
Title	Do girls read differently from boys? Adolescents and their gendered reading habits and preferences
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Do Girls Read Differently from Boys? Adolescents and their Gendered Reading Habits and Preferences

Abstract

Research on the gendered reading habits and preferences of boys and girls present them as very different: Boys read less than girls, boys and girls read different books, and boys read differently from girls. This study focuses on the gendered reading habits and preferences of Singapore adolescent students (aged 12 to 17-year-olds) to examine if such polarity exists in their reading habits. Drawing on survey data from 4830 adolescent from five secondary schools, the findings show that while more girls enjoyed reading compared to boys, both boys and girls preferred to read for pleasure. Although there are some gendered differences in reading preferences, adolescents' preferred reading materials differ less than often portrayed with convergence in areas such as Adventure and Science Fiction and Fantasy. In the area of reading and technology, the findings suggest that girls read more online, reflecting their tendency to read more in print. More complex understanding of contemporary adolescent reading will allow educators, librarians and parents to better address adolescent reading needs.

Keywords: reading habits and preferences, adolescents, gender, secondary schools, reading and technology, Singapore

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Introduction

Research on the gendered reading habits and preferences of boys and girls have presented them as having very different reading habits and preferences. The findings of the studies regarding the reading habits and preferences of boys and girls can be summed up in three statements: boys read less than girls, boys and girls read different books, and boys read differently from girls (Cherland, 1994; Millard, 1997). However, adolescent reading habits, whatever the gender, need to be understood against the backdrop of adolescence, where it has been reported that reading declines with increasing age (Clark & Foster, 2011; Common Sense media, 2014). Growing competition for adolescents' time for multiple diverse activities, particularly increased screen time and the pressure of high-stakes examinations may lead to decline in reading as students move from lower to upper adolescence (YouGov, 2018). Moreover, gendered reading habits and preferences may change with the times.

Within Singapore, there is an increasing concern about the reading habits of Singaporeans, with the National Reading Movement launched in 2016 to encourage Singaporeans to “read more, read widely, read together” (National Reading Movement, n.d.) in order to develop habits of lifelong learning. Although Singaporean students rank highly on international reading tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2016), there is concern that students in this technologically-saturated age may not engage in reading as a preferred activity or are reading less than they used to. Educators need more information about how best to encourage adolescents of different profiles and genders to engage in reading (Wolf & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008; Loh, 2015). Within Singapore, a study of the leisure reading preferences of 464 female students in two secondary schools showed that they read English books primarily for

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enjoyment and relaxation (Majid, Ng & Su, 2017) but there is little else published on the gendered reading habits and preferences of adolescents.

This concern with reading, particularly adolescent reading, is not unique to Singapore. There has been recent focus on adolescent reading habits in different countries (for example, see Merga, 2018 in Australia and Zasacka & Bulkowski, 2017 in Poland) an oft-neglected area in comparison to studies of childhood reading. However, the increased demands of life and work in this technological, globally connected age means that reading is no longer a skill to be acquired in early childhood but is a skill to be improved on throughout life (Alexander et al., 2012; Kirsch, Lafontaine, McQueen, Mendelovits, & Monseur, 2002). As such, schooling needs to develop in young people the desire and proficiency to read throughout their lives. Moreover, the availability of technology (e.g., e-books and smartphones), different means of accessing information (Wolf, 2018) as well as changing publishing and marketing practices (Brendler, 2014) impact adolescent reading habits and preferences.

Literature Review

Adolescent Reading Habits in Changing Times

Writing about “the complex world of adolescent literacy”, Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, & Morris (2008) note the lack of nuanced explorations of adolescent literacy. They point to the tendency to simplify and stereotype images of adolescents as being uninterested in reading, having just one kind of reading habit or reading limited kinds of books. With increased stress on literacy rates, schools may over-emphasize on reading instruction for proficiency and neglect the other crucial factors of student engagement and motivation in reading (Cummins, 2015). More recently,

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research has begun to centre on pleasure as key component of the reading experience, to understand how to encourage independent and engaged reading (Cremin & Moss, 2018). As such, one focus of this study is on whether students prefer to read for pleasure (often self-directed and for enjoyment) or for functional reasons (for academic-related reasons). Certainly, these two areas may overlap, but it is important to understand the reasons that would motivate student reading in order to better facilitate students' independent and engaged reading (Moje et al., 2008).

The reading habits of children change as they mature into adolescents, with preferences for different kinds of books and different approaches to reading. By adolescence, most readers have developed their personal reading tastes and habits and are more reflective and selective about their reading. In Appleyard's (1990) comprehensive study of the development of reading habits over a lifetime, he noted that adolescent readers tend to enjoy books where they could identify with the main character and be involved in the story, felt that the story was realistic or "true to life" and made them think. Appleyard noted that, unlike children, adolescents were both able to experience the story and step out of the story to think about it. It is thus possible that both genders appreciate stories that they can relate to, and simultaneously provoke their thinking.

Merga (2017) noted in her study of Australian adolescents that they tend to make safe choices about genres, using familiarity with authors or books as a choosing strategy. Knowing what adolescents like to read will help with book selection and stocking in schools and libraries. Changing dynamics of what is available in the market may lead to changes in reading tastes and acceptability over time, which is another reason to keep track of adolescents' reading habits and

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preferences. For example, while Enid Blyton was a staple in the 1980s and 1990s (Hall & Coles, 1997b), children's favourite books now include book series such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*, *Harry Potter* and *Percy Jackson* (YouGov, 2017), reflective of the greater variety in the book market and mass media influences. Writing about the book market, Brendler (2014) noted that adolescents today have greater choice as there are more books to appeal to both genders, new offerings addressing contemporary issues and perspectives. School libraries and educators need to cater to diverse students' interests and needs (Brendler, 2014; Manuel & Jackson, 2003; Wilhelm, 2016).

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In terms of reading habits, earlier studies suggest that more girls prefer leisure reading in comparison to boys (Cherland, 1994; Millard, 1997; Zasacka & Bulkowski, 2017) although both genders do read when their peers see reading as a desirable activity (Millard, 1997). Researchers have pointed out that rather than raising alarm bells over boys' literacy underachievement in terms of reading (Watson, Kehler, & Martino, 2010; Weaver-Tower, 2003), gendered reading need to be understood in relation to other factors such as socioeconomic status (Moss, 2007; Reay, 2006), race, and ethnicity (Love & Hamston, 2003). For example, middle-class boys are more likely to see themselves as readers (Loh, 2013; Reay 2006), and studies have shown that avid boy readers read as much as avid girl readers (Coles & Hall, 2002; Manuel & Jackson, 2003; Merga, 2017). Smith & Wilhelm (2002) point out in their study of boys' reading that they *will* read when they see reading as a meaningful and enjoyable activity.

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Earlier and current studies have shown that boys prefer non-fiction and girls prefer fiction (Millard, 1997; Hall & Coles, 1997a; Topping, 2015). More specifically, Halls and Coles (1997b) found that boys prefer reading sports-related non-fiction and comics and other studies have noted that girls prefer to read books about relationships (Cherland, 1994; Millard, 1997). However, recent research in Australia by Manuel and Jackson (2003) and Merga (2017) suggests that both genders read fiction, contrary to common misconceptions that boys only read non-fiction. In Merga's (2017) large-scale study of boys and girls, she found that although girls preferred fiction and boys prefer non-fiction, the disparity was not as wide as commonly believed. In Coles and Hall's (2002) study of the reading habits of 11 to 14-year-old boys and girls in the U.K., they found that while boys do read less than girls, very few boys read *only* non-fiction. Boys may read fiction primarily when they were younger and read more non-fiction as they grew older (Hall & Coles, 1997b), suggesting that students' tastes change as they mature and that their reading diet expands. In a study of online reading using data of 852,295 students in 3,243 schools, Topping (2015) found that although boys did read more non-fiction than girls, certain authors such as Roald Dahl were popular across genders. These studies suggest that while books appealing to both genders should be considered in book selection and stocking, it is also crucial to encourage both boys and girls to read widely and across genres and topics. In a study of book borrowing records of three classes of Year 6 (aged 10 to 11 years) pre-teens in a primary school, Moss and McDonald (2004) found that boys borrowed as much fiction as the girls and that it was the class culture that seemed to dictate borrowing habits.

Reading, Technology and Gender

There has been much talk about students reading less due to competition from other forms of media such as television and the internet. In a *Media Panel* cohort study of children and adolescents in Sweden from 1976 to 2002 (from the TV-generation to the mobile generation), Johnsson-Smaragdia & Jonsson (2006) point out that adolescents are not necessarily reading less, and that socioeconomic status and parental example and expectations may influence adolescent reading. Technology may not distract from reading. More important factors encouraging students' leisure reading include family and school background.

Moreover, despite remarkable advances in technology, print books are still more popular than books in digital formats (Loh & Sun, 2018b; Merga, & Moon, 2014; Pew Research Centre, 2016; YouGov, 2017). The growing research on students' reading habits in relation to technology suggests that readers still enjoy print (Evans, 2017) but may use technology to search for information or read short articles (Zasacka, 2017). Students may also feel that smartphones allow more convenient access to reading materials and alternative reading materials otherwise unavailable in print (Kuzmicova, Schilhab, & Burke, 2018). Adolescents decide to use print or technology depending on context and purposes for reading.

In terms of gender, some studies suggest that girls prefer print and boys prefer online reading (Liu, 2008) but others have suggested otherwise (National Literacy Trust, 2015). However, it may be that a more nuanced understanding of reading and technology is required. In Tveit and Mangen's (2014) study of 143 tenth graders reading a narrative, literary text on a Sony e-reader and in print, they found that boys and reluctant readers preferred reading on the device whereas

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avid readers preferred reading using print. They suggest that boys and reluctant readers may find it novel to read on the e-device and hence be attracted to reading through reading on a screen. These findings echo that of an earlier study by Miranda et al. (2011) which also found that reluctant readers could be persuaded to engage with reading through e-devices. It is important to account for emerging technologies and trends, alongside student profiles, to understand adolescent reading habits.

To conclude, the literature review suggests that boys and girls are likely to read differently, prefer different genres, and show dissimilar inclination towards print and electronic formats. However, as societal norms, expectations and pressures are changing, these factors are likely to influence reading habits and preferences of adolescent boys and girls. This study thus seeks to provide a snapshot of adolescent reading and gender in Singapore by asking the following research questions:

1. How is the reading enjoyment of adolescent boys and girls similar or different?
2. How are their reading habits similar or different?
3. How are their reading preferences similar or different?
4. How are their reading preference for print and electronic sources similar or different?

Method

The Context: The Building a Reading Culture Study

The survey data for this article is part of a larger mixed-methods study, the *Building a Reading Culture (BRC)* study, meant to provide a baseline understanding of the reading habits and preferences of Singapore students (Loh & Sun, 2018a), conducted between September 2016 to

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December 2017. English is the medium of instruction in Singapore, and the school system puts a premium on language proficiency in English. At various stages in their education, students are required to pass examinations for both languages in order to move up to higher stages of education (Loh, 2015). MOE has continuously endeavoured to improve language teaching to ensure high language proficiency and syllabi have undergone significant changes since the 1960s and new syllabus documents are produced about every ten years (Chew, 2005). The emphasis on English as a language for interracial communication, education and business has led to English being the most common home language in Singapore (Lee, 2016). Adolescent students who are proficient in English are more likely to associate reading of English books with pleasure reading and read in other languages such as Chinese or Malay to improve in their language (Majid, Ng & Su, 2017).

Participants

The participants of this study were Secondary 1 to Secondary 5 students (aged 12 – 17, equivalent to Grades 7 to 10 in the United States). Between January to March 2017, a reading survey was administered to all students in six secondary schools in Singapore. However, for the purpose of this paper, we have excluded one all-girls' school for a more balanced gender proportion. In total, 4830 out of 5825 students completed the online survey, and the response rate was 82.9%, among which 2493 (51.7%) were boys and 2332 (48.3%) were girls. As there was a small cohort of Secondary 5 students in the sample and they take the same examination as the Secondary 4 students, the dataset for Secondary 5 was merged with the Secondary 4 students.

Reading Survey

In order to understand students' reading habits and preferences, an online survey was designed and piloted. The items selected for the survey were based on a review of research and theories related to reading as well as an analysis of the existing instruments designed to assess students' reading habits and preferences. To ascertain that the questions in the survey were interpreted as intended, the initial survey was piloted with one class of 38 participants. After the participants completed the initial survey, one-to-one interviews were conducted with selected participants, during which the participants were asked to paraphrase the questions in the survey and interpret them. Survey items were then refined based on the results from the interviews. The finalized survey contained 50 questions and took approximately 25 - 30 minutes to finish. The survey included four sections: (1) reading enjoyment (i.e., reading enjoyment, reasons for reading), (2) reading habits (i.e., reading frequency, reading duration), (3) reading preferences (preferred reading materials, preferred genres for fiction and non-fiction books, preferred reading devices, online reading of e-books, newspapers articles and digital access), and (4) demographic information such as age and gender.

Institutional Review Board permission was obtained from the university. The survey was conducted at the beginning of the academic year, in consultation with the school. The class teachers informed the students about the research and clarified that participation was voluntary. Students were allocated class time to complete the online survey and took between 25 to 35 minutes to complete the survey.

Findings

Is it Only Girls Who Read for Pleasure?

Students were asked to indicate whether they like to read. Table 1 presents the percentage of students who reported they like to read.

Insert Table 1. Students' Enjoyment of Reading

As shown, about two thirds of the participants reported they like to read. Between the two genders, more girls than boys reported they like to read. The difference was tested by a Chi-square test and turned out to be significant, $X^2(1, N = 4830) = 136.98, p < .001$.

However, when the students were asked why they read, it was found that both genders tend to prefer reading for pleasure compared to functional reasons. Reading for pleasure includes reading for relaxing, for enjoyment, and reading is my hobby, and reading for functional reasons includes reading for better grades, for improving language, and for my homework). Students were given these options and asked to rate it on the scale of "never", "rarely", "sometime", "often", and "all the time", with 1 being 'never' and 5 being 'all the time'. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for all the reasons for reading.

Insert Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Students' Reasons for Reading

In general, both genders preferred reading for enjoyment and for relaxing rather than for functional reasons. Girls were more likely than boys to read for improving language ($t(4828) =$

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17.16, $p < .001$), for relaxing ($t(4828) = 11.47, p < .001$), for enjoyment ($t(4828) = 12.93, p < .001$), and because reading is their hobby ($t(4828) = 17.16, p < .001$).

Do Boys and Girls Really Have Different Reading Tastes?

Although boys and girls do differ in some ways in their reading preferences, the findings from the study suggest that there are commonalities, both in the reading of fiction and non-fiction.

To understand students' preferred genres for fiction books, they were provided a list of popular genres and asked to rate these on the scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'never' and 5 being 'all the time'. Table 3 shows the results.

Insert Table 3. Students' Preferences for Fiction Books

Overall, the most popular types of fiction books were adventure stories, mysteries, and humorous stories. Although girls preferred relationships and fairytales/folktales more than boys did ($t(4768) = 2.75$ and $3.08, ps < .001$), both genders shared almost similar taste in other types of fiction, except for mysteries ($t(4768) = 4.09, p < .001$). This points to greater convergence in boys' and girls' reading preferences by genre.

Similarly, students were asked to indicate their preferred subjects for non-fiction books, and results are presented in Table 4.

Insert Table 4. Preferences for Non-Fiction Books

For both genders, the most popular non-fiction books were about animals and plants, hobbies, and sports. However, compared to fiction, gender differences were more pronounced for non-fiction books. Boys showed a greater preference for various subjects such as sports ($t(4746) = 13.04, p < .001$), science ($t(4738) = 14.79, p < .001$), history ($t(4762) = 5.18, p < .001$), and geography ($t(4753) = 5.91, p < .001$). In comparison, girls preferred non-fiction books related to hobbies ($t(4761) = 11.43, p < .001$) and travel ($t(4736) = 6.93, p < .001$).

Does Technology Distract both Genders from Reading?

Singapore students live in one of the most connected cities in the world (“Singapore the Most Connected”, 2016), and our survey showed that more than 95% have internet connection at home, and more than 80% have phone plans that allow internet access (Table 5).

Insert Table 5. Digital Access and Online Reading

By gender, there was not much difference in internet access at home though slightly more girls had mobile phones with plans that allowed the Internet access compared to boys (83.4% for girls and 79.5% for boys). Interestingly, the data also showed that more girls than boys read e-books, articles and newspapers online using their computers and mobile devices (Table 5).

Students were asked to rate their preferences for different reading devices for electronic materials, i.e., dedicated e-reader, tablet, smartphone, and computer. Table 6 shows the results.

Insert Table 6. Preferred Reading Device

Compared to other types of reading devices, adolescent students still prefer printed book ($ts(4756) = 10.47 - 44.52, ps < .001$). Dedicated e-readers such as the Kindle was the least preferred reading device, perhaps due to the fact that a majority of the students own smartphones and have easy access to Wi-Fi. Fewer students may own a Kindle or device dedicated to reading. Students may also prefer to use the smartphone due to convenience and ease. Girls showed more preferences than boys in terms of using reading devices ($ts(4776) = 4.12 - 9.16, ps < .001$), except for computer usage ($t(4776) = 3.85, p < .001$).

Do Girls Always Read More than Boys?

For reading frequency, students were asked to indicate if they read almost daily, every other day, during weekends, during school holidays only and not at all. Students were also asked to report how much time they spend on each reading session (i.e., 15 minutes or less, 30 minutes or less, one hour or less, and more than an hour). The proportion of students' reading frequency and reading duration by gender is summarized in Table 7.

Insert Table 7. Reading Frequency and Reading Duration

Compared to boys, more girls reported that they read almost daily, every other day, or during weekends (38.7% - 17.8% vs 34.2% - 15.3%). By contrast, nearly 17.5% of the boys stated that they did not read at all, whereas only 7.6% of the girls reported so. For reading duration, even though similar proportions of boys and girls reading for one hour or less, more girls than boys tend to read for more than an hour (39.1% vs 26.2%) and more boys tend to read for less than 15

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minutes or 30 minutes. When considered together with earlier results that more girls than boys read online, it may suggest that girls read lengthier materials both online and offline. Technology may actually encourage readers to read more.

Table 8, which shows the preferred reading material by gender, suggests that boys may prefer reading shorter texts. Students were asked to rate how much they preferred various types of reading materials (i.e., storybooks, comics, magazines, internet/website, information, and newspaper), on the scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being ‘never’ and 5 being ‘all the time’.

Insert Table 8. Preferred Reading Materials

Compared to girls, boys showed more preferences for comics ($t(4762) = 6.97, p < .001$), information ($t(4756) = 4.32, p < .001$), and newspaper ($t(4757) = 2.65, p < .001$). On the other hand, girls reported more preferences for storybooks ($t(4798) = 15.44, p < .001$), internet/website ($t(4744) = 6.73, p < .001$), and magazines ($t(4744) = 1.18, p < .001$).

Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between both genders’ reasons for reading and their reading frequency and reading duration (Table 9).

Insert Table 8. Correlations of Reasons for Reading with Reading Frequency

Results demonstrated similar patterns of correlations for both genders. All reasons for reading were significantly correlated with students’ reading frequency ($r_s = .03 - .56, p_s < .001$), except for the correlation between reading for homework/projects and reading duration. A closer look

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revealed that the strength of the correlation of enjoyment reasons with reading frequency and reading durations are generally stronger ($r_s = .39 - .56, p_s < .001$) than those between two functional reasons (i.e., read for better grades and read for homework/projects) and reading frequency and reading duration ($r_s = .03 - .13, p_s < .01$). Taken together, these results indicate that students' enjoyment of reading is more correlated to reading frequency and reading duration. This means, regardless of gender, students who enjoy reading are more likely to read frequently and for longer durations.

Discussion and Implications

While there may be some gender stereotypes pertaining to reading preferences, the findings of this study suggest that there are fewer differences than often portrayed. The study also suggests that a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of adolescent reading is required.

Several previous studies (Hall & Cole, 1997b; Millard, 1997) suggest that girls are more keen readers than boys and we found the same in our study, with more girls than boys enjoying reading. What is worrying is the large percentage of boys (17.5%) who report that they do not read at all. As we did not collect qualitative data in relation to gendered reading habits and preferences, we were not able to determine if these boys stated that they did not read because they did not consider short reading in short spurts as reading or if they really did not spend any time reading. Further follow up should be done in this area. At the same time, we noted that there was a small percentage of girls who also do not read (7.6%). The tendency to focus on boys who do not read (Weaver-Tower, 2003) may lead to neglect of girls who do not read. Rather than thinking about adolescent readers as a uniform group, it is perhaps more helpful to focus on how

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to encourage different profiles of boys and girls to read and to explore strategies to help each profile and gender.

Across different profiles and levels, pleasure is a key motivator for students to want to read.

While girls were more likely to enjoy reading, the survey data showed that both genders prefer reading for pleasure than reading for functional reasons. Focusing on pleasure as an important factor in reading instruction and programmes provides adolescents with the reason to read (Cremin & Moss, 2018; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002). Pleasure in reading need not be limited to fiction but can be widely expanded to include the reading of non-fiction (Alexander & Jarman, 2018) and online materials (Kumovica, Schilhab, & Burke, 2018). In a recent study, Wilhelm (2016) has pointed out that students engaged in reading can experience five kinds of pleasure. These are immersive pleasure of play, intellectual pleasure of engaging with a text, social pleasure of sharing reading with others, the pleasure of reading for work, the pleasure of inner work, or self-development through reading. Students who are less proficient or interested readers may require different strategies to encourage them to find pleasure in reading. It is, therefore, desirable that educators should appeal to different kinds of pleasure when dealing with different students to help them find the right books for each kind of pleasure. The choice of print or other forms of technology can also be considered since some students may be motivated to read and find reading more engaging through the choice of a different device.

Given the tendency of current literacy education to focus *solely* on technical reading instruction to improve reading proficiency in a time of intense testing, this re-emphasis on pleasure is a crucial piece for educators' understanding about how to encourage independent and motivated

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reading (Loh, 2015; Cremin & Moss, 2018). There is a practical purpose for emphasizing the important role of pleasure in the reading classroom – regardless of gender, students who enjoy reading are likely to read more frequently and for longer periods. At the same time, students who read more frequently and for longer periods are more likely to enjoy reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998). Independent and engaged reading is a strong predictor of academic achievement (Kirsch et. al., 2002; Sullivan & Brown, 2015). Furthermore, given the current emphasis on lifelong learning for uncertain futures, students need to harness the power of reading for self-development and engagement.

The study's findings on reading preferences may also help educators and librarians understand how to better stock school libraries to encourage students to become keen readers. In terms of reading preferences, this study affirmed some stereotypes that boys and girls read differently. For example, more boys preferred comics and read non-fiction while more girls preferred books about relationships, echoing findings of some previous studies (Hall & Cole, 1997b; Millard, 1997). However, our study also found some convergence in adolescent reading behaviours, particularly in relation to fiction. Gendered differences in enjoyment of certain genres such as horror, science fiction and fantasy were quite small. This may be due to changing book markets, media influences and certain social factors.

Dystopian novels provide a case in point. Series books such as *The Hunger Games* (Collins, 2008) and *The Maze Runner* (Dashner, 2011) attract a large young adult readership. Part of the attraction of the genre may be its visibility in popular media in the form of movie remakes and also because of the growing numbers of adolescent male and female protagonists in dystopian

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novels (Wilhelm & Smith, 2016). Contemporary scholars suggest that dystopian novels call for social change and in fact allow readers to engage with thinking about current sociopolitical and global issues through their engagement with the text (Ames, 2013; Zipes, 2003). Contemporary YA dystopian novels also tend to feature autocratic governments, and reading these texts with strong, independently-minded teenagers as main characters allow adolescents room to think about individual autonomy as well as the role of government in today's world (Ames, 2013). Adolescents are at an age where they want to identify with key characters and think deeply about issues they encounter (Appleyard, 1990), and dystopian novels fulfil that need.

The study also showed that, across all genres and subjects, a minority of the students enjoyed reading books that were not typical for their gender. Some girls liked reading about history and sports and some boys showed interest in reading books about relationships. Thus, it is important not to compartmentalize reading interest of students from both genders. Although broad knowledge of gender reading patterns and trends can aid in book selection and instruction, it is equally important that educators, librarians and parents should ensure that the reading needs of individual children are adequately met. While taking care to ensure the availability of books for both genders in class and in school libraries, it is important to encourage students to read beyond gendered stereotypes to broaden their ways of reading and worldviews.

In terms of technology, both genders preferred the printed book compared to reading on devices. Smartphones were the most preferred reading device, likely due to its convenience as many students had access to smartphones (Kumovica, Schilhab, & Burke, 2018). Dedicated e-readers were the least preferred device, perhaps because fewer students had access to one. The findings

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also showed that girls generally read more in print and on devices. Elsewhere, we have found that students who enjoy reading more online and using technology in comparison to students who do not enjoy reading (Loh & Sun, 2018b). Taken together with current research that suggests that the enjoyment of reading and amount of reading is tied to socioeconomic background (Johnsson-Smaragdia & Jonsson, 2006; Pew Research Centre, 2016), the findings suggest that the study of reading habits and preferences must be contextualized and that further research of adolescent reading at the intersection of gender, proficiency, socioeconomic status and race would add depth to current understandings of adolescent reading. Although surveys such as these provide insight into current trends through analysis of a large dataset, qualitative studies can deepen understanding of why and how different adolescents read.

Complex understandings of adolescent reading require acknowledgement that there is no one size fits all when it comes to tailoring reading instruction or programmes and that those involved in promoting reading to adolescents need to be better trained to help adolescents find the right reading material. To promote reading, educators, parents and librarians first need to know adolescents better and not assume a single monolithic version of an adolescent reader or non-reader. Secondly, they need to become familiar with different kinds of books that adolescents would be interested in order to be able to recommend these books to students. Finally, they also need to understand why students would choose to read different kinds of materials in print and electronic formats, and whether students with different reading proficiency levels prefer using print or e-materials or devices. Being familiar with online platforms such as *Goodreads* (Authors 1 & 2, 2018; Nakamura, 2013) and fanfiction sites such as *Archive of Our Own (AO3)* are ways that educators, librarians and parents can understand and promote adolescent reading. By

developing one's sensitivities to adolescent needs and reading resources, educators, parents and librarians can develop more targeted approaches to help both boys and girls, of different profiles and needs, enjoy reading.

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