THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
FOURTH GRADERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD READING
AND THEIR HOME LITERARY ENVIRONMENT

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education
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by

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Official Advisor
DEDICATION

To my husband, John, for his love, patience, and encouragement throughout my master’s program and most especially with this thesis study. He is my greatest fan and my toughest adversary, my student and my teacher, my strength, my partner, and my very best friend. ∞

To my parents, James and Marilyn Thomeczek, who first gave me the gift of story. They read to me as a child and for that I will always be grateful. Their continuous love and support have made it possible for me to fulfill my dream of earning my master’s degree in literature.

To my students, whose incessant curiosity and enthusiasm for learning are my inspiration.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

"I think about the hunger still in my head – reading.
I have seen some people – young and old – do it.
I am nine years old and I know, if I had a chance,
I could do it too. I think there is a secret
in those books..."

In her first children's story, Marie Bradby (1995) writes of a young Booker T. Washington and his deep rooted longing to read. There are, indeed, secrets in those books. Secrets that tell of other worlds, adventures, poems, history, and so much more. Yet so many children are not reading. What are the common factors that encourage children to search for these secrets? How can our nation become filled with children who will become lifelong readers?

In order to discover the secrets in books, children need to possess two vital qualities. These are the same two elements that should be primary goals of every reading program: to teach children how to read and to make them want to read (Cullinan 1987). The issue of how to teach children to read has been heavily researched and debated. However, there has been a shift in the focus of interest and attention to this second component. There is a great concern in today's world that we are becoming an alliterate population (Watt, 1989); one filled with people who can read, but choose not to.

The key element that keeps these secrets found in books still untold is a lack of motivation and desire to read. Many children are not motivated to read, because
they do not have a positive attitude toward reading. It is widely believed by educators and researchers that attitude is an essential part of reading success (Wilson and Hall, 1972) “Students who perceive reading as valuable and important and who have personally relevant reasons for reading will engage in reading in a more planned and effortful manner (Ames & Archer, 1988).” It is, therefore, important to look at the factors that influence a child’s attitude toward reading.

While studying the disabled reader, Carter and McGinnis found that the interests, attitudes, and points of view of the individual have their origin in their environment (1970). Duncan and Goggin (1982) established that “Lifetime readers demonstrate an early interest in reading and this interest continues throughout their lives.” It is a logical conclusion then that research needs to determine the practices in the home, where this early interest first takes place, that may affect children’s attitudes toward reading. These practices, if encouraged, would help to foster lifelong readers.

Several studies have been done in recent years concerning the home literary environment and how it affects children. In his study of the home reading behaviors of third and fifth graders, Timothy Rasinski found that “Parents have an important contribution to make, both to the development of reading skills and encouraging the leisure reading habit. This they can do by introducing the child to the printed word, by creating an environment which helps to foster reading, and by providing opportunity, space, materials, encouragement, and example... It is the task of parents to help make encounters with print satisfying and pleasurable, thereby introducing the young person to a new world of adventure and ideas which can both illuminate and change his or her future life” (1987).

Several researchers including Handel (1976), Watt (1989), and Persson (1994) found that the literary environment of the home plays a vital role in the child’s reading ability and also in the child’s attitudes toward reading. In her thesis study,
Mary Ellen Kubis (1994) investigated the relationship between home literary environments and ninth graders' attitudes toward reading. She identified several variables of the home that positively impacted a child's attitude toward reading. These findings supported the conclusions of an earlier study by Harlan Hansen conducted in 1976.

**Statement of Purpose**

This study will attempt to verify and extend this previous research. This research will examine the home literary environment and the reading attitudes of fourth graders at one school. It will look at the results of attitude surveys and home literary environment surveys completed by the children. This study will explore the relationship between each child's home literary environment and his/her attitude toward reading in an attempt to suggest the factors found in the home that play a role in the fostering or discouraging of positive reading attitudes.

**Significance of the Study**

Several studies in the last decade have examined children's attitudes toward reading. The compilation of the results has shown that these attitudes are greatly influenced by extrinsic factors, beginning with the literary environment of the home. The first impressions that children receive about books come from this initial introduction to reading in the home. Therefore, it is vital that educators recognize this powerful influence and strive to both empower and educate all parents on the vital role they play in developing their child's attitudes toward reading. For if parents ensure that their child's first reading experiences are positive, our society is one step closer to truly becoming a nation of readers.
Hypothesis

A child’s attitude toward reading will be affected by the value that child’s family places on reading in their home literary environment. The home literary environment is defined as the aspects, behaviors, or experiences found in the home that influence a predisposition toward or against reading and books (Kubis, 1994). The value that a family places on reading is reflected in these reading aspects, behaviors, and experiences found in the home. These include the personal reading behaviors of the parents, as well as the reading experiences parents share with their children. Some examples are reading to their children, taking them to the library, discussing books with their children, and buying books and magazines for their children.

Assumptions of the Study

The following assumptions were made concerning this study.

1. The attitude scale accurately measured the children’s attitudes toward reading.
2. The children answered the attitude survey honestly, not feeling pressured to please their reading teacher, who administered the survey.
3. The students answered the home literary survey accurately.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to 19 fourth grade students in a parochial, suburban classroom setting that included 11 females and 8 males.
Definitions of Terms Used

**Attitude.** A system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation. (Alexander and Filler 1976)

**Aliteracy.** People who know how to read, but choose not to. (Watt, 1989)

**Reading Motivation.** An individual's self concept and the value the individual places on reading. (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Anders, 1996)

**Home Literary Environment.** Aspects, behaviors, or experiences found in the home that influence a predisposition toward or against reading and books. (Kubis, 1994)
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Attitudes and the Lifelong Reader

Determining the most effective way to help foster young readers will continue to be an issue for educational discussion and research. This discussion, however, does not always focus on the methodology of teaching children how to read. Mark Twain revealed to us in the late nineteenth century the simple truth that "Those who don't read have no advantage over those who can't." Over a hundred years later, educators and parents are still struggling with this issue.

This issue of aliteracy is at the very heart of reading education since one of the primary goals of reading teachers is the fostering of lifelong readers. In a national poll, teachers ranked motivating students and creating an interest in reading as their first priority of reading education (O'Flavahan et al., 1992). This focus on fostering children who choose to read supports the much earlier beliefs of Thomas Estes who stated that, "Certainly how students feel about reading is as important as whether they are able to read, for, as is true for most abilities, the value of reading ability lies in its use rather than in its possession" (1971).

Lifelong readers are characterized as active, voracious readers. They are people who often are reading two or three different books or magazines at one time. Or they are a person for whom the delivery of the newspaper is an event. Lifelong readers use reading as a passport into new worlds or a tool for learning new information. In essence, lifelong readers value reading and research has shown that this value comes from a positive attitude toward reading.

There have been multiple research studies done in the past twenty-five years
examining the effects of reading attitudes on recreational reading behaviors. Estes (1971) and Huck (1973) found that attitudes play an extremely vital role in the establishment of a lifelong reading habit. Attitudes, once they are formed, have been shown to exert strong control over behavior. Therefore, they are often the difference between a student who reads and one who does not (Greaney & Hegarty, 1987). After reviewing many studies, Alexander and Filler recognized that “Children’s attitudes are statistically correlated with both success in the task of reading and in self-concept” (1976). Finally, longitudinal data from a recent study found that “...a positive attitude developed in childhood persists into adulthood” (Smith, 1990).

The already established research suggests that a child’s attitude toward reading is perhaps the most important factor in reading habits. People of all ages are much more likely to engage in activities that are pleasing to them and hold value in their lives. Therefore, to reach the goal of encouraging lifelong readers, there is a definite need to increase our understanding of how children acquire a positive attitude, and in turn, the motivation to develop into active, engaged readers.

**Lifelong Readers and the Home Literary Environment**

Perhaps the first step in helping to foster positive attitudes in young children is to examine the experiences of adults who are lifelong readers, in an attempt to identify the factors that may have influenced them.

Such a study was conducted in 1982. Duncan and Grogin “Attempted to profile the active reader in retirement and to identify those patterns of behavior which permitted maintenance of interest in reading throughout a lifetime”. The researchers conducted interviews with 23 retired persons, all of whom indicated that reading was a very important part of their daily life. They were asked to discuss the factors that they felt made reading so appealing to them.

These interviews revealed several factors that many of the lifelong readers
had in common. Notably, all of these factors dealt with the subjects' experiences in the home. Most of the subjects demonstrated an interest in reading at a very young age. They were read to as a child and saw their parents engaged in reading activities. Other significant influences were: consistent family reading times, early exposure to the library, the possession of personal libraries, and the reception of books as gifts.

A similar study was conducted in 1994 (Marino & Moylan). Again the subjects were persons who were either self-proclaimed or nominated as "self-actualized" readers. The researchers used this term to describe avid readers who "...have made reading an integral part of their lives" (Marino & Moylan, 1994). However, in this study, these readers ranged from twenty years to sixty-seven years in age. The subjects were interviewed about their reading histories and habits. The goal of this research was to arrive at some commonalities in the readers' experiences in the hopes of using the results to guide parents and teachers in assisting children to become self-actualized readers.

When asked what motivated them to read, all twenty-five adults said that they found a great deal of pleasure in reading. Other significant factors included availability of books and other reading materials, being read to as a child, and going to the library with the family. Many also commented that discussing what they are reading with others was a key factor in encouraging their reading habit. Perhaps the most significant finding in this study was that all of the subjects possessed positive attitudes toward reading and "Their reading histories were essentially devoid of negative experiences" (Marino & Moylan, 1994). In summation, these profiles of lifetime readers not only identified specific factors that positively influenced reading attitudes, they served as a confirmation of the value of an early reinforcement of reading in the home.
Attitudes and the Home Literary Environment

There has been much attention given in recent years to children's home reading experiences. One needs only to look at the hundreds of informational books written for parents on how to help their child's reading development to see the importance placed on the home's affect on reading. There has been much research conducted in this area, beginning as early as the 1960's. However, the majority of this research has focused on the relationship between a child's home literary environment and his/her achievement in reading. These studies show a great correlation between children who have positive experiences in the home and children who succeed in reading. It is important to recognize the strong relationship between high achievement and positive attitudes toward reading. However, for the purpose of this research, only children's attitude's toward reading will be addressed and how they may be affected by their home literary environment.

There have been recent studies that have strived to accomplish this. The National Reading Research Center conducted an extensive year long study which was interested in "Understanding how children acquire the motivation to develop into engaged readers and how personal and situational factors influence students' motivation to read" (1994). They administered questionnaires to 330 third and fourth graders and then conducted personal interviews with 48 randomly selected students. From these results emerged three significant factors in the home that affect children's motivation toward reading. These were: prior experiences with books, social interactions with books, and access to books.

The students' prior experiences with books included activities found both at the home and in school. The experiences that were most prevalent in students who were highly motivated to read was being read to as a child and enjoying books which they had already been introduced to by either a parent, teacher, librarian, or other source such as the Reading Rainbow television show. The social interactions
with books included discussing the books, articles, etc. that he/she read with parents, a teacher, or friend(s). The experiences that fit under the child’s access to books were: having a book-rich classroom, making consistent visits to the library, and possessing a personal library which often develops as the child receives books as gifts.

A second study that supported the important effect the home literary environment can have on a child was descriptive research involving 116 elementary school children in the New Jersey school system. Susan Watt (1989) gave questionnaires to parents that focused on socioeconomic factors, along with early reading experiences. Her results showed a strong correlation between being read to as a child and having a positive disposition toward reading. One of her most significant findings was that the “Children who were introduced to books (were read to) within eighteen months after birth seemed to have an overall stronger attitude towards books than whose who are introduced after two years of age” (Watt, 1989). For example, when looking at the children who were read to starting from birth to one year, only eight percent needed any kind of encouragement to read on their own. It is also important to note that once encouraged, all the members of this eight percent enjoyed the activity.

Other generalizations dealt with the family profile. Watt attests to the imperative role that the parents’ attitudes and personal reading habits play in the development of children’s’ attitudes. “Family attitudes toward reading form a role model for children who naturally imitate what they see around them” (Watt 1989). This supports the findings of Carl Smith (1988) who believed that the model of parents reading in front of the children was even more influential than the parents reading to the children.

A third study investigated the impact that both the home and the school had on the development of print concepts and attitudes of primary students. The researchers, Shepston and Jensen (1996), investigated this relationship through an
attitude survey completed by seventy-nine first and second grade students and a literary survey completed by the parents. The results of the study showed a relatively high correlation (.81) between the students' scores on the recreational reading attitude scale and their scores on the academic reading attitude scale. This study also found a positive relationship between the children's home literary environment and their attitudes toward reading. Three specific factors in the home were identified as most influential. They were: accessibility to a wide variety of books, being read to as a child, and participation in verbal interactions about the books being read.

In her thesis study, Mary Ellen Kubis (1994) investigated these two factors: home literary environment and attitudes toward reading with 316 ninth graders. She used the Estes Reading Attitude Scale to determine the students' attitudes and the Home Literary Environment survey which was self-developed to measure the home reading experiences. Her results suggested that the ninth graders' reading attitudes were influenced by several variables in the home. These variables were: (a) being read to, (b) being read to by more than one person, (c) public library use, (d) possession of a library card, (e) receiving books as gifts, (f) parental book collections, (g) personal book collections, (h) television restrictions, and (i) discussing books and/or magazines with parents.

The final study referred to in this research study was conducted by Harlan Hansen in 1976. He stated that, "Because the home produces the first, most insistent, impact on a child, its importance has long been recognized." However, at the time, little had been done to focus on what elements of the home literary environment most affect children.

Hansen divided the factors of the home into two main categories: status characteristics and behaviors of parents. He devised a questionnaire that measured the home literary environment in four areas: availability of literary materials in the
home, amount of reading done with parents, reading guidance and encouragement given by parents, and parents as models of reading examples. He then gave this survey, along with a survey of reading attitudes, to forty-eight students in the fourth grade.

His results showed that the home literary environment did have an effect on children’s attitudes toward reading. He also found that the behaviors of the parents in the home had more influence on a child’s attitude toward reading than did the socioeconomic status of the parents. These results are very encouraging because this is an area over which parents have control and the ability to change.

In summary, previous research has consistently shown a correlation between positive literary environments in the home and positive attitudes toward reading in children. Becoming a Nation of Readers states that “Most children will learn how to read. Whether they will read depends in large part upon the encouragement they receive and the example their parents set.” These studies have recognized the important influence of a child’s home life and have presented a need for further investigation into the literary environment of the home and how it affects the child’s attitude toward reading.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This was descriptive research consisting of two surveys. The study examined the home literary environment of elementary school students, along with their attitudes toward reading.

Subjects

Holy Angels School is a parochial school located near downtown Dayton, Ohio. There are two fourth grade classes, each having approximately 20 students. The subjects in this study are an intact group, the 19 students in one fourth grade class. The class is comprised of 8 boys and 11 girls. These children are in a departmentalized environment, but have the same teacher for Reading and Language Arts.

Working Design

The study was conducted in February of 1998. A permission slip and explanation letter were sent home with every child in the intact group of the researcher’s fourth grade class. The parents were asked to return the slip within four days. Once permission was granted, the researcher administered the Estes Reading Attitude Scale (Estes, 1971). There are several published attitude surveys that measure how children feel about reading. This scale was chosen for several reasons. It was created for students in grades three through twelve. It has been tested for validity and reliability and produced a reliability coefficient of .92. The researcher felt that the statements included in this scale were clearly written, were appropriately
chosen, and would accurately assess children’s attitudes toward reading. The statements reiterated the researcher’s views on the criteria that most accurately reflects personal attitudes toward reading.

This survey consists of a 20 item Likert scale to which the students were to respond on a one to five scale ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Eight of the statements in the survey are positive and twelve are negative. This survey was taken in a whole group setting and the statements, along with the possible responses, were read aloud to the students. Item #8 was given additional explanation. The test administer stated that a grade grubber is a person who always gets A’s or a teacher’s pet. The children were reminded that there were no “correct” answers.

Four days later, a researcher-developed home literary environment survey was administered to the participants in the same group setting. This survey consists of 21 incomplete statements. The content of the survey came from a compilation of the results and surveys of previous research. The statements focus on factors in the home that previous research found to be most influential on children’s reading attitudes. All of the statements pertain to the actions of the family, not to the socioeconomic factors.

Eighteen of the items are followed by choices with which to finish the statement. Thirteen of the statements are multiple choice and five require a yes/no response. The remaining three statements are followed by a blank space and require a subjective answer. The subjects were instructed to choose the answer that best matches their experiences. Again, the questions were read aloud by the administrator of the survey. The students completed the statements revealing individual aspects of their home literary environment.
Data Collection

The surveys were hand scored by the researcher. Each student was given a total number score for each survey. Then, the two survey scores were compared in an attempt to find patterns and relationships between attitudes and home literary environment.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether factors in the home literary environment affect children’s attitudes toward reading. This chapter organizes the results of the study through the use of narratives and tables. This chapter will begin with an analysis of the data from the attitude surveys. Next, it will examine the home literary environments. Finally, it will compare the results of the surveys in an attempt to determine if a relationship exists between the two. This comparison will be done in a formal manner using statistics, followed by a discussion section.

Results of Attitude Surveys

The attitude survey administered to the children was developed by Thomas Estes in 1971. Along with his survey questions, Estes published a guide for scoring his survey. The researcher followed these directions by giving each of the twenty items a score from one to five, five indicating the most positive attitude, and one indicating the most negative attitudes. It is important to note that twelve of the items are written in the negative form. In these cases, a response of “strongly disagree” reflects the most positive attitude. Next, the scores for each item were added together to determine an overall attitude score. Estes did not include a chart which quantified the degree of attitude based on the final score. Therefore the researcher developed a scale. The possible scores on this survey range from 20-100. Since the “undecided” response scores as a three in each of the twenty statements, a total score of 60 would represent a relatively neutral position. A Likert scale was
used to identify attitude categories which the total scores suggest. Table 1 shows these categories which allow for easier discussion of the results.

Table 1
Categories of Students' Attitudes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Attitude Toward Reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>85 –100</td>
<td>Strong positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69 – 84</td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 – 68</td>
<td>Neutral attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37 – 52</td>
<td>Negative attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 36</td>
<td>Strong negative attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each student was given a number, so that the results of the two surveys could be compared. The numbers were assigned according to the results of the fourth grade IOWA Basics Test which were taken in October, 1997. With regard to reading, the children received a score for reading comprehension, a score for vocabulary, and a cumulative reading score, which was the mean of the first two. The researcher ranked the children from one to nineteen according to their cumulative reading score. Then each child was assigned the corresponding number, one being the highest reading achievement score and nineteen being the lowest.

Table 2 shows each student's total score on the Estes Attitude Survey, along with the descriptive label assigned by the researcher. The students' scores from this study ranged from 48 to 100. Nine of the students (47%) were identified as having “strong positive attitudes” toward reading. Six of the students (32%) were categorized as having “positive attitudes”. Three of the students (16%) had scores which suggested “neutral attitudes” toward reading and one student (.5%) was identified as having a “negative attitude” toward reading.

Overall, 79% of the students surveyed (fifteen of nineteen) indicated some degree of a positive attitude toward reading, while only 21% indicated a non-positive attitude (either neutral or negative).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Attitude Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Neutral Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Negative Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Neutral Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Neutral Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>Strong Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>Positive Attitude</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results of Home Literary Environment Surveys

The survey focusing on the home literary environment was created by the researcher, based on the results of previous research. The manner of scoring was created and completed by the researcher and is outlined in Table 3. Eighteen of the statements required a multiple choice answer. Sixteen of these statements were given a numerical value and were added together to determine the total score. The possible scores on this survey range from 21 to 71.

Aside from these quantitative questions, the researcher was very curious to know what actions parents can do to encourage their children to read. Perhaps more importantly, what do children perceive that their parents are doing that encourages them to read? For this reason, the final statement, #21 was included in the survey “My parents encourage me to read by...” Also, the survey contains two additional fill in the blank statements. This study only addressed the final statement. The researcher included statements #6, #8, #10 and #13 in the survey due to personal curiosity about the specific literary behaviors in the home. Therefore, they were not addressed in the study.
Table 3
Scoring the Home Literary Environment Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nos. 1, 2, 5, 7</td>
<td>0–1 hrs/week</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2 hrs/week</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2–3 hrs/week</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 3 hrs/week</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos. 3, 4, 16</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 9</td>
<td>0 Magazines</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 Magazine</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Magazines</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 Magazines</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 3 Magazines</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 11</td>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At least 3 times/week</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once or twice/week</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Every once in a while</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 12</td>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A couple times a year</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A few times a month</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nos. 14, 15, 17, 19, 20</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. 18</td>
<td>0–10 Books</td>
<td>1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11–25 Books</td>
<td>2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26–50 Books</td>
<td>3 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51–100 Books</td>
<td>4 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 100 Books</td>
<td>5 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The researcher believes that any positive reading activities found in the home have the capacity to positively influence children. For example, if a child is read to 1–2 hours a week, this is better than not at all. Following the same logic, the seldom discussion of books with parents is better than no discussion and can have a positive effect on the child's attitude. The total score descriptions reflect this belief. Only those homes that have an absence of all identified factors could be identified as a negative home literary environment. In this case, “neutral” is not a category because these practices are either found in the home in some degree or they are not. The researcher devised the categories found in Table 4 which correspond to the total scores of the Home Literary Environment Survey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Description of Home Literary Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60–71</td>
<td>Very Strong Home Literary Environment (VS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–59</td>
<td>Strong Home Literary Environment (S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42–49</td>
<td>Moderate Home Literary Environment (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21–41</td>
<td>Weak Home Literary Environment (W)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 presents the results of the Home Literary Environment Survey. It gives each student’s total score, along with the category assigned by the researcher. A third column reveals the responses to the final statement (#21), “My parents encourage me to read by...” Not every student responded to this statement. This is because students No. 3, 8, 14, and 16 indicated in statement #20 that their parents did not encourage them to read at home. Therefore, the term “No Response” was recorded in Table 3 for these students.

The students' total scores for the Home Literary Environment ranged from 40 to 62. Two of the students (11%) were identified as having a “very strong home literary environment.” Nine of the students (47%) were categorized as having
“strong home literary environments.” Five students (26%) were identified as having a “moderate home literary environment.” Three students (16%) gave responses that placed them in the “weak home literary environment” category.

Overall, the responses of 58% of the students surveyed (fifteen of nineteen) suggested that they experienced a positive home literary environment, characterized as “strong” or “very strong”, while the responses of 42% of the students surveyed indicated less positive home literary environments characterized as “moderate” or “weak.”

The responses to the final statement, “My parents encourage me to read by...” were quite interesting and revealed several commonalities among students. These will be discussed in further detail in the section of this chapter that compares the two surveys.
Table 5

Results of Home Literary Environment Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student No.</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Response to Statement #21 “My parents encourage me to read by...”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>54 (S)</td>
<td>giving me books for presents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>54 (S)</td>
<td>taking me to Books &amp; Co. once or twice a month to pick out one or two books/magazines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>40 (W)</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>62 (VS)</td>
<td>getting me books from the library when I can’t go</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>46 (M)</td>
<td>getting me books as presents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>52 (S)</td>
<td>giving me some good books so I can read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>47 (M)</td>
<td>giving me a new book and helping me</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>56 (S)</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>54 (S)</td>
<td>just saying go read a book</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>48 (M)</td>
<td>telling me to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>57 (S)</td>
<td>giving me time to read</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>49 (M)</td>
<td>(telling) me that reading helps me in school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>55 (S)</td>
<td>saying it will give me a better education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>41 (W)</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>54 (S)</td>
<td>whenever I’m bored my parents say, “Then go read!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>41 (W)</td>
<td>No Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>61 (VS)</td>
<td>saying I get a good education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>52 (S)</td>
<td>saying it gets me stronger in my reading skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>45 (M)</td>
<td>helping me (read) and getting me books</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of Attitude Survey and Home Literary Environment Survey

The final goal of this study was to compare the results of the attitude surveys and the results of the home literary environment survey, in order to determine if a relationship existed. First the scores of each test were compared according to the category in which each score fell.

The results showed that when students had either a “very strong” or “strong” home literary environment, their attitudes were much higher and more predictable than the students whose home literary environments were characterized as “moderate” or “weak.” Both of the students (100%) with a “very strong” home
literary environment demonstrated a “strong positive attitude” toward reading. Nine of the nineteen students in the sample indicated that they had a “strong” home literary environment. Of these nine students, six (67%) were identified as having a “strong positive” attitude toward reading. The other three had a “positive” attitude toward reading.

The observations found when comparing the students with “moderate” and “weak” were much more sporadic. Five of the students' home literary environments fell in the “moderate” range. Of these five, one (20%) had a “strong positive” attitude toward reading, one (20%) had a “positive” attitude toward reading, two (40%) had reading attitudes that were characterized as “neutral”, and one (20%) expressed a “negative” attitude toward reading. The home literary environments of three of the students were characterized as “weak.” Two of these students (67%) were identified as having “positive” attitudes toward reading, while one student (33%) had a “neutral attitude” toward reading.

These findings suggest a strong relationship between a positive home literary environment and a positive attitude toward reading. This is not to say that other factors in a child’s life do not play a role in the fostering of positive reading attitudes. However, all of the students with a strong home literary environment (eleven of eleven) also had did not have strong home literary environments expressed positive attitudes toward reading.

To further investigate the degree of this relationship, a scatter plot was created using the cumulative score from both tests, for each student. This scatter plot is shown in Table 6.
A brief look at this plot seemed to show a positive relationship between a child's home literary environment and his/her attitude toward reading. However, the researcher wanted more concrete statistics which would accurately describe this relationship. Therefore, she took this scatter plot to a statistician who ran a linear regression on the data. This procedure used an equation to determine the best fitting straight line through the points on the scatter plot. This straight line was given by the equation:

\[
\text{Attitude} = 14.81 + 1.30 \times \text{Home Literary Environment Score}
\]

The interpretation of this equation stated that for every one point increase in the home literary environment score, the attitude score went up 1.30 points. The fact that 1.30 was positive indicated that the relationship between the two scores was
positive. There were several diagnostic statistics that were outgrowths of this linear regression. The number 1.30 was an estimate of the effect of the environment on attitude. There was a 95% confidence interval for the 1.30 number assigned in the equation. This means that the statistician had 95% confidence that the effect of home literary environment on attitude was given by (0.4768, 2.1232). The 95% confidence interval can be interpreted as saying that there was a 95% assurance that the true effect is somewhere between .4768 and 2.1232. The significance of these results is that the researcher can be very sure that the effect of the home literary environment on students' attitudes was positive.

Another statistic that was helpful in interpreting the results was the p value of the home literary environment variable, which was .0066. This affirmed that if there were, in fact, no relationship between the home literary environment and reading attitude, the probability of drawing a sample of 19 students that have the numbers found in this study was .0066 (less than 1%). This extremely small probability, made the researcher quite sure that the finding of a positive relationship was not due to random chance.

The final statistic dealt with the total variation in the attitude scores. This variation was computed by adding the square of the individual's score minus the average score and was completed for each individual in the sample. The percentage of the total variation in scorers on attitude was 35%, a remarkably high number. In other words, 35% of the variance in reading attitude scores were explained by the home literary environment. All of these statistics served to support the researcher's hypothesis that a child's attitude toward reading is, in fact, affected by his/her home literary environment.

Discussion of the Results

After having established a positive relationship between a child's home
literary environment and his/her attitude toward reading, the researcher was curious to find out the specific variables in the home that play a particularly vital role in the development of positive reading attitudes. Were there certain factors frequently found in the homes of students with very positive attitudes toward reading that were not found in the homes of children with poorer attitudes?

This curiosity stemmed from the researcher's volunteer participation in a program designed to educate young, underprivileged parents about their child's cognitive development. Classes are taught which focus on activities and experiences that these parents can provide for their young children which will help prepare their child for success in school. Since research has shown that success in school is largely dependent upon reading ability and attitude, much of the focus of this class is on providing a positive home literary environment. Through this additional analysis, the researcher hoped to identify specific activities in the home that have the greatest effect on children's reading attitudes and to pass these results on to the parents in her class.

In an attempt to investigate this further, ten home literary environment surveys were more carefully analyzed. This sample consisted of the five students with the highest cumulative scores and the five students with the lowest cumulative scores. These groups will be referred to as "high" and "low" groups for ease of discussion. The researcher found it very interesting to discover that all of the students in the "high" group were female and all of the students in the "low" group were male. This is definitely an area that warrants further study.

The responses to sixteen of the multiple choice questions were examined. The following section is a discussion of the findings.

Statement #1

Four of the five students (80%) who have the top attitudes toward reading
were read to at least two hours a week as a small child. Only 20% (one of five) of the “low” group were read to for more than two hours a week as a child. This suggests that being read to as a child was a significant factor in the home literary environment.

Statement #2

Only one student in the entire ten person sample indicated that a parent read to them now, as a fourth grader. This student was in the “high” group. However, this factor did not seem to be a significant factor in differentiating between positive and negative reading attitudes in children.

Statements #3

Four of the five “high” students (80%) stated that they often or always share books they are reading with their parents, while 0% of the “low” students shared books with their parents always or often. This disparity validities the significant value of sharing books in the home.

Statement #4

Three of the five “high” students (60%) always engage in discussions with their parents about books they are reading. Zero of the “low” students (0%) always discuss books they are reading. All five of the “low” students reported that they sometimes or seldom discuss the books they are reading with their parents. These results, along with those found in statement #3, demonstrate the importance of interacting with children about the books they are reading and suggest a positive relationship between sharing and discussing books at home and children’s attitudes toward reading.
Statement #5

In the “high” attitude group, 100% (five of five) saw their mothers read more than two hours per week, while four of the five (80%) of the “low” group saw their mothers reading two or more hours per week. This does not seem to be a determining factor in the home literary environment until the gender of the students were realized. All of the “high” students were female and therefore had a positive, same gender, reading role model in the home.

Statement #7

All five of the “high” group (100%) remembered seeing their fathers read more than two hours per week. However, only one of the members of the low group (20%) saw his father reading more than two hours a week. These results are very significant, especially when taken in light of the gender of the “low” students. All five of these students are male. The presence of a same-gender role model in the home, who is a positive, active reader, appeared to have a strong relationship with the development of positive reading attitudes in children.

Statement #9

Four of the five students in the “high” group (80%) received more than two magazines in the home, while only 40% (two of five) of the students in the “low” group reported receiving more than two magazines addressed to them. This shows a significant relationship between receiving magazines in the home and having a positive attitude toward reading.

Statement #11

The results of the statement focusing on the frequency with which newspapers are found in the home found no significant relationship between
newspaper availability and a child’s attitude toward reading. 60% (three of five) of both the “high” and “low” groups received the newspaper at least three times a week.

Statement #12
Three of the five students with “high” reading attitudes (60%) reported visiting the public library at least two times a month. Only one of the students with a “low” reading attitude (20%) visited the public library at least two times a month. These results indicate that frequency of public library visits was a significant factor in the home literary environment.

Statement #14
All five students with “high” reading attitude (100%) and four of the students with “low” reading attitude (80%) have their own public library card. This does not seem to be a significant factor in determining reading attitude.

Statement #15
Eighty percent of the “high” attitude students (four of five) have a special place at home where they go to read, while only 40% (two of five) of the “low” attitude students indicated having such a place at home. These results suggest that this is a significant factor in the home that affects reading attitudes.

Statement #16
Four of the five “high” students (80%) stated that they often or always received books as gifts, while only 40% (two of five) of the “low” students received books as gifts often or always. Therefore, the frequent reception of gifts is a significant factor in the home literary environment.
Statement #17

All ten students (100%) indicated that they had a personal book collection at home. There was no differentiation between “high” and “low” students. Therefore, according to this study, the possession of a personal library is not a significant factor in the development of positive reading attitudes.

Statement #18

Four of the five “high” students (80%) stated that their personal book collection exceeded one hundred books. Two of the five students in the “low” group had personal book collections containing more than one hundred books. The number of books in a child’s personal collections is a significant factor in the home literary environment.

Statement #19

Two of the five “high” students (40%) stated that their family has a special time, either daily or weekly, that is set aside for reading. None of the “low” attitude students (0%) indicated that they had such a time in their family. These results suggest that having a special reading time for the whole family is a significant factor in the fostering of positive attitudes toward reading.

Statement #20

Four of the five students (80%) in both the “high” and “low” attitude groups revealed that their parents encourage them to read. There was no differentiation between “high” and “low” students. Therefore, according to this study, a child’s personal belief that he/she is being encouraged to read by mom and dad is not a significant factor in the home literary environment.
Statement #21

This item allowed the students to write in a narrative form, the ways their parents encourage them to read. The parents of the “high” group took a very active role in supporting their child’s reading. These activities included, “Getting me books from the library when I can’t go,” “Giving me time to read” and “Taking me to Books and Co. once or twice a month to pick out one or two books or magazines.”

However, the responses on the “low” group appeared to be less developed and the parents of the “low” students tended to play a more passive role in their child’s reading experiences. Two particularly poignant responses revealed that their parents encouraged them to read by, “Telling me to” and “Telling me that reading helps me in school.”

Overall, the responses of statement #21 suggest that parents playing a positive, active role, as opposed to a passive role, in their child’s reading experiences is a significant factor in the fostering of positive reading attitudes in their child.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to confirm and extend the work of earlier researchers on the relationship between home literary environment and reading attitudes. The results of this study support the previous findings which identified a positive relationship between a child's home literary environment and his/her attitude toward reading. Children who came from homes where reading was valued and experiences with reading were positive, were much more likely to develop positive attitudes toward reading.

The results of this study identified several specific characteristics found in the home literary environment that were significant factors in helping to develop positive reading attitudes in children. These can be placed into four main categories: children's introductions to literature, children and parental interactions with books, modeling of parents, and a sense of ownership held by the child when it comes to reading.

This study reiterated the important role parents have as their child's first teacher. The introduction they give their child to reading, either purposeful or accidental, has great affects on the child's interest in reading. This study showed that parents can encourage children to enjoy reading by being an active participant in positive reading activities with them. These activities include reading to their child frequently, interacting with their child by sharing and discussing the books their child is reading, and making frequent visits to the public library. A recommendation for further study is to compare children whose parents continue to read to them throughout their childhood versus those parents who stop when the child is able to
read themself.

Children learn what they live and they live what they see. Society is often talking about children's role models: famous athletes, actresses, and other public figures. The most influential role model for children is often overlooked, their parents. Young children look to their parents for the answers about how to act, what to do, and what to think about the world. They not only learn from their parents' words, they also learn from their parents' actions. Therefore, it is so important that children see their parents reading books, magazines, or the newspaper. Special time should be set aside when the whole family reads, either together or independently. The results of this study reinforced the importance for fathers to be positive role models for their sons by ensuring that their sons see their fathers engaged in reading for pleasure. Same gender role models is another recommendation for further investigation.

Finally, this study found that it is important that children's home literary experiences help them to gain a sense of ownership and personal value from reading. Parents can encourage this by allowing their child to receive magazine subscriptions in his/her name and encouraging their child to have his/her own library card. Having a personal library collection, receiving books as gifts, and having a special place to read, all are significant factors in the development of positive reading attitudes in children.

This study succeeded in verifying and extending the previous research conducted on the relationship between children's home literary environments and their attitudes toward reading. This correlation is not a new discovery to teachers and researchers. Most are aware of the many benefits of children having positive literary experiences in the home. However, teachers and researchers should not be the primary recipients of these findings. The group who needs to be educated about the vital role of the home in developing positive reading attitudes in children are
the people who determine the practices in the home, the parents. This is an area for further study as well.

Recent articles in educational journals show a steady increase in parental participation in the schools and in their child’s academic development. Parents really want to help and many recognize the vital role they play in their child’s education. However, one of the obstacles that stands in parents’ way is lack of confidence. They are not sure what they should be doing to help their children. This is where teachers and researchers need to step in. They need to educate parents about the vital role they play in the fostering of positive reading attitudes in their children. Parents need to be empowered to start to make changes in their home and reassured that they already have several positive reading practices in place.

This responsibility of educating and empowering parents should not lie solely on the shoulders of teachers and researchers. They must work together to reach parents of even the youngest of children. Educational programs should be set up through pediatricians, obstetricians, and birthing hospitals. New parents are given much advice and guidance on how to take care of their baby’s developing body. It’s time they receive the essential information they need on how to take care of their baby’s developing mind. For it is through the literary experiences started even in the earliest days of a child’s life, that begin the development of the lifelong reader.
APPENDIX A

ESTES READING ATTITUDE SURVEY

1. Reading is for learning, but not for enjoyment.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

2. Money spent on books is well spent.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

3. There is nothing to be gained from reading books.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

4. Books are a bore.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

5. Reading is a good way to spend spare time.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree
6. Sharing books in class is a waste of time.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

7. Reading turns me on.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

8. Reading is only for grade grubbers.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

9. Books aren’t usually good enough to finish.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

10. Reading is rewarding to me.
    A = strongly agree
    B = agree
    C = undecided
    D = disagree
    E = strongly disagree

11. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.
    A = strongly agree
    B = agree
    C = undecided
    D = disagree
    E = strongly disagree
12. Most books are too long and dull.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

13. Free reading doesn’t teach anything.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

14. There should be more time for free reading during the school day.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

15. There are many books which I hope to read.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

16. Books should not be read except for class requirements.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

17. Reading is something I can do without.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree
18. A certain amount of summer vacation should be set aside for reading.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree

20. Reading is dull.
   A = strongly agree
   B = agree
   C = undecided
   D = disagree
   E = strongly disagree
APPENDIX B

Home Literary Environment Survey

1. When I was younger, my parent(s) read to me:
   0–1 hrs/week
   1–2 hrs/week
   2–3 hrs/week
   more than 3 hrs/week

2. Now, as a fourth grader, my parents read to me:
   0–1 hrs/week
   1–2 hrs/week
   2–3 hrs/week
   more than 3 hrs/week

3. I share a book I’m reading with my parents:
   Always
   Often
   Sometimes
   Seldom
   Never

4. My parents and I discuss books I am reading:
   Always
   Often
   Sometimes
   Seldom
   Never

5. At home, I see my mother read:
   0–1 hrs/week
   1–2 hrs/week
   2–3 hrs/week
   more than 3 hrs/week

6. Most often, I see my mother reading:
   A book
   A magazine
   The newspaper
   Other
7. At home, I see my father read:
   0–1 hrs/week
   1–2 hrs/week
   2–3 hrs/week
   more than 3 hrs/week

8. Most often, I see my father reading:
   A book
   A magazine
   The newspaper
   Other

9. I receive magazines at home.
   0 Magazines
   1 Magazine
   2 Magazines
   3 Magazines
   More than 3 Magazines

10. The magazines I receive are ________________________________

11. My family receives a newspaper
   Every day
   At least 3 times/week
   Once or twice/week
   Every once in a while
   Never

12. I visit the library on an average:
   Once a year
   A couple times a year
   A couple times a month
   Several times a month, but not every week
   Once a week

13. The library I most often visit is ________________________________

14. I have my own library card:
   Yes
   No
15. I have a special place where I go to read.
   Yes
   No

16. I receive books for gifts:
    Always
    Often
    Sometimes
    Seldom
    Never

17. I have my own personal collection of books.
    Yes
    No

18. The number of books that I own is about:
    0–10 books
    11–25 books
    25–50 books
    50–100 books
    More than 100 books

19. My family sets aside a special time each day or week for reading.
    Yes
    No

20. My parents encourage me to read at home.
    Yes
    No

21. My parents encourage me to read by ________________________________________
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