DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 429 279 CS 013 531

AUTHOR	Higginbotham, Shelly
TITLE	Reading Interests of Middle School Students and Reading Preferences by Gender of Middle School Students in a Southeastern State.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	137p.; Master's Thesis, Mercer University.
PUB TYPE	Dissertations/Theses - Masters Theses (042) -- Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Literary Genres; *Middle School Students; Middle Schools; *Reading Attitudes; *Reading Interests; *Sex Differences; Sex Stereotypes; *Student Attitudes

ABSTRACT

A survey was conducted to examine the reading interests of middle school students. Subjects were sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in a metropolitan, public middle school located in a southeastern state. It was hypothesized that the data would reveal statistically significant categories of reading interest, and would reveal significant differences between categorical interests by gender. A one-dimensional chi square analysis was used to analyze the reading interests for the sample as a whole. A two-dimensional chi square analysis was used to compare the reading interests by gender. The students clearly indicated a strong preference for the categories of Humor and Horror. The students also reported an interest in Mystery, Historical Fiction, Adventure, Science Fiction, and the non-fiction category of Animals. The results of this study showed differences in interest by gender, which are congruent with many of society's stereotypes. The females reported a stronger interest in Romance, Friendship, Animal Stories, Adventure, and Historical Fiction, while the males reported stronger preferences for the categories of Sports and Science. In addition, the results indicated that the male respondents had a stronger preference for non-fiction than did the female respondents. (Author/RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 429 279

READING INTERESTS OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS AND READING PREFERENCES BY GENDER OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS IN A SOUTHEASTERN STATE

by

SHELLY HIGGINBOTHAM

B.S., Georgia Southern University, 1993

Research Report Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of Mercer University in Partial Fulfillment

of the

Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Atlanta, Georgia

1999

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS 013 531

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank several people for their assistance with this project. I truly appreciate the cooperation of the teachers and administrators at the middle school that participated in this study. I would also like to thank the professor and the professional educational test developer for their guidance in the development of the survey.

In addition, I wish to recognize my family for their encouragement and support. In particular, I would like to thank my husband, Jimmy, and my children, Griffin and Tatum, who forfeited their time with me so that I could work on this project. I would also like to recognize my father, Gene Scarzafava, for his time and direction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS. v

LIST OF TABLES. viii

ABSTRACT. xii

I. INTRODUCTION. 1

Problem. 10

Purpose. 11

Hypothesis. 11

Definition of Terms. 11

Curriculum. 12

Fictitious Annotated Titles Survey. . . . 12

Likert Scale. 12

Middle School. 12

Categories of Reading Interests. 13

Regular Education Students. 13

Textbook. 13

Trade Books. 13

Assumptions. 13

Limitations. 14

Significance of Study. 15

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE. 17

III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES. 45

Subjects. 47

Population. 47

Sample. 48

Instrument. 48

Procedures and Activities. 50

Method of Data Analysis. 51

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. 52

Data Collection. 52

Analysis of Findings. 52

One-dimensional Chi Square Analysis. . . .52

Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis. . . .78

Acceptance of Hypothesis. 107

Summary of Findings. 108

Conclusions for Subjects as a Whole. . . 108

Conclusions Based on Gender. 108

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings. . .109

Contribution to Theory. 112

Implications for Practice. 113

Suggestions for Further Research. 115

REFERENCES. 117

APPENDIX. 123

Reading Survey. 123

LIST OF TABLES

One-dimensional and Two-dimensional Chi Square Tables

TABLE PAGE

1. One-dimensional Earthquake (Science). 53

2. One-dimensional Mystery of the Hidden Jewels (Mystery). 54

3. One-dimensional Hidden in the Barn (Historical Fiction). 55

4. One-dimensional More Laughs (Humor). 56

5. One-dimensional Summer Love (Romance). 56

6. One-dimensional King (Animal Stories). 57

7. One-dimensional Crush (Romance). 57

8. One-dimensional The Coming of the Loo People (Science Fiction). 58

9. One-dimensional A Three Point Player (Sports). 59

10. One-dimensional Ledge (Adventure). 60

11. One-dimensional Models to be Made (Hobbies and Crafts). 61

12. One-dimensional Lady of Grace (Biographies). 61

13. One-dimensional Wings and Talons (Animals). 62

14. One-dimensional Funny Facts (Humor). 63

15. One-dimensional The Voice in the Box (Mystery). . . . 64

16.One-dimensional Who Will Care for Dusty (Animal Stories) 64

17.One-dimensional The President (Friendship). 65

18.One-dimensional Tall and Proud (Biographies). 66

19.One-dimensional The Winner Is (Friendship). 66

20.One-dimensional Paper and Printing (Hobbies and Crafts). 67

21.One-dimensional Wild Things (Animals). 68

22.One-dimensional Fishing (Sports). 68

23.One-dimensional Probing Space (Science). 69

24.One-dimensional House on the Hill (Horror). 70

25.One-dimensional A Journey in Time (Science Fiction). .71

26.One-dimensional Lion's Eye (Adventure). 71

27.One-dimensional The All Star Catcher (Sports). 72

28.One-dimensional A Friend With a Friend (Historical Fiction). 73

29.One-dimensional Bad Billy (Horror). 74

30.One-dimensional Baseball: The Game (Sports). 75

31.Two-dimensional Earthquake (Science). 79

32.Two-dimensional Mystery of the Hidden Jewels (Mystery). 80

33.Two-dimensional Hidden in the Barn (Historical Fiction). 80

34.Two-dimensional More Laughs (Humor). 81

35.Two-dimensional Summer Love (Romance). 82

36.Two-dimensional King (Animal Stories). 83

37.Two-dimensional Crush (Romance). 84

38.Two-dimensional The Coming of the Loo People (Science Fiction). 85

39.Two-dimensional A Three Point Player (Sports). 86

40.Two-dimensional Ledge (Adventure). 87

41.Two-dimensional Models to be Made (Hobbies and Crafts). 88

42.Two-dimensional Lady of Grace (Biographies). 89

43.Two-dimensional Wings and Talons (Animals). 90

44.Two-dimensional Funny Facts (Humor). 91

45.Two-dimensional The Voice in the Box (Mystery). . . . 91

46.Two-dimensional Who Will Care for Dusty (Animal Stories). 92

47.Two-dimensional The President (Friendship). 93

48.Two-dimensional Tall and Proud (Biographies). 94

49.Two-dimensional The Winner Is (Friendship). 95

50.Two-dimensional Paper and Printing (Hobbies and Crafts). 96

51.Two-dimensional Wild Things (Animals). 96

52.Two-dimensional Fishing (Sports). 97

53.Two-dimensional Probing Space (Science). 98

54.Two-dimensional House on the Hill (Horror). 99

55.Two-dimensional A Journey in Time (Science Fiction). 100

56.Two-dimensional Lion's Eye (Adventure). 100

57.Two-dimensional The All Star Catcher (Sports). . . . 101

58.Two-dimensional A Friend With a Friend (Historical Fiction). 102

59.Two-dimensional Bad Billy (Horror). 103

60.Two-dimensional Baseball: The Game (Sports). 104

Abstract

A survey was conducted to examine the reading interests of middle school students. The purpose of this study was to identify the reading interests of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in a metropolitan, public middle school located in a southeastern state. It was hypothesized that the data would reveal statistically significant categories of reading interest, and would reveal significant differences between categorical interests by gender. The population and sample were drawn from a metropolitan, public middle school in a southeastern state. A one-dimensional chi square analysis was used to analyze the reading interests for the sample as a whole. A two-dimensional chi square analysis was used to compare the reading interests by gender. The students clearly indicated a strong preference for the categories of Humor and Horror. The students also reported an interest in Mystery, Historical Fiction, Adventure, Science Fiction, and the non-fiction category of Animals. The results of this study showed differences in interest by gender, which are congruent with many of society's stereotypes. The females reported a stronger interest in Romance, Friendship, Animal Stories, Adventure, and Historical Fiction, while the males reported stronger preferences for the categories of Sports and Science. In addition, the results indicated that the male respondents had a stronger preference for non-fiction than did the female respondents.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The ability to read is viewed by American society as a necessity in order to function as a productive citizen. A trip to the grocery store, filling out a job application, and staying familiar with current events, all require at least a minimal level of reading proficiency. Reading is also incumbent to learning, as textbooks, computers, and trade books are composed of written material. Educated, productive citizens are essential to American culture because informed citizens are important to a successful democracy. In addition, well-educated citizens make a strong work force, which leads to a nation that thrives. Perhaps these reasons lead Americans to place such a great value on education and literacy skills.

Because literacy is a fundamental part of society and is an essential component to learning, the American public is continually evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the reading curricula. This is reflected in the numerous newspaper, magazine, and journal articles that report topics ranging from reading scores on standardized tests to increased funding for reading specialists. Many school districts' standardized tests scores in reading are below average, and these results are almost always reported in

local newspapers. For instance, The New York Times featured a story which covered Jersey City's public schools' problem of low scores on standardized reading tests (Pristin, 1996). According to the article, the state of New Jersey seized control of Jersey City's ailing public schools and will remain in control until the students' standardized test scores are high enough to justify returning the district to local control. This example is an illustration of how the public often looks at standardized test scores to judge the effectiveness of teaching programs.

Some school districts take a proactive stance or respond to unsatisfactory test scores by appropriating or creating additional funds for the lacking subject areas. For instance, The Washington Post reported that schools are seeking 93 million dollars to provide schools with reading specialists (Berselli, 1999). The purpose for hiring these specialists is to enhance reading programs by providing instructional support as well as acquiring additional materials to supplement and improve existing curricula. Throughout the nation, the media reports students' successes and failures with reading, and tells of the procedures initiated to improve or maintain reading achievement.

The public is concerned with students' reading skills and the programs used to teach reading. Perhaps one of the most controversial topics related to reading is the debate between phonics and whole language. In the recent past, educators as well as the general public were in deliberation as to which strategy was the most effective means to teach reading. Some argued that phonics, the teaching of basic skills, was the better approach whereas others believed that whole language, a more holistic philosophy of literature-based instruction, was the superior method. Although the dispute never resulted in a definitive answer, the general consensus among educators is that a combination of the two strategies provides a balanced and comprehensive method for teaching reading. Baumann, Hoffman, Moon, and Duffy-Hester (1998) conducted a nationwide survey of the instructional practices of reading teachers and found that most teachers use an eclectic approach that incorporates both whole language and phonics in instruction. As with the debate between phonics and whole language, the public is constantly acting as a "watchdog" to ensure that educators evaluate, assess, and modify instruction to improve students' reading performance.

There are a variety of instructional practices and strategies that have recently been adopted in efforts to improve students' reading skills and expand students' reading habits. For example, the Accelerated Reader program is popular among many schools. This computerized reading management system uses a reward system to motivate students to read beyond their required classroom texts. Students who participate in the Accelerated Reader program choose from a variety of books on the program's list to read independently either during class or outside of school. Once the students have completed their books, they take a computerized multiple choice reading comprehension quiz that awards points for passing scores. Students are awarded points based on the length and difficulty of the books and the percentage of correct answers on quizzes. Individual schools set up rewards systems which offer a variety of prizes ranging from certificates and items from the school store to extra classroom credit. This program was designed to provide students with an incentive to read and was created to enhance the curriculum by balancing instruction with trade books.

Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) is another program aimed to create proficient readers and is widely used in a number of schools. SSR is the practice of allotting

classroom time for everyone, including the teacher, to read self-selected material. Some teachers may schedule a specific day of the week for SSR, while others may devote a portion of each class period. SSR affords students with opportunities to read a variety of authentic texts, and allows them to read for their own purposes and pleasure which enables the students to practice lifetime reading skills. According to Alvermann and Phelps (1998), this time can be significant for students who otherwise might not read at all beyond the bare minimum required for school. Programs like Accelerated Reader and SSR have been implemented to build students' reading skills, as well as to encourage better reading habits.

As with SSR and Accelerated Reader, many schools' reading programs are allowing students to engage in self-selected reading material. Permitting students to choose books that interest them encourages reading habits and increases competence in reading skills. The major premise is that if students are afforded opportunities to engage in reading that interests them, they are more likely to read for extended periods of time and read more frequently. The other major premise is that the more students read, the better adept and accomplished they will be in their reading skills. As Lyman (1996) stated, "Given the opportunity,

the reader who finds a really good book, a book that has ideas he or she truly wants to learn about, frequently will transcend his or her level of reading performance" (p. 280). The approaches that emphasize the use of authentic texts and self-selection are designed to build reading skills and to create lifetime readers.

Because the success of these programs is partially dependent on tapping into students' reading interests, it is important for educators to be familiar with their students' reading preferences. For example during SSR, those who do not have their own books will need to select something from the classroom library. If the classroom library lacks books that appeal to students, it is unlikely that a student who chooses from the classroom library will enjoy the text he or she selects. Therefore, that particular session of SSR will not be a successful learning experience for the student.

If teachers do not know the reading preferences and practices of their own students, they are not in the best position to advise, persuade, and stimulate these students to make the most appropriate reading choices (Wray & Lewis, 1993). Not only should teachers understand students' reading preferences to ensure the success of SSR, but they should also be familiar with texts that interest students

to improve instructional planning. When teachers are aware of books that students prefer, they can for example, make these materials the focus of classroom activities by reading from them to the students, by discussing them with the students, and by making them the starting point for thematic works of various kinds (Wray & Lewis, 1993).

Teachers can use numerous techniques to discover the reading interests of their students. Simple, informal methods such as observation can be employed to get a general idea of the reading materials students enjoy, but more formal procedures should be followed to accurately determine their interests. Teachers should create their own or borrow an established instrument to effectively examine students' interests.

An abundant number of studies have been conducted to explore students' reading preferences. The studies are diverse and multi-dimensional. The studies vary in focus and range from topics such as recreational reading to students' process of book selection. For instance, Lyman (1996) conducted a study to investigate if the books students chose for recreational reading were at higher or lower level than the student's individual reading level whereas Carter (1988) explored the reasons and tactics students exercise when selecting books.

While the studies related to students' reading preferences are numerous and range in scope, a majority of the research focuses either on students' attitudes toward reading or students' reading interests. For instance, Ley, Shaer, and Dismukes (1994) conducted a longitudinal study using a reading attitudes scale to compare students' reading attitudes with their reading behaviors. The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between students' reading attitudes and students' reading behaviors. The researchers also discovered that both the students' reading attitudes and their frequency of voluntary reading declined during the 3 year investigation. These findings are corroborated by McKenna and Kear (1990), whose results also reported a decline in students' reading attitudes as they progress through school. The research of students' attitudes toward reading suggests that middle school is a pivotal time for students' reading habits. These studies indicate that teachers should encourage the use of trade books and should utilize materials that will appeal to their students.

Many studies have been performed to investigate students' reading interests. These studies range in size, focus on a variety of variables, and are diverse in technique. For example, researchers such as Fox (1996) and

Kaiser (1995) conducted case studies that generated comprehensive and specific information of a few students' interests. Other investigators such as Isaacs (1990) and Saccardi (1993) used book cards to determine students' reading interests. As students finished a book, they completed a book card describing why they liked or disliked that particular selection. The researchers then compiled the ballots to analyze and determine the books most liked by students.

Probably the most reliable and valid method of exploring students' reading interests is through the use of surveys. This allows researchers to sample a large number of students and permits non-readers to participate in the sample. Diaz-Rueben (1996) used surveys containing categorical listings to investigate students' reading interests. In surveys composed of categorical listings, the students are given choices such as horror, mystery, romance, and adventure, and are asked to select the categories that they would be most interested in reading.

Another form of surveying students' reading interests was employed by researchers like Harkrader and Moore (1997) who used fictitious annotated titles surveys. These surveys contained titles and descriptions of fictitious

books. The students were required to choose the books they would most like to read from the list provided.

Although the size and techniques are varied, the research on students' reading interests strongly shows that students have patterns for reading preferences. This means that there are categories of literature that are commonly popular among students of similar age groups. It is important to continue to investigate students' reading interests to determine any variables that may exist and to maintain that the findings will be consistent.

As previously discussed, the public and the media are concerned about students' reading achievement. Reading programs and strategies are under constant scrutiny and much research has been conducted to ensure quality reading programs. Being aware of students' reading interests is essential to the success of reading programs. Teachers must know, be familiar with, provide, and use literature that students will enjoy in order to create flourishing, lifelong readers.

Statement of the Problem

Although numerous studies have been conducted to examine students' reading interests, there have been few, if any that have specifically investigated the interests of metropolitan middle school students in a southeastern

state. Furthermore, understanding students' reading interests is an integral component to the success of reading programs. Therefore, this study explores the reading preferences of middle school students in a southeastern metropolitan area, and examines whether there are patterns of categorical reading interests.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the reading interests of sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in a metropolitan, public middle school located in a southeastern state.

Statement of the Hypotheses

The data will reveal statistically significant categories of reading interests and will reveal significant differences between categorical reading interests by gender for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students of a metropolitan public middle school.

Definition of Terms

The following is a list of terms that are relevant and necessary to the understanding of this study.

Curriculum

Curriculum is instruction that is mandated by the school and includes all the organized and intended experiences of the students.

Fictitious Annotated Titles Survey

A fictitious annotated titles survey is an instrument composed of imaginary book titles and plot descriptions. Students who complete fictitious annotated titles surveys rate each item on a 4-point Likert scale.

Likert Scale

The Likert scale, developed by Rensis Likert, is an attitude rating technique that may vary in range. For example, some researchers may use a 5-point scale, while others may choose to use a 4-point scale. This study will incorporate a 4-point Likert scale offering the choices of definitely would not read, probably would not read, probably would read, and definitely would read.

Middle School

Middle school is a school that students attend following elementary school and prior to high school. The middle school participating in this study includes sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students.

Categories of Reading Interests

Categories reading interests are areas or genres of literature that are commonly popular among groups of people.

Regular Education Students

Regular education students are those who do not participate in full-time special education programs or self-contained classrooms. Regular education students may participate in part-time programs such as those for the gifted or those for students with learning disabilities.

Textbook

A textbook is a book that the school provides for every student in each of the subject areas. A textbook is a book that is specifically written for a particular content area and grade level.

Trade Books

Trade books include many forms of written material other than the assigned content area texts. Trade books encompass a variety of literature ranging from novels and books about sports figures to self-help and picture books.

Assumptions

It is assumed that the participants' responses will be honest and accurate. There are not any "right" or "wrong" answers to the survey and the students' responses will in

no way influence their grades. The surveys will be anonymous and the teachers of the participants will only be privileged to the statistical results.

It is also assumed that the classes will be grouped equally according to ability, gender, and ethnicity as the counselor for the participating school reported that the classes are specifically arranged to be balanced in these areas. In addition, it is assumed that the instrument used for gathering the data will be reliable and valid. The researcher met with a professional educational test developer, a seasoned professor whose specialty is in young adult literature, and one of the participating teachers to ensure the reliability and validity of the instrument. Finally, it is assumed that the time of day the students take the survey will not interfere with the results. Because the participants are in different grade levels, the surveys will be given during various hours throughout the school day.

Limitations

It is believed that the findings and conclusions of this study can be generalized only to students represented in the sample. For example, the reading interests of middle school students may not be age appropriate for elementary students or students in high school. Another

limitation is that the study solely focuses on regular education students and will not reflect the interests of special education students. In addition, the 4-point Likert scale used on the survey is a limitation because it did not allow the students to mark an "undecided" option. Lastly, the use of intact groups is a limitation, as the participants were not chosen in a truly random manner. Although the counselors at the participating school report that the classes are constructed so that individual classes are reflective of the school's population, the sample is not completely random.

Significance of Study

Because many schools rely on trade books to supplement their reading programs, it is necessary that teachers understand and provide literature that will interest and motivate their students to read. As Alvermann and Phelps (1998) stated, "If students have positive reading experiences beyond their textbooks, their chances for becoming lifetime readers increase" (p. 320). The results of this study will provide educators with categories of literature that are collectively enjoyed by middle school students. Furthermore, this study will provide educators with an instrument to utilize in their classrooms to determine the specific reading preferences of their

students. Not only is assessing students' reading interests an integral part of successful reading instruction, but it is also a necessity for building an attractive classroom library. Knowing the texts that students enjoy reading will allow teachers to incorporate these books in classroom lessons and will aid in constructing an engaging classroom library.

Students will also profit from the results of this study because in having their interests explored, their needs will be better met. Enticing students will result in a more successful learning experience for both the students and educators. Overall, this study will furnish beneficial information relating to students' reading interests, which is a fundamental part of reading instruction.

CHAPTER II

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to identify the reading interests of middle school students in order to develop an effective curriculum and to produce an attractive classroom library. It is evident that literacy is the key to lifelong learning therefore, educators may need to look beyond the works of Shakespeare and Chaucer (Bushman, (1997). The Commission on Reading in its summary of research (as cited in McKenna and Kear, 1990) concluded that becoming a skilled reader requires recognizing that written material can be interesting. Smith observed (as cited in McKenna and Kear, 1990) that the emotional response to reading is the primary reason most readers read, and probably is the primary reason most nonreaders do not read. Consequently, determining students' interests and affording them the opportunities to utilize texts they enjoy may be instrumental in creating lifelong readers and learners.

According to Weintraub (as cited in Fisher 1988), reading interests of students have been examined since 1889. Since then, there have been a great number of studies related to reading. This paper will explain and summarize some of the current research available regarding students' reading behaviors.

Much of the research focuses on students' attitudes toward reading, as in Tunnell and Calder's study in which a new instrument to measure students' reading attitudes was developed (Tunnel & Calder, 1988). Another large portion of the research investigates students' reading interests. These studies range from relatively simplistic projects with few control variables to highly detailed and sophisticated investigations. For example, Saccardi (1993) conducted a somewhat uncomplicated study to determine students' reading preferences. Saccardi's subjects participated on a voluntary basis by simply submitting ballots for books they read. On the other end of the spectrum, Bank (1986) administered a more extensive study in which many variables including gender, native language, socio-economic status, and other variables were examined. Regardless of the subject or the intensity of the research, there is an abundance of literature available related to students' reading habits.

Perhaps so many researchers have devoted their efforts to study the reading practices of students because literacy is a fundamental part of our society and is an essential component to learning. These researchers presumably consider literature to be one of the basic parts of a student's education and understand the need to guide

students through this significant curriculum by assessing students' use, knowledge, and understanding of literature (California Media and Library Educators Association, 1984). The results of the research provide educators with information relevant to their students' needs as well as contribute a framework to utilize when planning reading instruction.

Due to the importance placed on reading as well as the relatively new and growing area of young adult fiction, many educators are advocates for the use of trade books and silent sustained reading (SSR) (Lyman, 1996). Haynes (1992) stated:

> A reason for that emphasis is that children's being able to read authentic texts for a variety of purposes is seen as a truer test of their being literate than their demonstrating skill mastery in workbook exercises and criterion reference tests. (p. 208)

A study conducted by Wray and Lewis (1993) found that 87% of teachers surveyed allotted classroom time for SSR everyday or every few days, and a further 12% did this on a weekly basis. The extensive time and emphasis being placed on reading has led to the large number of studies designed for students' reading behaviors.

Because there are so many studies related to students reading habits, the literature used to guide this study was relatively easy to find as well as reasonably current. The majority of the literature was written within the past 10 years. In fact, a substantial number of research articles were written within the past 5 years. Most of the information that was found is recent and pertinent to this study.

While the availability of the literature did not present any notable problems and a preponderance of the research is related to the focus of this study, it is noteworthy that several studies contained variables that will not be included in this study. In addition, some literature concentrated on special themes not directly related to this study. For instance, a research project directed by Culp and Sosa (1993), aimed to assess the influence of nonfiction on the attitudes, values, and behaviors of adolescents and to compare it with the influence of fiction. Culp and Sosa's research is not directly related, but provides useful information that pertains to this study. Because the subject of students' reading habits is an extensive topic, the related research is diverse and includes a variety of issues and ideas.

Review of Literature

As stated in the introduction, the literature contains many different themes and topics related to students' reading habits. There are several research articles that focus on similar subjects while others feature themes that are less common. The information will be presented in an order from least to most relevant to this study.

Read versus View

In Haynes and Richgels (1992) research of fourth graders' reading preferences, the researchers included the component of whether students preferred to read or view selected items. The researchers constructed a fictitious annotated titles inventory which provided the students with the opportunity to indicate whether they would rather read or view each item. Haynes and Richgels found a statistically significant difference between read and watch responses which allows the inference that fourth graders prefer to watch rather than to read selections like those described in the survey. This finding may be indicative of the fast-paced technological society that surrounds students, but further research is needed before these findings can be generalized.

Impact of Nonfiction

As described earlier, Culp and Sosa (1993) conducted a study to measure the influence of nonfiction on attitudes, values, and behavior of adolescents and to relate the findings to the influence of fiction. The results of Culp and Sosa's study indicated that a majority of students have been less affected by nonfiction than fiction. Many of the study's participants reported that newspapers and magazines were the only nonfiction materials they read and few noted any influence from these readings. One may ascertain from these findings that educators need to take a more aggressive role in finding and promoting nonfiction texts that will interest students. However, before any conclusions can be made regarding nonfiction texts, more elaborate research should be done to investigate the influence of nonfiction.

Recreational Reading and Reading Level

According to Lyman (1996), student motivation and interest can facilitate reading. Through his observations, Lyman stated "One phenomenon that contradicts the validity of the reading levels theory . . . is the case of the high-interest book and the low-powered reader" (p. 279). The assumption is that if interest and involvement are high, a persistent reader may comprehend and enjoy a book of

considerable difficulty. A study conducted by Smith and Joyner (1990) found that fifth grade students selected books above their independent reading level 58% of the time. The research of recreational reading suggests that persistent readers may enjoy challenging texts.

How Students Choose Books

Although the research (Lyman, 1996; Smith & Joyner, 1990) indicates that students may profit from challenging texts, Beaver, Carter, and Sonedecker (1992) warned that "Students' ability to select appropriate reading material is crucial to their growth and development as readers" (p. 42). Carter (1988) suggested that if students employ poor strategies when choosing books, they may inadvertently select a book that will frustrate or bore them, thereby deterring them from reading. In his study, Carter investigated the reasons and tactics students exercise when selecting books. Several categories for book selection emerged from his research. Structural elements were reported most frequently as having the greatest amount of influence on selection. Structural elements included characteristics such as the book's cover, illustrations, and length. In his article, Carter encouraged educators to instruct students as how to make informed decisions for choosing trade books. When students are aware of effective

tactics, they will be better equipped to select appropriate and enjoyable literature.

Moffit and Wartella (1992) also examined what influenced readers' choices of books by administering a survey that included questions addressing the possible influences. The questions offered choices such as parents, friends, or self. The researchers found that a substantial number (86%) identified themselves as the sole deciders. This finding is not consistent with Isaacs' (1990) article that suggested peer recommendations strongly induce selections. Additional studies need to be conducted in order to make conclusions regarding students' selection of books.

Effects of Teacher Perception and Teaching Style

McKinlay (1990) performed a study to assess whether or not teachers were aware of their students' attitudes toward reading. The participants completed an attitude survey and rated the statements on a 3 point Likert scale. Using the same survey, the teachers rated the students' attitudes as they perceived them. The results of the study showed no significant difference between the ratings of teachers and students. The comparisons revealed that both teachers and students rated pupils' attitudes as positive. Bank (1986) also included the component of teacher perception in his

reading interests assessment and found similar results. Knowing how students feel about their assignments allows educators to redesign, when necessary, and strengthen their curriculum.

Related research has been aimed at investigating the effects of teaching styles on students' reading attitudes. Barnett and Irwin (1994) examined this relationship by comparing student surveys with teacher questionnaires. The students responded to the reading attitude scale while their teachers completed questionnaires about their literacy instruction. The results presented a negative correlation between the traditional style of teaching and reading attitudes. Barnett and Irwin stated, "This implies that the more traditional and direct the classroom instruction, the less students liked to read, while the more teachers rely on trade paperbacks and avoid the use of worksheets and direct instruction, the better students like to read" (p. 116). This is consistent with research conducted by Kramer (1989), who discovered that children strongly preferred novels to workbooks.

Hiebert, Mervar, and Person (1990) found similar results during their research. In their comparison between teachers who utilize textbooks and teachers who utilize literature, the researchers concluded that the students in

the literature- based classrooms were more informed readers. These students were better able to choose books that matched their abilities and interests, and were more articulate in their responses related to literature. This study indicated that when students are encouraged to read trade books and are surrounded by these texts, they are more likely to become informed, avid readers.

Light Reading

Light reading, such as the reading of comic books, magazines, and newspapers has been a topic of interest for many researchers. For instance, in a study guided by Mellon (1990), the researchers found that "Magazines and newspapers were the all-time favorite reading material of teens. Almost every respondent claimed to read more than one magazine and was able to give titles" (p. 224). This resembles the findings of Elliott and Steinkellner (1979) who reported that 90% to 100% of students surveyed rated reading magazines quite positively.

Light reading has also been a concern for many educators as some feel that it is not intellectually stimulating and is inappropriate for use in the classroom. Others maintain that light reading serves a purpose, if it appeals to students, by acting as a lure to more challenging texts. Russikoff and Pilgreen (1994) addressed

this issue in their study involving doctoral students. The purpose of their research was to find if people who enjoyed light reading in their youth went on to master more difficult material. The study's participants answered an open-ended questionnaire containing inquiries related to reading practices of the past and present. The results showed that 82% of the respondents reported that they enjoyed light reading in their youth. These findings suggest that light reading does not interfere with reading skills. According to Krashen (as cited in Russikoff & Pilgreen, 1994), "There is evidence that light reading serves s a conduit to more 'serious reading' and sometimes is not as light as we think it is" (p. 122).

While these studies offer useful information, it should be noted that their procedures could have interfered with the reliability and validity of the results. The samples in the studies conducted by Mellon (1990) and Rusikoff and Pilgreen (1994) were not drawn randomly which may have prevented the results from truly representing the population. In addition, Mellon's researchers did not consistently use the same instrument when interviewing the participants. These limitations and others not discussed necessitate further examinations regarding light reading. Longitudinal studies would prove useful as the subjects'

reading habits could be measured and followed to give an accurate description of light reading and its effects. Light reading may be an area of interest for teenagers and may not hinder students from reading complex texts, but further investigations need to be conducted before any concrete conclusions can be drawn.

Reading and Leisure Time

The question of whether or not students read in their leisure time has been asked for many years. Students may spend their spare time participating in a variety of activities such as watching television, playing sports, visiting with friends, or doing homework. As technology increases, so do students' opportunities to become involved with pastimes other than reading. Video games, for example, are a very popular leisure activity for some students. With so many possibilities available, it is reasonable to be concerned about the amount of leisure time students devote to reading.

Mellon (1990) conducted a study of teenagers' leisure reading choices and reported that 70% of the respondents indicated that they did read for pleasure. This finding is consistent with the research directed by McCoy, Larson, and Higginson (1991) whose results showed that 75% of the participants reported an interest in recreational reading.

Although students indicated an interest in reading for pleasure, the study guided by McCoy, Larson and Higginson found that when students were asked to rank their leisure activities, recreational reading was clearly their lowest ranked activity. Watching television, participating in sports, and socializing with friends were consistently ranked at the top.

McEady-Gillead (1989) also examined the leisure time of students by administering a survey to 723 students. All subjects reported an interest in reading, but when asked to rank their leisure activities according to the amount of time spent per day, less than half indicated that they choose to read in their spare time. Watching television, playing with friends, and completing homework were the three highest rated activities.

According to Moffit and Wartella (1992), reading books is a relatively popular leisure practice for adolescents, with 78% of their sample reporting they read for leisure. While these findings are similar to other reading and leisure research with youth (McCoy, Larson, & Higginson, 1991; McEady-Gillead, 1989), the results of the ranked leisure activities are different. When asked to rank their leisure activities, the participants of Moffit and Wartella's study did not report reading as one of their

least preferred leisure pursuits. Instead, these participants ranked reading as their third leisure choice. Playing sports and being with friends were the two top rated activities. Reading may appeal to students, but the research (McCoy, Larscn, & Higginson, 1991; McEady-Gillead, 1989; Mellon, 1990; Moffit & Wartella, 1992) indicated that watching television, participating in sports, and spending time with friends may be more popular.

Reading Attitude and Achievement

Researchers have attempted to identify a correlation between reading achievement and students' attitudes toward reading, but theses studies (McKinlay, 1990; Moffit & Wartella, 1992; Russ, 1989) show conflicting results. According to Moffit and Wartella (1992), "Comparisons of readers to non-readers by grade point average . . . showed statistical significance and revealed that the academically-better students were more likely to read than students with lower grades" (p. 7). In support of this finding, McKinlay claimed that students who have difficulty reading have a poorer attitude towards it.

However, in a study specifically designed to measure the relationship between attitude and achievement, Russ (1989) found that students reported a positive attitude toward reading whether or not they were good readers. In

his research, Russ investigated the differences between the reading of attitudes of gifted students and regular education students. His results showed that although the normal classes scored below grade level on the standardized test, they still held positive attitudes for reading. The gifted students manifested higher attitudes towards reading than did the regular education classes, but both groups scored positively in the attitude survey. The researcher concluded that it is possible to have a sample where the reading attitude is high, but performance is low.

Because the studies exhibit contrasting results, additional research should be examined to determine the correlation between reading attitude and reading achievement. Neither the study conducted by Mckinlay (1990) nor the research guided by Moffit and Wartella (1992) specifically focused on the relationship between students' attitudes and reading achievement. Therefore, the results may not be reliable. Russ (1989) concentrated only on the correlation between attitude and achievement, but his results may not be generalized because his sample was relatively small. Further research is needed to provide reliable and valid information regarding reading attitude and reading achievement.

Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

As discussed earlier, researchers have conducted various studies related to students' attitudes toward reading (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; McKinlay, 1990; Russ, 1989). While these studies examined a specific effect on attitudes, several studies (California Media and Library Educators Association, 1984; Epstein, 1980; Lewis & Teale, 1980) have been performed to investigate students' general disposition toward reading. Lewis and Teale are recognized and accomplished researchers in this area, as they developed a reading attitudes scale that has been widely utilized by their colleagues. For example, Ley, Schaer, and Dismukes (1994) administered the Teale-Lewis Reading Attitudes Scales when conducting their longitudinal study of the reading attitudes and behaviors of middle school students.

Through their investigation, Ley, Schaer, and Dismukes (1994) found that there was a statistically significant relationship between students' reading attitudes and students' reading behaviors. The researchers also discovered that both the students' reading attitudes and their frequency of voluntary reading declined during the 3 year investigation. The data from McKenna and Kear (1990) documented ". . . a widening attitudinal gap between low-

and high-ability children as they move through school" (p. 628). The research suggested that students report positive attitudes toward reading, but their attitudes become less positive as they advance through school.

Home- Related Variables

A few researchers chose to include home- related variables in their studies (Bank, 1986; Duggins, 1989; Moffit & Wartella, 1992). Issues such as parental education and socio-economic status were examined to investigate whether or not these factors influence students' reading practices. Moffit and Wartella compared mothers' and fathers' level of education in relation to readers and non-readers. The results suggest that adolescents, whose parents had higher levels of education, were more likely to be readers. According to Moffit and Wartella, students whose parents attended at least some college read more than the students whose parents did not attend college.

Moffit and Wartella (1992) also examined the influence of socio-economic status on reading behavior. The results showed that both lower class and upper class students read more than middle class children. This finding is not consistent with the outcomes of studies conducted by Banks (1986) and Duggins (1989), both of which revealed no

significant difference between students of varying soci-economic status. Additional, more sophisticated studies must be conducted before any valid generalizations can be made regarding students parents' education or students' socio-economic status.

Student Characteristics as Variables

Many studies (Delin, Delin, & Cram, 1995; Fisher, 1988; Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994; Obert, 1988) have included variables such as race and gender in their projects related to students' reading interests. Ley, Schaer, and Dismukes observed no significant difference between the varying ethnic groups' reading attitudes. The researchers stated, "We did not find that Caucasian students valued reading significantly more or less than did African-American students, nor did we find that students of one race read more than the other outside of school" (p. 29). Duggins (1989) upholds this finding in his study of students' attitudes as he concludes that his results revealed no significant difference in interest between the various ethnic groups. Fisher (1988) also found that there were greater similarities among races than differences. The literature strongly suggests that a student's ethnic background has little or no impact on his or her reading habits.

Much of the literature identified gender as a variable, and the studies overwhelmingly indicate that there are consistent gender differences related to reading practices (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; Diaz-Rueben, 1996; Mellon, 1990). Some studies indicate differences in attitudes toward reading, while others suggest varying categorical differences. Duggins (1989) found that females were twice as likely as males to be interested in reading. In accordance with this result, the survey of reading attitudes administered by Barnett and Irwin revealed that females enjoyed reading more than males. Similarly, Obert (1988) reported from her survey of student reading, that more girls than boys read everyday.

Several studies (Harkrader & Moore, 1997; Haynes & Richgels, 1992; Mellon, 1990) revealed categorical reading preferences according to gender. The studies showed that boys indicated a stronger preference for sports and science fiction whereas girls indicated a preference for mystery and romance. The research did not consistently report the same categories as being preferred by either males or females, but the literature indisputably testified that there are significant gender differences.

Grade Level as a Variable

As noted in the research of students' attitudes (California Media & Library Association, 1984; Epstein, 1980; Ley, Schaer, & Dismukes, 1994; Lewis & Teale, 1980; McKenna & Kear, 1990), the literature indicates that students hold less positive attitudes as they progress through school. Additional studies (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; McCoy, Larson, & Higginson, 1991; McEady-Gillead, 1989) have included grade level as a variable and have found the same results. McCoy, Larson and Higginson surveyed both college students and middle school students to evaluate if and when students reading habits decline. The data revealed that there was a significant decrease in recreational reading at the seventh and eighth grade levels. McEady-Gillead claimed that students, who were once enthusiastic about reading, no longer enjoy it when they reach junior or senior high school.

Bushman (1997) administered a reading questionnaire in which students reported reading less as they progressed through school. In response to his study, students indicated that as they entered high school, they began to read different texts outside of school than were assigned in school. From this finding, Bushman suggested that students would enjoy reading more and may be more likely to

become life-long readers if teachers would assign more young adult fiction. While Bushman's findings are consistent with the others (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; McCoy, Larson, & Higginson, 1991), this information must be interpreted cautiously since longitudinal data are required to infer developmental changes.

Reading Interests

There is a multitude of literature available pertaining to students' reading interests. Not only are there a number of research projects, but there are also organizations that publish annual reading lists. For example, the University of Iowa annually publishes their poll of adolescents' reading choices (Conner, 1989). Books also contain references for popular texts (Rief, 1992). A variety of sources offer data regarding the reading choices of teenagers.

Before the lists and research articles can be published, some form of research must take place in order to gather the information. There are copious ways to collect data on students' reading interests and this is evident in the literature. The researchers employed various techniques and methods: case studies, book cards, surveys comprised of fictitious annotated titles, and surveys consisting of categorical listings.

Researchers who conducted case studies were successful in identifying texts that their subjects enjoyed (Fox, 1996; Kaiser, 1995). Through her inquiry, Fox found that adolescents do indeed read a variety of texts, but discovered that their reading interests are not often tapped in school. Kaiser, a college instructor of young adult literature, guided her study by pairing each of her prospective teachers with a local high school student. The pairs exchanged letters to determine reading interests. The prospective teachers were then required to recommend a book based on the students' preferences. The study was a success, as the high school students enjoyed the selected books. Case studies are effective for providing detailed and comprehensive reports of a few students interests, but in order to generalize to a larger population a different research method must be applied.

Book cards were used by some investigators to determine students' reading interests (Isaacs, 1990; Isaacs, 1992; Saccardi, 1993; Wilson & Abrahamson, 1988). As students finished a book, they completed a book card describing why they liked or disliked the book. The researchers then tabulated the results by counting the cards and listing the most frequently enjoyed books. According to Saccardi, the ballots suggested that students

who have appreciated particular books might seek out other books by that same author. In addition, these lists serve as a resource for educators. Book cards are a sufficient method for determining the best liked books, but they may not accurately reflect the interests of the population. Reluctant readers, for example, would not be represented in these types of studies because the respondents are students who are readers.

Surveys containing categorical listings show trends in preferences by category (Diaz-Rueben, 1996; Obert, 1988). For instance, Diaz-Rueben found "The most frequently listed topics selected by the respondents included: Movies, Adventure, Horror, Mysteries, Sports, Murder, Crime, Humorous, Love, and Fantasy" (P. 172). These results are consistent to Obert's study that reported similar categories as the most favored. Surveys featuring categorical listings are beneficial because the results show educators the types of books students enjoy. Categorical listings are also useful because they allow a large number of students to participate, yielding more applicable results. Although these types of studies are effective with older students, the categorical listings may be too difficult for young children to understand. For instance, a student in the second grade may have difficulty

differentiating between the categories of adventure and mystery.

Studies using fictitious annotated titles also showed categorical reading preferences (Harkrader & Moore, 1997; Haynes & Richgels, 1992). Harkrader and Moore surveyed 17 randomly selected classrooms and discovered that both boys and girls favored fiction over nonfiction. This is consistent with Haynes and Richgels study that also found students prefer fiction over nonfiction. Both research projects indicated as did others (Diaz-Rueben, 1996; Obert, 1988), that mystery, adventure, and science fiction, are consistently among the top rated categories for both males and females. These studies of students' reading interests strongly suggest that students have patterns of reading preferences. Surveys featuring fictitious annotated titles are advantageous because they are easily understood by all age groups and are able to be administered to large groups of participants.

Summary

The literature related to students' reading practices is multi-dimensional and encompasses a variety of topics. A majority of the research focused on students' attitudes

toward reading and their reading interests. However, topics such as recreational reading, students' process of book selection, and students' leisure activities were also investigated.

Studies of recreational reading (Lyman, 1996; Smith & Joyner, 1990) showed that students commonly chose to read books at or above their independent reading level. While these studies suggest that students may gain in their endeavors to comprehend this challenging material, other researchers (Beaver, Carter, & Sonedecker, 1992; Carter, 1988) caution that such texts could possibly frustrate or bore the reader, thereby discouraging the student from reading. Additional studies are necessary to make conclusions regarding students book selections and recreational reading choices.

The research (Elliot & Steinkellner, 1979; Mellon, 1990) consistently reports that light reading, or reading of texts such as magazines and newspapers, is one of the favorite reading categories for the majority of youth. Some educators do not share adolescents' enthusiasm for light reading because they feel that it does not exercise higher order thinking skills. A study conducted by Rusikoff and Pilgreen dispelled these educators' fears by finding that students who read light reading in their

youth, went on to enjoy more difficult texts as they matured. While these studies are useful, longitudinal studies would provide a more reliable measure of the effects of light reading.

In order to discover information about students' reading habits outside of school, researchers examined students' leisure pursuits (McCoy, Larson, & Higginson, 1991; McEady-Gillead, 1989; Mellon, 1990; Moffit & Wartella, 1992). These studies, which investigated the time students devote to reading in their leisure, suggest that reading is not one of the most popular past-time activities enjoyed by adolescents. The research repeatedly showed that students preferred watching television, participating in sports, and spending time with fiends to reading.

Students do manifest positive attitudes toward reading, but their attitudes may be affected by ability and teaching style (Bank, 1986; McKinlay, 1990). Studies related to ability (Moffit & Wartella, 1992; Russ, 1989) show conflicting results. Moffit and Wartella found that students who performed better academically, were more likely to read than students with lower grades. Russ' results indicated that reading attitudes can be high, although reading performance is low. Because the studies

offer contrasting results and because there were limitations, further research is necessary to provide reliable information regarding the relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement.

Research has shown (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; Hiebert, Mervar, & Person, 1990) that teaching style may influence students' attitudes toward reading. Barnett and Irwin discovered that students whose teachers used a literature based curriculum enjoyed reading more than students whose teachers used traditional instruction. This research implied that students prefer to learn through trade books rather than workbooks.

The literature includes additional variables such as: parental education, socio-economic status, race, grade level, and gender, which are suspected to affect students reading behaviors. While the studies related to parental education and socio-economic status (Bank, 1986; Duggins, 1989; Moffit & Wartella, 1992) were inconclusive, the research (Fisher, 1988; Ley, Schair, & Dismukes, 1994) unanimously concluded that ethnicity does not impact students' reading practices. The studies which compared the attitudes by grade level (Epstein, 1980; McEady-Gillead, 1989; McKenna & Kear, 1990) showed that as students progress through school, their attitudes toward

reading digress. These studies claimed that middle school is a critical period for developing readers because it is at this age that student's attitudes become less positive.

The literature investigating the relationship of gender (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; Diaz-Rueben, 1996; Mellon, 1990) overwhelmingly suggests that there are categorical preferences by gender. The studies also indicate that females manifest more positive attitudes to reading than do males. The literature related to gender undeniably shows that there are significant gender differences.

Reading interests have been examined in various ways as evidenced by the research (Fox, 1996; Saccardi, 1993; Harkrader & Moore, 1997). Some of the procedures used to obtain information regarding students' reading interests contain limitations, but other processes proved reliable. Regardless of the methodology, these studies strongly suggest that students have patterns of reading preferences.

Reading is critical to learning and should be explored in order to ensure that students' reading needs are fulfilled. The literature contains information that is beneficial to educators because it provides data that may be interpreted and applied to classroom situations. Research is an essential component to successful reading programs.

CHAPTER III

Methods and Procedures

Introduction

With the public concern for students' achievement in reading, in addition to the reading programs that have been implemented to improve the students' reading proficiency, it is important to investigate students' reading interests. It is essential for teachers to know the texts that students enjoy so that they will be able to incorporate these books into classroom lessons. Using texts that students prefer will motivate the students to read, thereby increasing the success of the reading program and students' reading skills.

Several studies (Lyman, 1996; Mellon, 1990; Russ, 1989) have been conducted to explore students' reading interests, and the results of these studies indicated that there were patterns of categorical reading preferences for middle school students. Although the findings were relatively consistent, further research is needed to ensure the reliability of these discoveries. For instance, while there are an abundance of studies related to students' reading interests very few, if any have examined the reading preferences of middle school students in a metropolitan area of a southeastern state. Because

previous studies investigated students from regions other than southeastern metropolitan areas, the results were not generalizable to southeastern metropolitan students. Therefore, this study specifically focused on the reading interests of middle school students in a metropolitan area of a southeastern state.

In addition to the regional sampling limitations, the previous research was also confined by deficiencies in data collection. Of the many studies that investigated students' reading interests, very few used instruments or methods of collection that enabled them to examine the interests of non-readers. Because knowing students' reading preferences is a key to enticing them to read and because most reading programs require that students read trade books, it is necessary for educators to be aware of the interests of readers as well as non-readers. Due to these factors, this study was designed to measure the interests of both readers and non-readers.

Several related studies (Barnett & Irwin, 1994; Diaz-Rueben, 1996) included gender as a variable. These studies examined whether boys' interests differed from girls' interests. The studies that included gender as a variable unanimously found that there were areas of interest that were significantly different between boys and girls. Based

on the research, it was hypothesized that the data would reveal statistically significant patterns for categorical reading interests, and would reveal differences between categorical interests by gender for middle school students in a metropolitan area of a southeastern state.

Subjects

The middle school that participated in this study was a public school and was located in a metropolitan area of a southeastern state. The school had a total population of approximately 1,100 students, which consisted of sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. The school's population contained an almost exactly equal proportion of girls and boys. The students were predominantly middle class and the surrounding community was made of mostly houses, restaurants, small businesses, and shopping plazas.

Population

The population for this study included all the students who attended the middle school, with the exception of self-contained special education students. There were approximately 1,126 students registered in the school and an estimated 40 students were enrolled in self-contained special education classes. Therefore, the population included 1,086 students.

Sample

As Reading was a required course for all students, the researcher used cluster sampling to select the participants. The researcher chose to use cluster sampling because the school's population was almost evenly distributed in terms of gender and grade level. In addition, the school's administration carefully designed each class to be relatively balanced for gender, ethnicity, and ability. Because the classes were evenly structured and representative of the school as a whole, the researcher was able to survey intact classes.

The sample consisted of two classes from each grade level, which totaled six classes. The six classes included 155 students. Of the 155 students in the sample, 75 were boys and 80 were girls. The gender distribution of the sample was representative of the population.

Instrument

In order to measure students' reading interests, the researcher designed a fictitious annotated reading survey (see Appendix). The survey was patterned after the instrument developed by Harkrader and Moore (1997). The researcher chose to create this type of instrument because it allowed the researcher to examine the interests of readers as well as non-readers. Furthermore, a fictitious

annotated titles survey eliminated the chance for error by providing the students with examples of literature, rather than having them select from an abstract list of categories.

The survey contained 30 titles and annotations, which were constructed to approximate literature that may have been found in libraries and bookstores. The survey consisted of 15 categories that the researcher selected on the basis of the findings of previous research studies. Two items were created for each of the categories and the items were placed in random order on the survey. There were 10 fiction and 5 non-fiction categories in the survey. The 10 fiction categories were Romance, Science Fiction, Mystery, Adventure, Sports, Humor, Historical Fiction, Friendship, Animal Stories, and Horror. The five non-fiction categories were Animals, Science, Hobbies and Crafts, Sports, and Biographies.

The survey included a 4-point Likert scale for the students to indicate their degree of interest. A 4-point Likert scale was chosen in order to encourage students to commit to a decision, instead of simply marking "undecided" without truly considering their preferences. The scale included the choices of definitely not read, probably not read, probably read, and definitely read.

The soundness of the content and the design of the survey were validated by colleagues including a classroom teacher, an assistant principal, a professional educational test developer, and a young adult literature professor. In addition, a pilot test including 15 students was conducted to identify and eliminate problems with validity and reliability.

Procedures and Activities

As this study investigated students' reading interests, the researcher considered the students' reading classes to be the most appropriate setting to conduct the study. Each of the six classes that participated completed the survey during their regularly scheduled reading period. Because of this, the surveys were administered throughout different periods of the school day.

In order to guarantee the consistency of the study's procedures, the researcher directed the administration of the surveys for each of the six classes. The researcher informed the students of the purpose and the benefits of the study. The researcher also led a discussion about surveys and illustrated that the students' responses were opinions and would not affect their grades. The students were encouraged to be honest, and the importance of their candor was stressed.

The students were then shown how to complete their surveys using the Likert scale, and the first page of the survey was read aloud to ensure student understanding. Following the reading of the first page, the students responded to surveys at their own paces, with all of the surveys being completed by the end of the class period. Identical instructions were given to all six classes.

Method of Data Analysis

After the interests of the students were tabulated, a chi square analysis was conducted to identify whether or not there were significant patterns of categorical reading preferences. A chi square analysis compares the frequency of distribution to the expected number of items for a normal statistical distribution. A two-dimensional chi square test was used to determine significant patterns of reading preferences by gender. The hypothesis was tested with an alpha level of .05.

CHAPTER IV

Results and Discussion

Data Collection

Of the 155 students in the sample, 18 were absent from school on the day the survey was administered. Therefore, 137 students, including 65 boys and 72 girls, responded to the survey. The gender representation of the study accurately reflected the schools' proportion of gender.

A few of the participating students made oversights in completing the surveys. There were four surveys in which the respondents neglected to answer one question, and one survey in which the respondent missed seven questions (this student apparently overlooked one page of the survey). Because of these errors, 11 of the 30 items had a total of 136 responses instead of 137. These omissions were not significant and in no way jeopardized the results of the study.

Analysis of Findings

One-dimensional Chi Square Analysis

A one-dimensional chi square analysis on the degree of interest for the 30 fictitious annotated titles yielded areas of non-significance as well as areas of significance. No significant differences among the respondents' interests were found for Romance (both fiction titles in category),

Tall and Proud (from the non-fiction category of Biography), The Winner Is (from the fiction category of Friendship), and Paper and Printing (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts). However, significant differences were found for the remaining 25 titles. A statistical analysis on the degree of interest for each of the 30 titles is as follows:

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.0001$) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Earthquake (from the non-fiction category of Science). The options of "probably read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "probably read" option and fewer than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections make no clear indications regarding preference.

Table 1

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Earthquake

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
22	44	67	4	65.19	3	.0001
16.1%	32.1%	48.9%	2.9%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels (from the fiction category of Mystery). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate that there is a preference for the title The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels.

Table 2

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
5	26	69	37	62.445	3	.0001
3.6%	19%	50.4%	27%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Hidden in the Barn (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction). The option of "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the

"probably read" option. These selections indicate that there is a preference for the title Hidden in the Barn.

Table 3

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Hidden in the Barn

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
24	42	50	21	17.190	3	.001
17.5%	30.7%	36.5%	15.3%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title More Laughs (from the fiction category of Humor). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a strong preference for the title More Laughs. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 4

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the title More Laughs

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
10	18	37	72	66.708	3	.0001
7.3%	13.1%	27%	52.6%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Summer Love (from the fiction category of Romance).

Table 5

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Summer Love

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
35	29	29	44	4.401	3	.221
25.5%	21.2%	21.2%	32.1%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.0001$) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title King (from the fiction category of Animal Stories). The options of "probably not read" and

"definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "probably not read" option and fewer than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that there is a dislike for the title King.

Table 6

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title King

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
46	57	29	5	44.927	3	.0001
33.6%	41.6%	21.2%	3.6%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Crush (from the fiction category of Romance).

Table 7

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Crush

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
23	33	42	39	6.153	3	.104
33.6%	41.6%	21.2%	3.6%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The Coming of the Loo People (from the fiction category of Science Fiction). The options of "probably not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "probably not read" option and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections make no clear indications regarding preference.

Table 8

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Coming of the Loo People

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
31	43	45	16	51.206	4	.0001
23%	31.9%	33.3%	11.8%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title A Three Point Player (from the fiction category of sports). The option of "definitely not read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely

not read" option. These selections make no clear indications regarding preference.

Table 9

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title A Three Point Player

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
14	48	46	29	22.328	3	.0001
10.2%	35%	33.6%	21.2%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Ledge (from the fiction category of Adventure). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the option of "definitely not read" and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a preference for the title Ledge. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 10

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Ledge

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
11	35	52	38	25.588	3	.0001
8.1%	25.7%	38.2%	28%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.019) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Models to be Made (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and fewer than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a dislike for the title Models to be Made. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 11

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Models to be Made

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
48	37	24	28	9.949	3	.019
35%	27%	17.5%	20.5%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.006) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Lady of Grace (from the non-fiction category of Biographies). The options of "probably not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "probably not read" option and fewer students than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a dislike for the title Lady of Grace.

Table 12

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Lady of Grace

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
34	49	34	20	12.285	3	.006
24.8%	35.8%	24.8%	14.6%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Wings and Talons (from the non-fiction category of Animals). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and fewer than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a strong dislike for the title Wings and Talons.

Table 13

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Wings and Talons

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
52	45	31	9	31.496	3	.0001
38%	32.8%	22.6%	6.6%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Funny Facts (from the fiction category of Humor). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance.

This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a strong preference for the title Funny Facts.

Table 14

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Funny Facts

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
4	19	49	65	67.467	3	.0001
2.9%	13.9%	35.8%	47.4%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The Voice in the Box (from the fiction category of Mystery). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a preference for the title The Voice in the Box. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 15

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Voice in the Box

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
15	40	59	23	33.365	3	.0001
11%	29.2%	43%	16.8%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of reading interest among the respondents for the title Who Will Care for Dusty (from the fiction category of Animal Stories). The options of "probably not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. These selections indicate a dislike for the title Who Will Care for Dusty.

Table 16

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Who Will Care for Dusty

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
23	53	44	17	25.423	3	.0001
16.8%	38.7%	32.1%	12.4%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.001$) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The President (from the fiction category of Friendship). The option of "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections make no clear indications regarding preference.

Table 17

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The President

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
28	47	44	18	16.372	3	.001
20.4%	34.3%	32.1%	13.2%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Tall and Proud (from the non-fiction category of Biographies). A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 18

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Tall and Proud

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
26	38	28	45	6.912	3	.075
19%	27.7%	20.4%	32.9%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The Winner Is (from the fiction category of Friendship).

Table 19

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Winner Is

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
24	41	39	33	5.102	3	.164
17.5%	30%	28.5%	24%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest among the respondents

for the title Paper and Printing (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts).

Table 20

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Paper and Printing

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
33	39	41	24	5.102	3	.164
24%	28.5%	30%	17.5%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Wild Things (from the non-fiction category of Animals). The option of "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more people than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a preference for the title Wild Things. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 21

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Wild Things

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
20	41	54	21	23.941	3	.0001
14.7%	30.1%	39.7%	15.5%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Fishing (from the non-fiction category of Sports). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more people than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and fewer than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a strong dislike for the title Fishing.

Table 22

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Fishing

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
63	36	25	12	41.471	3	.0001
46.3%	26.5%	18.4%	8.8%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.009$) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Probing Space (from the non-fiction category of Science). The options of "probably not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "probably not read" option and fewer than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a dislike for the title Probing Space.

Table 23

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Probing Space

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
35	45	37	18	11.459	3	.009
26%	33.3%	27.4%	13.3%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.0001$) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The House on the Hill (from the fiction category of Horror). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected

selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that there is a strong preference for the title The House on the Hill.

Table 24

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The House on the Hill

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
4	17	45	70	76.647	3	.0001
3%	12.5%	33%	51.5%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title A Journey in Time (from the fiction category of Science Fiction). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a preference for the title A Journey in Time. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 25

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title A Journey in Time

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
13	41	56	26	30.529	3	.0001
9.6%	30.1%	41.2%	19.1%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Lion's Eye (from the fiction category of Adventure). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a preference for the title Lion's Eye.

Table 26

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Lion's Eye

Definite Not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
14	33	55	34	24.765	3	.0001
10.2%	24.3%	40.5%	25%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title The All Star Catcher (from the fiction category of Sports). The options of "probably not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "probably not read" option and fewer than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a dislike for the title The All Star Catcher.

Table 27

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title The All Star Catcher

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
26	57	35	18	25.000	3	.0001
19.1%	42%	25.7%	13.2%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title A Friend With a Friend (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most

to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and more than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate a preference for the title A Friend with a Friend.

Table 28

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title A Friend with a Friend

Definite not read	**Probably not read**	**Probably read**	**Definite read**	**X2**	**df**	**P<**
13	42	46	36	19.059	3	.0001
9.5%	30.6%	33.6%	26.3%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Bad Billy (from the fiction category of Horror). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that fewer students than expected selected the "definitely not read option" and more than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a strong preference for the title Bad Billy. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 29

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title Bad Billy

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
6	12	42	76	91.059	3	.0001
4.4%	8.8%	30.9%	55.9%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.019) in the degree of interest among the respondents for the title Baseball: The Game (from the non-fiction category of Sports). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more students than expected selected the "definitely not read" option and fewer than expected selected "definitely read" option. These selections indicate a dislike for the title Baseball: The Game. A table showing the chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 30

Student Responses and Chi Square Analysis for the Title

Baseball: The Game

Definite not read	Probably not read	Probably read	Definite read	X2	df	P<
45	41	27	23	10.000	3	.019
33%	30.1%	19.9%	17%			

Items that achieved a significance of p<.0001. The one-dimensional chi square analysis showed that the respondents reported a significant difference in their degree of interest for 25 of the 30 titles. Of the 25 significant items, 19 showed a strong significance level of p<.0001. The significance of the expected scores versus the observed scores made several different indications regarding the students' preferences of the literature titles. Some scores indicated a preference, and others suggested a disliking.

The data revealed both preferences and strong preferences. The analysis indicated preferences for the following titles: Mystery of the Hidden Jewels and Voice in the Box (both from the fiction category of Mystery), Ledge and Lion's Eye (both from the fiction category of Adventure), Wild Things (from the non-fiction category of

Animals), A Journey in Time (from the fiction category of Science Fiction), and A Friend with a Friend (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction). The analysis suggested that the students strongly preferred the following titles: More Laughs and Funny Facts (both from the fiction category of Humor),and House on the Hill and Bad Billy (both from the fiction category of Horror).

The data also indicated that students disliked certain titles and strongly disliked particular titles. The scores indicated that the students disliked the following titles: King and Who Will Care for Dusty (both from the fiction category of Animal Stories), and All Star Catcher (from the fiction category of Sports). The analysis suggested that the students strongly disliked Wings and Talons (from the non-fiction category of Animals) and Fishing (from the non-fiction category of Sports).

While many scores indicated a direction of preference, others made no clear indications regarding the students' partiality. These scores tended to be on opposite ends of the scale, where the number of students that reported an interest was relatively equal to the number of students that reported they were not interested. The analysis gave no clear indications regarding preference for the following titles: Earthquake (from the non-fiction

category of Science), The Coming of the Loo People (from the fiction category of Science Fiction), and A Three Point Player (from the fiction category of Sports).

Items that achieved significance levels between $p<.001$ and $p<.019$. The other six items that achieved significance varied between levels of significance from $p<.001$ to $p<.019$. These scores also indicated titles that students either preferred or disliked. The analysis suggested a preference for the title Hidden in the Barn (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction). Students indicated disliking the following titles: Models to be Made (from non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts), Lady of Grace (from the non-fiction category of Biographies), Probing Space (from the non-fiction category of Science), and Baseball: The Game (from the non-fiction category of Sports). No clear indication regarding preference could be made for the title The President (from the fiction category of Friendship).

Items that did not achieve significance. There were five titles on the survey that did not achieve a level of significance ($p<.05$). The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest for these items. The following titles did not achieve a level of significance: Summer Love and Crush (both from the fiction

category of Romance), Tall and Proud (from the non-fiction category of Biographies), The Winner Is (from the fiction category of Friendship), and Paper and Printing (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts).

Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis

A two-dimensional chi square analysis on the degree of interest by gender reported areas of non-significance as well as areas of significance. For example, no significant differences were found between males and females for preferences of titles within the fiction categories of Mystery, Humor, Science Fiction, and Horror. However, there were significant differences between males and females for preferences of the titles within the fiction category of Romance and the titles within the non-fiction categories of Science, Biographies, and Sports. A statistical analysis on the degree of interest by gender for each of the 30 titles is as follows:

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.032$) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Earthquake (from the non-fiction category of Science). The option of "definitely not read" contributed most to this significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer males

than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. These selections indicate that the female respondents have a stronger disliking for the title Earthquake than do the male respondents.

Table 31

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Earthquake

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	5	19	39	2	8.835	3	.032
	22.7%	43.2%	58.2%	50%			
Female	17	25	28	2			
	77.3%	56.8%	41.8%	50%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels (from the fiction category of Mystery). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 32

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	3	13	32	17	.449	3	.930
	60%	50%	46.4%	45.9%			
Female	2	13	37	20			
	40%	50%	53.6%	54.1%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Hidden in the Barn (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction).

Table 33

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Hidden in the Barn

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	11	18	25	11	.716	3	.870
	45.8%	42.9%	50%	52.4%			
Female	13	24	25	10			
	54.2%	57.1%	50%	47.6%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and the female respondents for the title More Laughs (from the fiction category of Humor).

Table 34

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title More Laughs

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	5	6	15	39	3.476	3	.324
	50%	33.3%	40.5%	54.2%			
Female	5	12	22	33			
	50%	66.7%	59.5%	45.8%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.0001$) in the degree of interest between male and female respondents for the title Summer Love (from the fiction category of Romance). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more females than expected and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely read" option.

These selections indicate that the females have a stronger preference for the title Summer Love.

Table 35

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Summer Love

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	31	16	13	5	47.488	3	.0001
	88.6	55.2	44.8	11.4			
Female	4	13	16	39			
	11.4%	44.8%	55.2%	88.6%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title King (from the fiction category of Animal Stories). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 36

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title King

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	22	30	12	1	2.556	3	.465
	47.8%	52.6%	41.4%	20%			
Female	24	27	17	4			
	52.2%	47.4%	58.6%	80%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Crush (from the fiction category of Romance). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more females than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the female respondents have a

stronger preference for the title Crush than do the male respondents.

Table 37

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Crush

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	20	24	13	8	38.786	3	.0001
	87%	72.7%	31%	20.5%			
Female	3	9	29	31			
	13%	27.3%	69%	79.5%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title The Coming of the Loo People (from the fiction category of Science Fiction). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 38

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Coming of the Loo People

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	10	21	22	11	6.751	4	.150
	32.3%	48.8%	48.9%	68.8%			
Female	21	22	23	5			
	67.7%	51.2%	51.1%	31.3%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.004) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title A Three Point Player (from the fiction category of Sports). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more males than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer than expected females selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the male

respondents have a stronger preference for the title A Three Point Player than do the female respondents.

Table 39

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Three Point Player

Gender	Def. not Read	Prob. not Read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	3	18	23	21	13.075	3	.004
	21.4%	37.5%	50%	72.4%			
Female	11	30	23	8			
	78.6%	62.5%	50%	27.6%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.047) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Ledge (from the fiction category of Adventure). The options of "probably not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected selected the option of "probably not read", and fewer females than expected selected the "probably not read" option. This also means that more females than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the female respondents have a

stronger preference for the title Ledge than do the male respondents.

Table 40

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Ledge

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	4	23	24	13	7.929	3	.047
	36.4%	65.7%	46.2%	34.2%			
Female	7	12	28	25			
	63.6%	34.3%	53.8%	65.8%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.0001$) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Models to be Made (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts). The options of "definitely not read" and "probably read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more males than expected selected the "probably read" option, and fewer females than expected selected the "probably read" option. These selections indicate that the male

respondents have a stronger preference for the title Models to be Made than do the female respondents.

Table 41

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Models to be Made

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. Read	X2	df	P<
Male	8	16	19	22	39.063	3	.0001
	16.7%	43.2%	79.2%	78.6%			
Female	40	21	5	6			
	83.3%	56.8%	20.8%	21.4%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.003) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Lady of Grace (from the non-fiction category of Biographies). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more females than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that

females have a stronger preference for the title Lady of Grace than do the male respondents.

Table 42

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Lady of Grace

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	25	22	12	6	13.859	3	.003
	73.5%	44.9%	35.3%	30%			
Female	9	27	22	14			
	26.5%	55.1%	64.7%	70%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Wings and Talons (from the non-fiction category of Animals). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer males than expected the "definitely not read option. This also means that more males than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the male respondents have a

stronger preference for the title Wings and Talons than do the female respondents.

Table 43

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Wings and Talons

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	12	25	21	7	22.013	3	.0001
	23.1%	55.6%	67.7%	77.8%			
Female	40	20	10	2			
	76.9%	44.4%	32.3%	22.2%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Funny Facts (from the fiction category of Humor). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 44

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Funny Facts

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	2	9	24	30	.100	3	.992
	50%	47.4%	49%	46.2%			
Female	2	10	25	35			
	50%	52.6%	51%	34.2%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title The Voice in the Box (from the fiction category of Mystery).

Table 45

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Voice in the Box

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	8	24	26	7	5.676	3	.128
	53.3%	60%	44.1%	30.4%			
Female	7	16	33	16			
	46.7%	40%	55.9%	69.6%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.026) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Who Will Care for Dusty (from the fiction category of Animal Stories). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected selection the "definitely not read" option", and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more females than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the female respondents have a stronger preference for the title Who Will Care for Dusty than do the male respondents.

Table 46

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Who Will Care for Dusty

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	15	27	20	3	5.676	3	.128
	65.2%	50.9%	45.5%	17.6%			
Female	8	26	24	14			
	34.8%	49.1%	54.5%	82.4%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference between the male and female respondents for the title The President (from the fiction category of Friendship).

Table 47

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The President

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	12	27	22	4	6.830	3	.078
	42.9%	57.4%	50%	22.2%			
Female	16	20	22	14			
	57.1%	42.6%	50%	77.8%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.009) between the male and female respondents for the title Tall and Proud (from the non-fiction category of Biographies). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the option of "definitely not read", and more males than expected selected the option of "definitely not read". This also means that more males than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer females than expected

selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the male respondents have a stronger preference for the title Tall and Proud than do the female respondents.

Table 48

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Tall and Proud

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	6	17	13	29	11.530	3	.009
	23.1%	44.7%	46.4%	64.4%			
Female	20	21	15	16			
	76.9%	55.3%	53.6%	35.6%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.0001$) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title The Winner Is (from the fiction category of Friendship). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more females than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer

males than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the female respondents have a stronger preference for the title The Winner Is than do the male respondents.

Table 49

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The Winner Is

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	21	34	8	2	70.155	3	.0001
	87.5%	82.9%	20.5%	6.1%			
Female	3	7	31	31			
	12.5%	21.5%	79.5%	93.9%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Paper and Printing (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 50

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Paper and Printing

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. NOT read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	16	20	14	15	5.334	3	.149
	48.5%	51.3%	34.1%	62.5%			
Female	17	19	27	9			
	51.5%	48.7%	65.9%	37.5%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Wild Things (from the non-fiction category of Animals).

Table 51

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Wild Things

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	5	19	27	13	5.960	3	.114
	25%	46.3%	50%	61.9%			
Female	15	22	27	8			
	75%	53.7%	50%	38.1%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference (p<.0001) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Fishing (from the non-fiction category of Sports). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more males than expected selected the "definitely read" option, and fewer females than expected selected the "definitely read" option. These selections indicate that the male participants have a stronger preference for the title Fishing than do the female respondents.

Table 52

Student Response by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Fishing

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	15	18	19	12	35.699	3	.0001
	23.8%	50%	76%	100%			
Female	48	18	6	0			
	76.2%	50%	24%	0%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.012$) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Probing Space (from the non-fiction category of Science). The option of "probably not read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "probably not read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "probably not read" option. These selections indicate that the male respondents have a stronger preference for the title Probing Space than do the female respondents.

Table 53

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Probing Space

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	13	15	23	12	10.952	3	.012
	37.1%	33.3%	62.2%	66.7%			
Female	22	30	14	6			
	62.9%	66.7%	37.8%	33.3%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and

female respondents for the title The House on the Hill (from the fiction category of Horror).

Table 54

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The House on the Hill

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	0	9	23	32	4.139	3	.247
	0%	52.9%	51.1%	45.7%			
Female	4	8	22	38			
	100%	47.1%	48.9%	54.3%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title A Journey in Time (from the fiction category of Science Fiction). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 55

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title A Journey in Time

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	3	16	32	13	6.439	3	.092
	23.1%	39%	57.1%	50%			
Female	10	25	24	13			
	76.9%	61%	42.9%	50%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Lion's Eye (from the fiction category of Adventure).

Table 56

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Lion's Eye

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	4	14	27	19	3.359	3	.340
	28.6%	42.4%	49.1%	55.9%			
Female	10	19	28	15			
	71.4%	57.6%	50.9%	44.1%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title The All Star Catcher (from the fiction category of Sports).

Table 57

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title The All Star Catcher

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	14	24	16	10	1.589	3	.662
	53.8%	42.1%	45.7%	55.6%			
Female	12	33	19	8			
	46.2%	57.9%	54.3%	44.4%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.010$) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title A Friend with a Friend (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction). The options of "probably not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more males than expected selected the "probably not read option", and fewer females than expected selected the "probably not read" option. This also means that more females than expected selected the option "definitely

read", and fewer males than expected selected the option "definitely read". These selections indicate that the female respondents have a stronger preference for the title A Friend with a Friend than do the male respondents.

Table 58

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title A Friend with a Friend

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	7	28	19	11	11.251	3	.010
	53.8%	66.7%	41.3%	30.6%			
Female	6	14	27	25			
	46.2%	33.3%	58.7%	69.4%			

The statistical analysis found no significant difference in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Bad Billy (from the fiction category of Horror). A table showing the two-dimensional chi square analysis follows on the next page.

Table 59

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Bad Billy

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	5	6	23	30	5.966	3	.113
	83.3%	50%	54.8%	39.5%			
Female	1	6	19	46			
	16.7%	50%	45.2%	60.5%			

The statistical analysis found a significant difference ($p<.001$) in the degree of interest between the male and female respondents for the title Baseball: The Game (from the non-fiction category of Sports). The options of "definitely not read" and "definitely read" contributed most to the significance. This means that more females than expected selected the "definitely not read" option, and fewer males than expected selected the "definitely not read" option. This also means that more males than expected selected the option of "definitely read", and fewer females than expected selected the option of "definitely read". These selections indicate that the

male respondents have a stronger preference for the title Baseball: The Game than do the female respondents.

Table 60

Student Responses by Gender and a Two-dimensional Chi Square Analysis for the Title Baseball: The Game

Gender	Def. not read	Prob. not read	Prob. read	Def. read	X2	df	P<
Male	14	17	16	18	15.657	3	.001
	31.1%	41.5%	59.3%	78.3%			
Female	31	24	11	5			
	68.9%	58.5%	40.7%	21.7%			

Items that achieved a significance level of p<.0001. The two-dimensional chi square analysis was employed to determine significant differences in the degree of interest by gender. The analysis recognized six of the 30 survey items as having a strong significance level of p<.0001. Analyses for three of the six titles that achieved significance levels of p<.0001, indicated a preference by females. Analyses for both Summer Love and Crush, the two titles that represented the fiction category of Romance, indicated that females strongly prefer these books. The analysis from The Winner Is (from the fiction category of friendship), also indicated a strong preference by females.

The data for the other three of the six titles identified as having a significance level of $p<.0001$, indicated a preference by males. Models to be Made (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts) showed a strong male preference. Wings and Talons (from the non-fiction category of Animals) and Fishing (from the non-fiction category of Sports) also showed strong male preferences.

Items that achieved significance levels between $p<.001$ and $p<.009$. Analyses for three of the four titles within this group of significance ($p<.001$ to $p<.009$) indicated strong male preferences. A Three Point Player (from the fiction category of Sports), Tall and Proud, a biography about the life of Michael Jordan, (from the non-fiction category of Biographies), and Baseball: The Game (from the non-fiction category of Sports) showed male preferences. The three titles that indicated a male preference were all related to sports.

The other title within this group of significance ($p<.001$ to $p<.009$) indicated a female preference. The analysis of Lady of Grace (from the non-fiction category of Biographies) indicated a strong female preference.

Items that achieved significance levels between $p<.010$ and $p<.047$. The analysis identified five titles with this level of significance ($p<.010$ to $p<.047$). Two of the titles indicated a male preference, and three titles indicated a female preference. The two titles that indicated a male preference, Earthquake and Probing Space, were both from the non-fiction category of Science.

The analysis for the other three titles within this significance level ($p<.010$ to $p<.047$) indicated a female preference. The data showed that Ledge (from the fiction category of Adventure) indicated a female preference. The analyses of Who Will Care for Dusty (from the fiction category of Animal Stories) and A Friend with a Friend (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction) also showed a female preference.

Items that did not achieve significance. There were 15 titles that did not achieve significance ($p>.05$) based on preferences by gender. Because both males and females rated these titles relatively equally, there was no significant difference in the degree of interest between male and female respondents for these titles. The analysis showed that the following categories did not achieve a level of significance based on gender: The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels and The Voice in the Box (both from the

fiction category of Mystery), More Laughs and Funny Facts (both from the fiction category of Humor), The Coming of the Loo People and A Journey in Time (both from the fiction category of Science Fiction),and The House on the Hill and Bad Billy (both from the fiction category of Horror).

The analysis showed that the following fiction titles did not achieve a level of significance based on gender: Hidden in the Barn (from the fiction category of Historical Fiction), King (from the fiction category of Animals), The President (from the fiction category of Friendship), Lion's Eye (from the fiction category of Adventure), and The All Star Catcher (from the fiction category of Sports).

The analysis also reported two non-fiction titles that did not achieve a level of significance based on gender. Paper and Printing (from the non-fiction category of Hobbies and Crafts),and Wild Things (from the non-fiction category of Animals) did not show a significance by gender.

Acceptance of Hypothesis

The hypothesis stated that the data would reveal statistically significant categories of reading interests and would reveal significant differences between categorical reading interests by gender for sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students of a metropolitan public middle

school. Because the one-dimensional chi square analysis identified several titles with significance for interest, the first portion of the hypothesis was upheld. In addition, the two-dimensional chi square analysis identified several titles that were statistically significant for degree of interest by gender. Therefore, the second element of the hypothesis was also upheld.

Summary of Findings

Conclusions for Subjects as a Whole

The results of this study clearly show that the subjects have a strong preference for both Humor and Horror. Mystery, Historical Fiction, and Adventure were also reported as categories of interest among the subjects. It is notable that both titles for each of these categories showed interest.

Preferences were also reported for Science Fiction and the non-fiction category of Animals. While the results indicated an interest for these categories, only one title (of the two) within these categories was reported with a preference. The other titles in these categories were not reported as having a significant level of interest.

Conclusions Based on Gender

The results of this study report many differences in interest by gender. Females showed a much stronger

preference than the males for Romance. The females also reported a stronger preference for one of the two titles within the categories of Adventure, Animal Stories, Friendship, and Historical Fiction.

The Biographies category showed gender differences in degree of interest by title. While the females showed a stronger preference for the title Lady of Grace from the Biographies category, the males showed a stronger preference for Tall and Proud, the other title in the Biographies category.

The males reported stronger preferences for the non-fiction categories of Sports and Science. The males also showed stronger preferences for one of the two titles within the non-fiction categories of Hobbies and Crafts and Animals. All categories that showed a stronger male interest were non-fiction categories, and all but one of the categories that reported a stronger female preference were fiction categories.

Interpretation and Discussion of Findings

It is apparent that the subjects in this study favor certain categories of literature. Furthermore, the subjects showed differences by gender for literature preferences. The respondents reported interest in all titles represented on the survey for the following

categories: Adventure, Historical Fiction, Horror, Humor, and Mystery. The fact that the analysis identified all titles within these categories as preferences, indicates a reliability of student interest for these categories. In other words, the students consistently reported an interest for the categories of Adventure, Historical Fiction, Horror, Humor, and Mystery. These findings are congruent with the results of previous research such as the study conducted by Diaz-Rueben (1996), that also found these same categories to be interesting to students.

The data analysis also showed preferences for single titles. The students reported an interest for one title within the Science Fiction category and one title within the non-fiction category of Animals. Even though the students did not indicate interest for the other titles within these categories, single title selections suggest areas of interest.

Although the survey contained more fiction categories than non-fiction categories, it is nevertheless noteworthy that the students reported an interest in more fiction titles than non-fiction titles. In fact, of the 12 titles the analysis identified as preferable, 11 were from categories of fiction. This indicates that the respondents, as a whole, prefer fiction to non-fiction.

This observation is consistent with previous studies (Culp & Sosa, 1993; Harkrader & Moore, 1997), which reported that students prefer fiction to non-fiction.

The analysis of interest by gender confirmed the findings of previous studies (Delin, Delin, & Cram, 1995; Haynes & Richgels, 1992). The males and females differed in their reading preferences, and in some cases the preferences are harmonious with societal stereotypes. For instance, the female respondents reported a much greater preference for Romance, whereas males showed greater interest in Sports and Science.

Females showed stronger interest in the categories of Adventure, Animal Stories, Friendship, and Historical Fiction, and Romance. The males showed a stronger preference for the fiction category of Sports, and the non-fiction categories of Animals, Hobbies and Crafts, Science, and Sports. The fact that females showed a stronger interest in more fiction categories, and males showed a greater preference in more non-fiction categories suggests that there is a difference in interest for fiction and non-fiction by gender.

The non-fiction category of Biographies showed gender differences between titles. The females reported a greater interest in the biography Lady of Grace (about the life of

Princess Diana), whereas the males showed a stronger interest in the biography Tall and Proud (about the life of Michael Jordan). This finding may indicate that males and females have stronger preferences for literature having same-gender main characters, although further research is needed to confirm this observation.

Contribution to Theory

As previously stated, this study found that students have categorical reading preferences and that reading preferences differ by gender. These findings are consistent with prior studies (Fisher, 1988; Harkrader & Moore, 1997), and contribute to the theory that students' motivation to read is geared by interest. The underlying premise is that students will be more likely to read, if they are provided with literature they view as interesting. "Even the most reluctant readers can not resist books that touch upon things that matter to them" (Saccardi, 1993, p.321). Furthermore, as Mellon (1990) stated, "It would appear that once a student finds a subject or genre that interests him, the reading difficulty or format is of secondary importance." (p.224).

The results of this study reveal that students do, indeed, prefer certain genres of literature. Being aware of students' literature interests is important because in

order to motivate students to read, it is first necessary to know what interests them. The findings of this study are significant because literacy is a fundamental part of education and is essential to learning.

Implications for Practice

Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that teachers employ some form of reading inventory to discover the specific reading interests of their students. It is evident that students manifest categorical reading preferences; therefore, educators need to investigate students' reading interests in order to encourage students to read. Once teachers are aware of students' reading interests they can, for example, include these texts in the classroom and make them part of the classroom activities.

Understanding what students like to read will help teachers to build collections and develop reading ladders to broaden readers' tastes based on the materials they naturally enjoy (Mellon, 1990). Teachers can use their survey results to help them decide how to adapt their teaching methods and classroom libraries to enhance and extend the students' reading practices. This would be particularly helpful in efforts to encourage reluctant readers to improve their reading habits.

With the increasing use of programs like Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and the Accelerated Reader Program, it is essential for educators to be familiar with the texts students enjoy so that they will be able to provide those books in the classroom and make recommendations based on students' interests. In addition, being able to make suggestions based on interest and including texts reported as interesting in the classroom, may help students to discover or rediscover the potential that reading has for individual development and enjoyment.

Teachers may use a reading interest survey such as the one used in this study, or they may develop their own instrument. Using a fictitious annotated titles survey, like the one in this study, is beneficial because it measures the interests of readers as well as non-readers. In addition, the fictitious annotated titles survey is based on content rather than literature classification schemes or genres, which means it is more easily interpreted by students. Regardless of the style of the instrument, it is recommended that teachers use some form of reading inventory to determine the reading interests of their students. The ultimate goal of investigating students' reading interests is to encourage and to create lifelong readers.

Suggestions for Further Research

Future research into students' reading interests could be more comprehensive, including more categories of literature and additional examples for each category. A more extensive research design would provide educators and researchers with valuable and reliable information regarding students reading interests.

It would also be profitable to see the findings of this study applied to an experimental study that could investigate the effects of knowing students' reading interests. An experimental study could examine whether students in a classroom surrounded by books they view as interesting read more than students whose reading interests have not been explored.

Having this study replicated both locally and nationwide would also be informative. If the study were duplicated on a local level (metropolitan area of a southeastern state), it would be possible to compare results to determine if there are consistencies for categorical reading preferences. A nationwide replication would allow the researchers to compare the results, and identify any regional or countrywide patterns or similarities.

While this study found useful information regarding students' categorical reading interests, it is yet a mere piece of the enormous puzzle of reading research. Much more research is needed to provide a clear picture of students' reading interests.

References

Alvermann, D. E., & Phelps, S. F. (1994). Content reading and literacy (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Bank, S. (1986). Assessing reading interests of adolescent students. Educational Research Quarterly, 10(3), 8-13.

Barnett, J. E., & Irwin, L. (1994). The effects of classroom activities on elementary students' reading attitudes. Reading Improvement, 31(2), 113-121.

Baumann, J. F., Hoffman, J. V., Moon, J., & Duffy-Hester, A. M. (1998). Where are teachers' voices in phonics/whole language debate? Reading Teacher, 5, 636-650.

Beaver, J., Carter, M., & Sonedecker, J. (1992). The holistic reading assessment: Providing specific feedback to guide instruction. ERS Spectrum, 10(3), 39-46.

Berselli, B. (1999, January 21). 93 million dollars sought for Calvert County schools. The Washington Post, p. M03.

Bushman, J. H. (1997). Young adult literature in the classroom- or is it? English Journal, 86(3), 35-40.

California Media and Library Educators Association, Burlingame. (1984). Literature/reading surveys for

library/media specialists and teachers. Burlingame, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 250 702)

Carter, M. (1988). How children choose books: Implications for helping develop readers. Ohio Reading Teacher, 22(3), 15-21.

Conner, J. W. (1989). Iowa books for young adults poll. English Journal, 78(4), 86-89.

Culp, M. B., & Sosa, J. O. (1993). The influence of nonfiction on attitudes, values and behavior. English Journal, 82(8), 60-64.

Delin, C. R., Delin, P. S., & Cram, L. (1995). Patterns and preferences in recreational reading. The Australian Library Journal, 44(3), 199-231.

Diaz-Rueben, C. (1996). Reading interests of high school students. Reading Improvement, 33(3), 169-175.

Duggins, J. (1989). Middle school students' attitudes about reading. New Orleans, LA: International Reading Association. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 310 352)

Elliot, P. G., & Steinkellner, L. L. (1979). Reading preferences of urban and suburban secondary students: Topics and media. Journal of Reading, 23(2), 121-125.

Epstein, I. (1980). Measuring attitudes toward reading. Princeton, NJ: ERIC Clearinghouse on Tests,

Measurement, and Evaluation. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 196 938)

Fisher, P. J. (1988). The reading preferences of third, fourth, and fifth graders. Reading Horizons, 29, 62-70.

Fox, D. L. (1996). New teachers learning to teach through inquiry. English Journal, 85(6), 114-117.

Harkrader, M. A., & Moore, R. (1997). Literature preferences of fourth graders. Reading Research and Instruction, 36(4), 325-339.

Haynes, C., & Richgels, D. J. (1992). Fourth graders' literature preferences. Journal of Educational Research, 85(4), 208-219.

Heibert, E. H., Mervar, K. B., & Person, D. (1990). Research directions: Children's selection of trade books in libraries and classrooms. Language Arts, 67, 758-763.

Isaacs, K. T. (1990). Independent reading: Middle school choices. ALAN Review, 17(2), 35-36.

Isaacs, K. T. (1992). Go ask Alice: What middle schoolers choose to read. New Advocate, 5(2), 129-143.

Kaiser, M. (1995). The young adult literature course: Young readers teach prospective teachers about reading interests and reader response. ALAN Review, 22(2), 32-35.

Kramer, C. J. (1989). Do children accept literature in reading class? Reading Teacher, 42(4), 343-344.

Lewis, R., & Teale, W. H. (1980). Another look at secondary school students' attitudes toward reading. Journal of Reading Behavior, 12, 187-201.

Ley, T. C., Schaer, B. B., & Dismukes, B. W. (1994). Longitudinal study of the reading attitudes and behaviors of middle school students. Reading Psychology, 15(1), 11-38.

Lyman, C. H., Jr. (1996). The effect of self-selection, interest, and motivation upon independent, instructional, and frustrational levels. Reading Teacher, 50(4), 278-282.

McCoy, D., Larson, B., & Higginson, B. (1991). Surveys of independent reading: Pinpointing the problems, seeking the solutions. Crystal City, VA: College Reading Association. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 341 021)

McEady-Gillead, B. (1989). The leisure time of interested and uninterested readers. New Orleans, LA: International Reading Association. (ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 314 719)

McKenna, M. C., & Kear, D. J. (1990). Measuring attitude toward reading: A new tool for teachers. Reading Teacher, 43, 626-639.

McKinlay, S. (1990). Children's attitudes to reading: Do teachers know? Reading, 24, 166-178.

Mellon, C. A. (1990). Leisure reading choices of rural teens. School Library Media Quarterly, 18, 223-228.

Moffit, M. A., & Wartella, E. (1992). Youth and reading: A survey of leisure reading pursuits of female and male adolescents. Reading Research and Instruction, 31, 1-17.

Obert, B. (1988). Collection and development through student surveys and collection analysis. Illinois Libraries, 70(1), 46-53.

Pristin, T. (1996, September 4). New Jersey daily breifing: Slow road. The New York Times, p. B1.

Rief, L. (1992). Seeking Diversity. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Russ, K., III. (1989). Relating reading attitude to reading achievement in an East Los Angeles junior high school. Reading Improvement, 26, 208-214.

Russikoff, K. A., & Pilgreen, J. L. (1994). Shaking the tree of "Forbidden fruit": A study of light reading. Reading Improvement, 31, 122-123.

Saccardi, M. (1993). Children speak: Our students' reactions to books can tell us what to teach. Reading Teacher, 47(4), 318-324.

Smith, L. L., & Joyner, R. C. (1990). Comparing recreational reading levels with reading levels from an informal inventory. Reading Horizons, 30(4), 293-299.

Tunnell, M. O., & Calder, J. E. (1988). A short form reading attitude survey. Reading Improvement, 25(2), 146-151.

Wilson, P. J., & Abrahamson, R. F. (1988). What children's literature classics do children really enjoy? Reading Teacher, 41(4), 406-411.

Wray, D., & Lewis, M. (1993). The reading experiences and interests of junior school children. Children's Literature in Education, 24(4), 251-263.

Appendix

Reading Survey

Please check whether you are a boy_____ or a girl_____.

Directions- Please read each item and circle the answer that matches your opinion.

1. **Earthquake**- What happens to the earth when it quakes? What causes it to quake? Why can't scientists tell when an earthquake will happen?

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **Not** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

2. **The Mystery of the Hidden Jewels**- While visiting their grandparents Tom and Jessica explore an abandoned house and find a sack of jewels under a broken board in the floor.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

3. **Hidden in the Barn**- Two young girls in German-controlled Denmark help a wounded British soldier during World War II.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

4. **More Laughs**- 130 all new jokes that are guaranteed to bust your belly.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

5. **Summer Love**- Robert and his family visit Ocean Island for the summer. During Robert's vacation, he meets Jill who lives on the island. Robert and Jill fall in love, but find it difficult when Robert has to leave at the end of the summer.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

6. **King**- The story of a horse who is found roaming free, captured, and later becomes a winner in riding competition.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

7. **Crush**- Mike thinks that Kathy is really pretty and fun to be with, but his friends think that Kathy is weird. Mike wants to be with Kathy, but doesn't want his friends to make fun of him. Mike has to make an important decision.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

8. **The Coming of the Loo People**- Sarah discovers a family from a distant planet that has landed on earth. Trying to keep the fact that the family is from a different planet becomes difficult for Sarah.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

9. **A Three Point Player**- Jason, the star player on the basketball team, becomes resentful when Phillip, from France, shows his skills.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

10. **Ledge**- During a group camping trip, Brian and Steve become trapped on a ledge after a rock slide. Amanda, their friend, risks all to help them.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

11. **Models to be Made**- Drawings and directions on how to build airplanes, cars, gliders, rockets, ships, trains, and trucks.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

12. **Lady of Grace**- The life story and experiences of Princess Dianna.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

13. **Wings and Talons**- Learn how birds of prey get their food and protect themselves from their enemies.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

14. **Funny Facts**- Real stories about the silly things people do.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

15. **The Voice in the Box**- Amy turns detective when on her way home from school she hears a voice coming from a box sitting on a porch.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

16. **Who Will Care for Dusty**- The story of a dog who is left to roam the streets of a large city when its owner has to go to an old people's home. Will he find a new owner who will look after him?

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

17. **The President**- Nathan has been elected class president. He finds it difficult to be fair because his friends expect him to do what they want him to do.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

18. **Tall and Proud**- The life story of Michael Jordan and how he became a basketball star.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

19. **The Winner Is**- Two girls who are good friends become fierce competitors in gymnastics. Their friendship is tested after going head to head in a state-wide competition.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

20. **Paper and Printing**- Directions, diagrams and pictures help you create many interesting projects using paper. Some projects include block printing, origami, kites, and cut-out eggs.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

21. **Wild Things**- Pictures and facts about wild animals from around the world.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

22. **Fishing**- Find out what equipment you use for fishing in streams and lakes. Also learn where and when to fish.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

23. **Probing Space**- Where have they gone and what have they found?

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

24. **The House on the Hill**- When Eddie's family moves into the legendary haunted house, people all over the town start turning up dead. Eddie finds the killer and the reason behind the murders.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

25. **A Journey in Time**- Joe and Josh investigate Professor Pabulum's time machine. Soon they find themselves far into the future where everything has changed and even people are different.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

26. **Lion's Eye**- As the only survivor of a plane crash, David travels alone through the lands of Africa to try to make it back to the city. He finds himself in many dangerous situations throughout his journey.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

27. **The All-Star Catcher**- Sally was chosen to be the catcher for the All-Star team. Many problems await this honor.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

28. **A Friend with a Friend**- Rachel, a girl whose father is a station master for the Underground Railroad, finds that helping others can lead to death.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

29. **Bad Billy**- Soon after Monica and Billy start dating, people start dying. Each dead body has a note that reads "Bad Billy". Several people die before the police find the killer and the secret behind the murders.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

30. **Baseball: The Game**- Have the winning edge in the field and at the plate. Get tips on fielding and hitting the baseball.

Definitely **NOT** read	Probably **NOT** read	Probably **READ**	Definitely **READ**

Some ideas from Harkrader and Moore (1997)