This study is a multilevel comparative analysis of public and private high school students’ reading comprehension achievement. It investigates the way educational opportunities available to students at various levels are distributed across school types to explain the asymmetrical differences in their reading achievement. More specifically, this dissertation investigates how public school students’ reading achievement measures up to that of their private school counterparts and examines possible associations between and among psychological, home, classroom and school factors and students’ reading achievement. The emphasis has been directed towards understanding the underpinnings underlying school type disparities to restore even-handed pedagogical and structural opportunities and promote public schools’ excellence with regard to reading. This study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter one discusses the general background of the study, provides a historical background of the emergence of private schools in Morocco and discusses the reforms initiatives which regulated the Moroccan educational system with specific reference to the Strategic Vision (2015-2030). It also presents the objectives, the rationale, the research questions, the hypotheses and the organization of the study, respectively. Chapter two begins by presenting the way the teaching of reading comprehension is handled in the Moroccan context with a particular emphasis on strategies and processes nurturing the core-analytical skills and competences among Moroccan EFL readers. The second section focuses on research-based evidence of psychological factors pertaining to reading development. The third section examines the extent to which home influences including various parental factors and the educational opportunities provided to students at home influence their reading development. The fourth section deals with the degree to which school type (public or private), location, composition, and climate explain variation in reading achievement. In section five,
attention is directed to the role of teachers’ experience, professional development and quality reading instruction in engaging students in the reading process.
Chapter three offers an account of the theoretical framework within which the study is situated. It starts with an overview of reading-related theories then, elaborates on different reading models emanating from these theories. The remaining of this chapter highlights the basic concept and principles of systems theory and provides an overview of Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model, its key components, and its relevance to the present analysis. This section also points out to the level of specificity this model added to the description of reading achievement and presents practical implication for the teaching and learning of reading. Finally, due attention is given to the importance of applying Bronfenbrenner’s system theory to explaining the reading behavior and emphasizing multiple systems at various levels of the ecological model. The studies reviewed in this section unveil the potential of the individual contexts in which the reader develops and the peculiarities of the nature and quality of interactions within these contexts in determining students’ reading experiences.

Chapter four outlines the research paradigm adopted to investigate the reading comprehension achievement in Moroccan public and private high Schools. The study adheres to a quantitative nonexperimental correlational research design. It reviews most common research designs used in quantitative studies and provides reasons why the nonexperiment correlational design best fits the nature of the current study. This chapter also describes the setting, participants, and sampling procedures adopted to select students and schools. Additionally, this chapter presents the materials to be analyzed, namely a reading comprehension achievement test and context questionnaires. The reading comprehension test incorporates four reading comprehension processes. These processes assess students’ level of comprehension and interaction with informational texts. The context questionnaires collect extensive information about the learning and teaching processes and contexts in which public and private school students’ reading skills develop. These questionnaires are administered to students, their English teachers, and their school principals. The focus of this multilevel analysis is to interpret the
disparities of reading comprehension between the two groups of students based on an investigation of the way the learning opportunities are distributed across school types and how they relate to reading development. Finally, a detailed account is provided on the measurement tools as well as the methods of analysis employed for data examination in this dissertation.

Chapter five presents the findings which deal with different constructs likely to explain variation in reading comprehension achievement among public and private school students in grade 12. Given the multilevel nature of these influences, the findings related to each level are presented in separate sections. Accordingly, the first section accounts for trends in reading comprehension achievement of students attending public and private schools. The results indicate that private school student outperform their public school peers in both the overall reading achievement test and the four assessed reading comprehension processes. The findings examining individual (psychological) factors reported in section two reveal that, on average, students who reported high reading self-efficacy perceptions and self-regulatory strategy use and who achieved high reading scores are enrolled in private schools. Section three, examines the distribution of the learning opportunities available to students at home. The findings suggest that students attending private schools are introduced to more positive leaning environments with the number of books variable explaining more variance in students’ reading achievement. The last section presents findings of the classroom and school-level factors and the way they relate to public and private school students’ reading development. It has been noticed that private school students are enrolled in schools with a higher socioeconomic composition and more educational resources. Those students are served quality teacher-directed reading instruction and that these instructions progress without any marked constraints. The school-level analysis also reports that these students evolve in schools characterized by a safe and orderly learning environment, less discipline problems and high collaboration between school principals/teachers and parents. Overall, the patterns of results that surfaced from this study suggests that the educational opportunities are distributed unequally at the home, classroom and school levels between the two school types and that school-related variables followed by students’ psychological constructs, predominantly reading self-efficacy, are identified to exert
a much greater influence on students attending public schools than their socioeconomic status.

Chapter six offers a discussion of the results. It analyzes and comments on them in light of the reviewed studies and the theoretical framework which guided the study focusing on ways in which unequal educational opportunities available to students attending public and private schools account for differences in reading achievement. The issues taken up in the discussion chapter are organized in the order in which they are dealt with in the results chapter. The discussion further maintains that the findings of this study corroborate evidence-based research and are aligned with the core principles of the adopted theoretical framework. It postulates that reading development is a result of interaction of many influences emanating from within the individual and the contexts in which he/she develops and that an unparallel distribution of learning opportunities, particularly at the school level explains disparities between public and private school students’ reading comprehension achievement.

Lastly, chapter seven revisits the rationale and the four research questions and presents an overview of ways in which each research question is answered by the findings of this study. This chapter also suggests several implications intended to reduce the reading achievement gap between school types towards a model of equitable learning opportunities and quality education for all. The implications are organized in a thematic way and provide suggestions for increased reading achievement and improved reading self-efficacy perceptions. It also offers recommendations to redistribute the learning opportunities across school types and facilitate access to these opportunities. Finally, this chapter points out unresolved issues and gaps that are not filled to lay the ground for future research.