

Coles, M., & Hall, C. (2002). Gendered readings: Learning from children's reading choices. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 25, 96-108.

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Summary:

Researchers examined the relationship between English achievement and out-of-school reading habits of children ages 10-14. 9,000 students were given surveys to inquire about their choices of reading material (magazines, newspapers, books, fiction, non-fiction, etc.). Of these students 87 were interviewed further about their out-of-school reading choices to learn more about the different kinds of reading that boys and girls do outside of the classroom.

Assumptions:

- Boys are more likely than girls to have problems with basic literacy.
- Girls tend to read more fiction than boys.
- Girls tend to perform better when writing at length than do boys.
- Teachers of adolescent readers and writers need some understanding of where interest lies and how boys and girls respond to literature and writing.
- Out-of-school reading materials are just as important in shaping worldview and learning as are in-school texts.
- Since reading instruction is typically based on stories, the definition of a good reader is often based only on skill with fiction.

Findings:

- Although all children in this study read outside of school, they read fewer books as they grew older.
- Among boys, comics, newspapers and sports magazines were popular.
- 87% of the children surveyed reported that magazines constituted a large portion of their out-of-school reading.
- Boys read less than girls.
- Girls read more stories, and boys read more for information. Girls' writing tended to be more "story oriented," and boys' writing tended to be more analytic in form.

Conclusion:

Children's reading habits are highly gendered and become only more so as students move into adolescence. By broadening the definition of what a good reader (or writer) is and including classroom readings beyond "stories," teachers can help students to see themselves as good readers and writers and hence become more successful in their in-school literacy practices.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Analyze the texts you use for reading instruction by genre. See if you offer students a balance of different text types. If you do not, consider the need for change.
- Find out about your students' out-of-school reading interests and habits. Find ways to validate all this reading as "legitimate."
- Help students articulate and, if necessary, broaden their conceptions of what makes a good reader.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Help teachers examine both their instructional choices and the independent reading they offer students according to genre.
- Provide resources for teachers to obtain a balanced instructional and independent reading library.