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READING INTERESTS AND TASTES OF SOPHOMORE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
RELATED TO CERTAIN MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

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ATLANTA, GEORGIA

AUGUST 1967

R v. T 48

6:11-13

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer wishes to express her most sincere thanks to Dr. Lynette S. Gaines, thesis advisor, for reading and criticizing portions of the research and for making invaluable suggestions for the improvement thereof; and to Dr. Thomas D. Jarrett, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences, for his helpful guidance and suggestions that made the completion of this study possible.

M. W. S. C.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
LIST OF TABLES	v
 Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Contribution to Educational Knowledge	4
Basic Questions Which the Study Was Designed to Answer	4
Method of Research	5
Description of Subjects	5
Description of Materials	5
Limitations of the Study	8
Procedural Steps	8
Survey of Related Literature	9
II. ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA	23
Introductory Statement	23
Predominant Reading Interests and Tastes of the Tenth Grade Students	24
Occupational Preferences of the Sophomore Students	29
Community Resources for Reading Activities	34
Home Conditions and Family Attitudes Affecting the Reading Interests and Tastes of the Students	35
Related Implications of the Respective Findings with Regard to the Male and Female Tenth Grade Students	37
III. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	40
General Background and Design of the Study	40
Summary of Research Procedures	41
Summary of Related Literature	42
Summary of Basic Findings	43

TABLE OF CONTENTS - Continued

Chapter	Page
III.	
Conclusions	44
Implications	44
Recommendations	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	46

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Literary Types in Order of Preference	14
2. Types of Books Preferred by the Sophomore Students .	24
3. Magazine Preferences of the Sophomore Students . . .	25
4. Newspaper Preferences of the Students	27
5. Students' Preferences of TV Programs and Movies . . .	28
6. Distribution of Responses Regarding the Use of the Library for Reading Enjoyment	28
7. Distribution of Responses Regarding Types of Books in Homes	29
8. Occupational Preferences of Boys According to Performance on the Preference Record	30
9. Stated Occupational Interests of the Sophomore Boys and Girls	31
10. Occupational Preferences of Girls According to Performance on the Preference Record	32
11. Student Use of Community Resources (Excluding Libraries) for Reading-Related Activities	34
12. Home Conditions Affecting Reading Interests and Tastes	36
13. Results of the Survey of Parents' Reading	37

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Rationale. Success in school and in life is dependent upon one's ability to read well and widely. Yet, despite the sincere efforts of many of today's dedicated teachers of reading, the progress of our nation's students in reading is not commensurate with the labors of educators. It is therefore this writer's belief that one approach that needs more attention and exploration by all concerned with reading instruction, particularly at the secondary level, and all who seek a possible solution to this unfortunate situation is that of increased utilization of students' reading interests and tastes.

The fact that interest is a major motivating factor in any area of education certainly deserves more consideration in efforts to improve reading instruction. A teacher supplied with the knowledge of his students' specific likes and dislikes of various subjects can more effectively help students broaden their reading interests and tastes and, at the same time, give them valuable assistance and incentive to achieve more in all areas of their academic work.

The recognition of the need for reading teachers to use students' interests in enhancing reading instruction is not by any means

a recent development. As early as 1930, Sister M. Celestine surveyed literature dealing with reading interests of elementary-school children.¹ Nonetheless, there have been few books and studies devoted to systematic appraisal of the interests of readers, particularly since the advent of TV.²

There are many developments in the modern age that lend themselves toward the expansion of interests and tastes. Particularly has television, though often criticized for its adverse effects on reading, opened new areas of interest for young people. According to Witty,³ TV can become an asset if parents and teachers will provide guidance in the selection of programs and if they will aim to extend the worthy interests engendered by TV. Spiegler also expresses the opinion that students' interest in TV programs may well be considered a boon to wider reading:

There is mounting evidence that in every part of the country the enthusiasm and curiosity generated by television are natural springboards to children's reading.⁴

There are, however, many students who take television so much for granted and many teachers who believe that television does more harm than good to reading that many students and their teachers have failed

¹Paul Witty and David Kopel, Reading and the Educative Process (Atlanta, Ginn and Company, 1939), p. 25.

²Paul Witty, "Children, TV, and Reading," The Reading Teacher, II (October, 1957), 14.

³Ibid., p. 16.

⁴Charles G. Spiegler, "TV Sends Them to the Library," The Reading Teacher, II (October, 1957), 141.

to recognize that actually television has extended young people's interests in many directions. As Wagner has commented, "Interest is the key to reading. TV, by creating interest, becomes a road to wider reading."¹

In addition, never before has the market been so flooded with printed matter as it is today. Youths, particularly those who come from environments that impede rather than promote achievement in reading, must be guided not only in the appreciation of the abundance of reading material but also in how to get the most from reading the best that is in print. Many of today's students unknowingly have vast stores of knowledge gained from their unconscious observations of the world about them which they may, with systematic guidance, convert to a wider range of interests and tastes. These students are often criticized for their limited "low-brow" tastes in reading. There may be, of course, many reasons underlying this lack of taste in the selection of reading matter, but as Cole suggests,

. . . the relation of this selection to the failure to give children an opportunity to select in school has not been given sufficient attention. Failure may be attributed to the spoon-feeding resulting from a textbook-oriented curriculum.²

One major purpose of education is to prepare young people to become adults who have self-direction. Certainly, the development of

¹Paul A. Wagner, "Relationship of Mass Media to Reading Interests," Reading in the Secondary School, ed. Jerry M. Weiss (New York, The Odyssey Press, Inc., 1961), p. 197.

²Luella Cole, "Using Personal Interests as a Basis for Reading Aid," The Improvement of Reading (New York, Farrar and Rinehart, Inc., Publishers, 1940), p. 69.

self-direction and the attainment of self-realization may both be enhanced as more attention is given to students' selection of reading materials that represent a broad range of interests and tastes that will assist them in becoming better-adjusted citizens in school and in life.

Statement of the Problem. The problem involved in this study was to determine the reading interests and tastes of male and female students enrolled in sophomore classes in the Dunbar Junior-Senior High School, Fort Myers, Florida and to draw related implications with respect to their occupational preferences and the climate and resources for reading in their families and communities.

Contribution to Educational Knowledge. It was hoped that the information related herein would be helpful to school personnel responsible for reading instruction, particularly at the sophomore level in high school. Further, the writer was desirous that this information might be used for the purpose it was intended: to serve as a guide in organizing reading programs that utilize the dynamic force of students' interests as the mainspring to ensure wider reading, and hopefully better readers.

Basic Questions Which the Study Was Designed to Answer. The direction of this study was determined by the following questions which are outgrowths of the stated problem:

1. What were the predominant reading interests and tastes of these male and female tenth grade students of Dunbar Junior-Senior High School?
2. What were the occupational preferences of the students?

3. What was the general socio-economic level of the community, and what were its resources for reading and related activities?
4. What kinds of reading materials were found in the homes from which the students came, and what were the parents' attitudes toward reading?
5. How did these occupational preferences, community resources for reading, and family circumstances seem to relate to the reading interests and tastes of the students?
6. What implications may be drawn for effective guidance in broadening and refining reading interests and tastes within this type of situation?

Method of Research. The descriptive-survey method of research was employed in gathering, presenting, and interpreting the data necessary to conduct this study.

Description of Subjects. The subjects involved in this study were forty sophomore students (twenty-five boys and fifteen girls) of average and below-average reading ability.

Description of Materials. Materials used in this study were the Kuder Preference Record-Vocational, questionnaires for students' reactions regarding their reading interests, questionnaires regarding the availability of reading materials within the homes and parents' attitudes concerning their own and their boys' and girls' reading preferences.

The Kuder Preference Record-Vocational was selected as a means of determining the occupational preferences of the subjects involved in this study and then relating these preferences to reading interests. The use of the Preference Record provided a systematic initial approach

to this study as it limited students' vocational interests to the following ten broad areas: Outdoor, Mechanical, Computational, Persuasive, Artistic, Literary, Musical, Social Service, and Clerical. The test's designer offers the following information relative to its purpose:

Kuder-Form C scores do not indicate what a person should do or what he is able to do. The scores are classifications of interests which can help him predict what he would enjoy doing.¹

Each student was also asked to complete a questionnaire regarding his reading interests. This instrument, entitled "My Reading Interests"² was actually in two parts. In the first section, the student was directed to answer or respond to the following items:

1. Check the library or libraries that you can use.

Community _____ School _____

2. How many books have you borrowed from friends during the last month?

Give titles.

3. How many books have you loaned to friends during the last month?

Give titles.

4. Give the titles of some of the books in your home.

5. From what other sources, do you obtain books?

Buy _____ Rent _____
 Gifts _____ Exchange _____

¹G. Frederic Kuder, Administrator's Manual - Kuder Preference Record (Chicago, Science Research Associates, Inc., 1960), p. 5.

²Ruth Strang, Diagnostic Teaching of Reading (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1964), pp. 108-9.

6. What are your hobbies and collections?
7. What do you intend to be?
Are you going to college?
8. Name the five magazines you like best.
9. Name the three radio or TV programs you like best.
10. Name the state or country farthest away that you have visited.
11. Name the three movies you last saw.
12. What sections of the newspaper do you like best?

The second part of the questionnaire, designed to determine the student's attitude toward reading, included the following items, requiring more detailed responses:

1. What do young persons like you want most to read about?
2. What kind of book or article would you choose to read above all others?
3. Write a paragraph or two showing how you think a book should be written to appeal to most of the boys and girls you know.
4. What made you dislike a book or article you have read this year?
5. What made you like a book or article you have read this year?

Another instrument employed in this study was a form entitled "Reading Survey" which was to be completed by students and their parents. Students were purposefully asked not to sign their names in the completion of these forms because the writer wanted purely uninhibited responses concerning students' and parents' reading preferences.

The questionnaire included the following items: (1) family income, (2) number of persons in the family, (3) number of parents and other adults living in the home, (4) major types of recreational or leisure-time activities, (5) number of newspapers received in the home daily, (6) number of newspapers read daily, (7) number of magazines received in the home regularly or sometimes, (8) kinds of magazines read.

It was the writer's opinion that the instruments used would provide the information necessary to conduct this study and from them, she would be able to secure data to aid her in ascertaining the tastes and interests of the subjects involved.

Limitations of the Study. This study was limited to forty sophomore students enrolled in the Dunbar Junior-Senior High School during the school term 1966-67. The study was entirely concerned with the reading interests and tastes of these students and did not seek to answer questions regarding any other reasons why these students were considered average and under-average achievers in their English classes. The writer realized, moreover, that interest alone is not a sound basis for approaching reading instruction and that there are numerous other factors which influence a student's success in reading, such as, his physical and emotional constitution, his social adjustment in and out of school, and his accessibility to a variety of reading materials.

Procedural Steps. The writer used the following procedures in this study:

1. Secured permission to survey students from the principal of Dunbar Junior-Senior High School.

2. Surveyed students' interests and tastes by means of questionnaires.
3. Administered an interest inventory to forty sophomore students.
4. Held individual conferences with students regarding their interests and tastes.
5. Examined cumulative folders to gain information concerning students' interests and tastes.
6. Reviewed literature pertaining to the subject.
7. Organized and classified data.
8. Compiled findings.

Survey of Related Literature. The literature surveyed for this study has been both enlightening and rewarding. An abundance of material was available which needed only organization to fulfill the purposes of this study. Generally, the literature will be discussed in the following order: (1) types of literature which students typically do not like to read and those which they enjoy; (2) the role of teachers in guiding students' interests; (3) methods and materials to be used in a reading program geared to the interests and tastes of the subjects involved.

By the time students reach the sophomore year in high school, noticeable changes in reading patterns are evident. High school students are often in a period of rebellion, groping for independence and individuality. They often resent books that have been especially

¹Robert Karlin, Teaching Reading in High School (New York, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1964), p. 205 quoting Albert J. Mazurkiewicz's "Social-Cultural Influences and Reading," Journal of Developmental Reading (Summer, 1960), pp. 254-63.

written for them and want books that grapple with adult problems. Interesting observations concerning what students at this grade level want to read were made by several writers as a result of studies made concerning likes and dislikes of reading material. Strang¹ noted, for instance, in a study made in 1946, that both boys and girls expressed strong dislikes for books that had extreme characteristics such as the following: too great difficulty, too wordy, slow-moving, too monotonous, too sentimental, or characters were too old. She noted further that few students listed among the reading that had interested them the classics usually assigned high-school students.² Norvell makes the following comment concerning literary material commonly presented in schools:

Our data show clearly that much literary material being used in our schools is too mature, too subtle, too erudite to permit its enjoyment by the majority of secondary-school pupils.³

Making specific reference to Shakespeare's As You Like It, he pointed out the fact that it is very much disliked by boys, in particular, because of its style and content. In addition, he notes that neither boys nor girls like "subtle humor, descriptive prose and verse; letters; reflective, didactic, philosophical, or nature poems."⁴

¹Ruth Strang, "Reading Interests," English Journal, XXXV (November, 1946), 479.

²Ibid., p. 478.

³George W. Norvell, "Some Results of a Twelve-Year Study of Children's Reading Interests," English Journal, XXXV (December, 1946), 532.

⁴Ibid.

Of all literary genres, it has been observed that poetry as a whole is the most disliked form although many individual poems were highly ranked. Norvell observed that while narrative poems and poems of obvious humor are liked, nature poems, poems of sentiment, reflection, religion, philosophy, and didacticism rank low. He attributed this distaste of poetry to unusual word order and subtle vocabulary which may interfere with the students' understanding the meaning of the poem, but he adds:

Not form but content is the touchstone of popularity. The vast majority of poems deal with themes and ideas which children would reject as decisively if offered to them in prose. Youth demands life in action; age is often content with sentiment in rose leaves, with mood, reflection, dreams, didacticism, and philosophy.¹

The teaching materials and selections used are not equally favored by boys and girls. Norvell believes, moreover, that the fact that two out of every three selections commonly used in the classroom are better liked by girls than by boys may influence boys' unfavorable attitudes toward school in general and toward English classes in particular.²

Today's teenager is characterized by diversity. Adolescence is a period in which a young person's interest swings, as does a pendulum, between childhood and adulthood. This fluctuation is evident in his reading. Strang³ observes that there is a wide range of interest re-

¹Ibid., p. 533.

²Ibid., p. 534.

³Strang, loc. cit., p. 482.

presented among adolescents and that there is an extensive reading interest in current adult fiction.

Norvell also generalizes that most high-school pupils outgrow their love for the comics. This is probably due to the fact that young people at this age level are "seriously concerned with life's problems, their problems, and are not long content with the trivial."¹ Moreover, he believes that such teen-age magazines as Calling All Girls, Seventeen, and Miss America have stimulated the interest of high school girls in fashions and boy-girl relationships.

Smith and Eno² found that senior high school boys preferred adventure stories but that they also like mystery, sea stories, comedy, historical tales, and science fiction. They also observed that 66 per cent of the girls polled wanted romance and that they also liked career stories, mystery, adventure, and comedy. Both boys and girls believed that the leading character should be young (fifteen to nineteen years old for junior high school and twenty to twenty-four years old for senior high school readers), attractive, kind, intelligent, physically strong, good-natured with a sense of humor, and popular.

Norvell,³ after having studied interests in grades seven through twelve over a period of twenty-five years to discover the effects of age, intelligence and difference in sex upon the reading choices of adolescents, reached the following conclusions:

¹Norvell, loc. cit., p. 531.

²Karlin, loc. cit., p. 200 (quoting Mary L. Smith and Isabel V. Eno's "What Do They Really Want?" English Journal, L (May, 1961), 343-5.

³George Norvell, The Reading Interests of Young People (Boston, D. C. Heath and Company, 1950), p. 200.

1. Age and intelligence are not significant factors in the selection of materials for a given grade.
2. Differences in sex create a highly significant factor in the reading choices of boys and girls.
3. Girls like many books chosen by boys, and boys dislike many of those chosen by girls.
4. Boys like adventure, sports, mystery, humor, animals, and male characters.
5. Girls like adventure (without too much violence), patriotism, love, family life, school life, humor, animals, and both male and female characters in their reading.

Mazurkiewicz¹ concludes that men and boys generally view reading as a feminine activity and that this attitude seemingly influences the reading ability of boys.

Norvell's findings are similar inasmuch as he observes that both sexes react favorably to adventure, humorous poems, stories, and essays (except where the humor is subtle), poems and stories of patriotism, stories of mystery, sports, and animals. Boys are more favorably inclined than are girls to strenuous adventure, including war. Girls, he notes, react favorably to romantic love, to sentiment in general, and to poems and stories of home and family life. In conclusion, Norvell says:

The most powerful single influence in determining children's choices of reading materials in the high school is sex. This trend continues throughout the secondary school period, so that by the time young people leave high school their reading preferences are substantially the ones they will follow through later life.²

¹Karlin, loc. cit., p. 201 (quoting Albert J. Mazurkiewicz).

²Norvell, "Some Results . . .", pp. 532-3.

A summary of students' interests in literary types according to sex appears below:

TABLE 1
LITERARY TYPES IN ORDER OF PREFERENCE¹

Literary Type	No. of Selections	Per Cent Liking			Spread Points
		Boys	Girls	Av.	
Novel	47	78.4	79.6	79.0	1.2
Play	62	71.3	77.2	74.3	5.9
Short Story	219	72.5	73.8	73.2	1.3
Biography	50	67.7	69.2	68.5	1.5
Essay	81	63.1	66.3	64.7	3.2
Poem	466	60.7	68.3	64.5	7.6
Letter	12	60.6	64.9	62.8	4.3
Speech	13	63.9	59.7	61.8	4.2
TOTAL	950	65.6	70.5	68.1	4.9

According to Gray,² inquiries made among mature readers revealed two important facts: (1) that the crucial point in the development of permanent reading interests was when reading began to inspire, bring convictions, to make changes in the reader's values, and to open new vistas; (2) that the teacher who is himself a lover of good books

¹Ibid., p. 534.

²William S. Gray, "Providing Reading Materials Appropriate to Interest and Maturity Levels," International Reading Association Conference Proceedings, V (1960), p. 22.

is a very great influence in developing appreciations within youth concerning the great rewards of reading. The teacher's attitude can and does make an astounding difference in the students' interests, tastes, and attitudes toward reading. For a teacher to provide the right book for a student requires both the teacher's skill and understanding and a wide reading background. Before one can attempt to influence the reading teenagers do, he must be fully aware "that the first requisite for good reading guidance is an understanding of young people and a knowledge of their literature."¹

In order to ascertain accurately what the adolescent's literature is, several techniques may be employed. First of all, however, the teacher who would help his students through this period needs to understand that students are first individuals. Regarding ways by which teachers may secure information concerning the identification of individual students' reading preferences, Spache² recommends the following: (1) questionnaires, (2) interest inventories, (3) teacher observations, conferences, (4) cumulative record folder reviews (anecdotal records), personality tests, measures of adjustment, and checklists of problem areas. He further suggests that in order to gain information concerning a student's interests that the teacher have a clear picture of the student's family and community background and the student's accessibility of books. Spache makes the following conclusive point regarding the role of the teacher in guiding students' reading:

¹Gertrude S. Wright, "Some Reading Guidance Techniques," English Journal, LV (December, 1966), 1183.

²George D. Spache, Good Reading for Poor Readers (Champaign, Illinois, Garrard Publishing Company, 1966), p. 8.

Familiarity with books, a broad supply, and a real liking and respect for reading and for the pupils we teach are certainly fundamental. But with each new reluctant reader, we must start again at the beginning, and the beginning is the reader himself.¹

Handlin² warns, however, that we cannot assume that students will select good books; therefore, teachers must analyze students' responses to interest questionnaires and other interest determinants.

According to Helen Robinson,

The disinterested reader should be given a readiness preparation for individualized reading just as young children are given help when they are introduced to literature By studying each individual carefully those working with him can catch the spark of enthusiasm concerning a given topic that will open the door to a world of vicarious experiences in everyday living.³

"Good teachers," says Gray, "seek not only to guide children's interests but also to employ them in motivating reading."⁴

Reading is only one part of the mainstream of communication in today's world. Teachers can learn how to interest students by employing the techniques that appeal to students in the mass media they enjoy. Strickland aptly comments,

Increasingly schools will not use experiences from outside the classroom and the school merely to supplement or to enrich the ongoing program. Rather, they will be in the position of coordinating the

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²Bertha Handlin, "The Fallacy of Free Reading as an approach to Appreciation," English Journal, XXXV (April, 1946), 182-9.

³Helen M. Robinson, Materials for Reading (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 25.

⁴William S. Gray (ed.), Promoting Growth Toward Maturity in Interpreting What Is Read (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1951), p. 88.

learning experiences of boys and girls, since increasingly learning occurs in many situations and in many ways outside the school.¹

Smith² suggests the following ways to stimulate interest in reading:

1. Make materials available
2. Generate enthusiasm
3. Counsel parents
4. Plan for specific periods of sharing
5. Recommend books
6. Use table or shelf arrangements
7. Make attractive bulletin board displays
8. Prepare assembly, TV, or community programs
9. Hold book fairs

Since Smith also feels that literature is closely related to other creative arts and that interest and appreciation in literature may be extended by coordination into other art areas, she further suggests that dramatizations, choral reading, recording stories or plays, making murals, modeling, writing stories, and creating poems be also incorporated into the reading program.

Carlin³ believes that meaningful book reporting will avoid boredom and dullness and encourage wider, more thorough reading. He

¹Ruth G. Strickland, "Making the Most of Children's Interests in the Teaching of Reading," The Reading Teacher, X (February, 1957), 138.

²Nila Banton Smith, Reading Instruction for Today's Children (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 411.

³Jerome Carlin, "Your Next Book Report," English Journal, LI (January, 1961), 16-22.

lists a number of possibilities and suggests that the teacher pass forms, letting students decide for themselves which forms they wish to use for making their book reports:

1. A report on the book as it would be given by a man of the future.
2. The diary of a major character
3. A letter written in the role of a book character
4. Description of characters
5. Written analysis for a specific standpoint (such as supplying a topic sentence, i. e., "Like people in life, the characters in a book sometimes make us ashamed of the human race.")
6. Formal book review (using a newspaper model)
7. The scholarly critical paper
8. Round-table discussion under a student chairman
9. Conversation (with each student expressing curiosity about the other's book)
10. Oral reading and discussion of brief excerpts
11. Significant incident or anecdote (as a speaker on a TV program whose job it is to interest the audience through the use of an incident or anecdote)
12. Dramatization
13. Group performances in the style of "This Is Your Life"
14. Reporter at the scene
15. The trial of a major character
16. Interview by a reporter of a major character or of the author
17. The author meets the critics
18. Quiz program
19. Monologue (speaking as a main character)

20. Dialogue (between two students who have read the same book)
21. Counseling by experts (such as a character explaining his crucial problem to several social workers)
22. Sales talk
23. Presentation to a publisher (where a student has to face a selection committee)
24. Discussion of a proposed production conducted by a "playwright" and a "producer"
25. Outline of a TV or motion-picture version
26. Ceremonies for Recognition Day (where author is to receive an award or a character in a biography is to receive an award)
27. Dinner meeting of the Social Welfare Club (used when the class has read biographies and the new members must tell how they will be assets)
28. Preview of coming attractions
29. Art and other creative work (book jackets, ad blurbs, scenes from the story, posters, etc.)

Robinson¹ suggests that those who guide the reading program be familiar with the following types of reading materials: mythology, anthologies, poetry, conservation, periodicals, reference books in content matter, religious literature, travel literature, garden literature, detective and mystery stories, holiday stories, creative hobbies, book clubs, Boy and Girl Scout literature, comics books, and biography. Strang has commented that "The lower the reading ability, the higher must be the interest in the books," highlighting the need to provide highly interesting material for retarded readers.²

¹Robinson, loc. cit., p. 90.

²Strang, loc. cit., p. 103.

Center and Persons¹ offer the following guidelines in the selection of materials to use in a reading class:

1. Help boys and girls to see the significance in life.
2. Ideas must be predominant.
3. Contemporary material, discussing matters of real concern to people now and in the years to come, is best.
4. Material should include information on the world of nature.
5. Materials should have intrinsic value so as to create new interests, wider horizons, and increase knowledge about the world and life.
6. Material should be factual in character, not entirely literary.
7. Style is a vital factor to be considered in the choice of study-type and work-type material.

One author, James E. Davis, recommends highly the use of the junior novel, especially since he has noted that recent novels of this type show the following improvements over earlier junior novels: more mature content, movement away from unrealistic success stories, treatment of characters who do not necessarily come from socially and economically fortunate backgrounds. He concludes his article with the following statement, rebutting adverse statements concerning the use of the junior novel:

The junior novel is definitely being perpetuated, with some changes in thematic emphasis and limited but interesting experimentation in such aspects as point of view. The thematic shifts reflect such obvious areas as racial tension and space travel, but the books also seem to indicate a modest resurgence of the

¹Stella S. Center and Gladys L. Persons, Teaching High-School Students to Read (New York, D. Appleton-Century Company, 1937), p. 31.

historical novel and some use of satire. Many of the recent junior novels are not only well written, but . . . may well survive as classics no longer labeled with a qualifier.¹

Norvell² notes that students generally do not like to read the so-called classics and recommends that in selecting materials for students, teachers should in general choose selections "which stand where the lines of student and teacher approval converge."

Certainly, the veritable flood of paperbacks on the market today has offered still another material source to the teacher of reading. "The value of the paperback as a reading guidance technique is immeasurable," Wright asserts. Because students like paperbacks, they buy them and read them. The paperback, Wright further explains, is compatible with modern living and fits in with the teenagers' go-go way of life. It has become "the number one factor in motivating teenagers to read, and on the whole, to encourage them to read better books."³

Finally, Leonard⁴ suggests that teachers use the following three fundamental educational principles in the selection of reading materials:

1. Begin where children actually are.
2. Secure altogether significant and valuable materials of study.
3. Help pupils to realize the immediate worth of our subject.

¹James E. Davis, "Recent Trends in Fiction for Adolescents," English Journal, LVI (May, 1967), 720-4.

²Norvell, loc. cit., p. 532.

³Wright, loc. cit., p. 1189.

⁴Sterling Andrus Leonard, Essential Principles of Teaching Reading and Literature (Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1922), pp. 75-6.

The survey of literature reflects work that has been accomplished in the area of determining the predominant reading likes and dislikes of average teenaged Americans. Moreover, the literature shows a need for reconsideration on the part of those persons responsible for reading instruction in the secondary school (1) in selecting materials that pupils will not find distasteful; (2) in recognizing the teacher as the key person responsible for fostering desirable reading habits, tastes, and interests; and (3) in providing materials and activities that are in keeping with modern trends in education and, more specifically, with teenagers' way of life.

CHAPTER II

ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introductory Statement. The data in this chapter were collected after permission to conduct this study was granted by the faculty of Atlanta University and the principal of the Dunbar Junior-Senior High School in Fort Myers, Florida.

The writer wished to secure information, from a selected group of students, that would enable her to assess accurately their reading interests and tastes. Two classes of sophomore students were used as the subjects in this study: twenty-five boys and fifteen girls, representing a fourth of the entire sophomore class enrollment. These students were given three instruments to complete: the Kuder Preference Record - Form CH; "My Reading Interests," a questionnaire to determine individual students' reading interests; and "Reading Survey," a questionnaire that was to be returned unsigned because the writer wanted uninhibited responses to questions about student and parental attitudes toward reading, and the quantity and quality of printed materials found in the homes of the subjects.

In addition, the writer reviewed pertinent information in cumulative folders regarding family economic status, general achievement, and personality traits, and conducted personal conferences with the subjects involved, in further efforts to analyze their reading preferences.

Predominant Reading Interests and Tastes of the
Tenth Grade Students

To secure information regarding the predominant reading interests and tastes of the students, the writer held conferences with them and asked them to complete two sets of questionnaires, one entitled "My Reading Interests" and the other, "Reading Survey."

Book Preferences of Students, According to Sex. The data secured from the questionnaire, "My Reading Interests," and shown in Table 2 below, revealed that there are differences in preferences of books, according to the sex of students.

TABLE 2

TYPES OF BOOKS PREFERRED BY THE SOPHOMORE STUDENTS.

Types of Books	Boys	Per Cent	Girls	Per Cent
Mystery	24	96	14	93
Science-Fiction	24	96	4	26
Intrigue	23	92	8	53
Adventure	20	80	10	66
Romance	0	0	15	100
Biography	0	0	1	6
Poetry	0	0	2	13

The data, for instance, indicated that boys preferred reading at least four types of books: mystery, science-fiction, intrigue, and adventure.

The data further revealed that girls' tastes in reading were more limited than those of the boys, inasmuch as most girls' responses indicated that they enjoyed reading only two types of books, romance and mystery. Books containing biography and poetry were the least favored by both sexes. The data showed that the percentage of boys preferring poetry was 0 while only 13 per cent of the girls enjoyed that type of reading.

Magazine Preferences of Boys and Girls. The data showed, further, that boys' and girls' preferences in magazine reading were also quite different. Table 3 reports the data submitted pertinent to this fact and shows the

TABLE 3
MAGAZINE PREFERENCES OF THE SOPHOMORE STUDENTS

Magazine	Boys	Per Cent	Magazine	Girls	Per Cent
<u>Ebony</u>	20	80	<u>Look</u>	13	86
<u>Look</u>	15	60	<u>Life</u>	12	80
<u>Life</u>	15	60	<u>Co-Ed</u>	11	73
<u>Jive</u>	10	40	<u>Scope</u>	9	60
<u>Scope</u>	10	40	<u>McCall's</u>	8	53
<u>Time</u>	9	36	<u>Seventeen</u>	7	46
<u>Post</u>	9	36	<u>Family Circle</u>	6	40
<u>Newsweek</u>	9	36	<u>Vogue</u>	5	33
<u>Insider</u>	8	36	<u>Time</u>	5	33
<u>Reader's Digest</u>	7	28	<u>Ebony</u>	5	33

top ten selections of each sex. Students' responses to the questionnaire item, "Name the five magazines you like best," revealed that both boys and girls enjoyed magazines that featured stories accompanied by pictures. The first five choices for the boys were Ebony, Look, Life, Jive, and Scope. The girls' choices of magazines included at least three of the boys' top choices--Look, Life, and Scope, but their third- and fifth-place choices indicated that girls also preferred reading magazines especially written for the female sex. Other female "top ten" selections were Seventeen, Family Circle, and Vogue, all magazines written especially for the female sex.

Newspaper Section Preferences of Sophomore Students. An examination of the answers to questions regarding the sections of newspapers that were most enjoyed by the subjects revealed that boys' and girls' tastes in this kind of reading were closely related. Table 4, page 27, presents specific data relative to this observation. For both sexes, the sports section of the newspaper held the greatest attraction. Girls indicated that they were, however, equally as interested in the news section, but boys' responses revealed that only 32 per cent of them were interested in reading the news and the funnies. Ten girls, 66 per cent, reported enjoying the comics section of the newspaper. Students of both sexes showed that other parts of the newspaper were not appealing to them. One girl, however, indicated that she enjoyed reading editorials.

Those findings indicated that relatively few boys read the newspaper and that among those that did sports held the greatest attraction.

TABLE 4

NEWSPAPER SECTION PREFERENCES OF THE SOPHOMORE STUDENTS

Newspaper Sections	Boys	Per Cent	Girls	Per Cent
Sports	15	60	11	73
News	8	32	11	73
Funnies	8	32	10	66
Stories	0	0	0	0
Editorials	0	0	1	6
Other	0	0	0	0

Television Preferences of the Sophomore Students. Information concerning television preferences was also received from students' responses to items in the reading interests questionnaire. Table 5, page 28, presents the specific data. There it may be observed that boys predominantly preferred comedy, intrigue-mystery, and Western TV programs while girls enjoyed family-life, comedy, and romance. Regarding specific TV programs, girls indicated that they preferred the afternoon serial type of programs, such as, The Secret Storm and The Edge of Night.

The data indicated, further, that neither boys nor girls were particularly interested in news programs. Boys definitely showed a distaste for television programs featuring family-life, romance, and music.

General Reading Habits of the Sophomore Students. Data received from responses to questionnaire items and tabulated in Table 6, page 28, disclosed that only a few students used the library for purposes other than to study.

TABLE 5

SOPHOMORE STUDENTS' PREFERENCES OF TV PROGRAMS AND MOVIES

Types	Boys	Per Cent	Girls	Per Cent
Comedy	24	96	10	66
Intrigue-Mystery	21	84	6	40
Western	20	80	5	36
Science Fiction	15	60	4	33
Variety	8	32	5	36
News	5	20	4	33
Quiz	5	20	8	53
Family-Life	0	0	10	66
Romance	0	0	15	100
Musical	0	0	8	53

TABLE 6

DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES REGARDING USE
OF THE LIBRARY FOR READING ENJOYMENT

Libraries Used	Boys	Per Cent	Girls	Per Cent
School Library	18	72	8	53
Community Library	5	20	2	13
No Response	2	8	5	33

According to the responses, boys visited the libraries more than did

girls for the purpose of reading enjoyment. It was evident that few students (seven) used the community library, and seven students gave no indication as to whether or not they used the library for purposes other than to study.

Analysis of data in Table 7, below, showed that the types of books found in students' homes generally fall into five classifications--reference books, Bibles, fiction, biography, and poetry. The data showed, moreover, that (1) there is a characteristic shortage of books in the homes, and (2) that there are far more fictional-type books than any others.

TABLE 7
DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSES REGARDING
TYPES OF BOOKS IN HOMES

Type of Book	Student Responses	Per Cent
Reference (dictionaries, encyclopedias)	10	25.0
Bibles	3	7.5
Fiction	25	62.0
Biography	7	17.5
Poetry	3	7.5

Occupational Preferences of the Sophomore Students

The Kuder Preference Record - Occupational was one instrument used to determine the occupational preferences of the sophomore students. The

writer wanted to use the evidence secured from this instrument to (1) compare students' occupational interests to their reading interests, and (2) draw conclusions relative to their tastes. The other instrument used was a questionnaire, upon which students stated their preferred occupations.

Occupational Preferences of the Sophomore Boys. According to results of boys' performances on the Preference Record, the five top occupational choices were in computational, literary, musical, scientific, and persuasive areas. Table 8, below, shows the distribution of boys' interests among the occupations.

TABLE 8

OCCUPATIONAL PREFERENCES OF BOYS ACCORDING TO
PERFORMANCE ON THE PREFERENCE RECORD

Interests	*Number of Students	Per Cent
Outdoor	5	20
Mechanical	10	40
Computational	15	60
Scientific	9	36
Persuasive	9	36
Artistic	3	12
Literary	11	44
Musical	8	32
Social Service	6	4
Clerical	4	16

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile

Ten boys made scores above the fiftieth percentile in more than one interest component. The fact that eleven boys showed by their performance on this instrument that they were interested in literary occupations was noteworthy. According to the manual, high scoring in this area is indicative of subjects' interests in work requiring skill in reading and writing. According to their stated occupational interests, Table 9, below, five boys were interested in mechanical jobs, and four each indicated that they wanted computational and common labor occupations. Social service and clerical occupations were attractive to six boys. Of the remaining boys, one

TABLE 9
STATED OCCUPATIONAL INTERESTS OF THE
SOPHOMORE BOYS AND GIRLS

Interest	Boys	Per Cent	Girls	Per Cent
Mechanical	5	20	0	0
Computational	4	16	4	26
Common Labor	4	16	0	0
Social Service	3	12	3	20
Clerical	3	12	2	14
Persuasive	1	4	0	0
Artistic	1	4	3	20
Educational	0	0	1	6
Undecided	4	16	2	14
Total	25	100	15	100

cal occupations were attractive to six boys. Of the remaining boys, one

was interested in an occupation requiring persuasion, one was interested in an artistic career, and four were undecided about their future occupations.

Occupational Preferences of the Sophomore Girls. The data compiled from female responses on the Record, and shown in Table 10, below, indicated that girls are predominantly interested in clerical, computational, social service, mechanical, and literary occupations, respectively.

TABLE 10
OCCUPATIONAL PREFERENCES OF GIRLS ACCORDING
TO PERFORMANCE ON THE PREFERENCE RECORD

Interests	*Number of Students	Per Cent
Outdoor	4	26
Mechanical	8	53
Computational	9	60
Scientific	5	33
Persuasive	2	13
Artistic	3	20
Literary	7	46
Musical	4	26
Social Service	9	53
Clerical	10	66

*Students scoring at or above the 50th percentile

Girls' predominant interests as indicated by their responses on the Record revealed that they were interested in occupations requiring manual and mathematical skills. Since their interest in the literary component ranked in the fifth place in popularity, it was assumed that reading, in general, was not one of their major interests.

Among the girls, four (26 per cent) expressed interest in computational occupations (See Table 9, page 31). Social service (20 percent) and artistic (20 per cent) occupations attracted six others. Two girls were interested in clerical occupations and one girl was interested in teaching. Two girls were undecided about their choice occupations.

Comparative Summary. The data secured from responses on the Preference Record gave information relative to the occupational interests of the sophomore students. There was a marked contrast between the vocational interests of the boys and those of the girls. Boys' performances revealed that their interests lay in widely varied occupational fields. There was some similarity noted, however, in girls' responses inasmuch as relationships were observed between their interests in mechanical, computational, and clerical areas.

Data secured from the questionnaires substantiated the writer's opinion that many students were unaware of their vocational potentialities. As far as reading is concerned, the difference between inventoried interests and expressed occupational interests could be used advantageously to broaden students' reading interests.

Community Resources for Reading Activities

The community has several libraries, namely, a junior college library, community library, and chamber of commerce library, that are available for use by secondary school students. Results of conferences and questionnaires, shown in Table 6, page 28, indicated that these libraries were not used by a large number of the students.

Conferences with students yielded information, presented in Table 11, below, concerning their participation in those community activities related to reading. The junior college in the community afforded a number of opportunities designed to encourage the awareness of new and worthy experiences not only for college students but for other members of the

TABLE 11

STUDENT USE OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES (EXCLUDING LIBRARIES)
FOR READING-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Activities and Resources	Boys	Per Cent	Girls	Per Cent
Concerts	0	0	2	14
Lectures	0	0	0	0
College Courses	0	0	1	7
Dramatic Clubs	1	4	2	13

community as well. High school students were often invited to attend lectures, concerts, and even to participate in college assembly programs. Courses were offered in reading and in introduction to the theatre, espe-

cially designed for high school students and for which they could earn college credits to be held in escrow until their graduation from high school.

In addition, the Edison Apprentice Players, a local organization with an integrated membership, offered an opportunity for participation in reading-related activities involved in play production. One sophomore boy and two girls said that they were members of that organization.

As was indicated in Table 11, page 34, student participation in community-provided activities was rather limited. Conferences with students yielded further information that only two students, one boy and one girl, had attended plays given outside their school; and that five of the forty subjects, one boy and four girls, had visited the Edison Home, a museum containing a display of the inventor's works.

Home Conditions and Family Attitudes Affecting Reading Interests and Tastes of the Students

Data, with regard to home conditions and parents' reading, are presented in Tables 12 and 13. The information for these tables was secured from conferences with students, the unsigned reading survey questionnaire, and cumulative folders. According to the data received from the forty subjects, thirty-five per cent of the students came from families which received an annual income of over \$5000. Few of the students' parents (20 per cent) owned their own homes, the remainder of responses revealing that housing was either provided in the federal housing project or in rented houses. Ten responses (25 per cent) indicated that there were fewer than four members in the family. Finally, there were eight students (37 per cent) whose parents had an education above the ninth grade.

TABLE 12

HOME CONDITIONS AFFECTING READING INTERESTS AND TASTES

Conditions	Number of Responses	Per Cent
Annual Income above \$5000	14	35
Home Ownership	8	20
Membership of Family Four and Under	10	25
Parents' Education Above Ninth Grade	15	37

Analysis of the data in Table 13, page 37, showed that of the forty responses received, few parents (about 40 per cent) read newspapers and magazines. The data indicated, moreover, that only ten parents received and read newspapers daily, and that the most commonly read newspaper was the local paper. No parents read in over two newspapers, even on Sundays. Seventeen parents (42 percent) were reported to have been regular readers of magazines, with twelve parents having read two magazines regularly. Twenty percent (8) of the families said that magazines were received in the home regularly, and twenty per cent (8) indicated that magazines were received in the home sometimes, generally from borrowed sources. Nine parents reported that they read at least one book annually, and of this number five reported that they read more than one book a year.

TABLE 13

RESULTS OF SURVEY OF PARENTS' READING

Questionnaire Items	Responses				Total Responses	Per Cent
	1	2	3	More		
Number of newspapers received in home daily	10	0	0	0	10	25
Number of newspapers read daily	10	0	0	0	10	25
Number of newspapers read weekly	11	3	0	0	14	35
Number of magazines read regularly	5	12	0	0	17	42
Number of magazines received in home regularly	6	2	0	0	8	20
Number of magazines received in home sometimes	1	4	3	0	8	20
Number of books read regularly	4	2	2	1	9	22

Related Implications of the Respective Findings
with Regard to Male and Female
Tenth Grade Students

The data reviewed made it possible for the writer to note relationships between the subjects' reading preferences and their occupational interests, their use of community resources, and their family backgrounds.

Reading Interests and Tastes Related to Occupational Preferences of the Two Groups. The following implications were drawn from male and female students' performances on the Kuder Preference Record - Vocational, which

indicated their inventoried interests; and from their responses to questionnaire items, which indicated their manifested interests.

1. Most boys showed by their performance on both instruments that they were interested in mechanical and computational occupations. High interest in those areas was indicative of boys' preference to literature dealing with machines and numbers.
2. Although no boys professed an interest in literary occupations, the interest in reading was evident by the high scores of eleven boys (44 per cent) in the literary component.
3. Eight boys revealed by their expressed interest that they were undecided (4) and that they wanted to do common labor (4). This implied that their experiences were so limited as to make them unable to make specific occupational selections.
4. The data from both instruments showed that girls were generally interested in computational, social service, artistic, and clerical occupations, indicating that they too were interested in literature dealing with numbers, creativity, and people.
5. The fact that one girl expressed an interest in teaching and that seven showed interest, by their performance on the Preference Record, in literary occupations was indicative that the girls were more interested in reading activities than they had expressed that they were.

Reading Interests and Tastes Related to the Community Resources Available

to the Two Groups. The data secured from personal conferences and questionnaires led the writer to assume the following:

1. Neither boys nor girls used, to an appreciable extent the community resources available to them, a fact which accounted for their limited interests and tastes.
2. The fact that the community itself did not offer a wider variety of resources accounted, to some extent, for students' interest limitations.

Reading Interests and Tastes Related to the Families of the Two Groups.

Data received substantiated the writer's opinion that economic and environmental conditions exert a major influence on students' interests and tastes.

The following implications were evident:

1. Family income, home ownership, and parents' education are major influences on availability of books within the home and on the breadth of interests and the degree of taste.
2. Parents' attitudes toward reading and their reading preferences are directly related to those of students.

Interpretive Summary Regarding the Preceding Relationships. The selected sophomore subjects showed in their responses that there was a need for guidance in the improvement of their interests and tastes. Correlations evident between their inventoried and manifest occupational interests showed that most students, girls and boys, liked reading material about machines and numbers. Several students, particularly boys, were more interested in literary occupations than they had realized. Moreover, there was evidence that students' reading habits were unfavorably affected by (1) their lack of participation in community-sponsored activities related to reading, and (2) parental reading habits and home environments.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

General Background and Design of the Study. High school students need to experience the pleasure, knowledge, and growth that result from a wide familiarity with varied reading materials and experiences. Their ability to enjoy several types of literature, to appreciate the style of various writers, to interpret, understand, and apply what is read to their own experiences in life is one that will make living far more meaningful to them.

The problem of this study was to determine the reading interests and tastes of male and female students enrolled in sophomore classes in the Dunbar Junior-Senior High School, Fort Myers, Florida; and to draw related implications with respect to their occupational preferences and the climate and resources for reading in their families and communities.

The writer assumed that this study could be accomplished by means of a survey of the reading interests and tastes of a selected group of sophomore students. The following instruments were selected for use in ascertaining students' reading preferences: the Kuder Preference Record - Vocational, a reading interest questionnaire, and a reading survey questionnaire. In addition to using the instruments, the writer conducted personal conferences with the subjects, and reviewed pertinent information in cumulative folders regarding family economic status.

It was hoped that the information related herein would be helpful to persons responsible for reading instruction, particularly at the high school level. Further, the writer was desirous that this information might be used to serve as a guide in organizing reading programs that utilize the forces of students' interests as the mainspring to ensure wider reading and, hopefully, better readers.

This study was designed to answer the following basic questions which were outgrowths of the problem:

1. What were the predominant reading interests and tastes of these male and female tenth grade students of Dunbar Junior-Senior High School?
2. What were the occupational preferences of the students?
3. What was the general socio-economic level of the community, and what were its resources for reading and reading-related activities?
4. What kinds of reading materials were found in the homes from which the students came, and what were the parents' attitudes toward reading?
5. How did these occupational preferences, community resources for reading, and family circumstances seem to relate to the reading interests and tastes of these tenth grade students?
6. What implications may be drawn for effective guidance in broadening and refining reading interests and tastes within this type of situation?

Summary of Research Procedure. The writer surveyed the subjects' interests and tastes, using the following procedures:

1. Secured permission to survey the students from the principal of Dunbar Junior-Senior High School.
2. Surveyed students' interests and tastes by means of questionnaires.
3. Administered an interest inventory to forty sophomore students.

4. Held individual conferences with students regarding their interests and tastes.
5. Examined cumulative folders to gain information concerning students' interests and tastes.
6. Organized and classified data.
7. Compiled findings.

Summary of Related Literature. The summary of the related literature pertaining to the problem of this study was concluded in the following statements:

1. Sex is the most important determinant of a reader's choice of reading matter.
2. The fact that many men and boys view reading as a feminine activity is one reason why they have unfavorable attitudes toward reading.
3. Many facets of a student's life must be observed by a teacher before he can accurately determine the student's interests.
4. Teachers should rely more on experiences outside the classroom to promote interests in the classroom.
5. Young people at the high school level are no longer concerned with the trivial, being more concerned with their own and life's problems.
6. Highly interesting material should be provided for retarded readers.
7. Contemporary materials help boys and girls see the significance of life.
8. Since TV creates interest, it can be used profitably by the reading teacher.
9. Students will not automatically select good reading materials; rather, they must be guided to select them by teachers who know the students' interests.
10. Educational principles should be used in the development of a reading program utilizing the interests of students.
11. The paperback is valuable as a solution to the problem of finding interesting and varied reading materials.

12. The teacher who is responsible for reading instruction should be familiar with all types of reading materials and be himself a lover of reading.
13. Teachers have the greatest influence on students' interests, tastes, and attitudes toward reading.

Summary of Basic Findings. The basic findings of this study are to be found under the appropriate captions which follow.

Predominant Reading Interests and Tastes of the Tenth Grade Students

1. Boys preferred reading books of mystery, science-fiction, intrigue, and adventure.
2. Girls' tastes were centered in books featuring romance.
3. Neither of the sexes manifested interest in books containing poetry and biography.
4. Boys' favorite magazine titles indicated their preference of magazines that featured sports stories. Girls' responses showed their appreciation for magazines written especially for the female sex.
5. Boys and girls reported reading the sports section of the newspaper, with girls showing an equal interest in the news section. Other parts of the newspaper were not appealing to either sex.
6. Few students used the library for purposes other than to study.

Occupational Preferences of the Students

1. The five top occupational choices for boys were in computational, literary, musical, scientific, and persuasive areas.
2. Girls were predominantly interested in clerical, computational, social service, mechanical, and literary occupations, respectively.

Community Resources for Reading Activities

1. The community has several libraries which few students indicated

that they used.

2. Student participation in other community-provided activities (plays, concerts) was low.

Home Conditions and Family Attitudes Affecting Students' Reading Interests and Tastes

1. Few students receive newspapers and magazines regularly in their homes.
2. Most families (65 per cent) have annual incomes of less than \$5000.
3. Generally, parents (63 per cent) have education below the ninth grade level.
4. Most parents (78 per cent) do not read books.

Conclusions. The findings of this study apparently warrant the following conclusions:

1. The boys' choices of future occupations and their inventoried interests revealed that they were interested in reading material about mathematics and business. Their high literary interest was indicative that they generally enjoyed reading.
2. The girls' choices of future occupations and their inventoried interests showed that they were highly interested in mechanical and computational operations.
3. The subjects' limited experiences and accessibility to books were largely responsible for their narrow interests.
4. The subjects' lack taste in their selection of reading materials and movie and television viewing.
5. Not enough attention has been paid to students' general reading habits and use of library facilities.
6. The subjects' environments were largely responsible for their limited interests and tastes.

Implications. Inherent in the foregoing conclusions are the following implications:

1. The subjects would enjoy reading more if they could plan their reading experiences with their teachers.
2. Boys need and would appreciate reading instruction that will help them develop speed and comprehension.
3. Girls should be given experiences that will help them become more interested in reading for pleasure as well as for information.
4. Students need help in understanding the relationship between reading and successful living.

Recommendations. These implications have led the writer to make the following recommendations:

1. English teachers, in particular, should ascertain students' interests and tastes if they wish to help boys and girls read more and read more widely.
2. English teachers should make wider use of mass media, paperbacks, and guides to teenagers' reading, in order to be able to adequately direct students' reading.
3. More activities involving community resources should be provided to help broaden students' interests and tastes.
4. Studies of students' interests and tastes should be made at each grade level in the secondary school at regular intervals in order to ensure more effective reading instruction.
5. Students' participation in school activities need more careful guidance in order to ensure the development of more varied interests.
6. Teachers, guidance counselors, and librarians need to work cooperatively, perhaps by participation in an inservice study program, to extend reading interests and help students acquire tastes that are commensurate with their age and grade levels.

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