

## **Article Review/Summary 8**

**Article/Book Title:** Access to Books in the Home and Adolescent Engagement in Recreational Book Reading: Considerations for secondary school educators

**Full APA Reference:** Merga, M. K. (2015). Access to books in the home and adolescent engagement in recreational book reading: Considerations for secondary school educators. *English in Education*, 49(3), 197-214.

**Major Themes/Theories:** Social Practise, Access to Libraries/Books, Mixed Method

### **Abstract:**

The emphasis on schools' providing reading materials for students at home is very much on the primary school years, when the skill of reading is being acquired. Little consideration has been given to the impact of curtailing school-mediated access to books beyond this point. Regular recreational reading offers a wide range of benefit, and is essential for supporting ongoing literacy development. Without easy access to books, it can be readily assumed that capacity for regular engagement in reading can be limited. This article adds to the body of research supporting the benefit of student access to books in the home, linking access to books in the home with improved attitudes toward and frequency of engagement in recreational book reading, particularly in boys. It also provides analysis of data on students' access to books in the home, as well as discussing alternative avenues of access to books, such as the library and devices. The implications of the findings are explored, with educators ultimately urged to support increased access to self-selected home reading materials through the secondary school.

### **Define the Research Questions:**

Research has shown that access to book-rich environments increases student motivation (Gambrell, 1996), as well as have benefits for performance on literacy indicators including enhanced 'vocabulary, information, comprehension skills, imagination, broad horizons of history and geography, familiarity with good writing, understanding of the importance of evidence in argument, and many others' (Evans et al. 2010: 19). The study, *West Australian Study in Adolescent Book Reading* by Merga (2015), aims to explore the following research questions:(1) Is there a relationship between access to books at home and students' attitudes toward and frequency of engagement in recreational book reading? (2) Did students have access to books in the home? (3) Could other sources of access potentially mitigate the effect of limited access to books in the home?

### **Discuss the methodology used by the authors.**

This mixed method study was conducted at 20 different schools and was designed to provide data on a range of current issues in adolescent book reading, around social influences. Surveys were given to 520 participants. One aspect of this broad study investigated the relationship between adolescents' access to books at home and their attitudes toward, and frequency of engagement in, recreational book reading (Merga, 2015).

### **Describe the results.**

The following hypothesis were made in connections to the 3 research questions: (1) That

adolescent attitude toward recreational book reading will positively correlate with a greater number of books in the home. (2) That frequency of adolescent engagement in recreational book reading will positively correlate with a greater number of books in the home. (3) That correlation between number of books, and attitude and frequency, will be more significantly positive for boys. All 3 hypotheses were found to be correct. Access to books at home was significant concerning both reading attitude and frequency. This correlation was seen to be more true for boys than girls as the participants attitudes towards book reading, and book reading frequency, was found to be moderate for boys, and low for girls. Regarding hypothesis number 2, as a whole, there was a significant relationship between the group's frequency of engagement in recreational book reading and number of books in the home. As this study shows, in confirming hypothesis 3, improving boys' access to books within the home could potentially improve boys' attitudes towards, and frequency of engagement in, recreational book reading (Merga, 2015)

**Connect the main ideas presented in the article.**

Whats' a fundamental finding of this study, for educators to consider is that nearly a third of respondents live in a household containing fewer than 50 books. 14% of participants had fewer than 25 books in their homes. In addition to this, students did not seem to be utilizing ebooks or access to the library. With this, it is imperative that schools are supporting students' access to books, and that efforts are being made to maintain a book-rich home environment, especially beyond primary years moving forward to secondary.

Reference List

- Evans, M., Kelley, J., Sikora, J., and Treiman, D. (2010) 'Family scholarly culture and educational success: Books and schooling in 27 nations', *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility*, 28, 171–197.
- Gambrell, L. (1996) 'Creating classroom cultures that foster reading motivation', *The Reading Teacher*, 50 (1), 14–25.