

Bethany Meyer Wyrick

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Article Review 8

Goulding, A., Dickie, J., & Shuker, M. J. (2017). Observing preschool storytime practices in Aotearoa New Zealand's urban public libraries. *Library and Information Science Research*, 39(3), 199–212.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lisr.2017.07.005>

The title fairly represents the subject matter of this article. It is direct and gives a clear overview of what readers can expect. It does not address the specific literacy skills referenced in the article, but had they been included, that may have been a lengthy title. The “storytime practices” are what is under examination, which is covered in the title. The study aimed to identify the extent to which storytimes in Aotearoa New Zealand public libraries incorporated practices to encourage early literacy skills.

The abstract provides a general overview of the paper. It also lists six key literacy skills that are mentioned throughout the rest of the article. This is an informative abstract because it describes both the purpose of the work and the findings from the research.

Authors set the tone in the introduction by describing preschool storytimes and how they are internationally popular in libraries. Authors noted the importance and value of hard copy books in storytime and how they contribute to supporting early literacy. The authors suggest a lack of verification of the assertion that libraries are a key local community institution that can help improve academic outcomes. How do Aotearoa New Zealand libraries demonstrate their value? “Little is known about exactly how these programs work, the kinds of early literacy skills that are promoted through the sessions, and how effectively the staff running the sessions follow and demonstrate good practice in early literacy skills development” (200). Authors also included a quote from the Ministry of Education Best Evidence Synthesis that said available New Zealand evidence is sparse. “If public libraries are to promote themselves effectively as contributors to the literacy and learning agenda, it is important to try to understand what they do, and why and how they do it” (199). In addition to highlighting the significance of the study, the introduction also gives an overview of the research and lists the research questions.

The literature review is broken down into multiple sections: the importance of reading with young children, public libraries and reading engagement for preschoolers, and the Aotearoa New Zealand context. As noted earlier, the research on this topic specific to the New Zealand area is sparse: “While there has been a variety of studies investigating the practice and impact of public library storytimes in North America and Australia, no research could be identified which investigated how Aotearoa New Zealand’s public libraries approached preschool storytimes” (202). A majority of the literature is peripherally related to the topic being covered, and some is more directly related. The authors do not explicitly state that this is guided by a specific theory or theoretical framework. This is an integrative type of literature review because it explains and synthesizes various related studies so that new perspectives are formed.

The research questions that guided this study included the following:

1. How do storytimes in public libraries in Aotearoa New Zealand support young children's early literacy practices?
2. What evidence is there that the storytimes include opportunities for the children attending to experience the six early literacy skills of
 - a. Print motivation
 - b. Phonological awareness
 - c. Vocabulary
 - d. Narrative skills
 - e. Print awareness
 - f. Letter knowledge
3. Do the librarians' storytime practices focus on the six skills and, if so, what strategies do they use to integrate them into their programming?

I do believe the methods were clear enough so that this study could be replicated. Researchers used two types of data gathering methods: direct observation and interviews with librarians. I do not think this study has dependent variables. Authors just wanted to observe storytime practices to determine whether they incorporated specific early literacy practices. I do not think anything was "measured."

Researchers used a qualitative approach for this study because of their use of observational data collecting. They noted that the sampling method was "a combination of purposive and convenience sampling" (202). Due to this strategy, the target population size, sample size, and response rate cannot be calculated. However, this study was geographically specific to libraries in the Aotearoa New Zealand area, so results are not meant to be generalizable.

Results from the study are divided by sections. The sections represent the six key literacy skills referenced earlier in the article. "Evidence from the observations suggested that print motivation was a, if not *the*, key element in the librarians' approach, and they employed a variety of different strategies and practices to engage the children with the books they presented and the stories they read and told" (205). They also noted that storytimes incorporated songs and rhymes and encouraged children to participate. By observing librarians during storytimes, they noted that they "responded positively to the children's comments, building on them and encouraging them to talk more, which in turn gave children the opportunity to practice their vocabulary" (206). Each section is fashioned similarly to elaborate on the various storytime practices and how both librarians and children participated. There is a chart that provides data about the sites represented in this study. It includes details such as ages, library description, ethnicity, storytime setting, and space arrangement. This chart helps readers visualize the setting for the storytimes referenced in the article. "Analysis of the data gathered shows that the preschool storytimes exposed the children participating to some important early literacy skills within a community setting, in line with previous studies" (207). Librarians promoted engagement and enjoyment in their storytime practices, which lead to the children actively engaging, as well. Researchers listed observational data gather technique as one of the limitations of the study. The also stated that "the most notable limitations are selective attention on part of the observers, and researcher bias.

There were a great deal of references listed for this study. Although it was published in 2017, I thought a lot of the references skewed older since they were from the 1980's, 1990's, and early 2000's.

There were books, journals, and websites referenced. I think they even included the print books that some of the librarians read during storytimes.

I thought the article was organized well enough. The authors started with an overview of the topic and the problem statement, which led to the literature review, followed by the methods, results, and discussion. All terms were defined well, including the general “early literacy.” Some of the sections were lengthy, but everything flowed effectively from one section to the next.