | <input type="checkbox"/> | On the shelf | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The library catalogue | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please give details)..... | |

3. What type of books would you USUALLY borrow from the library (*please tick all that apply*)?

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| Science fiction/fantasy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Crime fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gay/lesbian fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | 'Chick lit'e.g. Lisa Jewell, Jane Green, Marian Keyes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black British fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian fiction (in English) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family sagas | <input type="checkbox"/> | Audio books (books on tape/CD) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Non-fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Literary fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Romance fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | War/spy/adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 'Lad lit' e.g. Nick Hornby, Irvine Welsh, Mike Gayle | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please give details)..... | |

4. In the following list, are there any types of book that you would NOT consider reading (please tick all that apply)?

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Science fiction/fantasy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Crime fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Gay/lesbian fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | 'Chick lit'e.g. Lisa Jewel, Jane Green, Marian Keyes | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Black British fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian fiction (in English) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family sagas | <input type="checkbox"/> | Audio books (books on tape/CD) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Non-fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | Literary fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Romance Fiction | <input type="checkbox"/> | War/spy/adventure | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 'Lad lit' e.g. Nick Hornby, Irvine Welsh, Mike Gayle | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please explain)..... | |

5. What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books (please tick all that apply)?

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Display in the library | <input type="checkbox"/> | Library staff recommendation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I saw it/them on the returns trolley | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friends' recommendation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Internet | <input type="checkbox"/> | Current events | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newspaper/magazine/TV review | <input type="checkbox"/> | 'Prizewinners' e.g. Orange prize, Man Booker prize | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I saw it in a bookshop | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please explain)..... | |

We would be grateful if you would complete this section.

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|
| | | | Your gender | Male | <input type="checkbox"/> | Female | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | | | | |
| Your age | 16-19 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 20-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 30-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 40-49 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50-59 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 60-69 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 70+ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

This section is optional.

We are interested in knowing more about people's reading habits and choice of books from the library.

Are you prepared to give 10 minutes of your time so that we can phone you to ask a few more questions? Yes No

If you answered yes, **what time do you prefer?** Morning (9-12) Afternoon (12-4.30) Early evening (4.30-6) Any

My name is Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms.....

My telephone number is (.....).....

N.B. All responses will be treated in the strictest confidence.

*East Midlands Libraries working together to promote
books and reading supported by East Midlands Arts.*

Thank you very much for your help.

N.B. The original version of this questionnaire was printed in a larger font size (12), and fitted on two sides of A4 landscape paper. The version included in this thesis was amended to accommodate binding margins.

What is the purpose of the reading habits questionnaire?

The questionnaire is a brief survey of library users' reading habits and choices, containing five short questions which should only take a couple of minutes to answer. We would like to know what sort of books you like and don't like to borrow from your public library, where in the library you look for them, and how you choose them.

The questionnaire is part of the evaluation of the EMERALD project - the East Midlands Reader and Library Development project. This is a 3 year initiative in your region that aims to increase access to and enjoyment of reading through public libraries in the East Midlands.

I have already filled in this questionnaire. Should I fill it in again?

If you have already completed one questionnaire, please do not complete it again. We want to ensure that all responses come from different people.

Are any other libraries taking part in the study?

The participating library services are: Derby, Derbyshire, Leicester, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottingham City, Nottinghamshire and Rutland. At least one library in each of these areas has been chosen for the study. If you go to libraries in more than one area, please do not complete more than one questionnaire!

Who has created the questionnaire, and what will happen to the results?

The questionnaire was created by Briony Train, a researcher at Sheffield University, who has been asked to evaluate part of the EMERALD project. The results will be used as part of the evaluation of the EMERALD project, and will be reported anonymously.

What other information will be collected from me?

None. The only information we require is your response to the questionnaire. If you prefer not to give your name we would still like to have your responses! If you have given your name and telephone number, we may telephone you to ask you a few more questions. As so many people have given us their details we will not be able to speak to everyone, but we will select at random a small sample of people from the list.

If your name is chosen, Briony Train will telephone you between 16-30 June. The conversation should take no more than 20 minutes. If she calls at an inconvenient time she will ask you if she can arrange an alternative date/time. The interview would be tape-recorded, but all information will be confidential and used only for the purposes of this evaluation. No names will be used in any report.

Who do I ask for more information about this questionnaire?

If you have any questions, please contact the researcher, Briony Train, by telephone - 0114 222 2653 - or by email - b.train@sheffield.ac.uk.

Thank you very much for your help!

distribution of reading habits questionnaire

N.B. This sheet should be given to staff organising the distribution of the 'What do you like to read?' questionnaires, between **Monday 3rd February and Friday 21st February 2003** inclusive. They should also be given a copy of the 'Borrower Information Sheet'.

Why are we collecting this questionnaire?

The reading habits questionnaire is part of the Sheffield University evaluation of the EMERALD project. Although we are evaluating the Black British fiction promotion, 'Black Bytes', this questionnaire is a general survey of users' reading habits and attitudes.

How is the questionnaire being distributed?

It is being distributed in those libraries that have been selected to have the promotion, plus 5 libraries that have not (these will act as the 'control' for the evaluation). 50 numbered questionnaires will be given to each of the 9 authorities participating in the EMERALD project:

- These should be shared evenly across those libraries using the promotion
- No further copies should be made, except to replace damaged copies. If you do replace a copy, please give it the same number and identifying code* as the original.

How are the 'control' questionnaires distributed?

If you are one of the five local authorities participating in the 'control' phase of the evaluation (Derby City, Derbyshire, Leicester City, Lincolnshire and Nottingham City), your service may receive 25 questionnaires (in addition to the original 50), to be distributed in a library *not participating* in the Black Bytes promotion, within the same 3-week period.

What should I tell borrowers before I give them a questionnaire?

When issuing (any) books to borrowers, please ask them if they would be interested in completing a questionnaire to find out more about the reading habits of readers in the East Midlands, as part of the evaluation of an East Midlands reading project. **Very important: ask them if they have already completed the questionnaire, and if so, do not issue a second copy to them.** Emphasise that completion of the questionnaire is entirely optional. Please stress that their names will not be used in the evaluation report, and emphasise that the survey

consists of five short 'tick box' questions. Ensure that they have the 'Borrower Information Sheet' to answer any further questions.

What if someone doesn't want to fill it in?

Completion of the questionnaire is entirely optional.

When do I start and finish handing out questionnaires?

Begin to offer questionnaires to borrowers on **Monday 3rd February**. Continue to hand the questionnaires out either until you have no more, or until **Friday 21st February**. Please ensure that no further copies are handed out after this date.

What happens if someone asks me a question I can't answer?

If you have any questions, or if you are unable to answer a borrower's question using the information sheet, please contact the researcher, Briony Train (contact details below).

What do I do with the completed questionnaires?

Please hand them to a member of staff working on the EMERALD project/your line manager. He/she will post them to the research team at Sheffield University in the envelope provided, giving his/her name and the name of the library and local authority.

*Each of the nine participating authorities will be given an identifying code, consisting of a letter (A-J, excluding I), and number (1-50), e.g. A1.

Thank you very much for your help!

Briony Train (researcher)

Telephone - 0114 222 2653

Email - b.train@sheffield.ac.uk

Library Staff Information Sheet 2: distribution of reading habits questionnaire

Appendix 1e.

N.B. This sheet should be given to staff organising the second distribution of the 'What do you like to read?' questionnaires, between **Monday 12th May and Friday 30th May 2003** inclusive. They should also be given a copy of the 'Borrower Information Sheet'.

Why are we collecting this questionnaire?

The reading habits questionnaire is part of the Sheffield University evaluation of the EMERALD project. Although we are evaluating the Black British fiction promotion, 'Black Bytes', this questionnaire is a general survey of users' reading habits and attitudes.

How is the questionnaire being distributed?

It is being distributed in those libraries that have been selected to have the promotion, plus 5 libraries that have not (these will act as the 'control' for the evaluation). 50 numbered questionnaires will be given to each of the 9 authorities participating in the EMERALD project:

- These should be shared evenly across those libraries using the promotion
- No further copies should be made, except to replace damaged copies. If you do replace a copy, please give it the same number and identifying code* as the original.

How are the 'control' questionnaires distributed?

If you are one of the five local authorities participating in the 'control' phase of the evaluation (Derby City, Derbyshire, Leicester City, Lincolnshire and Nottingham City), your service may receive 25 questionnaires (in addition to the original 50), to be distributed in a library *not participating in* the Black Bytes promotion, within the same 3-week period.

What should I tell borrowers before I give them a questionnaire?

When issuing (any) books to borrowers, please ask them if they would be interested in completing a questionnaire to find out more about the reading habits of readers in the East Midlands, as part of the evaluation of an East Midlands reading project. **Very important: ask them if they have already completed the questionnaire (in February), and if so, do not issue a second copy to them.** Emphasise that completion of the questionnaire is entirely optional.

Please stress that their names will not be used in the evaluation report, and emphasise that the survey consists of five short 'tick box' questions. Ensure that they have the 'Borrower Information Sheet' to answer any further questions.

What if someone doesn't want to fill it in?

Completion of the questionnaire is entirely optional.

When do I start and finish handing out questionnaires?

Begin to offer questionnaires to borrowers on **Monday 12th May**. Continue to hand the questionnaires out either until you have no more, or until **Friday 30th May**. Please ensure that no further copies are handed out after this date.

What happens if someone asks me a question I can't answer?

If you have any questions, or if you are unable to answer a borrower's question using the information sheet, please contact the researcher, Briony Train (contact details below).

What do I do with the completed questionnaires?

Please hand them to a member of staff working on the EMERALD project/your line manager. He/she will post them to the research team at Sheffield University in the envelope provided, giving his/her name and the name of the library and local authority.

* Each of the nine participating authorities will be given an identifying code, consisting of a letter (A-J, excluding I), and number (1-50), e.g. A1.

Thank you very much for your help!

Briony Train (researcher)

Telephone - 0114 222 2653

Email - b.train@sheffield.ac.uk

Introduction

- Reminder of original survey
- Brief summary of present research
- Discuss recording of interview, anonymity, dissemination
- Interviewee questions before commencing.

1. Books you usually borrow.

In the questionnaire you completed you said that when you go into your local library, you would usually borrow [a, b, c, d, etc.] types of books [question 3]. Would you agree with this, or do you have anything to add to or remove from the list? Of these types of book, which would you say you choose most frequently? You can give more than one answer if you want to.

2. Where you normally borrow your books from.

You said that you would normally look for these books from [a, b, c, d] locations [question 2]. Would you agree with this, or do you have anything to add/remove?

3. Bearing in mind the type of books that you say you usually borrow from the library, and the places from which you borrow them, would you tend to look in a particular area of the library for a particular type of book? For example, would you always choose your [example of fiction they gave] fiction from [example of location they gave]? Give reasons/explanations.

4. Layout and display of books within your library

I'm interested to know how your library is arranged and laid out. What do you think of the layout of [name] library? Do you think that it's easy to find what you're looking for? Is there enough guiding, e.g. signs in the library, labels on or above the shelves? [prompts: look at layout, categorisation, signs]

5. Do you like to see separate displays of new books in the library? Do you like to see different types of book displayed according to their genre, e.g. crime or science fiction, or would you prefer to see all the books displayed in alphabetical order?

6. Books you do not like to read.

In the questionnaire you completed you said that the types of book that you would not consider reading were [a, b, c, d, etc.] [question 4]. Would you agree with this, or do you have anything to add to or remove from the list?

Of these types of book, which would you say that you were least likely to choose? You can give more than one answer if you want to.

7. So looking again at the types of book that you would not be prepared to read [repeat them], I would be very interested to know why you gave these answers. For example, you said that you would not read [give an example] books: is that because you have tried books of this type in the past and haven't enjoyed them, or is it because you have decided that you wouldn't like to attempt one?

8. The range of books in your library.

So having looked at both the types of books that you would usually read, and the type of books that you wouldn't read, could you tell me if there are any types that you think are under-represented on the library shelves?/which books you would like to see more of in your library? And are there any books that you feel are over-represented, that there is too much of? Are there any types of book where you would say that the library has got the balance about right, for example you might think in terms of a good range of newer and older books, whether the books look attractive, or are in good condition?

9. Factors influencing choice of library books [question 5].

In the questionnaire you said that the things that usually influence you in your choice of library book are [x, y, z]. Would you agree with this, or do you have anything to add to or remove from the list? Could you rank these in order of importance, with 1 as the most important, and x [depending on how many they chose] as the least important? Obviously the question was looking at factors that USUALLY influence you – are there also times when your choice of books may be influenced by [x, y, z – those types of book they didn't tick in question 5]?

10. More specific questions on displays in the library.

Have you noticed any new displays of books in your library recently? Ask for details.

Did you see the Black Bytes [Black British fiction] promotion? What did you think? - Did it look attractive? Were you interested in the books it was promoting?

Did you think that the promotion was targeted at anyone in particular?

Did you borrow books from the Black Bytes promotion?

If so, did you borrow any books that you perhaps wouldn't normally borrow? Why was this?

Thinking more generally of any book promotions like this that may be in your library, do you enjoy choosing books in this way?

Do you like to see this type of themed promotion, or would you prefer the library books to be promoted/displayed in a different way?

Coding: authorities

Derby City (Unitary) Allestree Library Aa1-50 Alvaston Library ConA1-25	A
Derbyshire (Non-metropolitan county) Chesterfield Library Ba1-25 Sandiacre Library Bb1-25 Alfreton Library ConB1-25	B
Leicester City (Unitary) Evington Library Ca1-25 Southfields Library Cb1-25 (IS THE CONTROL) St. Barnabas Library ConC1-25 (is not control)	C
Leicestershire (Non-metropolitan county) Oadby Library Da1-25 Loughborough Library Db1-25	D
Lincolnshire (Non-metropolitan county) Boultham Library Ea1-25 Kirton Library Eb1-25	E
Northamptonshire (Non-metropolitan county) Kettering Library Fa1-25 Kingsthorpe Library Fb1-25 Rushden Library Con F1-25	F
Nottingham City (Unitary) Clifton Library ConG1-25 Radford-Lenton Library Ga1-25 Leisure Library at Nottingham Central Library Gb1-25	G
Nottinghamshire (Non-metropolitan county) Ruddington Library Ha1-25 Newark Library Hb1-25	H
Rutland (Unitary) Oakham Library Ja1-50	J

N.B. When presenting interview data the number [1] or [2] was included at the end of the code to identify a questionnaire from the first or second distribution of the survey, e.g. Participant AA1[1] would have completed a questionnaire in the first distribution, and Participant AA1[2] in the second.

Table to show survey responses by community type

Question no.	Categories	Combined valid %		
		Rural	Urban	Suburb.
1. During your visit to the library TODAY, what type(s) of books were you looking for?	Science fiction/fantasy	13.2	18.7	15.1
	Gay/lesbian fiction	0.0	0.9	0.3
	Black British fiction	1.0	3.4	3.5
	Family sagas	26.5	23.5	29.4
	Non-fiction	52.9	46.0	46.5
	Romance fiction	20.8	20.7	20.8
	Lad Lit	1.6	3.9	3.1
	Crime fiction	35.5	35.4	41.1
	Chick Lit	5.3	7.4	6.9
	Asian fiction	0.6	3.3	1.6
	Audio books	6.9	9.6	5.8
	Literary fiction	20.9	19.5	22.0
	War/spy/adventure	20.9	17.8	14.1
2. Where did you look for these books?	Displays of new books	46.6	48.6	50.4
	The returns trolley	49.5	38.3	48.8
	The library catalogue	13.7	18.8	13.5
	Other displays or promotions	17.9	13.6	20.2
	On the shelf	73.7	73.7	75.1
3. What type of books would you USUALLY borrow from the library?	Science fiction/fantasy	16.8	21.1	17.9
	Gay/lesbian fiction	0.5	1.8	0.3
	Black British fiction	2.6	5.4	1.9
	Family sagas	29.4	27.4	31.8
	Non-fiction	58.0	52.6	49.6
	Romance fiction	24.6	25.8	25.3
	Lad Lit	1.1	5.9	4.0
	Crime fiction	40.7	41.1	47.2
	Chick Lit	6.9	9.7	8.1
	Asian fiction	1.6	4.7	1.3
	Audio books	11.0	12.6	6.8
	Literary fiction	27.1	25.9	26.8
	War/spy/adventure	24.9	21.8	26.3
4. In the following list, are there any types of book that you would NOT consider reading?	Science fiction/fantasy	45.4	36.6	45.6
	Gay/lesbian fiction	69.2	63.5	60.9
	Black British fiction	33.9	32.7	30.6
	Family sagas	17.2	19.2	14.5
	Non-fiction	4.7	4.5	3.8
	Romance fiction	34.9	36.5	34.6
	Lad Lit	33.0	27.4	31.9
	Crime fiction	14.0	14.7	14.2
	Chick Lit	37.1	38.3	30.5
	Asian fiction	46.4	44.6	43.5
	Audio books	26.5	25.6	28.9
	Literary fiction	12.5	14.7	10.7

	War/spy/adventure	18.9	13.2	23.1
5. What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books?	Display in the library	62.0	56.7	56.5
	I saw it on the returns trolley	45.8	33.6	40.7
	Internet	4.3	11.0	6.2
	Newspaper/magazine/TV review	40.2	44.5	46.1
	I saw it in a bookshop	40.4	37.4	39.8
	Library staff recommendation	16.3	23.6	19.4
	Friends' recommendation	37.2	48.6	47.9
	Current events	14.1	17.8	16.0
	'Prize winners'	15.1	18.2	17.4

Table to show survey responses by community ethnicity

Question no.	Categories	Combined valid %			
		White	Black	Mixed	Asian
1. During your visit to the library TODAY, what type(s) of books were you looking for?	Science fiction/fantasy	14.6		21.7	
	Gay/lesbian fiction	0.4		0.9	
	Black British fiction	2.8		4.3	
	Family sagas	28.3		19.9	
	Non-fiction	48.7		43.1	
	Romance fiction	21.5		18.3	
	Lad Lit	2.8		4.3	
	Crime fiction	39.1		33.5	
	Chick Lit	6.6		7.3	
	Asian fiction	1.2		5.1	
	Audio books	7.1		9.3	
	Literary fiction	20.7		20.4	
War/spy/adventure	22.0		16.2		
2. Where did you look for these books?	Displays of new books	49.9		44.9	
	The returns trolley	47.9		32.2	
	The library catalogue	15.6		16.2	
	Other displays or promotions	18.4		11.5	
	On the shelf	75.3		70.0	
3. What type of books would you USUALLY borrow from the library?	Science fiction/fantasy	17.8		23.0	
	Gay/lesbian fiction	0.6		2.2	
	Black British fiction	2.7		6.5	
	Family sagas	31.1		24.5	
	Non-fiction	53.0		50.4	
	Romance fiction	26.5		21.3	
	Lad Lit	3.6		6.4	
	Crime fiction	44.0		40.7	
	Chick Lit	8.3		9.4	
	Asian fiction	1.5		7.3	
	Audio books	9.7		11.4	
	Literary fiction	26.5		26.3	
War/spy/adventure	25.5		32.3		
4. In the	Science fiction/fantasy	45.1		30.0	

following list, are there any types of book that you would NOT consider reading?	Gay/lesbian fiction	64.7		59.8	
	Black British fiction	33.5		27.9	
	Family sagas	15.9		21.2	
	Non-fiction	4.0		5.5	
	Romance fiction	34.8		38.0	
	Lad Lit	32.0		23.6	
	Crime fiction	14.0		16.0	
	Chick Lit	34.8		36.4	
	Asian fiction	46.4		38.5	
	Audio books	28.0		24.1	
	Literary fiction	12.5		14.0	
War/spy/adventure	22.6		21.5		
5. What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books?	Display in the library	58.5		54.2	
	I saw it on the returns trolley	41.8		27.6	
	Internet	6.0		14.1	
	Newspaper/magazine/TV review	43.1		48.4	
	I saw it in a bookshop	38.3		40.3	
	Library staff recommendation	21.1		19.1	
	Friends' recommendation	45.1		49.6	
	Current events	14.4		48.2	
	'Prize winners'	16.2		21.2	

Table to show survey responses by (community) class

Question no.	Categories	Combined valid %		
		Middle	Working	Mixed
1. During your visit to the library TODAY, what type(s) of books were you looking for?	Science fiction/fantasy	13.6	16.9	17.3
	Gay/lesbian fiction	0.4	0.7	0.4
	Black British fiction	3.2	5.3	1.7
	Family sagas	25.2	29.1	25.1
	Non-fiction	48.7	43.3	49.3
	Romance fiction	19.7	21.7	20.9
	Lad Lit	3.4	4.1	2.3
	Crime fiction	41.4	38.0	35.7
	Chick Lit	6.0	5.8	7.8
	Asian fiction	1.6	4.8	0.6
	Audio books	5.4	9.1	7.9
	Literary fiction	18.9	14.3	25.5
	War/spy/adventure	23.6	20.4	19.2
2. Where did you look for these books?	Displays of new books	46.0	54.3	46.6
	The returns trolley	44.1	41.2	46.6
	The library catalogue	12.9	15.5	17.4
	Other displays or promotions	19.3	14.9	16.7
	On the shelf	77.7	70.6	74.4
3. What type of books would you USUALLY borrow from the library?	Science fiction/fantasy	16.9	19.3	20.1
	Gay/lesbian fiction	0.4	1.4	1.1
	Black British fiction	2.5	6.7	2.1
	Family sagas	28.6	32.0	28.6
	Non-fiction	55.1	47.5	54.1
	Romance fiction	22.7	27.9	25.3
	Lad Lit	4.1	5.9	3.2
	Crime fiction	48.6	43.0	40.5
	Chick Lit	7.2	6.4	10.7
	Asian fiction	1.6	6.5	1.1
	Audio books	7.9	12.2	10.0
	Literary fiction	23.5	21.6	30.9
	War/spy/adventure	27.3	22.0	23.4
4. In the following list, are there any types of book that you would NOT consider reading?	Science fiction/fantasy	45.1	37.9	42.2
	Gay/lesbian fiction	62.2	68.2	61.4
	Black British fiction	30.8	33.2	32.4
	Family sagas	13.5	15.9	19.8
	Non-fiction	5.2	4.9	3.4
	Romance fiction	33.4	34.3	37.6
	Lad Lit	31.1	20.7	34.9
	Crime fiction	13.1	12.4	16.5
	Chick Lit	30.2	33.5	38.6
	Asian fiction	41.9	39.8	49.1
	Audio books	28.3	25.7	27.2
	Literary fiction	11.6	18.2	12.3
	War/spy/adventure	22.2	22.6	22.1

5. What factors usually influence you in your choice of library books?	Display in the library	59.6	59.5	55.4
	I saw it on the returns trolley	39.3	38.7	37.9
	Internet	4.3	7.7	9.8
	Newspaper/magazine/TV review	42.6	40.7	47.4
	I saw it in a bookshop	40.7	32.5	41.6
	Library staff recommendation	18.9	25.4	18.6
	Friends' recommendation	46.5	46.6	45.7
	Current events	13.9	15.8	18.0
	'Prize winners'	18.0	14.6	18.8

All genre demographic analyses (Study 1)

Gusually x gender (n =843)

Appendix 1h.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Science fiction / fantasy	LGBT	Black British Fiction	Family sagas	Non-fiction	Romance	Lad Lit	Crime fiction	Chick lit	Asian fiction	Audio books	Literary fiction	War/Spy/Adventure
Continuity correction coefficient	20.57***	0.72	.60	70.90***	3.93	71.23***	1.17	0.33	34.75***	2.54	0.05	.00	56.11***
Trend	Male	Neither	Neither	Female	Neither	Female	Neither	Neither	Female	Neither	Neither	Neither	Male
Explanation													
Male	28% readers	0.4% readers	4.7	9.1	58.0	7.2	5.8	45.7	0.4	1.4	10.5	26.8	40.2
Female	15% readers	1.2% readers	3.4	37.0	50.4	34.6	3.9	43.3	12.9	3.7	11.3	26.5	16.4

Note: Use continuity correction coefficient rather than straightforward Pearsons Chi Square as this is a 2 x 2 table.

* p <.05

**p<.01

***p<.001

Gusually x age (n =976)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Science fiction / fantasy	LGBT	Black British Fiction	Family sagas	Non-fiction	Romance	Lad Lit	Crime fiction	Chick lit	Asian fiction	Audio books	Literary fiction	War/Spy/Adventure
Pearson Chi Square	63.02***	18.48**	10.86	67.79***	15.92	7.41	31.21***	17.06**	62.75***	18.43**	11.64	10.32	42.19***
Trend	Younger	Younger	None	Older	None	None	Younger	Older	Younger	Younger	None	None	Older
Explanation													
16-19	47.8% readers (% of the gp of 16-19)	6.5	8.7	15.2	52.2	32.6	4.3	28.9	19.6	8.7	10.9	19.6	15.2
20-29	33.3	0	4.9	10.8	50	17.6	13.7	36.3	23.5	4.9	9.8	22.5	17.6
30-39	22.5	1.9	1.9	18.1	57.5	29.4	5	36.9	13.8	5	11.9	20	12.5
40-49	20.1	1.3	6	25.5	55	24.8	5.4	42.3	10.7	1.3	15.4	32.9	18.8
50-59	17.9	0.6	1.2	31.5	60.7	23.8	3	49.4	6	1.8	10.7	28.6	24.4
60-69	12.6	0	3.8	42.1	54.1	24.5	2.5	49.1	1.9	0.6	5	30.8	35.2
70+	6.8	0.5	3.1	45.3	41.7	29.2	0.5	50.5	1.6	1	7.3	27.1	35.4

Note: Use straightforward Pearsons Chi Square here with a 2 x 7 table.

Gusually x community type (n =1038)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Science fiction / fantasy	LGBT	Black British Fiction	Family sagas	Non-fiction	Romance	Lad Lit	Crime fiction	Chick lit	Asian fiction	Audio books	Literary fiction	War/Spy/Adventure
Pearson Chi Square	2.23	5.46	8.32 (p=.016)	2.14	3.32	.07	7.22	3.83	1.52	9.94**	8.12 (p=.017)	.19	2.47
Trend	None	None	None (just)	None	None	None	None	None	None	Urban	None (just)	None	None
Explanation													
Rural	16.8	0.5	2.6	30	58.4	24.7	1.1	41.1	6.8	1.6	11.1	27.4	25.3
Urban	21.1	1.8	5.3	27.5	53	25.7	5.7	41.3	9.7	4.6	12.7	25.9	21.8
Suburban	17.8	0.3	1.8	32.1	50.4	25.4	4.1	47.4	8.1	1.3	6.9	27	26.2

Note: Use straightforward Pearsons Chi Square here with a 2 x 3 table.

Gusually x community ethnicity (n =1038)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Science fiction / fantasy	LGBT	Black British Fiction	Family sagas	Non-fiction	Romance	Lad Lit	Crime fiction	Chick lit	Asian fiction	Audio books	Literary fiction	War/Spy/Adventure
Continuity correction coefficient	2.81	2.92	6.72 (p = .01)	3.16	.45	2.36	2.85	.68	.14	20.16***	.41	.00	3.56
Trend	None	None	Mixed (just)	None	None	None	None	None	None	Mixed	None	None	None
Explanation													
White	17.9	0.6	2.6	31.1	53.6	26.6	3.6	44.3	8.3	1.5	9.8	26.6	25.5
Mixed	23.1	2.1	6.4	24.8	50.9	21.4	6.4	41	9.4	7.3	11.5	26.5	19.2

Note: Use continuity correction coefficient rather than straightforward Pearsons Chi Square here with a 2 x 2 table i.e. community only recorded as white or mixed

* p <.05

**p<.01

***p<.001

Gusually x community class (n =1038)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
	Science fiction / fantasy	LGBT	Black British Fiction	Family sagas	Non-fiction	Romance	Lad Lit	Crime fiction	Chick lit	Asian fiction	Audio books	Literary fiction	War/Spy/Adventure
Pearson Chi Square	1.15	1.31	12.11**	1.09	4.63	2.01	3.32	3.95	5.65	22.37***	3.28	10.07**	1.98
Trend	None	None	Working	None	None	None	None	None	None	Working	None	Mixed?	None
Explanation													
Middle	17.1% are readers	0.4	2.3	28.3	55.8	22.5	4.3	48.6	7.4	1.6	7.8	23.6	27.1
Working	18.9	1.3	6.5	31.9	47.9	27.7	5.9	43.3	6.2	6.5	12.4	21.8	22.1
Mixed	20.3	1.1	2.1	29	54.8	25.6	3.2	41	10.8	1.1	10.1	31.3	23.7

Note: Use straightforward Pearsons Chi Square here with a 2 x 3 table.

Appendix Two

Study Two

Page no.

- 2a. Repertory grid interview instrument, including grid template**
- 2b. Information Sheet for repertory grid interview**
- 2c. Consent form for repertory grid interview**
- 2d. Descriptions of genres used in Studies 2 & 3**
- 2e. Text of email sent to participants RG01-RG05 for respondent validation**
- 2f. Element selected as different**
- 2g. Full list of constructs elicited in interview order**

Repertory grid interview instrument

1. Information sheet – first ask participant if have had time to read the information sheet I emailed to them, and if they have any questions to ask.
2. Consent form – if they're happy and questions have been answered. 2 copies – one for me, one for them to take away. I would like to record the interview, if you have no problem with this, as I want to make sure that the notes I take are an accurate reflection of your responses.
3. 'This interview will explore your perceptions of the characteristics of readers of different fiction genres. In the first part of the interview I'll ask you to look at combinations of three cards, each of which will represent the reader of a particular genre, and will ask you to tell me a way in which two are similar to each other, but different from the third. There is no right or wrong answer; I'm just interested to know your opinion. When you're happy with the two terms, one for the similarity and one for the difference, you'll be asked to complete a brief table which I'll explain to you, rating each reader according to the characteristics you have chosen, on a scale from 1-7. All of this can be explained further at the appropriate point of the interview.
 - 3a. To reassure you, at no point will you be analysed as an individual: the study as a whole is concerned with general attitudes towards fiction genres, not with your individual response.
 - 3b. Those who took part in the pilot interviews found the process quite demanding, so we are only going to look at three or four readers at any time, and if you need a break at any point, just let me know.
4. Could you first read the following list of descriptions of the genres we're going to be looking at today? Although you will have your own understanding of each genre, this is to ensure that all participants begin with the same definition.
5. If you are happy that you have understood each description, could you please look at the following combination, and tell me:

a way in which you think that two readers are similar to each other, but different from the third? As I said before, there is no right or wrong answer. Remember to focus on the reader of the genre, not on the books themselves [make sure that I get the implicit and emerging pole, and that I label which is which].

Triads:

- 1) Crime/Black British/romance fiction (4,9,3)
- 2) lad lit/crime fiction/chick lit (6,4,2)
- 3) Black British/Asian/literary (9,8,5)
- 4) Lad lit/war and spy/crime (6,7,4)

6. 'Before we continue, I'd like you to rate your responses for each of the categories on the table, on a scale of 1-7, where 1= (for example, GIVE FIRST EXAMPLE FROM TABLE), AND 7 = (GIVE FIRST EXAMPLE – OPPOSITE FROM TABLE). The scales relate to how strong your view is, not to a knowledge you have or don't have. A '4' rating would indicate 'neither x nor y', not 'I don't know the answer'. You'll notice that 'myself as a reader' is the final column, so please think about how you would rate yourself according to each of the responses you gave in the first part. When you're rating your responses, it would be helpful if you could talk through your thought processes, so that I can see how you reach your decision.'

Then continue with combinations:

- 5) Asian fiction/Black British fiction/LGBT (8,9,1)
- 6) Black British/literary fiction/Sci-fi (9,5,10)
- 7) Sci-fi/Asian/lad lit (10,8,6)

Could you rate your responses for these 3 now, please?

The final 3 combinations:

- 8) LGBT/romance/war and spy (1,3,7)
- 9) Asian/Black British/Sci-fi (8,9,10)
- 10) LGBT/chick lit/romance (1,2,3).

7. Reflecting on the process

- Now that you have completed the grid, I would like to ask how you felt while taking part in this interview?
- Were there any difficulties you faced, or anything that made you feel at all uncomfortable?
- Looking again at the constructs you developed and your rating of them, do you feel at all that the grid is an accurate representation of your views?

8. Participant information.

'Before we finish the interview, I'd be grateful if you'd let me have a few details about yourself. All of this information will be entirely anonymised when the data are analysed. I'm recording your gender, ethnicity and status as a student of Librarianship. In addition, could you please let me know:

- which age band you fall into: [show card with age groups]?
- Have you ever worked in a public library, and if so, for how long and in what capacity?
- How much experience have you had of supporting readers of LGBT fiction? Of Black British fiction? Of Asian fiction in English?

- Have any of the libraries you have worked in run promotions of titles of LGBT fiction? Of Black British fiction? Of Asian fiction in English?
- And finally, how much experience have you had of dealing with the following members of the public?
 - i. LGBT people
 - ii. Black British people
 - iii. Asian people?

9. Are there any final comments you would like to make?

Thank participant for his/her help.

Participant RG??

Part One: triads [genre underlined indicates the respondent's final selection]

1) Crime/Black British/Romance - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘(polar construct, ‘)

2) Lad lit/crime fiction/chick lit - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘ (polar construct, ‘).

3) Black British/Asian/Literary - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘(polar construct, ‘).

4) Lad lit/War and spy/Crime - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘ (polar construct, ‘).

5) Asian fiction/Black British fiction/LGBT - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘(polar construct, ‘).

6) Black British/Literary fiction/Sci-fi - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘ (polar construct, ‘.

7) Sci-fi/Asian/Lad Lit - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘
(polar construct, ‘).

8) LGBT/Romance/War and Spy - ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘ (polar construct, ‘’).

9) Asian/Black British/Sci-fi = ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘ (polar construct, ‘).

10) LGBT/Chick Lit/Romance- ‘

Construct developed for the repertory grid = ‘

[Time so far: ? minutes]

Part Two: rating the constructs

[BB explaining how to rate the constructs, giving examples]

[Time so far: ? minutes]

Part Three: reflecting on the process

[BB - asked how participant felt during the process, how he found the experience]

[BB - asked how he found the rating part of the exercise]
'Less difficult, to be honest, I guess you've already got a bit more clarity.'

[BB - is the grid an accurate representation of your views?]

Part Four: participant information

- Age band:
- Previous experience in public libraries:
- Experience of supporting readers of Black British/Asian fiction?
- [And LGBT fiction?] ‘
- [BB - Final comments about the interview?] ‘

[Time to end: ??]

Research Project Title:
**An investigation of the reading of, and engagement with,
minority ethnic fiction in public libraries**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Take your time to read the following information carefully. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the project?

The project is investigating the reading of, and engagement with, genre fiction in public libraries.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as a member of the 2007-8 MA Librarianship programme, all members of which have been invited to participate in a research interview.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your involvement would consist of answering a series of questions, and expressing your opinion, in response to an interview. Your responses will be used anonymously with others, in order to provide data concerning people's views of genre fiction within public libraries. The interview should take no more than 1 hour of your time.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable disadvantages or risks involved in taking part in this study. However, it will involve you expressing personal opinions, which some participants may find uncomfortable.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this research will be of interest to all participants in terms of subject matter and methodology, and will lead

to a greater understanding of the public library's work in selecting and promoting genre fiction.

What if something goes wrong?

Should you wish to make a complaint about this research or the way in which it is being conducted, contact the researcher (contact details below). Complaints will be taken very seriously. However, if you feel that the complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the University's Registrar and Secretary.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect from you during the course of the research will be entirely anonymous. It will not be possible to identify you or any other participant in the final research or subsequent publications.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the study are part of a PhD research project which, when completed, will be available on our research group website (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/centres/cplis>) and via the Department of Information Studies' publications database, at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/publications>.

Who has reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the Department of Information Studies' ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

Contact details for further information

Briony Birdi
Lecturer in Librarianship, Department of Information Studies
Email: b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel. 0114 222 2653

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

A copy of this information sheet will be given to all participants.

Descriptions of genres used in Studies 2 & 3

Genre	Description
Science fiction/fantasy	Science fiction is the genre of fiction related to science, technology, space and the future. Fantasy fiction features stories set in fanciful, invented worlds or in a legendary, mythic past.
Black British fiction	Fiction written by an author of African-Caribbean or African heritage, living in Britain and writing in the English language.
War/spy fiction	In war fiction, the primary action takes place in a field of armed combat, or describes characters preoccupied with the preparations for, or recovery from, war. Spy fiction is concerned with spying, espionage, surveillance and sabotage.
Romance fiction	Romance fiction features the mutual attraction and love of a man and a woman as the main plot, and will generally have a 'happy ending'.
Lad Lit	A genre that features books written by men and focusing on young, male characters, particularly those who are selfish, insensitive, and afraid of commitment to marriage.
Crime fiction	Crime fiction is the genre of fiction that deals with crimes, their detection, criminals, and their motives.
Chick Lit	Chick Lit is a genre comprised of books that are mainly written by women, for women. There is usually a personal, light, and humorous tone to the books.
Asian fiction (in English)	Fiction written by an author of Asian (British Asian/Indian subcontinent) heritage, living in Britain and writing in the English language.
Literary fiction	Literary fiction describes 'serious' fiction (that is, work with claims to literary merit), as opposed to the many types of genre fiction and popular fiction.
LGBT fiction	Fiction which features lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender characters.

Example email sent to respondents RG01-RG05, 06.08.08

Subject: Respondent validation (repertory grid) interview

[Respondent name],

If you remember earlier in the year you very kindly agreed to participate in a repertory grid interview about genre fiction. I'm now sending written accounts of those interviews to a sample of participants, as part of the respondent validation.

I'd therefore be very grateful if you could firstly take the time to read through the notes (looking at the grid you completed for reference, if it helps), and to confirm again that you're happy that this as an accurate representation of the interview. Secondly, could you let me know if there are any details you would like me to amend/clarify, and thirdly if you have any further comments to add?

Thanks again for your help, it's really much appreciated, and I hope you're enjoying the summer.

Briony

--

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www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/centres/cplis

Attachments:

Transcript from repertory grid interview

Completed rep. grid for individual participant

Table to show the frequency with which each genre was selected as ‘different’ from the other two elements in each triad

Appendix 2f.

Triad			RG 01	RG 02	RG 03	RG 04	RG 05	RG 06	RG 07	RG 08	RG 9	RG 10	RG 11	RG 12	RG 13	RG 14	RG 15	Element frequency		
1	2	3																1	2	3
Crime	Black British	Romance	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	3	1	2	1	4	9	2
Lad Lit	Crime	Chick Lit	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	1	1	2	4	7	4
Black British	Asian	Literary	1	3	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	2	9
Lad Lit	War & Spy	Crime	1	1	1	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	11	0	4
Asian	Black British	LGBT	1	3	3	1	3	3	N/A	3	1	N/A	1	N/A	3	3	3	4	0	8
Black British	Literary	Sci-fi/ Fantasy	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	3	1	1	13
Sci-fi/ Fantasy	Asian	Lad Lit	2	2	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	7	7	1
LGBT	Romance	War/Spy	1	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	8	0	7
Asian	Black British	Sci-fi/ Fantasy	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	3	3	1	1	13
LGBT	Chick Lit	Romance	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	3	3	1	12	1	1

Repertory grid – full list of constructs elicited in interview order

No.	Constructs	Polar construct
1	Has a specialist interest	Does not have a specialist interest
2	A younger reader	An older reader
3	Reads for an edifying experience	Reads for pure escapism
4	Predominantly male	Predominantly female
5	Would define themselves as fans of the genre	Would not define themselves as fans of the genre
1	Would tend to be middle-aged/older woman	Would tend not to be middle-aged/older woman
2	Is predominantly male	Is predominantly female
3	Would prefer a more contemporary, more accessible novel	Would prefer <u>not</u> to read a more contemporary, more accessible novel
4	Would tend to be male, middle-aged/older man	Would tend not to be male, middle-aged/older man
5	Would tend not to be aware of/concerned by the author’s background	Would be aware of/concerned by the author’s background
6	Would be interested in multiple genres	Would not be interested in multiple genres
7	Would tend to be male, under 50, looking for a lighter read [3]	Would tend not to be male, under 50, looking for a lighter read [3]
8	Would tend to be middle-class, white, middle-aged [3]	Would tend not to be middle-class, white, middle-aged [3]
9	Would be keen to try other genres	Would not be keen to try other genres
10	Would tend to be female, looking for a lighter read, not issue-based stories	Would tend not to be female, looking for a lighter read, not issue-based stories
1	More interested in plot than style, looking for entertainment	More interested in style than plot, not so mainstream
2	More likely to be a woman	More likely to be a man
3	Looking to identify with the plot and/or characters	Not necessarily looking to identify with plot and/or characters
4	Would tend to read only this genre, would be looking to identify with content	Would read other genres too, would not necessarily be looking to identify with content
5	Would be prepared to look hard for a book, wants an obscure read	Would be more used to finding a book easily
6	Looking for a book to make you think about ideas, etc.	Not necessarily looking for a book to challenge their ideas
7	Less interested in reading as a hobby	Would be avid readers
8	Enjoys a good plot, and a mainstream read	Looking for identification, rather than a mainstream read
9	Looking for fiction dealing with ethnicity, a book to make you think [3]	Looking for a more plot-driven, escapist read [3]
10	Looking for an easy read	Looking for a higher-quality, more challenging read
1	Looking for a more predictable read	Looking for a more experimental read
2	Looking for a more culturally diverse book	Looking for a more specifically

		British book
3	Looking for more thrills or excitement in a book	Looking for a more mind-exercising read
4	Looking for a book to reflect their experiences	Looking for other non self-related experiences
5	Looking for a more challenging read	Looking for a book within his/her comfort zone
6	Looking for a more experimental read	Looking for something more predictable
7	Looking for escapism	Looking for a reflection of his/her life
8	Is more open to where the book will lead him/her	Knows what he/she is looking for in a book
9	Looking for escapism, predictability [3]	Looking for something more challenging [3]
1	Is looking for one genre only in selecting fiction	Is interested in multiple genres
2	Is likely to be younger, with a reasonable income	Is likely to be older, of no particular socio-economic group
3	See themselves as part of a minority group, like to see themselves represented in fiction	More likely to be white, part of a majority group
4	Likely to be interested in issues of ethnicity	Likely not to be interested in issues of ethnicity
5	Reading interests related to his/her lifestyle	Reading interests not related to his/her lifestyle
6	Is likely to be a younger reader	Is likely to be an older reader
7	Is a member of a majority group	Is a member of a minority group
8	Is looking for a happy ending	Is not necessarily looking for a happy ending
1	More likely to be female	Less likely to be female
2	More likely to be younger	Not likely to be younger
3	More likely to be male	Less likely to be male
4	More likely to be middle-class	Less likely to be middle-class
5	More likely to be looking for a literary, high-brow read	Less likely to be looking for a literary, high-brow read
6	More likely to be male and younger (teenage)	Less likely to be male and younger (teenage)
7	Knows what he or she is looking for	Doesn't know what he/she is looking for
8	Is more likely to be a browser	Is less likely to be a browser
9	Is more likely to be female and older	Is less likely to be female and older
1	Looking for a page-turner	Not looking for a page-turner
2	Would not identify themselves as 'readers'	Would identify themselves as 'readers'
3	Looking to read something they feel 'should be read'	Not looking to read something they feel 'should be read'
4	Looking for a plot-driven read	Not looking for a plot-driven read
5	Not looking for an intellectual read	Looking for an intellectual read
6	Aware of what people are talking about (current fashion)	Not aware of what people are talking about (current fashion)
7	Looking for an escapist situation, not 'real'	Looking for something grounded in reality
8	Looking for 'boy meets girl' novel	Not looking for 'boy meets girl' novel
1	Looking for a resolution in the books he/she reads	Not looking for resolution in the books he/she reads

2	Looking for humour, more likely SINK (Single Income No Kids)	Not looking for humour in plot, not likely to be SINK
3	Looking for a historical novel, a 'classic' text	Not looking for a historical novel, or a 'classic' text
4	More likely to be male	Not likely to be male
5	Would experience prejudice in searching for a book	Would not experience prejudice in searching for a book
6	Looking for escapism	Not looking for escapism
7	Looking for a plot which is detached from 'the real world'	Not looking for a plot which is detached from 'the real world'
8	Looking for predictable characters with a definite outcome	Not looking for predictable characters with a definite outcome
9	Is more interested in issues and complex relationships	Is not interested in issues and complex relationships
10	Looking for a formulaic read, with a happy ending	Not looking for a formulaic read, with a happy ending
1	Is interested in society	Is interested in society
2	Is looking for a less serious book, for pleasure	Is not looking for a less serious book, for pleasure
3	Is a member of an ethnic majority group	Is not a member of an ethnic majority group
4	Is interested in real-life issues	Is not interested in real-life issues
5	Is likely to be from, and interested in, British society	Is not likely to be from, or interested in, British society
6	Is interested in just one genre of fiction	Is interested in all genres of fiction
7	Is interested in romance/love stories	Is not interested in romance/love stories
8	Is interested in exploring outside reality	Is not interested in exploring outside reality
9	Is looking for an easier read	Is not looking for an easier read
1	Looking for a mainstream novel	Not looking for a mainstream novel
2	More likely to be male	More likely to be female
3	More likely to be of a minority group	Less likely to be of a minority group
4	Likely to be older	Likely to be younger
5	More likely to be male	Gender non-specific
6	Would be looking for a love story	Would not be looking for a love story
7	Looking for a more serious read	Looking for a lighter read
1	Would only read one genre	Would read any genre
2	Would be more likely to be male	Would be more likely to be female
3	Is interested in another culture	Is not interested in another culture
4	Is more likely to be older	Is more likely to be younger
5	Is not interested in plots with homosexual characters	Is interested in plots with homosexual characters
6	Is not highly thought of by other readers	Is highly thought of by other readers
7	Is not interested in romantic plots	Is interested in romantic plots
8	Is more likely to be a member of a minority group	Is not likely to be a member of a minority group
1	More likely to be female	More likely to be male

2	Target reader could be either male or female	Target reader is gender-specific
3	Is looking for a 'literary', acclaimed text	Is not looking for a 'literary', acclaimed text
4	More likely to be younger	More likely to be older
5	More likely to be educated to degree level or higher	Less likely to be educated to degree level or higher
6	More likely to be a geek	Less likely to be a geek
7	More likely to be white	Less likely to be white
1	More likely to be female	More likely to be male
2	Looking for a 'holiday read', escapism	Not looking for a 'holiday read', escapism
3	Interested in British colonial heritage	Not interested in British colonial heritage
4	Interested in ethnic identity	Not interested in ethnic identity
5	Interested only in one genre	Interested in multiple genres
6	Interested in romance in novel	Not interested in romance in novel
7	Interested in myth/fantasy	Not interested in myth/fantasy
8	Looking for light reading	Not looking for light reading
1	Looking for a safe, non-challenging read	Not looking for a safe, non-challenging read
2	More likely to be female	More likely to be male
3	Interested in different cultural backgrounds	Not interested in different cultural backgrounds
4	Likely to be an established reader	Not likely to be an established reader
5	Would be from a minority group (cultural/sexual)	Would not be from a minority group (cultural/sexual)
6	Looking primarily for enjoyment in a book	Not looking primarily for enjoyment in a book
7	Interested in finding out about another person's lifestyle	Not interested in finding out about another person's lifestyle
8	More likely to be older	More likely to be younger
9	Looking for escapism	Looking for reality
10	Looking for a contemporary novel	Not looking for a contemporary novel
1	Interested in personal issues	Not interested in personal issues
2	Looking for an easy read	Not looking for an easy read
3	Looking for a plot/characters they can identify with	Not looking for a plot/characters they can identify with
4	Looking for a 'serious' read	Looking for a 'lighter' read
5	Looking for a book which reflects his/her lifestyle	Not looking for a book which reflects his/her lifestyle
6	Looking for an escapist plot	Not looking for an escapist plot
7	More likely to be male	Less likely to be male
8	Looking for a romantic plot	Not looking for a romantic plot
9	Interested in societal issues	Not interested in societal issues
10	Looking for a happy ending	Not looking for a happy ending

Appendix Three

Study Three

Page no.

- 3a. Participant Information Sheet for repertory grid construct rating exercise**
- 3b. Text of invitation email to potential Study 3 participants (student population)**
- 3c. Study 3 repertory grid rating instrument**

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title:
**An investigation of the reading of, and engagement with,
minority ethnic fiction in public libraries**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Take your time to read the following information carefully. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of the project?

The project is investigating the reading of, and engagement with, genre fiction in public libraries.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to participate in this research either as a librarianship postgraduate student or as a public librarian.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in the research is entirely voluntary, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw at any time, without having to give a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Your involvement would simply consist of completing a brief table regarding your perceptions of the readers of different fiction genres. Your responses will be used anonymously with others, in order to provide data concerning people's views of genre fiction within public libraries. The activity should take no more than 10 minutes of your time.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no foreseeable disadvantages or risks involved in taking part in this study.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this research will be of interest to all participants in terms of subject matter and methodology, and will lead

to a greater understanding of the public library's work in selecting and promoting genre fiction.

What if something goes wrong?

Should you wish to make a complaint about this research or the way in which it is being conducted, contact the researcher (contact details below). Complaints will be taken very seriously. However, if you feel that the complaint has not been handled to your satisfaction, you can contact the University's Registrar and Secretary.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All the information that we collect from you during the course of the research will be entirely anonymous. It will not be possible to identify you or any other participant in the final research or subsequent publications.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the study are part of a research project which, when completed, will be available on our research group website (<http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/centres/cplis>) and via the Department of Information Studies' publications database, at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/publications>.

Who has reviewed the project?

This project has been ethically approved via the Department of Information Studies' ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

Contact details for further information

Briony Birdi
Lecturer in Librarianship, Department of Information Studies
Email: b.birdi@sheffield.ac.uk
Tel. 0114 222 2653

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

A copy of this information sheet will be given to all participants.

Email sent to MA Librarianship students 2008-9, 20.10.08

Dear all,

Related to the genre fiction reading most of you are already doing for the INF6180 module 'Libraries, Information and Society', I'm looking for volunteers to (very briefly) participate in a study I'm doing into fiction reading and readers. I'm very keen to collect the views of Librarianship students in particular, as you will have the sort of knowledge I'm looking for. It doesn't matter at all if you have no interest in fiction; your views will still be of great value to me.

I have attached a grid to this email (Rep grid 2008-9 Librarianship students), and would be very grateful if you would take the time to rate each of the eleven readers according to the constructs in the left-hand column. For example, if you think that the reader of Chick Lit fiction is far more likely to be female than male, you would score a 5,6 or 7 (depending on your strength of feeling) under 'Reader of Chick Lit fiction' in the first row 'Reader is more likely to be male'. If you feel that the same reader is far more likely to be male than female, you would score a 1,2 or 3 (again depending on your strength of feeling). If, in your view, the reader of Chick Lit fiction is no more likely to be male than female, score a 4 in this column. To avoid confusion regarding the definitions of individual genres, a glossary is attached which I would suggest that you read before beginning the process.

Completing the grid should take no more than 10 minutes, but of course if you have any questions regarding this exercise please get in touch. At no point will you be judged as an individual, and all data will be fully anonymised. Please read the attached information sheet to reassure you that this research has gone through the University Ethics Review process, and that all ethical issues have been taken into account.

Email your responses back to me by next Monday 3rd November if you can. I'm very grateful indeed for your help with this fascinating aspect of reading research, and will obviously make available all research output when it's ready via the CPLIS website (www.shef.ac.uk/is/research/centres/cplis).

Thank you all, and I hope you're enjoying Semester 1!
Briony

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Attachments:

Description of genres used (see Appendix 2d)

Participant information sheet (see Appendix 3a)

Repertory grid rating instrument for Study 3 (see Appendix 3c)

Study 3 repertory grid rating instrument

Appendix 3c.

1 ←	→ 7	Reader of Sci-fi /fantasy fiction	Reader of Black British fiction	Reader of War/spy fiction	Reader of Romance fiction	Reader of Lad Lit fiction	Reader of Crime fiction	Reader of Chick Lit fiction	Reader of Asian fiction (in English)	Reader of Literary fiction	Reader of LGBT fiction	Myself as a reader
Reader is more likely to be male	Reader is more likely to be female											N/A
Reader is more likely to be younger	Reader is more likely to be older											N/A
Reader is likely to be a member of a minority group	Reader is likely to be a member of a majority group											
Reader is not likely to be an avid reader	Reader is likely to be an avid reader											
Reader is not looking for a mainstream read	Reader is looking for a mainstream read											
Reader is looking for an easy read	Reader is looking for a challenging read											
Reader is more interested in reality	Reader is more interested in escapism											
Reader is looking for a light read	Reader is looking for a serious read											

Reader is not looking to identify with the plot/characters	Reader is looking to identify with the plot/characters												
Reader is not looking for a predictable plot	Reader is looking for a predictable plot												
Reader not looking for a happy ending	Reader looking for a happy ending												
Reader not interested in ethnicity as subject matter	Reader interested in ethnicity as subject matter												
Reader not interested in others & their relationships (when selecting a book)	Reader interested in others & their relationships (when selecting a book)												
Reader not interested in societal issues (when selecting a book)	Reader interested in societal issues (when selecting a book)												
Reader interested in one fiction genre only	Reader interested in multiple genres												
Reader not interested in romantic plots	Reader interested in romantic plots												

Demographic information

- My gender: Male/Female*
- My age: 16-19/20-29/30-39/40-49/50-59/60-69/70+*
- My ethnic group*[†]: White; Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups; Asian/Asian British; Black/African/Caribbean/Black British;

Any other ethnic group, please describe.....

- Public library work experience? Yes/No*

If Yes, please state number of years of experience: ____ years

* please underline the appropriate response

N.B. The original version of this repertory grid fitted on two sides of A4 landscape paper. The version included in this thesis was amended to accommodate binding margins.

[†]Terms used for ethnic group question based on the Office for National Statistics recommended country specific ethnic groupings for use in England, see <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/measuring-equality/equality/ethnic-nat-identity-religion/ethnic-group/index.html#10>