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What impacts attitudes to reading in a Year 2 class in a large suburban school?

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Contents

Abstract

Children's reading attitudes have frequently been in educational discourse and researched across many countries. This research aims to discover how different factors can impact a child's reading attitudes while finding links between them (Crivilare, 2019). It investigates three key themes: school influence, parental influence, and gender influence during my final school placement. One Year 2 class, the pupils' parents and the class teacher took part in the research from one school in the West Midlands in England. Purposeful sampling of the children in the class took place to investigate the impact of specific characteristics on their reading attitudes. Mixed method data collection was used, gathering data through questionnaires and interviews.

The research findings found that the three themes (school influence, parental influence, and gender influence) all shape a child's reading attitudes, as well as other factors such as the role of siblings and the impact of peers. This report offers further data to build upon existing literature in this area of research and is also able to show how the three main themes can link together. The findings reinforce research that took place nearly thirty years ago that suggest individuals can hold an attitude to reading in general as well as on a more specific level depending on the type of book (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995). This research advises how my personal teaching practice will adapt due to my findings, which others may choose to follow.

Word count: 5997

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1. Introduction

After observing a variety of attitudes towards reading in previous placements, I wanted to research this area within education more closely. This research took place during my final teaching placement and aimed to identify what factors can influence a pupil's reading attitudes. A reading attitude is a complicated idea that cannot be simply defined by all (Boerma, Mol and Jolles, 2016). I explored three main themes that influence children's reading attitudes:

1. School Influence
2. Parental Influence
3. Gender Influence

The findings from this small-scale research aim to build upon existing literature with current data from a Year 2 class in a primary school in England. Previous research in this area has taken place across the world for decades, such as in America (Baker and Scher, 2022), Germany (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2019) and Australia (Nicholas and Paatsch, 2021). A case study approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of individual attitudes (Creswell, 2018). In this report interviews and questionnaires were used to gather data from my chosen research sample.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This literature review will survey the three main areas of research that were highlighted when exploring existing literature. Reading is an essential skill to have in both school and in wider society (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2019; Bayraktar and Firat, 2020; Vélez, Gámez, and Martínez, 2021).

Reading here is defined to be making meaning from text (Medwell and Wray, 2017). The national curriculum aims for all children to be able to read fluently before they leave Year 6 (Medwell and Wray, 2021; Department for Education, 2022).

For decades attitudes have been used to understand how people perceive the world around them (Wolf, Haddock and Maio, 2020). For coherence, attitudes will be defined as individual evaluations of things, people, or places (Eaton and Visser, 2008; Albarracin and Johnson, 2018). However, a reading attitude is more complicated than just a positive or negative view towards reading (Boerma, Mol and Jolles, 2016). For this study reading attitudes will be defined as how children appreciate and enjoy books (Bayraktar and Firat, 2020). Reading attitudes and reading achievement have been found to be linked, impacting how well a child learns to read (Altun et al., 2022). Therefore, pupils who struggle to learn how to read tend to develop a dislike for reading (Department for Education, 2022). This conveys the need to tackle this issue early on so that positive attitudes can be developed as primary children are at a critical age for establishing beneficial reading habits (Zhao et al., 2019). There is a clear gap in research that explores the relationships between Key Stage 1 children and reading attitudes, which this research will aim to fill in (McGeown et al., 2015).

2.2 School influence

Before the 1988 National Literacy Strategy, children learnt to read by reading to themselves and to the class teacher (Department for Education, 2011). The teaching of reading has developed massively since, which includes teachers having a key role in creating an environment which encourages children to read more (Medwell and Wray, 2017; Yıldırım, 2017). However, Reynolds et al. (2017) found no relationship between academic achievement and the school setting. This research can be critiqued as it was completed with pupils aged eleven to sixteen, which suggests the findings may not be comparable to younger children. Teachers are crucial in helping their pupils develop effective reading attitudes. It has been found that teachers positively talking about books

improves a pupil's view of reading (Moses and Kelly, 2018). Research suggests that high quality teaching is correlated with reading enjoyment within classrooms (Hochweber and Vieluf, 2018). This research had a sample of over ten thousand pupils which increases the reliability of its findings. Teachers can increase pupils' motivation to read, through forming strong relationships where pupils feel supported (Reynolds et al., 2017; Hochweber and Vieluf, 2018; Zhao et al., 2019). It is found that teachers can improve reading engagement by providing choice to follow individual reading interests (Gordon and Lu, 2021). Today you may see a classroom that has a variety of books being readily available to access whenever a child likes (Moses and Kelly, 2018). This piece of research was completed in America, but it does not mean the findings cannot be generalised to England as it is common practice across most countries today.

There is an ever-increasing movement that acknowledges the importance of parental involvement in education (Topping and Wolfendale, 2017). Teachers now understand the importance of engaging parents to benefit children's education (Swain and Cara, 2019). When 'parents' are mentioned throughout this research, I refer to any individual who holds parental responsibility for a child. Schools and families must work together to create an encouraging environment for children to develop positive attitudes to reading (Zhao et al., 2019). However, Lepkowska and Nightingale (2019) convey the challenge of engaging all parents to benefit their child's education. It is sometimes hard for teachers to bridge the gap between home and school (Hindin and Mueller, 2016). If schools persevere pupils can benefit from their parents having good partnerships with teachers, as practices and expectations are reinforced at both home and school (Lerkkanen and Pakarinen, 2021). Parents can make changes in a child's home to improve their attitudes towards reading (Bayraktar and Firat, 2020). For instance, how a parent reads with their child can impact how they view reading, such as reading in an interactive way (Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). Both parents and teachers can teach children the purpose of reading and help guide children with what books they should read (Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi, 2018).

2.3 Parental influence

As parents are children's first teachers, the importance for them to develop quality reading habits with their children should be emphasised (Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi, 2018; Ahmad et al., 2020). However, the Education Endowment Foundation (2021) believes developing beneficial reading habits is an area that needs focussing on. This can occur through shared reading, where a parent and child interact with the same book together (Nicholas and Paatsch, 2021). It is a key approach for encouraging early language development and building the foundations for literacy skills (Daniels et al., 2022; Ahmad et al., 2020; Education Endowment Foundation, 2021). Book awareness typically takes place before a child starts school, such as how to turn the pages, left to right sequencing and running your finger along words as you read (Medwell and Wray, 2017). If children lack these skills before starting school, they are more likely to develop negative reading attitudes if they are behind other pupils.

Parents should provide reading materials and create an encouraging reading environment at home (Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi, 2018). Children have different experiences of books in their own home, some may be surrounded by books where others may have none (Medwell and Wray, 2017). Children's books have become much more widely accessible and affordable (Cutler and Palkovitz, 2020). It has been found that parents with a higher educational background have significantly more books for their child at home and are more likely to read with their children (Sawyer at al., 2018; Wiescholek et al., 2018). However, many parents are found to not read the correct level books with their children to be the most beneficial (Ha, 2021). Some parents still lack the sufficient funds to purchase books, meaning they cannot read with their children (Ha, 2021). Others may lack the time to read with their children due to the work arrangements (Lepkowska and Nightingale, 2019). Studies have found that parents' time spent reading with children is very low (Gjelaj et al., 2020). This conveys the importance of teachers needing to encourage parents to get involved with their child's education. When parents read to their children from a young age, they learn that reading can

be enjoyable (Medwell and Wray, 2017). It gives children the opportunity to improve their attitudes to reading and become enthusiastic readers (Department for Education, 2022). Another way parents can encourage their children is to read in front of them at home (Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi, 2018). This then lets children observe reading take place around them. Children can then become the ones to ask their parents to read to them as they want to become involved (Sawyer et al., 2018).

Today, technology plays a massive role in everyone's lives, which includes children (Gjelaj et al., 2020). This however has been found to reduce time spent reading books within the home (Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi, 2018). To combat this issue, e-books have become popular, which are digital books that can be read through technology (Kucirkova and Flewitt, 2022). Some argue that overusing technology in the home can cause developmental delays, sleeping and socialising problems when children become reliant on having technology in front of them (Gjelaj et al., 2020). Therefore, most parents prefer using printed books because of how more engaged children can become, compared to digital books (Nicholas and Paatsch, 2021).

It is found that some parents have different educational expectations for their child depending on their gender (Lerkkanen and Pakarinen, 2021). Parents often favour girls with reading, therefore showing an area of weakness in promoting boys reading (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2019). This may hinder a child's perceptions of reading, due to gender stereotypes made by their parents. Previous research clearly highlights the need for interventions where parents' gender stereotypes are addressed, to prevent a child's reading attitudes being negatively impacted (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2019). It is argued that mothers are more involved with their child's academic development compared to fathers (Ahmad et al., 2020). This study involved over seventy-eight thousand students which increases the reliability of its findings. It can be inferred that mothers are the parent who reads with their child the most, therefore having more of an influence on developing reading attitudes. However, Cutler and Palkovitz (2020) argue that men consider reading with their children as part of

their responsibilities as a father and as a marital partner. This suggests that both mothers and fathers have the potential to shape a child's view on reading.

2.4 Gender influence

Gender differences have been a key topic for discussion within education discourse for decades (Hochweber and Vieluf, 2018). The impact of gender on reading attitudes has altered, as over twenty years ago research found no association with views towards reading and gender (Baker and Scher, 2002). Boys tend to hold more confident attitudes towards sports and maths, rather than reading (Boerma, Mol and Jolles, 2016). However, McGeown et al. (2015) completed research with two hundred pupils that found that gender differences in enjoyment of reading were no longer significant. More recently multiple pieces of research have found that girls hold more positive attitudes towards reading than boys (Hochweber and Vieluf, 2018; Scholes, 2019). Teachers tend to underestimate the ability of boys and overestimate the ability of girls (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2018). Teachers' expectations of pupils can have an influence on their reading attitudes. For boys it was found that teacher expectations had no impact, but for girls it did, influencing how they valued reading (Boerma, Mol and Jolles, 2016). It emphasises the importance of teachers not holding gender stereotyped views as it can limit a pupil's potential. Some argue that structural changes in schools are required to tackle gender differences in education, such as recruiting more male teachers (Scholes, 2019).

It has been found that boys read more when they find texts interesting, therefore highlighting the responsibility of both schools and parents to inspire children to read a range of books (Van Hek, Buchmann and Kraaykamp, 2019). It is important to not see all boys as a homogenous group who have the same views (Scholes, 2019). Within education, boys and girls can be viewed differently because of their gender. Independent of gender, children who receive positive messages about reading from those around them, tend to have higher-quality reading experiences and attitudes (Altun et al., 2022). This disputes the said influence that gender can have on children's developing reading attitudes. Educational processes can have a beneficial impact on the gender gap in reading,

both with academic achievement and attitudes (Hochweber and Vieluf, 2018). This research took place with a sample of over ten thousand pupils, which reinforces the reliability of its findings. Teachers play an important role in tackling gender stereotypes in their classrooms (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2018). For example, it has been identified that boys generally need more motivation to read a range of books, both at school and home (Van Hek, Buchmann and Kraaykamp, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research approach

This study is a case study, a common research method used in education but can be critiqued for the lack of rigour due to the sample size (Yin, 2009). However, this research was purposefully small to gain an in-depth understanding of the attitudes specific individuals held (Creswell, 2018). This research uses mixed methods as it combines qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis, to solve the research question (Plano Clark and Ivankova, 2016; Hall, 2020). When mixed methods are used in research the strengths and weaknesses of each method complement the other (Bans-Akutey and Tiimub, 2021). Quantitative research methods involve numerical measurement of data (Clark-Carter, 2018). On the other hand, qualitative research methods gather personal views through verbal descriptions (Silverman, 2020).

3.2 Data Collection

The class teacher, nineteen pupils and twenty-one parents took part, which fits with the research approach of a case study. Purposeful sampling of the thirty pupils was chosen to explore a mix of certain characteristics (Olejnik, 2021). To explore the impact of gender, there needed to be an equal mix of girls and boys in the sample. I included an equal ratio of children with special educational needs in my data sample to the whole class, one child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and two with dyslexia.

Using qualitative research methods generates large amounts of data, which need to be carefully analysed (Bazeley, 2020). This research compares qualitative data using quantitative methods of data analysis (Clark et al., 2014). Triangulation is being used as I combine gathering data through interviews and questionnaires (Yin, 2009; Mostafavi, 2021). This helps to increase the validity and reliability of my research as it gathers different viewpoints (Noble and Heale, 2019). Validity is how a study is assessed for its rigour (Ravitch, 2020). This study is valid because it truly represents the views of the participants. I believe the relationships built with the participants increased the success of the validity and reliability (Bazeley, 2020). If research is reproducible, it can be labelled as reliable (Plano Clark and Ivankova, 2016). Overall, the data collection methods proved to be beneficial as it provided an insight into what impacts attitudes to reading in a Year 2 class.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were completed with nineteen pupils and the class teacher (see Appendix 1 and 2), one participant at a time (Gronmo, 2019). Interviews, as a qualitative method, provide an understanding into an individual's attitudes (Johnson, 2017). Follow up questions were asked to expand responses or re-ask the question to participants (Johnson, 2017; Flick, 2018). Books were used as prompts during the pupil interviews to inspire responses (see Appendix 3 and 4). I acknowledge there are limitations, mainly regarding the impact of the interviewer (Clark et al., 2014). The rapport is challenging with pupils because of the authority that adults hold (Alderson and Morrow, 2020). I believe a trusting rapport was built over a few weeks prior to get open responses from the participants (Alvesson, 2011). With the location of the interview being in the hallway, there were unexpected interruptions, which may have hindered their responses (Flick, 2018). Therefore, in future research the location of the interview will be taken into higher consideration to ensure there are fewer distractions (Johnson, 2017).

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were sent home with all thirty pupils for their parents to complete (see Appendix 5), twenty-one were successfully returned. The questionnaires were sent home twice to encourage parents to respond (Olejnik, 2021). As the questionnaire was in a paper form it could be easily sent back and forth (Gronmo, 2019). An advantage is that they are low cost while collecting large amounts of information (Kabir, 2016). I made sure the questionnaire was one side of A4, to increase the likelihood of a higher response rate (Coe et al., 2021). There are limitations to using questionnaires, such as how participants will interpret the questions, and how honest they are, impacting the accuracy of responses (Kabir, 2016; Ravitch, 2020).

3.3 Ethical Considerations

Before the research took place the York St John University ethical clearance form was signed off by my research supervisor (see Appendix 6). I worked within the university guidelines throughout the research. Passive consent for interviewing the children (see Appendix 7) was obtained by the headteacher (Gronmo, 2019). An overview of the research project (see Appendix 8 and 9) was sent out to the class teacher and parents, alongside consent forms before the research took place (Flick, 2018; Gronmo, 2019). All participants had the right to withdraw during the data collection and to up to two weeks after their data was collected (Thorley and Henrion, 2019). Confidentiality and anonymity are of high importance, as all data is anonymised and responses are not discussed with others in the study (Clark et al., 2014).

4. Findings and Discussion

The findings from this study, gathered through questionnaires and interviews, are presented below giving an insight into what impacts attitudes towards reading. They represent the views of pupils in a Year 2 class, their parents, and their class teacher where relevant. Mixed method data analysis is

used, where findings are displayed through graphs and coding of key themes that arose (Creswell, 2018).

4.1 School Influence

Figure 1: A question taken from the pupil interviews.

Question:	Answer:	
Does school make reading fun?	**Yes:** 13/19 Most common reasons: -School give us different books every Tuesday. -School has lots of books in the library. -They help us learn.	**No:** 6/19 Most common reasons: - I do not like reading. -Reading is the same everywhere. -They don't have football books at school.

There is evidence to suggest that the school environment plays a key role in encouraging children to find reading fun, consequently developing positive reading attitudes. This is clear through Child A stating, 'they use different voices when reading to us,' which conveys teachers have a part to play in making reading engaging. This links to Zhao et al. (2019) who emphasises that teachers must stimulate children's interests in reading to develop effective reading habits. Figure 1 reinforces previous research that suggests children like to read books they find interesting, as Child B, said 'I love football, but we can't read football books at school.' This child did not believe their school made reading fun because they were not allowed to only read their topic of interest, showing the challenging job schools have in motivating children to read a range of books.

When the class teacher was asked if he liked reading for pleasure, he replied that he did not, but believed he was still able to promote positive reading attitudes through his classroom environment. He explained that he did this through verbally discussing a love of reading, sharing books to the class and by having new books in the classroom. It is important to acknowledge the limitations with using interviews here, as the class teacher may have shared responses that he thinks are socially acceptable. This creates the question of validity, but I believe they are an accurate representation of his classroom practice as I was involved with the Year 2 class for twelve weeks.

Figure 2: A question taken from the parent questionnaires.

Question:	Answer:		
Do you think your child's school creates a love for reading?	**Yes:** 15 /21 Most common explanations: -They send home weekly reading books. -They can choose a library book to bring home.	**No:** 2/21 Most common explanations: -Has become a tick box activity. -Reading is just taught to comply with the curriculum.	**Do not know:** 4/21 Most common explanations: -Not seen enough evidence. -They encourage reading, but my child does not love it yet.

The Department for Education (2022) highlights that headteachers are responsible for creating a reading culture. From the data collection, it was found that fifteen out of twenty-one parents think their child's school creates a love for reading (see Figure 2). Parent A explained, 'they encourage children to go to the library,' which consequently inspires children to develop positive reading attitudes. This connects with teacher standard four in emphasising teachers' role in creating a love for learning (Department for Education, 2021). When the class teacher was asked how he involves parents in reading, he replied that a reading book gets sent home every week. However, Parent B felt this was a flaw within the reading system as their child 'only gets one school reading book a week.' This suggests that some parents want more from their child's school than what is in place.

Another question asked if parents would like more interaction with their child's school on how to support reading, where sixteen out of twenty-one parents said yes. The Education Endowment Foundation (2021) emphasises the importance of continual support for parents, to encourage effective reading at home. This may include tips or resources given to parents throughout the year, such as 'a reading session with parents and teachers once a term,' Parent C suggested. If this was implemented, it may tackle the lack of guidance which some parents receive about what books should be read with their children (Daniels et al., 2022).

The class teacher also reported that the new reading journals worked well as they provided a slight pressure on parents which increased the likelihood that they will read with their children. Parents

reported on these positively also with Parent D saying, 'I'm happy with the reading diary system.' These were small books, like diaries, which every child took home after school and brought back the next day. They would be filled in by parents with what their children had read at home, then staff members at school would do the same for what they read in school. Teachers can keep a track of this and provide further encouragement where it was seen to be needed. This then may in turn develop positive reading attitudes because parents should try to make more time to read with their children.

4.2 Parental Influence

The class teacher was asked what the role of parents was, in which he replied, 'parents' role is vital…it is crucial for children to read at home every single day.' It is evident through the following findings that parents can have a positive or negative impact on their children's reading attitudes. It is important to note that the parent questionnaires were sent home for any parent to complete and each one returned was filled out by a mother. Therefore, the findings of my research will only represent the views of mothers so cannot be generalised to both parents.

Figure 3: Parents and children's views on who children read the most with.
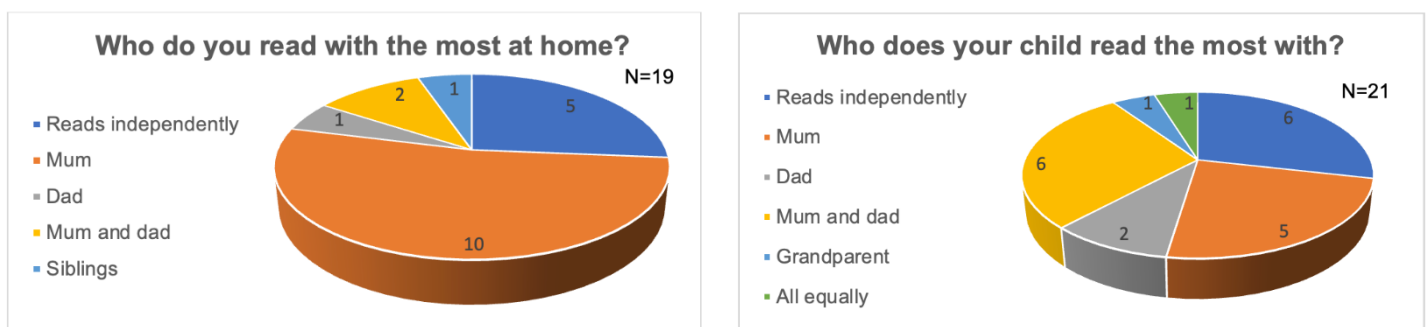
The aim of asking both parents and children similar questions was to find out as accurately as possible who children read the most with at home. As you can see from the graphs in Figure 3 there are clear trends with reading independently and with their mother as being the highest across both methods of data collection. This correlates with the research completed by Swain and Cara (2019) who found that 95% of their sample of a hundred and eighteen, said the mother was the most likely to read to their child. A larger piece of research with nearly seventy-nine thousand students

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highlighted how mothers are seen to provide the most motivation with supporting children to read (Ahmad et al., 2020). Although reading with siblings only received one response, it was not an option I had foreseen receiving. This data tells me that siblings can have a role to play in promoting children's attitudes to reading, especially older siblings who may be looked up to as role models (Sawyer et al., 2018). However, this will only have positive impacts if they portray the value and enjoyment of reading to their younger siblings or it may have the opposite effect.

The data tells me that children reading with their fathers is an area requiring improvement because it has one of the lowest selections with whom children read with. This conveys that more must be put into place to encourage fathers to engage with reading with their children (Chacko et al., 2018). This can then consequently reduce children developing gender stereotypes in the home environment, such as believing reading is a feminine activity (Muntoni and Retelsdorf, 2019). As there was only one pupil in my research sample who lived with only their mother, it meant the findings of my research were still accurately representing who children read the most with.

Figure 4: A question taken from the parent questionnaires.

| Question:	Answer:
How do you encourage your child to read a range of books?	Most common explanations: -We have a range of books available at home. -We go to the local library and book shops, where they can choose a book to take home.

As seen in Figure 4, parents were asked how they encourage their child to read a range of books which is important because a child's attitudes towards reading can be impacted by the books they read. The two most common explanations said by multiple parents are well backed up by research emphasising the importance of an educational environment at home (Bano, Jabeen and Qutoshi, 2018). Many parents said reasons like Parent E who said their child 'has a bookcase full of a variety of books in his room.' This will help develop positive attitudes to reading through being surrounded by books they can choose to read. One parent explained they use reading on an iPad to encourage their child to read, which has become everyday practice for some families (Vorobel, Voorhees and

Gokcora, 2021). There is evidence to suggest that most parents prefer using printed books, as only one out of twenty-one parents mentioned using technology (Kucirkova and Flewitt, 2022). Another parent said they 'buy a treat for completion of a book,' to encourage their child to read. This may have varying effects on a child's attitude to reading, associating it with rewards rather than pleasure. Instead, Bayraktar and Firat (2020) suggest positive attitudes towards reading can be developed through regular buying of a variety of texts, such as books or magazines.

4.3 Gender Influence

I have found that gender has an influence on children's reading attitudes, revealed through children's own perceptions, parents and those of the class teacher. When the pupils were asked if they liked reading, eight boys and six girls said yes, leaving five saying they were not sure or that they did not. Child D, a boy, said 'yes because it helps my brain,' with Child E, also a boy, stating 'yes because it gives me more information to use in my writing.' This may question previous research that suggests girls favour reading over boys (Hochweber and Vieluf, 2018; Scholes, 2019). There are limitations with the research design due to the impact of the rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee. The pupils may have responded with what they believe is the desired answer, with it not being their actual opinion on reading. However, I believe I had built a relationship with the pupils where they felt they could be honest and know they would not be treated differently because of their responses.

Figure 5: Children being asked if they liked different books to the opposite gender.
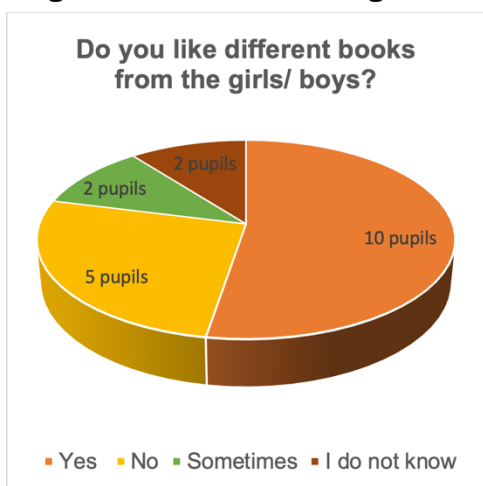
The nine girls in my sample were asked if they liked different books from the boys and the ten boys in my sample were asked if they liked different books from the girls (see Figure 5). Ten pupils responded with yes, with explanations such as liking different things or labelling books girls read as 'girl books' where they, as a boy, could only read 'boy books.' This highlights how

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gender stereotypes in reading choices can be found in children as young as seven or eight (Boerma, Mol and Jolles, 2016). The data overall tells me that girls were more open to the fact that 'it doesn't matter' what books they read, this being Girl 4's explanation.

Figure 6: Children's reactions to stereotypical gendered books.
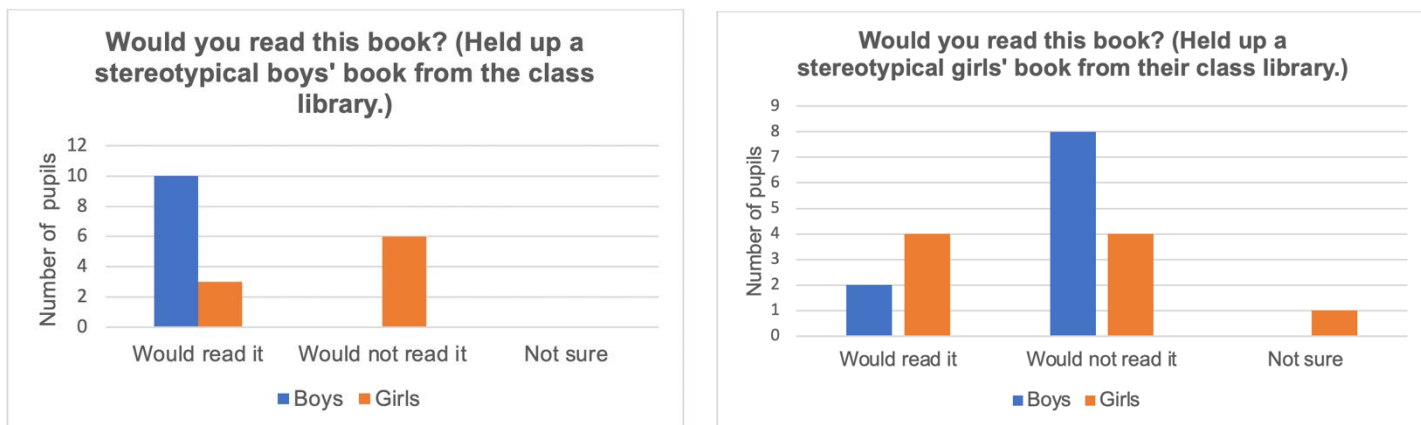
During the pupil interviews, I held up a stereotypical book that may be viewed as a 'girl' book (see Appendix 3) and then one that may be viewed as a 'boy' book (see Appendix 4). I chose the stereotypical girls' book because it was pink with a fairy on, with the stereotypical boys' book displaying dinosaurs on the front cover. When shown the 'boy' book, some responses fit what I was expecting to find based on previous research, such as Boy 1 saying 'I have it at home,' or Boy 2 responding eagerly with 'I love this one, I love dinosaurs so much.' This initially would suggest that the boys in my small sample were fitting with the stereotype of liking certain books that follow their interests (Van Hek, Buchmann and Kraaykamp, 2019). Reinforcing this, the girls' responses to the same book were that six out of nine would not read it, for reasons such as not liking dinosaurs or liking 'girl things better like princesses or castles' as Girl 1 explained. The data gathered from the children here lined up with the class teachers experience, where he highlighted boys tend to choose non-fiction books such as about dinosaurs or robots. The more unexpected responses were from both one boy and one girl who suggested they would read the 'boy' book to find out facts, which then challenges girls or boys wanting to read separate books.

As this is a small-scale piece of research it was important to repeat the process with the stereotypical 'girl' book, to see if the findings could be reinforced or challenged. It revealed that eight out of ten boys would not read the book shown, with expected reasons like 'my worst colour is pink,' from Boy 3, and 'it's for girls (pulls a disgusted face)' from Boy 4. The harsh reality of gender stereotypes was revealed when Boy 5 said 'I wouldn't read it because my friends make fun of me.' This clearly highlights how attitudes are formed through social exchanges such as in school, where this child will not read the typical 'girl' book because of how others may react (Albarracin and Johnson, 2018). Previous research argues that girls are more prone to being impacted by the opinions of others (Boerma, Mol and Jolles, 2016). In contrast, my data revealed that only one boy commented that his view on reading has been influenced by others, whereas no girls did. My research is unlikely to be able to challenge this previous research due to the sample size but can be generalised to other classes with children the same age and in a similar location. It is interesting to note that the same number of girls said they would read the 'girl' book compared with not reading the book, Girl 2 replied with 'I like fairies,' while Girl 3 said 'I don't like fairies.' This may suggest boys are more focussed on picking gender typical books, while girls are less likely to do so.

Figure 7: A question taken from the parent questionnaire.

Question:	Answer:	
Do you notice your child is choosing certain books to read?	**Yes:** 11/21 Most common explanations: -They like picture books. -They like books which make them laugh. -They choose books to match their interests.	**No:** 10/21 Most did not provide an explanation. A given explanation: -It is too soon to observe trends.

When parents were asked if they noticed their child reading certain books, eleven parents said yes (see Figure 7). A key theme that arose was the belief that their child chose certain books to appeal to their interests, this builds strongly on the research by Daniels et al. (2022). Interestingly, no parent linked their explanation of this to gender, which reveals that some parents are unaware of their child's reading habits (Vélez, Gámez, and Martínez, 2021). When directly asked if their child chooses stereotypical gendered books, ten out of twenty-one responded with no, which disagrees

with what the pupils themselves reported. The class teacher did acknowledge other factors which can influence a child's reading book choice. One I did not expect was the influence of people around them such as picking books linked to their parents' job. Finally, the class teacher explained how he tackled gender stereotypes in his classroom by verbally suggesting choosing a different book if a pattern is observed. However, I do not believe this was always successful as I experienced a child crying when asked to change the same book they had kept for weeks in a row, so he was allowed to keep it for another week.

4.4 Application to Practice

I will use my research findings to develop my teaching practice moving forward. Regarding the impact of the school environment, I am keen to emphasise my personal love of reading out loud to my pupils. Although, I do not enjoy reading for pleasure myself, it is clear you are still able to create a positive reading environment in schools. This will be through having inviting books within the classroom and school library that fit with children's interests. I will encourage children to share what they have read to the rest of the class to encourage others to want to read that book, one they might have otherwise overlooked. I believe it is important to never force a child to read a book that they do not want to read, as this will only create negative attitudes towards reading, but children should be guided in making beneficial reading choices.

Concerning the influence of parents on developing reading attitudes, I will make sure all parents know the importance of their involvement with their child's reading. I aim to make sure all pupils have access to a range of books at home, no matter their financial position. I look forward to inviting parents into school, to show them how to support their child's reading. I want parents to make reading a daily activity in their households, so children see reading taking place around them and then want to take part in it themselves.

With reference to gender influencing reading attitudes, I believe tackling gender stereotypes is the first step in making progress. This may involve teachers sharing a love for a book they have read that children may typically have associated with the opposite gender. This should also be encouraged to take place at home, so children are getting the same messages in multiple environments. However, I think children should not be forced to read books that they associate as a 'girl' or 'boy' book. Instead, pupils should be taught to not judge their classmates for any choices they make.

4. Conclusion

This research aimed to find out what impacts attitudes to reading in a Year 2 class in a large suburban school. My research revealed that pupils' attitudes to reading can be impacted by their school, the influence of gender and parental influence. The basis of the research was around one class: its pupils, their parents, and the class teacher. I accept that my findings cannot be widely generalised to all children's attitudes because the research approach decided upon was a case study, meaning a small sample was focussed on. Generalisability can be defined as how findings from a particular study can be applied to a larger population (UK Parliament, 2020). However, some may argue that a small sample size within mixed method research does not diminish whether the findings can be generalised or not because of the in-depth perspective provided (Creswell, 2018). I believe this piece of research is reliable as if it was repeated with similar target populations (such as the same target age range or geographical location) the same factors would influence children's reading attitudes. This can be reinforced through how a representative sample was used in this research to investigate particular characteristics (UK Parliament, 2020).

I believe the findings of my research reinforce research that took place nearly three decades ago, that individuals hold an attitude to reading overall as well as an attitude that differs depending on

the text (McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth, 1995). It could be suggested that the impact of gender, parents and a child's school all have a part to play in developing reading attitudes, with links occurring between. The findings of the research can be put into practice by enabling all children to be within an encouraging reading environment, both at home and school. In addition, gender stereotypes with book choices develop at a young age meaning assumptions should be challenged by all who interact with children. I suggest that future research should investigate if it matters what type of books children choose to read. Also, should we as education practitioners focus on children being happy to read what they choose, instead of being forced to read something different. Research into this area may reveal that if a child was to stick to typically labelled gendered books does in fact limit their educational outcomes or have little to no impact.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Pupil interview questions.

Name: Boy.   Girl.

After having the research project explained in child- friendly terms, are they happy to take part in the research project?   Yes.   No.

Do they understand they can stop the interview at any time?   Yes.   No.

1. Do you like reading?

Yes.   No.   Why, why not? ……………………………………………

2. How often do you read at school?

Never,   once a day,   twice a day,   3 or more times a day

3. Why have you been reading ****** this book in class recently?

4. What makes you choose different or the same books from your classmates?

5. Do you choose different or the same books to your classmates?

6. Would you read this book (hold up a stereotypical girl's book from their class library)?

7. Would you read this book (hold up a stereotypical boy's book from their class library)?

8. Does school make reading fun?

Yes.   No.   Why, why not? ……………………………………………

9. Who do you read with the most at home?

10. Why do you read at home?

To do my homework,   It is fun,   When I am bored,   Anything else? ……………………….

11. How often do you read at home?

Never,   once a week,   every few days,   every day,   more than once a day

Appendix 2: Class teacher interview questions.

1. Do you like reading? Can you explain why? Why not?

2. How do you as the class teacher, teach reading directly through the curriculum?

3. How do you as the class teacher, teach reading indirectly through the curriculum?

4. What book/ books are you reading in class now?

5. How do you promote a positive environment for reading in your classroom?

6. Do you notice gender differences in attitudes to reading?

7. How often do you notice gender differences in attitudes towards reading in one day?

   Never,   once a day,   twice a day,   three times a day +

8. How do you try and combat gender differences in attitudes in your classroom?

9. Have you noticed anything other than gender that affects reading choices?

10. What do you think about the role of parents in teaching children to read?

11. How do you involve parents in reading with their child?

12. How often in a year do you actively engage parents or careers in how to support their child's reading ability?

    Never,   once a year,   twice a year,   three times + a year

13. How often do parents come to you for advice on supporting their child's reading?

    Never,   rarely,   sometimes,   often,   all the time

Appendix 3: Stereotypical girls' book used in pupil interviews.
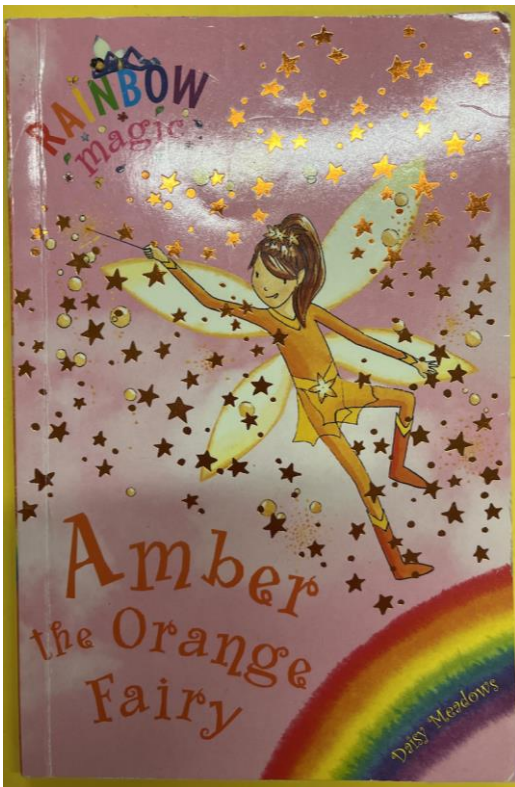
Appendix 4: Stereotypical boys' book used in pupil interviews.
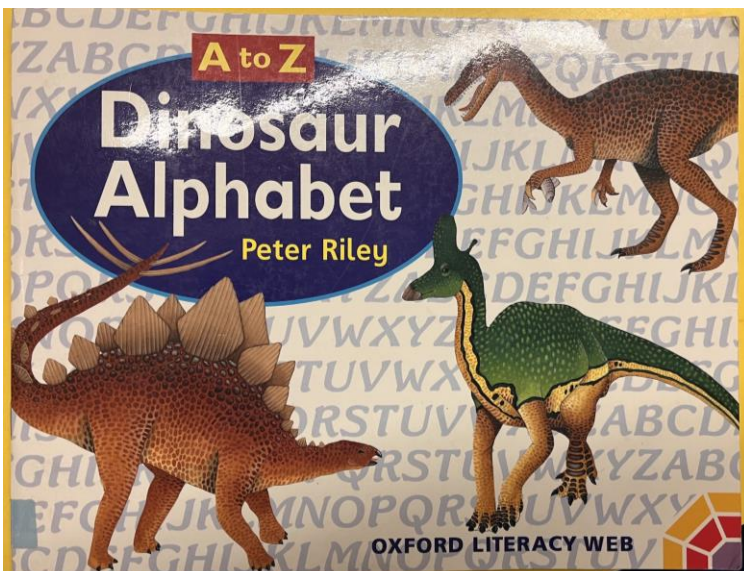
Appendix 5: Parent questionnaire.

<u>**Parent/ Carers Questionnaire:**</u>

1.Do you, yourself like to read?

Yes   No   Why?...

2. Did you like reading when growing up?

Yes   No   Why?...

3. Does your child like to read?

Yes   sometimes   No   Why?...

4. Does your child read more when:

Independent   With mum   With dad   With a sibling   Grandparent   Other................................

5. Do you read with your child more:

For pleasure   To help develop their reading ability   To complete homework

6a. Do you notice your child is choosing certain books to read?	**6b. If yes, why do you think this is?**
Yes No	*...*

7. Does your child choose to read stereotypical gendered books?

Yes   sometimes   No

8. How do you encourage your child to read a range of books?

..

9. Would you prefer more interaction with your child's school on how to support their reading development?

Yes   No

10. Do you think your child's school creates a love for reading?

Yes | No   Why?...

Appendix 6: Ethics form signature.

Section 7: Declaration

Declaration – I have read the ethics policy and guidance and the general data protection regulation information alongside abiding by the practice in place within my research discipline. The information supplied here is accurate to the best of my knowledge.
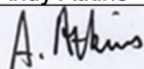
Student Signature Name Date	W Hawkins Willow Hawkins 28/11/2022

Staff Signature for approval Name	Andy Atkins A. Atkins
Date	13/12/2022

Appendix 7: Headteacher permission form.

QTS6004M Research Project Permission form

Student name: _Willow Hawkins_

SE3 School: ███████████████

Headteacher permissions:

I have read this student's ethical clearance form and give my permission for the conduct of this small-scale research project.

Additional parental passive consent is not required/~~has been obtained~~ (pleased delete as applicable)

Headteacher's name: ██████████

Headteacher's signature: ██████████

Date: _2 /12/22_

Appendix 8: Parent consent form.

YORK ST JOHN UNIVERSITY
Est. 1841

Dear Parents/ Carers,

You may be aware that 2M currently has a student teacher Miss Hawkins working alongside Mr***********. As part of my Undergraduate BA (Hons) Primary Education with QTS Programme, I am required to complete a research project.

The aim of the research is to investigate what impacts attitudes to reading. Permission for this project to be carried out in school has been given by the Headteacher.

I am writing this letter to invite you to take part in my research, which will involve you completing and returning a questionnaire. You have the right to withdraw up until two weeks after the data is gathered. Your data will remain anonymous, and confidentiality will be kept throughout the research.

There is no compulsion upon anyone to participate; you are free to decline the invitation.

Thank you,

Miss Hawkins

Please complete the form below, fill out the questionnaire and return to school by 20/ 01/23 if you would like to take part:

_____

I *(your full name)*…………………………………………………….... consent to take part in the research project.

Parent/ carers of *(your child's full name)*……………………………………………….

	Yes	No
I understand my data will be used as part of a research project.	☐	☐
I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research up until 2 weeks after.	☐	☐
I understand my data will be kept anonymous and confidential.	☐	☐
I understand I can request to see the final research paper when finished.	☐	☐

Date: …………………………

Signature: …………………….

Appendix 9: Class teacher consent form.

YORK
Est. **ST JOHN**
1841 **UNIVERSITY**

Dear staff,

As part of my Undergraduate BA (Hons) Primary Education with QTS Programme, I am required to complete a research project. The aim of the research is to investigate what impacts attitudes to reading.

I am writing this letter to invite you to take part in my research, which will involve you taking part in a short interview with myself. You have the right to withdraw during and up until two weeks after the interview. Your data will remain anonymous, and confidentiality will be kept throughout the research project.

There is no compulsion upon anyone to participate; you are free to decline the invitation.

Raw data will not be openly available. If requested, each participant may have access to their own data. The final research report will present an analysis of the data.

There is no compulsion upon anyone to participate; you are free to decline the invitation.

Please complete the form below if you would like to take part:

I (your full name).. consent to take part in "*What impacts attitudes to reading in a Year 2 class in a large suburban primary school?*" research.

Role within the school: ...TEACHER...................

	Yes	No
I understand my data will be used as part of a research project.	☑	☐
I understand I have the right to withdraw from the research up until 2 weeks after.	☑	☐
I understand my data will be kept anonymous and confidential.	☑	☐
I understand I can request to see the final research paper when finished.	☑	☐

Date...13/11/23.............   Signed............