

Love, K., & Hamston, J. (2004). Committed and reluctant male teenage readers: Beyond bedtime stories. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 36, 335-400.

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Summary: Through analysis of questionnaires and interviews, this study examined the leisure reading practices of Australian teen-aged boys, initially identified as “able and committed readers” or as “able and reluctant readers.” The researchers investigated the types of guided participation provided by the boys’ families as well as the individual choices about reading the young men made.

Assumptions:

- Attitudes of teenaged boys toward reading are a source of concern for parents and educators.
- The study of young men who regularly and voluntarily read recreationally can inform strategies to encourage their peers who are reluctant or resistant toward reading.

Results:

Guided participation strategies parents used include the following:

- Demonstrating the value of reading for personal and interpersonal pleasure
- Reinforcing the value of reading connections with other family members
- Collaborating with sons on various forms of reading materials
- Purchasing reading materials or providing reading settings
- Restricting access to selected forms of leisure reading

Parental involvement can be characterized as follows:

- Mothers invested significant time and energy in encouraging their sons’ reading.
- Fathers’ roles in their sons’ reading lives were secondary and decreased further as their sons entered high school.
- As their sons reach adolescence, parents increasingly encourage the reading of nonfiction in various modes, including electronic.
- Parents generally privilege print-based rather than electronic forms of reading.

Conclusions:

- Far from relinquishing shared reading-related routines, many parents continued to guide (or attempt to guide) their teenage sons by developing alternative reading-related strategies that took their lead from their sons’ emerging identities.
- Rather than being a simple dichotomy of reluctant and committed readers, a continuum would better describe their interest in reading.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Design programs that expand teachers’, parents’, and boys’ understanding of what constitutes reading, validating electronic and male youth culture texts.
- Provide parent workshops to share successful strategies for encouraging adolescent boys’ leisure reading.

- Beware “remedying” boys’ reluctance to read with in-school, back-to-basics, exclusively print-based texts.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Provide and plan for creative and relevant literacy events for male adolescent readers and their families.