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**THE VOLUNTARY READING INTERESTS AND  
HABITS OF JAMAICAN SIXTH GRADERS**

by

Cherrell Victoria Robinson

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Faculty of Information Science  
University of Toronto

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# **THE VOLUNTARY READING INTERESTS AND HABITS OF JAMAICAN SIXTH GRADERS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was undertaken to discover the voluntary reading interests and habits of sixth graders in public elementary schools in Jamaica. Its objectives were to: (1) identify the types of books Jamaican sixth graders were interested in reading; (2) ascertain their preference for books with Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters; and (3) discover some of the children's reading habits including how much they like to read and their reasons for doing so. The specific variables examined were: sex, geographic location, academic and reading performance, race of main characters in books, why children read, how much they like to read, reading as a leisure time activity, hindrances to reading, sources of reading guidance and the availability of books. These were the predictor variables that were expected to affect the number of books read and the types of books preferred.

Four hundred and eighteen students, stratified by sex and geography, were randomly selected and surveyed via questionnaire and eight of whom were subsequently interviewed. Additional data were also collected about the

students' academic performance and the state of their school libraries.

The general findings revealed that the Jamaican sixth graders' reading interests were nearly identical to those of their peers in developed countries. Sex, more than either geography or academic performance, was the most powerful determinant of reading interests and habits. Race too appeared to affect book choices, as most students preferred books with Afrocentric heroes. With regards to academic performance relative to reading interests and habits, few significant differences were observed across groups, except that the academically brighter students were more likely to read a greater number of books.

The majority of the children said they liked to read, mostly for utility rather than for pleasure. Reading ranked high as a pastime, especially for girls who also tended to read more books. Finally, children acquired their books from home and friends, rather from libraries, and turned to parents and peers for reading guidance instead of librarians who were ranked very low overall.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

Reading is considered the foundation of learning, and the development of a life-long reading habit a gateway to enjoyment and personal enrichment. Recognising that interest plays an important role in motivating children to learn and to read for pleasure, librarians and educators have conducted many studies to discover children's reading interests and habits in order to develop policies and guidelines for book selection and use. In Jamaica, professionals responsible for producing and selecting books for children do so primarily on the basis of research findings emanating from developed countries, such as the United States, Canada and England.

There are several reasons for this practice. Among them are: the ease and convenience of ready-made findings; the fact that many of the Jamaican professionals were educated in one or more of these countries, which also

furnish the majority of the learning resources used at all levels of the local educational system; the acceptance of the universality of certain aspects of child development which assumes a degree of similarity in the abilities, needs and interests of children everywhere; and not to be overlooked, the dearth of indigenous research into reading interests and habits.

Whatever the justification, the question does arise regarding the appropriateness of using research findings from other countries to inform policies concerning material production, selection and use in Jamaica, especially in light of the social and cultural disparities that usually exist between developed and developing nations. Some of these differences are bound to affect reading interests and habits which are influenced not only by personal variables but also by cultural ones. Therefore, some variations in the reading behaviour of children from different countries should be expected.

There are several factors in the Jamaican society that would seem to militate against the successful development of reading interests and the pursuit of the reading habit. Hamilton (1984) mentions some of these likely deterrents in her introduction to **Books and Reading in Jamaica**:

Probably of greatest concern is the high rate of illiteracy ... Closely linked to this feature is the existence of traditionally oral folk culture, escalating population growth, a low per capita income, limited numbers of skilled personnel, and an educational system which, at the primary level, may at best be described as mediocre... There is also a shortage of books on the island... (p.1)

Other factors that might inhibit reading include inadequate library services, the unavailability of a wide variety of attractive reading material, a lack of electricity in some rural areas and the long distances many children have to travel to schools, libraries and other public institutions. It therefore becomes obvious that many social amenities taken for granted in developed countries are not the norm in some of the lesser developed ones, and the absence of these facilities is likely to impact negatively on children's reading habits and interests. In formulating book selection policies on the basis of research findings, librarians from developing countries need to take cognisance of the many differences between the two kinds of societies.

For example, Barker and Escarpit (1973) in **The Book Hunger** pointed out that the severe shortage of books in developing nations has had a negative impact on national development. Many factors have contributed to this dearth of printed material. Some of the reasons for this in Jamaica are the high cost of all the materials for book production (which leads to a selling price beyond the reach of the common citizen), too few local publishing houses, and untrained personnel at all levels of the book trade. To compound the problem, there is a tendency towards an oral culture which means that book-buying is not a standard practice for a large segment of the population.

For those who read, there is a heavy reliance on libraries for reading material. With limited financial resources, librarians must perforce give careful

consideration to every item they acquire so as to ensure maximum return for money spent. Therefore, accuracy in assessing the reading interests of children is vital in ensuring that the limited number of books purchased have strong child appeal. Errors of judgement resulting from ignorance can prove costly not only financially but also in terms of human development. Children can be discouraged from wanting to read for either educational or recreational purposes due to exposure to books inconsistent with their special needs, interests and abilities.

Race is another important element that should not be overlooked when considering the sources of possible differences in the reading interests and habits of children within the developed societies of North America and Britain and an emergent nation like Jamaica. In the wake of the Civil Rights movement in America during the sixties, research was undertaken into the relation between a child's ethnic origins and his or her choice of reading material (e.g., McElwin, 1971; Wolfson, Manning and Manning, 1984). While no clear consensus has emerged from these findings that would indicate a marked divergence in the reading interests of children from different ethnic groups, there has been a strong demand for the production of books that positively portray ethnic minorities because of the perceived importance of such works to the development of these children's self-esteem and pride in their cultural heritage (Birtha, 1972; Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1986).

Although in Jamaica the population is predominantly black, locally produced books are few, and so the majority of reading material comes from North America and Britain. This over-dependence on foreign reading materials would suggest that the need for Jamaican children to see their own racial group positively reflected in their books is hardly being met.

Confronted with these problems, Jamaican librarians and educators are constantly being challenged to find ways to surmount these difficulties in order to help the children both master the mechanics of reading and acquire a love for the activity. Research aimed at ascertaining the nature of the reading interests and habits of Jamaican children can therefore provide an empirical framework to assist in the formulation of more culture-specific policies and guidelines for the production, selection and use of children's books in Jamaica. From a wider perspective, the study should also be of professional significance primarily to librarians with responsibility for children's services, and, to a lesser extent, teachers in charge of literature programmes in schools.

## **1.2 IMPORTANCE TO THE PROFESSION**

Collection development is a vital aspect of library services and as such requires a sound knowledge of the users - their ages, educational levels, interests, needs and abilities, among other things - as well as a thorough

knowledge of the types of resources that exist in order to meet both the known and anticipated needs of the patrons. Also, one of the prime objectives of the public and the school library is to encourage users to develop a life-long habit of voluntary reading, and so a knowledge of what motivates and influences young people to read becomes an essential prerequisite for successfully accomplishing this objective.

For Jamaica, an investigation of these factors is long overdue and should provide a more valid basis for the production and selection of reading material for use in literature programmes in libraries and schools. Although numerous studies have been conducted in developed countries, very few have dealt with the developing world and after an extensive literature search, only three studies on reading interests in Jamaica were identified

Floyd (1973) conducted a year long experiment in seven Jamaican high schools during which she flooded selected classes with inexpensive paperbacks and collected data about the students' reading interests, attitude and habits before, during and after the experiment. She observed that increased access to books made a difference in the quantity and types of books read; sex played a strong role in student book preferences and that Jamaican students had some interests in common with their peers from other countries.

Jennings-Wray (1981) undertook a study that focused more on story features that appealed to primary age children as she sought to determine the

extent to which class texts matched the reading interests of the students. She also set out to establish whether there were sex, grade level and environmental differences in the reading interests of first and fourth graders. Major findings revealed that there were some differences related to these variables, and she was able to identify many of the story features that appealed to students. She also found that fourth grade textbooks tended to reflect the children's reading interests more than the books used by the first graders.

The third study (Headlam, 1989) investigated the appeal of indigenous language arts textbooks to students in elementary schools. She found that the local children were more responsive to the indigenous class readers because of their ability to identify with the situations and the characters.

While these studies have made an initial contribution to a knowledge of reading interests and habits in Jamaica, there is need for more research to expand and update these early findings, especially in light of some of the changes that have occurred and are still taking place in the Jamaican society. The expansion of the national school library service into secondary schools, the continual move towards Caribbean-based examinations, the introduction of an indigenous curriculum, and the increasing demand for the publication of more indigenous books are examples of some of these developments. A more precise and current knowledge of young people's reading interests (and their habits) at different grade levels can be useful in all these areas.

As previously stated, selection policies are currently based on what is known about the reading interests of North American or British children and these findings might not be congruent with the interests of Jamaicans. Beside providing a more solid foundation upon which to base material selection policies, it was also anticipated that this present investigation into the reading interests and habits of Jamaican children would encourage local educators and librarians to undertake similar studies within the different age groups. This would establish a more comprehensive knowledge of young people's reading interests and habits at all stages of their development and so facilitate the development of reading promotion and intervention programmes in schools and libraries.

It was hoped that this study would be of further significance to the profession for several other reasons. Stimulating and maintaining interest in reading becomes even more challenging when children are involved because of the many restrictions imposed by their age which compel them to rely almost completely on adults for access to reading material. Therefore, failure on the part of adult intermediaries to provide a satisfying connection between children and books in the early years can lead to a disenchantment with reading and a rejection of the library.

This disaffection with reading or libraries in general becomes particularly noticeable during the teen years as observed by Marshall (1975), Whitehead et

al., (1977) and Heather (1981). A more precise knowledge of the reading tastes and habits of children should increase the likelihood of librarians striking the right match between child and book. The identification of books commensurate with their reading interests is of particular importance for sixth graders who are at a crucial stage in their reading development.

This ten to twelve year age group was chosen for study because research findings show that they are usually at the peak of their reading and although they have specialised interests these are still fairly wide compared to the later years (Kinder, 1967; Ashley, 1972; Leng, 1968; Huus, 1979). For this reason, these intermediate years are considered one of the most critical periods for reading development since by this time the children have become independent readers.

Margaret Meek (1982), writing about reading development, describes children of this age as those whose reading skills and tastes in reading matter are at their most diversified and individual as they move toward independence. This kind of reading behaviour, she says, may be observed in the performance of the competent eleven year old who makes either a wide ranging choice of reading material or has one absorbing interest which he or she pursues during leisure time. These children's insatiable curiosity helps to fuel their appetite for reading which, as the teen years approach, gradually tapers off to reflect fewer specific areas of interest (Bloom, 1964; Schucking, 1966; Marshall, 1975;

Whitehead, et al., 1977).

Given these conditions, sixth graders are likely to be very susceptible to reading guidance from adults because they are still open to experimentation with different genres. At this time, repeated encounters with satisfying reading experiences could make a significant difference in whether or not they become life-long readers. Assisting them to develop a strong commitment to voluntary reading before the teen years might be one way that librarians can stem the later "drift" from libraries which is usually blamed on the psychological turbulence, increased social activities and the heavier academic workload frequently associated with the adolescent period (Marshall, 1975).

Librarians are not alone in their pre-occupation with what children like to read. Educators have been equally concerned with how to use children's interests to motivate them not only to learn to read and gain mastery of their language, but also to nurture a love of literature. Belloni and Jongsma (1978) found that children's comprehension improved when they were interested in the content of their reading, and Pauk (1973) discovered that interesting subject content was a powerful incentive for getting reading disabled students to read at a higher level without too much difficulty. Educators are well aware of the importance of reading for effective learning because the decoding and understanding of print on a page remains central to the curriculum despite the proliferation of new communication media.

The book is still the most common format found in libraries and schools. and the ability to read print is still regarded as the foundation of learning. Therefore, teachers and other school personnel could use findings about reading interests to assist in the selection of materials for reading instruction and the literature programme. It should also be noted that even if a medium other than the book is employed, a knowledge of the topics about which children want to read about can also serve as a guide for choosing other media such as films, videotapes and computer activities. Similarly, producers and compilers of anthologies for the language arts programme can also use these findings to determine the types of subjects or stories to select for publication.

The only aspect of race that was of concern to this study related to an examination of the preference of Jamaican children for Eurocentric or Afrocentric characters from Britain, North America, Africa and the Caribbean as the heroes in their books. Since the majority of Jamaicans are of African origin their reaction to this question could be significant. A definite preference for Afrocentric books would confirm other research findings that show ethnic minorities preferring books that featured their own cultural group (Kirsch, 1975; Palmer and Palmer, 1983; Fisher, 1988 and Headlam, 1989).

In addition, although a definite conclusion about the effect of race generally upon children's reading preferences could not be made since no matching sample of North Americans or Britons was surveyed, the selectivity

displayed by the sample towards characters of their own ethnic group could strengthen the case for the provision of more ethnically diverse books for children in multi-cultural societies elsewhere. Also, such findings could be taken as a useful indicator of the level of interest in Afrocentric materials and so alert publishers in Jamaica to the need to produce more indigenous books.

More importantly, local librarians and educators could use such findings as a basis for establishing special book selection policies that emphasise, among other things, the acquisition of more Afrocentric materials for their literature collections. This could also encourage them to tap into the modest supply of black literature available from Britain and North America as indicated by the many bibliographies available (e.g., Sims, 1982; Rollock 1988a and Williams, 1991).

In order to develop effective library services for children, librarians also need a knowledge about children's reading habits which encompasses, according to Ward (1977), all the sociological aspects of the reading process and is concerned with the patterns, activities and the whole range of behaviour related to how people go about reading. For example, the knowledge that children prefer an informal atmosphere for recreational reading can lead to the design of functional yet attractive libraries with an air of informality. In the same vein, an awareness that children like to share their reading with friends and rely heavily on peer group endorsement in deciding what to read should

encourage librarians to provide many opportunities for children to discuss and share their reading experiences.

Hence, information gleaned from research and other sources about children's reading habits can and should be an essential tool for the planning and development of child-centred library facilities and programmes. While not all factors affecting children's reading habits are within the control of librarians, a knowledge of the external variables that can be manipulated should produce useful guidelines for developing services to children.

Finally, it was envisioned that this study would add to the limited corpus of knowledge available about developing countries generally, and Jamaica, in particular, where so few investigations have been conducted. Hopefully, it will contribute to a more comprehensive perspective on reading interests and habits internationally. Furthermore, in the areas where there have been concurrence with other such studies, it should allow for more reliable generalisations to be made about children's reading behaviour universally.

Since this study is concerned with Jamaica and reading interests and habits are influenced by socio-cultural factors as well as personal ones, the following section provides background information considered essential for an understanding of the setting of the study and its findings.

### 1.3 BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON JAMAICA

Jamaica, 4,411 square miles in size, is situated in the middle of the Caribbean Sea 90 miles south of Cuba and 100 miles west of Haiti. The largest English-speaking Caribbean island, it was discovered by Columbus in 1494 and placed under Spanish rule which ended in 1655 when the British captured and colonised the country from then until 1962 when the island gained its independence (**Handbook of Jamaica**, 1971).

This lengthy colonial domination led to the country's social institutions (such as the government, the judiciary, the schools and the public library service) being modelled on the British system. Similarly, for administrative convenience, the country was divided into three counties and fourteen parishes all of which are still maintained today.

As a legacy of its history, Jamaica has a racially mixed society comprised of the Europeans who came as colonisers, the Africans who were forcibly brought as slaves to work the sugar plantations, the East Indians and some Chinese who came as indentured servants, and the Lebanese and Jews who arrived as merchants. There is also a sprinkling of other ethnic groups. Much inter-marriage has occurred among all these groups, but persons of African descent predominate (87.5%) with all the others (12.5%) making up the remaining the minority (**Statistical Handbook of Jamaica**, 1992).

With such a racial potpourri, there is little observable racism in the

usual sense. Instead there is a class system closely linked to the colour or shade of people's skins (Miller, 1967; Phillips, 1973). This system may be seen as a relic of the colonial era when the Europeans were at the top of the social ladder, the Africans at the bottom with the mixed off-spring of both groups falling in-between. The issue of colour and class extends to social values which have also been imported: first from Britain through forced dependence on the colonial powers who for three hundred years set policies and determined the norms for social conduct. Second, from North America through trade and tourism. This penchant for things and values foreign was further strengthened by large scale migration of Jamaicans to Britain in the fifties, and to North America since the seventies. The influence of the United States has grown even stronger through its ubiquitous movies and mass media. The latter reality led Nettleford (1982) to state that Jamaica and the rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean share more of the values, meanings and belief-systems with the United States of America than with neighbouring Latin American countries.

The latest census conducted in 1991 showed that Jamaica has a population of approximately 2.4 million people with 63% under 30 years old and 45% between the ages of 0-18 years (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1992). This youthful populace helps to explain the high demand for school places and the over-crowding frequently encountered in the schools. Social conditions differ sharply between urban and rural areas with persons living in the rural

areas being at a distinct disadvantage with regard to social infrastructure and accessibility to goods and services.

The **Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions** (1990) showed that the majority (73%) of persons who received welfare assistance from the state came from the rural areas, where 33 % and 47.8% of the population lacked running water and electricity, respectively. In comparison, 82% in urban areas had electricity, 64% piped water, and in general they had access to better roads, regular transportation, telephones, among other such social amenities.

Under these conditions, access to reading materials, which is of prime concern to this study, is not easy in the rural parts. Hamilton (1984) reported that there were only 24 commercial book outlets functioning on the island with only ten located in the rural areas, and while the public library service has a network of branches throughout the country, book supplies are inadequate. This situation was underscored by research that showed that in September, 1982 there was a ratio of 1.83 books per reader in the public libraries (Jamaica, National Council on Libraries, Archives and Documentation Services, 1986). Residents in urban areas are usually closer to book stores and better stocked libraries since the main branches are situated in the principal towns.

Other factors likely to militate against reading in rural areas, especially for children, include: domestic chores that consume a large portion of free time, daily travel over long distances to and from school, parents who place a

lesser emphasis on reading, and the subsistence economy so common in many rural communities (Jennings-Wray, 1981).

In Jamaica, the churches were mainly responsible for providing basic literacy education in the nineteenth century while fee-paying secondary schools were established by the British colonists to educate their children who were not repatriated (**Handbook of Jamaica**, 1971). This pattern continued well into the twentieth century when the government took over the church schools and converted them into free elementary schools, thereby providing access for all children. For a long time thereafter secondary education remained elitist because it was restricted to the upper classes who could afford to pay. After the establishment of internal self-government, in an effort to increase the opportunities for children from all social strata to obtain secondary education, the government in 1958 introduced the Common Entrance Examinations which provided a limited number of free places for the successful candidates.

Although other types of secondary schools - new secondary, comprehensive and vocational - have since been established that collectively absorb nearly 60% of the public school population (**Jamaica. Development of Secondary Education**, 1983), a premium is placed upon attendance at the traditional grammar or high schools because of the quality of education they offer. Access to these schools is still very restricted due to the shortage of spaces.

So although from 1974 (Gleaner Company, 1985) education in these institutions has been free, only about 20% (Been, Caillods and Leo-Rhynie, 1984) of the eligible students are admitted each year to these special grammar schools. The other children are channelled into vocational and junior secondary schools which are generally perceived as offering an inferior quality of education compared to that of the grammar schools.

Public primary education, of six years' duration, is offered in two types of schools - primary and all-age. The primary school caters for grades 1-6, while the all-age school covers grades 1-9 with the last three grades (7-9) consisting of children who were unsuccessful in the entrance examinations to secondary or vocational schools or those who could not attend these institutions due to geography or a lack of financial resources. Children graduate from the all-age schools at age fifteen which usually marks the end of their formal schooling (Been, Caillods and Leo-Rhynie, 1984). Most of the rural schools tend to be all-age while the urban ones are mostly primary and serve as feeder schools for the different types of secondary and vocational schools (**Jamaica: Development of Secondary Education**, 1983).

With 34% of the population of school age (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1992) and an insufficient number of schools, classes are large especially at the primary level. In 1987 the teacher-pupil ratio for primary education was at 1:43, only a little better than it was under colonial rule which ended 25 years

earlier (Miller, 1992). Although primary education is available to almost everyone, it is plagued by other problems such as lack of school materials, uneven distribution of qualified teachers, and over-crowded and inadequate classrooms (Been, Caillods and Leo-Rhynie, 1984).

In their incisive study of primary education in Jamaica, Murray et al. (1974) stated that developing the reading skill and habit within these schools was extremely difficult because of adult illiteracy, bookless homes, irregular school attendance, overcrowded classrooms, large classes in addition to inadequate and inappropriate reading materials. Little has changed since 1974.

Library provision in primary and some secondary schools falls under the aegis of the Ministry of Education. Through the Jamaica Library Service it operates a national school library service that serves all elementary schools from five regional centres within the country. Library service at this level usually consists of deposit collections based on the size of the school's enrolment. Visits are made each term to the schools via bookmobiles accompanied by a library assistant who helps the teachers to select the books and give guidance about library related problems (Jamaica Library Service, 1989). Very few primary and all-age schools have librarians and so the classroom teachers assume this additional responsibility along with their regular work load. Consequently, the collection is available only at special times that do not conflict with classroom teaching. Many schools have no proper library

accommodation which results in books being stored in boxes or cupboards, and even where library rooms exist, they are often appropriated for other purposes because of shortage of space. Since 1987 the School Library Service has reduced the frequency of its visits to schools and the number of books it can supply as a result of government's budgetary cuts (Jamaica Library Service, 1993).

A high level of illiteracy has always existed in Jamaican society because education was denied the black population under slavery; and after emancipation, for a long time, schooling was available only at the elementary level, and even then it was not compulsory. A strong relation exists between illiteracy, age and sex - more males than females are illiterate, and the numbers tend to increase with age. It was also observed that illiteracy rates rose proportionally with a decline in occupational status, and as one moved from the urban to rural areas (Hamilton, 1984).

To address this problem, in 1974 the government launched the Jamaica Movement for the Advancement of Literacy (JAMAL) to spearhead a national thrust to eradicate illiteracy. Between 1975 and 1987 three national literacy surveys showed a decrease in the illiteracy rate from 32% to 18% (Miller, 1992). Nevertheless, being functionally literate does not mean that an individual is comfortable with print or capable of decoding and understanding a text sufficiently to enjoy it. Because traditionally the society is largely an oral

one, reading is not a common practice (Hamilton, 1984) and so children are not often influenced by parents who read.

These are just some of the many social factors that are likely to impact in one way or another on the reading interests and habits of Jamaicans. This makes it even more necessary for research to be undertaken in an effort to identify the reading interests and habits of Jamaican sixth graders.

#### **1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study therefore set out: (1) to identify the types of books Jamaican sixth graders are generally interested in reading; (2) to ascertain their preference for books with Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters; and (3) to discover some of the reading habits of these children including how much they like to read and their reasons for doing so. The specific variables examined were: sex, geographic location, academic and reading performance, race of main characters in books, why children read, how much they like to read, reading as a leisure time activity, hindrances to reading, sources of reading guidance and the availability of books. These were the predictor variables that were expected to affect the number of books read and the types of books preferred by the Jamaican sixth graders.

This age group was chosen because at this stage of development ten to twelve year-olds should have mastered the mechanics of reading and become

independent readers, and usually their interest in reading is at its peak during these middle years which many described as the "golden years" of reading. Taken together, these factors seem to make sixth graders an apt group to investigate since this age appears to be a crucial stage in the development of a lifelong reading habit.

### **1.5 HYPOTHESES TESTED**

The following hypotheses emerged from the literature reviewed and were subsequently tested:

1. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their preference for certain types of books
2. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls of above average, average and below average academic performance in their preference for certain types of books
3. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in the number of books they read voluntarily
4. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls of above average, average and below average academic performance in the number of books they read voluntarily
5. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls relative to the sources from which they obtain their books

6. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their reliance on others for reading guidance
7. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their ranking of reading as a leisure time activity
8. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in the various factors they cite as hindrances to reading more
9. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their expressed preference for books with Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters
10. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in how much they like to read as a voluntary activity
11. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls of above average, average and below average academic performance in how much they like to read as a voluntary activity
12. There is a significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls regarding the reasons given for voluntary reading

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited by the following factors:

1. The expressed reading interests and habits of the sixth grade population within the public school system in Jamaica were

investigated. Generalisations cannot be made for children in other grades or other types of schools.

2. The broad categories used to classify children's books into specific types for the purpose of this study do not completely reflect the almost infinite variety that exist, although efforts were made to improve the representativeness of the literature by expanding upon the number of categories used in previous research. However, restrictions had to be applied because of the extensiveness of the literature and the need to keep the questionnaire reasonably short to avoid overtaxing the discriminative abilities of the children .
3. The research method used only permitted the establishment of associations between different variables but did not allow conclusions to be drawn about what actually caused differences in reading interests and habits.

### **1.7 ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING THE STUDY**

The assumptions underlying the objectives and design of this study were:

1. That most children, once they have mastered the mechanics of reading, will voluntarily pursue this activity during their leisure time so long as the right conditions exist and appropriate

resources are available;

2. That by the time most children reach the sixth grade they have developed very definite reading interests and habits and are capable of articulating these in response to a questionnaire;
3. That sixth graders are able to discriminate clearly between the different categories used to describe the literature in order to indicate their preferences for one type of book over the other; and
4. That the students' grades as reflected in their annual school report for the previous year in fifth grade should provide a fairly accurate assessment of their overall academic and reading performance.

### **1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS**

Reading interests studies are often criticised for imprecise terminology which poses problems in the interpretation and comparison of findings. One of the most controversial terms is "READING INTEREST". While some researchers (for example, Chrisman and Bishop, 1985) insist that there is very little difference between 'reading interests' and 'reading preferences', and so use both terms interchangeably, others go to great lengths to differentiate between the two. For example, Getzels (1966), whose definition is indicative of the nature of the distinction being made, states that:

"... PREFERENCE is a readiness to receive one object against another, it does not induce us to seek out the object. In contrast, the basic nature of an INTEREST is that it does induce us to seek out particular objects and activities." (p. 97)

In this context 'preference' is passive and mainly hypothetical since it does not necessarily mean that the person has or will make any effort to find the objects of preference. Conversely, 'interest' is dynamic by nature and results in the reader's search for and reading of the types of particular types books.

Although there may be a subtle difference between the two terms they need not be viewed as mutually exclusive but rather as part of a continuum in the selection process where preference is discriminative and usually antecedes interest which in turn impels the reader to seek out the preferred object. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the term READING INTEREST will be defined as: the expressed liking for a specific type of story or subject which indicates a readiness to receive this type of book over another and/or a willingness to seek out this subject or story for reading.

Such a broad definition seemed more appropriate within the context of this study since in Jamaica, mainly for economic reasons, children do not have access to a wide variety of books. Thus the desire to seek a particular type of book may be lessened by the realisation that most times such a search will prove fruitless. In addition, for some of these children, actively seeking out a

book could mean anything from having to travel many miles to the nearest library or trying to extract money from an insolvent family, either of which might not be possible due to circumstances beyond the children's control.

Under such circumstances, failure to seek out a book for which preference is expressed cannot always be interpreted as passivity or a lack of "real" interest, as defined by Getzels (1966). For these reasons it was decided to make the term "interest" inclusive of both concepts - that is, preference and interest.

The term AFROCENTRIC as used to refer to type of main book characters describes persons in the United Kingdom, North America, the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere who are descended from Black Africans.

EUROCENTRIC by the same token denotes persons in the United Kingdom, North America, the Caribbean, Africa and elsewhere who are descended from white Europeans.

## **1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

This chapter includes: a description of the research problem, its significance and the rationale for undertaking the study. A thumbnail sketch of the Jamaican society follows because it was considered necessary for a proper understanding of the context within which the investigation was carried out. Also present are the objectives of the study, the hypotheses that were tested, the limitations and assumptions governing the research, the definition of

key terms and a description of the organisation of the dissertation.

Chapter Two provides a review of the literature establishing the theoretical framework for the study, while Chapter Three is comprised of details of the research design along with the procedures followed in conducting the study and collecting the data. An analysis of the quantitative data is to be found in Chapter Four, while Chapter Five contains the qualitative data gleaned from the interviews and presented in a narrative form as profiles of some of the Jamaican sixth grade readers. Finally, Chapter Six summarises the study - the findings, conclusions, implications and recommendations.

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**CHAPTER 2**  
**REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**  
**2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Research into children's reading interests and habits has a long history. Carter (1978) reported that in 1899 there were at least twenty-five studies and Zimet (1966) claimed that over three hundred were in existence by the nineteen sixties. As observed by Joels and Anderson (1983), the numbers peaked between the late sixties and mid-seventies then declined to a small steady flow, emerging mainly from departments of education or from educators in the field. In comparison, a much smaller number has come from the library profession.

One might conjecture that the greater productivity of educators results in part from their being more numerous as well as from the many debates that still surround reading instruction and the urgent need to find more effective ways to teach children to read and to improve their comprehension of subject content. On the other hand, librarians might find little time left over for

research after meeting the demands of the administrative and more practical aspects of literature programmes aimed at developing and maintaining the reading habit. Nevertheless, their keen interest in children's reading behaviour has led both librarians and educators to investigate the topic within the classroom context and as a voluntary activity.

Establishing the nature of children's reading interests has been a constant concern of librarians and educators since the child's ability to read and his interest in and pursuit of reading are fundamental to the practice of both professions. For educators, reading is an indispensable skill to be acquired at the earliest opportunity because it forms the basis for all other learning, and the more children read the greater the likelihood that they will gain a better mastery of the language and improve both their comprehension skills and general academic performance (Elley, 1991; Anderson, Wilson and Fielding, 1988). Librarians are less concerned with the mechanics of reading and its contribution to academic performance, instead they see reading as a gateway to pleasure and personal enrichment, a means of extending children's experience by introducing them to the world's great ideas and literary heritage, which is every child's birthright (Chambers, 1985).

Their mutual interest in reading provides several opportunities for cooperation between teachers and librarians especially where a literature-based or whole language approach to reading is practised. Rasinki and Gillespie

(1992) describe the nature and potential value of such a professional partnership:

Since trade books play such an important role in whole language classrooms... the librarian is integral and critical to the success of any whole language approach. Librarians are indispensable for ... locating and recommending books that match particular interest, theme, or curricular objective... [they] help students become independent and knowledgeable users of books and libraries. And by sharing the best literature available with students as well as their own enthusiasm for books and reading, librarians (and teachers) ignite and nurture a love of books that will inspire students' own love of reading. (pp. 8-9)

Similarly, Kulleseid and Strickland (1989) observed that many of the traditional goals and objectives of school librarianship were now being reinforced by the current trends in reading instruction that depended less on the text-book and more on individualised reading and the use of literature as integral to the language arts programme rather than only as enrichment. This professional link between educators and librarians also extends into the field of theory as children's librarians rely heavily on the theories of child development to provide a framework and a philosophy for book selection and the planning of literature programmes.

Since both professions share a common interest in children's reading behaviour what follows is a review of the literature on children's reading interests and habits from both fields. The body of accumulated research is large, spanning several decades, encompassing many variables in different

permutations, and employing a variety of research methods. Therefore, while the focus here was on the more recent literature, many of the studies fell within the seventies or mid-eighties, due in part to the decline in research on the topic since then. Where appropriate, much older studies were also included mainly because of their significant contribution to the field based on their scope, methodology or findings.

## **2.2 WHY CHILDREN READ AND THEIR LIKING FOR THE ACTIVITY**

Reading can be undertaken for a variety of reasons including the need for information, the desire to understand self and others, to stimulate the imagination, to escape the harsh realities of daily living or for sheer enjoyment. Once children have mastered the mechanics of reading it is expected that they will use their newly acquired skill not only to learn but also to explore the vast treasury of children's literature. When this does not happen, teachers and librarians become concerned and often turn to research to furnish answers to this perplexing problem. One of the emphases of such research has been the identification of personal and social correlates of leisure reading.

According to Neuman (1980), this approach has yielded a good deal of information on subject preferences but has not significantly contributed to an understanding of the motivations that underlie these preferences. A clearer

knowledge of why children engage in voluntary reading and how much they actually enjoy the activity should assist educators and librarians in their attempts to meet the reading needs of young people.

The search for answers to the complex question about the function of reading in the lives of children has been cross-disciplinary since it is known that a desire to read is governed by psychological factors - attitudes, motivation and personal needs - as well as by external stimuli from the home and school environment, and the society at large (Nell, 1988). For a child or an adult, the act of reading is highly personal and Carter (1978) acknowledges the difficulties experienced in attempting to extract explicit answers from children who are often incapable of articulating their deepest feelings and are sometimes unaware of the many external and internal stimuli influencing their reading behaviour.

Furthermore, since attitudes, motivation and needs fulfilment all lie within the realm of psychology and depend largely on each person's social and emotional landscape, they are very difficult to investigate. Despite the problems involved, however, Getzels (1966) insists that because of their influence on reading behaviour the psychological aspects of reading interests must be considered when choosing books for children. Some of these factors will therefore be examined in this review of the literature.

### **2.2.1 Attitude Toward Reading**

Greaney (1980), who has conducted several studies of children's reading

interests, opines that a favourable attitude is likely to lead a child to invest time in reading although more than that may be required for the development of reading as a habit. Attitude has been defined by the **Handbook of Social Psychology** (1985) as a:

Mental state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. (p.139)

The operative word here is "experience" which affects the mental state, and thus the individual's response to an object or situation. It would seem that the development of an attitude toward books and reading results from an accumulation of experiences based on some of the following: the child's early exposure to print at home; the social value attached to books and reading by parents, siblings, teachers, librarians and peers; the purposes for which reading is perceived to be undertaken; the way reading was taught and the child's reaction to the book as a physical object (Durkin 1966; Clark, 1976; Ingham, 1981; Morrow, 1983).

Early experiences with print at home do seem to play a very important role in children's later responses to books and reading (Staiger, 1979; Goelman et al., 1984; Greaney, 1986). Neither should the influence of the school be minimised since children can be demotivated to read because of the techniques or resources used to teach reading and the absence of enthusiastic role models

among their teachers (Bamberger, 1972; Ingham, 1981; Morrow, 1983). Some of the children in a study of young Canadian readers (Landy, 1977a) admitted that they began to read because of a pleasurable experience with an affectionate foster mother or an assignment from an insistent teacher or a warm happy association with a librarian.

When Nelson (1989) asked 189 college students to recall how they felt about their reading moments at the primary and secondary school levels, the factors most frequently cited for helping them to develop a love for reading were a caring teacher who modelled reading and read to the class, family members who read, and materials available at home. From another perspective, a cross-section of college students between 1950 and 1980 reported to Carlsen and Sherrill (1988) some of the negative experiences that contributed to their not being habitual leisure time readers. Some of these unpleasant memories recalled from childhood were: adults, whether teachers or parents, telling them they were not good at reading; living in a home where books were not valued or where no one read; and teachers embarrassing them because of poor oral reading skills, or forcing them to read and sometimes report on books they did not like.

These are some of the varied personal experiences that can contribute to the state of mental readiness which conditions the child to display either an interest in reading or a dislike for the activity. Purves and Beach (1972) also

insist on the importance of attitude because they believe that inevitably students will develop either a positive or negative attitude toward the activity, and although neither may lead to active reading, a favourable attitude is a definite precursor to the practice of voluntary reading. This has been supported by several studies.

For example, Greaney and Hegarty (1987) included an attitudinal component in their study of leisure time reading. They looked at the inter-relationships of previously recognised correlates such as sex and socio-economic status and reading behaviour. A sample of 138 fifth grade students from a primary school in Dublin kept diaries of their leisure time activities, and as part of the research process they were also given an 18-item attitude toward reading scale. The results from this section of the research showed that attitude was positively related to reading achievement, verbal ability, class place and sex. Girls had a more favourable attitude toward reading than boys which could account for the former reading more. The overall findings convinced Greaney and Hegarty (1987) that the development of a favourable disposition toward reading is to a large extent related to the level of satisfaction derived from earlier reading experiences.

It is generally accepted that attitudes are learned, that they develop over a period of time through experience and play an important part in the regulation of behaviour (Gorman, 1982). However, although they tend to be stable, the

possibility exists for change - an important factor that parents, teachers and librarians can exploit through the provision of suitable reading materials and by the creation of opportunities for pleasurable and rewarding encounters with literature. Nevertheless, a favourable disposition towards an object or activity sometimes is not sufficient to make the person actively seek it out.

Many children are known to value reading highly and even express a liking for it, yet they rarely engage themselves in the activity. Lewis and Teale (1980) are of the opinion that reading attitude is multi-dimensional, possessing cognitive, affective and behavioral components which are represented by the child's opinions about reading (cognitive), his or her evaluations or feelings about the activity (affective) and his or her reading behaviour (behavioral). However, the last dimension seems to contradict the usual concept of attitude being a receptive but passive mental state.

All too frequently children who seem to possess the proper cognitive and affective elements as identified by Lewis and Teale (1980) lack the accompanying behavioral aspect manifested by their failure to actively seek out the favoured objects for perusal. This hiatus between the favourable disposition and the action would seem to require another component which many researchers identify as a motivational one.

### **2.2.2 Motivation for Reading**

In proposing an affective model for reading to improve comprehension

in the classroom setting, Matthewson (1976) included both an attitudinal and a motivational element. He posited that if a child were to read he or she would need not only a favourable attitude toward reading materials, but also an appropriate motivation that would serve as an energising force to propel him or her toward reading. In Mathewson's (1976) model, this strong action orientation plus a positive attitude provided the dynamic quality previously ascribed to "interest" by Getzels (1966). Consequently, a child will not only like to read (positive attitude) but will be "driven" (motivated) to actively seek out the means to fulfil this desire. Therefore motivation, directly related to anticipated extrinsic and intrinsic rewards, is a dynamic ingredient that works in cooperation with attitude to make the child voluntarily seek out a book for reading.

At this juncture the motivational theory as proposed by Maslow (1970) appears relevant since it has often been used in the field of children's literature to explain, in part, why children do or do not read. He claims that humankind has certain basic needs ranked hierarchically from the most basic to the loftiest, and the desire to fulfill these needs provides the motivational force behind man's behaviour. The needs as described by Maslow (1970) are physiological, safety, belongingness, love, esteem and self-actualization to which he also added the cognitive (to know and understand) and the aesthetic (beauty and order). Children's literature specialists like Sebesta and Iverson (1975), Huck (1979),

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1986) and Norton (1991) have all applied this theory to children and their reading. Literature is seen as one aspect of culture that can help to meet some of these needs in a child's life, especially at the higher levels as children tend to read for vicarious experience, for knowledge and understanding, and for pleasure.

While insisting that there is a limit to what can be ascribed to literature, Huck (1979) supports the notion that literature can and does meet some of the human needs identified by Maslow (1970):

Books alone cannot bring about the satisfaction of basic needs. [But] literature may provide opportunities for identification and for understanding self and others. Books may contribute to feelings of success as children satisfy their desires for new experiences, gain insights into their behaviour and that of others, or "try on" new roles as they identify with the various characters. (p. 27)

Although Maslow's motivational theory might explain some of the inner drives that make a child want to read, librarians are also aware of the many other social factors that can modify children's response to these basic needs or lead them to seek satisfaction elsewhere. For example, the existence of a variety of non-print media formats and the multiplicity of competing social activities may strongly rival reading as a form of needs fulfilment. Greaney (1986) underscores this reality when he says that a child's willingness to devote time to reading for leisure is dependent upon predominantly personal factors

such as age, attitude toward reading, reading ability, satisfaction derived from earlier recreational reading, the attractiveness of alternate pursuits, plus other interests and friendships.

Needs satisfaction is hard to determine since very often needs are at the subconscious level and it is difficult to express satisfaction if the person is unaware that he or she has a need. The identification and articulation of their needs must be even harder for children who may lack not only the appropriate vocabulary but also the knowledge and experience to properly identify and explain these needs. Therefore, conclusions arrived at from the application of any theory to the understanding of why children read should be seen as tentative at best and must be evaluated within the context of what is already known about children and their reading behaviour.

In an effort to arrive at a more profound explanation for why children read, some researchers have experimented with the fairly recent "uses and gratification" theory that has emerged in the field of mass communications. This theory is described as a methodological strategy for analyzing the relationship between mass media behaviour and personal characteristics which explains the user's choice of one medium over another (Blumler, 1979). According to this concept, the individual plays a dynamic role in consciously selecting the communication options that are most likely to serve desired functions, i.e., to gratify the individual. These functions are determined by the

person's needs which in turn depend on certain psychological (intelligence, personality, experience) and social factors (e.g., socio-economic status, environmental values). In some ways, this theory contains elements of both Maslow's idea about psychological needs motivating human action, and Lewis and Teale's (1980) concept of reading behaviour which they consider to be shaped by the values and experiences gained from the social environment.

Greaney and Neuman (1983) expressed the view that the "uses and gratification" theory offers valuable insights into children's reading behaviour because it takes into consideration the total psychological and social characteristics, including motivation and personality, that shape individual needs. However, they did not explain how the type of detailed data that would be needed to create these rounded profiles would be collected or the difficulties likely to arise because of the age of the participants. Also, any full scale application of this theory to children must question certain accompanying assumptions such as the ability of participants to accurately identify and express their interests and motives for using any media; the children's access to all existing media formats; and their ability to recognise which needs each media type fulfils.

The "consciousness" with which children could be expected to choose one particular medium over another to fulfil a specific need is questionable given the fact that they have limited knowledge and so their choices are not

usually made at a conscious level (Ciancolo, 1971; and Schlager, 1978). In addition, children are known to have difficulty expressing their reasons for choice of reading materials. The approach by Greaney and Neuman (1983) also assumes that all children have equal access to the different communication media so that in making their selection they would be able to balance one against the other. This is clearly not the case as availability of resources will depend to a large extent on geographic location and socio-economic factors as well as parental approval because children are not autonomous.

The most useful aspect of the "uses gratification" theory with regard to children's reading interests would seem to be its provision of a wide range of possible functions that reading could serve in children's lives. For while some children might be motivated to read for pleasure or academic success, others value reading as a means of gaining insights into life, relieving anxiety or stress or so that they can have something to talk about with their peers. As Ciancolo (1971) states, reading can serve many functions in life.

### **2.2.3 Functions of Reading**

As stated previously, at least one aspect of the "uses and gratification" theory might prove to be of some value in understanding some of the functions of reading which in turn can help to elucidate why children read. This could be seen from one of the earlier studies carried out in Sweden to ascertain what needs mass media met for children. Von Feilitzen (1976) found that mass

media serve thirty different functions which can be grouped under five main headings. They are:

- entertaining - expressed in terms like interesting, exciting, fun, relaxing;
- informative or cognitive - providing general knowledge, information on current events, practical information and advice, and arousing curiosity;
- social - giving a sense of relationship with the people on the screen, preventing the viewer from feeling lonely, giving him or her something to talk about with others;
- escapist - using the media to shape dreams, to get away from people or things; and
- convenient (i.e., referring to the mode of consumption) - the convenience of the format, its availability and ease of use.

All of these functions are applicable to reading, with entertainment, information and escape figuring prominently in the literature. The social function and the convenience of consumption appear less frequently. Nevertheless, the last named reason seems to provide a plausible explanation for the perseverance of the book due to its physical format and portability. It can be read at any time and almost any place which makes it superior to most of

the electronic media.

One aspect of the social factor - giving a sense of relationship with the people on the screen - could possibly be classified under entertainment since part of the pleasure in reading comes from the vicarious experience it provides for the child reader who may identify completely with the main character. Using the mass media to stave off loneliness could also, in the context of reading, be seen as escapist. Meanwhile, reading in order to have something to talk about could be equated somewhat with the pleasure children seem to derive from sharing their reading with peers.

Greaney and Neuman (1983, 1990) decided to apply the "uses and gratification" approach in two studies based on the assumption that children choose to read in order to fulfil certain functions in keeping with those identified above. The first investigation (Greaney and Neuman, 1983) focused on 459 children in grades three, five and eight from the United States and Ireland. The second (Greaney and Neuman, 1990) was much more extensive and included students eight to thirteen years old from fifteen different countries, including some developing ones. In both studies the same methodology was used. First, a pilot sample was given an essay to write on "Why I like to read", then the responses were analyzed and used to furnish items for constructing the "Functions of Reading Scale", which was then given to a second sample to elicit responses about why they read.

In the 1983 study a high degree of similarity was observed between children from the United States and Ireland. Reading for enjoyment (entertainment) ranked highest followed by utility (informative/cognitive) and escape. In keeping with the trend, girls ranked reading for enjoyment higher than boys who read mostly for utilitarian reasons. Fifth graders read more for enjoyment than the other two grades which is not surprising since they are supposed to be near or at the peak of their reading. Cross-culturally, the Irish read more for enjoyment, the Americans for escape. In the second study, reading for utility was the primary reason given for reading by most children from the different countries.

The most important aspect of the findings from the two studies was the congruence arrived at on the major reasons for reading. The order differed slightly in the second study which ranked utility before pleasure, but basically the three primary functions served by reading were identified as:

- Utility - which has both moral and educational aspects. They read for school success, to help their country (most often cited by developing country representatives), to know right from wrong, and because parents stressed reading as important;
- Enjoyment - they found reading enjoyable, interesting, exciting, and they read to fulfil internal needs rather than external goals;

and

- Escape - the need to relieve boredom, to pass time when they have nothing else to do or to get away from personal worries.

The researchers used "utility " here to equate with von Feilitzen's cognitive/informative category, and "enjoyment" in place of entertainment. They also viewed "escape" in a negative light since reading was being used as a means of distraction. On the basis of the international study, Greaney and Neuman (1990) concluded that these functions of reading operated in a wide range of cultural settings and that reading to learn appeared to be an important function for boys as well as girls in all countries. Failure to get representative samples in all countries limits the generalisability of the findings, but other studies have also identified these three functions as the most frequently cited by children.

Neuman (1980) and Ngandu (1981) both solicited information from children by asking them to respond directly to the question "Why do you read?". The two sets of responses were subject to content analysis and Ngandu (1981) found that children ranked their reasons for reading in the following order: for survival and in order to function in school, to gain knowledge, for personal development, pleasure, and shared experiences, that is so they would have something to talk about with their peers. This last reason corresponds with von Feilitzen's social function mentioned earlier. Neuman (1980) used

categories from the "uses and gratification" approach and found that reading for enjoyment held first place followed by informative (the desire to learn), escape (relief from boredom), convenience of consumption and cognitive stimulation.

While the different methods employed by the two researchers in classifying the data accounted for some of the variation in the replies, still it would seem that in both studies either utilitarian or entertainment functions came first. Pleasure was the main reason for reading identified by Neuman (1980) but this was ranked third (13%) by the sample used by Ngandu (1981) as they chose knowledge (37%) and survival (26%) more frequently. Neuman (1980) also observed that convenience of consumption, i.e., easy access to books which required no special equipment or preparation for use, was also a reason given for reading by a small minority. Her analysis of the data was much more productive and allowed her to examine the pattern of each function across grades. Reading for enjoyment remained in first place throughout, however, by grade nine reading for pleasure dropped considerably while there was a sharp increase in the number who reported "escape" as their motive, suggesting that at this stage reading was partly diversionary.

In discussing the three main reasons for which children say they read, one should not overlook the contributory role of adults since parents, teachers and librarians all help to shape children's reading attitudes, interests and habits.

From the review of the literature, it is obvious that children attach great importance to reading for utilitarian or informative purposes. This could be so because adults tend to always emphasise the need to read for academic and personal success. Very soon children come to realise that adults seem to ascribe the highest value to this type of reading. This might explain why so many children seem to give such a high ranking to the cognitive/informative functions of reading. Although reading for pleasure is the primary focus of the public library and to a lesser extent, the school library, it very often takes second place to reading for utility. Again, this might be due to the failure of significant adults to promote or model reading as a worthwhile means of enjoyment.

Many researchers tend to ascribe a very low value to reading for escape even though the line between it and reading for pleasure is not too clearly drawn. Nevertheless, "escape reading" (whatever it is defined to mean by the particular researcher) is largely viewed with suspicion. Greaney and Neuman (1990) assigned negative value to escapist reading and discounted it as a source of pleasure, and Mathewson (1976) expressed the belief that escape reading may be motivated more by anxiety than by any of the higher order needs described by Maslow. However, Spink (1989), in his study of young readers, pointed out that while this type of reading was often spoken of in pejorative terms such as trivial and time-wasting, reading for escape was as valid a reason

as any other and should be seen as compensatory or therapeutic since it helped the readers to relax.

Favat (1977), who studied the story interests of very young children, saw this type of reading as typical of children who read for compensation because they did not enjoy unbroken happiness. Since children are natural seekers of pleasure, they strive to reduce discontent in their lives by creating harmonious worlds which accommodate their desires. Books, therefore, provided escape, pleasure and relief from distress, even if it was only temporary.

Although reading for escape and for pleasure sometimes intersect, the experts in reading have tried to show that there is a subtle distinction between the two which can sometimes be discerned from a close scrutiny of children's responses to queries about their reading behaviour. Replies like the following seem to connote pleasure: "I read for fun, because it is interesting, to experience other people's lives, it makes me feel good or because I like it". On the other hand, the following statements have less pleasurable undertones: " I read because it gives me something to do, I get bored , there is nothing else to do, it takes my mind off things or I am lonely" (Landy, 1977a; Swanton, 1984). By the definition of many researchers, these later comments would qualify as "escapist".

However, Nell (1988) does not differentiate between reading for

enjoyment or escape, he sees both as legitimate aspects of a pleasurable encounter with books. This can be seen from his coining of the term "ludic reading" described as by him as a playful, free activity standing outside ordinary life, intrinsically motivated, and usually engaged in for its own sake. During this process the reader is so engrossed in what is being read that he becomes "lost in a book", whether the reader wishes to escape from the unpleasant realities of life or to enter into someone else's experiences. This, according to Nell (1988, 2) constitutes reading for enjoyment.

The vicarious experience achieved through close identification with the protagonist and the events of the story is considered to be one of the main sources of pleasure for the child reader and Hildick (1971) believes that this is the primary reason why children read fiction. Marshall (1982, 113) posits that the child's enjoyment comes from seeing himself or herself vicariously in the story, taking on another's character in dream or wish fulfilment and discovering how others tackle problems. The same idea is conveyed by Schlager (1978) who says that children clamour for books with characters who reflect the readers' psychological and emotional state and share a similar perception of the world.

This would seem to be substantiated by Osula, an avid reader, who in a detailed interview with Sims (1983) acknowledged that she derived pleasure from reading about people and situations with which she could identify. While

children often find it difficult to articulate their experiences due to their limited understanding and vocabulary, some have reported being "lost in a book" or "reading themselves into the story". Fry (1985) encountered one such reader during his intensive case study of a small group of British children. One girl admitted that she had become so completely immersed in the world of **Jane Eyre** that it took her quite some time after finishing the book to stop seeing the things around her house in terms of the story.

The unwavering commitment of librarians to inculcating a love of reading in children is based primarily on the pleasure principle which might also include "escapist reading". These professionals hope that children, through continual satisfying experiences with literature, will develop functional autonomy, that is the habit of reading for the sheer pleasure and satisfaction of the act. As a result of these satisfying book encounters, children's literature experts hope that these young people will come to possess a richness of vicarious experience to augment their daily activities and enhance the quality of their lives (Sebesta and Iverson, 1975).

Given these high expectations, librarians must be disturbed by the tendency of so many children to associate reading with the practical rather than the enjoyable (Southgate, Arnold and Johnson, 1981; Neville and Pugh, 1982; Carter, 1986). Such a view directly contravenes the basic principle - reading for pleasure - which underlies the literature programme in libraries and to a

lesser extent in schools. Educational institutions have often been cited as one of the factors contributing to children's emphasis on reading for utility as well as their general attitude toward reading. The home has also been identified as playing an important role in the shaping of reading attitude.

#### **2.2.4 School and Home Factors Affecting Interest in Reading**

Within the school context Lynch-Brown (1990) affirms both the educational value of children's literature and its pleasurable aspects. She believes that the latter might be an even more important reason to use literature across the curriculum since it might help children develop a life-long reading habit. This of course, will depend mainly on the methods adopted for reading instruction and for the presentation of the literature programme. In discussing her reading response theory, Rosenblatt (1978) states that there are two approaches to reading: the efferent - reading to gain knowledge from a text, and the aesthetic - reading for the enjoyment of the experience. Sometimes in the teaching of literature, the former seems to predominate as children are forced to dissect texts and provide uniform answers. During this process reading for pleasure is rarely taught so children might come away with the idea that there is only one way to read - to extract information.

For this reason, reading instruction and the literature programmes in schools have been accused many times as being largely responsible for children's lack of interest in reading. Cullinan (1989) voices some of the

concerns relative to classroom teaching and reading for pleasure when she says:

The ultimate goal of a reading teacher and of a literature teacher are the same: both want students to read and write a variety of literary and expository material for many purposes, one of which is the enjoyment of reading. Too often, reading to gain information or, worse yet, simply to decode is stressed rather than to gain meaning. This emphasis thereby outweighs reading as a pleasurable activity... (p.6)

Bettelheim (1982), with almost evangelistic fervour, insists that the solution lies in the abandonment of the skills-oriented approach to reading instruction along with the boring class text and the opening up of the world of power and excitement to the child through books - real books from the wide variety of excellent children's literature available today. In expounding his philosophy of reading instruction further, Bettelheim (1982) is convinced that the child will be sufficiently motivated to master the difficult task of learning to read once his or her imagination is fired by the exciting prospect of gaining entry, through reading, to a wonderful world of knowledge, understanding and experience.

At one time such an idea would be thought revolutionary, but in light of the whole language movement it seems to be a logical and viable alternative to the traditional approach which Chambers (1983) describes as teaching the kind of reading which dutifully seeks to acquire information to be used for other ends, or which becomes only a tool that enables the child to do something else.

rather than reading which has invaluable ends and purposes in itself. This is the type of reading instruction which is so frequently criticised as being partially responsible for the low level of voluntary reading among youngsters (Lamme, 1976; Landy, 1977a; and Morrow, 1983).

Other school related factors have also been linked to children's failure to develop a love for reading. Bamberger (1972) lamented the fact that while children are in school they read twice as much as adults, but when they leave many stop altogether, which means that school only temporarily interested children in reading. This could be the result of the association of reading mainly with the classroom, and also because the other types of media available for amusement and education enjoy a higher repute socially, and so reading is marginalised.

Chambers (1983), drawing upon his knowledge as a children's literature specialist, argues further that the difficulty experienced by some children in mastering reading makes the task appear insurmountable and therefore more appropriate for their intellectually superior peers to whom the activity is readily relinquished. For others, books are seen as a symbol of school life to be abandoned at the earliest opportunity, and many may have never been introduced to reading as a pleasurable engagement. Research also points to low academic ability as another disincentive to reading. Even though all children in a given grade might share similar reading interests the weaker students tend

to read less and so most of the non-readers are to be found in this group (Whitehead et al., 1977; Moray, 1978; McKenna, 1986; Hafner, Palmer and Tullos 1986).

Despite the prominence given to the school correlates of reading interests, other variables must be taken into account since they are also known to influence reading behaviour. For example, the home environment plays a crucial role in the development of literacy and an attitude toward reading (Goelman et al., 1984). The young child must learn basic concepts about books and print and this usually takes place first in the home. Parents' own modelling of reading and the sharing of books with children in a pleasurable setting contribute towards the development of a favourable attitude towards books and reading.

This view is also more or less shared by Staiger (1979) who contends that the models of reading in the family, the reading materials available and the family's own attitude toward learning generally form the foundation of the reading habit, although some children do rise above negative circumstances to become habitual readers. Findings by Durkin (1966), Clark (1976) and others who have studied young fluent readers, also stress the significance of the early home environment in the making of a committed reader.

Detailed investigations (Landy, 1977a; Ingham, 1981; Morrow, 1983) into the home lives of young children revealed that the children's socio-

economic background tends to affect their attitude toward and interest in reading. Whitehead et al., (1977) also found that children whose parents were of a higher educational level were likely to have more books and to be read to regularly by parents, all of which helped to stimulate the children to read. Greaney (1980) agreed with these researchers but went further by insisting that socio-economic status by itself was not as important as what parents actually **did** to promote and encourage reading.

This is applicable to parents at any social level although it would seem that children from the lower socio-economic stratum might be at a disadvantage since their parents sometimes lack the education and the financial resources that would make book-buying and reading a priority in the home. Nevertheless, many of these children have been known to defy the odds and become habitual readers (Whitehead et al., 1977; Ingham, 1981).

From the discussion so far about why children read and how much they like to do so, it would seem that home and school correlates along with several other personal and social variables do influence children's reading behaviour. However, further insight into why children read and their liking for the activity might also be gained from a closer examination of children who, for one reason or other, have been identified as non-readers.

### **2.2.5 The Non-Reader and the Aliterate**

Research reports indicate that the typical child who does not like to read

is usually male, below average academically, and consequently experiences reading difficulties. In addition, the child usually lives in a deprived home environment where reading is not encouraged by parental modelling nor by the provision of stimulating reading materials. Although this might be a fairly accurate generalisation, in more recent times another type of non-reader has emerged that contradicts this stereotype. Johns (1978) clearly distinguishes between these two groups of non-readers in his discussion of strategies for overcoming reluctance in reading. The first set consists of children who are not particularly good at reading, read below their grade level and have problems with decoding and making meaning. In short, they are mostly poor readers which is the primary reason for their dislike of voluntary reading.

The second group, overlooked for a long time, are distinctly different in that they are quite proficient at reading but choose not to read. Cullinan (1989) describes these as **aliterates**, children who can read well but neither read for information nor pleasure, who may glance at the headlines of a newspaper but more often reach for a television schedule. It would seem that for a long time most researchers did not notice the difference between poor readers and "committed" non-readers who are academically bright, very skilled at reading, but lack interest in the activity altogether.

The reason for this oversight may partly be explained by the fact that so often librarians and others who conduct research into reading interests usually

assume that most children will read voluntarily once they have mastered the mechanics. Therefore, any failure to develop a reading habit can be remedied by the creation of an environment conducive to reading to compensate for any lack at home, and also by implementing literature programmes to expose the children to the right type of books commensurate with their developmental needs, abilities and interests. The planning of these intervention strategies are consistent with one of the basic tenets of children's librarianship, which is, that reading plays a vital role in a child's personal development. It is mainly on this belief that library services are developed for the young.

The second reason, although an extension of the first, cannot be expressed with the same degree of certainty, but it would seem that librarians also operate under the premise that within every child there is a latent desire to read which will be manifested once the personal and social obstacles in a child's life are addressed. Such a conviction might have gained support from the successes reported with 'bookflood' experiments (Ingham, 1981; Fader and McNeil, 1968; Floyd, 1973; and Ingham, 1981) and other research findings that repeatedly emphasised the specific reading interests of children and the frequency with which children say they like to read. Such findings, taken together, give the impression that most children are readers and the minority who do not read are still favourably inclined toward the activity and only need the right incentive and conditions to activate their latent desire to read.

Other studies have shown this general theory to be only partially true. The findings reveal that there is a core of skilled readers who demonstrate a remarkable intolerance for print and these children seem resistant to any overtures aimed at converting them into habitual readers. Whitehead et al., (1977), among the earliest researcher to stumble across this group, expressed alarm when he discovered that a large proportion of his sample of 8,000 British children were non-readers, many of whom possessed the ability to read quite well. He found it impossible to ignore the large percentage of non-book readers among the children assessed as above average and average. For him this was much too high for comfort, especially as the numbers seemed to be sex-related and to increase with age.

He graphically described the situation where the percentage of non-book readers among the boys escalated rapidly with age from 15.8% at 10+ to a staggering 40% at 14+. While about a third were weak and backward at reading, the remaining two-thirds consisted of boys assessed as average or above average in ability and attainment. For girls, while the percentages were a little less the number of non-readers was still high. Whitehead et al., (1977) used the number of books the children reported reading over a four week period as an indicator of their status as readers or non-readers (i.e. those who had read no books at all for that time). While this approach might not produce a totally accurate picture, the findings still raise the issue of why children like

these do not read even though they are well equipped to do so.

Very few studies have focused deliberately on non-readers as a special group, although some researchers have asked children why they read (Neuman, 1980; Ngandu, 1981) and others have commented on non-readers as a part of a larger study (Whitehead et al, 1977). However, Landy (1977a), aware of the existence of growing numbers of non-readers, decided to give equal importance to non-readers as well as readers in her study of the reading interests and habits of grade seven students in Canada. Using questionnaires, psychological tests, interviews and school visits to gather data on her sample of 573 readers and non-readers, she tried to establish the difference between the two groups.

In the process she was able to create a profile of the typical reader and, by implication, the non-reader. The typical reader, among other things, tends to be female, possesses a higher level of reading and intellectual ability, reads mostly for pleasure, owns more books, engages in a wide range of spare time activities and has parents who read a lot. By default, the non-reader tends to be the opposite: male, associating reading almost exclusively with seeking information or with completing school-related assignments, expressing a definite preference for television or auditory means of learning rather than print, and seldom experiencing any pleasurable associations with reading. If a favourable attitude is a precursor to voluntary reading (Greaney, 1986) and attitude is shaped by past experiences (Lewis and Teale, 1982) then it might be

understandable why these children have a negative attitude toward reading.

In her thesis upon which the article was based, Landy (1977b) reported in more detail some of the reasons given by children for not reading: "it's boring, I don't want to, it's not exciting, I don't think books are interesting, my eyes hurt. I cannot read very well, I am a slow learner. I get stuck and others laugh at me". Non-readers ascribed their failure to read for pleasure more to lack of interest than to poor reading ability, which again presents the problem as one of perception rather than ability, and hints at a negative attitude towards print - one of the noticeable characteristics of aliterates.

Lampert and Saunders (1976) were also concerned about reading attitudes in their survey of a convenience sample of suburban students in a high school. Their concern focused on possible differences between readers and non-readers in terms of achievement, attitude or both. Students were questioned about their leisure time activities, the types of material they read and for how long, and their present and past exposure to books. Their reading proficiency was also tested.

The findings showed that on the tests readers scored only slightly higher than non-readers and that males and females did not differ significantly. Interestingly, 25% of the non-readers scored higher than the mean reading comprehension score for the readers, while 29% of the readers scored below the mean for their grade and sex. The non-readers also expressed low interest in

activities that were passive or represented mediated interpretations of reality such as magazines and documentaries. Learning by explanation and being with friends were preferable to reading. The general picture that emerged was that of a group who could read but chose not to, preferring more concrete activities.

This finding led the researchers to conclude that there is little automatic correlation between a student self-designated as a reader or a non-reader and his or her reading proficiency because the clearest factor distinguishing readers from non-readers seems to be the students' own perception of themselves and their background. Non-readers perceived themselves as such, no matter how much or how skilfully they read, while readers saw themselves as such regardless of reading skill and preference for other media.

Therefore, the difference between reader and non-reader was based less on academic ability than on attitude, suggesting that those who saw themselves as readers were favourably disposed towards the activity even though they were not reading consistently, while the self-styled non-readers read out of necessity and disliked having to do so. Although the findings cannot be generalised because of the convenience sample used, they support what Landy (1977a) and Whitehead et al., (1977) observed - that non-readers were not all necessarily children of low academic ability or attainment.

Attitude seems to be a significant factor contributing to the aliterate child's disaffection with reading which could be the result of subtle

conditioning through peer pressure to avoid reading, the lack of appropriate materials or negative experiences with books (Staiger, 1979). All these variables would be covered by the concept of attitude as multi-dimensional possessing cognitive, affective and behavioral components (Lewis and Teale, 1980). Therefore, the non-reader's mental state of readiness to receive a book or participate in the act of reading would be shaped by his knowledge about books plus the feelings and values he attaches to them based on his life experiences at home, school and wherever else he might have been.

This emergent category of non-readers - the intelligent reading proficient, who refuses to read voluntarily - has become a growing concern for educators and librarians alike. Cullinan (1989) maintains that these children who pass through high school with high scholastic standing but who never voluntarily read for information and pleasure represent hidden failures of the educational system. Such a belief is debatable because Lampert and Saunders (1976) reported that their group of skilled non-readers were successful at school but chose not to read, instead they preferred more active, concrete activities, and from all appearances seemed to be leading happy satisfying lives.

Librarians and educators no doubt will find it hard to accept that some children might never be interested in reading because they simply dislike the activity, or find that it does not provide the satisfaction of other leisure time undertakings, and even more significantly the functions it previously served are

currently fulfilled by other media. In today's electronic age a variety of media options exists for information and entertainment, and librarians might need to come to terms with the reality that books - once perceived as a child's primary gateway to pleasure and as a means of personal development - may no longer hold such a singular position.

### **Summary**

Children seem to read for three reasons: information, pleasure, and to escape the realities of every day life. This consensus was arrived at from studies conducted within the context of theories of human behaviour as well as from a sociological perspective. Maslow's (1970) theory of human motivation suggests that children read to fulfil certain psychological needs found at the upper end of the hierarchical scale. As an extension of the same idea, the "uses and gratification" theory implies that the book has certain properties that makes it attractive to the child who is also motivated to read because this activity serves certain functions in his life and is governed by personal as well as social and psychological factors. No doubt a child can find some degree of personal fulfilment from the knowledge and pleasure gained through reading.

However, an active pursuit of recreational reading is usually preceded by a favourable attitude which is in turn shaped by the experiences the child has with print at home and at school. Not all children like to read and this can result, in part, from repeatedly unpleasant associations with books whether

through poor reading instruction, unsatisfactory library programmes or lack of parental encouragement.

Low academic ability has also discouraged reading but not in every case as avid readers have been found among this group, while some bright fluent readers have demonstrated a strong intolerance for print. This growing incidence of the skilled non-reader in the information age when literacy is crucial for personal effectiveness and survival has also generated deep concern among educators and librarians. Rasinki and Gillespie (1992) find it ironic that the same technologically advanced world that makes literacy more important for survival is also responsible for creating electronic pastimes that draw adults and children away from reading. In the light of these developments and the finding that children tend to read primarily for utilitarian purposes, librarians are being challenged to re-think their philosophy of the role of books in children's lives and the reasons why children should continue to see reading as a worthwhile leisure time activity. It is hoped that this study might shed some further light on this matter.

### **2.3 READING AS A LEISURE TIME ACTIVITY**

Literacy, access, environment and time are four of the necessary conditions for reading in addition to which the individual must be motivated to read (Hatt, 1976). For children, time to read must be found in the hours left

after the demands of school or home are met. In addition, the time allocated to reading will be based upon priorities and preferences since the child must choose reading over a variety of other possible leisure time activities. Making time to read is one of the best indicators of commitment to reading and the importance attached to the activity by the individual. Although many children declare themselves to be readers and testify to the value of reading, their behaviour would seem to contradict this assertion.

Lack of time is perhaps the most frequently cited excuse children give for not reading as much as they would like (Heather, 1981; Carter, 1986). An examination of research findings on how children spend their time should therefore provide a useful framework within which to evaluate this claim and to find out the importance they assign to reading as a leisure time activity in comparison to other pastimes.

### **2.3.1 Time Devoted to Reading and Other Social Activities**

Two measures often used to classify children as readers are the number of books read and/or the amount of time spent reading over a given period. Both approaches are justified on the grounds that the best ways an individual can demonstrate that he or she is a reader is by reading. Before a proper assessment can be made of the child's commitment to voluntary reading based on the time spent, a knowledge of the average number of hours available to children during a typical week should prove useful. Detailed data on how 764

eleven to twelve year olds spent their time out of school was compiled by Medrich et al., (1982) and an inter-disciplinary team of sociologists, psychologists and urban planners in a large American city.

The study identified five domains of out-of-school life that, although not mutually exclusive, covered the major spheres of children's activities. They consisted of children's activities: on their own; with parents; organised with an adult who is not a parent in charge (e.g. clubs); children in-home and out-of-home; and television viewing. The study is particularly valuable for the insight it gives into children's lives, how their time is spent and the importance they attach to various competing social and domestic activities.

By systematically documenting the children's daily activities the study provides a useful indication of the average number of hours per day a typical North American child has available. Medrich et al., (1982) calculated that these children have approximately 7 hours between 7:00 am and 10:30 p.m. each school day and this time was roughly apportioned as follows: time on own - 2-3 hours; television - 3-4 hours; parents with child - less than 1 1/2 hours; chores and related responsibilities or jobs outside home - less than 1 hour. Generally, organised activity consumed about 4-5 hours per week. Excluding weekends and holidays, the average urban child in the United States has at his or her disposal approximately 35 leisure hours during the week when school is in session. Of course, it should be noted that children in rural or suburban

areas as well as in other countries might apportion their time differently due to varying social, cultural and geographic factors.

The researchers also made an important observation about time: while it reflects priorities, constraints, predilections and opportunities, how children spend their time depends to a great extent on the adults who influence and control their lives. From the data furnished it can be deduced that of the seven hours available daily, a child is likely to read only during the two to three hours spent alone, unless he or she is one of those who claim to read and watch television simultaneously.

Indubitably, television was found to be the major consumer of time in the child's life outside of school, and this will be discussed later. Since the other features of the study did not relate specifically to reading, although it was mentioned as one of the solitary activities, the findings will only be used as an index in helping to assess the priority children give to reading as a leisure time activity.

In the United States, McEady-Gilead (1989) investigated sixth graders' out-of-school activities, including reading, as part of a larger study. The 723 students represented diverse socio-economic backgrounds, academic abilities, races and geographic locations. The **California Media and Library Education Association Literature / Reading Survey For Library Media Specialists and Teachers** was administered to garner information on their

degree of interest in reading, the kinds of books read, their use of free time and their knowledge of literature.

Although all students, irrespective of ability, said they were interested in reading this interest did not translate into heavy involvement during their leisure time. Reading registered fifth in the overall tally after watching television, playing with friends, doing homework and engaging in sports. On the whole, literature related engagements such as going to the library were mentioned infrequently. McEady-Gilead (1989) noted that twelve year-olds across all the socio-economic groups tended to spend their leisure time similarly, the only difference was the frequency with which they participated in the various activities. Those at the lower end of the social ladder were restricted by the location of the recreational programmes, the opportunities available for participation as well as the cost and logistics of attending. The researcher commented that the young people were enthralled with electronic media in the form of computer and video games and music formats.

Little variation was seen in reports on free time activities collected by Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) over a number of weeks from fifth graders who listed their favourites in descending order as: watching television, going out, listening to music, playing games, reading, doing chores and being occupied with hobbies. On most days little or no book reading was done and the combined time spent on reading books, comics and periodicals was

seventeen minutes per day compared to the approximately two hours spent watching television. The time a child spent reading was directly related to his or her ability, and boys were observed to read for shorter periods than girls.

Greaney has conducted several studies, individually and in collaboration with others, into several aspects of the reading interests and habits of children. For example, Greaney and Hegarty (1987) examined the relationship between home environment, attitude to reading and motivation on one hand, and leisure time reading on the other. The sample consisted of fifth graders in a suburban primary school who kept diaries and recorded all their activities on four designated days so that the amount of time devoted to leisure activities could be tallied. They were not informed that the researcher was interested in their reading so this reduced some of the bias that might have affected reports about the amount of time spent reading.

The findings revealed that 7.2% of leisure time was spent on reading in contrast to 30.4% for television, and reading ranked eighth out of the eleven leisure time activities recorded. The percentage of time spent reading shows a slight increase (from 5.4% to 7.2%) over an earlier study done by Greaney (1980) using the same method, but even then the amount of time allotted to reading shows that it is definitely not a favourite activity of many children.

If the hours available to the typical North American child as calculated by Medrich et al. (1982) were used as a guide, then these children had twenty-

eight hours free time over the four days only two of which were devoted to reading as compared to the over eight spent on watching television. Greaney and Hegarty (1987) also found that the amount of reading done during leisure time was subject to availability of suitable reading materials, current interests and friendships, the time of year, weather conditions, the amount of homework and alternative attractions. The home environment, especially what parents did to promote reading, and personal variables such as sex and intellectual ability also affected the amount of time spent reading. Sex differences were also observed as girls devoted more time to reading than boys, and more boys were non-readers.

Long and Henderson (1973), employing the same diary method to investigate fifth graders' use of time, arrived at nearly similar conclusions. Apart from sleeping, watching television ranked first. About one third of the sample reported no reading over the two week period, and those who read spent an average of one and a half hours per week doing so. This was even less than the sample of Greaney and Hegarty (1987). Again, girls devoted more time to this activity than boys, who also spent significantly less time on chores and organised activity.

Long and Henderson (1973) ascribed this disparity to the influence of sex-role differentiation and cultural norms that forced girls to lead more restricted lives. Medrich et al., (1982) also reported on this trend where girls

spent twice as much time as boys on domestic chores. The total responses for all the children surveyed suggested sex-linked clusters of activities with boys almost exclusively reporting making and fixing things, while girls favoured expressive hobbies like drawing and painting.

Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) found that the typical child in the middle grade spent less than 25 minutes a day reading. This finding is comparable to observations made by Wagner (1980) that the amount of time devoted to book reading was directly related to the child's reading level and growth in reading proficiency from the second to the third grade. While most children did little reading, there was a small core who read for an increasingly longer period of time. They would likely fall within Whitehead et al's.. (1977) category of avid readers. Such students read five or more books per month, and contrary to expectations, led very active lives.

Other studies (for example, Ingham, 1981 and Greaney, 1980) provide slightly different figures on time spent reading, have shown the same predominance of watching television over reading and other leisure time activities. Overall, the evidence points to a very low ranking given to recreational reading by the majority of students.

The findings from countries outside North America are no more encouraging with regard to the time children spend reading. Two studies were initiated by librarians in Britain to investigate children's reading habits.

including the time spent reading among other leisure time activities. Neither study used inferential statistics, so the significance of the findings are not known, but the conditions described hardly differed from the findings emanating from other developed countries.

Heather (1981), who concentrated on young adolescents, found that nearly half the sample (47%) spent more than three hours per night watching television compared to 58% who spent an hour on homework. As for reading, 20% admitted to not reading at all, but only 38% of the remainder read for any sustained time during the week (2-8 hours) with most of the students clustering around the lower end. The remaining 42% either did not read every week or did so for less than two hours.

The Nottinghamshire Library (1971) survey showed an even greater reduction in time spent reading which might be due to the inclusion of older out-of-school teenagers as part of the sample. When these adolescents were asked how long they devoted to reading over a four day period, the most popular length of time for boys was thirty minutes and one hour for girls. This nearly coincides with what Moffitt and Wartella (1992) found among urban American teenagers in a study that showed that they spent an average of 30-36 minutes per day reading all types of print materials, including books. Similarly, Greaney (1980) in Ireland computed an average of 26.4 minutes per day spent on reading by his subjects. However, none of the means for time spent reading

ever comes close to the maximum of 2-3 hours that Medrich et al., (1982) said the typical child spent alone, which suggests that on average approximately one quarter or less of this private time was assigned to reading.

Overall, these findings fall a little below the average response recorded by Medrich et al., (1982) as coming from their sample of 12 year-olds when asked how they spent the two to three hours they had alone. The boys said reading accounted for 37% of their solitary moments for the five day period. This percentage works out to approximately 1 hour per day, and in keeping with the observed differences between the sexes, girls reported roughly 1 hour 40 minutes. It is possible that the variations between these figures and those of other researchers are due to different approaches used to record time. Medrich et al., (1982) relied on the children's ability to recall time spent while most of the other researchers had children keep daily records of how they spent their hours.

Confirmation that children spend little time reading was obtained when Walberg and Tsai (1984) summarised research findings from America and other countries. The researchers stated that:

... although an absolute amount of reading is not possible, nonetheless, it can be confidently concluded that the typical child in middle grade read less than 25 minutes a day out of school. The amount appears to be considerably less than this in the United States, maybe as little as 8-12 minutes per day when all types of reading materials are included, and maybe as little as 4-5 minutes a day when [only] books are counted. (p.449)

If what they say is true of middle graders who are described as being at the "golden age" or peak of their reading, then the findings for teenagers, who are well documented as drifters from libraries and reading generally, should not be viewed with much surprise. Cullinan (1989) says that:

When children make independent choices to spend their time, they turn to reading if it is a source of pleasure. The degree to which enjoyment effectively motivates reading depends largely on the strength of the pleasurable experiences associated with books. (p. 8)

If this is the case, then reading experiences would seem to be much less pleasurable than other recreational activities and so fail in the bid for priority during the child's free time. This minority status assigned to reading should raise some perplexing questions for both librarians and educators. The former must question the long-term effectiveness of the numerous reading promotion programmes which are standard features of almost every public library and involve large investments of human and capital resources. For educators, the issue revolves around finding the most effective strategies for teaching reading and at the same time inculcating a love of literature to the children. Despite this seemingly dismal picture, opportunities still seem to exist for teachers and librarians to make a difference.

Anderson, Wilson and Feeling (1988) announced that one of their most newsworthy findings was that the teacher has a significant influence on the amount of reading children do outside the classroom. Ingham (1981) and

Landy (1977a) also emphasised the motivational impact of enthusiastic teachers and librarians who were themselves avid readers and knowledgeable about books. Even though youngsters show a greater tendency to resort to peers for reading guidance, assistance from professionals is still necessary because children can easily fall into a reading rut since their knowledge of the variety of literature available would definitely be more limited than that of the librarian or teacher. Therefore, it would seem that the development of a life-long reading habit in children depends to a great extent on the kind of literary environment created and the intervention strategies adopted in the formative years by librarians, educators and parents.

### **2.3.2 Television and Reading as Leisure Time Activities**

Although the objectives of this present study did not include a comparison of watching television and reading as leisure time activities, the topic occurs repeatedly in the review of the literature. The pattern that emerges is usually that of television replacing reading as the primary means of entertainment for children. As this pattern is still being debated by some, it was decided to briefly discuss the issue apart from the other leisure time activities.

It is difficult to ignore the ubiquity and subsequent effect of television (aptly dubbed the "electronic pied piper" by Wagner (1980)) on the amount of time children allocate to reading, despite the assurances of some that it does not displace the reading habit. Simple logic suggests that if an inordinate

amount of time is spent on any single activity, then there has to be less time available for anything else, whether it be reading or sports. Whitehead et al., (1977) strongly believes that there is an inverse relationship between the amount of television viewing and the amount of book reading, and that "poorer" readers watch more television than the more able. Lampert and Saunders (1976) concur with these findings.

Conversely, Landy (1977a) found that there was little difference between avid readers and non-readers when it came to television, since over 80% of her seventh graders watched at least 5 hours per week. At the same time, Ingham (1981) concluded from her case studies that avid readers watched more television than infrequent readers (who are not necessarily poor readers) with the former claiming that they read and watched simultaneously. The nature and quality of "reading" that takes place while viewing is subject to question, and while the number of hours may vary somewhat, almost all children, irrespective of sex, tend to spend a great deal of their time watching television.

There is little doubt that television is a major consumer of children's time. They spend approximately one-sixth of their lives between birth and 18 years on this activity (Berger, 1976) with the result that they pass more time in front of the television than in doing any other activity, except for sleeping (Huston-Stein and Wright, 1979). Wagner (1980) reviewed research on the relationship between television and children pertinent to their academic

achievement, reading habit, creativity and critical reading. He calculated that the average American child, twelve years and younger, spent two hours per day viewing television, thirty minutes reading (not including school work) and forty-five minutes doing homework.

By the time a teenager graduated from high school he or she would have spent 15,000 hours watching television. This statistic relates closely to what Medrich et al., (1982) and Walberg and Tsai (1978) have computed. In the light of these findings, Wagner (1980) recommended that adults come to terms with this medium as complementary to reading and as a potential source of motivation for undertaking this activity.

### **2.3.3 The Ranking of Reading as a Pastime and Some Hindrances to Reading More**

While watching television might account for a large chunk of children's free time, several other leisure activities also militate against recreational reading. When children were asked to rank reading as compared to other leisure time activities, at no time in any of the studies reviewed was reading ranked first by the majority of any group sampled even when they claimed to read to read for pleasure. It would seem then that reading is not highly regarded for its entertainment value. While the three major purposes given for reading were utility, pleasure and escape, it would seem as if most of the reading done by children tend to fall into the first category (Ngandu, 1981; Greaney and

Neuman, 1983, 1990). If so, then it would appear that the rewards offered by reading cannot effectively compete with the prospect of pleasure from other recreational activities.

In their study of American teenagers, Moffitt and Wartella (1992) noted that girls ranked reading third while boys assigned it fourth place. Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) and Greaney (1980) saw it placed seventh and eighth respectively, in comparison with eleven other recreational activities. Going out, being with friends, sports and games were usually given priority over reading, which would seem to strengthen the image of reading as passive, and readers as introverted. Research has contradicted both these stereotypes by showing that many children who were avid readers also led very active lives and still found or made time to read (Whitehead et al., 1977; Ingham, 1981; Anderson, Wilson and Fielding, 1988).

Besides watching television and participating in various leisure activities, children have also cited other personal and environmental hindrances to reading as much as they would like. Two hundred and fifty-four fifth to eighth graders, replying to a survey administered by Heathington (1979), listed the following as distractions from reading: too much homework, class work, religious activities and sports; too many external interruptions when they tried to read; a lack of enough books on the topics they were interested in; and for a few, the inability to read well. Heather (1981) interviewed British teenagers and found

that homework and examination pressures, other social activities and the unavailability of reading materials were frequently cited. Whitehead et al's., (1977) students also complained that the excessive demands of homework left little time for reading or anything else.

Socio-economic conditions also affect the amount of reading children undertake. The lack of a private place where children can escape from noise, movement, television and other distractions all undermine voluntary reading. Landy (1977a), Greaney (1980) and Southgate, Arnold and Johnson (1981) reported that most reading took place at home, usually in bed, and stressed the importance of having a private place for reading. Ingham (1981) in her study of 10-14 year olds found that avid readers tend to have their own rooms, although this was not always sufficient stimulus for reading; some children who had such a facility did not read, while others who lacked this luxury were still avid readers. However, in general, it would seem that a conducive atmosphere serves as an added incentive for reading for those children who already have the inclination.

### **Summary**

On the whole, it would seem as if most children consider reading to be very important, although they did not read at a level consistent with this belief. Of the approximately 35 free hours available to children during a typical school week, only about 2 hours are devoted to voluntary reading of all types of

materials. One of the major reasons cited for this discrepancy between personal conviction and action is the lack of time, which has been attributed partly to the many different social activities competing for the young person's attention along with the demands of homework and domestic chores. The solitary and seemingly passive nature of reading could also make it appear less attractive than other leisure time activities.

For many children, reading is assigned lesser priority as a recreational activity than going out, being with friends or involvement with sports and games. However, based on most research findings, one may conclude that watching television is one of, if not the major consumer of children's free time. If so, it would seem to be the pastime that has either displaced reading or severely reduced the time available for doing so. Young people appear to be captivated by the dynamism and immediacy of this "magic box" with its endless variety of programmes.

With modern life becoming more complex each day and greater demands being placed on the child's time in school and at home, and with the mushrooming of new electronic forms of entertainment, it should not be surprising if an even greater decline in the reading habit occurs. The future of books and reading in this technological age must be uppermost in the minds of librarians and educators. They seem to be faced with a formidable challenge to develop skilled and committed readers who will still find pleasure in books,

despite the attractiveness of the new technology. A knowledge of how children view reading in comparison with other leisure time activities could be one of the ways that librarians, teachers and other interested professionals can equip themselves to successfully tackle the issue.

## **2.4 SOURCES OF READING GUIDANCE**

Parents, teachers, librarians and peers figure prominently among the persons expected to exert some influence on the reading interests and habits of children. The impact might result either from direct intervention from these individuals or from their being unconsciously observed as role models. For librarians, reading guidance, given overtly or indirectly, is one of the most important aspects of their work with children who because of their age often need to ask someone for assistance with book choices.

Teachers, by the very nature of their role as guides to learning, may also be expected to function in a similar capacity when it comes to selection of reading material for leisure. Parents, a child's first teachers, are likely to be the most accessible adults while the advice of friends tend to be highly valued although they might lack sufficient knowledge to offer proper guidance. The research reports show varying degree of reliance on significant others by children in their quest for books.

### **2.4.1 Parents, Teachers and Librarians as Guides**

Greaney (1986) maintains that parents have an important contribution to make toward the development of reading skills and the encouragement of leisure reading habits. Parents can make their contribution by introducing the child to print and creating an environment which helps to foster reading by providing the opportunity, space and materials along with encouragement and personal example. Research findings seem to support the importance of the home and parental activities in the lives of children who read early.

Durkin (1966) found that children who began to read before attending school were all read to at home and their parents had a great respect for education. In her intensive study of the home and school correlates of early interest in literature, Morrow (1983) observed that young children who displayed a high interest in literature came from homes where parents read to them often and provided a supporting literary environment.

When Whitehead et al., (1977) examined the data relative to the parental occupation of his sample of 10-14 years olds, he found that children from 'non-manual' or professional homes were more likely to be readers than those from 'manual' homes. This socio-economic advantage he attributed to the higher educational level of parents, the presence of 'quality' reading materials in the homes and parental examples of reading. Maxwell (1977) confirmed these findings in Scotland too. Lewis and Teale (1982) from their survey of research

on early readers identified the type of environment likely to foster learning to read as being one where a range of materials as well as adults who actively read were available. Such a setting, they said, facilitated the discovery of reading as a pleasurable, unique and communicable experience.

Studies have consistently shown that children rank adults (including librarians and teachers) low to middling on the scale for overt helpfulness in the choice of reading materials. For example, Ross (1982) found that tenth to twelfth graders in New Jersey did not cite librarians among their major sources of ideas on what to read. Friends, teachers and book stores were given greater prominence. Similarly, Synder (1981) investigated the reading habits of fifth, sixth and seventh graders in Vancouver and discovered that most children (boys and girls) cited "self" as the main source of reading guidance and adults - parents, teachers or librarians - did not play a significant role in book recommendations.

Lamme (1976) conducted a three year longitudinal study of fourth graders in New York and also reported that generally the children selected books on their own and when they needed help they resorted to friends and teachers more often than librarians, parents or siblings. Also, in her application of a multi-levelled approach to research into reading interests, Landy (1977a) questioned those children who said they disliked reading about their perception of the library. Along with responses about the library being too large or not

having the right kind of books, the children added that the librarians were either too busy or seemed annoyed when asked for assistance. This seeming pre-occupation with work helped to discourage them from wanting to read.

The general low status to which librarians are relegated invites a re-examination of their perception of themselves as the friendly, knowledgeable and helpful partner in the children's search for books. Although children's reliance on self and peers might be taken as indicative of their developmental stages, there is still cause for concern about their failure to consult librarians who consider themselves primarily as mediators between children and books. Rollock (1988b), a well-known children's librarian, in her writings about public library service to children, re-affirms the gate-keeping role of adults in providing children with access to books. More specifically, she stresses the importance of the librarian, with the requisite knowledge and understanding of children and books, being present to serve as a link between the two.

Some research findings confirm this perception of the role of the children's librarian. Bird (1982) showed that children did value the services of librarians at the public library. On investigating children's reading interests during a summer reading programme, Bird (1982) discovered that on their visits to the library children appreciated the guidance given by the professionals. Given the usual negative responses to assistance from this quarter, she regarded this as an important finding.

Most of the children said they welcomed the booklist offered and enjoyed using adults as sounding boards about their reading without being 'marked' for their comments. She remarked that this last point might possibly explain why teachers were not often relied upon for reading advice. Bird (1982) further added that to serve effectively in their role as gatekeepers, librarians must be equipped to offer guidance beyond selecting the right resources for the shelves. They must also have the ability to guide the children, when necessary, in the ways they want, and that are beneficial to them.

Thus it would seem that despite their wanting independence from adults, children still need and appreciate professional help in selecting books for leisure time reading. Unfortunately, research revealing children seeking out librarians or citing them as a source of reading guidance is all too rare. In general, it does not appear that children perceive librarians in the role of an active and helpful intermediary. This negative picture could result from sheer ignorance, unpleasant library experiences or possibly an inherent resistance on the part of children to what they may see as another attempt by adults to control their lives. The last mentioned explanation seems to have some plausibility especially in the light of other research findings which show that other adults are almost equally ignored by children when it comes to seeking advice about what to read.

In a investigation with a slightly different turn from the regular reading

interests study, Wells (1978) tried to identify experiences at home and at school that made 300 fifth graders want to either read more or give up the practice all together. From the interviews conducted with the children, Wells (1978) identified several factors - negative and positive - that accounted for much of the variance in the findings. The "parent negative" factors cited were parent-induced frustration and an over-emphasis on reading and punishment. The positive ones were characterised by supportiveness (providing interesting reading material) and arousal of interest. "Teacher negative" behaviour was associated with poor choice of stories, too many comprehension exercises and student embarrassment over their inability to read well.

Although Wells (1978) conducted the study in the context of reading instruction, the findings show the influence both parents and teachers can have on children's attitude toward reading and their desire to perpetuate the habit. They also suggest some probable reasons for children's reluctance to turn to teachers and parents for reading guidance.

When children were canvassed directly about whom they sought advice from about reading materials, some children explained why they did not resort to either teachers or librarians as first choice. During her bookflood experiment Ingham (1981) found that one of the repeated complaints from the children was that the teachers lacked knowledge of children's books.

Ingham (1981) herself noted this as one of the disadvantages during the

study. Many teachers were ignorant of the wide variety of titles in existence and so were not equipped to give proper guidance. At the same time she observed that one of the more successful teachers in terms of getting children to read, was enthusiastic, knowledgeable about books, and used a variety of methods to bring books to the children's attention.

Landy (1977a) commented on this same factor in her visits to schools during her investigation of Canadian children's reading interests. She noticed that a well-stocked library was not sufficient to guarantee that reading would occur - by far the most important requirement was an enthusiastic teacher. Gjengset (1986) also uncovered some reasons for children's unwillingness to rely on adults for reading guidance. She interviewed ten and eleven year-olds as well as parents, teachers and librarians in a preliminary study of children's reading habits in Norway. When asked who influenced their choice of materials, the majority of children reported that their parents seldom made recommendations, their teachers were largely unable to help, so classmates became the most important source for finding out about books.

Chambers (1983) stresses the important role that adults can play in helping children to become readers:

Just as non-reading children are made by non-reading parents, so the issue is compounded by non-reading teachers. Unless a school has on its staff at least some adults who enjoy books and enjoy talking to children about what they read, it is hardly likely that it will be successful in helping children become readers. (p. 291)

Parents, teachers and librarians are all implicated here, and Chambers goes on to mention one of the activities found to be much valued by the children - talking about the books they read with someone - which is a potentially useful tool for motivating children to read. It might indicate one of the opportunities of which professionals should avail themselves more often in the classroom and library-based literature programmes. Having children share their reading experiences in a non-threatening environment not only increases the pleasure of reading but also provides an opportunity for direct and indirect guidance from teachers and librarians.

#### **2.4.2 Friends and Peers as Guides**

While parents might serve as the earliest role models and guides for their children's reading, Greaney (1986) explains that this arrangement only lasts for a short time, as the source of reading influence shifts with age. As children grow older the influence of peers becomes more powerful than that of parents and so children tend to rely less on parents and other adults and depend more upon their peer group for guidance and help in their lives. This independence from parents seems equally applicable when it comes to seeking advice about books. Preisser (1990) explains that friends and peers play a key role in the child's transition from dependence on family to independence, although in the process both peers and parents influence the young person, albeit in different ways.

Peers are more influential in status approval concerns such as mode of speech, clothing styles and meeting places. Parents have greater influence regarding educational, occupational and life goals. This dual approach to guidance implies the likelihood of peers wielding greater power when it comes to the value placed on books and reading as the child matures. Peers are known to have strong influence on children's lives as they transmit to each other their values, enthusiasm, trends and attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Peer group influence has also been identified as the most powerful factor in children's choices of reading materials.

Hepler and Hickman (1982) while discussing the social aspects of children's responses to literature state that:

Middle grade children use each other for information about what to read... the stamp of several readers' approval on a particular book assures the novice reader that someone has found satisfaction there... Peer recommendation makes the act of choosing a book more efficient and less risky. (p. 279)

This observation has been confirmed many times in the literature.

Lau and Cheung (1988) in their study of 2,114 Chinese adolescents' reading interests also included a section on the influence of family and peers. When these data were analyzed, it was found that the reading interests of parents were very narrow in that they read mostly newspapers. The children of parents who read fiction and magazines tended to have a wider range of

reading interests. Siblings had broader interests than their parents and the effects of their reading were more noticeable on the sample, but by far the greater area of influence came from friends and classmates. Again this observation coincides with general findings from North America, Britain and elsewhere. Watson (1978) in Australia had teenagers ranking peer recommendations second only to consulting the blurb for an idea of the story content; for Biagini (1980) both male and female adolescents named friends first; while 55% of the sample in the study by Moffitt and Wartella (1992) cited friends.

### **Summary**

There is no denying the impact of peer group influence on children's choices. Whether because of the developmental stages or certain obstacles that they meet in the reading environment, most children turn to friends first for advice. Adults - parents, teachers and librarians, who are in different ways responsible for children's reading development - appear to take second place or even become a last resort for help in choosing books. Parents and teachers tend to be avoided or ignored as potential guides because of their emphasis on reading for academic or personal success, their lack of knowledge about books and a failure to model the pleasures of the reading experience.

With regard to librarians, some children find them to be personally intimidating, too busy or not visible enough. Also the nature of the library

environment contributes at times to children's unwillingness to consult these professionals. However, it would seem that when proper guidance and assistance are offered, children are likely to respond positively. Findings about those whom Jamaican children consult for reading guidance should prove interesting, as such results can either confirm what obtains in developed countries or shed new light on how children approach book selection when faced with certain socio-economic constraints. Some factors in a Jamaican context that might produce differences in reading behaviour include: the absence of librarians from most elementary schools; the low literacy levels of some parents; the lack of a tradition of reading among the population; and the many problems that limit access to reading material.

## **2.5 THE AVAILABILITY OF BOOKS**

Rollock (1988b) in her text on library services to children, describes how children usually come in contact with books:

Most children find their books through adults, who provide for a book's presence either at home or in a library or school. Later, books may be discovered by the child on his or her own, but this usually happens only after a love of reading has been developed in the early years and personal discovery is made possible by exposure and access to a variety of books and reading experiences. (pp. 151-152)

Inevitably, adults find themselves cast into the role of intermediaries for children's access to books which is a pre-condition for reading.

The importance of an early exposure to print for the development of a positive attitude toward books and a love of reading has also been attested to by several studies. Greaney (1986) relates the lack of certain resources and infrastructure in developing countries to the low incidence of reading in these places. He says it is difficult to nurture the reading habit partly because of inadequate schooling, a lack of appropriate reading materials, parents' inability to purchase any form of reading material and a reticence on their part to promote reading at home.

The likelihood of his assessment being true was supported by some of the findings from the study conducted by the Singapore Institute of Education (1980) that showed a low level of reading generally, which seemed to have been brought about by some of the very factors identified as having an adverse effect on the development of interest in reading. The unavailability of sufficient resources figured prominently and from the sketchy background information supplied, it could be deduced that there were also problems with literacy. Since the country is multilingual, printed materials were in short supply because of the need to have books in all the major languages, and even though school libraries existed, access to books did not seem easy. This study found a generally low level of reading was discovered among the 1,157 primary school students surveyed and it would seem that lack of ready access to reading material could have been a contributory factor.

Some findings from experimental research have demonstrated the importance of access to promoting and maintaining children's interest in reading. Several 'bookflood' experiments have been undertaken to test the hypothesis that easy access to a wide variety of books geared to the reading abilities and interests of the children will encourage them to read more (e.g., Fader and McNeil, 1968; Elley, Cowie and Watson, 1975; and Ingham, 1981).

Elley, Cowie and Watson (1975) in New Zealand supplied primary children in two schools with 400 extra books in their classrooms and monitored their effect on the children's literacy skills, reading interests and attitudes. After six months, they concluded that the book flood seemed to produce a worthwhile change in the amount of voluntary reading done by the children as well as in their reading abilities and attitudes. These findings coincide with those from the other studies which recorded improved academic performances accompanied by an increase in recreational reading even among reluctant students, such as the group of disadvantaged boys who made up part of the sample investigated by Fader and McNeil (1968).

Even when a wide variety of books is made available, there is no guarantee that the children will resort to these in order to satisfy their reading interests, or that the books reflect real needs and interests. Research has shown that teachers and librarians sometimes misjudge young people's reading tastes (Nilsen, Petersen and Searfross, 1980). In addition, there might be

environmental and institutional barriers that prevent the users from accessing these collections, forcing the children to go elsewhere. Cognisant of the importance of availability and access, many researchers ask for information on the sources of books since this is one variable that can be manipulated to bring about change.

As part of a larger study on reading attainment and the teaching of reading, Maxwell (1977) asked primary and secondary school children in Scotland about the source of their books for leisure time reading. Over 90% in all the classes reported that they obtained their books from private sources - family, friends and book stores. School and public libraries did not receive favourable ratings leading Maxwell (1977) to wonder if this was not a reflection on the libraries, especially those in schools which tended to place too much emphasis on 'quality' books that were irrelevant to pupils' needs and interests.

The results from the study of 8,000 British students by Whitehead et al., (1977) were slightly more favourable toward school libraries, although the majority of ten to twelve year-olds still said they owned most of the books they read. This was attributed to the tendency of parents and other family members to give books as presents. Classroom libraries, found in almost every primary school, ranked second, with public libraries coming last. The presence of libraries in all the schools could explain the low ranking of public libraries.

In another study, this time among teenagers, Heather (1981) found little

difference from Maxwell (1977) in the ranking of sources. Book purchases, borrowing from public libraries and friends, and the school library was the order given. When questioned further about resources from school, the young people's responses suggested that their reading needs were not being met from this source. Their reasons for not using these libraries include: "too many books on the same topic", "they had only a few good books that I like", and "they need more comics". The adequacy of these collections was questioned by Heather (1981), who suggested that maybe the school libraries were overlooked because of their association with school work. The findings from the various 'bookfloods' would seem to support this concern since these experiments show that whenever children encounter attractive and interesting books that meet their interests, needs and abilities, there is a strong likelihood that they will use them.

Book-buying as another source of reading materials was found to be more prevalent among the following: 13-19 year-olds (Nottinghamshire County Library, 1971); avid readers who preferred to own their books so they could re-read them at leisure, or because they liked to collect books and did not like having their books chosen for them (Ingham, 1981); and gifted students who wanted to own their books for marking, for re-reading and for the sheer pleasure brought about by ownership (Swanton, 1984).

The desire to own books might be a good one but depends largely on

access to bookshops and money being made available by adults. Whitehead et al., (1977) strongly advocates book ownership by children because he believes that:

... actually possessing a book is an important factor in finding lasting satisfaction for them and all children should be encouraged to build their own libraries, and parents buying books is a supportive action that may be the basis of a child developing life-long pleasure in reading. (p. 28)

Purves and Beach (1972), in their comprehensive review of the literature in the field, concluded that the availability of books seemed to have a definite impact upon reading interests. They further stressed the importance of children having access to a wide variety of books not based solely on their professed interests, since they are still at the formative stage and are open to new experiences and ideas. Ciancolo (1971) insists that there must be as much opportunity as possible for children to come in contact with books because reading can satisfy so many conscious and unconscious needs, and the more children read and enjoy their encounter with books, the greater the likelihood that they will repeat the action.

Access and availability are crucial in stimulating and maintaining interest in reading because even the most committed reader will eventually be forced to find alternative activities to occupy his or her time if there are no books to read. For this reason, adults play a crucial role in ensuring that books are placed within easy reach of young people. Formally, reading resources are

usually supplied through the establishment and maintenance of proper library services that take cognisance of children's needs and interests.

Research reports show that even though children have a library in their school, if the materials are not easily accessible and commensurate with the children's reading tastes they will be ignored. On the other hand, where attractive and interesting books are easily available in the classroom or in a central library, children are likely to use these sources more frequently.

However, it is also to be expected that some children will still want to own the books they read even when library provisions are adequate. On the whole, young readers seem inclined to resort to any source - school, home, friends, libraries or book stores - that will provide them with unrestricted recourse to the types of books they like. Therefore, the availability of reading materials through formal or informal channels does seem to make a difference to the reading interests and habits of children everywhere.

## **2.6 THE SEX OF THE CHILD RELATIVE TO READING INTERESTS AND HABITS**

Over the years, the sex of the child has been acknowledged as the single most powerful determinant of children's reading interests and to a lesser extent, their reading habits (Jordan, 1921; Terman and Lima, 1931; Thorndike, 1941; Carsley, 1957; Schultze, 1969; Norvell, 1973; Jenkinson, 1973; Whitehead et al., 1977; Lane, 1985; and Haynes and Richgel, 1992). While the findings

repeatedly confirm the existence of gender biases in children book choices and reading behaviour, there is a lack of consensus as to the reasons for these differences. A discussion of some of the major findings and explanations for their occurrence follows.

### **2.6.1 Reading Interests and Habits**

Jordan (1921) canvassed 3,598 students in the United States for the five books they liked reading best of all. To increase the reliability of the results he also checked the popularity of books cited against withdrawal records in several public libraries and further solicited the opinions of librarians. His findings showed marked dissimilarities between the reading interests of girls and boys. The latter read more non-fiction topics than girls, who showed little interest in this type of literature. In the case of fiction, boys liked war, scouting, school, sports and strenuous activities while girls preferred stories about life at home or at school.

Using only a questionnaire, Terman and Lima (1931), confirmed these differences between the sexes, as did Schultze (1969) many years later. She reported that boys were more interested in history, social studies and science while girls favoured realistic fiction, fanciful tales, biography, recreational topics and poetry. Despite weaknesses in the sampling and a lack of precision in defining the parameters of some of these early studies, they drew attention to the dichotomy in boys' and girls' reading interests that has persisted up until

the present.

Research conducted into children's reading interests by Norvell (1958, 1973) is one of the most extensive, spanning twenty-five years, and the cumulated results clearly show a striking difference in the reading interests of boys and girls. After his classic survey of over 24,000 children across the United States, so overwhelming was the evidence about the dominant role played by sex in determining young people's reading choices, that Norvell (1973) insisted that this fact should be given priority when planning reading programmes for the curriculum.

So strongly did he feel on the issue that his recommendations called for the exclusion from the syllabus of any books that did not adequately represent the expressed preferences of both sexes. While such an extreme reaction ignores the unique interests of the individual in favour of the group, and runs contrary to the objective of the literature programme that seeks to broaden children's reading taste, it also reflects the magnitude of the differences observed.

Norvell (1973) reported that girls 10-15 preferred stories about home and school life, domestic animals and pets, sentimental fiction, mystery, the supernatural and fairy tales. Boys' favourites were detective stories and books containing humour, physical struggle, history, courage and heroism, invention and science. They responded unfavourably to fairy tales, romantic love,

descriptions, didacticism, sentiments, physical weakness in males and females as leading characters. Girls disliked violent action, description, didacticism, and fierce animals.

While Norvell's categories consist of a mixture of genres plus individual story features and was confined to literature used in schools, many of the choices matched Thorndike's (1941) earlier findings. Three decades before, he discovered that boys were more interested in science, sports, inventions and violent adventures, and girls had an affinity for home life, romance, school adventures, fairy tales and animals. He also observed that boys read more informational works than girls who chose fiction almost exclusively.

A similar reluctance on the part of girls for non-narrative reading was discovered by Whitehead et al., (1977) in their investigation of the reading interests and habits of 8,000 children in Wales and England. Outstanding for its comprehensiveness and the rigor of sampling to ensure representativeness of the total school population, this study, employing questionnaires and follow-up interviews, revealed that sex was the first of three major variables that related to book reading. Social class and academic attainment were the other two. While Whitehead et al., (1977) did not provide detailed analysis of preference for certain book types by each sex, yet he noticed that boys favoured non-fiction more than girls who showed a general reluctance to undertake non-narrative type of reading.

Time seems to have made little impact on the nature of boys' and girls' reading interests as observed by Feeley (1972, 1982) who conducted one study in 1972 then replicated it a decade later. She clustered the literature categories around central themes (for example, social empathy, fantasy, excitement, information and recreation) in trying to determine the areas of interest to both sexes. The results from both studies showed many similarities for each group despite the lapse in time. The boys' pattern of interests in 1972 in rank order were: sports, excitement-fantasy, recreational, excitement/realistic, informational, fun/fantasy, social empathy, and artistic. For the girls during the same period, the order was social empathy, fun and excitement, fantasy, social empathy/people and problems, recreational, hobbies/artistic, excitement/realistic, social studies, science, and sports.

The high ranking of sports by boys with the corresponding low status assigned to social empathy, and the reverse placement of these by girls conform to the pattern which has varied little over time. Ten years later, these interests remained fairly stable, especially for the boys and there were a few changes for the girls. For example, girls' interest in sports moved up from the bottom to the middle of the list, while preferences for media and animals were ranked at the top with fantasy/social empathy. The shift in sports could be attributed to the emergence of more women in the field, but the other topics represent conventional choices.

They would seem to substantiate conclusions drawn by McKenna's (1986) study of low achievers. He stated that girls on the whole tend to prefer topics of an affective nature exemplified by stories dealing with romance, family, growing up, and interpersonal relationships, while boys were more interested in highly physical activity such as war stories, sports, machines and things scientific.

In the process of investigating boys' reading difficulties Stanchfield (1962, 1979), using a list of twenty-four topics ranging from outdoor life to romance, also conducted two studies into the reading interests of fourth, sixth and eighth grade boys. The students were also questioned about their preference for certain characteristics of writing style such as excitement, suspense and surprise. In 1962 the boys favourite topics were: outdoor life, explorations and expeditions, sports and games, sea adventure, science fiction, mystery and adventure, outer space and humour. Least favoured topics were poetry, plays, romance, family and home life.

In the second study fifteen years later, eight of these topics were still popular including outdoor life, explorations and expeditions, sports and games and science fiction. Some changes did occur in keeping with developments in society, so automobiles zoomed up from twenty-fourth to second place and there was a corresponding falling off in space travel which in 1979 occupied the twenty-fourth spot rather than ninth as in the previous study. The most

dramatic changes occurred in the preference expressed for certain content features : anger, hate, cruelty, fighting and brutality shifted from twentieth position in the first study to eighth in the second. Increased violence on television and in the society at large was cited as the possible cause for this shift of interest.

Although the variety of methods used to investigate reading interests (for example, pictures, fictitious annotated titles, forced comparisons, reading inventories) makes it difficult to compare findings, the results relative to sex tend to be strikingly similar overall. Haynes and Richgels (1992) used fictitious annotated titles in their study of 523 fourth graders across the United States. Detailed analysis of the data showed concurrence with the general findings about sex. Girls ranked items of fantasy and growing up highest, while those dealing with adventure, space, science and sports appealed most to the boys. The researchers also noticed an important difference between the sexes which has emerged as a pattern over the years. The girls were predisposed toward fiction items, with a few non-fiction items unevenly distributed throughout. On the other hand, there was a greater balance between the narrative and informational works in the boys' choices, which suggested more diverse interests.

Not only are there differences in the contents of material chosen, but boys and girls are dissimilar in other reading practices too. Whitehead et al

(1977), Ingham (1981), Heather (1981) and Bird (1982), all found that girls read more books than boys, and logically spent more of their time on this activity, while boys read less but had a wider range of reading interests. Landy (1977a) in Canada confirmed these findings in her survey of seventh graders which revealed most of the non-readers to be boys, who even in their infrequent reading, selected non-fiction works. It was also observed that girls appeared more willing to read "boys" books while boys rejected "girls" books. This disparity between boys and girls' reading interests and habits seem to extend across national boundaries.

Both Schofer (1981) and Fisher and Ayers (1990), in comparing American and British young people's reading interests, discovered only minor variations in the categories of materials preferred by the subjects from the two countries. Boys preferred science and sports more than girls who had a stronger liking for biographies, crafts, jokes, fairytales, animals and poetry. Between country differences included poetry, biography and science all of which were preferred more by Americans than English students. A slight difference in liking for poetry was recorded by Schofer (1981) whose study had English children ranking poetry higher than the Americans.

The same sharp demarcation between boys' and girls' tastes was in evidence. From other studies conducted in New Zealand (Tolley, 1977), Canada (Summers and Lukasevich, 1983) and Singapore (Bookbird, 1980) the

marked divergence in boys and girls' reading interests, and to a lesser extent their reading habits, was also confirmed.

### **2.6.2 Explanations for the Effects of Sex on Reading Interests and Habits**

In the light of these findings, many explanations have been proffered to account for the variations between the sexes in their reading tastes and behaviour. Perera (1986) reasons that the high incidence of fiction reading by both boys and girls results from the readability of narratives, children's familiarity with story structure and the lesser demand of receptive reading associated with fiction compared with the reflective approach required for informational works. Moreover, the reading of fiction is usually more rewarding personally. While personal reward might explain fiction's general appeal for children, it still does not adequately address the stronger preference demonstrated by girls for this form of literature.

Whitehead et al. (1977), through a detailed analysis of data by sex, presents one of the strongest evidence of this phenomenon. The sample consisted of three age groups (10+, 12+ and 14+) and at each of the three age levels four-fifth of the girls' total reading consisted of fiction compared to the boys' two-thirds. This pre-disposition of girls toward fiction is not easily explained.

With regards to boys' greater preference for non-fiction, Searfross (1983) posits that this affinity should be interpreted in the light of the types of non-

fiction available since a quick perusal of the standard lists and reviewing journals for children's books will show that for informational works topics of interest to male far outweigh those for females - so it might seem a logical choice for girls to turn to fiction. On the other hand, DeBoer (1970) contends that the phenomenon of girls reading more than boys and preferring fiction to non-fiction should not be too surprising, since it is generally accepted that girls are usually superior to boys in reading ability and verbal proficiency, while boys excel at science and arithmetic.

According to Nilsen (1987), this same belief that boys were naturally inclined towards science led to the publication of science books in the sixties with a strong male bias to develop this "innate" skill. However, although she observed that later science books portrayed women more positively, girls still do not accord high status to science in their leisure time reading, which raises doubts about the availability of non-sexist science books or sexist bias inhibiting girls' interest in informational works.

Childress (1985), after studying the literature interests of very young children, concluded that the gravitation of pre-adolescent boys and girls toward non-fiction and fiction respectively was due to the children being at Freud's "latency period" of development. At this stage boys and girls tend to shun each other's company and interests in order to identify with the roles and models of their own sex which also affects their interests in books. In accordance with

this theory, boys therefore choose informational works to fulfil their inborn drive for mastery of the external world, whereas girls innately turn to fiction to understand the complexities of human relationships.

Other researchers believe that in the early years boys' and girls' literature choices tend to be similar and differentiation determined by sex does not become manifest until about age nine or and older (Ford and Kopyay, 1968; King, 1967). However, Tibbetts (1974) in discussing research on sex differences in reading interests and habits acknowledges the possibility of social conditioning being partially responsible for sex-typed behaviour in the choice of reading materials.

She posits that since boys and girls are usually treated differently they behave in these socially defined ways which also affect their reading interests in that they have been conditioned to like certain types of material. Commenting on girls reading boys' books and the outright refusal of boys to read girls' books or to admit that they do, Tibbetts (1974) says that such behaviour may also be attributed to the greater importance attached to the male by society and the association of 'inferior' with the female. Therefore, girls will read boys' books to identify with the 'superior' while the reverse will not occur due to its association with effeminacy. In a similar vein Bleakley and Hopkins (1988) believe that the greater tolerance of girls for stories in which the main characters are male may be a function of social adaptation and

adjustment to the world of stories which seem to be strongly dominated by male characters.

The habit of girls reading more than boys has sometimes been attributed to their different maturation rate and language development, among other things (Dwyer, 1973). Stanchfield and Fraim (1979), after many years investigating reading difficulties among boys, noted certain basic differences in boys' concept development patterns which they believe could account for boys' failure to equal girls' reading attainment. However, this line of thinking has been strongly countered by Johnson (1974) who maintained that if biology was responsible for girls' superior performance to boys in North America then it should hold constant in other countries, which proved not to be the case.

To test his hypothesis, he examined the reading abilities of 1,000 elementary school children in America, Canada, Nigeria and England and found that in England and Nigeria boys scored higher than girls while in Canada and America girls outperformed boys. This finding, he felt, showed that sex differences in reading ability as measured by tests might be more related to cultural differences rather than biology.

Downing et al. (1979) share nearly similar views that cultural expectations and sex-role standards, rather than biology, are more likely to affect students' attitudes toward reading, their reading attainment and ultimately how much they read. Thus, if boys viewed reading as an inappropriate activity,

it follows that their reading performance would be impaired, and this would happen on a large scale if within a country reading was considered as an inappropriate activity for males. Consequently, they conducted an international study of children's perception of reading as an appropriate sex-type activity in seven countries - Finland, Denmark, Japan, Canada, United States, Israel and England.

To minimise translation difficulties and to reduce bias, a picture test was used showing various objects and activities including reading and books. A sample of children from grades one, four, eight, and twelve, in addition to college students and adults from each country was asked to decide if each of the activities and objects was appropriate for either a boy or a girl. Only in Denmark and Japan was reading consistently accepted at all ages as a sex-appropriate activity for males, while in all the other countries males, at the early stages of schooling, accepted reading as a masculine activity but quickly started to perceive it as feminine as they grew older. According to Downing's hypothesis, this reaction was culturally imposed and accounts generally for boys' lower reading performance. If this is true then a concomitant decline in voluntary reading by males is to be expected.

While Downing et al. (1979) advise caution in generalising their results because of incomplete samples in some countries and because of weaknesses in the instrument, two replications of the study have confirmed the general trend

in North America for boys to start out accepting reading as appropriate to their sex but with maturation come to reject it as inconsistent with being male. May and Ollila (1981) surveyed 136 pre-schoolers, the majority of whom saw reading as masculine, while Shapiro (1980) noticed a significant interaction between sex and grade for children from kindergarten to grade two. The boys' acceptance of reading as an appropriate activity declined between grades one and two. Shapiro (1980) concluded that this change in perception could lead to negative reading performance by boys because of the conflict with the masculine role.

### **Summary**

In view of the often simplistic approach most researchers adopt and the many confounding variables likely to interpose when trying to assess the influence of culture or biology on reading interest and habits, caution is required in interpreting the findings. It is possible that both nature and nurture play a part, but the extent of the effect of each is still uncertain. What is beyond dispute, is that there are some clear-cut differences in the reading interests and habits of boys and girls. With reference to their preference for specific types of books, both sexes share a common interest in animal stories, adventure, mystery and humour and they also enjoy "excitement" as a stylistic feature in their books. Their tastes diverge sharply after this.

Boys have a predilection for books on sports, science, war, history,

machines, science fiction and story features such as physical action, excitement, violence, and heroism. They express strong dislike for love stories, sentimentalism, poetry and stories that focus on family and the home. On the contrary, girls favour home and family stories, fantasy, fairytales, poetry, biography, growing up and books that contain social empathy, sentimentality and interpersonal relationships. They also show a strong aversion for war and violence.

Further disparities seem to exist in the observed tendency of boys not to cross sex-typed boundaries and read what they perceive as "girls" books while girls display a greater tolerance for "boys" books and they also tend to read a greater number of books over a given time. Finally, while both sexes combined read mostly fiction, girls exhibits a stronger preference for this genre while boys have a greater liking for non-fiction than do the girls.

Based on the consistency of research findings over the years, it has been accepted that boys and girls do have these noticeable differences in reading tastes and behaviour. Furthermore, a child's sex combined with his or her age are seen as the two major predictors of his or her reading interests, and to a lesser extent reading habits.

## **2.7 THE AGE OF THE CHILD RELATIVE TO READING INTERESTS**

The chronological age of children is often considered as another

important variable that exerts strong influence upon their reading interests. When building literature collections, librarians and educators rely heavily on age as well as the sex of the reader in endeavouring to match children with the appropriate books. By combining the main aspects of the cognitive, social and moral theories of child development from Piaget, Erikson and Kohlberg along with the main ideas from Maslow's motivational theory, children's literature specialists have created a generalised pattern of the different stages of child development and the types of books that are most likely to appeal to young people at each stage.

For example, Tucker (1981), drawing on his knowledge of psychology and children's literature and with many years of experience in both fields, opines that certain literature themes appeal to children because they reflect the young people's general psychological growth and development. For him correspondence of child's psychological state with story content explains the strong appeal of fairy tales, along with tales of wish fulfilment and magic for the very young, who find a reflection of themselves and their personal fantasies disguised in these stories.

In contrast, he states that older children at Piaget's formal operations stage are no longer interested in fairy tales but in higher order fantasy, historical fiction and realism as they begin to grow away from earlier idealised notions of the world in favour of a more accurate picture of how things really

are. Most authors (e.g., Huck, 1979; Sutherland and Arbuthnot 1986; Norton, 1991) of standard texts for college level Children's Literature courses have developed their books along these lines.

Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1986), writing about book selection for children, stress the importance of these theories for guiding this task:

... a knowledge of child development becomes a tool for book selection just as familiarity with the literature is a tool. Information about developmental levels can help tell us something about children and also something about the types of literature they are likely to enjoy at a particular age. (p. 39)

Barbara Rollock (1988b), in discussing public library services to children, also acknowledges the profession's dependence on these theories to create a profile of children's developmental behaviours to assist with library programming, and Sebesta and Iverson (1975) comment that it would seem that the more one knows about child development, the better one can guide literature selection and experiences.

Also Huck (1979), before going on to provide a chart of children's developmental stages and a list of recommended books suited for each stage, says:

Adults who are responsible for children's reading need to be aware of the guides from child development, learning theory, and children's interests. They must recognise the characteristic needs of children at different ages and stages of development... (p. 30)

While the librarians' initial decision to look to the field of developmental

psychology for guidance in professional practice may have been mainly intuitive, this approach has subsequently been validated by empirical research.

### **2.7.1 Impact of Child Development on Reading Interests**

Several studies have been conducted to ascertain if there is an association between a child's developmental stage and his or her book choices, the findings seem to suggest that they are somehow related. Carlson (1985), curious about the value of library pre-school programmes for children, surveyed the literature of child development in order to construct an outline of the salient characteristics of children from birth to three years. In turn, she reviewed information on early childhood literature experiences which was then combined with the findings on child development to form a schema that linked the different stages of the maturing child with the type of literature experiences considered appropriate at each level.

As the final stage in her research, Carlson (1985) then collected data from 324 pre-school library programmes in the United States for comparison with her schema. She discovered that her outline also coincided with the instinctive behaviour of the children's librarians who were matching library activities to what they knew about very young children before there was much proof that they (the librarians) were doing the right thing.

Further support for this approach comes from Schlager (1978), a specialist in literature and child development, who insists on the

appropriateness of the developmental approach to understanding children's choices of literature. She further asserts that since this biological aspect of human growth takes precedence over any cross-cultural or geographic differences and varies so little from one country to another, it has led to a universality among children that creates an enjoyment of the same genres of books (e.g.: folktales, rhymes, mysteries) the world over.

She, therefore, undertook research on the conviction that:

Children's choices of literature are not made at a conscious level. No child can verbalise the reason for his or her selection...the key to those actions lies in the stage of development in which a child can be found...Books that reflect the child's perception of the world are the books children clamour for. Those books whose main characters reflect the complex psychological and emotional aspects of the reader gain wide readership. (p. 137)

To test her hypothesis, Schlager (1978), like Carlson (1985), compiled a list of the behavioral characteristics of the particular age group (approximately 7-12 years) drawn from the field of developmental psychology. She then checked the frequency of circulation of 52 Newbery award books over a three year period and chose a sample of those books with the highest and lowest circulation. Content analysis was then applied to determine if there was any correlation between the most popular books and the characteristics exhibited by the 7-12 year olds.

Schlager (1978) observed the five most popular books to have a high

degree of correlation with the developmental characteristics of the group. Also the least favoured stories conspicuously lacked these qualities, even though the protagonists were within the age range of the readers. In assessing the findings, it must be remembered that in using content analysis, it is not possible to identify all the likely features that might attract a child to a book. However, Broderick (1973b) came to much the same conclusion when she examined the contents of books popular with children and found that the contents of the stories closely matched the readers' stages of moral development based upon Kohlberg's theory.

Adopting a totally different approach from the usual reading interest study, Favat (1977) sought to find out the enduring appeal of fairy tales for young children (6-8 year olds) by examining the tales they read and the psyche of the child because he believed that the precise intersection of the characteristics of the book and certain characteristics of the child produced "interest". Since his focus was on fairy tales, he first analyzed a selection of these to identify story characteristics. Then he established the child's psychological characteristics based on the theories of Piaget, Jung and Bettelheim.

In comparing the characteristics of the child and those of the fairy tales, Favat (1977) observed that the tales embodied an accurate representation of the young child's concept of the world with regards to animism, egocentricity,

causality and magic, along with concepts of morality which accounted for the child's interest in these stories. From this, he deduced that interest in a particular type of story is based generally on the child's developmental stages and the coincidence of these features with those found in the stories they read. Bettelheim (1977) shares much the same view based on his use of fairy tales in the treatment of mentally disturbed children.

Their position strengthened by research findings, librarians continue to use their knowledge gleaned from developmental psychology about the normative behaviour of children, for identifying and anticipating the reading interests of children. This reliance on age (in combination with sex) means constant attention to changes in children's abilities, needs and interests which signal concomitant fluctuations in reading interests and habits. In order to obtain some degree of predictability about the various stages, librarians and educators have closely studied the different age groups and developed some basic generalisations to serve as guidelines in materials selection and programme planning. Research findings seem largely to support the use of children's developmental stages to assist in predicting their likely reading interests.

### **2.7.2 Reading Interests and Habits of Middle School Children**

Middle school children seem to be the most researched group when it comes to reading interests, maybe because they are at the stage where most are

now able to communicate their preferences for one type of book over another. Finding an effective method to extract this type of information from younger children is extremely difficult (Ford and Kopyay, 1968 and Kirsch, 1975). Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1986) clearly associate literature choices with children's developmental stage when they say that in the middle grades children have acquired a better understanding of time and a sense of history and so they find biographies appealing, some become addicted to a topic or genre and their insatiable curiosity makes informational books of growing importance.

In addition, they maintain that these children's desire for a clearer understanding of themselves and their relation to others is evident in their interest in fiction that deal with families, interpersonal relationships, sex roles and children from other countries and times. From what has been said, these developmental characteristic could, in part, explain middle readers' move away from anthropomorphic characters of earlier years and the children's increasing passion for more realistic fiction and series books like Enid Blyton's **Secret Seven** and the **Babysitters' Club**.

An examination of studies on primary age children tend to confirm the pattern described by Sutherland and Arbuthnot (1986) and other children's literature experts. In researching the reading interests of 1,127 fifth, sixth and seventh graders living in three different regions in Canada, Summers and

Lukasevich (1983) created a reading preference inventory using paired comparisons based on fourteen reading themes extrapolated from previous research. The design of the instrument required the participants to weigh each topic against all the others in the process of indicating preference and so increase the probability of arriving at a fairly accurate representation of each child's real interests in relation to all the topics presented.

Although the technique used restricted the number of literature categories that could be accommodated, it had the advantage of being able to indicate fluctuations of interests for each book type across grades. The analysis of variance computations for age (i.e. grade level) revealed significant differences for eight out of the fourteen themes (adventure, children / family, poetry, fantasy, travel, romance, nature study, mystery). For example, in the case of the girls, romance received very low ranking at the grade five level but steadily rose to second place by grade seven in keeping with their adolescent stage of development. Books about children and family, biography and sports all achieved higher ratings, and for the boys, poetry declined with age while interest in real animals increased.

Although some of these variations were also due to the interaction of community with grade and sex, it would still seem as if their maturation stages had some influence on their changing interests. When the preference values were calculated and scaled according to location, grade and sex, the differences

brought about by age became more obvious. It was generally observed that few changes in reading tastes occurred between grades five and six but between grades five and seven there were many significant ones. These changes are possibly attributable to the wider age span between the two groups, reflective of their different stages of maturation.

A different approach was used by Karrenbrock (1984), who attempted to identify the characteristics of books that appealed to ten to fourteen year-olds by analyzing a sample of prize-winning books chosen by these children over a ten year period. This method avoided the restrictions imposed by pre-selected lists and the uncertainty of hypothetical responses derived from their use since the books were actually selected by the children. Karrenbrock (1984) discovered that younger children seemed to like the following features: young children as characters, less formal language, humour, possibilities for identification with the characters, themes relevant to their lives, coherence in action, and books with media tie-in. There also appeared to be a negative response to books on historical themes, figurative language, and books that portrayed conflict with nature or society and had wilderness settings.

Karrenbrock (1984) also observed that certain of the stylistic features found in the books correlated at grades four to seven, but there were marked dissimilarities at grade eight suggesting that interests change as the children matured. Whereas the lower grades preferred books with much cover

decoration, limited areas or urban settings, books set in contemporary times and with first person narration, eighth graders no longer seemed to like them. Instead, the older children responded more positively to historical settings, literary symbolism, plots that were complex or based on abstract ideas, violence and longer books with higher reading levels.

Some of these changes seem to coincide with the older children's entrance into the formal operations stage, marked by increased logical, hypothetical and reflective thinking which enables them to go beyond the present, to formulate theories about the physical and social aspects of life and to link parts to the whole. While acceptance of these findings must be modified by the inability of content analysis to pin-point the exact features that might appeal, the frequency of occurrence of these characteristics in the books over the ten year period suggests some degree of reliability.

Although it is difficult to compare findings based on the use of such diverse methodologies, Huus (1979), in reviewing the research, still observed a general pattern in the reading interests of the middle age readers: early primary children liked books about animals, home and family and make believe: at about nine years of age the interests of boys and girls begin to diverge but still they have certain interests in common -mystery, animals, adventure and humour - though not in the same order of preference. In addition, boys like sports, science, cars, history and historical fiction and other

informational subjects.

Girls prefer fantasy, make believe, people with problems, social themes and hobbies. Whitehead's (1984) useful tabulation of research findings for this age group also shows a commonality of interest by both sexes in humour, mystery and/or adventure, animals and fantasy. There were also some differences based on age which concurred with other findings. For example, mystery and love stories ranked very low at eight, medium at nine and very high at ten plus; biography had medium rank until ages ten and eleven when it moved to the top, especially for girls; realistic fiction and books about people of other lands had little appeal before age ten while animal and folktales remained constant at almost every age.

The sex factor was also evident with girls giving a higher rating to romance and biography, and the boys placing greater emphasis on sports, science and war. Carter (1978) commented that reading interests have remained remarkably stable over the past eighty years and her comment seems to hold true for sex-linked choices as well as those brought about by maturation as validated by the replication of studies conducted many years apart by both Feeley (1974, 1982) and Stanchfield (1962, 1979) which showed that children's interests remained substantially the same for most kinds of literature with minor variations in order of preference due mostly to societal changes.

During the middle years, children tend to be voracious readers as their

reading interests become more pronounced. Many librarians and educators believe that this time is crucial to the development of a life-long reading habit. The years between ten and twelve are described as the "golden age" of reading by Kinder (1967) while Carter (1978) opines that the younger the reader the greater the likelihood of him or her becoming a voluntary reader. According to Bloom (1964) a child's reading habits are developed early in life, by the sixth grade the type of reader he or she is going to be has already been established, therefore it is important that interest in a wide variety of books be fostered from an early age or else it will be too late to inculcate the reading habit when the children reach the teen years.

Ashley (1972) seems to share this opinion too, as he posits that the crucial stage of reading development comes at about grade five; prior to this point, they have experimented widely with all kinds of books and are now forming their reading taste which would continue along narrower channels as depth, not width, would characterise their reading after the middle years. The consensus seems to be that there is a steady rise in the number and variety of books read until about age twelve when voluntary reading decreases (Marshall, 1975; Whitehead et al., 1977; Carlsen, 1980; and McKenna, 1986).

Librarians have long noticed this decline in reading and the use of libraries as age increases and they have been constantly seeking ways to encourage teenagers to continue the reading habit. A study by Heather (1981)

was undertaken partly to investigate the "young adult drift" from libraries. She found a marked decline in the number of books read by teens, which led her to theorise that the reading habit is usually formed at an earlier age and pupils can be classified as either book readers or non-book readers before they become teenagers. These findings - that the pre-teen years are the critical ones for acquiring the reading habit - have certain implications for educators and librarians whose goal is to create habitual readers.

These professionals need to make sure that early literature experiences are not only pleasurable, but also serve as an opportunity to introduce children to a wide variety of books that will both satisfy their many interests and constantly simulate new ones. As Chambers (1983) astutely comments, adult readers are made during childhood because by adolescence the die is cast as to whether or not they will become habitual readers. Consequently, the formative years are the most opportune for adults to motivate children to develop a love for reading.

The evidence seems to be overwhelmingly in favour of the influence of developmental stages on the types of books children like to read, but it must be remembered that there are several other elements that attract a child to a book beside its genre. Stylistic features such as excitement, suspense and humour (Stanchfield and Fraim, 1979), the sex of the main characters (Beyard-Tyler and Sullivan, 1980), the format of the work (Kirk, 1982), and prior knowledge of

the author (Ingham, 1981) are also of importance in creating interest.

Finally, it would be erroneous to assume that all children fit neatly into the different developmental stages at a precise moment in time. The warning issued by Sebesta (1968) about relying too much on the developmental approach for determining reading interests and abilities is still pertinent. His concern is that the hierarchical structure of the developmental stages might give the impression that a child must follow this path sequentially, and that it is impossible for her or him to be at several stages at one time or to pass through a particular phase and still not have the identified needs. Moreover, the needs might be there but the child might not express any desire to have them fulfilled by reading.

Sebesta (1968) further expresses the belief that many of the needs associated with the stages in a child's growth are cyclical and variegated and so developmental levels should be viewed only as a tentative indicator of children's reading interests. Chambers (1983) argues in like mode that it would be a mistake to suppose that the broad stages of development correspond precisely to clear-cut chronological or reading ages or that the stages are sharply defined. Children might be at a mixture of stages, they sometimes relapse - returning to a stage they appear to have left behind - and some even suffer arrested development which leaves them permanently stuck at a particular stage of reading (e.g., addiction to mysteries and romances) all their lives. Therefore

caution must be exercised that in referring to these theories librarians and educators neither adhere to them too rigidly nor overlook the uniqueness of each child.

### **Summary**

When the findings from past and more recent research are combined (Thorndike, 1941; Schultze, 1969; Norvell, 1973; Whitehead et al., 1977; Chiu, 1973; Summers and Lukasevich, 1983; Haynes and Richgels, 1992), a recurrent core of interests for middle school readers emerges, which inevitably reflects sex differentiation that becomes increasingly dominant as the teen years approach. Girls more than boys tend to favour family stories, fairy tales, realistic fiction, romance, biography, poetry. On the other hand, boys have a greater preference for science, sports, social studies, travel and exploration, inventions and war. Both share a common interest in certain topics such as adventure, animals, mystery and humour. Younger children have a predilection for anthropomorphic characters, fairy stories and tales of wish fulfilment and magic that match their personal fantasies, only as they grow do they gravitate towards more realistic books that deal with interpersonal relationships, growing up and historical events.

Thus, by constantly exhibiting these generalised patterns of interest in certain types of books over the years both younger and middle readers seem to be confirming to some extent the influence of their age and developmental

stages on this aspect of their reading behaviour.

## **2.8 ACADEMIC AND READING PERFORMANCE RELATIVE TO READING INTERESTS AND AMOUNT OF READING DONE**

To a large extent, a child's intelligence determines his or her reading and academic performance, both of which are closely linked since being able to read is vital for learning. Researchers are also concerned about the relationship between intelligence (as reflected by academic achievement) and reading interests since the ability to read is a prerequisite to the development of the reading habit. It is expected that children of lesser intellectual ability who perform below standard will experience more reading difficulties, and so are less likely to undertake voluntary reading because of the frustrations encountered in attempting to decode a text. Conversely, children with average or exceptional intellectual ability are expected to experience fewer reading difficulties, out-perform their less able peers academically, and are more likely to become habitual readers.

Concomitant with the preceding viewpoint is the assumption that even if the weaker students do read voluntarily, because of their deficiency, their interests are likely to be different from those of their more talented peers. So far, research has not supported any of these suppositions at the expected level of certainty, although findings do show some dissimilarities in reading interests

and habits among children of different academic abilities.

Studies of young children who read prior to entering school as well as those who read in kindergarten (Durkin, 1966; Clark, 1976; Southgate, Arnold and Johnson, 1981) showed that most of these children possessed high or above average intelligence and performed well academically. This finding gives credence to the idea that intellectual ability, reflected here by reading and academic performance, does play a part in the making of a committed reader.

However, while the child must be able to read well to enjoy books independently, and no doubt the better the reader the more he or she is likely to extract meaning from a book, it would appear that other factors beside intellectual ability and reading competence are also responsible for the types of books that children like to read. As discussed previously, age and sex are two of the major determinants of children's reading interests, and to a lesser extent their reading habits, because most of the research generally show children of the same age sharing similar tastes despite variations in intellectual ability.

Based on the literature reviewed, the studies on children with mixed abilities are more numerous, while a much smaller number focused on gifted and/or slow learners. Some of the research pertaining to each group will be discussed.

### **2.8.1 Children in Mixed Academic Ability Groups**

In a landmark studies on the topic, Thorndike (1941) discovered that for

the 2,891 children in grades 4-12 who were grouped according to age, sex and IQ scores, there was a consistent pattern of interests based primarily upon their sex, irrespective of their level of intelligence. The major difference was that the brighter children tended to read more. Subsequent findings up until the present have largely confirmed this early discovery. For example, Norvell (1958, 1973), based on his accumulated research findings spanning twenty-five years, explained that the extensive evidence examined in grades one to twelve supported the view that in most areas of interest there were no significant differences in the reading preferences of bright or dull young people.

In another large scale national study, this time in Britain, Whitehead et al., (1977) announced that the best predictor of the amount of reading for ten to twelve year-olds was their academic ability and attainment, however, neither seemed to create any differences in the reading interests of the group who were of mixed abilities. Nonetheless, he made it clear that the assumption that highly intelligent children were automatically habitual voluntary readers was not necessarily true, because among his sample a sizeable percentage (29%) of the boys with above-average academic attainment were non-readers, while many of the less able children read avidly.

Studies that focus specifically on reading or academic ability or performance should help to provide a clearer picture of the association between intellectual ability and reading interests. In Indiana, Chiu (1973) set

out to establish the reading preferences of middle class fourth graders grouped according to sex and reading ability - high, average and low - by using paired comparisons with ten categories of children's literature. While the usual divergence of interests based on sex was clearly noticeable, no significant main effects could be detected from the data based on the sample's differing reading abilities.

Although academic ability might not affect reading interests to any great extent, it seems to have a larger impact on the quantity of books read. Lau and Cheung (1988), investigated the relationship of the reading interests of Chinese students to their personality type, intellectualism and academic achievements and the reading interests of their family and peers. One of the hypotheses was that students who valued intellectualism and academic achievement highly and reflected these in their school performance, would read more. A randomly chosen sample of 2,114 children from forms one to three (i. e., grades seven to nine) was surveyed via questionnaires.

The portion of the data analyzed under the heading of reading interests and academic achievement showed that children of high intellectual ability consistently read more and showed a wider range of interests than those of moderate or low intellectual ability. Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) also confirmed this difference between the two ability groups and the fact that above average children tend to place a high value on leisure reading, leading in turn

to greater participation in the activity.

### **2.8.2 Gifted Children and Those of Low Academic Ability**

Fewer studies of gifted children seem to exist, perhaps because of the greater urgency to find innovative approaches to motivate low ability students to read and attain proficiency at their expected grade levels. However, a few studies have been done, usually with very small samples, which restrict generalisability but still indicate certain commonalities. Carter (1982) undertook a descriptive study in Texas that sought to compare the quantity and subject content of library books borrowed by gifted and regular students in a junior high school. Giftedness was determined by scores from the California Testing Bureau. The circulation of library books was monitored for one semester by asking children to note author, title and subject of the book being checked out and whether it was to be used for school work or leisure reading.

Those books borrowed for educational purposes (20%) were excluded. Of the remainder (80%), gifted students borrowed more than twice the number checked out by the regular group. This high incidence of borrowing was seen as an indication that the gifted children read more. With reference to content, gifted students favoured more science fiction and fantasy and overall exhibited more sophisticated reading tastes, a comparatively wider range of interests and tended to select books that stimulated higher level thinking. These findings coincide with Hafner, Palmer and Tullos (1986) discussed later, as well as

others.

For example, Chrisman and Bishop (1985) employed the same methodology with similar objectives to a sample of gifted and regular students in a small private high school. With reference to content, the researchers' observations were similar to those made by Carter (1982) relative to the students' choice of fantasy, but differed with their citing of humour-oriented and series books as favourites. Another area of difference between both studies was the number of books read. Chrisman and Bishop (1985) found that there was no appreciable variation in quantity between the two groups which conflicts with most other findings elsewhere. The researchers' explanation was that this difference in findings might have arisen because the school was an exclusive one where most children tended to read a lot normally.

A much larger sample than the two preceding studies was used by Swanton (1984) in her survey of 146 gifted students in accelerated programmes from third to sixth grade. She compared their reading interests with another 100 students in the regular programme. All students rated mysteries first, but for the gifted this was followed by science fiction and fantasy while the others chose comedy, humour and adventure. History and historical fiction were mentioned by the gifted only, in comparison to biography and animal stories which were widely read by the regular children. When the former group was pressed for an explanation of their preference for science fiction and fantasy

they referred to the challenge such books presented. This emphasis on more sophisticated types of books Swanton (1984) regarded as reflective of the children's superior mental ability which demanded stories that stretched the imagination.

Research into the reading interests of children of lower academic ability appears to confirm that some differences do exist between them and their average and above average peers. Moray (1978), in summarising research on grades four to six, revealed that low achievers, irrespective of their level of achievement, preferred the comic book format and all children showed a strong liking for humour. This result concurs with findings by McKenna (1986) from a study of 576 low achieving high school students whose category of strongest interest was "cartoons and comic books". Unlike Moray (1978) he did not interpret interest in these types of material as being so much an endorsement of humour as a general area of interest, but more as a positive response to the large amount of space devoted to pictures which proved less demanding for the reader than a solid page of print.

Hafner, Palmer and Tullos (1986) added further insight into the reading interests of less academically able students when they administered a questionnaire to an equal number (40) of good and poor readers in ninth grade. They concluded that no difference existed between the two groups in the quantity and type of books or magazines read, except for variations in the

quality of the material. The good readers preferred more abstract, complex and imaginative materials like historical fiction, science fiction, adventure, and books dealing with personal development and insight.

The poorer readers favoured books that were more concrete in terms of making and doing things (how-to-do-it, hobby, art, music), realistic history (biography and history) and adventure. When the readability of their favourite magazines was checked, the less able group chose periodicals that were easier and rejected the more sophisticated, while the opposite was true for the better readers.

### **Summary**

Although it seems that intelligence demonstrated by the child's reading and academic performance should be strongly associated with the types and numbers of books a child read, this does not seem to always be the case. Instead, research findings show a moderate to low correlation between the two, with the general picture being one of young people of approximately the same age sharing common reading interests despite their differing intellectual abilities.

However, there are usually variations in the number and quality of books read by the different ability groups, with the above average student reading more and preferring fantasy, science fiction, subtle humour and generally more sophisticated books. On the other hand, the academically weaker readers would

seem to favour less challenging materials both in format (e.g., comics) and in story content even though the topics might be similar to those liked by their more academically able peers.

## **2.9 RACE OF THE CHILD RELATIVE TO READING INTERESTS**

Studies on the reading interests of ethnic minorities have been conducted mainly in the United States, where those focusing on blacks are the most numerous. The general objectives of the majority of these studies tend to be two-fold: to establish if there are any differences in the literature preferences of ethnic minority children vis-à-vis white children, and to identify the level of interest ethnic minorities display toward literature that reflects their own racial heritage. The need to acquire information in this area has become more urgent in the light of the multi-cultural nature of many societies in developed countries, which are faced with the challenge of providing equal access for all to education and library resources.

The paucity of research on the topic was noted by Kirsch (1975) and confirmed by the absence of reference to any such studies in reviews of the literature by Zimet (1966), King (1967), and Moray (1978), with Huus (1979) recording only two such items. A few studies were conducted in the sixties although overlooked by most of the reviews of the literature. A greater number has appeared since the seventies in the wake of the black power movement

and the thrust toward civil rights in the United States. Purves and Beach (1972), in their assessment of the literature, observed that research on the reading preferences of different ethnic groups is most often devoted to comparisons between interests of Caucasian and non-Caucasian students without dealing in detail with specific interests of either group of students.

Other shortcomings and problems are also bound to arise because race is a sensitive issue inextricably bound up with matters of social class, history and culture. An enquiry into what children of a certain ethnic group like to read might elicit responses that convey much more than an interest in books. Their choices are likely to be conditioned by underlying factors such as the respondents' perception of their social status and their feelings about being identified with their own ethnic group and its outward cultural expressions. Birtha (1972) maintains that the way in which a society views a child's ethnic group and other groups will affect the attitudes that the child develops towards himself or herself and others. These many confounding variables only complicate the design and execution of research into race and its impact upon children's reading interests and habits.

Furthermore, problems also arise as to how to avoid the introduction of bias through the methodologies or instruments used to conduct the investigation. This might be one reason for the conflicting research findings regarding differences in the reading tastes of children not from the same race. Some

findings suggest that there are no differences while others seem to contradict this. Studies reflecting both viewpoints will be examined separately. Children's responses to indigenous literature will also be discussed since it is believed that this might help to further elucidate the matter of race and reading interests.

### **2.9.1 Similarities in Children's Reading Interests Across Race**

Peterson (1982) designed a study to discover if there were any differences in the preference of white middle class American children and Mexican-Americans in California for books that reflected the perceived life-style of each group. She chose excerpts from novels which were subsequently illustrated by photographs selected as representative of the description of the settings, characters and group interactions found in each passage. The illustrations were then paired to reflect the sharp contrasts between the two life-styles. For example, those used to demonstrate differences in physical setting showed two kinds of neighbourhoods - a stark setting characterised by poverty, over-crowding and deprivation was juxtaposed with one showing well kept lawns and other overt signs of wealth. The latter was indicative of the middle class life-style of white Americans while the former stood for that of the Mexican-Americans who clearly were seen as belonging to a lower socio-economic group.

The children were then asked: which picture and description is more or

less like the place where you live? Which neighbourhood would you like to live in? If a story was written about one of these places which would you prefer to read? The same pattern was followed for the depiction and choice of characters and group interactions presented to the children. With such an approach and the kind of instrument employed, her finding that there was little or no difference in the preferences of the two groups (with most favouring the middle class life-style) must be viewed cautiously. The nature of the questions and the illustrations seem likely to produce a bias toward the more favourable settings and socially approved characters and interactions. Some of the Mexican-American children might also have been offended by the questionnaire content in its portrayal of their life-style, even though this might have been based on reality.

This was a replication of an earlier study by Johns (1975) who came to much the same conclusion about black and white students, but realised afterwards that bias might have been introduced by the choice of the literary passages and the accompanying illustrations. He therefore added the proviso that maybe the conditions chosen to represent the minority group's lifestyle were too harsh. Nevertheless, Johns (1975) still insisted that inner city children, including those from different cultural backgrounds, did not merit any special consideration when choosing literature for classroom use since their interests were basically the same.

From both these studies one interesting factor has emerged which has recurred several times since, and that being the tendency for minority groups to reject a negative portrayal of their life-style as reflected in books whether or not this picture coincides with their real life situation (Palmer and Palmer, 1983). This tendency further complicates attempts to elicit information about ethnic minorities' actual reading interests.

The findings by Johns (1975) and Peterson (1982) that the reading interests of children who are culturally different are the same as those who belong to the larger national culture run contrary to the views of many children's literature experts (Broderick, 1973; Latimer, 1977; MacCann, 1985; Cullinan, 1989) who insist upon the need for culturally relevant literature for ethnic minorities. They maintain that even if the child does not express an overt desire for this kind of literature, the need is there because of the importance of ethnic literature to the development of children's identity as well as a positive self-image and pride in their cultural heritage.

Cullinan (1989) makes clear this position when she says:

It is important to have multicultural literature in schools and libraries because stories do shape readers' views of their world and themselves. If some children never see themselves in books, then that absence subtly tells them that they are not important enough to appear in books. Even more harmful are the negative or stereotype images of ethnic groups in children's books ... Children's literature that accurately reflects cultural values can be a powerful force in the socialisation, acculturation, and personal and moral development of children. (p. 575)

Support for this view came from some studies conducted in the 1960s and 70s which suggested that children's books were important in the child's development of self-concept and world view (Cohen, 1969; Miel and Kiester, 1967). Such findings strengthened the belief that the absence of ethnic minorities from books or stereotype portrayals of their racial group is likely to affect their self-image negatively and could subconsciously influence them to reject literature about their own experiences.

Despite the contentions of the advocates for multi-ethnic literature the research more often than not supports findings by Johns (1975) and Peterson (1982), although to different degrees. A more balanced study than either Johns (1975) or Peterson (1982) was executed by Asher (1979) who also looked at similarities in the reading interests of black and white students while investigating their reading comprehension.

Data collected about children's reading preferences were based upon pictures and passages from the type of books they cited as most and least preferred. Asher (1979) confirmed his hypothesis that the correlation of black and white students' interests with sex would be stronger than the correlation of boys' and girls' interests with race. Considerable cross-race similarities were found, with most of the variations due to sex rather than ethnicity. He attributed these results to the strength of the children's similar socialisation histories which over-rode their racial differences. He therefore cautioned

against over-estimating the uniqueness of black children's interests when selecting materials for their use.

Kirsch (1975) found that it was not until second grade that there were significant differences in reading interests caused by race among her sample of 1,078 white, black and Hispanic first and second grades from different socio-economic backgrounds and geographic locations across the United States. Among the second graders blacks were more interested in "imaginative fiction", Hispanics in "realistic fiction", and whites in "information scientific." This unusual classification of the literature and the broadness of the terms used make it difficult to identify the exact nature of some of the differences that were identified. Other studies were more positive in their identification of distinct differences between racial groups.

### **2.9.2 Dissimilarities in Children's Reading Interests Across Race**

A clear predilection by black children for biographies and sports in contrast to white children's stronger liking for mystery and adventure was uncovered by Fisher (1988). He used fictitious annotated titles to represent eleven literature categories for which a sample of fourth and fifth graders were asked to express the degree of their preference for each type of book on a four point Likert scale. The study sought to establish the effects of sex, grade and race on reading interests. Generally, Fisher (1988) reported that for all the children reading preferences reflected more similarities than differences

irrespective of grade, sex and race.

This echoes findings by Feeley (1982) on race for the same grades, as she too noted very few substantive differences in choice of contents between these two ethnic groups. The popularity of biography and sports with black children could possibly be attributed to the large number of these types of books that appeared after the civil rights movement and the subsequent boom in black publications. In addition, the characters were usually presented positively, and many of the sports personalities were successful and could be seen as positive role models by these children.

A different picture emerged from two studies where actual books were used instead of an inventory of topics, fictitious annotated titles or excerpted passages with illustrations. This might account, in part, for the difference in the results obtained. A very small sample was used by Palmer and Palmer (1983) to see if black and white sixth graders from the same socio-economic background shared similar reading interests. Participants were asked to select books they would like to read from a display representing various areas of interests ascribed to the age group. Many titles from black literature were included.

While fairytales was one of their favourites, there was a high correlation between blacks choosing books about famous black people (87.5% chose **Muhammed Ali**, 75% **Aretha Franklin**), however, these same children did not

choose those books that dealt with poor blacks, exemplified by their rejection of **Sunder** - a book about a poor black share-cropper and his ill-treatment at the hands of whites. Meanwhile, the white children ranked books about blacks last, and chose joke books and horse stories as their favourites. In this context, other factors besides the content of the books are likely to affect the children's decisions. The range of books available, their attractiveness, the size of the type, the presence of illustrations and prior knowledge of a work are all known to exert some influence on children's choices (Ingham, 1981; Heather, 1981; Kirk, 1982; Bird, 1982).

The black children's selection of books portraying prominent blacks could also be affected by the popularity of these persons which meant the students were familiar with them. The minority group's rejection of **Sunder** might indicate their dissatisfaction with books that depict blacks in a "socially undesirable" life-style, even if it is a realistic representation. This reaction might further explain why the minority sample in the studies by Johns (1975) and Peterson (1982) identified with the more positive portrayal of the life-style of whites.

Various attempts have been made to explain the rejection by whites of books about the black experience observed here and elsewhere. McElwin (1971) suggests from his research that there might be a basic intolerance of whites for books about the black experience. He too used real books with

illustrations of both races in his study of black and white third graders' responses to these works. A significantly greater number of white students selected materials illustrated with persons from their own race than did blacks of their own ethnic group. This he ascribed to the possibility that whites have a higher intolerance for black books while there was a greater level of acceptance by blacks of books with white characters since the latter has been the norm all along.

Kirsch (1975) also noted the ambivalence of black children in their tendency to select books dealing with white as well as black life experiences, whereas white children clearly demonstrated a preference for books about their own racial group. Another factor which McElwin (1971) acknowledged could have influenced black children to choose fewer books reflecting their ethnic group was the quality of the illustrations. He argued that since some of the books containing black characters were published before the mid-seventies, the portrayal of these persons could have been stereotyped, hence their rejection.

White (1972), using illustrated stories from basal readers, also found marked differences in reading interests between black and white children. Two versions of each story were used, one had illustrations with white characters, the other with black. The children were then asked to choose which version of the same story they preferred. Unequivocally, they all expressed preference for stories illustrated with characters from their own race. No information about

the quality of the illustrations was given but based on the tendency to reject negative images of themselves, maybe it can be assumed that the pictures of the blacks were non-stereotyped which could account, in part, for their willingness to choose them. Whether or not this was the case, this finding lends some support to the advocacy of children's literature specialists like Broderick (1973) and MacCann (1985) for more ethnic literature that positively portrayed the life-style of blacks.

A more detailed depiction of the differences in reading interests of minority and non-minority children was made by Wolfson, Manning and Manning (1984) by means of a very lengthy self-developed instrument consisting of 120 questions about reading preferences. Ten of the items related to multi-ethnic literature. A comparison of the responses of the minority and majority ethnic groups of fourth grade students showed considerable differences in five areas: more of the ethnic majority children seemed interested in adventures and animals while personal problems, multi-ethnic books, fine and applied arts appealed more to minority children. Unfortunately, Wolfson, Manning and Manning (1984) failed to mention the specific ethnic group described as "minority" so it could only be deduced from the definition of the literature categories used that he was referring to blacks.

From an examination of the studies discussed so far, it would seem as if the findings are nearly balanced between the two views - the absence or the

presence of differences in children's reading interests based upon race. A slightly different picture may be arrived at when the issue is viewed from a different perspective - that of children from different ethnic groups and their interest in indigenous literature in circumstances where books from another racial group (within or outside the country) is the norm.

### **2.9.3 Children's Preference for Indigenous Literature**

Not many geographic locations within the United States of America afford the opportunity to investigate children's response to indigenous literature not belonging to the dominant culture. Hawaii is one of the few places where this is possible because for socio-historical reasons the majority of its population differ racially and culturally in some ways from that of the rest of the United States. For this reason, as part of a larger study Bard and Leide (1985) decided to assess the popularity of local literature with students, most of whom were Asian-Americans.

The circulation records in a school library were monitored over a five year period to determine circulation patterns according to grade and sex. Since most of the children were Asian-Americans the researchers also decided to check how well books about Hawaii and Asian-Americans circulated. 35,420 books were borrowed over the period but only 105 were recorded for Hawaiian materials. Reasons proffered for the negative response were: the limited quantity of indigenous materials many of which did not match the reading

interests of the children; the fact that some of the local material was at a higher reading level; and that some of the books were used for curricular purposes.

From this study, it would seem as if literature portraying the minority's racial group and life-style was not very popular with children living in a society where another culture besides their own predominates. Such a finding seems to imply that maybe, in general, children of different ethnic heritage within the same country tend to have reading interests that are more alike than different. This result would support the theory of a common socialisation history being responsible for the general similarity in tastes (Asher, 1979) since all these studies were carried out in one country.

However, the picture appears to change somewhat when the influence of race or ethnicity on children's reading interests is explored by examining the young people's reaction to indigenous literature in countries where the mass of the reading materials comes from abroad. Here, developing nations immediately come to mind and the problem posed by the scarcity of local literature which can seriously distort the findings. With the continuing "book hunger" in these emergent nations, the children might have very few books to choose from, and even among the few the majority are foreign titles.

Under these conditions, even the smallest indication of a preference for local books over imported ones should be regarded as important since it might reflect an interest in persons and life experiences similar to their own. The

findings could also shed some light on the literature interests of ethnic minorities living in multi-cultural societies since many of them originally migrated from countries like these where library and school collections consist mostly of books imported from North America and Britain.

It should be noted that such studies are few and not easily traced because they often do not appear in the standard publications of developed countries. and for those that do, some are poorly designed or lack sufficient background information to assist in interpreting the findings. The problems affecting the availability of indigenous literature is very acute in developing countries, as noted by Ann Pellowski (1986) who, from her knowledge as Director of UNICEF Information Centre on Children's Culture, said that there was little indigenous publishing in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia (apart from Japan) where there many obstacles exist and the majority of their books are imported mainly from Europe and North America. The need for and the importance of indigenous literature in these countries is unquestionable.

Osiobe et al., (1989) conducted a small scale study in Nigeria where most of this country's books come from Britain because the local publishing industry is not well developed. They first interviewed 216 children randomly selected from Classes 1 to 6 (grades seven to twelve equivalent in North America) to find out what books - local and foreign - they had read and enjoyed. Not surprisingly, foreign titles were more frequently cited which

could be mainly due to the fact that books from abroad most likely outnumbered the indigenous ones by a wide margin. Next, a random sample of 100 titles (50 foreign, 50 local) from the school library were examined for frequency of circulation to see if Nigerian children's literature preferences were affected by local themes and to assess the relationship of the quality of illustrations with preference of literary material.

Sufficient information about the types of books selected was not provided and so it is uncertain how the books compared with regards to content, format and quantity. However, on the basis of the gross circulation record of 369 for local books and 230 for foreign ones Osiobe et al. concluded that if there was an equal amount of both types of books in the library, Nigerian books would be more popular. The smallness of sample size reduces the usefulness of the study, however the raw data seem to suggest that local books were more popular despite the smaller quantity available. From this it may be assumed that the Nigerians preferred books that portrayed their own people and life-style.

While teaching in Africa, Jordan (1978) carried out two studies aimed at ascertaining the reading interests of Form 1 (grade 7 equivalent) children in certain countries in Asia and Africa. The first study focused on 1,080 children 10 - 13 years old from Sierra Leone while the second used 1,602 children from six countries in Africa and Asia, namely, India, Iran, Nigeria, Nepal, Pakistan

and Sri Lanka. The same instrument with some modifications was used for both investigations, consisting of a two part questionnaire. Section One listed ten places from which the students were to choose their favourite setting for a book they would like to read. The locations represented four cities in Sierra Leone, three in other parts of Africa and the final three (London, New York and Tokyo) on other continents.

By far the most popular choices were Freetown (Sierra Leone) and London (22% each), followed by New York (12%) and Lagos (10%). The least liked were the two other cities in Sierra Leone, and Tokyo in Japan. For the second study, cities from each country being surveyed were added to Tokyo, London and New York. First choice was the town or city (20%) containing or nearest the schools taking part in the survey, followed closely by London (19%) and then New York (12%). Therefore, it could be said that the children's first interest was in stories set in their immediate locale followed closely by those from developed nations like England and the United States.

The students did not appear as interested in books set in neighbouring countries as they were in those located in developed nations. This penchant for foreign locales could be the result of many factors at work in their societies, such as: the previous colonial links with Britain; the pervasiveness of American culture via movies and the mass media; the appeal of the exotic and the value the society places on travel abroad.

Section Two of the questionnaire asked both sets of children to select from ten literature categories their favourite types of books. Although the number of book types was too restrictive to adequately reflect the possible range of the children's interests, some of the choices were typical of the age group elsewhere. For example, all children liked adventure first followed by books about animals and children (not clear what this meant). There were the usual differences between the sexes: the girls ranked children, family and folktales much higher than the boys. However, this time it would seem as if these children from Asia and Africa had an almost equal liking for books reflecting their own culture as well as those from developed societies in the West.

With the majority of Jamaicans being of African descent, any study done in this country on children's reading interests should reflect to some extent the influence of race on choice of reading materials. Although neither Floyd (1973) nor Jennings-Wray (1981) had race as one of the objectives of their study, the latter observed that Jamaican teenagers showed an interest in books about black Americans. Only one research report on reading interests with a focus on race was identified as coming from Jamaica. This was an ethnographic study conducted by Headlam (1989) to discover the cultural relevance of a set of indigenous textbooks specifically developed for Jamaican children.

The study was a part of a project to make the curriculum indigenous and all of the textbooks were written and illustrated by local personnel and reflected life in Jamaica. Through content analysis, questionnaires and interviews with the teachers, writers, artists and the students themselves, Headlam (1989) found that the books had achieved a high level of relevancy. The children were pleased to find themselves and other familiar persons, events and settings in the stories, illustrations and the language. Teachers also observed that children tended to read more and that those from low and middle reading ability groups were having greater success with reading than with previous books. It would seem as if the relevance of the stories to the children's lives increased their appeal.

### **Summary**

The findings from these studies suggest that generally the reading interests of children from different racial backgrounds seem to be substantially the same, with few variations. The common socialisation patterns in North American society as well as the smaller number and range of books available about their own ethnic group would seem to encourage some of the similarities in reading tastes.

Some of the observed differences between racial groups are: black children in the United States seem to have a strong preference for biography and sports and tended to reject books that portrayed their life-style negatively:

when actual books were used instead of hypothetical lists, ethnic minorities invariably gravitated toward those that positively reflected their ethnic group and life-style. In the case of developing countries, there are too few studies to make more than tentative comments, but it would seem as if children are more positively inclined toward indigenous literature and the issue of its unavailability might be one of the main reasons for the popularity of books from abroad.

The impact of race as a determinant of children's reading interests is not easily assessed because of the many factors operating together. The children's concept of themselves and their race, the way the materials portray the minority groups and the availability of multi-ethnic books all play a part. Allowances must also be made for developmental stages which Schlager (1978) insists are universal and so results in children everywhere possessing some reading interests in common. Caution must be exercised, however, in interpreting minority children's choice that reflect the lifestyle of the majority as being indicative of a rejection of their own group. On the contrary, such a response could be the result of social conditioning and the type of resources available, rather than personal dislike. Also, very often the issue does not seem to be so much one of the type or genre of a book but its contents which may reflect or omit characters and life situations representative of the child's cultural heritage.

Children's literature advocates like Haymon (1979) still believe that even

though a child from an ethnic minority group might not overtly express an interest in books reflecting his or her culture, the need is still there because they are looking for satisfying literary images, sensitive racial insights, help in self-identification, new heroes and inspiration for their own creativity.

The call by Purves and Beach (1972) for more research in this area on the different variables that affect minority children's reading interests and habits is still applicable, especially since the momentum of the civil rights movement has subsided and there has been a decline in the number of studies on the topic.

It is hoped that the findings from this study will add to the store of knowledge on the subject.

## **2.10 GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION OF THE CHILD RELATIVE TO READING INTERESTS AND HABITS**

Several reviews of the literature on reading interests indicate that geographic location, especially within the same country, has little impact on children's reading interests and habits (Purves and Beach, 1972; Carter, 1978; Whitehead, 1984). However, a greater degree of variation in book choices have sometimes been found between urban and rural groups within the same developing country. Where this occurs, it might be theorised that the greater uniformity in social infrastructure within the industrialised nations might minimise some of the factors that would cause differences. There might also

be certain elements operating in the lesser developed societies that are missing from or not so prevalent in the more advanced ones.

In acknowledging that such differences might exist, Greaney (1986) stated that the reading interests and habits of children in developing countries could be adversely affected by, among other things, a lack of access to books, poor social infrastructure and an absence of reading promotion programmes. In order to discover whether differences in reading interests and habits exist due to geographic location, studies from both types of societies will be examined.

#### **2.10.1 Geographic Location Relative to Reading Interests and Habits in Developed Countries**

Elliott and Steinkellner (1979) in the United States conducted a study in which they compared the reading interests of 1,000 inner city vocational students with those of 1,400 from a suburban comprehensive school. The students from grades ten to twelve were given a reading inventory with forty items and a six point Likert scale to register their reaction to each topic. The researchers found that there was a consistent pattern of interests across grades and reading abilities, with sex responsible for the major differences noticed. The only minor dissimilarity was in joke books and magazines which were slightly more popular with suburban students, while the urban ones showed a greater tolerance for poetry.

A greater level of variation was detected by Feeley (1982) when she

investigated middle grade students from urban and suburban schools in America for their responses to a fifty item questionnaire about their topic interests and whether they were interested in viewing or reading the items chosen. She noted that suburban boys indicated greater preference for reading in the sports and historical-adventure area than did urban boys, and suburban girls preferred the animal/social empathy cluster more than their urban counterparts. Feeley (1982) ascribed some of these variations to the almost rural environment of the suburban sample, and she also noted that the urban group had a significantly higher preference for watching their selected topics on television rather than reading about them.

Whitehead (1984), in his summary of research spanning 1950-1970, concluded that children from urban, suburban and rural areas tend to have similar tastes in books, although geographic proximity to a library or other sources of books has a minor bearing on the number of books a child reads. However, other research has shown that geographic location as it relates to cultural or national boundaries sometimes influences reading behaviour (Dwyer, 1973; Johnson, 1974). This was demonstrated by Downing et al., (1979) in their investigation of cultural expectations and sex-role standards in different countries. Samples of children and adults from Canada, Denmark, England, Finland, Israel, Japan and the United States revealed that sex-role standards for reading did vary across culture.

The conclusion that geographic location might influence reading behaviour was derived from the participants' designation of certain activities and objects (including reading and books) as either feminine or masculine. For example, in North America and Britain boys quickly came to perceive reading as a feminine activity, while in Denmark and Japan males regarded reading as a sex-appropriate activity. Such differences suggest that socialisation might be partially responsible for sex-typed reading behaviour; but more importantly it should remind librarians and educators about the need to exercise caution when they consider transposing research findings from one nation or cultural setting to another as a basis for book selection and programme planning.

Since these were all developed countries, the differences seem to have arisen chiefly from the cultural expectations of each nation rather than from socio-economic factors. Several studies from different regions within the same country or even across national borders in the developed world show more similarities than differences in reading interests (Robinson and Weintraub, 1973). Studies by Schofer (1981) and Fisher and Ayers (1990) compared the reading interests of children in America with those in England at different times and had closely matching results. Schofer (1981) presented the two samples of English and American children ages seven to ten with a reading interest inventory developed from categories culled from previous research. The responses were compared on the basis of sex, age and nationality and revealed

that reading interests were only minimally differentiated by sex, and the five most popular categories were similarly ranked by both nationalities. Clear-cut differences were only noticeable in two areas - "People" and "Poetry", Americans preferred the former while the reverse was true for the English.

Fisher and Ayres (1990) conducted a similar study with 215 students (111 from America, 104 from England) between the ages of eight and eleven and from a similar socio-economic background. They were presented with forty-four annotated fictitious titles representing eleven literature categories and a four point Likert scale was used to indicate their level of interest in a topic. The topics were almost identical to those used by Schofer (1981) and while the usual sex differences were obvious, only a few categories contributed to country differences.

Both studies helped to strengthen the idea of the universality of children's reading interests which are more alike than different. Unfortunately, only a small number of interest categories were used in the two studies and so only a limited knowledge of the degree to which children's numerous interests converge across national boundaries was provided.

Kirsch, Pehrsson and Robinson (1976), in one of the best known international studies, supplied a much more extensive listing of literature categories (twenty-four) and a wider cross-section of responses from children in Austria, Canada, England, Israel, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Panama and

the United States. Their study surveyed 2,110 students in the first two grades of school (excluding kindergarten) to compare their reading interests. *inter alia*.

Each child was asked to draw a picture of what she or he would like to read about or have read to him or her, then based on the picture drawn, the child was interviewed to establish the specific reading interest. Although the interpretation of the pictures was likely to be subjective, and in some countries convenience samples had to be used, the findings showed common trends in reading interests that have been supported by more rigorous research.

Kirsch, Pehrsson and Robinson (1976) concluded that although there were some significant differences, more similarities than differences existed among the expressed reading interests of first and second graders in the ten countries. For example, fairy tales and fantasies were the most preferred types of books by both grades, while stories about children, animals in stories in addition to information about real animals were the top choices of over two-thirds of all children in first grade. Fifty-four percent of the second graders ranked these same topics just as high but in a slightly different order. The same preponderance of fiction compared to informational books was observed as previously mentioned by other researchers.

Examples of observed variations included the second place accorded to "information on space" by Austrians while all others placed it at tenth, or "chemical or biological information" assigned third place by Dutch children but

ranked at sixteenth position by all others. Where differences existed, explanations as to their source can only be speculative since these could be due to any number of things such as variations in culture, curriculum or the issue of availability, all of which were outside the scope of the study.

Although all these studies appear to arrive at a high degree of congruence with regard to the universality of reading interests, one cannot help but wonder if the results would have been different had the investigations taken place in less developed countries. For example, only one developing country, Panama, was included in the above survey. It could therefore be assumed that many of the similarities in the findings arose from certain social features that most of the countries shared. With one exception, they were all well developed societies characterised by high literacy levels where a high value is usually attached to reading, library services are readily available and there is access to an abundance of reading materials. Quite the contrary obtains in emergent nations, an awareness of which led Greaney (1986) to raise the issue about the likely impact of geographic location on reading interests and habits in developing countries.

He pointed out that in many of these countries people do not have access to reading materials, and factors such as family income, local dialects, the unavailability of schools, illiterate parents and poor living conditions militate against the development of the reading habit. In this context, geographic

location is an important variable for consideration in this study as the expressed reading interests and habits of the Jamaican children might be different from that of their peers from more affluent countries. At the same time, different geographic locations within the same country should also be important due to the sharp differences observed between urban and rural lifestyles. For these and other reasons, research reports from developing nations should shed some light on the topic.

### **2.10.2 Geographic Location Relative to Reading Interests and Habits in Developing Countries**

There is a scarcity of research from developing nations and what exists is hard to locate. Therefore, although Singapore does not typify a developing country, research conducted there would seem to corroborate some aspects of Greaney's (1986) argument about the possible effects of geographic location on reading interests and habits. The Singapore Institute of Education (1980) undertook a study that was ambitious in terms of its objectives which were either not fully realised or else the total findings were not reported in the article published.

The researchers set out to investigate, among other things, the amount and quality of reading done by children, the relationship between the medium of instruction and the items read, as well as home correlates that affected choice of materials. Questionnaires were administered to 1,157 primary students.

The results were interesting for how they contrasted in some areas with those from the major developed countries. They also underscored the importance of certain variables identified as essential for fostering the reading habit.

A moderately low level of reading generally was recorded among the children for the month preceding the survey: 33% had read no books, 43% no magazines. The main source of materials was the school library and there was no difference in the quantity of materials read by either boys or girls (quite unlike developed countries), except for comics which were more popular with the males. On the matter of reading interests, both sexes ranked fairy tales first followed by adventure, mystery and detective, and animal stories.

The favourite informational works for boys were science and invention and sports; for girls - life and people in other lands, and science and invention. Here some of the interests coincided with those from North America and Britain, except for the popularity of fairy tales particularly with boys, and the high rating of science and invention by the girls.

Access to reading material was limited mainly to the school library and it could be deduced from the data that there were problems with availability created in part by the multi-lingual nature of the society which made it difficult to produce enough indigenous books for all language groups. Library facilities left much to be desired, and encouragement to read from parents was negligible. Ten percent of parents encouraged their children to read books and 17%

magazines. Teachers (28%) as a source of motivation were ranked much higher than they usually are in developed countries, possibly because most of the books for reading were available in the schools.

Surprisingly, friends as a source of reading guidance ranked low, a mere 12%, compared to the leading position assigned them in developed countries. One can only conjecture that since so few children were committed readers not many of them would be knowledgeable about books, and so had few to recommend to their friends.

While the differences in reading interests between Singaporean children and those from elsewhere seemed minimal, the variations in reading habits were more pronounced and could, in some ways, have resulted from geographic location, as stated by Greaney (1986). Factors considered important for developing and maintaining the reading habit were either at a minimum or absent. These include: the availability of a wide variety of books for leisure time reading; easy access to books from a variety of sources; programmes that promote recreational reading; and parental encouragement and modelling of reading.

The absence of many of these variables that are known to foster the reading habit is even more acute in lesser developed countries which lack some of the basic social infrastructure taken for granted in more advanced societies. Good roads, access to running water and electricity are confined mostly to the

more urban areas. Bookshops and libraries are few, books are scarce, money is in short supply and meeting subsistence needs takes priority over book-buying. In addition, educational opportunities are few, literacy levels are low and the oral tradition is embedded within the culture. Under these circumstances, reading for recreational purposes is hardly likely to flourish as pointed out by Hamilton (1984) earlier in reference to Jamaica.

Jennings-Wray (1981) conducted one of the few Jamaican studies on children's reading interests. Among other things, she set out to develop a schema for categorising reading interests and to find out whether grade level, sex and environmental variables were responsible for differences in reading interests. Four hundred and thirty-eight children (214 boys, 224 girls) representing grades 1 and 4 in the elementary schools were given a reading interest schedule. This consisted of several illustrated passages representing seventy-one interest elements for which children were to indicate how well they liked each excerpt by rating it on a scale of 1 to 3. Since one of the objectives of the study was to assess the effect of different stimuli on children's interests, the students from grade 1 only heard the passages read while those from grade 4 were also given illustrated booklets with the excerpts.

The curious mix of minute story features and non-fiction topics makes it very difficult to compare the interests revealed by this study with others from elsewhere. For example, included among the seventy-five interest categories

were terms like music, anger, fear, insects, people in hostile situations or occupational roles, and familiar institutions. Some of the more traditional categories like fairytales, westerns and biographies were also listed. The findings showed that the reasons for children story preferences were the moral and humorous contents as well as the realities of the children's experiences reflected therein. While sex and grade level were mostly responsible for differences in reading interests, the impact from geography was not as anticipated.

Initially, Jennings-Wray (1981) had theorised that geographic location would be an important variable because of the vast difference between life in rural and urban Jamaica. This was partially substantiated by the results which revealed that although urban and rural children had many interests in common, there were some noticeable differences too. Grade four children from rural areas were more likely to be attracted to books about unfamiliar institutions, people engaged in social and recreational activities, school, people in romantic situations and biographies.

Their urban counterparts responded positively to westerns, stories about real animals, people in occupational roles, insects and mythological characters. First graders exhibited some of the differences too with rural children expressing interest in westerns, adventure, local places and people engaged in sports and other competitive activities. Their urban peers liked animals and

nature, fairytales and people living in a suburban environment. The researcher attributed some of these variations to the social conditions within each location, for example, urban children might have a greater interest in animals because they were not as familiar with them, while rural children might find "People (social/recreational)" a more appealing topic because of their limited access to television and other forms of entertainment. No information was sought about the reading habits of these children and so the effect of geographic location on these could not be determined.

### **Summary**

It would seem that different geographic locations within the same country or even across national boundaries within the industrialised world have minimal effect upon children's reading interests. This observation, in part, affirms what Schlager (1978) believes about children's reading interests. She has concluded that children are more alike than different due to the universality of the children's developmental stages, and so too were their reading tastes.

Other reasons for this congruence in the results could be the common socialisation background and a more equitable distribution of goods and services in rural and urban areas within more developed countries. The same situation does not hold in developing nations where, in comparison, some degree of differences tend to be found. These variations could arise from the social and cultural disparities between the two types of societies. Dissimilarities based on

geographic locations within the same third world country may also be attributed to the sharp polarisation frequently manifested in the social conditions that distinguish urban from rural areas.

These differences, especially as they relate to social infrastructure and personal income, are likely to have a more pronounced impact on the value placed on reading by significant others and the children themselves, the mastery of reading skills and the frequency with which reading is practised, membership in libraries and the overall availability of reading material. So while within the developed world geographical location might have very little influence on reading interests and habits, elsewhere it might well affect the development of a life-long reading habit.

## **2. 11 General Summary of Literature Reviewed**

From all the literature reviewed for this present study the following generalisations have emerged. Sex and age are considered to be the most dominant factors affecting the types of books read and the amount of reading done. Girls are likely to read more than boys and have a stronger affinity for fiction. Boys' interests appear to be more diverse as males tend to gravitate more toward non-fiction topics. Sex differentiation in reading interests is very pronounced by the sixth grade, and sex-typed reading behaviour might be more a result of social conditioning than heredity. Across national boundaries, children of the same age tend to share a common core of reading interests, and

despite differing academic abilities, youngsters tend to like the same kinds of books. The major difference is that less able children tend to choose simpler works.

With reference to reading interests among children of different races, it was observed that despite more cross-race similarities than differences in reading interests, black children in the United States still displayed some specialised interests not exhibited by their white peers. It was also observed that children in developing countries exhibited a strong preference for indigenous literature. While geographic location appears to have little impact on reading interests and habits, the same does not always hold true in emergent nations.

Furthermore, while most children might admit that reading is important and that they like it, this is not usually borne out by practice, as very few rank reading as a favourite pastime or spend much time pursuing the activity. When asked why they read, the three commonest reasons given are - for pleasure, utility and escape, sometimes with a greater stress placed on utility.

How much and what a child reads is to a large extent conditional on what is easily available. Therefore, depending on the proximity, ease of access and the quality of the collection, children in general will resort to the sources nearest them for their reading material. Although adults in one way or the other often act as intermediaries between children and books, young readers do

not usually perceive them as a first source of reading guidance. Instead, peers hold the distinction of being the persons most frequently consulted for advice on what to read.

Finally, it would appear that the development of committed readers is a continuous process affected over the years by a confluence of many social and personal factors. Some of these variables were examined with the view that librarians, teachers and all other adults involved with the various aspects of literature selection for children might come to a clearer understanding as to how these influence reading interests and habits. With the scarcity of research on this topic from developing countries, this study should fill a gap in the literature as it sheds more light on the reading behaviour of Jamaican sixth graders in particular, and children generally.

The findings with regard to race - that is, black children`s preference for Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters - should be of special interest to librarians and educators facing the challenge of providing multi-ethnic literature in schools and libraries. In view of the fact that there has been a tapering off of general research on children`s reading interests and habits since the seventies, the findings from this study might also reveal any fundamental shift in behaviour patterns established over the years.

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## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 RATIONALE FOR DESIGN OF RESEARCH**

Generally, this study set out to survey Jamaican sixth graders' voluntary reading interests and habits. More specifically, it focused on the following variables as predictors of the types and number of books that the children read: sex, geographic location, academic performance, the availability of books, the sources of reading guidance, the practice of reading as a leisure time activity, liking to read, hindrances to reading, reasons for reading and the race of book characters.

Over the years, various research methods have been employed in the process of identifying the reading interests and habits of young people. Analyzing the contents of circulation records, reading logs, and favourite or award-winning books to identify common features or topics as indicative of reading interests can be misleading (Osiobe et al., 1989; Bard and Leide, 1985;

Schlager, 1978). Borrowing a book does not necessarily ensure that it will be read by the child nor that choice was voluntary. Also, the child's selection is limited to what is available in a given collection and so may not adequately reflect his or her broader interests. Rather, an examination of books known to be read, especially the more popular items, might be more accurate in judging interests although for generalisations to be made there would have to be a common source of books to which all children have access. This might only obtain in certain situations.

Unobtrusive observations have also been made of children in a classroom or library setting as they browsed or selected books for reading and then the books were examined for their subject content (Morrow, 1983; Karrenbrock 1984). In this case the child's consultation of any book was taken as a sign of interest. Clearly, this indicator of interest is less valid, since looking at a book, flipping through the pages, or even reading an occasional paragraph does not necessarily constitute interest.

The availability, ease and convenience of consulting administrative records or the relevant books must also be considered when applying content analysis. This approach seems more appropriate in a restricted setting. For example, it can be useful in a school or public library system where there is some degree of homogeneity in the materials available or where the primary objective of the research is to determine reading interests for local collection

development.

Case studies, while providing deeper insights, must by design be limited to small numbers, and so their findings cannot be applied to a wider population. Nevertheless, case studies can be used very effectively by themselves to create in-depth reader profiles within the framework of generalisations gained from other types of research (Fry, 1985), or in combination with other methods to enliven and enrich bare statistics (Ingham, 1981). Since each of these approaches have limitations and there is no one "best" approach to the topic, consequently, the objectives and circumstances of the research must dictate the choice of method.

A review of the literature shows that surveys are the most popular method for studying children's reading interests and habits. There are several justifications for this choice. It is best suited for studying a large number of geographically dispersed cases. It allows the investigator to contact a large portion of the desired population fairly easily; and, if the research is properly planned, time and money can be saved without sacrificing scientific efficiency, accuracy or information adequacy. Standardisation and uniformity in data collection via questionnaires or interviews are also other strong points.

Some disadvantages of the survey method include loss of details due to generalisations, misunderstanding of terminology or concepts because questionnaires are self-reporting, and inaccurate data collected due to a lack of

exhaustivity and exclusiveness in forced choice items presented to participants. Social desirability might also affect responses to questions which children give in order to please the researcher. This can be controlled, to some extent, by the way the questions are worded, by stressing anonymity and by including additional items that can counter-balance the socially "good" replies given. Other weaknesses can be minimised through careful design such as framing questions with respondents' educational and social level in mind. The main strength of survey research, however, is that it allows the investigator to generalise about a whole population from the study of a small sample.

Therefore, in light of the objectives and scope of this study plus the restrictions imposed by time and limited financial resources, a survey was chosen as the most appropriate method. From the review of the literature on the subject, it was also decided to base this research design broadly on the survey done by Whitehead et al., (1977). Despite the number of years that have elapsed since its undertaking, it appears to be one of the better studies executed on a national scale. It is very comprehensive in that the researchers tried to examine many of the major social and personal factors associated with children's reading interests and habits.

To ensure generalisability, Whitehead et al., (1977) employed very rigorous sampling techniques to obtain a fairly accurate representative of the ten to fourteen year-old school population in England and Wales. A stratified two-

stage random sample of 8,000 children from 381 primary and secondary schools was surveyed by questionnaire following which 576 of the sample were interviewed. Since geographical location was important the schools were organised by this and selected first. Then the children within them were chosen with no regard given to sex since it was expected that a fair representation of boys and girls would emerge.

Another of the strengths of Whitehead et al's study was the research instruments, especially the one for use with the children. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected via questionnaires and follow-up interviews which strengthened and enriched the findings as well as improved their overall validity. A total of two questionnaires were administered in addition to a student assessment sheet and an interview schedule. The first questionnaire allowed students to report on their reading behaviour relative to amount of reading done, preferences among different kinds of reading, source of reading materials, use of non-literary media and their attitude to school. Information was also sought on other family and social differences that were considered relevant to the children's engagement with reading. As a result of the many pre-tests, it was determined that children from the age of ten were quite capable of completing a short, simple and clearly written questionnaire.

The second questionnaire was intended to gather data on each school's demographics, curriculum, approach to English teaching and other such

information that would characterise the differences among all the schools. These data, it was anticipated, would explain some of the variation in the quantity and quality of the students' book reading.

In addition to the questionnaires used by Whitehead et al., a student assessment sheet was also designed for completion by teachers about the students' academic ability and attainment as well as their attitude toward school work. All these variables were considered relevant to reading interests and habits. An interview schedule was also developed to guide the questioning of the 576 students who were chosen to be subsequently interviewed from among the original sample.

While there are some similarities between this present study and the one by Whitehead et al., (1977), the major differences must be pointed out in order to justify some of the modifications made to the latter's research design. The British study was slanted heavily towards the educational sector which is understandable given the National School Council's mandate to discover the extent and kind of children's voluntary reading, what satisfactions they seek from books, and what environmental factors influence their choice. Consequently, great emphasis was placed on the quality and the quantity of the actual books read. Each title mentioned by the children was evaluated according to the research team's concept of "quality" literature and the findings related directly to the school curriculum. Also, their survey covered reading

materials of every format -books, newspapers, comics and magazines - accompanied by a very detailed examination of their contents and characteristics as well as the children's response to each type.

Concern about print formats and the curricular use of book lay outside the scope of this study which adopted a much narrower perspective. Its emphasis was on the general reading interests of sixth graders as they relate to the types of books read during their free time and their reading habits including how much they enjoyed reading and the reasons for participating in this activity. Only the more salient variables identified by the literature, along with some considered to be of particular concern in the Jamaican context, were examined. No attempt was made to be comprehensive or to judge the quality of their reading material or to relate it to any existing school curriculum.

For these and other reasons, only the most functional elements of the design of Whitehead et al., (1977) were adopted and can be seen mainly in the actual methodology and the use of modified versions of the student and school questionnaires and the student assessment form. A detailed explanation of these changes will be provided as each aspect of the research design is discussed.

## **3.2 THE SAMPLE: DESCRIPTION AND SELECTION**

### **3.2.1 The Schools and Their Students**

Based mainly on information collected by the **School Questionnaire** (see

**Appendix 1**), direct observation, and documents such as the Ministry of Education publications and research reports, a profile of the participating schools and their students was created. A total of 418 children (206 boys, 212 girls) from eleven schools took part in the study with ages ranging from 9 to 13 years for a mean population age of 11.1 years.

Of the eleven schools (six primary and five all-age) six were rural and five urban with the latter tending to have larger enrolments and greater access to modern amenities including electricity, regular transportation, libraries, book stores and public entertainment. Four schools were located in farming communities far removed from any urban centre. For these schools, transportation was irregular except for buses that passed in each direction once per day. There were no book stores or branch libraries within easy reach. Instead, the public library bookmobile from the parish capital visited each area once every three weeks and sometimes less frequently due to mechanical difficulties and budget cuts. The other two rural schools were much nearer to towns or the parish capitals and were fairly well supplied with transportation so that visits to the library or book stores were possible.

Most schools were accommodated within single storey concrete buildings with some having self-contained classrooms while others had one large room with wooden partitions separating one class from another. Space was at a premium with no unoccupied room during school hours, except for one urban

school that had a separate library room large enough to hold a class.

The total enrolment in these eleven schools stood at 7,902 with the sixth grade population totalling 1,119 (514 boys, 605 girls). Most schools had between two to four sixth grade classes. The size of each ranged from a low of 13 pupils in the smallest to 45 in the largest school. One rural school had a double shift in order to accommodate a large population of over 1,000. In the urban areas many classrooms were overcrowded, a factor which was to later affect the administration of the students' questionnaire. Children in the sixth grade are unstreamed based on instructions from the Ministry of Education.

The curriculum includes Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Music, Art and Crafts, Religious and Physical Education (Ministry of Education, Jamaica, 1980). The integrated approach is used for Language Arts which allows the children to be exposed to poetry and short stories and to develop their understanding of drama by active participation. The reading programme is designed to continue developing the habits and skills of both intensive and extensive reading, and help pupils to become independent readers who enjoy and can make use of a wider range of reading materials. At the primary level (grades 1 to 6) a set of books covering the core curriculum is provided free of cost to each child as part of a textbook programme operated by the government in association with several local private and international organisations (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1992).

Sixth grade is crucial to the children's future since this is when they are eligible to sit the Common Entrance Examination that determines who gets into secondary schools and therefore the quality of education they will receive. Ranked qualitatively in ascending order there are "new" secondary, comprehensive, vocational and the traditional high schools. Due to the severe limitations on the number of places available in the traditional high schools and the importance placed on education as the main means of social mobility, this qualifying examination is highly competitive. Approximately 20% of all grade six children gain access to high school on the basis of the Common Entrance Examination results (Been, Caillods and Leo-Rhynie, 1984). Since only a few of the children can be accommodated in these schools, failure to gain a place in the traditional high school is not always indicative of poor academic ability. For example, of the 51,298 children who sat the Common Entrance Examination in 1992 only 12,452 (24.3%) were awarded places in high schools (Planning Institute of Jamaica, 1992) with most of the spaces going to girls.

In Jamaica this is not unusual since boys tend to outnumber girls in the early grades but the position is reversed by sixth grade where the ratio of girls to boys sitting the exam is close to 2:1 with more girls being successful at gaining entry into high schools (**Jamaica: Development of Secondary Education**, 1983). This should not be surprising since it was found that girls tend to start school earlier, attend more regularly, repeat fewer grades, remain

in school longer and perform better than boys at the primary level (Miller, 1992). Among the eleven schools from which the sample came, there were more boys than girls in only two classes and overall there was approximately 9% more girls than boys.

The superior performance of the girls was also revealed when the class teachers were asked to rank the students based on their academic and reading performance during the previous year. With regard to academic performance, 75% of the children considered above average were girls and 55% of the below average group were boys. In reading performance, the pattern was almost the same - 68% of the best readers were girls and boys constituted 67% of the least able. At the time of the administration of the questionnaires the children were in preparation for the Common Entrance Examination and by the time of the interviews, four months later, all eligible sixth graders had taken it already.

The library facilities were rudimentary in every school. Although all stated that they had libraries, a closer examination revealed that this was interpreted in the narrowest sense to mean basically a collection of books in a room somewhere. Of the eleven schools, only five said they had specially designated library rooms, and even then only two were dedicated solely to that purpose. The others were partially or wholly used for classes, storage or administration. In fact, one of the special rooms was so small that the children had to select their books and go elsewhere to read them, so that really left only

one urban school with a place capable of accommodating a class for the most basic library activities.

Of the remaining six schools, one had the books dispersed in the classrooms while the other five kept them in boxes, cupboards or the principal's office. This arrangement meant that they were only available at prescribed times at the discretion of the teacher who had to fetch the books and take them to the children in the classroom. Under such conditions, browsing and free choice were severely restricted.

One school in the rural area was in the process of constructing a library that in terms of space should meet the minimal requirements established by the local library association (Jamaica Library Association, 1971). None of the schools had a librarian; teachers were responsible for the collection of books and operated mainly as custodians. In all the schools, irrespective of geographic location, there was little difference in the quality of library services, except for the presence of separate rooms in the two already mentioned.

**TABLE 1** shows the approximate size of each school's library collection and its student population.

**TABLE 1: Size of Library Collection and Student Population for Sample Schools**

SIZE OF COLLECTION	NO. OF SCHOOLS & STUDENT ENROLMENT
0 - 499	5 *(160,507,514,540,652)
500 - 999	2 (259, 1360)
1000 - 1499	1 (750)
1500 - 1999	2 (520, 1443)
2000 and over	1 (1,284)

\*Each school's total student population

**Table 1** shows the approximate sizes of the book collections which are provided by the national schools library service during once per term visits when the teachers are allowed to select a certain quantity of books based on the size of the school population and the number of books being returned. Continuous budget cuts over the years have made it extremely difficult for the national school library service to provide even the minimum number of books as planned.

Although nine of the eleven schools had enrolments between 500 and 1,500 only three had collections ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 books and only one had over 3,000. For four schools there was less than one book per child;

for the rest, the ratio ranged from approximately 1.5 to 3.5 books per pupil. It is hardly to be expected that such minimal resources can effectively satisfy the wide variety of reading interests and abilities of these children.

With regards to library programmes, there were none currently operating in any of the schools. Circulation of materials for reading or reference took place in the classrooms, except for the one urban school that could accommodate the students in the library. There, on Fridays the classes took turns going to the library to borrow books. The other schools had reading periods when the teacher would fetch the books from their location and distribute them in the classroom for silent reading or for students to borrow to take home.

Surprisingly, four schools insisted that they did not lend books for home reading because of the high rate of loss. With such restricted access to reading materials, the students' main source of reading in the schools was their textbooks and supplementary readers supplied by the Ministry of Education. In addition, there was a very popular children's newspaper, **The Children's Own** (Gleaner Company, 1993), published by the leading newspaper company and distributed weekly within the schools at a nominal cost. This publication contains stories, poems, puzzles, letters and general information articles of interest to children. Additional exposure to literature came from classroom experiences when teachers told stories or read poems not contained in their texts.

The general picture that emerges is one of large classes, limited space and inadequate library facilities and resources.

### **3.2.2 Sample Selection**

Attempts were made to equalise sex and geographic location and so 418 children (206 boys, 212 girls) from the original sample of 420 participated in the survey. This minor difference should not affect the findings since standard procedure for the calculation of sample size reveals 397 students to be an appropriate sample capable of providing meaningful results and allowing for statistical inferences to be made about the population (Yamane, 1973). The number was increased to 420 to make allowances for children who might choose not to participate. In the end, a total of 418 students were surveyed and they came from urban and rural schools because geographic location was considered to be an important variable in Jamaica due to many social disparities between urban and rural communities.

In further determining the composition of the sample, the researcher aimed for an equal representation of each sex because the literature reviewed strongly supported the importance of sex differences relative to reading interests and habits. Therefore, in order to meet these criteria while ensuring representativeness and heterogeneity, a two-stage stratified random sample of the total sixth grade population was drawn.

It was also decided that rather than choosing the required number of

participants from all 795 public elementary schools scattered across the country. it would be more practical to select a limited number of schools to supply the required number of students. Such an approach would facilitate data collection within the constraints of time and money while allowing the researcher to acquire specific information about each school's library provisions which were also expected to have an impact on the children's reading interests and habits. At the same time, data on the schools would furnish valuable background material for understanding and interpreting the findings.

The Jamaican Ministry of Education records provided the sampling frame for the total number of public elementary schools, their location and student populations. Based on the latest available records, the total sixth grade population stood at approximately 52,000 (Jamaica. Ministry of Education. 1990) with an almost equal distribution of boys and girls - 48% and 52% respectively.

In the first sampling stage, stratification was by the geographic location of the schools because it was felt that the situation of a school in either the rural or urban area would lead to some pronounced differences in reading habits, if not interests. At the time of the research there were 795 public elementary schools - 95 urban and 700 rural - in Jamaica (Jamaica. Ministry of Education 1990). The designation of an area as rural or urban was based upon the zoning method employed by the Planning and Statistical Institutes of

Jamaica (1991) which are responsible for the census and other demographic statistics used by the government for socio-economic planning. Kingston, the capital city, and its immediate environs, which extend into three neighbouring parishes, make up the Kingston Metropolitan Area. Outside of this area, the twelve other parish capitals were also deemed to be urban, with the rest of the country considered rural.

Based upon this classification, the 795 schools were categorised as either rural or urban and arranged alphabetically by name and sequentially numbered within each group. In selecting the sample certain constraints of time, money and the availability of persons to carry out the survey had to be taken into consideration. According to the average class size and the fact that nearly all schools had two or more sixth grade classes, it was decided that ten schools would be sufficient to furnish the required 420 students (42 from each). To this end 5 urban and 5 rural schools were selected using a table of random numbers. An additional 6 schools (3 rural, 3 urban) were selected to serve as replacements for any that might not wish to participate. Of the fourteen parishes in Jamaica, eight were in the main sample which increased the degree of representativeness of the population.

At the second sampling stage, the students were chosen from each school on the basis of sex. It was planned that 42 children (21 boys, 21 girls) would be selected from each of the ten schools to ensure an equal number of each sex

and from each geographical area. This strategy was expected to produce 420 children equally matched, or nearly so, by geography and sex so as to permit valid comparisons of the data based on these two variables. The selection of the students was actually done at the school on the day when the data were collected.

The attendance registers for all the sixth grade classes were checked and the names of the children were arranged by sex into two alphabetical lists and numbered sequentially. The total number of girls (and boys) was then divided by the required number of children (21) and the result was used as the sampling interval for randomly choosing the participants. For example, if there were 69 boys it was divided by 21 resulting in 3, so every third child would be selected from the list, and where a child was absent for that day a replacement was chosen in the same manner.

A total sample of 418 children (206 boys, 212 girls) from 11 schools participated which meant the number fell short of the 420 originally planned. This shortfall in the number of boys resulted from absences in two schools where there were no extra sixth graders, while the excess of girls came about from the researcher having to use an intact class of 44 in a school that had only one sixth grade. An eleventh school was also included because one of the other schools had only 13 children in grade six, less than half of the required number, and so to supplement the number 27 students were included from one

of the replacement schools. Thus the final sample of 418 students was arrived at with the assumption that the randomness of choice of schools and students would ensure an appropriate mix of children with different academic and reading performances since the classes were not streamed.

A sub-sample of the participating students was also selected for interviewing at the second stage of the research with the objective of creating some profiles of Jamaican sixth grade readers. Further insights into the children's reading behaviour was sought by exploring in greater depth the nature of their reading interests and habits and how these might be affected by personal and family characteristics. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews, while few in number, were considered an integral part of the study since they would provide a deeper understanding of the Jamaican readers and so enrich the findings from the research. Although there was no intention to analyze the interview data statistically or to make generalisations from its findings, the sub-sample was still stratified by sex and geography and selected randomly to remove personal bias.

Owing to the constraints placed on the study by time and the lack of resources to hire and train a team of interviewers, it was only possible to interview a very small number of the students from the sample. Too, bearing in mind that the objective of this phase of the research was not to make inferences to the wider population, eight students were considered sufficient to

provide a more detailed picture of their lives - their attitude, interests, aspirations, family situations, and experiences - relative to books and reading.

These children were selected by using the list of names on the coding sheet created for the questionnaires and arranging all children by geography and sex into four groups (rural boys, rural girls, urban boys and urban girls). All the children from the original sample were therefore numbered sequentially across the groups. Since only eight children were required, it was decided to select two from each of the four groups (rural boys, rural girls, urban boys, urban girls) giving equal representation to sex as well as location.

Random numbers were chosen from a table and whenever there was a match, irrespective of the group that person was in, he or she was selected until there were two representatives from each of the four groups. Consequently, the sub-sample consisted of eight children - four girls and four boys - drawn from eight of the eleven participating schools in both rural and urban locations.

It was anticipated that each interview would last from 30-45 minutes and would take place in the school at a convenient date some months after the questionnaire had been administered and the data analyzed in order to supply the background information on which to base the interviews. It was also decided to record the interviews on tape in order to aid recall of the information.

### 3.3 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The following instruments were used to collect the data: a school questionnaire, a student assessment record, a student questionnaire and an interview schedule. All were loosely based on those used by Whitehead et al., (1977) in their study. Each item will be discussed separately.

#### 3.3.1 The School Questionnaire

The idea of a questionnaire for the schools to gain background information was considered useful, and a modified version of the one used by Whitehead et al., (1977) was designed, with several modifications for the purpose of this present study. In light of their objectives, the British research team sought information on the teaching of English, access to literature in the schools, available library facilities and general facts about the school itself. This information was deemed important as a means of arriving at differences that characterised each school with the hope that this would explain some of the differences in the quantity and quality of the pupils' reading.

Since the objectives of the present investigation were different, the school questionnaire (see **Appendix 1**) was developed mainly to collect data on the library. Hence, the items focused on the physical facilities provided for the library - its resources, administration and use, especially as it related to the sixth graders. This information was considered relevant to the research topic since the availability of books is a serious problem in Jamaica, and school

libraries can play a crucial role in whether or not children read and what they read.

This questionnaire was to be completed by the principals or their designated representatives.

### **3.3.2 The Student Assessment Record**

This record (see **Appendix 2**) was designed to collect data from teachers about each student's academic and reading performance since these variables were known to impact on reading interests and habits. In contrast to the one used for the British study, information on ability streaming or attitude toward school was omitted. The teachers were asked to use the children's fifth grade end of year reports to supply this information because the research was conducted between October-November 1993, too early in the new academic year for a proper assessment to be made from their performance in sixth grade.

Instead of asking for the actual grades which would vary across schools in the absence of a national standardised test for all sixth graders, the teachers were asked to rank each child's academic performance on a scale of 1-3 (1 = 70% and over, above average; 2 = 50 - 69%, average; and 3 = 49 and less, below average) within the class based on the child's overall score as recorded on the report. Their reading performance was similarly judged on the basis of their individual score for the subject "Reading". The use of their school records was intended to reduce subjectivity on the part of the teachers and bring some

level of consistency in ranking the students.

### **3.3.3 The Interview Schedule**

The interview schedule (see **Appendix 3**) was intended only as a guide, since each interview was based on the individual child's responses to the questionnaire items; the purpose of the interchange was not to gather additional facts for analysis but rather to obtain a general impression of the child's social world and how it relates to her or his reading behaviour. Therefore, the interviewer was free to adapt and supplement the questions where appropriate, so long as they remained meaningful and relevant within the context of the research objectives. So, while all children were asked some of the same basic questions, the line of conversation took different turns as the children were allowed to express themselves freely.

The interviews covered a much narrower range of topics than those conducted by Whitehead et al. (1977) because of the modifications done to the questionnaire, which led to the omission of references to specific titles of books read and other such information. Furthermore, after talking about their responses to items on the questionnaires, the Jamaican children were further questioned about aspects of their reading behaviour that were not covered by the initial survey. So while the children were asked to clarify answers given on the earlier instrument, additional information was sought about their families, leisure time activities including television viewing, the place of books

and reading in the home, and career aspirations, among other things.

### **3.3.4 The Student Questionnaire**

The student questionnaire used by Whitehead and his team sought information on the formats and titles of items read, quantity of reading done over a given period, degree of liking for the books read, source of reading material, ownership of books, favourite writers, membership in libraries, family reading, television viewing habits, attitude towards English lessons, and personal family data. Since the purpose and circumstances of both studies differed in many ways, certain modifications were made.

Many of the above features were excluded since the focus of this study was somewhat different. As this study was limited to books, information on the reading of magazines or comics, formats not easily available to Jamaican children, was left out. Family reading habits and socio-economic status were omitted on the grounds that the usual indices used to determine status were difficult to apply in Jamaica, and while these variables do seem to influence reading interests, teachers and librarians have little control over them. Children's attitudes toward the curriculum and the age when they planned to leave school were marginal within a Jamaican context, and so both were excluded.

A major departure from the instrument employed by Whitehead et al., (1977) was the decision to use a reading inventory with specific literature

categories for which children were asked to indicate their degree of interest. Various approaches have been adopted to elicit children's reading interests. Summer and Lukasevich (1983) created an interest matrix based on fourteen topics from which children were to indicate their preference for each topic compared to all the others. Thorndike (1941) was one of the first to use annotated fictitious titles to reduce bias created by the naming of specific topics. For the same reason, Whitehead et al., (1977) asked children to name the books read from which he compiled a list indicative of their interests.

In order to use an interest matrix or fictitious annotated titles lists effectively, only a limited number of literature categories can be used since each type must be repeated several times within the instrument to ascertain the child's interest in the particular topic. For example, Summer and Lukasevic (1983) could accommodate only fourteen, while Fisher and Ayers (1990) had forty-four items representing only eleven categories.

The creation of self-generated lists by children poses difficulties for them as well as the researchers. In the case of the former, recalling the specifics of books read can be extremely difficult, especially if a long time frame is involved. For the investigators, identification and classification of book contents based only on title require a fairly intimate knowledge of the works cited and the process of sorting can prove to be very time consuming, as Whitehead et al., (1977) discovered.

Mainly for these reasons, an inventory of pre-determined categories based on previous findings was used. Additionally, since one of the objectives of the study was to provide guidelines for collection development, some idea of the broad categories of books the Jamaican children were interested in reading was needed. Nevertheless, the children were still asked to specify the number of books they had read over the last four weeks, and to list their authors and titles as a way of verifying their answers.

Nevertheless, given the length of the questionnaire that the children had to respond to and the quantity of data that would have to be analyzed, a shorter instrument was designed. What resulted was an 18 item questionnaire incorporating some of the relevant elements from the British instrument used by Whitehead et al., (1977). The questionnaire was then pilot-tested.

### **3.4 THE PILOT-TESTS**

The student questionnaire was pilot-tested with 80 sixth graders in three schools - one in Jamaica and two in Canada. The main purpose served by the pilot-test and subsequent discussion of the instrument was to find out if the questionnaire actually measured what it set out to do; whether the children were able to comprehend and respond appropriately to the different items; whether any other aspect of their reading behaviour should be included; and whether the children understood the different categories assigned the literature and if any

others should be added.

The preliminary questionnaire was administered during June 1993 in the form of a 12 page booklet to two intact sixth grade classes in Canada and one in Jamaica. Each administration was followed by a general discussion of the contents and the exercise with the participants. It should be noted that there was one minor difference between the questionnaire used in Canada and the one in Jamaica. The researcher was advised to omit the question about children's preference for the race of the heroes in their books, it was considered inappropriate in the Canadian society. Otherwise, the questionnaire items were similar.

While most of the children in Canada had little difficulty understanding the questions or following the instructions, several Jamaican children did experience problems. Since this was the country where the research was to be conducted, remedial action was taken to simplify the instructions even more, and the decision was also made to have the final questionnaire read aloud for clarity and to increase understanding. Writing on the part of the students was reduced to a minimum, with only one open-ended question requiring one or two sentences. All other questions needed only a simple check mark or the circling or writing of a number at a prescribed location.

Another area where weaknesses surfaced was when children were asked to recall and list the number of books they had read in a four week period. The

first part seemed easy enough for most, but more than half of the children did not complete the section requiring them to list the authors and/or titles of the books. Space was provided for as many as seven titles to cater for the most avid reader, but only a small number of children provided full details on the author and title, fewer still listed one or the other, while others ignored the section completely even though they admitted to having read some books over the period of time. A close scrutiny of the titles listed as read also revealed many unfamiliar to the researcher. In some instances several of the titles did not sound authentic and were hard to verify.

Failure to give a satisfactory response could be ascribed to the usual problem posed by identification and recall as well as the children's reluctance to spend too much effort and time compiling such a list. One of the drawbacks Whitehead et al., (1977) mentioned about the listing of specific titles was the time-consuming task the research team faced in trying to verify and categorise them. It was decided to eliminate this particular question since the problems far outweighed any benefits, and also because unlike Whitehead et al., (1977), the objective was not to evaluate the quality of the books or to create a master list of the children's reading.

As this question was intended only as a means of ascertaining the amount of reading the children did rather than the types of books they were reading, the researcher decided that trust would have to be exercised in accepting the

children's responses to the question about number of books read. To aid memory it was also decided to reduce the period of recall for the number of books read from four to two weeks.

Children queried the meaning of some of the categories for the literature; so short qualifying statements were added to those categories that were identified as unclear. For example, "Growing Up" had in parenthesis "Becoming a man/woman" and "History" - "Stories and events from long ago." Many children also drew attention to the absence of "Science Fiction" and "Humorous Stories" from the literature categories, and so these were subsequently added.

For all the children, especially in Jamaica, completing the questionnaire took up too much time - eighteen items were too many to be completed within a 30-45 minute period. Administratively, there were problems too. It was observed that during the completion of the instrument the children shared information freely with each other and copied the names of books on their desks in the space provided for filling in the books read. This observation confirmed the earlier decision not to ask the children to provide the titles of books read.

In light of these discoveries, additional guidelines for administering the questionnaire were adopted. The children were not allowed to talk to each other during the exercise and all school books were to be removed from their

desks. The final instrument that emerged from the pilot-test was simpler and shorter, having fourteen items rather than the original eighteen (See **Appendix 4**).

### **3.5 VARIABLES USED IN EXAMINING READING INTERESTS AND HABITS**

The following variables were chosen for investigation because of their known influence on the reading interests and habits of children. It was therefore believed that an examination of these variables within the Jamaican context would make a meaningful contribution to reading interests studies. They are divided into three categories - personal variables, variables relative to reading interests, and variables relative to reading habits.

#### **3.5.1 Personal Variables**

**3.5.1.1 The Sex of the Child:** the sex of the reader has been identified as the single most important factor governing the type of material read by children as well as the amount of reading done and the choice of reading as a recreational activity. This has been the case in almost every major study conducted in different parts of the world from the early years until at present (Jordan, 1921; Terman and Lima, 1931; Thorndike, 1941; Carsley, 1957; Schultze, 1969; Whitehead et al., 1977 and Maxwell, 1977).

Sex, in combination with age, was therefore expected to play an important role in this study. However, although children were asked to give

their age in years, this information was only used to verify that they belonged to the age group under study. As a variable, age and its influence on reading interests was not examined since only a restricted age group (10 - 12) were being investigated. The children were asked to indicate their sex by placing a tick underneath a picture of either a boy or a girl.

**3.5.1.2 Academic and Reading Performance:** Moray (1978), Chrisman and Bishop (1985) and McKenna (1986) found that children within the same age group, but of different academic abilities, share common reading interests although the quantity and quality of the books they read tend to vary. Whitehead et al., (1977) also reported that there was a higher percentage of non-book readers among pupils graded average or below average for ability and attainment, and conversely there was a much higher percentage of moderate to heavy book readers among those graded above average.

In Jamaica, because IQ tests are not normally used to evaluate children's mental ability and there are no national standardised examinations for grade six students, academic and reading performance were therefore assessed by reference to the students' academic report from the previous year. It was felt that this data would give a general picture of the child's reading and academic abilities. This approach was adopted in order to maintain a certain amount of consistency in arriving at the grading of the students and to reduce subjectivity on the part of the teachers. They were asked to rank each child as above

average (70% or more), average (50-69%) or below average (49% or less).

**3.5.1.3 The Geographic Location of the Child:** In most of the studies reviewed, geographic location did not appear to strongly affect reading interests and habits, however it was anticipated that this variable would have a greater impact in this study because of the many disparities that exist between urban and rural areas in the Jamaican society. Urban life provides greater access to libraries, book stores and other social amenities. All these advantages, combined with a higher literacy level, tend to create an atmosphere conducive to leisure time reading. Therefore, reading habits and interests were expected to differ.

The country was divided into urban and rural areas based on the geographical boundaries used by the National Planning and Statistical Institutes of Jamaica, the two central agencies responsible for the national census and socio-economic planning. Coding for each area was added by the researcher to each student's questionnaire after the completion of the survey.

### **3.5.2 Variables Relative to Reading Interests**

**3.5.2.1 Interest in Different Types of Books:** This variable was among the most important in the study since all of the foregoing variables were expected to affect, to some extent, the reading interests of the children and in turn the types of books they chose to read. "Type" or "category" refers to the broad classification of books based on genre for fiction (e.g.: adventure and mystery

stories ) and subject content for informational works (e.g.: history and music). In determining the literature categories to be represented, a close scrutiny was made of the studies reviewed in an attempt to arrive at a fairly balanced representation of the world of children's books.

Clarity and uniformity of expression were sought by reference to the **Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme** when classifying informational works and to standard children's literature texts (e.g., Huck, 1979; Sutherland and Arbuthnot, 1986; and Norton, 1991) and review journals (e.g.: **The Horn Book magazine. School Library Journal**) for fictional works. A deliberate effort was made to balance the number of non-fiction and fiction categories which has not always been the case in other research where fiction types tend to predominate. This required an expansion of the non-fiction categories in order to accommodate more subjects that might appeal to girls because almost all studies show that boys read more non-fiction than girls.

While this observation might be true, an examination of the categories represented in the reading inventories in the studies showed a tendency to include topics considered to be favoured more by boys. For example, science and invention, exploration and machines were popular topics on inventories. It was felt that a wider selection from informational works should provide an opportunity to see if Jamaican girls would broaden their books choices to include more non-fiction. So additional non-fiction categories such as Growing

Up, Things to Make and Do and Understanding Myself and Others were also included.

The body of children's literature is so vast and varied that no single inventory can claim to be totally representative or exhaustive; therefore the findings cannot be taken to represent the all the possible areas of interests of the Jamaican sixth graders. Rather, they should be seen only as their response to the specific categories of literature presented, and it should be understood that the children's interests might be more extensive and varied given a different combination of book types.

Twenty-four literature categories, divided equally between fiction and non-fiction, were arrived at after a careful review of the many lists and options available. Fiction was represented by: Adventure Stories, Animal Stories, Fairy Tales, Family Stories, Fantasy, Horror Stories, Humorous Stories, Love Stories, Mystery Stories, Poetry, Science Fiction and War Stories. The following non-fiction categories were used: Dancing, Growing Up, History, Lives of Famous People, Machines, Music, People in Other Lands, Riddles and Jokes, Science, Sports, Things to Make and Do, and Understanding Myself and Others. Where necessary, each category was accompanied by a brief definition or an explanatory phrase to clarify its meaning.

The students were asked to respond to each category by indicating on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 = very much, 2 = maybe and 3 = not at all) the extent to

which they would like to read each type of book. In the sixties, Coleman and Jungeblut (1961) have established that children between eight and twelve years old were able to make discriminating judgements based on such a scale. Therefore, this procedure was adopted in order to obtain a more meaningful response than would be arrived at by asking them to respond in the negative or the positive.

By rating their answers, the sixth graders would not only display their particular interests but also the degree to which they were attracted to a given category, thereby making it easier to distinguish those book types of most interest to the students from the less interesting ones. The average score for each category would be calculated to arrive at the degree of interest in that particular type in comparison to all the other twenty-three categories.

In order to identify their favourite types of books from among the twenty-four categories, the children were also asked to identify the three types of books, in rank order, that they most enjoyed reading. The popularity of each type was then based on the frequency with which it was chosen as one of the top three favourites.

**3.5.2.2 The Race of Main Characters in Books:** In this context, race refers to the ethnic origins of persons living in Africa, the Caribbean, North America and Britain. The children's preference for book characters that reflect their ethnic group was explored. Children's literature experts, such as Haymon

(1979) and MacCann (1985), insist that ethnic minorities in Euro-centric countries need literature that reflects their cultural heritage in order that their children can develop self-esteem, a sense of their own identity and pride in their ethnic heritage.

Although Afro-Jamaicans are not an ethnic minority within their own country, nevertheless for centuries the country was under colonial rule and Britain remained the chief source for reading material for a long time, even after independence. While a few indigenous books - 85 between 1976-1980 (Hamilton, 1984) - are being published annually for children, the bulk of Jamaican children's books, films and videotapes still comes from North America and Britain. The question therefore arises as to the need for indigenous material reflecting the Jamaican children's ethnicity even as for those minority groups living in countries with predominantly white populations.

From a generic list of Afrocentric and Eurocentric book characters from Africa, the Caribbean, North America and Britain the children were asked to rank three types of book characters they would most like to play the leading roles in their books (1 = the most favourite, 2 = second favourite, and 3 = third favourite). The objective was to find out if Jamaican sixth graders displayed any greater preference for Afrocentric characters than for Eurocentric ones.

For the socio-historical reasons already stated, all of these children would have been exposed to books featuring mainly Eurocentric characters but

the same cannot be said for Afrocentric characters. The children were therefore asked if they could recollect having read any books with black characters cast in the major roles. Such information could provide a useful context within which to evaluate their responses to the previous question.

The choice of countries to be represented was based on the following factors. Britain was the colonising power in Jamaica for over three hundred years and its influence still dominates the social institutions, especially the educational system including the materials used at all levels of the curriculum. Africa looms large in Jamaica's history because the majority of the population is descended from Africans brought forcibly to the Caribbean to work on the sugar plantations. Strong vestiges of the African heritage are to be found in the society and most of the people regard themselves as part of the African diaspora.

Finally, North America, especially the United States, has become a major force in Jamaican society because of its world dominance, its proximity to the Caribbean region and the heavy two-way flow of people primarily as migrants and tourists. North America is also the primary source for movies, television programmes and reading material for Jamaica.

A choice between black and white main characters from each of these regions - North America, Britain, Africa and the Caribbean - was presented to the children who were asked to indicate their three favourite types of

protagonists. It was felt that the strength of their choices would be better expressed by using a ranking system than by a single choice.

### **3.5.3 Variables Relative to Reading Habits**

**3.5.3.1 Liking to Read:** In surveys of this type it is often assumed that all children like to read and will read once they become proficient at it and are given the opportunity. However, this assumption is called into question by those children who claim to like to read but never pursue the activity voluntarily, while others show a definite dislike for reading even though they are highly competent readers (Landy, 1977a; Whitehead et al., 1977). How a child feels about reading is one of the attitudinal components identified by Lewis and Teale (1980) as contributing towards a child's interest in and voluntary participation in reading.

To find out how much the children in this study liked to read, they were presented with a two-part open-ended question, the first of which is applicable to this variable. The students were required to select one of the following statements that came closest to how they felt about reading: "I like to read a lot", "I like to read", "I like to read a little but not too much", and "I do not like to read at all". Responses to this statement would furnish information on their degree of liking for reading and so indicate the affective dimension of their attitude toward this activity.

**3.5.3.2 Reasons for Reading:** Children tend to engage in reading for several

reasons, which along with other personal and social factors, govern the extent to which they will seek to undertake the activity. It is believed that, among other things, children read to satisfy curiosity, for exploration, self-actualization or for the sake of activity. It was felt that the combined knowledge of how much they like to read and the functions that reading serves in their lives would give some indication of the children's motivation to read.

For this reason, the second part of the same question discussed in section 3.5.3.1 asked students to provide an explanation as to why they like/do not like to read. By formulating their own replies it was hoped that the data would also provide some insight into what they think about reading. The nature of this question was in keeping with the cognitive dimension of reading attitude as identified by Lewis and Teale (1980). Since research shows that the three most frequently cited reasons for reading are for pleasure, utility and escape, it was decided to group and analyze the responses under these broad headings.

**3.5.3.3 Reading as a Leisure Time Activity:** Time is finite, and according to Medrich et al (1982) children have approximately seven hours free time each school day into which to squeeze all their obligatory and favourite activities. Although children seem to place a high value on reading, and many claim to read for pleasure, very few rank it as their main recreational activity (Greaney and Hegarty, 1987; Long and Henderson, 1973; Moffitt and Wartella, 1992). Instead, among their many pastimes television usually takes the lead followed

by more active and gregarious leisure pursuits such as outdoor games, going out and being with friends.

To more directly assess the value placed on reading as a leisure time activity by the students, they were asked to select and rank their three favourite pastimes from a list of social activities, including reading. Their responses were expected to indicate their actual level of engagement in leisure time reading and so furnish information on behavioral component of reading attitude.

This question was also included to serve as an item with which to counterbalance answers to the question of how much they like to read since the children might be tempted to exaggerate about the latter. If both sets of replies show that the majority of children like to read very much and also give a high rank to reading as a leisure time activity, one might be more inclined to consider their responses to be fairly accurate.

**3.5.3.4 Hindrances to Reading More:** Children are known to proffer a variety of excuses for not reading as much as they ought. These excuses range from personal ones such as poor reading ability to environmental factors like not having a comfortable place to read. Answers to this and the preceding question were expected to supply information about the sample's reading habits.

For this reason, students were asked to rank order from a list of several personal and environmental factors the three that would encourage them to read more. They were also asked to rank these in order of importance (1 - the one

that most prevented him/her from reading, 2 - the second most important and 3 - the third most important hindrance factor).

**3.5.3.5 Sources of Reading Guidance:** In order to gain access to books children ordinarily have to resort to adult intermediaries, usually parents, teachers or librarians. Peers are also known to exercise a strong influence on reading choices (Watson, 1978; Biagini, 1980; Hepler and Hickman, 1982). However, Whitehead et al., (1977) and Ingham (1981) both emphasise that the presence of a well stocked library does not in itself guarantee that children will be motivated to read, unless it is complemented by the presence of enthusiastic teachers or librarians who enjoy reading and communicate this to their charges.

Librarians invest a considerable amount of time and energy in promoting themselves as experts in recreational reading and the library as the ideal place for satisfying reading needs. How successful they have been in communicating this image can be judged partly on how often children visit the libraries and seek their advice when selecting books. The students were asked to indicate from a list of adults (parents, relatives and professionals) and children (peers and siblings) the three persons from whom they sought help most often when deciding what books to read voluntarily.

**3.5.3.6 The Availability of Books:** Ready access to a source of reading materials can serve as a strong incentive for reading as shown by the "book flood" experiments conducted with children (Fader and McNeil, 1968; Elley and

Tolley, 1972; and Ingham, 1981). Library membership, ownership of books through purchase or receiving books as gifts from others are some of the ways that children acquire their reading material.

Membership in libraries suggests at least one regular source of reading materials and guidance by a knowledgeable adult. Gifts from relatives and friends can supplement materials received through more formal channels; in fact, the ownership of books can be a sign of a child's own interest in reading or reflect the desire of parents or relatives that the child engage in reading. Whatever the reason, owning books provides another means of access to reading material.

The children were asked to indicate their membership in different types of libraries, the three main sources from which they received the books they read and the approximate number of books (excluding texts) personally owned. A precise number was not requested because the books were not at hand and too an estimate was considered sufficient to suggest the likely level of book ownership and availability. The usual method of giving the children a range of numbers from which to choose was avoided so as to reduce the temptation for them to choose the higher numbers so as to look "good".

**3.5.3.7 The Number of Books Read by the Child:** This variable and the types of books the children liked to read were the two dependent variables in the study. While a favourable attitude is a precursor to reading, one of the best

proofs that a child really likes to read is the act of reading itself. Therefore, one good indicator of a commitment to reading is the number of books read over a given period of time, although disruptions in regular reading patterns may result from the unavailability of reading materials or from the occurrence of expected or unforeseen events.

The students were asked to state the number of books read during the past two weeks immediately preceding the survey. This period of recall was considered to be within the children's ability as established by Whitehead et al., (1977) who found that up to four weeks was a reasonable period of recall for ten to fourteen year olds.

The questionnaires were administered toward the middle of the school term which meant that in the two weeks immediately preceding the survey the children were engaged in their regular school/home routines. They would not have been subjected to examination pressures and no holiday period was a part of that time. Therefore, a more realistic picture of their reading habits was expected to emerge.

### **3.6 PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION**

#### **3.6.1 The General Approach to Data Collection**

Data collection was done in two stages. At the first stage the **Student Questionnaire**, the **School Questionnaire** and the **Student Assessment Record** were administered simultaneously, and the interviews were conducted four

months later. Prior to carrying out the investigation, permission was sought from the Jamaica Ministry of Education, the governing authority for elementary education, for entry into the schools (see **Appendix 5**).

Once permission was granted it was up to the individual principals to decide if their school would participate, and their agreement to do so was also considered as consent for the children themselves to take part, thereby waiving the need for individual parental permission (see letter to principals and release statement in **Appendix 7**).

Letters were sent to the principals of the ten randomly selected schools in June 1993 requesting their participation in the study during the fall term. The nature and objective of the research were outlined along with the functions to be performed by the principal, teachers and students. The confidentiality and voluntary nature of participation were stressed (See **Appendix 6**).

A stamped self-addressed envelope was included with each letter as well as a form to be filled and returned immediately to the researcher indicating the school's decision to participate or not. All ten schools agreed to take part although some schools required follow up letters, telephone calls and personal visits.

Once agreement was reached, the schools were subsequently contacted to set a mutually convenient date to administer the survey (See **Appendix 7**). Much later an eleventh school was added because one of the other schools did

not have a large enough sixth grade population to provide the extra students needed. During a three week period from October 26 to November 15, 1993 the researcher visited the eleven schools and administered the **Student Questionnaire**, the **School Questionnaire** and ensured that the **Student Assessment Record** was completed.

### 3.6.2 The Survey

The following procedure was applied at each school:

1. On arrival at the school the principal was contacted. He or she then directed the researcher to the sixth grade teacher assigned to assist with the research activities. Before leaving the principal, the researcher gave him or her the **School Questionnaire** to be completed.
2. The attendance registers for all sixth grades within the school were collected and the children arranged alphabetically by surname into two groups according to their sex since the sample was stratified in this manner.
3. Since a sample of forty-two children ( 21 boys and 21 girls) was needed from each school, the total number of sixth graders present for each sex was divided by the number of children required from each group and the result determined the sampling interval for randomly choosing the students. For example, if there were 69 girls every third girl would be chosen. Thus an equal number of boys and girls was selected. If any

of the students were not present, a replacement was chosen in like manner.

In only two schools did this approach have to be modified because one had a total of only thirteen children in the sixth grade and so a replacement school was added to supply the remaining twenty-seven students. At the second school an intact class was used since there was only one sixth grade class and it was decided not to embarrass the few extra students by asking them to leave.

4. The names of the children were then written on the **Student Assessment Record** - one for boys, one for girls - in columns bearing identity numbers similar to those on the questionnaires. These numbers would be later used to identify the students chosen for interviews while permitting the transfer of the correct reading and academic performance scores to the right questionnaire.
5. A copy of the two lists (boys and girls) of students chosen was then given to the teacher who used it to assemble the children at the appointed place. In most schools this proved to be a lengthy process because none of them had an extra room that was not in use. What this meant was that all the sixth grade population had to be re-distributed for the duration of the survey so that one classroom could be devoted to this activity.

Sometimes the non-participating children had to be taken outdoors. While the sorting of the children was taking place, the researcher assigned identity numbers to the children on the list and transferred this number to the questionnaires in order to link the responses to the correct students so that those for interviewing could be properly identified later.

6. Once the students were settled in their places, the researcher went to the classroom where after being introduced she explained the purposes of the research and what each child was expected to do. Again the voluntary nature of the exercise and the confidentiality of their replies were stressed and the children were given one final opportunity to withdraw. Three children (two from one school and one from another) chose not to participate and replacements were found based on the earlier selection procedure.
7. Using the list with the names and identity numbers to ensure that the right child received the correct questionnaire, the researcher, with the assistance of the teacher, distributed the questionnaires.
8. After everyone had received the instrument, the procedure for answering the different types of questions was illustrated on the chalkboard. The children were shown how to place a checkmark within a box, circle the correct number from among several, and how to answer a branched

question.

9. Each item on the questionnaire was read aloud, with long enough pauses to allow the children time to respond. Such a measure was considered necessary because during the pilot-testing some of the Jamaican children had difficulties reading and following the instructions in the questionnaire.
10. While the children completed the questionnaire, one of the teachers completed the **Student Assessment Record** by filling in the academic and reading performance data for each participant based on his or her fifth grade year end report. In only one instance were grades unavailable as the child in question had recently transferred from another school. Her class teacher was then asked to apply her individual judgement in determining her rank.
11. After the children were finished and all the questionnaires collected, free pens were handed out as a surprise token of appreciation for their participation. Each school was also presented with a book on science experiments for the library/classroom collection.
12. The **School Questionnaire**, handed out earlier, was then collected from the principal prior to the researcher's departure.

### **3.6.3 The Interviews**

For the interviews the following procedure was followed:

1. After the sub-sample was appropriately identified, three letters were sent to each school involved a month before the anticipated time of the interviews . The first letter (see **Appendix 8**) was addressed to the principal reminding him of the commitment to allow for follow-up interviews at the school and informing him of the name/s of the students chosen and a proposed date for the meeting.

The other two letters were addressed to the parent/guardian of the child and to the child, respectively. The parent/guardian's letter (see **Appendix 9**) informed him/ her of the selection of his/her child for interview, what would be involved and the need to grant permission for the child to participate. A section was included that could be cut off and returned with the parent/guardian's response.

The child's letter (see **Appendix 10**) reminded him/her of the questionnaire he/she had previously completed and informed him/her of being selected for the Interview, and the purpose of the meeting. No response was requested since the parent was expected to reply on behalf of the student.

2. Once a positive response was received about the child's participation (no parent refused), the date was confirmed with the principal since the child would be interviewed at school. In preparation for the interviews which were to be recorded, a separate cassette tape was assigned to each child

and appropriately labelled with his or her identity number (taken from the questionnaire), the geographic location of the school (urban/rural) and the school code.

3. The school was asked to make a private and quiet place available for the interviews where the researcher met with each child. The student was warmly greeted and asked if he or she remembered the previous visit when the questionnaires were filled in. Every effort was made to put the student at ease while the researcher again explained what the interview was about and what was expected of the child.

In order to make children feel more relaxed, the children were told to speak just as they would to a friend and they were encouraged to use the Jamaican dialect with which many of them felt more comfortable than having to struggle with standard English.

The researcher also began the interview with what were considered non-threatening questions about themselves and what they liked to do. The remainder of the meeting was guided by the items found on the **Interview Schedule** and the answers given by each student to the items on the **Student Questionnaire**.

4. Each interview lasted for approximately 30 minutes. The children were thanked and as a surprise each was presented with a story book in the category that they had indicated as their favourite on the questionnaire.

### 3.7 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The information from the **School Questionnaire** was used to provide descriptive statistics in background information on the schools and their library provisions. The interviews were intended to provide insights into the reading interests and habits of the children, and as a result they were not analyzed quantitatively, but presented in narrative form to create profiles of the Jamaican sixth grader readers. The data collected from the **Student Questionnaire** were coded and processed using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Since most of the data was ranked and thus not normally distributed, non-parametric analyses were used to test the hypotheses. First the data were subjected to Kruskal-Wallis Tests to indicate whether there were any significant differences among the four subgroups of the sample. These tests would show if there was at least one group that was significantly different from the others, although it would not be able to identify which one. For this reason, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to any significant results from the Kruskal-Wallis Tests to examine the main effects and interactions.

In only one instance, the case of the second part of **Question 14**, due to the categorical nature of the data, it was considered more appropriate to use Chi-square tests. In addition, the first three questions on the **Student Questionnaire** that were intended to furnish demographic details about the

sample were presented using descriptive statistics.

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## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

What follows in this chapter is the description and analysis of the data collected via the **Student Questionnaire** (See **Appendix 4**) and the **Student Assessment Record** (See **Appendix 2**). The results are reported in relation to the objectives of the study which were to identify the voluntary reading interests of Jamaican sixth graders in terms of the types of books they like to read and their preference for Eurocentric or Afrocentric book characters; and to discover some of their reading habits including how much they like to read and why.

A total of 418 student questionnaires were circulated and all were returned. Therefore, any discrepancy between the actual sample size and the number of responses to any given question was due to some students ignoring individual items or giving inappropriate answers that were not useable.

The following approach was used for analyzing the data. Demographic and other general information about the sample are reported by the use of frequency scores and means, where considered appropriate. The sample was stratified by sex (male/female) and geography (rural/urban) for a total of four groups. Since the data were ranks and not normally distributed, non-parametric analyses were employed for the purpose of hypothesis testing. First, Kruskal-Wallis Tests were used to compare the four groups since these tests would indicate if there were any significant differences between the groups. The Kruskal-Wallis tests would show if there was at least one group that was significantly different from the others although it would not be able to identify which one. For this reason, analysis of variance (ANOVA), which is a robust test, was also applied to any results from the Kruskal-Wallis Tests which were significant in order to examine the main effects and interaction between sex and geography (and academic performance, where necessary).

In the few instances where the data were categorical and not inherently ordered, chi-square tests were used.

The data gleaned during the interviews are not presented here but separately in the Chapter 5 in a narrative form since the intention was not to analyze this information quantitatively but rather to use it to add a qualitative dimension to the study.

## 4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Questions 1 - 3 on the **Student Questionnaire** and the data from the **Student Assessment Record** provided the demographic information about the sample and furnished a context within which to view the rest of the findings. Only descriptive statistics are discussed in this section because the making of inferences was not the objective.

### 4.2.1 Sex and Geographic Location of Sample

**Question 1: I am a : Boy ( ) Girl ( )**

**TABLE 2: Distribution of Sample by Geography and Sex**

<b>Sex/Geo</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Total</b>
Boys	101 48.6%	105 50.0%	206 49.3%
Girls	107 51.4%	105 50.0%	212 50.7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	208	210	418 100%

The sample was stratified by sex and geography because previous studies suggested that these two variables would have a pronounced impact on the reading interests and habits of the sixth graders. Attempts were therefore made to obtain an equal representation of children from both sexes and the two geographic locations. This was not fully realised, however, due to unforeseen

circumstances. In some instances the sixth grade classes did not have enough children or the required number of boys, which accounts for the slight imbalance between the four groups in the sample. There were shortfalls in the expected numbers for sex (206 boys, 212 girls) as well as for geographic location (rural 208, urban 210). This also explains why the sample consisted only of 418 instead of the intended 420. Nevertheless, it was felt that such a minor variation was unlikely to have any serious impact on the power of the tests (i.e., their ability to detect significant differences, where they exist).

#### **4.2.2 Academic and Reading Performance**

On the **Student Assessment Record** class teachers were asked to assign each child a number from a scale of 1 - 3 (1 = above average, a score of 70 and over, 2 = average, a score of 50-69 and 3 = below average, scores below 49) for both their academic and reading performance. This evaluation was based on the children's annual school report for the previous year (Grade 5) which was done in July 1993. The use of this record was considered necessary because the survey was conducted near the beginning of the 1993/4 academic year which was too early to assess the students' performance since entrance into the sixth grade in September, 1993. **Tables 3 and 4** show the findings.

**TABLE 3: Teacher Evaluation of Children's Academic Performance Based on Grade 5 Standing**

Academic Performance	BOYS		GIRLS		Total
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Above Average (70 +)	20 19.8%	4 3.8%	39 36.4%	15 14.3%	78 18.7%
Average (50-69)	37 36.6%	34 32.4%	38 35.5%	59 56.2%	168 40.2%
Below Average (0-49)	44 43.6%	67 63.8%	30 28.1%	31 29.5%	172 41.1%
<b>TOTAL</b>	101	105	107	105	418 100%

Overall, seventy-eight (18.7%) of the children were assessed as above average, but this figure obscures the large differences by groups. Among the boys, 19.8% of the rural but only 3.8% of the urban were assessed as above average. The corresponding percentage for the girls are 36.4% rural and 14.3% urban. The remainder of the sample was split almost equally between average (40.1%) and below average performance (41.1%). For the average performance group, urban girls (56.2%) constituted the majority. Forty-one percent (41.1%) is a large proportion of the children to be regarded as performing below the required grade level and among the four groups, urban boys (63.8%) were the most numerous into this category.

From the data, it would appear that the girls are being assessed higher

than boys. However, caution should be applied when interpreting these data since standardised tests were not used in assessing the children.

**TABLE 4: Teacher Evaluation of Children's Reading Performance Based on Grade 5 Standing**

Reading Performance	BOYS		GIRLS		Total
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Above Average	21 20.8%	9 8.6%	42 39.3%	21 20.0%	93 22.3%
Average	44 43.6%	34 32.4%	41 38.3%	60 57.1%	179 42.8%
Below Average	36 35.6%	62 59.0%	24 22.4%	24 22.9%	146 34.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	101	105	107	105	418 100%

With regards to the 93 (22.3%) of the sample rated above average, 63 or 67.7% were girls and the rural children were more numerous. Urban boys were clearly in the minority (8.6%). A more equitable distribution was found for geographic location and sex at the average performance level, with urban girls having a slight edge over the others. Once more, at the below average level, boys (98 or 67.1%) greatly outnumbered girls (48 or 32.9%) and urban (86 or 58.9%) rural (60 or 41.1%). It was also very noticeable that urban boys (59.0%) comprised the largest group.

Since the scores for both academic and reading performance seemed to be closely matched a Spearman correlation was performed on both sets of data. The result showed a high positive correlation between the two ( $r = .86$ ). It was

therefore felt that the results would be almost the same whether academic or reading performance was studied. For this reason, wherever there were similar hypotheses with the only difference being references to academic and reading performance, they were combined and tested using only the data for academic performance.

#### 4.2.3 Age of Child

##### Question 2: I am — years old.

The children were asked to indicate their age in order to confirm that they fell within the age range of those described in the literature as "middle readers", that is, children 10 to 12 years old. Children belonging to this age group are thought to be at the peak of their recreational reading, have a reasonably clear idea of the types of books they like to read and are able to communicate this by means of a questionnaire (Kinder, 1967; Meek, 1982).

Table 5 reflects the age range of the children involved.

**TABLE 5: Age Range of the Sample**

Years	Boys	Girls	Total	%
9	1	2	3	0.7
10	27	20	47	11.2
11	123	150	273	65.3
12	53	40	93	22.3
13	2	0	2	0.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	206	212	418	100.0

The children's ages ranged from 9 to 13 with the majority (87.5%) being within the eleven to twelve age group. Very few children were either 9 or 13 years old (1.2% combined) which meant that the mean age of the sample was 11.1 years. Therefore, the sample could be identified as belonging to those designated as "middle readers" by the literature.

#### **4.2.4 Library Membership Among the Sample**

**Question 3: I am a member of the (you may tick more than one):**  
**School library, Public library (the bookmobile or a**  
**branch), No library at all, Other (please name).**

Membership in a library implies access to reading materials as well as an interest in reading on the part of the child or adult. In Jamaica, the children usually need to apply formally for membership at the school library, with the approval of their parents, just as they would do for the public one. Membership is therefore not automatic due to attendance at the school. Beside the public and school libraries, some children may also have access to the national library or to those run by churches or other private groups within the community. The distribution of their membership among the available libraries is shown in **Table 6.**

**TABLE 6: The Sixth Graders' Membership in Libraries**

Type of Library	BOYS		GIRLS		Total
	Rural n=101	Urban n=105	Rural n=107	Urban n=105	
School Library	16 14.5%	20 17.2%	37 30.8%	19 16.5%	92 22.0%
Public Library	42 38.2%	22 19.0%	47 39.2%	23 20.0%	134 32.1%
Other	0 0.0%	3 2.6%	2 1.7%	6 5.2%	11 2.6%
No Library At All	52 47.3%	71 61.2%	34 28.3%	67 58.3%	224 53.6%
<b>TOTAL</b>					461*

**\*Total number of responses adds up to more than sample size because the children could choose more than one type of library**

The total in each row reflects the number of times that the membership in a given type of library was chosen. The total number (461) of responses exceeds the sample size because the children were allowed to report membership in more than one type of library. However, the percentages in the final column represent the number of children from the total sample of 418 who chose a given category. The most outstanding fact to emerge from an examination of the data was that more than half (53.6%) the total number of children were not members of any kind of library. More boys (123 or 54.9%) than girls (101 or 45.1%) were numbered among the non-members and more urban (61.6%) than rural (38.4%).

For the rest of the children who held membership in any type of library, the public library was much more common (32.1%) than school library

membership (22%). For both these types of libraries, rural children tended to cite them more often, and girls were in the majority on both occasions. The eleven (2.6%) children who stated "Other" named either the National Library of Jamaica or church libraries.

From the data, it would therefore seem that most of the children were not members of any library, and when they took out membership it was more likely to be the public library rather than the school. Also, on the whole, girls were more likely to be members of libraries, and rural children more than urban ones.

### **4.3 READING INTERESTS**

#### **4.3.1 Degree of Interest in Different Types of Books**

**Question 4: Carefully go through ALL the different types of books listed below and beside each one show how much you would like to read it by CIRCLING the Number under one of the following phrases:**

**1 = Very Much, 2 = Maybe, 3 = Not at All.**

This question was in keeping with one of the main objectives of the study which was to find out the voluntary reading interests of Jamaican sixth graders. The children were presented with twenty-four types of books identified from the research as corresponding generally to some of the expected topic interests of ten to twelve years old. There was an equal number of fiction

and informational book types.

The children's level of interest in the different types of books listed was indicated by the assignment of the numbers 1 (I would like to read this very much), 2 (Maybe I would like to read this) or 3 (I would not like to read this at all) to each type of book presented. To make the results easier to understand the scores were reversed so that 3 now meant "I would like to read this very much", 2 " Maybe I would like to read this" and 1 "I would not like to read this at all". Therefore, the higher the mean score (maximum 3) the more interested the children would be in reading the type of book.

The simplest way to present the results for this question was to calculate a mean score for each type of book (obtained by summing all scores assigned to a given book type and then dividing by 418 - the sample size). These are presented in **Table 7**. Higher means indicate greater interest. The maximum possible score of 3 would mean that all of the children had said they would like to read this type of book very much. Based on this method of calculation, the following interest level scale was devised so as to allow the mean scores to be used to reflect the different levels of interest displayed by the total sample as well as across the four sub-groups toward each type of book when compared with all the other types listed. This way too, it was easier to identify the more interesting book types and the less appealing ones. For the purpose of the discussion, the scale values will be referred to as: 1 - 2.34 = low interest (LI).

2.35 - 2.44 = moderate interest (MI), 2.45 - 3 = high interest (HI).

**TABLE 7: Reading Interests of Rural/Urban Boys and Girls (Based on Mean Scores)**

TYPES OF BOOKS	MEANS SCORES					+p value
	ALL SCORES	BOYS		GIRLS		
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Riddles & Jokes (HI)	2.793	2.724	2.8	2.766	2.882	0.104
Fairy Tales	2.563	2.505	2.421	2.737	2.574	0.0087*
Things to Make & Do	2.558	2.375	2.485	2.650	2.710	0.0001*
Science	2.529	2.630	2.565	2.523	2.400	0.181
People in Other Lands	2.513	2.520	2.425	2.576	2.530	0.506
Adventure Stories	2.483	2.305	2.520	2.580	2.514	0.0339*
Humorous Stories	2.471	2.589	2.275	2.617	2.400	0.0011*
Family Stories	2.468	2.510	2.313	2.495	2.554	0.125
Sports	2.467	2.630	2.597	2.323	2.330	0.0006*
Lives of Famous People	2.465	2.385	2.425	2.578	2.466	0.379
Animal Stories (MI)	2.447	2.525	2.303	2.471	2.485	0.143
Growing Up	2.434	2.530	2.212	2.500	2.490	0.015*
Poetry	2.431	2.239	2.415	2.476	2.578	0.0041*
Love Stories	2.418	2.410	2.577	2.168	2.524	0.0009*
Understanding Myself and Others	2.393	2.290	2.260	2.371	2.643	0.0013*
History (LI)	2.338	2.346	2.343	2.298	2.366	0.904
Music	2.291	2.063	2.287	2.274	2.524	0.0006*

**Continued...**

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups

\*Significant at the 0.002 level after the Bonferroni adjustment

HI = High Interest (2.45-3), MI = Moderate Interest (2.35-2.44), LI: = Low Interest (1-2.34)

Continued... TABLE 7

**TABLE 7: Reading Interests of Rural/Urban Boys and Girls (Based on Mean Scores)**

TYPES OF BOOKS	MEAN SCORES					
	ALL SCORES	BOYS		GIRLS		+p value
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Machines	2.281	2.577	2.340	2.300	1.920	0.0001*
Dancing	2.251	2.020	2.103	2.336	2.529	0.0001*
Horror Stories	2.186	2.170	2.316	2.078	2.178	0.267
Mystery Stories	2.185	2.164	2.063	2.174	2.330	0.165
Science Fiction	2.177	2.135	2.336	2.173	2.069	0.061
War Stories	2.114	2.298	2.460	1.778	1.941	0.0001*
Fantasy	2.035	2.021	2.085	2.077	1.96	.0694

**+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups**

**\*Significant at the 0.002 level after the Bonferroni adjustment**

**HI = High Interest (2.45-3), MI = Moderate Interest (2.35-2.44),**

**LI: = Low Interest (1-2.34)**

From the overall mean scores it was observed that the children displayed very high interest in Riddles and Jokes (2.793) . Their high interests were: Riddles and Jokes, Fairy Tales, Things to Make and Do. Science, People in Other Lands. Adventure Stories, Humorous Stories, Family Stories. Sports and Lives of Famous People. Their interest tapered off becoming moderate (2.35 - 2.44) for Animal Stories. Growing Up, Poetry. Love Stories and Understanding Myself and Others. The low interest (1.45 - 2.34) book types were History, Music, Machines, Dancing, Horror Stories, Mystery Stories, Science Fiction,

War Stories and Fantasy, in that order.

None of the 24 categories received a mean score of less than 1.7 which would indicate that the sixth graders have a broad range of interests. On the other hand, it could also mean that they were reluctant to express an outright dislike for any category and so they veered toward the middle choice of "Maybe". Also noticeable was the strong interest in traditional literature (i.e., Riddles and Jokes and Fairy Tales). Informational topics (with the exception of History, Music, Machines and Dancing, which attracted a low level of interest) were ranked as being either of high or moderate interest.

The children's reaction to the twelve fiction categories (including Fairy Tales and Poetry) was mixed. While seven featured at the high or moderate levels of interest, five (Horror Stories, Mystery Stories, Science Fiction, War Stories and Fantasy) could be ranked as the least appealing with mean scores lower than that of any of the non-fiction categories.

With reference to the breadth of interests displayed by the four groups in the twenty-four categories of books presented, the girls (urban = 14, rural = 12) on a whole expressed high interest in a wider variety of book types than the boys (rural = 10, urban = 7). The following table gives a clearer picture of each group's ranking of each book type based on its mean score when compared with the others.

**TABLE 8: Ranking of Reading Interests  
by the Four Rural/Urban Boys and Girls**

BOOK TYPE	RANK ASSIGNED BY EACH OF THE FOUR GROUPS			
	BOYS		GIRLS	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Riddles & Jokes	1	1	1	1
Science	2	4	8	16
Sports	3	2	15	18
Humorous Stories	4	19	4	15
Machines	5	13	16	24
Growing Up	6	21	9	12
Animal Stories	7	17	12	13
People in Other Lands	8	9	7	8
Family Stories	9	16	10	6
Fairy Tales	10	10	2	5
Love Stories	11	3	19	7
Lives of Famous People	12	8	6	14
Things to Make and Do	13	6	3	2
History	14	12	17	17
Adventure Stories	15	5	5	11
War Stories	16	7	24	23
Understanding Myself and Others	17	20	13	3
Poetry	18	11	11	4
Horror Stories	19	15	20	20
Mystery Stories	20	24	22	19
Science Fiction	21	14	23	21
Music	22	18	18	10
Fantasy	23	23	21	22
Dancing	24	22	14	9

From the above table, similarities and differences in book choice among the four groups are much more obvious. For example, observable differences can be seen immediately in the girls greater interest in Dancing, Things to Make

and Do, Fairy Tales, Poetry, Understanding Myself and Others and Music in comparison to the boys' interest in Science, Sports, Machines, History, Love Stories and War Stories. There also seems to be a remarkable geographic effect in the case of Humorous Stories, with rural children showing a stronger interest in contrast to the low rank given by the urban students. Rural boys' strong interest in books on Growing Up when compared to urban boys, is also a little unexpected.

In order to determine if these and other differences detected among the four sample groups were statistically significant, the following hypothesis was tested.

**Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between urban and rural boys and girls in their preference for certain types of books**

When the data were subjected to the Kruskal-Wallis Test, significant differences in the reading interests of the four groups of children were found for thirteen of the twenty-four book categories - Adventure Stories, Fairy Tales, Dancing, Growing Up, Humorous Stories, Love Stories, Machines, Music, Poetry, Sports, Things to Make and Do, Understanding Myself and Others, and War Stories. However, we would expect a certain number of significant results to occur by chance alone given the large number of tests done; however, if the 24 tests are performed at the 0.002 significance level, the overall probability of identifying at least one significant result by chance alone is 0.05, the desired significance level for the study. Therefore after the Bonferroni correction for

multiple tests, the significant findings from the Kruskal-Wallis tests were reduced by four categories - Adventure, Fairy Tales, Growing Up and Poetry - because they had  $p$  values above 0.002 which could have occurred by chance.

For the remaining nine categories, ANOVA was used to determine the source of the significant differences. The results of these tests are discussed below. In each case, the dependent variable was the score students assigned a particular type of book; the independent variables were sex and geography. So as not to interrupt the flow of the presentation the details of the ANOVA results for each of the different book categories are to be found in Appendix 11. Therefore, only the summary for each book type showing significant differences will be presented here.

**Dancing:** ( $F$  value = 8.40,  $Df$  = 3, 398,  $p$  value = 0.0001;  $p$  values: Geography = 0.0842, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.4903). Only the main effect of sex was significant, with girls expressing a higher level of interest in this type of book than boys. Therefore, it can be said that no matter where they lived, girls tended to show greater interest in this type of story.

**Humorous Stories:** ( $F$  value = 5.37,  $Df$  = 3, 391,  $p$  value = 0.0012;  $p$  values: Geography = 0.0002, Sex = 0.2756, Interaction = 0.4914). The main effect was produced by geography with rural boys and girls showing strong interest in these books unlike the moderate and low interest of urban girls and boys respectively.

**Love Stories:** (F value = 6.32, Df = 3,390, p value = 0.0003; p values: Geography = 0.0004, Sex = 0.0439, Interaction = 0.1941). The interaction was not significant. The main factors responsible for the significant difference was geography and sex. Both urban boys (2.58) and girls (2.52) had scores at the high interest level thus indicating a stronger preference for Love Stories than exhibited by rural children (boys 2.41, girls 2.17). Sex also had an effect, in that the boys tended to prefer love stories a little more than the girls.

**Machines:** (F value =14.00, Df = 3, 394, p value = 0 .0001; p values: Geography = 0.0001, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.3251). Both sex and geography were significant in predicting the children's expression of interest in this type of informational book. Boys were more interested in this than girls. Rural children tended to rank it higher than their urban peers.

**Music:** (F value = 5.51, Df = 3, 394, p value = 0.0010; p values: Geography = 0.0031, Sex = 0.0051, Interaction = 0.8656). There was no significant interaction. There were significant main effects brought about by geography and sex. Those children who lived in the city tended to show a greater preference for Music, while girls were inclined to prefer this type of book more.

**Sports:** (F value = 5.60, Df = 3, 398, p value = 0.0009;p values: Geography = 0.8542, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.7858). Geography was not significant and there was no interaction. Both sets of boys registered the same

level of high interest in Sports (2.63, 2.59) while rural and urban girls (2.32, 2.33) had a low level of interest in the subject. Sex was therefore responsible for the main effect with boys preferring these books more.

**Things to Make and Do:** (F value = 5.86, Df = 3, 399, p value = 0.0006; Geography = 0.1788, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.6844). The interaction was not significant, neither was geography. Sex produced the significant difference. The girls (urban 2.71, rural 2.65) seemed to be very interested in the topic, while the boys' responded with much more restraint.

**Understanding Myself and Others:** (F value = 6.01, Df = 3, 395, p value = 0.0005; p values: Geography = 0.0909, Sex = 0.0012, Interaction = 0.0346). There was a significant interaction between sex and geography. Urban girls (2.64) were by far the most interested group in this type of book, with urban boys the least interested group.

**War Stories:** (F value = 15.00, Df = 3, 399, p value = 0.0001; p values: Geography = 0.0471, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.9936). There was no significant interaction, but sex and geography did make a significant difference to the children's responses. War stories attracted a very negative response from girls (1.94 urban, 1.78 rural), wherever they lived. Conversely, the boys ranked it much higher on both counts (2.46 urban, 2.23 rural). Geography also impacted on their choices too, as urban children ranked these books somewhat higher than their rural peers.

A summary of the findings based on the hypothesis related to Question 4 is presented in the following table.

**TABLE 9: Summary Of Significant Findings From ANOVA For Reading Interests**

BOOK TYPE	Main Effects		Interaction
	Geography	Sex	Geog/Sex
1. Dancing	No	Yes	No
2. Humorous Stories	Yes	No	No
3. Love Stories	Yes	Yes	No
4. Machines	Yes	Yes	No
5. Music	Yes	Yes	No
6. Sports	No	Yes	No
7. Things to Make and Do	No	Yes	No
8. Understanding Myself and Others	-	-	Yes
9. War Stories	Yes	Yes	No

In conclusion, sex rather than geography was more frequently responsible for determining the kinds of books the Jamaican sixth graders were interested in reading. Among the nine book categories, sex was significant for all but one for which geography was solely responsible for the children's book choices. For the single significant interaction, urban girls were more attracted to books about Understanding Myself and Others than any of the other groups.

Overall, the boys clearly indicated their greater interest in Love Stories, Machines, Sports and War Stories. On the other hand, the girls were more

interested in Dancing, Music and Things to Make and Do. To a lesser extent geography influenced book choice. Urban children were more interested in Love Stories, Music and War Stories. Rural boys and girls favoured Humorous Stories and books about Machines more than urban children.

The following hypothesis was subsequently tested.

**Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls of above average, average and below average academic performance in their preference for certain types of books**

The following approach was used when analyzing the data. First, a series of Kruskal-Wallis tests were conducted to identify those reading interests that were significant statistically when academic performance was added to geography and sex. ANOVA was then performed on any significant results to detect the actual source of differences.

In this case, the null hypothesis was retained for thirteen of the twenty-four book types; but when the Bonferroni correction (0.002) was applied, the number was further reduced to six. The six types of statistical interest were: Dancing, Humorous Stories, Machines, Sports, Things to Make and Do and War Stories. ANOVA was subsequently applied to these categories.

For easy access to the data and to enhance clarity, the results of both tests for each type of book will be presented in two consecutive tables and

commented on together. Only those findings that have direct bearing on academic performance will be discussed in any detail since sex and geography have been dealt with previously.

### Books on Dancing:

**TABLE 10: Mean Scores arranged by Sex, Geography and Academic Performance to Show Level of Children's Interest in Books on DANCING (Kruskal-Wallis Test)**

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE				+p Value
Groups By Geo/Sex	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0011*
Rural Boys	2.12	1.89	2.11	
Urban Boys	1.90	2.21	2.08	
Rural Girls	2.23	2.44	2.32	
Urban Girls	2.26	2.59	2.54	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve sub-groups.

\* Significant at the 0.05 level

**TABLE 11: ANOVA Summary for Books on DANCING**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	11	21.0393	1.9127	3.00	0.0007*
Within Groups	390	248.5851	0.6374		
Total	401	269.6244			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0116	0.0116	0.03	0.8720
SEX	1	10.4545	10.4545	16.40	0.0001*
ACP	2	2.1992	1.0996	1.73	0.1795
GEO*SEX	1	0.7598	0.7598	1.19	0.2756
GEO*ACP	2	2.2081	1.1041	1.73	0.1783
SEX*ACP	2	0.3235	0.1626	0.26	0.7749
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	1.6131	0.8066	1.27	0.2833

\* Significant at the 0.05 level

Neither geography nor academic performance were significant and there was no interaction. Sex was responsible for the difference as girls in general had greater interest in books on Dancing.

### Humorous Stories:

**TABLE 12: Mean Scores arranged by Sex, Geography and Academic Performance to show Level of Children's Interest in HUMOROUS STORIES (Kruskal-Wallis Test)**

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE				+p Value for All
Groups By Geo/Sex	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0014*
Rural Boys	2.84	2.51	2.93	
Urban Boys	2.25	2.27	2.28	
Rural Girls	2.74	2.53	2.57	
Urban Girls	2.45	2.24	2.73	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve sub-groups.

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

**TABLE 13: ANOVA Summary for HUMOROUS STORIES**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	11	14.6754	1.3341	2.81	0.0015*
Within groups	383	181.7397	0.4745		
Total	394	196.4151			
Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	3.6482	3.6482	7.69	0.0058*
SEX	1	0.2833	0.5478	1.15	0.2833
ACP	2	2.0434	1.0217	2.15	0.1175
GEO*SEX	1	0.7841	0.7841	1.65	0.1994
GEO*ACP	2	1.5435	0.7717	1.63	0.1980
SEX*ACP	2	1.1559	0.5779	1.22	0.2970
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	0.9930	0.4965	1.05	0.3522

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

Sex and academic performance were not significant and there was no interaction. Geography was responsible for the main effects as rural children liked Humorous Stories more than urban children.

### Books on Machines:

**TABLE 14: Mean Scores arranged by Sex, Geography and Academic Performance to show Level of Children's Interest in Books on MACHINES**

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE				+p Value for All
Groups By Geo/Sex	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0001*
Rural Boys	2.61	2.63	2.51	
Urban Boys	2.24	2.44	2.28	
Rural Girls	1.47	2.40	2.55	
Urban Girls	2.45	1.98	2.03	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve sub-groups.

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

**TABLE 15: ANOVA Summary for Books on MACHINES**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr>F
Between Groups	11	31.6796	2.8799	5.65	0.0001*
Within Groups	386	196.8028	0.5099		
Total	397	228.4824			
Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
GEO	1	8.5428	8.5428	16.76	0.0001*
SEX	1	8.4341	8.4341	16.54	0.0001*
ACP	2	2.6011	1.3005	2.55	0.0793
GEO*SEX	1	0.8495	0.8495	1.67	0.1975
GEO*ACP	2	0.1999	0.0999	0.20	0.8220
SEX*ACP	2	3.9122	1.4561	2.86	0.0587
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	0.0329	0.0164	0.03	0.9682

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

Geography and sex were significant but not academic performance, and there were no significant interactions for books about Machines.

### Books on Sports:

**TABLE 16: Mean Scores arranged by Sex, Geography and Academic Performance to show Level of Children's Interest in Books on SPORTS**

GROUPS BY GEO/SEX	ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE			+p Value for All
	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0001*
Rural Boys	2.75	2.46	2.72	
Urban Boys	2.75	2.48	2.65	
Rural Girls	1.62	2.37	2.39	
Urban Girls	1.87	2.61	1.96	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve subgroups.

\* Significant at the 0.05 level

**TABLE 17: ANOVA Summary for Books on SPORTS**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
Between Groups	11	22.6743	2.0613	4.38	0.0001*
Within Groups	390	183.4053	0.4703		
Total	401	206.0796			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
GEO	1	0.5915	0.5915	1.26	0.2627
SEX	1	9.3695	9.3695	19.92	0.0001*
ACP	2	0.3034	0.1517	0.32	0.7244
GEO*SEX	1	0.4253	0.4253	0.90	0.3422
GEO*ACP	2	2.9216	1.4608	3.11	0.0459*
SEX*ACP	2	7.1443	3.5721	7.60	0.0006*
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	1.7654	0.8826	1.88	0.1545

\*Significant at 0.05 level

There were two interactions - academic performance/geography and

academic performance/sex. A closer examination of how sex and academic performance interacted shows that while above average boys liked Sports the most, their female counterparts liked it the least of all groups. With regard to academic performance and geography, it is of borderline significance and much more difficult to explain. Rural children of a below average academic performance seemed to like these books the most.

### Books on Things to Make and Do:

**TABLE 18: Mean Scores arranged by Sex, Geography and Academic Performance to show Level of Children's Interest in Books on THINGS TO MAKE and DO**

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE				+p Value for All
Groups	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0001*
Rural Boys	2.24	2.41	2.41	
Urban Boys	2.00	2.62	2.45	
Rural Girls	2.85	2.63	2.42	
Urban Girls	2.40	2.41	2.78	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve sub-groups. \*Significant at the 0.05 level

**TABLE 19: ANOVA Summary for Books On THINGS TO MAKE and DO**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
Between Groups	11	13.8570	1.2597	3.25	0.0003*
Within groups	391	151.5226	0.3875		
Total	402	165.3796			
Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
GEO	1	0.0061	0.0061	0.02	0.8996
SEX	1	4.8334	4.8334	12.47	0.0005*
ACP	2	0.9145	0.9572	2.47	0.0859
GEO*SEX	1	0.0013	0.0013	0.00	0.9538
GEO*ACP	2	2.4548	1.2274	3.17	0.0432*
SEX*ACP	2	1.9496	0.4748	1.23	0.2948
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	1.0190	0.5095	1.31	0.2697

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

Sex was significant as girls tended to like these books more. An interaction was also observed for geography/academic performance as rural above average and urban below average children rated books on Things to make and Do higher.

### War Stories:

**TABLE 20: Mean Scores arranged by Sex, Geography and Academic Performance to Show Level of Children's Interest in WAR STORIES**

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE				+p Value for All
Groups By Geo/Sex	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0001*
Rural Boys	2.05	2.33	2.38	
Urban Boys	2.75	2.52	2.40	
Rural Girls	1.74	1.54	2.14	
Urban Girls	1.39	2.00	2.10	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve sub-groups. \*Significant at 0.05 level

**TABLE 21: ANOVA Summary for WAR STORIES**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
Between Groups	11	43.4250	3.9477	6.14	0.0001*
Within groups	391	251.3243	0.6427		
Total	402	294.7493			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.6326	1.6326	2.54	0.1118
SEX	1	20.3436	20.3436	31.65	0.0001*
ACP	2	3.1532	1.5766	2.45	0.0874
GEO*SEX	1	1.1493	1.1493	1.79	0.1819
GEO*ACP	2	2.1063	1.0531	1.64	0.1956
SEX*ACP	2	4.0533	2.0266	3.15	0.0438*
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	3.4453	1.7226	2.68	0.0698

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

There was a significant interaction between academic performance and sex. Although boys in the above average group showed a greater predilection for these types of books, girls in this group liked it the least and this pattern ran through all the performance groups. Attention should be drawn to the smallness of the above average urban boys as a group, (only 4 according to **Table 3**) which might in part explain their high mean score of 2.75.

A summary of the hypotheses findings indicates that the impact of academic performance on children's reading interests was significant for only three of the six book types and always in interaction with either geography or sex. Therefore no clear picture emerged of one type of book being of highest appeal to any academic level.

There was no significant difference among the academic groups in their interest in Humorous Stories and books about Machines and Dancing. Only for War Stories, Things to Make and Do and Sports did academic performance produce a significant effect. War Stories appealed most to above average urban boys and to a lesser extent, all other males. Girls of all academic levels were much less in favour of these books, but above average girls liked them the least.

For books on Things to Make and Do, girls were more interested however the interaction between geography and academic performance was less clear cut: above average rural and below average urban were the most interested. For Sports books, academic performance and sex interacted with

boys of above average ability liked it most while their female counterparts liked it the least. Academic performance and geography also affected interest, as rural children of below average ability liked Sports stories the most.

#### **4.3.2 Favourite Types of Books**

**Question 5: From the list above select the THREE types of books you like to read the MOST and write them in the spaces below (1 = the type you like the most, 2 = your second favourite type and 3 = your third favourite type)**

Previously the children were presented with a list of 24 types of books and asked to indicate their general level of interest in each one. However, in responding to **Question 4**, the children could be expressing interest that is hypothetical or based on actual encounters with the types of books listed. Similarly, there are no guarantees that interest in a subject will lead to its enjoyment. So while the earlier question tried to establish the sort of books the children were generally interested in, **Question 5** went a step further in trying to identify more precisely the types of books the children had found pleasure in reading. This was done by asking each child to indicate his or her three favourite book types from among the twenty-four categories given.

It was anticipated that the likelihood was greater in this instance that the children would base their choices on prior encounters with actual books and that their responses would provide a more accurate picture of what the children were

currently interested in reading. The results could also help to confirm some of the interests already identified in **Question 4**. It should also be borne in mind, however, that their responses are likely to be conditioned by the supply of reading materials available as well as the number of book categories presented by the list.

Three hundred and eighty-six (386 or 76%) of the four hundred and eighteen (418) students responded to this question. **Table 22** summarizes and ranks the data on the basis of the overall tally for the number of times each type of book was chosen as favourite 1, 2 or 3. By this method the overall popularity of each type with the sample was determined.

**TABLE 22: Ranking of Favourite Types of Books Based on the Frequency with which Each Type Was Chosen as Favourites 1, 2, and 3**

Type of Book	1st FAV	2nd FAV	3rd FAV	Total	%*
Fairy Tales	83	46	31	159	41.2
Love Stories	44	45	33	122	28.5
Animal Stories	41	37	29	107	27.7
Riddles & Jokes	21	28	39	88	22.7
Family Stories	31	28	27	86	22.3
Adventure Stories	44	26	11	81	21.0
Dancing	28	29	23	80	20.7
Horror Stories	30	18	25	73	18.9

\* Percentages represent the proportion of the 386 children who responded.

**Continued.../**

TABLE 22 Continued...

**TABLE 22: Ranking of Favourite Types of Books Based on the Frequency with which Each Type Was Chosen as Favourites 1, 2, and 3**

Type of Book	1st FAV	2nd FAV	3rd FAV	Total	%*
Sports	14	18	15	47	12.2
War Stories	14	10	14	38	9.8
Growing Up	7	13	14	34	8.8
Fantasy	1	14	18	33	8.5
Music	4	15	11	30	7.7
Poetry	4	9	17	30	7.7
Mystery Stories	1	12	16	29	7.5
People in other Lands	9	5	14	28	7.3
Science Fiction	4	10	11	25	6.5
Machines	5	10	8	23	5.9
Things to Make & Do	6	7	10	23	5.9
Lives of Famous People	8	9	6	23	5.9
History	3	10	6	19	4.9
Humorous Stories	4	4	8	16	4.1
Science	2	4	9	15	3.9
Understanding Myself & Others	0	2	7	9	2.3

\* Percentages represent the proportion of the 386 children who responded.

Based on the range of the frequency scores (9 - 159), only the first seven of the twenty-four book types were found to be favourites for 20% or more of the children. After this, the scores were widely dispersed among the remaining

seventeen categories which resulted in each type being chosen as a favourite by a much smaller number of children. Thus it would seem that the children had only a few favourite book types in common, and that their tastes in general were very diverse. When asked to choose the kind of books they really enjoyed reading (and presumably had available), the children made it clear that they greatly favoured fictional works over informational ones.

Of the twelve fictional types (including Fairy Tales and Poetry) on the inventory, six were ranked at the very top where each reflected the choice of 18.9% or more of the children who responded. These were: Fairy Tales, Love Stories, Animal Stories, Family Stories, Adventure Stories and Horror Stories.

Although the scores could be considered low for all the other book types since they attracted less than 10% of the children (except for Sports 12.2%), four of the other fiction types - War Stories, Mystery Stories, Fantasy, and Poetry - clustered near the top of the remaining categories. Only three - Fantasy (8.9%), Science Fiction (6.5%) and Humorous Stories (4.1%) - were found near the end of the inventory. Dancing (24.4%) and Riddles and Jokes (22.8%) were the only non-narrative type of books to get a very high ranking as a favourite.

Except for Sports (12.2%), the remaining fifteen book categories counted less often as favourites in that they each gained less than 10% of the children's votes. Six of these were fiction - War Stories, Fantasy, Mystery Stories,

Poetry, Science Fiction and Humorous Stories. The remaining nine were non-fiction - Sports, Music, People in Other Lands, Machines, Things to Make and Do, Lives of Famous People, History, Science and Understanding Myself and Others. Most of these were ranked near the end of the list, indicating that they were not popular with many children.

When these general findings were compared with the responses to **Question 4**, they confirmed the strong interest in Fairy Tales, Riddles and Jokes and Adventure Stories. Similarly, a low interest in Science Fiction, Machines and History was reflected in both instances. For the other categories, there were many disparities in the two sets of rankings. A possible reason for these dissimilarities may be the matter of social desirability mentioned earlier. The children might have been motivated to express strong interest in certain types of books like Science and other informational works in order to please or impress their teachers and/or the researcher. The choice of several non-fiction categories as areas of interest could also result from the children's belief that reading is primarily for utility as shown by their more frequent citing of this reason for reading (**Question 14**). Perhaps, too, some of these differences reflect the unavailability of books in general, as well as the absence of specific genres. The variation in the two sets of findings also helps to reveal some of the problems relating to reading interests research.

## 4.4 READING HABITS

### 4.4.1 Number of Books Read in Two Weeks

**Question 6: Did you read any books in the last TWO weeks?**

**(Do not count the books you read for school work)**

Table 23 summaries the findings for this question.

**TABLE 23: Number of Books Read by Sixth Graders  
Two Weeks Prior to the Survey  
(n= 418)**

Number of Books Read	BOYS		GIRLS		Total	Row %
	Rural n=101	Urban n=105	Rural n=107	Urban n=105		
0	45 44.6%	35 33.3%	33 30.9%	24 22.9%	137	32.8
1	21 20.9%	20 19.0%	18 16.8%	25 23.8%	84	20.2
2	18 17.9%	27 25.7%	37 34.6%	22 21.0%	104	24.9
3	5 4.9%	11 10.5%	9 8.4%	16 15.2%	41	9.8
4	6 5.9%	3 2.9%	4 3.7%	6 5.7%	19	4.5
5	3 2.9%	4 3.8%	1 0.9%	6 5.7%	14	3.3
6 -14	3 2.9%	5 4.8%	5 4.7%	6 5.7%	19	4.4
<b>TOTAL</b>						100

This question was asked to find out the current state of the children's leisure time reading in order to judge more accurately their level of commitment to reading. Two weeks was regarded as a short enough period of time over which children could be expected to recall what they had read,

and a reasonable period for children who are habitual readers to be expected to engage in recreational reading, given resources and time. **Table 23** shows their responses.

The column percentage is included in each cell, while the percentage appearing after the total in each row refers to that row, both sets of percentages will be used in discussing the findings. Nearly a third (32.8%) of the students had read no books during the two week period prior to the survey, while two thirds (67.2%) said they had read between 1 and 14 books. Within the latter group, the majority (54.7%) had read between 1 and 3 books with 2 being the mode. There was little variation in the number of children belonging to each of the four groups who had read only one book, however this changed markedly with the reading of two books where rural girls (34.6%) and urban boys (25.7%) led the way. As the number of books read increased to 3 and beyond the number of children decreased considerably. Thus, it was observed that only 12.2% children read in excess of three books. The majority of were urban girls.

A minute number (19 i.e., 11 girls, 8 boys) or 6.8% of the sample stated that they read between six and fourteen books for the two week period. Overall, 281 students who read one or more books read a total of 721 books which worked out to approximately 2.6 books per student. The remaining 32.8% of the sample, who had not read any books over the period of time.

consisted primarily of urban boys and rural children.

**Table 24** shows the mean scores for number of books read by each group as well as the overall sample during the two week period prior to the administration of the questionnaire.

**Table 24: Number of Books Read by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls During the Two Weeks Preceding the Survey (Based on Mean Scores) (n= 418)**

	Mean for All	BOYS		GIRLS		+p value
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
No of Books Read	1.72	1.41	1.69	1.70	2.07	0.0088*

**+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups**

**\*Significant at the 0.05 level**

Based on the group mean, the results show that, on average, girls did the most reading during the two weeks. Urban girls took the lead, followed by rural girls and urban boys, respectively. Rural boys accounted for the fewest number of books read. To find out if any of the observed differences among the groups was significant, the following hypothesis was tested.

**Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between urban and rural boys and girls in the number of books they read voluntarily**

The results from the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was at least one group that was significantly different from the others ( $p = 0.008$ ) among the four groups, however, the ANOVA (**Table 25**) was not able to pinpoint the

source of the difference, as sometimes happens when the data are skewed.

**TABLE 25: ANOVA Summary for Number of Books Read**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
Between Groups	3	22.7586	7.5862	1.83	0.1407
Within Groups	414	1714.6026	4.1416		
Total	417	1737.3612			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
GEO	1	11.1914	11.1914	2.70	0.1010
SEX	1	11.5843	11.5843	2.80	0.0952
GEO*SEX	1	0.2399	0.2399	0.06	0.8099

Consequently, each group was compared to each other using the Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test to identify the source of the significant difference identified by the Kruskal-Wallis test. **Table 26** indicates the results.

**TABLE 26: Results of the Wilcoxon Sign Rank Test Comparing the Groups on the Basis of Geography and Sex for the Number of Books Read**

GROUPS BEING COMPARED	+p value
Urban Girl and Rural Boy	0.0009*
Urban Girl and Rural Girl	0.1252
Urban Girl and Urban Boy	0.099
Rural Boy and Rural Girl	0.0415*
Rural Boy and Urban Boy	0.0774
Rural Girl and Urban Boy	0.7519

**+p value for Wilcoxon Sign Rank test**

**\*Significant at the 0.05 level**

The results showed that urban boys and rural and urban girls were closely alike, but there was a significant difference between urban girls and rural boys (p value = 0.0009) and rural girls and boys (p = 0.0415). The urban were likely to read the most (2.07), while their rural counterparts, noticeably

the rural boys (1.41), tended to read the least number of books. Rural girls (1.70) also read significantly more than their male counterparts (1.41). From the mean scores, it was observed that being urban and female meant that such children were likely to read more books.

In keeping with the theory that the higher the academic attainment and/or reading ability of the children, the more books they were likely to read, the following hypothesis was also tested in relation to this question.

**Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls of above average, average and below average academic performance in the number of books they read voluntarily**

Table 27 shows the relevant data.

**TABLE 27: Mean Scores for Number of Books Read According to the Sample's Academic Performance, Geography and Sex**

Number of Books Read				+p Value for All
Groups	Above Average	Average	Below Average	0.0006*
Rural Boys	1.42	1.89	1.00	
Urban Boys	4.25	1.82	1.48	
Rural Girls	2.57	1.26	1.13	
Urban Girls	2.07	2.09	2.07	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups.

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there were significant differences ( $p = 0.0006$ ) among the twelve groups of children. When ANOVA was applied the following results emerged:

**TABLE 28: ANOVA Summary for Number of Books Read Based on Geography, Sex and Academic Performance**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	11	114.6308	10.4209	2.61	0.0032*
Within Groups	406	1622.7306	3.9969		
Total	417	1737.3612			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	33.4856	33.4856	8.38	0.0040*
SEX	1	0.8625	0.8625	0.22	0.6425
ACP	2	44.6957	22.3479	5.59	0.0040*
GEO*SEX	1	6.4137	6.4137	1.60	0.2060
GEO*ACP	2	5.5174	2.7587	0.69	0.5021
SEX*ACP	2	9.2789	4.6395	1.16	0.3143
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	36.5674	18.2837	4.57	0.0108*

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

There was a significant interaction among sex, geography and academic performance ( $p = 0.0108$ ). The high mean score (4.25) for above average urban boys was noted which led to the raw data being re-checked for possible coding or entry errors. None was found, but close scrutiny of the data revealed that only four urban boys were graded as above average in academic performance by their teachers (see **Table 3**) and together these students reported reading a total of seventeen books which accounts for the very high mean score, and the significant interaction of geography, sex and academic performance.

Because of the nature of the interaction, it is useful in this case to look at the significant main effects: urban children and the higher academically performing students tended to have read more. From these observations, it could be seen that while academic performance was in some way related to the quantity of books read, but its contribution was not clear.

#### **4.4.2 Sources of Books**

**Question 7: From the list below tick the THREE sources from which you get the most of your books. Then place the number 1, 2 or 3 beside each of the three you choose. (1 = where you get the most; 2 = where you get the second largest number and 3 = where you get the third largest amount)**

Since availability and access to reading materials play a key role in the development and maintenance of reading interests and habits the children were asked to indicate the most common sources for the books they read during their leisure hours. As observed by the researcher and reported earlier, most of the schools did not have a functional library and whatever make shift arrangements existed rarely allowed browsing or the self-selection of books by the children. At some locations the children had access to public libraries or bookshops, but generally books were not readily available. Therefore, the source of the children's books was considered an important variable that would likely affect their reading interests and habits.

The data for this question were processed in the following manner. The children were asked to rank their three choices (1 = source of most books; 2 = second largest source of books; and 3 = third largest source of books). In computing the data, the values assigned to these three items were reversed so that 3 = the source of most books, 2 = the second most common source, 1 = the third most common source. This was done for two reasons: to make it easier to understand so that the nearer the mean to 3 the more positive the response; and to maintain uniformity with **Question 4** and the other questions that used ranks. Therefore, the same approach was used for analyzing responses to **Questions 9, 10, 11 and 12**.

For all these questions, in computing the mean score for each item, since the children were asked to make three choices from a list of several items, the remaining items that were not chosen were assigned a zero score. This approach allowed the comparison of all items in the question to show the average response of the total sample, which explains the small mean scores obtained in some instances.

In **Table 29** the mean scores were used to rank each source in order to show the overall pattern of access to books for each of the four groups.

**TABLE 29: Ranking of Sources of Books by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls (Based on Mean Scores)**

SOURCE OF BOOKS	MEAN SCORES					
	All Sample	BOYS		GIRLS		+p Value
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Friends	1.36	1.03	1.43	1.37	1.62	0.004*
Home	1.33	1.33	1.35	1.27	1.36	0.93
Relatives	0.70	0.66	0.64	0.68	0.82	0.54
Public Library	0.68	0.76	0.46	0.87	0.60	0.03
School Library	0.67	0.73	0.64	0.73	0.57	0.54
Class Library	0.52	0.62	0.65	0.42	0.43	0.19
I Buy It	0.42	0.46	0.53	0.35	0.35	0.61

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups

\*Significant at 0.007 after the Bonferroni correction

The overall mean score showed Friends, Home and Relatives to be the top three sources of reading materials for the majority of the sample. The three types of libraries came next, and, interestingly, the public library preceded both the school and class libraries. Self-purchasing was the least common source used for gaining access to reading material.

When the overall mean was broken down into groups for comparisons on the basis of geography and sex, Friends proved to be the main source of reading materials for all groups except the rural boys who cited Home first, instead of second like all the rest. Libraries of one sort or another fell somewhere in the middle except for Class Library, it was positioned second to last by all but urban boys, who ranked it as high as third.

The School Library held a steady fourth throughout for everyone except urban girls who placed the Public Library in this slot followed by the School Library. In general the order of the different sources cited by rural boys and girls was similar except for the placement of Home and Friends, which alternated between first and second for each group respectively. For both rural groups, the Public Library held third place while urban girls named it as fourth and the boys at a low sixth. Urban girls were the only group giving a high ranking (third) to Relatives. With all others, Relatives fell low (fifth) on the list. For most children, self-purchasing of books was the least common source of reading materials.

For greater clarity a summary of the comparative listing of the four groups' ranking of the various sources based on their mean scores is presented below in **Table 30**.

**TABLE 30: Ranked Listing of Sources of Books For Each Group (Based on Mean Scores)**

	BOYS		GIRLS	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Home	1	2	2	2
Friends	2	1	1	1
Public Library	3	6	3	4
School Library	4	4	4	5
Relatives	5	5	5	3
Class Library	6	3	6	6
Buy Myself	7	7	7	7

The following hypothesis was formulated with the understanding that

while sex was unlikely to have much of an influence on the source from which the children obtained their books, geography might make a difference due to the vast differences between urban and rural life in Jamaica.

**Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls relative to the sources from which they obtain their books**

The null hypothesis was rejected for only two sources - Friends and the Public Library but when the Bonferroni correction (0.007) was applied to reduce the possibility of the effect of chance on the results. significant differences were found only for Friends.

**Friends:** (F value 4.26, Df = 3, 395, p value = 0.0056, Geography = 0.0063, Sex = 0.0296, Interaction = 0.5166). **Table 31** gives the details.

**TABLE 31: ANOVA Summary for Friends as a Source of Books**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	18.0487	6.0162	4.26	0.0056*
Within Groups	395	558.2569	1.4133		
Total	398	576.3056			
Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	10.6440	10.6440	7.53	0.0065*
SEX	1	6.7352	6.7375	4.77	0.0282*
GEO*SEX	1	0.5956	0.5956	0.42	0.5166

**\*Significant at the 0.05 level**

There was no interaction and both geography and sex were significant.

Urban children relied more heavily on Friends than did the rural sixth

graders with girls more likely to do so than boys. Generally, it would seem that geography, slightly more than sex, affected the source from which the children received their reading materials. Urban children tended to rely more on friends, with the girls showing a greater inclination toward this source. Otherwise there would seem to be little difference among the groups as to the main sources they turned to for books.

#### **4.4.3 Book Ownership Among the Sample**

**QUESTION 8: Do You Own Any Books Yourself? If yes, how many?**

**(Give as close a number as you can remember)**

Book ownership can be seen either as an indication of a child's own interest in reading and a commitment to the habit or as an attempt on the part of well meaning adults to foster the reading habit in young people by giving them books. By whatever means children might obtain books for themselves, book ownership should provide ready access to reading materials when required, although other factors such as the genre and the appropriateness of the books for the particular age group will affect their usage.

In Jamaica, books for recreational reading are scarce partly because of their high cost which puts them out of the reach of the average family. It is hardly likely that the inadequately stocked libraries are in a position to supplement the meagre collections in the home. This overall scarcity of

reading material would certainly impact upon the development and practice of the reading habit. This question therefore sought to establish the level of book ownership across the sample to further indicate the availability of books and the children's access to them.

**Table 32** indicates the state of book ownership among the children.

**TABLE 32: Approximate Number of Books Owned By Rural/Urban Boys and Girls**

No. of Books Owned	BOYS		GIRLS		Total	Row %
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
0	40 39.7%*	31 29.5%	33 30.8%	20 19.1%	124	29.8
1-5	40 39.7%	43 41.0%	60 56.6%	63 60.0%	206	49.3
6-10	14 13.9%	19 18.1%	10 9.3%	12 11.4%	55	13.1
11-15	3 2.9%	2 1.9%	2 1.9%	6 5.7%	13	3.1
16-20	2 1.9%	4 3.8%	0 0%	3 2.9%	9	2.1
More than 20, less than 90	2 1.9%	6 5.7%	2 1.9%	1 0.9%	11	2.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	101	105	107	105	418	100

**\*Percentages in the cells refer to the columns**

The most outstanding feature of the data was that nearly a third (29.8%) of the children owned no books at all while a further 49.3% had between 1 and 5. Although the number of books ranged from 1 to 89, the data were grouped for more convenient study. Only 7.8% possessed in excess of ten books each.

and before the data were collapsed the most frequently cited number was one (1) owned by 15.6%. Another 10.6% had two books each and a further 9.6% owned three. For the three highest figures (89, 60 and 50) cited for books owned only one person in each case had that given number of books. The 294 (70.2%) sixth graders who said they owned books had a total of 1,697 among themselves and this reflected a ratio of approximately 5.8 books per student.

When the data were examined on the basis of sex and geography, the following pattern was observed. Of the 29.8% who owned no books overall the boys outnumbered the girls, and many more rural children possessed books than their peers in the city. A larger number of girls, both urban (15%) and rural (14.3%), than boys owned between 1 and 5 books. Nevertheless, as the number of books owned by each child increased beyond 5, the boys on an average tended to outstrip the girls in ownership. So while more boys than girls had no books, they were also the owners of larger individual collections. The tendency for urban children to own larger personal collections than their rural counterparts was also noted.

From the above data, it would seem that the opportunities for recreational reading provided by book ownership were very limited for most Jamaican sixth graders.

#### **4.4.4 Sources of Reading Guidance**

**Question 9: Which THREE of the following do you ask for help**

**MOST of the times when you are trying to decide what books to read? Place the number 1, 2 or 3 beside each of the THREE you choose. (1 = those you ask most often, 2 = those you ask second most often and 3 = those you ask third most often)**

Guidance is crucial in the life of children as they pursue their reading interests, and very often they rely upon significant others for assistance. This person might be the librarian who sees the provision of reading guidance as one of the major aspects of her work as an intermediary between children and books. Teachers, primarily through the literature programme, can also offer help and encouragement in the cultivation of the reading habit. or children might turn to other adults as well as their peers for assistance.

It should be noted that in Jamaican elementary schools there are no library professionals: and school libraries, where they exist, are usually staffed by teachers. Nevertheless, it was expected that at least some of the children would have encountered librarians on their visits to the public library to which 32.1% of the sample said they belonged (see **Table 6**).

For all these reasons, this item on the questionnaire focused on the persons children resorted to most frequently on the average for reading guidance. **Table 33** provides the mean scores for comparison of the four groups with regard to the possible impact of geography and sex on this variable.

**TABLE 33: Rural/Urban Boys' and Girls' Reliance on Others for Reading Guidance (Based on Mean Scores)**

PERSONS	ALL MEAN	BOYS		GIRLS		+p Value
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Parents	1.40	1.27	1.26	1.35	1.74	0.02*
Friends	1.23	0.96	1.30	1.34	1.33	0.05
Teachers	1.09	1.18	1.04	1.13	1.02	0.88
Relatives	0.56	0.52	0.56	0.50	0.66	0.68
Librarians	0.54	0.45	0.66	0.46	0.62	0.18
No One	0.46	0.63	0.37	0.52	0.33	0.17
Other	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.00	0.02	0.51

**+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups**

**\*Significant at the 0.007 level after the Bonferroni correction**

After the application of the Bonferroni correction it was observed that the significance level arrived at meant that none of the above sources were significantly different across the four groups. The discussion will therefore be confined to the overall order of the findings. The data showed the top three categories to be, in order, Parents, Friends and Teachers in that order. The only group that diverted from this was the urban boys who chose Friends first followed by Parents and Teachers. A clearer picture of the children's ranking of the different persons as sources of reading guidance, especially librarians, can be seen in **Table 34**.

**TABLE 34: Ranking of Persons Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Rely on For Reading Guidance (Based on Mean Scores)**

PERSONS	BOYS		GIRLS	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Parents	1	2	1	1
Teachers	2	3	2	3
Friends	3	1	3	2
No One	4	6	4	6
Relatives	5	5	5	4
Librarians	6	4	6	5
Other	7	7	7	7

The highest position attained by Librarians was fourth place ascribed to them by urban boys. The other groups placed these professionals fifth (urban girls) and sixth (rural boys and girls). For these two groups this place is technically last since only "Others" (consisting mostly of other relatives besides those listed) with a very small score came afterwards. Although three of the groups gave Relatives equal billing in fifth place, in all but one instance they obtained a higher place than Librarians. Both rural boys and girls rated "No One" fourth before either Relatives or Librarians, while for urban children there was less reliance on self.

In short, it seems clear from the data that for all groups librarians were displaced by parents, teachers and friends as a source of reading guidance and

that a small core of children relied mostly on themselves, for whatever reason.

The hypothesis relative to this variable was then tested.

**Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their reliance on others for reading guidance**

There seemed to be a significant difference among the four groups with reference to Parents but when the Bonferroni correction (0.007) was applied to the data to minimise the effects of chance producing a significant result, the null hypothesis was not rejected. (See **Appendix 11** for ANOVA results).

#### **4.4.5 Reading as a Leisure Time Activity**

**QUESTION 10: From the list of activities below choose the THREE that you like to do the MOST. Then put Number 1, 2, or 3 beside each of the three you choose. (1 = the one you like the most, 2 = your second favourite activity, 3 = your third favourite activity)**

The literature has shown that while most children tend to recognise the importance of reading very few practise it as a leisure time activity. What children do or plan to do about reading is seen as comprising the behavioural component of reading attitude. Therefore, active involvement in reading during their free time would help to substantiate statements made by the children about

liking to read and also help to confirm whether they have a positive attitude toward reading.

To find out if this were so, the children were presented with an array of leisure time activities considered fairly standard for this particular age group. Reading was included, not only because it was seen as one of their possible pastimes, but also to establish its status as a recreational activity among Jamaican sixth graders. It was hoped that their responses would help to provide further answers to questions regarding how much they like to read and their motivation for doing so, which were also among the objectives of the present study.

The list contained a mixture of solitary and gregarious, active and passive, pastimes likely to appeal to these children and the items were alphabetically arranged so that Reading came near the end. This was to reduce the chance of the children realising the main objective of the question was to find out how highly they ranked reading as a leisure time activity.

The pattern of the children's responses indicated a fairly wide range of leisure time activities with the sexes showing a predilection for certain types of activities, while some pastimes were favourites of both sexes. When the mean scores for the total sample and the four groups were examined, several of these differences were thrown in sharp relief as seen in **Table 35**.

**TABLE 35: The Ranking of Certain Leisure Time Activities (Including Reading) by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls (Based on Mean Scores)**

ACTIVITIES	ALL MEAN	BOYS		GIRLS		+p Value
		Rur.	Urb.	Rur.	Urb.	
Watching TV	1.127	1.30	0.95	1.06	1.21	0.11
Reading	1.014	0.76	0.64	1.35	1.29	0.0001*
Outdoor Games & Sports	0.983	1.31	1.05	0.91	0.69	0.004*
Being With Friends	0.584	0.45	0.50	0.67	0.71	0.13
Listening to Music	0.478	0.39	0.32	0.57	0.63	0.03
Art & Craft	0.461	0.38	0.51	0.46	0.5	0.71
Playing Video Games	0.411	0.48	0.68	0.19	0.31	0.0001*
Indoor Games & Sports	0.353	0.31	0.61	0.33	0.17	0.005*
Going Out	0.230	0.22	0.38	0.16	0.17	0.20
Listening to Radio	0.225	0.3	0.23	0.18	0.2	0.53

**Rur. = rural Urb. = urban**

**+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups**

**\*Significant at 0.005 after the Bonferroni adjustment**

An examination of the children's overall mean scores for choice of leisure time activities shows that Watching Television and Reading, both of which might be regarded as sedentary and somewhat solitary activities, were the two most favoured pastimes recording very high mean scores. The next two activities - Outdoor Games and Sports and Being with Friends - are gregarious and while the former is definitely active, the latter can be either active or passive depending on what the friends do together. Indoor Games and Sports.

Going Out and Listening to Radio were the least popular of all ten recreational activities.

To facilitate intergroup comparisons of the children's ranking of their leisure time activities (including Reading) the following table was created based on the mean scores.

**TABLE 36: Ranked Listing of Recreational Activities for Rural/Urban Boys and Girls (Based on Mean Scores)**

ACTIVITY	RANK ASSIGNED BY GROUPS			
	Rural Boys	Urban Boys	Rural Girls	Urban Girls
Outdoor Games & Sports	1	1	3	4
Watching TV	2	2	2	2
Reading	3	4	1	1
Video Games	4	3	8	7
Being with Friends	5	7	4	3
Listening to Music	6	9	5	5
Art & Craft	7	6	6	6
Indoor Games & Sports	8	5	7	9
Listening to Radio	9	10	9	8
Going Out	10	8	10	10

Rural and urban girls had Reading in the number one position, while for both sets of boys this position was occupied by Outdoor Games and Sports. For all four groups Watching Television took second place on their lists. Rural boys placed Reading third followed by Video Games, while their urban peers assigned it fourth place preceded by Playing Video Games. Rural and Urban

girls have much in common. Their first six activities were closely matched except for Being with Friends and Outdoor Games and Sports which alternately placed third for the rural group and fourth for the urban one. Both groups of girls ranked Indoor Sports and Games, Video Games, Listening to the Radio and Going Out at the bottom of their lists.

The boys' most favoured pastimes were closely matched, with a few variations. Both groups agreed on Outdoor Games and Sports and Watching Television as their top choices along with Reading and Video Games, alternately taking third and fourth place for rural and urban boys respectively. They differed in their liking for Indoor Sports and Games. Being With Friends and Listening to Music. Urban boys ranked the last two much lower than rural boys who, in turn, responded more positively to Indoor Sports and Games. They both shared with girls a dislike for Listening to the Radio and Going Out. The pertinent hypothesis was then tested.

**Hypothesis 7: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their ranking of reading as a leisure time activity**

The null hypothesis was rejected for reading as a leisure time activity. Since the other recreational activities did not relate directly to the hypothesis, the results of their ANOVA were not included for discussion. Even after the Bonferroni correction (0.005) was applied the findings for Reading still showed

statistical significance.

**Reading:** (F value 9.78, Df = 3, 412, p value = 0.0001; p values: Geography = 0.4297, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.7891). This summary of the ANOVA results indicates that there was no interaction and geography was not significant. Therefore sex was responsible for the difference in the choice of reading as a recreational activity. Wherever girls lived, they seemed to prefer to read more during their leisure time than the boys, who appeared a little less enthusiastic about the activity.

The details of the ANOVA presented in **Table 37** confirm that although reading was ranked high as a pastime for all groups, sex was the variable that brought about the main effects.

**TABLE 37: ANOVA Summary for Reading as a Leisure Time Activity**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	40.2735	13.4245	9.78	0.0001*
Within Groups	412	565.6399	1.3729		
Total	415	605.9134			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.8577	0.8577	0.67	0.4297
SEX	1	39.2121	39.2121	28.56	0.0001*
GEO*SEX	1	0.0983	0.0983	0.07	0.7891

**\*Significant at 0.05**

#### **4.4.6 Hindrances to Children Reading More**

**Question 11: From the list below choose the THREE MOST important things that would help you to read more right now. (1 =**

**the most important one, 2 = the second most important one, 3 = the third most important one)**

Although most children seem to regard reading as being of intrinsic value, research has shown that sometimes their reading behaviour is inconsistent with this belief as children tend to read less than expected. When pressed for an explanation for this, children usually offer a variety of personal and social reasons. These include the demands made on their time by school work, domestic chores and other recreational activities; a lack of access to books that interest them; and sometimes they will even admit to poor reading ability. In anticipation that Jamaican sixth graders would not be different from children elsewhere, the researcher posed this question about some of the factors that were seen as hindrances to reading more.

The identification of the activities or conditions that presently detract from the amount of reading they do should throw some light on why children do not read as much as they would like. The nature of their responses could also suggest some of the strategies that librarians, teachers and parents could adopt to facilitate the pursuit of leisure time reading. When the mean score for each factor was calculated for the total sample and for each of the four groups the following picture emerged.

**TABLE 38: Factors That Would Help Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Read More (Based on Mean Scores)**

FACTORS	Total Sample	BOYS		GIRLS		+p Value
		Rur	Urb	Rur	Urb	
Watching Less TV	0.81	0.89	0.86	0.64	0.88	0.22
Less School Work	0.71	0.69	0.59	0.97	0.57	0.044
Library with many Books nearby	0.66	0.57	0.61	0.76	0.70	0.36
Being Good at Reading	0.61	0.94	0.79	0.42	0.30	0.0001*
Having My Own Books	0.60	0.64	0.40	0.82	0.52	0.007
A Place of My Own to Read	0.55	0.38	0.61	0.68	0.51	0.199
Spending Less Time with Friends	0.54	0.49	0.64	0.36	0.69	0.17
Liking to Read	0.41	0.53	0.17	0.58	0.36	0.0016*
Someone to Help Me Know What Books to Read	0.36	0.35	0.50	0.09	0.49	0.0003*
Fewer Chores to Do at Home	0.33	0.23	0.35	0.26	0.47	0.26
Parents Who Encourage Me to Read	0.28	0.29	0.19	0.23	0.43	0.08
Other	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.05	0.30

**Rur = rural Urb = urban**

**+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups**

**\*Significant at 0.004 after the Bonferroni adjustment**

From the total mean score for the number of children who responded from the four groups, Watching Television was the prime detractor from reading more. Too much School Work, not having access to A Library with Many Books Nearby and not Being Good at Reading were also considered to be serious obstacles in the way of leisure time reading. Besides television, which could be seen as a social activity, and the demands of academic work, the most frequently cited hindrances had to do with access to resources, physical facilities and reading ability. It did not seem as if liking to read, fewer domestic chores, parental encouragement or some other source of reading guidance would necessarily make these children read much more than they were doing at the time. This can be observed from the low rank given to these items on the list. **Table 39** shows the ranking of the hindrances by the four groups.

**TABLE 39: Ranking of Factors that would Make Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Read More (Based on Mean Scores)**

FACTORS	BOYS		GIRLS	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Being Good at Reading	1	2	7	11
Watching Less TV	2	1	5	1
Less School Work	3	5	1	4
Having My Own Books	4	7	2	5
Library With Books Nearby	5	4	3	2

Continued ...

Table 39 Continued ...

**TABLE 39: Ranking of Factors that would Make Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Read More (Based on Mean Scores)**

FACTORS	BOYS		GIRLS	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Being Good at Reading	1	2	7	11
Watching Less TV	2	1	5	1
Less School Work	3	5	1	4
Having My Own Books	4	7	2	5
Library With Books Nearby	5	4	3	2
Liking to Read	6	10	6	10
Spending Less Time With Friends	7	3	8	3
A Place of My Own to Read	8	4	4	6
Someone to Help Me Know What Books to Read	9	6	11	7
Parents Who Encourage Me to Read	10	9	10	9
Fewer Chores to Do at Home	11	8	9	8
Other	12	12	12	12

When the mean scores for the four groups of children were compared, the following discoveries were made. For urban children, Watching Less Television was the most important factor that would allow them to read more. This placed second for rural boys who cited Being Good at Reading first. The number one spot for rural girls was taken by Less School Work, while Watching Less Television appeared fifth on their list. For all, Having a Library

with Many Books Nearby ranked fairly high. Encounters with friends seemed to consume a lot of time for urban children (3rd place for both), and rural girls placed much emphasis on having ready access to books and a place of their own to read.

For the boys, it would seem as if fewer domestic chores, parental encouragement and a place of their own to read would not contribute markedly to their reading more since all of these fell among the last four items on their list. Among other things, they were very concerned about not being able to read well. Girls did not feel that Parents Encouraging Them to Read or Fewer Chores at Home would result in any more reading on their part. Rural girls also relegated Spending Less Time with Friends, Someone to Help Me Know What Books to Read to the bottom of their inventory, while their urban counterparts had Liking to Read and Being Good at Reading as least concerns.

To determine if these and other differences were statistically significant the pertinent hypothesis was tested.

**Hypothesis 8: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in the various factors they cite as hindrances to reading more**

For the eleven factors cited as hindrances to the children reading more during their leisure time, the null hypothesis was rejected for only five, but when the Bonferroni correction was applied to make adjustments for the many

tests, it was found that p values of more than 0.004 could have occurred by chance and so two of these factors were omitted from further analysis and discussion. The remaining ones that showed significant differences were: Being Good at Reading, Liking to Read and Someone to Help Me Know What Books to Read. A summary of the ANOVAs is presented below and the details can be seen in **Appendix 11**.

**Being Good at Reading:** (F value 8.43, Df = 3, 412, p value = 0.0001; p values: Geography = 0.1765, Sex = 0.0001, Interaction = 0.9126). There was no interaction and geography was not significant. Sex made a significant difference relative to which children cited poor reading ability as a hindrance to reading more. Boys, more often than girls, said that this factor would help them improve the quantity of their reading.

**Liking to Read:** (F value 4.44, Df = 3, 412, p value = 0.0044; p values: Geography = 0.0011, Sex = 0.1890, Interaction = 0.3969). Geography was responsible for the significant difference among the four groups since sex was not significant and there was no interaction. More rural children said they would increase their reading if they had a greater liking for the activity. Conversely, urban children were less likely to see this as a contributory factor to their reading more.

**Someone to Help Me Know What Books to Read:** (F value 5.56, Df = 3, 412, p value = 0.0009; p values: Geography = 0.0008, Sex = 0.0978.

Interaction = 0.1392). Geography was significant but not sex and there was no interaction. Urban children expressed a greater need for reading guidance.

In summary, geography was the predominant variable affecting the many factors the sample stated would facilitate their reading more. For rural children, a greater liking for reading would motivate them to carry out the activity, while the urban children stressed having someone to guide them in their reading. On a lesser scale the sex of the child also affected the nature of the factors cited. Boys admitted they would spend more time reading if they were good at it. For girls in general, this seemed to be of minimal concern.

#### **4.4.7 Race of the Main Characters in Books**

**Question 12: From the list below select THREE kinds of persons you would like the most to play the main parts in the books you read. Then place the Number 1, 2 or 3 beside each of the THREE you choose. (1 = the kind of persons you like most, 2 = your second favourite kind of persons, 3 = your third favourite kind of persons)**

For Jamaican children this was an important question because from birth they have been brought up on a steady diet of books that usually feature white characters in the leading roles. In book selection children are rarely canvassed for the types of books they like to read. In addition, selection is carried out based mainly on generalised findings from research that takes little cognisance

of the particular needs of the predominantly black population in Jamaica.

This question represented an important objective of the study - that is, to find out whether Jamaican sixth graders favoured Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters in their books. Any inclination toward Afrocentric characters would lend support to the strong demand being made by several children's literature experts for books reflective of the readers' ethnic group and culture. Due to the importance of the findings on this question to the objectives of the research, the frequency scores (**Table 40**) as well as the mean scores (**Table 41**) will both be examined.

**TABLE 40: Ranking of Eurocentric/Afrocentric Main Characters Based on Frequency with which each was chosen as Favourites 1, 2 and 3**

Main Characters	N0.	% *
Black Jamaicans & Caribbean Persons	266	63.6
White Jamaicans & Caribbean Persons	182	43.5
Black Africans	166	39.7
Black North Americans	157	37.5
Black English	148	35.4
White North Americans	125	29.9
White English	111	26.5
White Africans	73	17.5

**\*Percentage of total sample of 418**

When the frequency scores were examined for the total sample it was noted that the type of main characters about which they most wanted to read was black Jamaican/Caribbean persons. This category netted nearly two-thirds (63.6%) of the responses. White characters (43.5%) from the same geographic

location were in second place. This interest in Eurocentric characters from the Jamaica and the wider Caribbean meant that many of the children wanted to read about persons (black or white) from the Caribbean.

There was a marked difference in the Jamaican sixth graders' response to black and white characters from different countries. Black Africans (39.7%) elicited almost the same high level of interest as white characters from the Caribbean and the former would seem to be the most favoured group of the non-Caribbean characters. On the whole, it would appear that black nationals from everywhere were stronger favourites as white boys and girls from other countries outside the Caribbean were all ranked lower than black children from these same locations. North Americans, black and white, preceded the English in both instances and white Africans were the least preferred of all the eight types of main characters. Thus, from the frequency scores it was observed that Jamaican sixth graders seemed to prefer leading characters from the Caribbean, especially if they were black. Their most popular choices after that were black book heroes from other countries.

**Table 41** reflects the comparison of the average ranking of each type of main character when compared to all others by the four different groups in the sample. In this case, there were very few variations from the order produced when they were ranked by the frequency scores.

**TABLE 41: Ranking of the Preferences of Rural/Urban Boys and Girls for Eurocentric/Afrocentric Main Characters in Books (Based on Mean Scores)**

MAIN CHARACTERS	MEAN SCORES					
	All Sample	BOYS		GIRLS		+p Value
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Black Jamaicans & Caribbean Persons	1.53	1.96	1.21	1.34	1.64	0.0001*
White Jamaicans & Caribbean Persons	0.92	0.75	1.02	0.87	1.06	0.21
Black Africans	0.82	0.73	1.12	0.59	0.85	0.005*
Black English	0.63	0.76	0.61	0.69	0.48	0.17
Black North Americans	0.62	0.51	0.81	0.47	0.71	0.04
White North Americans	0.54	0.41	0.36	0.84	0.55	0.0007*
White English	0.51	0.55	0.34	0.79	0.36	0.001*
White Africans	0.33	0.27	0.33	0.36	0.33	0.65

**+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the sub-groups**

**\*Significant at 0.006 after the Bonferroni adjustment**

From the overall mean scores for the total sample, it could be seen that black Jamaican/Caribbean heroes were the top favourites of the Jamaican sixth graders. The appearance of white Jamaican/Caribbean persons in second place also suggests that the children were definitely interested in Caribbean

personages, irrespective of their colour. Afterwards, the children were more interested in black characters no matter where they lived. Among the blacks from outside the Caribbean region, Africans were ranked before either the English or North Americans. The placement of the characters contrasted with the ordering of the white characters. Here, white North Americans preceded both the English and the Africans. For ease of comparison **Table 42** summarises the individual rankings of each of the four groups of the sample.

**TABLE 42: Ranking of Eurocentric/Afrocentric Main Characters by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls (Based on Mean Scores)**

MAIN CHARACTERS	BOYS		GIRLS	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Black Jamaican & Caribbean Persons	1	1	1	1
Black English	2	5	5	6
White Jamaican & Caribbean Persons	3	3	2	2
Black Africans	4	2	6	3
White English	5	7	4	7
Black North Americans	6	4	7	4
White North Americans	7	6	3	5
White Africans	8	8	8	8

Once again, the majority of four groups of children showed a distinct preference for Black Caribbean Persons as their first choice and a very strong interest in those who were white. Urban children had an inclination to assign

high rank to Black Africans and North Americans while rural children veered more toward White English, although rural boys also gave a high rank to Black English main characters. The girls seemed to favour White North Americans much more than the boys, and all four groups gave a very low rating to White Africans.

The relevant hypothesis was then tested.

**Hypothesis 9: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in their expressed preference for books with Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters**

By using the Bonferroni correction for the many tests being done, 0.006 was established as an acceptable level of significance at which the differences were not likely to occur by chance. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected for four of the eight categories, namely, Black Africans, White English, Black Jamaican / Caribbean Persons and White North Americans. See **Appendix 11** for details of ANOVAs.

**Black Africans:** (F value 4.28, Df = 3, 414, p value = 0.0055; p values: Geography = 0.0034, Sex = 0.0572, Interaction = 0.5485). Geography was responsible for the differences among the groups as urban children appeared to prefer these characters more than rural youngsters. Sex was not significant and there was no interaction.

**White English:** (F value 5.33, Df = 3, 414, p value = 0.0013; p values:

Geography = 0.0005, Sex = 0.1591, Interaction = 0.2296). A significant difference between urban and rural children was detected. Those from the rural areas preferred books featuring White English characters more than children living in the cities. Sex was not significant and there was no interaction.

**Black Jamaican/Caribbean Persons:** (F value 7.16, Df = 3, 414, p value = 0.0001; p values: Geography = 0.0717, Sex = 0.4328, Interaction = 0.0001). There was a very strong interaction between sex and geography regarding the Jamaican sixth graders' response to books that featured Black Jamaican/Caribbean characters as heroes. While rural boys liked them the most, their urban counterparts displayed the lowest level of interest among the four groups. On the other hand, urban girls preferred them much more than their rural peers, although somewhat less than the rural boys.

**White North Americans:** (F value 5.91, Df = 3, 414, p value = 0.0006; p values: Geography = 0.0639, Sex = 0.0005, Interaction = 0.1726). There was no interaction, geography was not significant and so the main effects were due to sex. Girls, irrespective of geographic location, tended to favour White North Americans more than boys.

Geographic location somewhat more than the sex of the child was the variable that appeared to affect the children's choices of the kind of main characters they would like to see in their books. Urban children preferred

Black Africans more than their rural peers who were inclined to favour White English heroes instead. Only once did sex play a major role by itself in that girls, wherever they lived, tended to prefer White North Americans. When sex was significant another time it was interacting with geography in that case, Black Jamaican / Caribbean heroes drew mixed reaction from boys and girls at both geographic locations. While most children gave them top ranking, rural boys and urban girls seemed to prefer these characters more than did the other groups.

#### **4.4.8 Exposure to Books with Black Main Characters**

**Question 13: Have you read any books in which black persons  
(children or adults) played the leading parts?**

**Yes      No      I don't remember**

This question sought to establish the exposure of Jamaican sixth graders to books with black characters as heroes in order to determine whether their response to the previous question might have been conditioned by actual exposure to books with Afrocentric main characters. Their replies are tabulated below.

**Table 43: Jamaican Sixth Graders' Encounter with Black Main Characters in Books (Based on Frequency Scores)**

RESPONSE	BOYS		GIRLS		TOTAL	% of Total
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
Yes	45 44.5%	64 60.9%	36 33.6%	50 47.6%	195	46.7
No	11 10.9%	13 12.4%	11 10.3%	16 15.3%	51	12.2
Don't remember	45 44.6%	28 26.7%	60 56.1%	39 37.1%	172	41.1
<b>TOTAL</b>	101	105	107	105	418	100.0

Nearly half the students (46.7%) could recall encountering books with black characters in the leading role, but an almost equal number (41.1%) could not remember ever having this experience. Rural children (boys - 44.6%, girls 56.1%) were less likely to remember having read such books. Since failure to recall does not necessarily mean the event never occurred, it might be that a greater number actually read such books but simply failed to remember. From the percentage of those who had read them (46.7% of the total sample), urban children (boys 60.9%, girls 47.6%) were more numerous. There was little difference between the scores of the small number (12.2%) of the children who were able to state categorically that they had never read such books. It should be pointed out that "No" reply does not necessarily mean that a child has never read a book with black characters, but rather that he or she had never

encountered a book with these characters in the leading role or did not remember doing so.

From the above data, one may infer that Jamaican sixth graders' desire to see Jamaican/Caribbean heroes in their books was based, for some part, on actual exposure to such books as well as on a hypothetical stance.

#### **4.4.9 Liking to Read**

**Question 14: Read each of the following unfinished sentences then choose the ONE that comes closest to saying how you feel about reading and complete the sentence:**

- a) I like to read A LITTLE because...**
- b) I like to read (MORE than a little, but not TOO MUCH) because...**
- c) I like to read A WHOLE LOT because...**
- d) I do NOT like to read because...**

This question consisted basically of two parts. The first part only required students to select the statement that came closest to describing how much they liked to read, while the second part asked them to complete the statement for the option selected by giving their reason for liking or not liking to read. The two sections of the question will be looked at separately as they reflect different dimensions of reading attitude (that is, the affective and the

cognitive as defined by Lewis and Teale (1980)).

The children were asked to say how much they like to read with the view that their response to this could be used to gauge how they felt (the affective component for reading attitude) about reading, as it is generally accepted that a positive attitude is a precursor to a child's willingness to read voluntarily. The data gleaned from this part of the question could also be compared with that for **Question 10** as a means of determining if there was any discrepancy, as reported by other studies, between the children's stated affection for reading and their actual practice of it. **Table 44** shows the data for this part of the question.

**TABLE 44: Degree to Which Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Like to Read (Based on Frequency Distribution)**

LIKE TO READ	BOYS		GIRLS		TOTAL	Row %
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban		
Very Much	48 *47.5%	54 51.4%	87 81.3%	76 72.4%	265	63.4
More than a little but not too much	12 11.9%	13 12.4%	4 3.7%	9 8.6%	38	9.1
A Little	32 31.7%	34 32.4%	11 10.3%	16 15.2%	93	22.2
None at all	9 8.9%	4 3.8%	5 4.7%	4 3.8%	22	5.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	101	105	107	105	418	100.0

**\*Percentages in cells refer to rows**

A staggering 94.7% of the sample admitted to liking to read to some

degree compared to the remaining (5.3%) who clearly said they did not favour the activity. 63.4% of the total sample said they liked to read very much and the 265 children were almost evenly split between the two geographic locations - urban (50.9% rural, 49.1% urban). The figures differed sharply when it came to sex as girls were in the majority (61.5%) of liking to read very much.

The percentage of boys was higher at the other three response levels where the children said they liked to read. For example, of the 93 children who said they liked to read "A Little" the percentage of rural boys was nearly two and three times as high as that of the girls (boys: rural - 31.7%, urban -32.4%; girls : rural - 10.3%, urban - 15.2%). With reference to geographical location, only once ("I Do Not Like to Read at All" - rural boys - 8.9%, girls - 4.7%; urban boys -3.8%, girls - 3.8%) did a higher percentage of rural children emerge.

These responses must be viewed with some caution, however, since there is the likelihood that the children's overwhelming choice of the superlative category might have been conditioned by their desire to please the adults present and/or a tendency to exaggerate so as to look "good".

When the mean scores were computed for the total sample and for each of the four groups, the following results in **Table 45** were obtained. In calculating the mean scores the children's responses were graded based on how much they said they liked to read. The following calculations were used for the

four possible responses: Very Much = 4; More than a Little, but not Too Much = 3; A little = 2; and None at All = 1. Thus the nearer the mean score to 4, the more the children like to read.

**TABLE 45: Degree to which Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Like to Read (Based on Mean Scores)**

VARIABLE	BOYS		GIRLS		+p Value
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
Likes to Read	2.98	3.1	3.62	3.49	0.0001*

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis, testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the four sub-groups  
\*Significant at the 0.05 level

It was observed that girls in general showed the strongest liking for reading. Rural girls attained the highest score followed by urban girls, then urban boys. Rural males trailed all the other groups, but not too far behind.

The following hypothesis was subsequently tested.

**Hypothesis 10: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls in how much they like to read as a voluntary activity**

The null hypothesis was rejected. The Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there were significant differences among the groups as to how much they liked to read. When ANOVA was applied **Table 46** gives the results.

**TABLE 46: ANOVA Summary for Liking to Read  
by Sex and Geography**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
Between Groups	3	28.6775	9.5591	10.47	0.0001*
Within Groups	414	378.1263	0.9133		
Total	417	406.8038			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
GEO	1	0.0040	0.0040	0.00	0.9750
SEX	1	26.9696	26.9696	29.60	0.0001*
GEO*SEX	1	1.7069	1.7069	1.87	0.1723

**\*Significant at the 0.05 level**

There was no interaction and geography was not significant, so sex accounted for the significant difference as to how much the children liked to read. Although most children gave liking to read a high score (2.98 and over out of a possible 4), girls, no matter where they lived, appeared as liking to read more than boys. Mean scores for the girls (rural 3.62, urban 3.49) were nearer to 4 (I like to Read Very Much) in comparison with the boys (rural 2.98, urban 3.1) who leaned closer to moderate 3 (I like to Read More than a Little, But Not Too Much).

Research findings have consistently shown that if brighter children tend to read more, they are likely to display a greater liking for reading. Therefore, the following hypothesis was also tested.

**Hypothesis 11: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls of above average, average and below average academic performance in how much they like to read as a voluntary activity**

First, the Kruskal-Wallis tests were carried out on the data (Table 47) to see if any of the groups was significantly different from the others.

**TABLE 47: Degree to Which Rural/Urban Boys and Girls Like to Read According to Geography, Sex and Academic Performance (Based on Mean Scores)**

GROUPS BY GEO/SEX	ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE			+P value for All
	ABOVE AVERAGE	AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	
Rural Boys	3.2	3.1	2.8	0.0001*
Urban Boys	3.5	3.4	2.9	
Rural Girls	3.8	3.7	3.2	
Urban Girls	3.6	3.7	3.1	

+p value for Kruskal-Wallis , testing the null hypothesis of no difference among the twelve groups.

\*Significant at the 0.05 level

The null hypothesis was rejected as the Kruskal-Wallis test indicated that there was one or more significant differences among the groups. From looking at the means scores, it can be seen that children (whether girls or boys) at the higher academic levels tend to like to read a little more than those lower down. When ANOVA was applied, the source of the significant differences was identified (Table 48).

**TABLE 48: ANOVA Summary for Liking to Read Geography,  
Sex and Academic Performance**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
Between Groups	11	53.7873	4.8897	5.62	0.0001*
Within Groups	406	353.0165	0.8694		
Total	417	406.8038			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr >F
GEO	1	0.2582	0.2582	0.30	0.5860
SEX	1	7.9377	7.9377	9.13	0.0027*
ACP	2	22.9977	10.9988	12.65	0.0001*
GEO*SEX	1	2.3707	2.3707	2.73	0.0995
GEO*ACP	2	0.5307	0.2653	0.31	0.7372
SEX*ACP	2	0.6595	0.3297	0.38	0.6846
GEO*SEX*ACP	2	0.1697	0.0848	0.10	0.9070

**\*Significant at the 0.05 level**

Sex and academic performance were responsible for the main effects. The girls in general had a greater liking for reading than the boys, and so did the children at the higher performance levels.

**4.4.10 Reasons for Reading**

The second part of **Question 14** required the children to write a brief statement explaining their reasons for reading. The responses to this section of the question were expected to reflect what the children thought about reading from which could be deduced the value they ascribed to the activity. This would in turn provide information on the cognitive aspect of their reading attitude. It was the only open-ended question that allowed the children to express themselves freely. As no limit was set on the number of their replies, many children furnished more than one reason for reading. A variety of reasons were given which were grouped for analysis under three broad headings

- utility, pleasure and escape - as identified from the literature reviewed. The definitions used by Greaney and Hegarty (1987,10) were applied in trying to decide where to place each answer. Reading for **pleasure** was done because it was considered exciting, interesting, enjoyable; reading for **utility** - was carried out on account of its usefulness in school and with later careers; and reading for **escape** - was undertaken when there was nothing else to do, to pass time or as a distraction from personal worries.

The following sample of expressions made by the children exemplifies how the answers were categorised. Statements about liking to read such as: "It is good". "it helps me to learn or with my lesson", "I want to know more", "It will help me to get a job". "I do not want to be a dunce" and such like, were classified under **Utility**. Comments like: "I enjoy it", "it's fun", "it makes me feel good" and it is "nice" or "interesting" were equated with **Pleasure**. Reading because "there was nothing else to do", "I want to get away" and "I am bored" qualified as **Escape**.

A total of 361 (86.4%) children responded to this question and the missing 13.4% is comprised of the 5.3% of children who said they did not like to read at all (**Table 44**) and another 8.3% of them whose replies were not usable. Reasons and/or excuses given for not liking to read included: "it is boring". "I like to play", "I can't read so good", "I don't have the time", "I have too many other things to do", and "the classroom is too noisy". Unused

responses consisted of spaces left blank, illegible answers and replies that had to be discarded because they did not make sense. For example, some children said they read a little because: "my eyes hurt", "I like to play" or "it is too noisy". These responses were interpreted more as excuses rather than reasons. and so they too were omitted from the tally.

**TABLE 49: Reasons Given by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls for Reading (Based on Frequency Scores) (n=418)**

REASONS FOR READING	BOYS		GIRLS		TOTAL	% of Sample
	Rural n=101	Urban n=105	Rural n=107	Urban n=105		
Utility	56 55.4%	53 50.5%	68 63.5%	75 71.4%	252	60.2
Pleasure	23 22.8%	36 34.2%	40 37.4%	37 35.2%	136	32.5
Escape	2 1.9%	12 11.4%	1 3.7%	3 6.7%	18	4.3

The majority of the children (60.2%) indicated that they read primarily for **Utility**, exemplified by such statements as: "to get a job", "to be bright", "so I can pass my examinations", and "to find out what is going on in the world". Reading for its practical purpose was more often cited by girls, especially the urban ones. **Pleasure** (32.5%), mentioned nearly fifty-percent less frequently

than utility, was the second most common reason given for reading. Here again, girls led the way but with the rural ones naming this slightly more often than their urban peers. Very few of the reasons given could be categorised as **Escape**, and even so, it was urban boys who gave most of the replies that fell under this heading.

The following hypothesis was tested to establish if any of these differences were statistically significant.

**Hypothesis 12: There is no significant difference between rural and urban boys and girls regarding the reasons given for voluntary reading**

Because the data were categorical and not inherently ordered, chi-square tests, instead of Kruskal-Wallis, were used to test the hypothesis. Only the data for reading for Utility and Pleasure were done and reported on because the numbers for Escape were considered too small (a total of 18 responses among the four groups) to produce any meaningful results.

**Tables 50** and **51** indicate the findings for Pleasure and Utility, respectively.

**TABLE 50: Chi-square Test Results for Reading for  
PLEASURE by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
Rural Boys Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	51 46.12 0.5159	23 027.88 0.8536	74
Urban Boys Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	58 58.59 0.0059	36 35.41 0.0097	94
Rural Girls Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	56 59.83 0.2456	40 36.17 0.4064	96
Urban Girls Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	60 60.46 0.0035	37 36.54 0.0057	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	225	136	361

**Overall X<sup>2</sup> = 2.046    df = 3    p Value = 0.563    Cramer's V = 0.075**

The null hypothesis was not rejected for **Pleasure**, which meant that the four groups were more alike than different in stating this reason for reading. However, a different picture emerged for reading for utility.

**TABLE 51: Chi-square Test Results for Reading For  
UTILITY by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>ROW TOTAL</b>
Rural Boys Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	18 22.3 00.8444	56 51.7 00.3652	74
Urban Boys Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	41 28.4 05.6094	53 65.6 02.4263	94
Rural Girls Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	28 28.9 00.0336	68 67.1 00.0145	96
Urban Girls Observed Expected X <sup>2</sup>	22 29.3 01.8136	75 67.7 00.7844	97
<b>TOTAL</b>	109	252	361

**Overall X<sup>2</sup> = 11.891 df = 3 p Value = 0.008 Cramer's V = 0.181**

Significant differences were found among the four groups. Overall, urban boys differed significantly different from the other three groups in that they were the least likely to read for utilitarian purposes. Girls, especially the urban ones, demonstrated a greater tendency to give this as their main reason for reading. Thus, it would seem that being urban and female, there was a strong

likelihood that the child would be reading mainly for this purpose. Although there were significant differences among the four groups, Cramer's  $V$  (0.181) indicates the level of association between sex and geography to be relatively low in their impact on reading for utility.

### Summary

This study was guided by twelve hypotheses which were tested, one of which was not retained (i.e., that pertaining to reading guidance). The remaining eleven were supported to varying degrees as shown by the summary of the results in **Table 52**.

**TABLE 52: Summary of Results from Hypotheses Tested for Significant Main Effects/Interactions**

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables		
	Geo.	Sex	ACP
Interest in Book Types	Yes	Yes	Yes
Number of Books Read	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sources of Books	Yes	Yes	NT
Sources of Reading Guidance	No	No	NT
Reading as a Leisure Time Activity	No	Yes	NT
Hindrances to Reading More	Yes	Yes	NT
Preference for Race of Book Heroes	Yes	Yes	NT
Liking to Read	No	Yes	Yes
Reasons for Reading	Yes	Yes	NT

**Geo. = Geography ACP = Academic Performance NT = Not Tested**

From the preceding table, it can be observed that sex was the most dominant factor influencing Jamaican sixth graders' reading interests and habits. Geography had a somewhat lesser impact. The examination of the impact of academic performance on reading interests and habits was confined to the types of books the sixth graders were interested in reading, the number of books read, and their degree of liking for reading. In the few instances that academic performance was included, it also had a much smaller effect.

These findings are in many respects similar to previous findings by other researchers. The more interesting new findings relate to: race and children's preference for main book characters, girls' greater interest in certain types of informational works and boys' strong interest in love stories.

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**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**INTERVIEWS WITH JAMAICAN SIXTH GRADE READERS**  
**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The interviews were undertaken for the purpose of providing a glimpse into the lives of a small group of the Jamaican sixth graders to see how their personal circumstances might affect their reading interest and habits. By so doing, the researcher hoped to bring a human side to the data which might reveal general trends and patterns but tell us little about the persons behind the statistics. These short vignettes, therefore, should provide a further context for understanding and interpreting the findings of the study.

The interviews were semi-structured and based in part upon the children's answers to the items on the **Student Questionnaire**. The children were allowed to talk freely about their reading behaviour and at times clarifications were sought about responses given on the questionnaire. Each

interview is presented separately so as to give a more complete profile of the individual child and the factors operating concurrently in his or her life that might influence his or her response to books and reading. Where patterns of individual reading behaviour seem to conform to or differ from accepted theories and practice, brief commentaries are made.

In reporting interviews, it is customary to include excerpts from the direct speech of the interviewees to lend authenticity to the assessments being made. In this case, very few instances of this have been given, primarily because many of the children spoke in non-standard English or the Jamaican dialect, which would not be easily read if reported verbatim. The children were encouraged to speak informally since the researcher felt this would make them feel more comfortable.

What follows is a summary of the contents of the eight interviews along with additional information gleaned from the children's earlier response to the **Student Questionnaire**. The students were randomly chosen and consisted of four boys and four girls of different academic abilities from both the rural and urban areas of Jamaica. Each interview lasted approximately 30 - 45 minutes. The boys are presented first, and participants are numbered to indicate sex and geographic location.

## 5.2 THE INTERVIEWS

### 5.2.1 Rural Boy 1

From the data collected via the student questionnaire, Rural Boy 1 was a member of the public library, had read no books two weeks prior to the survey, and got most of the books he read from home, the public library and friends, in that order. He personally owned eleven books and resorted most often to friends and parents for advice as to what to read. Art, craft, outdoor games and watching television were named as his favourites pastimes, and when asked how much he liked to read he said that he "hated" reading for which he offered no explanation. He further stated that his two major distractions from reading more were being with friends and not being good at reading. Questions about his reading interests showed that his favourite types of books, when he did read, were Fairy Tales, Machines and Animals Stories.

The general picture arrived at from the preceding data shows an active child who in addition to liking to play outdoors also had an artistic streak. He strongly disliked reading, perhaps because he was not too good at it, although occasionally he did read. However, this initial profile proved to be superficial, and somewhat misleading as he turned out to be a bright, fascinating, and obviously talented ten year old who read avidly. Such a discovery justified the decision to conduct follow-up interviews, even with such a small sub-

sample, because of the valuable insights they provided into the world of these Jamaican readers.

He was the only student who no longer attended the same school at which he had been surveyed earlier. His parents had transferred him to a private elementary school in the parish capital about twenty miles away. Rural Boy 1, a ten year old from a rural school, came across as an intelligent, creative, articulate and a multi-faceted individual with whom it was a pleasure to talk. The maturity of thought displayed at times far exceeded his age, and although he was ranked as an average achiever by his teacher on the basis of his grades, in conversation he showed signs of being above average in intelligence. Several times throughout the interview he interrupted the conversation to elaborate, clarify or provide a rationale for his comments in order to ensure that the interviewer clearly understood what was being communicated. Due to his willingness to talk and his level of understanding the interview covered most of the items from the questionnaire and even went beyond.

The older of two children, Rural Boy 1's mother was an aerobic gym instructor at a nearby high school, while his father was a graphic artist whose creative ability his son seemed to have inherited. The child also wanted to become an artist although he made it clear that he did not want to do commercial art but to draw scenery, cars and animals. The family seemed to

be closely knit, spending a lot of time together - going out, exercising, and communicating with one another. His parents encourage him to read and they themselves read magazines, books and newspapers.

The books he read were monitored by his parents to make sure they met with family guidelines for suitability. Time spent watching television and reading comic books was also controlled because his parents felt that the former did not help with his reading and the latter had too many pictures which could negatively affect his language development.

His socio-economic background seemed to fit the type described by Whitehead et al. (1977) as "non-manual" and more likely to produce habitual readers because of the likely presence of more sources for literary stimulation. His home setting also reflected some of the qualities observed by Ingham (1981) and Durkin (1966) as contributory to children becoming early readers and developing a positive attitude towards reading. Actually, Rural Boy 1 said he recalled being able to read from the time he was about three years old.

His self-confessed aversion to reading ("I hate it!") given on the questionnaire concealed a voracious appetite for information that was sated mainly by reading. Thus, the motivation to read did not spring from a love of the activity but rather from a recognition of the power and value of the information contained between the covers of a book. In his own words, he said: "I read so that I can be bright... to know more than my friends, and just

to know about what is going on in life around me... but I still do not like to read." He was adamant on this last point, explaining how even his teachers refused to believe this fact because he read so much. But his explanation was that since he wanted so badly to be superior to his peers in knowledge and at the moment the only way to achieve this goal was through the print medium, he was prepared to put aside his dislike for the activity and read as much as he needed to.

Such a burning desire to read, despite not liking the activity, says much for the power of motivation in getting a child to read, and would seem to concur with Mathewson's (1976) view that a favourable attitude toward reading is not the sole factor in encouraging a child to read. There also must be an appropriate motivation to serve as an energising force to propel the child toward reading. In this instance, whether or not Rural Boy 1 had a favourable attitude toward reading, he certainly had a strong incentive to undertake the activity. As Mathewson (1976) further notes, such motivation is directly related to an anticipated extrinsic or intrinsic reward. For this child, both types of rewards operated - satisfying his thirst for knowledge and at the same time gaining superior status among his peers by knowing more than they did.

Perhaps, in an environment with free access to a wide variety of multimedia formats, this child would become an "aliterate", because he could satisfy his information needs through non-book sources. A query about his

preference for viewing or reading the same story elicited a definite response in favour of viewing because, he says, "... I like to see the movements and the images on the screen". On the other hand, with the book he was forced to do his own "imagining".

Although she did not give the reasons why children preferred viewing to reading, Feeley's (1982) research on fourth and fifth graders in New Jersey revealed that most preferred viewing the stories to reading them. Given the proliferation of the electronic media, such a finding should not come as a surprise. Rural Boy 1's aversion to print could also have sprung from his artistic approach to life. He tended to think in pictures and see the world from that perspective, and to spend most of his free time drawing wild animals and reading some of the books (e.g., adventure stories, fairy tales and history) that interested him.

His creativity extended to making up stories for himself and he reported that he had already written and illustrated a "real" book based on a documentary on seals that he had watched on television. He copied the drawings based on what he had seen and added a few lines of text to produce a twenty page book that he duplicated with his parents help and sold to family friends. For a child of this age, this could be seen as a major accomplishment and further proof of his above average intelligence which for various reasons might not be reflected in his classwork.

In an effort to gain further insight into why certain book types appeal to children or do not attract them, the researcher questioned Rural Boy 1 about some of the book types he had selected in the questionnaire. The following were some of his responses: He enjoyed Fairy Tales, because of the illustrations and the magic (although his examples were more descriptive of fantasy - e.g., **Pinocchio, Peter Pan, Donald Duck**; Riddles and Jokes - because they were like puzzles and he liked sharing them with his peers, especially when they did not know the answers; books about Things to Make and Do were one of his top favourites because he liked to make things out of paper, paint them and use them to decorate the walls at home; and War Stories had strong appeal especially when the soldiers use powerful weapons. When asked if he were not bothered by the fact that in real life people were killed by these missiles, he said in books it was not real so he was not disturbed in any way.

He disliked Science Fiction and Horror Stories because many of the creatures in them terrified him to the extent that he had nightmares. Books about Growing Up did not interest him but since they did have essential information he would read them. Love Stories, so popular with Jamaican boys, did not attract him, neither did mystery stories although he enjoyed watching detective shows on television. His enjoyment of the latter came from helping to solve the mystery.

While a ten year old boy would not be expected to formulate any real

theories about the perceived sex differences in children's reading interests and habits, Rural Boy 1 was asked if he noticed any difference between the two sexes when it came to reading and doing school work. His reply was that because girls were not rough, liked to sit and play with dolls, they read more and faster than boys who liked to play a lot more.

He also expressed the belief that boys liked war stories because of the shooting while girls seemed to prefer books with pictures of girls, and he had noticed that his sister liked to read family stories and watch family shows on television. He also observed that at school boys tended to tease the girls a lot because they were better readers, and he thought that girls were brighter because they behaved themselves in class so they learned more.

From these comments, Rural Boy 1's perception of the differences between the sexes as they relate to academic performance and reading behaviour is not so far removed from some of the usual arguments found in the literature that ascribe some of the differences to the stereotyped view of girls being more passive and preferring books relating to the affective domain.

Finally, he was asked to comment on his preference for Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters in the books he read. Black characters, no matter what their nationality, was his first choice because he himself was black and lived in Jamaica. He did add however, that in most of the books he read the main characters were white and it made him wonder if "white people were the

only people to write books". He also made it clear that the colour of the characters did not affect his enjoyment of the story, for example, in a mystery his main concern was to find out what happened.

This last statement would seem to emphasise that when discussing book choices for children of different races - the matter of content does not seem to be the main issue as their tastes tend to be nearly similar. It seems to be more a matter of how another ethnic group is portrayed and its likely psychological effect on the reader that should be cause for concern, as stated by MacCann (1985) and other advocates for more non-stereotyped multicultural children's literature.

Without doubt, this was not a typical ten year-old with respect to his creativity, thinking and ability to articulate what he thought and felt. He was very perceptive, self-confident and an avid reader, who, although he read primarily for utilitarian reasons, also seemed to get some pleasure from it, despite claiming a dislike for the activity.

### **5.2.2 Rural Boy 2**

Rural Boy 2 was a quiet and soft spoken boy who appeared reserved at first, but once started he warmed up and shared experiences without needing much encouragement from the interviewer. This child lived with an extended family headed by his mother since his father resided in the United States of America. His mother and grandmother worked in a grocery shop at home

adjacent to their house. The adults (including aunts and cousins) in his family read the daily paper, "The Children's Own," a weekly newspaper from his school, and sometimes the books he borrowed from the library. This last fact was taken into consideration when he was taking out materials from the library.

The questionnaire data showed that Rural Boy 2 was assessed by his teachers as being above average in both reading and academic performance. He reported that he liked to read only a little and also said that not liking to read enough and not being a good reader were hindrances to his reading more. Yet in the two weeks prior to the interview he had read five books. The picture seem contradictory, but Lampert and Saunders (1976) also observed that children's perception of themselves as recreational readers did not rest so much on their reading or academic ability as on their attitude towards books and reading. In other words, many proficient readers do not consider themselves as "recreational readers" because they were not favourably disposed towards the activity; the opposite is sometimes the case for less able readers.

Rural Boy 2 owned a few books received from his father and although he could not recall being read to as a child, currently, family members sometimes read to him to improve his skill, and he in turn read to them for the same purpose. He was an active member of both the public and school libraries and he did not hesitate to ask adults for help when trying to find something to read. The persons usually resorted to for reading guidance were the teachers

at school and the library staff at the public library where he enjoyed going with his friends to sit and read together.

For this boy, at least, reading seemed to meet with the approval of his peers with whom he had last visited the library the day before the interview and borrowed two books on animal stories. When asked specifically for the titles of books read, he could not recall them although he gave summaries of the stories. This failure to pay close attention to book titles and authors would seem to justify the researcher's earlier decision to exclude such a section from the final questionnaire.

Reading was only one of his hobbies as he spent a good deal of his leisure time playing cricket or baseball. This love for active outdoor games conforms to the pattern of the data for ranking of reading as a leisure time activity. For many boys outdoor games and sports seemed more attractive than reading. His main reasons for reading were to improve his ability and because he found it interesting. His recreational reading was carried out at home, school or on his trips to a nearby branch of the public library of which he was a member.

When choosing books for reading, he liked long stories but with language simple enough for him to manage. Illustrations were very important to him so he would not choose books without them even if the story seemed interesting. Large print made the books seem too babyish so he preferred a

smaller type size, and sometimes he sampled portions of the story to see if it appealed to him. From these comments, it would seem that the decision to select a book for reading involves much more than a response to the genre or subject of the work. This observation corresponds with Kirk (1985), who found out that the physical format of a book had as much to do with creating interest as its contents.

Rural Boy 2's reading interests included Fairy Tales, War Stories, Horror (he liked being scared) and Animals Stories because he had them as pets. Love stories were more suited for girls as he did not like to read about people kissing. Fiction was preferred more than non-fiction. Favourite television shows were cartoons, detective stories and a local sitcom featuring every day life in Jamaica. Most nights he watched television for about an hour and his viewing hours increased to about three on the weekends.

When questioned about his preference for Eurocentric main characters, his response was; "...because I am white...I don't see myself as black..." Rural Boy 2 was of an olive complexion, and it would seem to him that being black meant literally having a black skin. His response touches upon one of the dilemmas facing children of mixed heritage in a country like Jamaica where racism as known in North America and elsewhere is not the norm and children are sometimes baffled by the sociological definitions of "blackness" or "whiteness". As Nettleford (1982), one of Jamaica's leading social scientists,

observed that Jamaicans and other Caribbean peoples must forever wrestle with the issue of identity by reason of history which makes them neither white nor black in the true sense of either terms. Therefore, self-identity posed a serious problem for Jamaican children and adults alike.

Rural Boy 2 appears to be a recreational reader, although he does not seem to recognise the fact, and he does not fit the usual stereotype that boys prefer informational books to fiction and consider reading to be more appropriate for girls. His response about Afrocentric heroes brought to light a new dimension on the issue of race and book selection as it revealed another of the underlying factors that might also influence some children's book choices in the Jamaican society.

### **5.2.3 Urban Boy 1**

A very talkative and open child, it was not very difficult to start a conversation with Urban Boy 1 and to allow him to freely expressed his ideas about his reading habits with little guidance from the researcher. At the time of the interview he was living with his parents, although his father worked as a soldier nearly forty miles away and was not always at home. He was the older of two boys in a family that read magazines, the newspaper and sometimes his literature texts. He owned no books for recreational reading, could not recall ever having received any as gifts, admitted to not being able to read well and so did not enjoy reading. His poor reading ability was

confirmed by the teachers who ranked him as being below average in both reading and academic performance.

Perhaps, because of his limited reading ability, he found great enjoyment in the stories his teachers read to him, and they seemed to help boost his self-esteem with his peers as he said hearing those stories gave him something to talk about with his friends; when they meet they talk about the books they have read and the parts they liked. It would seem that reading books or watching television for social reasons is also a common reason why some children read. According to von Feilitzen (1976), this is one of the social purposes for reading and for many children - it is one aspect of shared relationships - as it gives them something in common to talk about which in turn imparts a sense of belonging to the group.

His poor reading ability might further explain this Urban Boy 1's heavy reliance on television for entertainment. He watched television nightly and liked many of the family type sitcoms like **Getting By** and **Hanging Out With Mr Cooper**. Cartoons also appealed as well as some of the North American soap operas such as **Generations** and **General Hospital**. **McGyver** had a particularly strong appeal because of the hero's cleverness. One might wonder at the viewing fare of this eleven year old boy, but in Jamaica there are very few children's programmes on regular television, especially for this age group, so it is not surprising to find them watching adult soap operas and

sitcoms which are more readily available. Urban Boy 1 could not recall watching a television show and then wanting to read the book, but he had experienced reading a book and wanting to see the movie because the story was so exciting.

Over the past two weeks prior to the interview, he had read two books, both fiction, which he said he preferred over informational works. Such a preference could be the result of his poor reading ability, as Perera (1986) has noted that children's choices often veer toward fiction because it is much simpler than non-narrative materials. Queries about reading interests showed that he liked books on Dancing because they helped to improve one's posture and he would have liked to learn to ballet.

Horror stories, War Stories, Animal Stories, Fairy Tales, and Riddles and Jokes were other favourites. Fairy tales for him, meant Anancy stories which he found funny; Riddles and Jokes were easy to read; and while he liked reading about war he hoped not to see it in real life. The only book type he cited as disliking was Poetry, for which he gave no explanation. Seeing Afrocentric main characters in his books was not too important to him, although he still preferred them as heroes.

His main source of reading material was the school library, and when selecting a book he looked at the title first, then read a part of the book to see if he liked the story. The size of the print was not a deterrent if the topic was

of interest. He did not like too many pictures in the books chosen (maybe because the books would look too much like ones for a younger child), and he would read a book whether or not it had pictures. Friends were sometimes consulted for reading guidance and once they endorsed a book, he usually borrowed it. This reliance on friends confirms research findings that show peer approval to be very influential in children's book choices.

Urban Boy 1 displayed many of the characteristics identified with non-readers: male, below average academically, not finding satisfaction in reading and a preference for the electronic media over reading. He also conforms somewhat to the general pattern of urban boys arising from this study. These boys stood out clearly as a group that requires serious intervention strategies because so many of them were performing below the expected academic level with the attendant reading difficulties. They also displayed little interest in reading and would seem to have a less than positive attitude toward the activity.

#### **5.2.4 Urban Boy 2**

Urban Boy 2 was rated as below average academically, did not belong to any library, possessed only one book, and relied on friends and home for his reading material. His favourite types of books listed on the questionnaire were: Fairy Tales, Love and Mystery Stories, and his recreational interests included indoor, outdoor and video games. He liked to read "a little" in order to improve his reading skills and his major hindrances to reading more were

watching television, not having his own books and not being good at reading.

This boy seemed to be a quiet child who enjoyed outdoor sports and video games during his free time. Watching television also consumed about three of his waking hours each day and many more on weekends. He said he liked to read comics and newspapers and sometimes his parents encouraged him to read by bringing home books for him. Although the public library was less than one kilometre away from the school, he was not a member because he lived in another town and so did not have the time to visit.

His reading tastes included fairy tales, which he liked because the prince always ended up getting his bride and they usually married and lived happily ever after. When asked further why this was so appealing to him, he said he hoped to get married one day and live happily ever after. Marshall (1982) expressed the idea that part of a child's enjoyment from reading comes from wish-fulfilment as a child sees his own dream or longing being experienced by the characters in his books. Huck (1979) also adds that children gain a feeling of satisfaction from their reading when the stories allow them to try on new roles. In this boy's case, some of the pleasure he feels seems to come from anticipating his future role as a husband.

His interest in the romantic aspects of life was further confirmed by his strong preference for love stories, which he borrowed from his sisters. Again he liked them because they gave him insights into romance, and of course, there

was the happily ever after ending as with the fairy tales. This penchant for books of this nature runs contrary to much of the research findings that show boys disliking books that dealt with the affective domain. It only points out one of the limitations of trying to determine children's reading tastes solely on the basis of generalised research findings.

The suspense of mystery stories aroused his curiosity and made him want to find out what happens next; riddles and jokes were humorous and could be shared with others and animal stories were also liked. He was fond of animals and he could vividly recall being very touched by the story of **Bambi**, a young deer who lived in the forest. He was very sad when Bambi's mother died, but happy when he eventually triumphed over his enemies and became king of the forest. Family stories were not among his favourites as he felt they were more suitable to girls although he could not say why. Also, when asked for his preference, he chose Eurocentric book heroes but did not offer an explanation. His unwillingness to comment on his choice might be caused from feelings of discomfort with openly expressing such a position and the feeling that maybe he was expected to prefer people like himself more.

Ranked as below average academically, Urban Boy 2 admitted that he was not good at reading and disliked being asked to read aloud in class. He cited the embarrassment it caused him when he could not pronounce the words properly. For him, reading was mainly for educational purposes and was

undertaken less frequently for enjoyment. Watching television kept him from reading more. If there were no television he still would not choose to read, a view his friends also shared, he said.

Although this urban boy's profile closely matches Urban Boy 1, one left the interview with the impression that although Urban Boy 2 had limited reading ability and said he did not like reading - he did read and seemed to enjoy the activity. This seeming discrepancy suggests that if he were exposed to some more pleasurable reading experiences, he might become a committed reader. A well planned literature programme specially geared to his reading ability and interests, and administered under the guidance of a knowledgeable and sensitive librarian or teacher might well contribute to his reading development.

### **5.2.5 Rural Girl 1**

Rural Girl 1, assessed as below average in academic performance, did not indicate membership in any library, owned no books and had not read any in the two weeks prior to the survey. She relied mostly on friends for reading guidance as well as material to read, although libraries were also another source. Reading was her favourite pastime followed by watching television and being with friends. She reported that she liked to read very much but excessive school work, not being good at reading and, oddly, not liking to read were the main hindrances to reading more. This seeming contradiction might

be indicative of the desire on her part either to give the "right" answers she thinks adults expect or to exaggerate in order to look "good".

She is the ninth of twelve children and lives at home with both parents who themselves never read but encourage her to do so for educational purposes. Her career aspiration is to become a lawyer because she likes how they conduct themselves in the movies on television. This girl did not own any books at all although there were a few at home, and she did not consider herself a good reader, i.e. having a good grasp of the mechanics (she was rated as below average for academic performance). Her parents did not read anything at all, except for her weekly children's newspaper that she received at school. This fact emphasises the non-literary environment existing in many homes in Jamaica, especially in rural areas where books are extremely scarce.

Although she had not responded to this query on the questionnaire, she stated that she was a member of the public library and received her books from the bookmobile that visits her area once per month. She had never gone to a public library building although she would do so if one were nearby so she could have access to a wider variety of books and have the time sit down or browse. The nearest library was about ten miles away in the parish capital.

She had not read any books for the previous three weeks, but liked to read because that was one of the ways she learned new things. Asked to recall some of the things she had learnt, she mentioned first aid, and the message

from a story about a boy and a runaway car, which to her meant that if one interferes with other people's property trouble will result.

Like the other interviewees, other aspects of the book besides its content contributed to the child making a decision to read a book. When selecting books she usually sampled short portions of the story, mostly the beginning, to see if it was humorous. She looked for the number of pictures because she preferred the books to have several. This might indicate her attempts to find books within her reading level since she was judged as a low achieving student. Moray (1978) observed that less academically able students preferred books with many pictures because they had fewer words and were usually easier to read.

Her hobbies included reading, playing outdoor games and watching television which consumed a great deal of her time. Favourite television programmes were **The Fresh Prince of Belair**, **Head of the Class** and cartoons. Sometimes, there were stories on television for which she would have liked to read the corresponding book, but since these were not in the library she gave up trying to find them. From what she said, it can be inferred that while the media can be used to promote reading, this must be complemented by quick and easy access to the books or else interest will soon be lost.

The types of books she counted among her favourites and reasons for liking them were: family stories - she could learn something from these stories

since she planned to have a family of her own; biographies - to find people whom she might want to be like; love stories - because they tell about marriage and what it could be like; fairy tales - because "...they are funny..." (humorous, one may assume); horror stories - "I like being made to feel afraid..."; growing up - " I like to know what it is to be a woman". Although she was inclined toward Afrocentric book heroes, the colour of the characters did not matter too greatly to her. She disliked war stories because she did not like to see people fight, and even when watching television she turned off such programmes. Her statement echoes research findings that indicate that girls tend to have a strong aversion to violence in their books.

Although a low achieving student and a non-reader, this girl still showed a certain degree of interest in reading and would seem inclined to do more if there was greater access to reading material. Her home environment was not one to stimulate interest in books or reading and this too could have played a role in her not being a more committed reader.

#### **5.2.6 Rural Girl 2**

Assessed as above average in academic performance, Rural Girl 2 had a moderate liking for reading, ranked it as her second favourite pastime and pursued the activity because it was "funny and calms me down." Being with friends, watching television and playing video games kept her from reading as much as she would like to do. As a member of the public library she received

most of the books from this source and resorted to librarians more often than any other person for reading guidance. Her favourite kind of books were: Fairy Tales, Riddles and Jokes and Poetry. In the two weeks prior to the survey, she had read four books.

Rural Girl 2 was not very communicative, appeared shy and when she expressed an idea hardly elaborated on it. This reticence could be natural as well as resulting from her living in a deeply rural area and not being used to talking about herself to strangers.

She was an only child and her father was a farmer and her mother worked in a non-professional capacity at a branch of the public library nearly five miles away. Her parents read magazines and newspapers which she sometimes read too, but did not like too much. She preferred reading comics and books borrowed from her friends. She had no recollection of her parents reading to her, but she liked it when teachers told her stories.

Rated as above average in academic performance, she saw herself as a good reader who could read well but preferred not to read. Although her mother worked at the library, Rural girl 2 said she herself had not gone there for a long time. When pressed for a reason she stated that she was too lazy to go even though she had read through all the books at home. She owned quite a number of books, some received as gifts and other purchased from book shops in the parish capital. However, she stated that she much preferred watching

television to reading. She still believed that reading was important and she enjoyed talking about her reading with friends since it gave them an opportunity to share and recommend books to each other.

The repetition of this reason for reading by so many of the interviewees suggests that children derive some measure of satisfaction from sharing their reading with friends. This fact has some implications for practice. Teachers and librarians need to provide more opportunities for children to share their reading experiences with each other to encourage more leisure time reading. For Chambers (1993, 7) the sharing of reading experiences even go beyond that because "...talking about books is the best rehearsal for talking well about other things. So in helping children to talk about their reading, we help them to be articulate about the rest of their lives..."

Her favourite story types included Fairy Tales, Horror Stories, Riddles and Jokes and Biographies. War Stories and Animal Stories were not well liked and she had no particular preference for Afrocentric characters in her books since the colour of their skins did not affect her enjoyment of the work.

In Rural Girl 2's case, access and available did not seem to be too great a problem to keep her from reading as she had books at home and her mother worked at a library. This child also acknowledged the value of reading, but preferred viewing to reading, and it would appear that she lacked a strong enough motivation (like that of Rural Boy 1) to propel her to actively seek out

the kind of books she was interested in reading.

From all appearances, this child is a capable reader but one who does not enjoy reading despite her ability. She seems to bear close to resemblance to the aliterate children Landy (1977a) and Whitehead et al., (1977) discovered among their sample. For such children, there seems to be little guarantee that any literature programme will succeed in making them habitual readers. Further research might uncover some of the factors leading to this condition, and so provide some suggested strategies for handling the matter.

### **5.2.7 Urban Girl 1**

Urban Girl 1, evaluated as above average in academic performance, liked to read very much because it was the key to education. In the two weeks immediately preceding the survey, she had read three books and her favourite ones were: Fairy Tales, Growing Up, Riddles and Jokes. Her main sources for books were relatives, the public library (of which she was a member) and friends. Her preferred pastimes in rank order were: dancing, reading and listening to music; and she found that being with friends, watching television and too many chores at home were among her chief distractions from reading.

The youngest of eight children, Urban Girl 1 lived at home with grandmother, a retired elementary school teacher, who used to read her bedtime stories. She liked being read to because her grandmother made the stories sound so real. This child, of above average ability, described herself as a

"bookworm" who liked to read a lot "... because I find it interesting... it gives me understanding of the world... and it makes me wise."

When asked for an example of the wisdom she had gained, she referred to reading **The Berenstain Bears Go to the Dentist**. The story dealt with a little bear who was afraid to go to the dentist because everyone told him it was going to be unpleasant, but on going he discovered that it was not as bad as everyone had said. Urban Girl 1 drew the following meaning from the story: "... we mustn't always listen to all that people say, but should try and find out for ourselves."

Urban Girl 1 led a very active life - she belonged to the Red Cross, Scouts and sang with a group at church. Most of her spare time was spent reading comics, books and newspapers. In addition, her hobbies included playing baseball, tag and being with her friends. If she had a whole day to spend as she pleased she would first of all read, then play games and watch television all night. Her television viewing was monitored by her grandmother who discouraged her from watching cartoons because they were silly and her cousins always tried to imitate the foolish actions of the characters. Her grandmother also felt books with love stories were inappropriate for her age.

This grandmother, who seemed so vigilant about Urban Girl 1's pastimes, also provided guidance and positive encouragement for reading by buying her granddaughter books, talking about them with her and by modelling

reading herself. It would seem then, that this child's home environment contained some of the positive elements repeatedly identified as contributing to the making of a committed reader. Staiger (1979) stated that the models of reading in the family, the reading material available and the family's own attitude toward learning generally formed the foundation of the reading habit.

Durkin (1966), who studied the home setting of young fluent readers, also stressed the importance of the home in developing early literacy and the reading habit. The family's socio-economic status should not be overlooked: the grandmother's professional status could have made it easier financially to buy books and her level of education could have influenced her own reading behaviour and consequently the granddaughter's.

In order to sustain her reading habit, Urban Girl 1 was a member of a mobile branch of the public library which allowed her to borrow only one book every two or three weeks. She lamented this restriction which left her little to read for such a long period. Fortunately for her, she had recourse to books purchased by her grandmother and those borrowed from friends.

Her enjoyment in reading came primarily from how the characters behaved and imagining that the story actually did take place. Sometimes for her this had negative effects in real life: ghost stories made her really scared to sleep by herself afterwards. Many types of books interested her and she was eager to talk about her reading, and unlike some of the other interviewees, she

was able to comment on books she had read.

Fairy tales were among her top favourites and she elaborated on some of her recent readings. **Cinderella** - she did not like how Cinderella was treated by her family, they worked her too hard. **Pinocchio** she did not like because he told too many lies and was very disobedient. She further added that Pinocchio reminded her of a close friend. However, she liked how the puppet's father loved him and went looking for Pinocchio whenever he was lost. She found **Alice in Wonderland** boring although she was not able to say why, she just knew it was.

Her main source of reading guidance was friends because when she actually visited the library, since the staff member - who might not be a librarian - was always too busy checking out books. This observation about librarians echoes the complaints of other children in the studies reviewed and the seeming busyness of library staff might be one of the reasons why children tend not to consult them for reading guidance.

Urban Girl 1 closely resembles the profile of the typical committed reader compiled by Landy (1977a) during her study of Canadian seventh grade students. She described the typical reader as: female who tends to possess a higher level of reading and intellectual ability, reads more for pleasure, owns more books, engages in a wide range of spare time activities and has parents who read a lot.

### 5.2.8 Urban Girls 2

Described as above average by her teachers, Urban Girl 2 liked to read "a little" in order to learn, and did not include reading among her three favourite leisure time activities. Instead she enjoyed playing indoor games, watching television and going out with friends. These last two activities along with too many chores at home kept her from reading more. She belonged to the school library which provided the majority of the books she read and most times she resorted to no one for guidance in book choices. During the two weeks before the survey she had read one book, and her most preferred types of books were: Family. Animal and Adventure Stories.

Urban Girl 2 came from a family of five headed by her mother who works as a domestic helper. There were no books at home and she could not recall having received one as a gift. Her mother encouraged her to read because it was "good for her" and she would learn something worthwhile. Not having any one at home to turn to for reading guidance, she relied on her older cousin who sometimes borrowed books from her school library. Her older brother was of little help because "...he is not bright enough, and does even know the words I do!" Sometimes she would go next door and talk with friends about whatever they were reading, which sometimes was only their textbooks, and they would wonder about the authenticity of some of the things in those books, especially if they had never seen or experienced them.

Reading was not her favourite activity as she preferred to play outdoor games and be with her friends. She also watched television a great deal and liked the adult soap operas and detective stories. On weekends she did not have much spare time as she had to assist her aunt in a grocery shop. At the time of the interview, she was not a member of any library and, prior to this, the only library she had ever visited was the one at school to which she had access until Grade four, but not since then.

Her experiences with that library were not very encouraging as she commented on not being allowed to handle certain books, the need to be quiet and having to pay for materials damaged. These comments raise questions about library policies and practices which might seem legitimate to administrators but which children often find puzzling and discouraging. In the Jamaican situation, the teachers in charge of the school libraries sometimes adopt a custodial attitude toward the material, which might explain the reluctance to have children touch certain books.

When this child was asked why she had not tried to join a branch of the public library since she lived in the capital city, her response was that she did not live near any. Since she could no longer use the school library, for whatever reason, her only source of reading material at that time was the literature text used for language arts. Therefore, it was not surprising to discover that she read primarily for utility. She said: ".. because it helped me

to spell... to know a lot of big words...and I like it too." The last statement sounded almost like an afterthought.

Although she had limited access to reading material and did not like reading as a pastime, she could recall the types of stories she had read and enjoyed. Among these were: fairy tales - she liked how the characters behaved and the way they lived in the end; family stories -they were sometimes humorous; animal stories - dogs had strong appeal, especially **Lassie** because he "...had sense"; Riddles and Jokes - they were funny; People from other lands - "... they made you sad or happy and you want to be like them sometimes... I mean the happy ones..." Afrocentric main characters were her first choice of book heroes - "... because they are our people... I feel sad when they are treated bad in shows (movies) and I feel like crying... and I feel happy when someone treat them like real somebody...".

Urban Girl 2 was ranked as above average, but she did not see herself as a good recreational reader which is understandable given her limited exposure to literature. Her situation at home and at school appears almost opposite to that of Urban Girl 1. Both were academically bright but the other girl seemed to have had the advantage of a literary environment and a good role model in her grandmother, which Urban Girl 2 lacked.

Her reading environment appears in stark contrast to what usually obtains in more developed societies; and this child's situation would seem to

justify Greaney's (1986) belief that geographic location, in terms of socio-economic conditions, can severely affect children's reading behaviour. He writes that factors such as lack of access to reading materials, subsistence economies, poor living conditions and the low educational level of parents were likely to impact negatively on the development of the reading habit.

### **Summary**

Although confined to a small group of children, these interviews proved to be useful and informative as they helped to validate some of the responses given on the questionnaire as well as add depth and meaning to the information provided through the questionnaire. Valuable insights into the lives of children and their reading attitudes, interests and habits were obtained. Some of the theories about children's reading factors influencing reading behaviour also appeared to be at work among these Jamaican sixth graders: the type of home environment, easy access to books, encouragement or lack of it from significant others, the child's own interests and abilities as well as the physical format of the book.

In addition, these interviews give the impression that each child is a unique individual who does not fit exactly into any pre-determined mould as, *inter alia*, it was observed that boys can and do have an interest in Love Stories for the very same reasons that it is believed that girls usually do - to vicariously project themselves in future roles as adults. Some children

struggled to maintain the reading habit despite the limitations imposed upon them by their environment, while others made little effort to read even though the opportunities are present. It was also noticed that children's perception of themselves as readers (and non-readers) was not always an accurate reflection of the reality. This misperception, the researcher felt, could have arisen from poor reading ability which made some children not see themselves as readers. Conversely, others had the ability but did not like to read. Yet, in both instances, the children regularly engaged in reading and as such would be classified as habitual readers.

The implications are that while generalisations about children's reading interests and habits are useful, they should not be applied without giving due consideration to the idiosyncrasies of each child and his or her social environment.

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**CHAPTER 6**  
**FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**6.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study set out to discover Jamaican sixth graders' voluntary reading interests and habits focusing on the types of books they like to read; whether they prefer Eurocentric or Afrocentric main characters; and how much and why they like to read. The survey method was used, complemented by a small number of semi-structured interviews. The investigation was developed on the assumption that for Jamaican sixth graders, the types and quantities of books read would be affected by the following variables: geographical location, sex, academic performance, the availability of reading materials (based upon membership in libraries, other sources of supply and the number of books owned), the persons they relied on for reading guidance, their ranking of reading as a recreational activity, the social and personal hindrances to reading,

how much they liked to read and their reasons for doing so.

It was also believed that the race of the Jamaican readers would influence the types of heroes they would like to see in their books. Additionally, it was felt that since Jamaica was a developing country with social conditions and culture so disparate from what obtained in developed countries, there was a likelihood that the children's reading habits and interests might differ from those of children in more socially advanced countries in North America and Britain.

A survey was conducted using a fourteen item **Student Questionnaire**, pre-tested and refined, to gather data about the sixth graders' reading interests and habits; a **School Questionnaire** seeking background information on each school and its library facilities; and a **Student Assessment Record** that collected data on the children's academic and reading performance. Four hundred and eighteen (418) sixth graders from eleven public elementary schools in Jamaica participated in the survey, and eight children from the sample were subsequently interviewed to provide further insights into the reading interests and habits of the Jamaican middle readers. The analysis of the data for this study was performed through frequencies, means and the application of the Kruskal-Wallis and Chi-square tests and ANOVA, where appropriate.

## **6.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

Following is a summarization of the major findings of the study based

upon the twelve hypotheses that were tested. **Table 53** links the hypotheses with the relevant findings and provides a quick overview of the findings.

**TABLE 53: Summary of Results from Hypotheses Tested**

<b>Dependent Variables</b>		<b>Independent Variables</b>		
<b>Hypotheses</b>		<b>Geo.</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>ACP</b>
<b>1 &amp; 2</b>	Interest in Book Types	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>3 &amp; 4</b>	Number of Books Read	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>5</b>	Sources of Books	Yes	Yes	NT
<b>6*</b>	Sources of Reading Guidance	No	No	NT
<b>7</b>	Reading as a Leisure Time Activity	No	Yes	NT
<b>8</b>	Hindrances to Reading More	Yes	Yes	NT
<b>9</b>	Preference for Race of Book Heroes	Yes	Yes	NT
<b>10 &amp; 11</b>	Liking to Read	No	Yes	Yes
<b>12</b>	Reasons for Reading	Yes	Yes	NT

**Geo. = Geography    ACP = Academic Performance    NT = Not Tested**

**\* Null hypothesis was not rejected**

In general, the results show that of the twelve hypotheses tested only one was not supported in any way: - no significant difference was established among the four groups with reference to the persons they consulted for reading

guidance. All other hypotheses prove to be supported to some extent. The highlights of these findings are grouped under reading interests and habits - the two areas of concern of the study.

### **READING INTERESTS:**

1. **Reading Interests of Jamaican Sixth Graders:** With few exceptions, the reading interests of Jamaican sixth graders conformed generally to that of their peers in developed countries.
2. **Impact of Sex and Geography on Reading Interests:** With reference to the impact of sex and geography on the children's reading interests, as in other countries, it was found that sex was more dominant than geography in determining what the Jamaican children were interested in reading.
3. **Impact of Academic/Reading Performance on Reading Interests:** Academic performance (and by implication reading performance) had little effect by itself on the types of books the sample was interested in reading.  
  
Only occasionally was it associated with either sex or geography as a determinant of reading interests.
4. **Preference for Race of Main Characters in Books:** Jamaican children indicated a very strong preference for Afrocentric main characters. in the following order: Jamaican/Caribbean, Africans, North Americans and

Britons. White Jamaican / Caribbean heroes were the only Eurocentric group given high rank.

### **READING HABITS:**

5. **Children Liking to Read:** The majority of the children said they liked to read very much, especially the girls, who seem to have a much stronger liking for the activity than their male peers.
6. **Impact of Academic Performance on Liking to Read:** Children of higher academic achievement expressed a greater liking for reading than their less academically able peers.
7. **Reasons For Reading:** The majority of Jamaican children stated that they read for utilitarian purposes much more frequently than for either pleasure or escape. Being urban and female meant there was a greater probability that the child would read for utility.
8. **Reading as a Leisure Time Activity:** Girls ranked reading as their number one leisure time activity, while rural and urban boys placed it third and fourth, respectively.
9. **Number of Books Read by Rural/Urban Boys and Girls:** Geography, sex and academic performance all seemed to be associated with the number of books read. Urban children, especially females, at the higher performance levels were likely to read more books voluntarily.
10. **Hindrances to Reading More:** Watching television was the most

frequently cited obstacle to reading more. Lack of access to and lack of availability of books also featured high on the list of deterrents to reading, and for some children (mostly boys), poor reading ability was a further impediment.

11. **Sources of Books:** The children tended to resort mostly to non-library sources (friends, home and relatives) for their reading material.
12. **Sources of Reading Guidance:** The children relied more on parents, friends and teachers than on librarians for assistance with their book choices.

### 6.3 DETAILS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings will now be presented in fuller details and discussed relative to the objectives of the study. Wherever appropriate, references will be made to the qualitative data collected via the interviews in order to clarify understanding and to add more meaning to the information gleaned from the questionnaires.

#### 6.3.1 Reading Interests Generally

The twenty-four categories included in the inventory for the **Student Questionnaire** were derived mainly from the core of book types that research findings showed were typically of interest to middle readers of both sexes. As most of the research literature came from the developed countries, it was

anticipated that the discussion of the findings from Jamaica against such a background would provide some interesting insights into the reading interests and habits of children in different kinds of society.

Summaries of research findings (for example, the one by Whitehead, 1984) about the reading interests of middle grade children reveal that they were primarily interested in: Adventure Stories, Animal Stories, Biographies, Fantasy, Fairy Tales, History, Humorous Stories, Love Stories, Mystery Stories, Poetry, Science, Sports, Family Stories, and Social Studies. Carter (1986) commented on the remarkable stability of children's reading interests over the last eighty years as there have been only minor variations reflective of societal changes. This would suggest that the listings arrived at from several studies should be a fairly good indication of the interests of this age group.

Like children 10 to 12 years old from elsewhere, Jamaican sixth graders showed definite interest in Riddles and Jokes, Fairy Tales, Science, People in Other Lands, Adventure Stories, Humorous Stories, Family Stories, Sports, Lives of Famous People, Animal Stories and Poetry. Other interests, not found in keeping with the standard lists were books on : Things to Make and Do, Growing Up and Understanding Myself and Others. Although the last two were not among those normally found interesting to intermediate children elsewhere, these book types may be considered as belonging to the general category of books dealing with social empathy and personal relationships. These types

Feeley (1982) and Mckenna (1986) found were of particular interest to girls. Things to Make and Do, a distinctive Jamaican favourite, could be related to their strong liking for Art and Craft which ranked fairly high on their list of leisure time activities.

The high degree of congruence between the interests of Jamaican children and their counterparts in developed countries would seem to confirm Schlager's (1978) statement that children's developmental stages greatly affect what they read and that there is a core of reading interests common to children within a similar age group no matter where in the world they live.

Other factors operating in the Jamaican society and culture might also contribute to their positive response to some of these book types. For example, their high interest in traditional literature (Riddles and Jokes and Fairy Tales) could also be partly influenced by the strong oral culture in Jamaica where telling stories preceded by the asking of riddles is still common practice at certain social functions, especially in the rural areas. Most of the children interviewed liked Fairy Tales - some for the magic or the happily ever after endings, others for the humour. Rural Boy 1 said he enjoyed Riddles and Jokes because they were funny and he could also share them with his friends.

Noticeable absences from the Jamaican children's list of high interests were History, Fantasy and Mystery Stories, which are usually regarded as being of strong interest to children in North America and Britain. Their low level of

interest in History, Mystery Stories and Fantasy is hard to explain and one can only conjecture as to the reasons. Given that Mystery Stories tend to have a strong combination of action, suspense and wish fulfilment, which are known to make them very appealing to young readers, one wonders if lack of access might be the problem. Or, perhaps, it might be as one boy said during the interviews: "I do not like to read mysteries, but I like to watch detective stories on television because I like trying to solve the problem and to find out what happens in the end".

Low interest in historical works might be due to the children's inability to relate to or identify with most of the historical books they are likely to encounter. While in school they study Caribbean history and they are also exposed to a great deal of British history. The historical adventures or accounts that they meet in their books are likely to deal mainly with European or American experiences, and so lack relevance. On the other hand, very few indigenous historical stories have been written in a form attractive to children. All this might help to create a lack of interest in historical works. As for the negative response to Fantasy, it could be that the children did not understand the term, as seen by one boy's response to a question about Fairy Tales at the interview. In the discussion, he cited **Pinocchio** and **Peter Pan** as examples, when to the children's literature experts these would be classified as Fantasy.

There are several possible explanations as to why children are interested

in certain book types, and in this instance the differences between developed and developing countries could be a factor. In Jamaica access to books for leisure time reading is not easy because school libraries hardly exist at the primary level and books are very expensive. This could mean the children have limited exposure and access to the wide variety of books published abroad.

A factor of interest relating to the children's choices was the mix of fiction and non-fiction types selected. Research findings show that children in general tend to prefer narrative book types to informational ones. According to Hildick (1971) one good story is worth more than a hundred non-fiction books no matter how well they are illustrated or laid out. Perera (1986) also believes that children tend to prefer fiction because of their familiarity with story structure, the readability of narratives and the greater ease with which such books can be read. From all indications a similar pattern was to be expected from Jamaican sixth graders, but their responses differed.

Before discussing the children's replies, however, reference should be made to the fact that the researcher made a deliberate effort to equalise the number of fiction and non-fiction book categories included on the questionnaire. This was considered necessary because an examination of many of the reading interests inventories used during research showed that fictional book types usually predominated and this over-representation could contribute to their being chosen more frequently. For this reason, the Jamaican students were

presented with an equal number of fiction and non-fiction categories. Balancing the two groups provided a better chance of seeing whether the children preferred informational works to narrative ones, or vice versa, based on the number of each kind that were assigned high/moderate or low interest level scores.

The results showed that there was an almost equal distribution of fiction (7) and non-fiction (8) among the fifteen book types that were of high or moderate interest. This could have resulted from the deliberate inclusion of more non-fiction types on the inventory as well as the strong emphasis the Jamaicans placed on reading for utilitarian purposes (60.2%) which might also cause them to be very interested in informational works. Because research often shows that girls prefer fiction and boys non-fiction, the balancing of the two in the Jamaican's choices suggests that children, especially girls, might show greater interest in informational works if they are given a wider variety of book choices in that area. However, this was not sustained when the children selected their favourite book types in response to the next question.

Despite the children's earlier expression of interest in an almost equal number of non-fiction and fictional works, the picture changed immensely when they were later asked to select their favourite types of books from among the same twenty-four categories. This request for favourites differed somewhat from the one for interests, in that it was anticipated that the choice of a

favourite book type would be based on empirical knowledge made possible through access, while interest could be based on expectation or a guess.

In answering the question, the children selected only seven of the twenty-four categories for top billing (i.e., chosen by 20% and over) all the other book types had much smaller scores which suggest that the children's interests are diverse. The most popular choices in rank order were: Fairy Tales, Love Stories, Animal Stories, Riddles and Jokes, Family Stories, Adventure Stories and Dancing. The supremacy of place given to fiction by both sexes could be taken to mean that interest is not necessarily synonymous with enjoyment, and that children are more inclined to opt for the pleasure offered by fiction even though they might be more interested in non-fiction for its utilitarian value. If this is the case, it would also lend further support to the view expressed by Hildick (1971) that children will always choose fiction over informational works because narrative types provide greater personal satisfaction than non-fiction.

### **6.3.2 Reading Interests Relative to the Children's Sex, Geographic**

#### **Location and Academic Performance**

When the interests of the four groups in the sample were compared based on their sex and geographic location, the discovery that sex affected their choices more than geography was not surprising as the literature repeatedly showed this to be so. With regard to geographic location, urban children were

more interested in Love Stories, Music, and War Stories while their rural peers favoured Humorous Stories and Machines. Some of these differences are hard to explain due to the problem of availability and access which means that even within the same location children might not have access to the same types of books. Library services are uneven and sporadic depending on where the child lives or attends school, and there are very few other means of gaining access to books.

Rural children's stronger preference for Humorous Stories could arise from their greater exposure to storytelling and the oral folk culture, while their interest in Machines could spring from the agrarian setting in which they live. The appeal of Music, Love Stories and War Stories for the urban children could be partly the result of proximity to bookstores, theatres and cinemas. Bookstores, situated mostly in the cities, stock several of the romance series that are now being published in paperback format for young people. Urban children are also more likely to have a better chance of visiting music stores, hearing the latest recordings and attending musical concerts. These children's appetite for War Stories could also be fuelled by the many films that focus on the topic.

The sex of children has always played a major role in their reading choices. Female middle grade readers are known to have a penchant for family stories, fairy tales, realistic fiction, romance, biography and poetry while boys

have an affinity for science, sports, social studies, travel and exploration, inventions and war. With regard to sex, research repeatedly demonstrates that boys have a greater predilection for informational works and books full of action, excitement and violence. They dislike love stories, sentimentalism, poetry and stories focusing on home and family. On the other hand, girls prefer fiction and books that contain social empathy, sentimentality and interpersonal relationships. Books about war or containing much violence are not usually counted among their favourites.

In Jamaica, sixth grade boys did prefer War Stories, Machines, Sports and Love Stories all of which, except for the last named, closely adhere to some of the items on the list for their age group elsewhere. The girls liked books on Dancing, Music, Things to Make and Do and Understanding Myself and Others. Like their peers from the developed countries, Jamaican girls were less tolerant of violence as exemplified by the extremely low mean scores (rural girls 1.77, urban girls 1.94 out of 3) given to War stories, and generally they were not too interested in Sports or Machines. Most of the sex differences relate to the informational book types, with the girls in this study showing greater interest than the boys in non-fiction. In other studies, the opposite is usually the case.

This finding is unexpected since it is generally observed that boys have a greater propensity for choosing informational topics. The reason for this reversal could be due in part to the researcher's decision to include more

informational topics known to appeal to girls in order to gauge the girls' response to these. It should be noted that the girl's choices of non-fiction topics veered toward the expressive arts and the affective domain, both of which have been identified as being attractive to girls.

The boys' strong interest in *Love Stories* was quite uncharacteristic of intermediate male readers from elsewhere who tended to shun these books. A hint as to the reason for this unexpected interest could be found in one of the comments made during the interviews. Urban Boy 2 said he loved to read them to find out what love was about since he planned to get married some day, and just like in fairy tales, he loved the "happily ever after" endings. Such a response should gratify advocates of a non-sexist approach to children's literature as it shows that boys too can be just as interested as girls in reading romantic fiction.

Academic performance was the other variable linked to book choices, but here it produced mixed results so that it was hard to identify a specific trend. Hafner, Palmer and Tullos (1986) and others maintain that in general children of different intellectual abilities tend to share the same reading tastes. Moray (1978) in his summary of research findings confirmed this in part, but also observed that lower achieving students showed a stronger liking for humour as well as the comic book format. He interpreted this to mean that they liked less complicated and more concrete books. Therefore, it would seem that less

academically able children tend to prefer comics, humorous and realistic stories than their more able peers who more frequently reached for fantasy, science and historical fiction.

For four book types (Machines, Sports, Things to Make and Do, and War Stories) it did seem as if academic performance played a part in the differences expressed among the groups. Since most times this variable interacted with either sex or geography the pattern is not very clear. This made it difficult to compare the findings with those from elsewhere. However, with so few of the twenty-four book types being affected by academic performance, it would seem to suggest that the children of differing intellectual abilities had almost the same taste in books, as revealed by previous research.

Examples of the mixed reaction to the same types of books by all four groups can be seen with reference to Sports and War Stories. Among the above average groups, boys showed strong interest in Sports and War Stories. Actually for urban boys the higher their academic rating the more they were interested in War Stories while all the other children, including rural boys, gave them a low interest score. But what held true for above average boys was not so for the girls who disliked Sports the most, and felt almost the same way about War Stories. This type of interaction between academic performance, sex and geography indicates the complicated association between this variable and book choices.

It was observed that although research findings elsewhere tend to indicate that Humorous Stories was often more favoured by low achieving students, this was not exactly the case for the Jamaicans. With them this category did enjoy high appeal among the below average students, but it was also held in almost the same regard by many of the above average and average groups. If one recalls the immense popularity of Riddles and Jokes among Jamaican children, and the statement from one of the interviewees that he found these books funny, then maybe this might be a partial explanation for the appeal of humorous books across the boundaries of sex and academic ability.

Because academic performance always acted in combination with either sex or geographic location, it is obvious that academic performance by itself is not a major factor influencing Jamaican sixth graders' choice of reading materials.

So, it may be concluded that while there are some differences in the reading interests of Jamaican sixth graders when compared to research findings about children from elsewhere, in general the interests are more alike than different. There does seem to be a common core of reading interests that children share based on their age and sex. Where differences occur, the reasons are not always clear, but some of them might well be rooted in the culture and social context of the children's daily lives.

### **6.3.3 Preference for Race of Main Characters in Books**

The findings arising from this issue of race and children's book choices merit a detailed discussion because of its importance locally and abroad. The matter was one of the major concerns of the study since it had not been explored previously in Jamaica where librarians in selecting reading materials rely heavily on research findings from countries with predominantly white populations. It was also important because many of these developed countries are still grappling with the problem of how best to cater to the literature needs of children in pluralistic societies.

Most Jamaican sixth graders displayed a strong preference for Black Jamaican/Caribbean persons as heroes in their books and this can be assumed to result from the majority of Jamaicans being of African descent and so their desire to see their images reflected in their books. Headlam (1989) also discovered, in studying the contents of indigenous texts and their effects on children in Jamaica, that these children showed a stronger interest in these books because they portrayed people and lifestyles familiar to them. In a much earlier investigation, Floyd (1973) had also uncovered a strong interest in Afrocentric books among Jamaican teenagers. Information gleaned from the interviews showed that most children preferred Afrocentric main characters. According to Rural Boy 1 and Urban girl 4 "...because they are people like us " or "... because they look like us."

The children's general expression of preference for Afrocentric book heroes seems to support the demands of children's literature experts (for example, Broderick, 1973a and MacCann, 1985) for books that positively reflect the images and lifestyles of ethnic minorities in multicultural societies. Cullinan (1989) insists that children from minority ethnic groups need literature representing their culture in order to develop a positive self-image and an appreciation for their ethnic heritage.

Although with a much lower mean score, the children's ranking of white Jamaican/Caribbean persons in second place before blacks from elsewhere indicates that they are also interested in main characters, black and white, from their own region. The inclusion of white persons from the Caribbean suggests that in this instance not only race was at work but also the sharing of a common socialisation experience. According to Asher (1979), this sometimes accounts for children from different ethnic groups choosing the same types of books.

The ordering of the children's choices of book characters might seem to indicate certain amount of ambivalence because of the high rank assigned to white Jamaican / Caribbean persons. But by selecting all the remaining Afrocentric groups before any of the other Eurocentric ones, the sixth graders indicated that of foremost interest to them were Afrocentric books.

Hildick (1971) expresses the opinion that the chief reason why children

read fiction is for identification and that vicarious experience is one of the most important sources of pleasure in reading. If this is so, then it would seem that for minority groups this pleasure might be further enhanced when they are not only able to identify with the characters in thought and action, but also through ethnicity and lifestyle.

The ranking of the choices for black characters could also be indicative of certain socio-cultural factors at work. Blacks from Africa were more favoured than those from North America or England which seems logical with over 90% of Jamaicans descended from black Africans. The Jamaican sixth graders seemed to have very definite ideas about which types of black characters were of interest and in the process of ranking them, the children seem to have been influenced first by their ancestry and then by their proximity to the other Afrocentric groups. So the choice of black North Americans over Britons might be explained in terms of the extensive exposure of Jamaicans to people and things American through trade, immigration, tourism and the mass media. It would seem as if the influence of Britain over the Jamaican psyche has weakened somewhat as it relates to the matter of personal identity.

The rank order for the placement of the different white nationals, most of whom appear low on the list, differed from that of the black characters. Although the North Americans still preceded the Britons, the Africans were placed last. Once more, proximity and familiarity seem to be at work here. It

should be pointed out that the most likely reason for white Africans being assigned last place while their black counterparts were ranked close to the top could be that Jamaican children are taught that Africa is the black man's country. Therefore, for them, it might be difficult to conceive of any Africans as white.

The differences emerging from the comparison of the four groups based on geographic location and sex are not easily explained as some degree of ambivalence was identified. This same kind of uncertainty was also noticed by Kirsch (1975) as the black children in her study tended to choose books with black as well as white characters, while white children choose books with only white characters. McElwin (1971) had earlier observed this same trend and explained the black children's response in terms of their acceptance of white characters being in most of the books as the norm. This kind of reasoning might also colour the responses of the Jamaican children since the mass of their reading material features Eurocentric heroes.

Before attempting to proffer explanations for the findings, it should be borne in mind that the variable race or ethnicity was but one aspect of this larger study on reading interests and habits, and so it could not be explored fully. Therefore, any conclusion arrived at about the differences found on the basis of the data must be tentative, since no doubt many other unexamined factors were likely to be of influence.

Geography more often than sex tended to determine which of the characters were preferred. Urban children's stronger preference for Black Africans could be linked to their living in urban centres which would give them greater exposure to books and movies featuring more black persons in leading roles. This is partially supported by the data which showed that urban children comprised 27.3% of the 46.7% who said they had read books with black heroes. Rural children's affinity for white English heroes might be explained in the same manner, as only 19.4% had read books with Afrocentric heroes. The possibility exists that less frequent exposure to black heroes makes the rural children more willing to tolerate books with only white main characters while the reverse could obtain for their urban peers.

The greater interest expressed by rural children for white English characters could also result from the steady diet of books peopled with them as heroes that has been the main fare for most of these Jamaicans from birth. One of the interviewees from the rural area commented on this phenomenon by saying that for a while he thought only white people could write books because they were the only characters he met when reading. Other remarks from some of the children who were interviewed might shed further light on the situation. At least four of the children interviewed stated that while they preferred Afrocentric heroes, the colour of the main character did not affect their enjoyment of the story. It would seem then, that the story content was of more

concern to the children than the race of the characters.

The matter of the reader's sex influencing his or her choice of main characters is not very clear as girls revealed a stronger inclination toward white North Americans while boys inclined more toward black Africans. Perhaps, some of the findings by Miller (1967) in his investigation (though dated) of body image among Jamaican teenagers might help to explain. When he asked teenage boys and girls to indicate which race they would like their different body parts to look like, the composite picture arrived at for boys differed from that for girls. The boys appeared to be more satisfied with their African features, while the girls mainly wanted to look like Europeans.

Although the majority of the children wanted to read books with black Jamaican/Caribbean heroes, rural boys and urban girls liked them the most, which could be due to a variety of factors, including their ability to recall having read books with black characters as heroes and whether or not the colour of the characters mattered to them. The explanations for several of these choices of one race over the other could do with further investigation.

## **READING HABITS**

### **6.3.4 Liking to Read**

Nearly sixty-four percent (63.4%) of the children chose "I Like to Read Very Much" and this huge response might have been affected by their own perception of reading as something very important and of intrinsic worth. No

doubt social desirability had a role in this high score. The carrying out of the survey within the classroom context could also have contributed to the magnitude of the response because teachers frequently stress the value of reading for academic success, if for nothing else. In Jamaica, this assumes even greater importance because education is seen as a scarce benefit and the main avenue for upward social mobility. Therefore, from an early age Jamaican children come to realise the importance of education and by association reading, the foundation of most learning.

The discovery that girls liked to read much more than boys corroborates the earlier findings where girls assigned a higher rank to reading as a recreational activity, and they also read more books than did the boys over the two week period prior to the survey. On all these points the Jamaican sixth graders appear to behave very much like their counterparts in other countries.

The survey of research reports on reading interests show that the typical profile of the child who does not like to read is usually that of a male, performing below average academically and experiencing reading difficulties. Although groups of aliterates, (that is, bright, reading proficient children who dislike reading), have been among some of the samples, they are usually in the minority. Again, the Jamaican profile appears to closely match the stereotype of non-readers since more boys than girls fell in the lower academic levels. Further justification for this view becomes evident when the children were

asked to indicate the degree to which they liked to read. More girls chose "I Like to Read Very Much " (girls 39%, boys 24.5%), and as the degree of liking moved from moderate to very little/none at all, the percentage of boys responding was always larger than that of the girls. When academic ability was also considered, the data showed that brighter children, mostly the girls, had a greater liking for reading. Therefore, the Jamaican sixth graders would seem to have replicated the pattern of children from developed countries.

While the trend of girls liking to read more than boys has been confirmed by the findings of this study, the reasons for this are still not clear as the debate about the cause, which hinges mainly on the role of nature and/or nurture, has not been resolved. For those who uphold the view that nature is mainly responsible for girls outperforming boys academically and having a greater predisposition for reading, then the geographic location (for example - Jamaica) of children would make little difference to this pattern of behaviour.

On the other hand, the proponents (Johnson, 1974; Downing et al., 1979) of the socialisation theory base their position on cross-cultural research which shows cultural expectations and sex-role standards were more likely to affect attitude toward reading. This would, in turn, affect how much either boys or girls liked to read. Since these and other studies have shown that in the United States and many other western societies reading is usually perceived as an activity more appropriate for females, and since Jamaica falls within this

hemisphere, it can be assumed that these children would also be affected by such a perception.

Johnson (1974) also links this perception of reading as a mostly feminine activity to children's reading levels. He argues that if boys view reading negatively, then their reading ability will also be impaired and this might be one reason why girls, at least in western societies, tend to out-perform boys in this sphere. If this is so, then it might also explain why the Jamaican girls preferred reading more than did the boys. However, with the level of uncertainty that still exists between these two schools of thought, it would seem that more research is needed to clarify the issue.

#### **6.3.5 Reasons For Reading:**

The majority (60.2%) of the responses from the children indicated that they read primarily for utilitarian purposes with nearly a third of the answers were for Pleasure (32.5%), with a much smaller percentages falling under Escape (4.3%). The observations made here do not differ much from those originating in more developed countries, although occasionally reading for pleasure is ranked first. Greaney and Neuman (1990) concluded from their international study that reading to learn appeared to be an important function of reading in all of the countries surveyed.

The open-ended nature of the question allowed the children to supply their own reasons for their choices, and their prime motivation was education.

Examples of their replies were: "I want to be bright," "I do not want to be a dunce", "It will help me get a job," "... so that I can pass my exams", or "...that I will become somebody". As stated earlier, education is the key to personal advancement in Jamaica, and while this might also be a truism in developed countries, for Jamaicans it becomes even more crucial because of the limited opportunities for schooling.

In developed countries, one of the major reasons offered for the children's emphasis on the practical relates to the methods of reading instruction employed in schools. As Cullinan (1989) states, in teaching reading, too often the emphasis is on reading to gain information or simply to decode the text which leaves children believing that reading is to be undertaken mainly to extract information. Bettelheim (1982) also criticises the use of boring class texts that deny the child an entrance into the exciting world of knowledge, understanding and pleasurable experiences to be found in real literature. Hopefully, the introduction of the whole language approach to reading education will change this.

In Jamaica, reading instruction is still mostly skill-oriented and taught using class texts. This could mean that some of these same factors could also be in operation. In addition, 41.1% of the sample were rated as performing below average academically and it has been found that children of limited reading ability are less likely to find reading a pleasurable activity. Therefore,

any reading undertaken by them would be primarily to meet academic demands.

Reading for pleasure included references to engaging in the habit because it was fun, interesting, nice, funny or made the readers feel good. Its placement at second may be the result of some of the factors already stated and this could be further compounded by the lack of attractive and interesting reading material at home or in the libraries. Books are expensive and scarce. libraries are under-stocked, and access to book shops limited. Under these conditions, even if a child enjoys reading, his or her opportunities for encountering a wide enough variety of books to satisfy his or her reading tastes are greatly reduced. Therefore, reading for pleasure could be a sporadic activity, not from choice, but from circumstances. The low score arrived at for Escape (4.3%) might have resulted from the children finding it difficult to distinguish between this and reading for pleasure and so they used the same terms to describe both.

The observation that only in reading for utility was there any significant differences among the four groups indicated that the children were more alike than different in their reading for pleasure and escape. It was noticed that the urban girls were the most likely group to read for utilitarian purposes, and even then the weak interaction between sex and geography indicated these two variables did not make a great difference in the children's reasons for reading.

The finding that the urban girls were more likely than all other groups

to read for utility should not be totally unexpected, as this same set had read the most books during the two weeks prior to the survey. It is usually accepted that girls tend to read more than boys, and living in the cities should give the former an edge over their rural peers when it comes to access to books.

Mention should be made of the fact that quite unlike the girls, urban boys appeared to be the least likely to read for utility, and they cited escape more frequently than all other groups. This is in keeping with the general pattern of differentness established by this group throughout the study. From the information collected, it was observed that they had the largest percentage of students among those assessed as below average in academic (63.8%) and reading performance (59.4%). Furthermore, from their responses to questionnaire items, it appeared that: they did not like to read very much, had few reading interests, gave the lowest ranking to reading as a recreational activity, listed not being good at reading as one of their major hindrances to reading more, and 32.4% of the 105 included in the sample admitted that they only liked to read "A Little".

The most positive discovery was that above average urban boys were avid readers. Only four fell into this category, but among them they had read 4.25 books each during the two week period before the survey. Apart from this, the overall picture is not a positive one and would seem to suggest several underlying variables at work beyond the scope of this study. Whatever the

nature of the personal and social factors involved, they are likely to have had some effect on the reading interest and habits of urban boys. As a group, they merit further research.

However, on the whole, Jamaican sixth graders would seem to read primarily for utility which related mainly to education, career and future advancement in the world. Reading for pleasure was not the norm for most and this might be understandable given the shortage of books and the greater significance attached to education - a very scarce benefit.

#### **6.3.6 Reading As a Leisure Time Activity**

Jamaican children ranked reading in second place after watching television as their favourite leisure time activity. This would suggest not only a favourable attitude toward reading, but also some degree of active participation by the children. When the four groups were compared rural and urban girls placed it first while rural boys had it at third and the urban ones at fourth place. For the boys, outdoor sports and games was the favourite along with watching television and for the urban boys, playing video games. Only after these did they consider reading.

These sixth grade boys would appear to favour more active outdoor engagements like cricket and football, and this would be in keeping with the very high level of interest they demonstrated earlier in books on sports. The urban boys' choice of video games above reading might have been influenced

by the greater access afforded them by virtue of living in the urban areas.

Girls' greater predilection for reading as a pastime has sometimes been ascribed to gender, which it is felt makes them inclined toward more passive activities like reading. However, this theory has been hotly disputed by both Johnson (1974) and Downing et al., (1979) who established through research that cultural expectations and sex-role standards were more likely to affect students' attitudes towards reading, reading attainment and ultimately how much they read.

From surveys conducted in North America and other western and non-western nations around the world, these researchers observed that wherever boys or girls viewed reading as an appropriate activity for their sex, they tend to develop a positive attitude toward it, have a higher level of reading attainment and concomitantly their participation in voluntary reading tend also to increase. In most of the Western societies studied, reading was perceived as mainly a female activity, which might account for Jamaican boys, as well as others in the western world, preferring it less frequently as a pastime than did the girls.

When compared to the research findings from developed countries, Jamaican sixth grade boys' lower ranking of reading conforms more closely to the usual trend in studies conducted by McEady-Gilead (1989), Anderson, Wilson and Fielding (1988) and Moffitt and Wartella (1992) where the highest rank accorded reading was third place. Even though girls were seen as

favouring reading more as a recreation activity, they still rarely placed it as number one. The high priority assigned to recreational reading by Jamaican girls is in keeping with their tendency to read more and to express a greater liking for the activity. The dissimilarity between the lower ranking of reading by children from developed countries and the Jamaican girls' high placement might be further attributed to some of the differences between the two types of societies from which they come.

In heavily industrialised countries there is likely to be a wider variety of recreational activities and more opportunities to participate in them due to, among other things, a better social infrastructure, which is either lacking or rudimentary in lesser developed countries like Jamaica. While this certainly does not explain girls' greater proclivity for reading as a pastime, the absence of certain basic social amenities coupled with limited financial resources could restrict the variety and number of leisure time pursuits available.

Even within the same country, Heathington (1979) noticed that there was a difference in how children of different socio-economic status in the United States spent their leisure time. While they had many interests in common, those at the lower end of the social ladder were restricted from participating due to the location, cost and logistics of attending.

The overwhelming popularity of televiewing as a recreational activity among Jamaican sixth graders shows that it is not only children in developed

countries who are captivated by this medium. It would seem as if some of the same features appeal - the attraction of the combination of sight, sound and motion as well as the variety of programmes. In addition, those who experience difficulty with reading usually find it easier to access the information provided via this medium.

While there might not be a television in every Jamaican household, it is accessible to a large number of the population, and it is not unusual, especially in the rural areas, to see neighbours congregating at each others houses to watch television. In this technological age, television seems to be rivalling reading as the favourite pastime among children and, as Whitehead et al., (1977) maintain, there seems to be an inverse relationship between the number of books read and the amount of time children spend watching television.

Such a claim seems justified when research findings show that children in North America on average spend approximately two hours per day watching television and about thirty minutes doing voluntary reading (Wagner, 1980). Given this reality, she recommended that adults accept this medium as being complementary to reading and also see it as a potential source for motivating children to read.

When the findings on children's ranking of reading as a leisure time activity are looked at in combination with those on liking to read and reasons for reading, it is possible to arrive at a general picture of the sixth graders'

reading attitude. This assessment can be made on the basis of Lewis and Teale's (1980) description of reading attitude as being tri-dimensional - possessing affective, cognitive and behavioral components. If this definition is applied, then each of these variables furnishes information on each of the three elements.

From the responses given, it can therefore be deduced that most of the Jamaicans (63.4% like to read very much) are favourably inclined toward reading; many of them also know that reading has personal value (60.2% read for utilitarian purposes); and behaviourally, they ranked reading as their second favourite leisure time activity, which suggests that they actively engage in it with some amount of regularity..

With this being the case, many of these children are positively disposed toward reading, despite their limiting social and personal circumstances. It would therefore seem to suggest that fertile ground exists among Jamaican sixth graders for parents, teachers and librarians to work together to cultivate a crop of habitual leisure time readers.

### **6.3.7 Number of Books Read Over Two Weeks**

It was expected that girls would read more books than boys since this seems to be one of the recurrent sex-linked findings that keep researchers perennially searching for plausible explanations. For this sample of sixth graders, it was found that more boys (19.2%) than girls (13.6%) had not read

any books during the period studied and that on average, the girls read between 1.70 and 2.07 books (rural and urban girls respectively) while the boys read between 1.41 and 1.72. The urban girls were inclined to read the largest number of books. Living in the urban areas should permit greater access to books so that these girls who are already favourably disposed toward reading would be in a better position than their rural peers to pursue their reading interests.

If reading skill and girls' stronger inclination toward reading are in any way contributory to their reading more, then Jamaican girls might be little different from those in the developed countries. As Miller (1991) reported, these girls were and still are out-performing boys at all levels of the educational system. A greater liking for reading expressed by the girls and their choice of it as their favourite pastime only substantiate the picture gleaned from the data.

When academic performance was taken into consideration, it seemed to support, to a lesser extent, the established results from other studies. Since all three variables interacted this meant that they were each in some way associated with the amount of reading done. All the above average groups, except for rural boys, more or less conformed to the expected by reading more on average (i.e. approximately 2.5 compared to 1.7 average and 1.6 below average) during the two week period. Urban girls were consistent across all performance levels by reading approximately two books each. Even more remarkable was the

above average set of urban boys who had a mean score of 4.25. This was unusual since all other groups, especially the boys, had a much more modest score. The small number of urban boys (4) classified as above average and the large number of books they read accounted for this distortion.

It would therefore appear that in general sex was the most important predictor variable while geographical location was not independent of academic performance in determining how much children read. The anticipation that the disparity between the standard of living in the urban and rural areas of Jamaica might impact on the amount of reading done appears to have some validity. This seems to be reflected in the data where more rural than urban children had not read any books during the period studied and later when they stated that having their own books and a library nearby would help them to read more.

Although the tendency was for rural children and the less academically able to read fewer books, this was not always the case as seen by closer examination of the data in relation to geography and academic performance. It would seem that some of the below average or rural children who wanted to read (e.g., below average urban girls and average rural boys) were able to circumvent whatever obstacles the environment or a lack of reading ability placed in their way. Perhaps, some of the less able ones were so strongly motivated by the contents of the book that they were challenged to extend themselves beyond their reading level in order to master the text. Pauk (1973)

found that this occurred when low achieving students were exposed to high interest material above their reading level.

It should also be remembered that the number of books read does not necessarily demonstrate a lack of interest in reading or a dislike for the activity. Greaney and Hegarty (1987) stated that the amount of reading a child does in his or her leisure time is subject to a variety of things, including the availability of suitable material, current interests and friendships, the time of the year, the amount of homework and alternate attractions.

Medrich et al., (1982) in commenting on the way children spent their leisure time, also stressed that children are not autonomous so how they apportion their time might not be within their control. Therefore, the amount of reading they do would most likely be affected by all these other factors. These observations give rise to questions about the nature of the obstacles children identify as keeping them from reading more when they wanted to.

### **6.3.8 Hindrances to Reading More**

Concomitant with the high rank they assigned to watching television as a leisure time activity, the boys and girls also named it as the prime detractor from reading as much as they would like to at the time of the survey. Another major hindrance to their reading was too much school work which could come about partly because of the cramming that occurs during preparation for the highly competitive Common Entrance Examination. This takes place while the

children are in sixth grade because the results are used to decide who will be awarded the few coveted spaces to the traditional high schools.

Even without this added pressure, Whitehead et al., (1977) also expressed concern about the quantity of homework 10 - 14 year-olds were being asked to do in British schools. The excessive demands of this activity, he felt, left them little time for anything else, including recreational reading. Heather (1981) also reported a similar complaint by teenagers who gave this as one reason for not spending more time reading.

Some of the other factors that were at the top of the sixth graders' list of impediments to reading more included the absence of a library with many books nearby, not having their own books nor a special place at home to read. A confluence of factors seem to be at work in the Jamaican society to discourage the reading habit. Chief among them must be the poor state of the school libraries where books are kept in boxes, cupboards or any other space found and facilities allocated for libraries are sometimes converted into offices or classrooms to accommodate large student populations.

There are few set times to borrow books and some schools do not lend materials for home reading. In addition to this, the library collections are sparse and students own very few books for themselves. Some children, especially those in the lower socio-economic strata, might also lack adequate individual space at home due to poor living conditions. From the hindrances

identified, it would seem as if better access to resources and improved physical facilities, at home and at school, would allow these children to read more.

When the four groups were compared, geographical location was more often responsible for the significant differences. Urban children expressed a greater need for reading guidance relative to being told what books to read. This concurs with their earlier response to **Question 9** that asked whom they turned to most frequently for such assistance. At that time, among the children who said they relied on no one, fewer were from the urban areas. This suggested that urban children, more than their rural counterparts, showed a greater likelihood of relying on others for assistance with their book choices. The need to depend on others might arise from the availability of more resources from which to choose since the city dwellers would be nearer to bookshops and better stocked libraries. Under these circumstances, guidance from parents and friends, the two groups most children said they consult with greatest frequency, might prove inadequate and since a large number (33.1%) of urban children were not members of any type of library and so their exposure to librarians would also be limited.

Not being good at reading was cited more often by boys as an obstacle to greater involvement in voluntary reading. This again supports the point made by Whitehead et al., (1977) that the best predictor of the amount of voluntary reading for ten to twelve year-olds was their academic ability. This finding

also concurs with the academic/reading performance data that showed more boys than girls falling into the below average groups. There appears to be little doubt that Jamaican sixth grade boys are experiencing reading difficulties which would seem to affect their interest in and involvement with recreational reading.

It is much harder to interpret the rural children's statement that a stronger liking for reading was required in order for them to read more. The problem is compounded by their response to **Question 14** which showed them having a high mean score for liking to read although among the small group who admitted to not liking to read at all, more rural children were present. The question might therefore arise as to what they considered to be a normal degree of liking to read, or what constituted sufficient reading, which would guide their judgement.

One might also be tempted to posit that low academic or reading ability could also be responsible for the rural children not liking to read enough. However, when assigned by their teachers to the three levels (above average, average and below average) used to assess the students' reading/academic performance, the rural groups were found to be a little more numerous at the higher levels. In addition to this, Landy (1977a) and Whitehead et al., (1977) both discovered that among their samples there were a moderate number of aliterate children, that is, those who were very proficient in reading but lacked interest in doing so. Perhaps, some of these non-readers were among the sample

from rural Jamaica, and so contributed to this kind of a response.

Since geographic location appears to be the variable affecting their response, living in the rural areas could pose some peculiar problems that militate against the fostering of a love for reading. In Jamaica, life in many rural areas differs greatly from that in the city, standards of living are lower, books are harder to come by, some parents are barely literate and the home environment might not be conducive to reading. These are only a few of the possibilities that could affect children's desire to read and how much they do read.

#### **6.3.9 Sources of Books**

From the research reports on the availability of books no consensus emerged as to the order of the sources from which children obtained their books. Instead, it was found that wherever interesting books were readily available the children were likely to resort to that source, whether it be the school or public library or friends. In general, the Jamaican children relied more heavily on friends, home and relatives than on any institutional or commercial source for their reading materials. Among the four groups of boys and girls there was little difference based on geographic location and sex. Urban children, girls more than boys, were more inclined to depend on friends to supply the books they read.

That neither the school nor public libraries were the major source of

reading materials for the majority of the children might be understandable given the data on the children's library membership and library provisions in Jamaica. A little over fifty percent (53.6%) of the sample said they did not belong to any library, and only 32.1% and 22% claimed membership in the public and school libraries, respectively. This low level of membership could be due to the prevailing conditions in the libraries. In most of the schools surveyed, proper library facilities were either lacking or inadequate and the book stocks were sparse and access to them very restricted. Public libraries are a little better as their collections are larger and more diversified, although for children in the rural areas getting to the nearest branch might prove difficult, even with the existence of a book mobile service.

Shrinking budgets and mechanical difficulties have greatly reduced the frequency of bookmobile visits to schools, thereby limiting one more avenue of access to books for the children. Class libraries are not the norm, and only one school mentioned having books in the classroom and so would not be a popular source of books.

With the prevailing economic conditions in Jamaica, self-purchasing would not be a common means of acquiring books, especially in rural areas where many parents live at subsistence level, very few bookshops are to be found, and the oral culture is more entrenched. Even in the urban areas, children are still not likely to buy their own books because they are usually

expensive, whether published locally or abroad. Urban Girl 2 who was interviewed seems like a good example of a child who has the potential for becoming a committed reader but lacked the financial means and received very little support from either home or school in finding what to read.

Perhaps this also explains, in part, urban children's greater dependence on friends when other sources failed. On the other hand, this could also be attributed to the fact that these children were the owners of larger personal collections than their rural peers, and being nearer to book outlets could mean that other members of the family also bought books which the sixth graders not only read but also lent to their friends. The fact that girls showed a greater likelihood of turning to friends for reading material could be a result of their penchant for reading which also made them give higher priority to it as a pastime.

In general, it appears that access to books poses a serious problem in Jamaica as the data on book ownership showed a paucity of books in the home. A third of the students owned no books and a further 49.3% had between 1 and 5. When questioned about hindrances to reading, many of the highly ranked items such as having a library with books nearby, also pertained to access and availability. Indeed, from the data gathered, it would seem that there was a "book hunger" in the homes as well as in the schools.

#### **6.3.10 Sources of Reading Guidance**

This was the only variable for which the null hypothesis was not rejected, which means that there was little difference among the groups as to from whom or where they obtained reading guidance. Therefore, only the overall finding based on the mean scores for the total sample will be discussed.

The fact that children turned to friends as their chief source for reading guidance, might be due not only to peer influence, but also to the inadequacies of their libraries. This could also be one of the reasons why on average they looked more to Parents, Friends and Teachers as the main sources of guidance and not to Librarians. A large percentage of the children (53.6%) were not members of any library and almost all of the schools lacked proper resources and qualified personnel. It is therefore not surprising that the children tend to turn to others - parents, friends and teachers - and not librarians, for reading guidance.

While the reasons might differ, children from developed countries also tend to rank librarians low on the scale for overt helpfulness. For them, friends are usually their main avenue of advice and very often teachers come before librarians. For the Jamaicans, out of seven possible choices of persons to consult, two groups of children ranked librarians sixth and the others groups placed them fourth and fifth. This happened even though 32.1% of the sample were members of the public library where it could be assumed that they would meet librarians.

One can only conjecture that, if and when such encounters occurred, they might have been all too brief or infrequent to communicate the concept of the librarian as someone specially trained and available to help these youngsters with their selection of books. On the other hand, some of these encounters could have been unpleasant. Some of Landy's (1977a) seventh grade sample reported that the librarians they met either looked too busy to be disturbed or were annoyed when asked for help. Urban Girl 2 also commented that on her visits to the bookmobile the library staff was always too busy checking out books to be of any help to her. Urban Girl 2 reported negative experiences with libraries where she had to be quiet, was not permitted to handle certain books and had to pay for damaged books.

The chances of a Jamaican child in a public elementary school meeting a librarian, especially one trained to work with young people, are few. First, because there are very few children's librarians and, second, as with libraries everywhere, very often the person at the circulation desk is not a professional. The only opportunity some children might have of meeting a "real" librarian is during class visits or special programmes. Otherwise, the professional is usually hidden from the public's view where he or she is occupied with administrative responsibilities.

The reliance upon parents for advice about what to read could spring logically from the children's limited encounter with professionals and the

proximity of parents compared to other adults. Turning toward home would also seem in keeping with the essential role usually ascribed to it in fostering literacy and recreational reading. Greaney (1980), Whitehead et al., (1977) Maxwell (1977) and Lewis and Teale (1982) all insist on the importance of the home in the child's reading development. In the ideal setting, parents model reading, read to their children and provide them with books. By so doing parents create a literary environment that fosters the reading habit. Durkin (1966) and Clark (1976) found that early fluent readers tend to come from such environments, although Ingham (1981) and Whitehead et al., (1977) also observed that this was not always the case as some children were avid readers even though they grew up in less advantageous social circumstances where the environment did not provide for much reading stimulation.

Although this study of Jamaicans did not include their socio-economic status as a variable, the randomness of the sample should have allowed a mixture of children from all social levels. Therefore, it was to be expected that there would be homes that provided a good literary environment, and some that did not. For example, Urban Girl 1 lived with a grandparent who bought her books, discussed them with her, told her stories and generally monitored her reading. Rural Boy 1 also had parents who encouraged and guided his reading.

However, background information on the country indicated a scarcity of books, a non-reading population generally, and a much lower standard of living

in the rural areas. In some areas literacy levels were also low and in general parents might not have much knowledge of children's books. For these reasons, some parents' ability to guide their children's reading might be limited. Urban Girl 2 seem to fall into the latter category. She lived in a book-less home environment and her only parental encouragement to read was based on their desire for her to learn but they were not in a position to tell her what to read or to provide the necessary resources.

Resorting to peers was the second choice for the whole sample and this finding differs slightly from other studies in North America and Britain where children tend to rank their companions in first place due, it is believed, to the strength of peer group influence. Hepler and Hickman (1982) concluded that the stamp of several friends' approval on a book assures the others that there is pleasure to be had from it. Also, children tend to rely on this more than advice from others because it helps to make the act of choosing a book less risky and more efficient.

Gjengset (1986) also found that the majority of the 10-11 year-old sample she interviewed about their reading habits said they relied upon their friends because parents seldom made recommendations and sometimes their teachers were not able to help them. Almost all the children interviewed mentioned talking about their reading with their friends and trusted their recommendation of a book when choosing books for reading.

Teachers ranked a high third out of the six categories of persons chosen. Despite the poor state of the libraries, the teachers are usually the ones to provide whatever limited access there is to the resources by taking the children to the collection or alternately bringing it to the classroom at prescribed times. In addition, the language arts curriculum provides further opportunities for reading guidance. As Ingham (1981) and Landy (1977a) stated, teachers can be a valuable source for reading guidance if they are themselves enthusiastic readers and knowledgeable about children's literature. In the absence of librarians or in conjunction with them, teachers can play an important role in fostering a love for reading.

The small core of children who relied on no one could have reached this position as a result of many things. Some of these could be the disorganised state of the school libraries, the lack of library membership and the absence of any knowledgeable adults, including teachers and librarians. They might also belong to that group of children who did not like to read or were not good at it and so they rarely felt the need to seek help from peers or others.

Not to be overlooked are the many other factors that might also inhibit them from asking anyone for assistance. This could include librarians who are unfriendly and unapproachable (as recounted by the children studied by Landy (1977a)) or a more personal reason given by one of the interviewees who stated that he chose his books himself because he did not want to make a mistake (i.e.,

get the wrong type of book).

## **6.4 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.4.1 Children's Reading Interests**

The Jamaican sixth graders share many reading interests in common with their counterparts from more developed countries. The theory about the universality of some reading interests brought about by children's common developmental stages is strengthened by such a finding. This means that, to a certain extent, librarians anywhere can be guided by research findings from developed as well as developing countries. However, that does not obviate the need for local research to detect hidden or specialised needs created by certain socio-historical factors that might be peculiar to each society. Such findings, like that relating to Jamaican children's strong interest in indigenous literature and Afrocentric books from elsewhere, should also inform selection policies.

This discovery that Jamaicans were very interested in seeing themselves portrayed in the leading roles in the books they read should be of particular interest to librarians in countries that have multicultural populations. It would seem that even though there is a certain amount of universality in children's reading interests at specific stages of development, if these youngsters come from different racial groups there will also be the desire to see themselves and their ethnic groups positively portrayed in some of the books they read. The issue is not so much about the genre of the work, but rather that of the

characters and their lifestyle delineated within the book.

For Jamaican librarians to act on the basis of this finding about the preference for indigenous and Afrocentric heroes, these professionals would have to develop ways to exercise greater bibliographic control over local and regional publications so that they are easier to identify and acquire. They would also need to tap into the pool of Afrocentric literature currently available mostly in the United States and Britain. Budgetary allocations would also have to be made to accommodate spending for these special needs and definite policies initiated to accelerate the building of this collection.

Since local publications are few, librarians would also need to become pro-active and lobby local publishing houses to produce more indigenous works. They might even go further by working through organisations like the National Book Development Council, in which librarians now play a key role, to have it offer training courses and book awards as incentives for writers and other persons involved in the book industry.

The children's wide interest in a variety of book types was indicated by the range of their choices for books they were interested in reading as well as those considered as favourites. The middle years are regarded as the best time to develop the habit of life-long reading because the children have so many interests. Teachers or librarians, intent on meeting sixth graders' reading interests in libraries or in the classroom should expose these children to a wide

variety of reading materials, not only to meet their known needs, but also to broaden their tastes. Book collections should be also be developed with as much attention paid to informational works as to fiction since the children showed almost equal interest in both types of books.

The same principle should prevail with regard to sex-linked choices. While it has been established repeatedly that girls and boys have divergent tastes, while these differences should not be overlooked, librarians should avoid any action that seems to suggest that one type of book is more appropriate for one sex than the other. In the social shift from gender stereotyping, librarians too should try to include books that are non-sexist and avoid sexist materials. For example, in preparing bibliographies or displays, care should be taken to avoid arranging material by themes that suggest sex bias. and in planning literature programme books should be chosen with male as well as female protagonists.

The academic ability of less able students should not be ignored in book selection even though they share most of the interests of their brighter peers. Books of high interest and low vocabulary, but dealing with the same topics or types of stories considered suitable for the a given age group should be in the collections. Remedial measures can also be adopted to help low achievers enjoy literary experiences even though they experience difficulty with reading. Story-telling, stories on audio-tapes and librarians or teachers reading aloud are

some of the compensatory measures that can be adopted. The children's strong interest in traditional literature should also be considered during the selection process.

If any library, including those in Jamaica, is to meet the varied reading needs of these sixth graders, who are supposed to be at the peak of their reading, then they would need to provide a wider variety of books - fiction and non-fiction - at different reading levels. Finally, it should also be borne in mind that generalised findings about children's reading tastes should not be adhered to so strictly that allowances are not made for the individuality of each reader or for the broadening of reading tastes.

## **6.4.2 CHILDREN'S READING HABITS**

### **6.4.2.1 Liking to Read**

Girls exhibit a greater liking for the act of reading than boys, even in developing countries, and while the reasons for this are not fully understood, librarians and teachers should act in accordance with this knowledge. In planning literature experiences for children, librarians and teachers need to deliberately include aspects that will appeal to boys and activities that pit boys against girls should be minimised in case these programmes further alienate boys from reading and using the library. For collection development purposes, the specific needs and interests of boys must be given due consideration as well as the fact that they tend not to have as great an affinity for reading as do girls.

The larger number of books read by girls seems to be a logical result of their greater degree of liking for reading. Since sixth graders are believed to be at the golden age of reading and are very susceptible to reading guidance, this would be a good time to introduce the girls to as wide a variety of book types as possible so as to broaden their tastes, increase their pleasure in reading and strengthen their love for reading.

#### **6.4.2.2 Reasons for Reading**

The satisfying of utilitarian needs is the main reason why Jamaican sixth graders read, which differs only slightly in more developed countries where occasionally reading for pleasure appears in first place. For librarians this must be disappointing news indeed when so many of their programmes and services are predicated on the idea that for children reading should be primarily a pleasurable experience. This discrepancy between what children say and what librarians believe might spring from a lack of knowledge on the part of the latter as to what motivates children to read.

In order to plan effective programmes or to act as a successful intermediary between books and children, librarians must be knowledgeable about both. These professionals have been fairly successful at pinpointing the social factors that make children want to read and using the findings to inform library policy and practice. Now librarians are faced with a much more challenging task of finding out why young people do not read for pleasure as

much as they did previously.

The answer to such a question is complex since it goes beyond the mere social and involves psychological factors such as attitude, motivation and needs fulfilment. A more cross-disciplinary approach to research might have to be adopted, incorporating theories and methodologies from psychology as well as other related fields. Studies by Landy (1977a) and Morrow (1983) are good examples of this kind of research as they adopted multi-disciplinary approach to investigating the topic. Also, in seeking for more profound explanations for why children read, Greaney and Neuman (1990) experimented with the "uses and gratification" theory from mass communications.

Further research needs to be undertaken into the case of the aliterates in order to uncover some of the factors that contribute to this condition. Such knowledge could prove very useful for a better understanding of these children and for suggesting possible intervention strategies that might motivate them and other reluctant readers to undertake the activity for pleasure.

#### **6.4.2.3 Reading As a Leisure Time Activity**

For most children today, especially boys, reading does not appear to be the first choice of leisure time activity as other pastimes such as television, electronic games, sports and being with friends often take precedence over reading. Whenever it is chosen as a pastime, reading is usually ranked much higher by girls than boys. This was exemplified by the Jamaican girls who,

however, diverge a little from their international peers by assigning first place to this activity. The boys' relegating reading to a much lower position was more in accord with what was expected. In the light of this finding, librarians are challenged to develop new strategies for promoting reading and in this technological age any such plans must take cognisance of the electronic media, especially television, which is one of the chief rivals of reading.

#### **6.4.2.4 Hindrances to Reading More**

Whether the children live elsewhere or in Jamaica, it is usually reported that watching television is one of the main detractors from the amount of time spent in voluntary reading. Too much homework, hanging out with friends and a variety of other social activities were also cited by children from developed societies. In Jamaica, access to and availability of books, proper physical facilities conducive to reading at home and at school and poor reading ability were some of the other obstacles. While some of these factors can be remedied and others are outside the control of librarians and educators, it would seem that a much more serious issue is at stake here - that of the role of reading in the lives of children today.

Programming is one of the major library services to children, and one of its guiding principles for planning is to capitalise on the leisure time activities and other known interests of children in order to encourage them to become life-long readers. With reading being assigned increasingly lower priority by

children, especially in competition with other media formats, then the move toward the multimedia approach to literature which has already been adopted by libraries must continue. Also, with more emphasis now being placed on the content of an information resource rather than the format and on the acquisition of different types of literacy, it is to be expected that these concepts will also affect the way literature experiences are mediated to children.

In short, this implies that there continues to be a paradigmatic shift from print orientation to a multimedia approach in libraries, and the concept of reading as it is known will have to change in order to embrace the variety of ways that experience can now be accessed. This does not suggest that children will not be encouraged to read print, but it will become one of the many ways (instead of the only one) that children can obtain knowledge, insights and understanding about people, places and things. This might also explain why children read primarily for utilitarian purposes: because they can now turn to other forms of media, besides books for entertainment.

While emergent nations might lag far behind the industrialised world in terms of overall development, the same re-thinking about reading is still necessary because technology, by its very nature, has crossed geographic and political boundaries and changed the way people think and behave worldwide. Children in countries like Jamaica have also been affected by the many alternatives offered by technology and so they too prefer to view than to read.

Therefore efforts to make them committed readers are likely to meet with some resistance. For local librarians and teachers this would suggest, where possible, they should apply modern technology in its many forms to improve reading skills as well as to expose the children to a variety of literature experiences.

In light of the finding that none of the schools had an adequate library service, it must be concluded that the children are denied ready access to reading resources and literature programmes that would foster a love of books and reading. Within this context, children are forced to rely on private sources for their reading materials and committed readers, especially those in the rural areas, are likely to experience some degree of frustration due to the paucity of reading resources. In order to sustain their reading habit they would need to possess a great deal of creativity and resourcefulness.

#### **6.4.2.5 Sources of Books**

Availability of reading material is one of the prerequisites for children to develop and maintain the reading habit. It has also been observed that children will readily resort to any source from which books are easily available, and the Jamaican children confirmed this when they turned to private sources instead of to existing libraries, most of which were non-functional. However, such an action is weighed against the fact that many children from the sample owned no books, the majority of them did not have membership in libraries and purchasing their own books was an option for only a small minority.

It would seem that one of the recurring problems affecting reading interests and habits was the availability of reading material. Therefore, if librarians and teachers plan to create a love of literature and reading in children then they will have to provide books in easily accessible places like classrooms and libraries.

As this relates to Jamaica, specifically, it means that serious thought must be given to book provision in elementary schools via the language arts curriculum as well as the library programme to ensure that a variety of books reflecting the interests and reading abilities of the children is easily available.

#### **6.4.2.6 Sources of Reading Guidance**

Although librarians pride themselves on being helpful, friendly and knowledgeable intermediaries between children and their books, they are not often consulted as the first point of reference by young readers when searching for a book. While the reasons for this might be different in developing countries, the same pattern was observed. It would therefore appear that despite the emphasis on reading guidance being one of the most important tasks carried out by the children's librarian, the execution of this function, especially at the level of the individual child, might need re-examination.

Librarians need to be visible, easily accessible, appear not too busy so as to deter requests for assistance, and try to make their encounters with children pleasant and meaningful. In public libraries, the practice of using

non-professionals to serve the public while the professionals carry out managerial tasks elsewhere might have to be weighed against any possible contribution it may make to the children's negative perception of librarians and how this might influence the youngsters' reading behaviour.

In Jamaica, there are no librarians in elementary schools, which should largely explain the children's failure to consult them. In the absence of librarians (as well as proper libraries), the responsibility for fostering a love of reading will devolve unto the classroom teachers who now need to be properly equipped with a good knowledge of the children's literature and the appropriate competencies for promoting its use. In order for this to become a reality, the curriculum for teacher training would have to be modified to include courses in children's literature.

### **6.4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings from the study, recommendations are made with regards to the Jamaican situation specifically, library practice generally and areas for further research. They are as follows:

#### **6.4.3.1 Library Provisions in Elementary Schools in Jamaica**

Considering the important role libraries can play in maintaining literacy and fostering a love of reading, all aspects of the library service presently being offered in schools in Jamaica need to be evaluated to see how more efficient use can be made of the limited resources.

Efforts should be made to enforce whatever policies already exist for the provision of libraries within these schools, and where physical facilities have been provided, the authorities should see to it that they are used exclusively for that purpose. The facilities should be equipped to comfortably accommodate at least a class of students.

Services by professional librarians should be a part of a long-term plan for these libraries, given the financial constraints operating within the country. Teachers with special training in children's literature should always be a part of every elementary classroom, and where necessary they could assume responsibility for the libraries until library staff are employed. In order to make books readily available, some classroom collections could be established from the present collection of books, many of which are locked away.

#### **6.4.3.2 Collection Development in Public and School Libraries**

One of the most fundamental needs of the Jamaican sixth graders is for more books to be made available and more easily accessible to them. The findings from this study can be used by teachers and librarians to guide the selecting and use of books in the literature programme. The variety of books chosen should be wide and represent a good balance between fictional and informational book types as the children displayed almost equal interest in both.

Special efforts should be made to develop collections of Caribbean literature and other Afrocentric books. Particular consideration need to be

given to the reading needs of Jamaican sixth grade boys, many of whom are below average academically, have limited reading interests and would need material simpler in content and format when compared to their more able peers.

#### **6.4.3.3 The Use of Television to Promote Reading**

Since educational broadcasting already exists in a limited way in the schools, it is recommended that the possibilities be explored for its use to promote reading since the children indicate a strong interest in watching television. Programmes could be specially developed to focus on themes or specific books which would be made available through the school library service or the Ministry of Education programme that provides supplementary reading material.

The special needs of urban boys should be considered because as a group they seem to require special intervention strategies to stimulate a greater interest in reading.

#### **6.4.3.4 The Production of Indigenous Books**

Local publishers should use these findings about Jamaican children's preference for Afrocentric main characters to guide their selection of story excerpts for inclusion in literature anthologies for classroom use. They should also see this as an incentive to publish more indigenous trade books for the children's recreational reading. Co-publication rights could also be sought for Afrocentric books from North America, Britain and Africa, where possible.

## **6.4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIBRARY PRACTICE GENERALLY**

### **6.4.4.1 Reading Guidance**

While the concept of librarians as intermediaries between books and children is theoretically sound, this seems too often to fail to translate well into practice according to the children's ranking of librarians for overt helpfulness in providing reading guidance. Individual library policies for professional interaction with children need to be examined in terms of availability, access, and specialised training for the task. Where necessary, adjustments should be made to improve on these. Children need to see and interact with real librarians, with the prerequisite knowledge and competence to guide their reading development. Too often they encounter para-professionals or clerks while the professionals are hidden away performing administrative tasks.

Furthermore, close attention also need to be paid to the nature of the children's contact with whatever level of staff that they meet on their visit to the library. The individual's attitude, body language and other aspects of interpersonal communication should convey a positive message that will encourage the child to approach and seek assistance when needed. Present institutional policies, although administratively convenient, might need to be re-examined from the users' perspective to ensure that they are not having a negative effect on the children's pursuit of the reading habit.

#### **6.4.4.2 Reading Promotion**

Since this is one of the major objectives of children's library services, then the knowledge that children place such a high value on their peers' advice as to what to read can be used to generate more interest in reading. Many opportunities should be provided for children to share book experiences with each other through discussion groups, peer reviews displayed on notice boards or issued in a journal. Time should also be allowed in class for oral presentations on their reading. With many interesting and attractive books available for personal reading, the children themselves can become role models for their peers and by so doing effectively promote leisure time reading.

#### **6.4.4.3 Collection Development**

Library collections for sixth graders' should contain a wide variety of book types - fiction and non-fiction, and where funding allows, some of these resources should be in other media besides print. Although boys like certain books as opposed to girls and vice versa, there should a definite move away from any practice within the library that would emphasise the sex-typing of materials. Collection development policies and programming activities that perpetuate sex stereotyping of readers should be avoided. The trend in society is toward the equalisation of gender and one of the ways that librarians can contribute to this by buying more non-sexist books even though still catering for the specialised interests of each sex.

#### **6.4.4.4 Resource Provision for Multicultural Communities**

It would seem as if children in general have a desire to see themselves and their racial groups positively portrayed in the books they read, and this desire is no less in children from ethnic minorities. Even though they share similar interests in book types with the children from the majority culture, this need for ethnic literature still exists. Therefore, in multicultural societies, collection development policies should be put in place that make allowance for the acquisition of books reflective of the life-styles of ethnic minorities. Children receive much pleasure from identifying with the characters they read about, and it would seem as if this enjoyment could be increased when they see physical images of themselves in their books. In addition, many children's literature specialists believe that such books positively affect the children's self-esteem and create pride in their ethnic heritage.

#### **6.4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

##### **6.4.5.1 Race and Reading Interests**

Since this study could only examine one aspect of race, further research needs to be conducted that would go beyond whether children from different ethnic groups are interested in the same kinds of books. More investigation should be conducted to identify the reading interests of minority groups and the specific satisfaction gained from reading about themselves. Some of these studies should focus exclusively on the ethnic minorities rather adopting the

usual approach of comparing two or more racial groups. Intensive case studies like those done by Fry (1985) or Sims (1983) might better help to explain some of the satisfaction children get from seeing their ethnic group in books as well as the ambivalence black children display when faced with books about their own group and those from the dominant culture.

#### **6.4.5.2 Home Correlates and Reading Habits**

In this study many of the children were forced to rely on parents, friends, relatives for reading materials and guidance. The literature surveyed also stressed the important role of the home environment in shaping children's reading attitudes and habits. It therefore seems as if further research into the home correlates affecting Jamaican children's reading behaviour would prove worthwhile.

#### **6.4.5.3 Sex and its Influence on Reading Behaviour**

So far, the majority of the studies in the field has been confined to discovering the differences in the reading interests of the two sexes. Very few have attempted to find out the reasons for these sex-linked choices that have persisted throughout the years. Further cross-cultural research in the mode of Johnson (1974) and Downing et al., (1979) are needed with deliberate attempts being made to discover the reason behind the differences expressed by boys and girls relative to their reading interests and habits.

#### **6.4.5.4 Reading Instruction**

From the literature reviewed, many children's literature experts maintain that the skills-oriented approach to reading instruction and the use of dull class readers have been to a large extent responsible for children developing a negative attitude towards reading for pleasure. With much emphasis being placed on the whole language approach to instruction, research should be undertaken to find out if this fairly recent method has produced children who are any more favourably inclined toward books and leisure time reading.

#### **6.4.5.5 Reading Interests of Jamaican Young People**

While this study has established some of the reading interests of a sixth graders in public elementary schools, there still exists the need for each age group to be studied to be able to arrive at a more comprehensive knowledge of the reading interests of Jamaican children and teenagers so that local librarians can use these findings to provide more culture specific guidelines for collection development.

#### **6.4.5.6 Reading Interests and Habits: Theoretical Considerations**

Theoretically, this study has confirmed some of the generally accepted ideas and concepts about children's reading interests and habits established by previous research. At the same time, it has also raised several questions about some of these commonly held beliefs.

In the first instance, the findings have helped to strengthen the belief in

the predominance of sex as an important, if not the major, predictor of the types of books children are interested in reading, the amount they are likely to read over a given period of time, as well as their preference for reading as a pastime. Although there seems to be a core of different book types that appeal to each of the sexes and the seeming stability of children's reading interests over the ages, some of these ideas might need to be re-considered. For example, the validity of the idea that boys favour non-fiction more than fiction must be raised in light of the fact that close scrutiny of many of the reading inventories previously used indicates a bias towards informational topics known to be preferred by boys. One might therefore conjecture that the results might have been different, as was found in this study, if greater care had been used to select non-fiction topics likely to appeal to girls.

The possibility might also exist to alter some of these sex-linked interests if children were consistently exposed to more non-sexist literature as this study showed boys having a greater liking than girls for romantic stories, although the reason why is not clear. This discovery creates uncertainty about nature being the main reason for differences of choices between the sexes.

The effect of the universality of children's developmental stages on book choices is hard to contravene, yet the findings from this study suggest that geographical and cultural factors can, and do, play a contributory role in determining reading interests. So, while a common core of interests may exist

and can be used to guide material selection, allowances must be made for variations based upon where children live and their socio-cultural milieu.

Although there is little consensus about the impact of race on children's reading interests, and by and large children of different ethnic groups seem to like the same kind of books, the issue extends beyond that of preference for specific genres to that of content. The majority of Jamaican children preferred books that had Afrocentric heroes, first from the region. With a much smaller score, those books featuring Eurocentric Caribbean persons were their second favourites. What this implies is that ethnically diverse children are interested in seeing themselves and their life styles portrayed in the books they read. Based on other studies in the field, it would seem as if ethnic minority children were also more inclined to gravitate toward books that positively depicted themselves and their group.

The strong focus on reading for utility found among the Jamaicans and the indication from other investigations that children from developed countries seem to be becoming more inclined to read for this same purpose appears to run contrary to some of the common tenets of the library profession. Librarians firmly believe in the importance of reading and its worth as a source of pleasure, therefore one of the library's chief role has always been to foster in children a love of recreational reading. Library services, especially for children, are predicated on these principles. But if there really is a paradigmatic shift

towards the concept of the library as an information centre and a greater dependence on other sources in the society for entertainment, then one must ask, in the light of this, what role should the library now play or where should its emphasis be placed.

With so many other avenues and media existing in society to meet entertainment needs, and with some children clearly identified as aliterate, the question is : can the library continue to develop its policies for service on the belief that all children are latent readers and given the right conditions and resources young people can be motivated to become leisure time readers?

These were some of the major concerns arising from this study of Jamaican middle grade readers, and an awareness of these findings and future investigations of the issues they raise should extend even further the theoretical foundations upon which are based reading instruction and library services to children the world over.

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**APPENDICES**

**APPENDIX 1: SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE****SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE**

The information required here will be used to complement data supplied by the children as a part of the study of their reading interests and habits. Kindly fill in the details as accurately as possible and when you are finished please return the questionnaire to the researcher.

**POSITION OF PERSON COMPLETING QUESTIONNAIRE**

.....

1. Type of school:

Primary ( )

All-age ( )

2. Current School Population.....

3. Current Sixth Grade Population.

BOYS.....

GIRLS.....

4. Do Grade Six students have scheduled times for quiet uninterrupted reading in the classroom?

Yes ( )

No ( )

5. Does the school have a library?

Yes ( )

No ( )

Go on to Ques 6.

If there is no library the rest of the questions will not apply to your school, could you kindly return the questionnaire to the researcher.

Thank You.

(2)

6. Which of the following statements best describes the arrangement of the school library?

A room designed specially for the purpose ( )

Books distributed in classrooms, no central collection ( )

Books kept in boxes, cupboards, bookcases all around the school ( )

Other arrangement, please say.....

7. What is the approximate number of books in the school library?

0-499 ( )	2000-2499 ( )
500-999 ( )	2500-2999 ( )
1000-1499 ( )	3000-3499 ( )
1500-1999 ( )	3500-4999 ( )

8. Who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school library?

A teacher ( )                      A librarian ( )

A teacher/librarian ( )              No one ( )

9. How many hours per day is the library opened for student use?

.....

10. Do Grade Six students have scheduled weekly periods for visiting the library?

Yes ( )                      No ( )

11. Are Grade Six children allowed to borrow books to take home?

Yes ( )                      No ( )

Kindly return the questionnaire to the Researcher.  
Thank you for your cooperation.



## APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDE

### GUIDE FOR SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS WITH THE CHILDREN:

The students were asked to expand on some of the answers they gave on the **Student Questionnaire** and then additional areas relative to their reading interests and habits were explored using the guide as well as their own responses during the interview. The semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that the researcher was able to modify the questions to suit each situation.

#### MAJOR AREAS TO BE COVERED

##### A. PERSONAL DATA

1. Favourite subject/s in school
2. What do you want to be when you grow up?
3. How do you usually spend your time after school each day?
4. How do you usually spend your free time?

##### B. FAMILY SITUATION:

1. With whom do you live? What kind of work do your parents/guardians do?
2. How big is your family?
3. What are some of the fun activities your family does together?
4. Does anyone in your family like to read? If yes, what do they read?
5. Do you remember being read to as a child?
6. Were you ever taken to the library by your parent or guardian?
7. Are there books in your home? If yes, what types? Who reads them?
8. Do you parents encourage you to read? If yes, how?
9. Does your family have a TV set? If yes, about how many hours do you watch on week days, weekends? What are your favourite programmes?

##### C. READING HABITS:

1. What are some of your favourite books you have read?
2. Did you read any books recently? If yes, tell me about them.
3. When choosing a book to read, what are some of the things you look at to help you make up your mind about borrowing it?
4. Is there anything you would like to tell me about your reading?

## APPENDIX 4: STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

# READING INTERESTS SURVEY



This questionnaire is mainly about the reading you do because you want to - it is NOT asking about the reading you must do for your school work. This is not a test, there are no right answers and your teachers will not know what you write. Please answer every question as truthfully as you can for by so doing you will help us to know how you go about your reading and the kinds of books you like to read.

To answer most of the questions you need to place a tick in the box like this , or circle a number, or write a number on a line beside the answer you choose. When you are asked to write anything, make it short and you need not pay too much attention to the spelling.

1. I am:



1. a boy



2. a girl

2. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old.

3. I am a member of the: (you may tick more than one)

1. School library

2. Public library (the bookmobile or a branch)

3. No library at all

4. Other (please name) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Carefully go through ALL the different types of books listed below and beside EACH ONE show how much you would like to read it by CIRCLING the NUMBER under one of the following phrases:

VERY MUCH      MAY BE      NOT AT ALL  
 1                      2                      3

TYPE OF BOOK

I WOULD LIKE TO READ THIS:

Very Much      May Be      Not At All



TYPE OF BOOK

a. Adventure stories	1	2	3
b. Animal Stories	1	2	3
c. Dancing	1	2	3
d. Fairy Tales	1	2	3
e. Family Stories	1	2	3
f. Fantasy	1	2	3
g. Growing Up (Becoming a man/woman, ...)	1	2	3
h. History (Stories and events from long ago)	1	2	3
i. Horror Stories (Ghosts, Vampires)	1	2	3
j. Humorous stories	1	2	3
k. Lives of famous people	1	2	3
l. Love stories	1	2	3
m. Machines (planes, cars, etc.)	1	2	3
n. Mystery stories	1	2	3
o. Music (Pop, folk, etc)	1	2	3
p. People in other lands	1	2	3

Very Much                      May Be    Not At All



q. Poetry .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
r. Riddles and Jokes .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
s. Science (plants, animals, earth) .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
t. Science Fiction .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
u. Sports .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
v. Things to make and do .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
w. Understanding myself and others .....	1	.....	2	.....	3
x. War Stories .....	1	.....	2	.....	3

5. *From the list above select the THREE TYPES of books you like to read the MOST and write them in the spaces below.*

1 = the type you like most

2 = your second favourite type

3 = your third favourite type.

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

6. *Did you read any books in the last TWO weeks?  
(Do not count the books you read for school work)*

a. No



Go on to  
Number 7

b. Yes



How many? \_\_\_\_\_

- 7 *From the list below tick the THREE sources from which you get MOST of the books you read. Then place the number 1, 2 or 3 beside each of the three you choose.*

1 = where you get the most

2 = where you get the second largest number

3 = where you get the third largest number

a. \_\_\_\_\_ Class library

b. \_\_\_\_\_ Friends

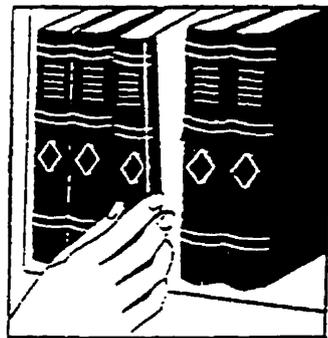
c. \_\_\_\_\_ Home

d. \_\_\_\_\_ Public Library

e. \_\_\_\_\_ Relatives

f. \_\_\_\_\_ School Library

g. \_\_\_\_\_ I buy them myself



8. Do you own any books yourself?

No

Go on to  
Number 9

Yes

How Many?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Give as close a number as  
you can remember

9. Which *THREE* of the following do you ask for help *MOST* of the times when trying to decide what books to read? Place the number 1 2 or 3 beside each of the *THREE* you choose.

1 = those you ask most often

2 = those you ask the second most often

3 = those you ask the third most often

a. \_\_\_ Friends

b. \_\_\_ Librarians

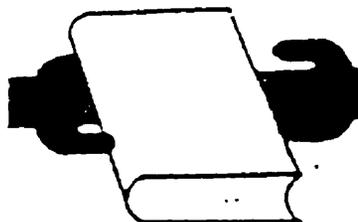
c. \_\_\_ Parents

d. \_\_\_ Relatives

e. \_\_\_ Teachers

f. \_\_\_ No one

g. \_\_\_ Any other person not named above



\_\_\_\_\_

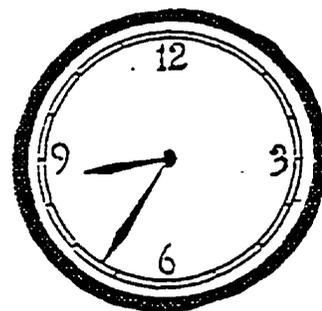
10. From the list of activities below choose the **THREE** that you like to do **MOST**. Then put the **NUMBER 1, 2, or 3** beside each of the three you choose.

1 = the one you like the most

2 = your second favourite activity

3 = your third favourite activity

- a. \_\_\_ Being with friends
- b. \_\_\_ Doing arts and craft
- c. \_\_\_ Going out (e.g. club meeting etc.)
- d. \_\_\_ Listening to music
- e. \_\_\_ Listening to the radio
- f. \_\_\_ Playing indoor games & sports
- g. \_\_\_ Playing outdoor games & sports
- h. \_\_\_ Playing video games
- i. \_\_\_ Reading
- j. \_\_\_ Watching TV
- k. \_\_\_ Anything else you enjoy doing that is not listed here



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Give it a number if it is one of your **THREE** favourite activities.

11. *From the list below choose the THREE MOST important things that would help you to read more right now. Then place the number 1, 2 or 3 beside each of the THREE you choose.*

**1 = the most important one**

**2 = those second most important one**

**3 = the third most important one**

- a. \_\_\_ Less school work
- b. \_\_\_ A library with many books nearby
- c. \_\_\_ Someone to help me know what books to read
- d. \_\_\_ Fewer chores to do at home
- e. \_\_\_ Having a place of my own to read
- f. \_\_\_ Watching less Television
- g. \_\_\_ Being good at reading
- h. \_\_\_ Parents who encourage me to read
- i. \_\_\_ Having my own books
- j. \_\_\_ Spending less time with friends
- k. \_\_\_ Liking to read
- l. \_\_\_\_\_



If none of the things written above keeps you from reading more, and there is something else that does please write it here and give it a number if it is one of the three that is important.

12. From the list below select **THREE** kinds of **PERSONS** you would like the most to play the main parts in the books you read. Then place the **NUMBER 1, 2 or 3** beside each of the **THREE** you choose.

**1 = the kind of persons you would like the most to play the main parts in the books you read**

**2 = your second favourite kind of persons**

**3 = your third favourite kind of persons**

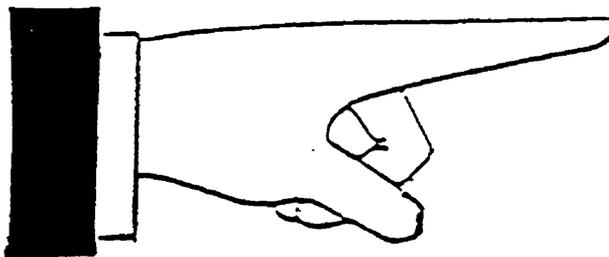
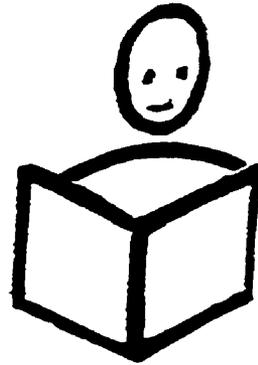
- a. \_\_\_ White boys and girls from Africa
- b. \_\_\_ Black boys and girls from Africa
- c. \_\_\_ White boys and girls from England
- d. \_\_\_ Black boys and girls from England
- e. \_\_\_ White boys and girls from Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean
- f. \_\_\_ Black boys and girls from Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean
- g. \_\_\_ White boys and girls from the United States and Canada
- h. \_\_\_ Black boys and girls from the United States and Canada

13. Have you ever read any books in which black persons (children or adults) played the leading parts?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I don't remember



PLEASE TURN OVER THE PAGE FOR THE LAST QUESTION

14. *Read each of the following unfinished sentences then choose the ONE that comes closest to saying how you feel about reading and complete the sentence*

a) I like to read A LITTLE because .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

b) I like to read (MORE than a LITTLE, but not TOO MUCH) because .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

c) I like to read A WHOLE LOT because .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

d) I do NOT like to read because .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Please check all the questions to make sure you have answered all of them.

Thank you very much for helping me with my research.

APPENDIX 5: LETTER OF CONSENT FROM THE JAMAICAN MINISTRY  
OF EDUCATION GRANTING PERMISSION FOR THE  
CONDUCTING OF THE SURVEY IN THE SCHOOLS.



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE

2 NATIONAL HEROES CIRCLE

P.O. BOX 498.

KINGSTON, JAMAICA

March 5, 1993

ANY REPLY OR SUBSEQUENT REFERENCE  
TO THIS COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE  
ADDRESSED TO THE PERMANENT  
SECRETARY AND THE FOLLOWING  
REFERENCE QUOTED:—

No. \_\_\_\_\_

Mrs. Cherrell V. Robinson  
Faculty of Library and Information Science  
University of Toronto  
Claude T. Bissell Building  
140 St. George Street  
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1  
Canada.

Dear Mrs. Robinson,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated  
February 16, 1993 seeking permission to conduct research in  
both preparatory and elementary schools in Jamaica.

The Ministry is willing to assist you where  
possible. The matter has been referred to the Chief Education  
Officer, Mr. Wesley Barrett for further action.

Yours sincerely,

Rae A. Davis  
Permanent Secretary

**APPENDIX 6: FIRST LETTER TO PRINCIPAL RE  
PARTICIPATION IN THE SURVEY**

452

Department of Library Studies  
University of the West Indies  
P.O. Box 181, Kingston 7, Mona.

June 15, 1993.

Dear.....,

**RE: RESEARCH INTO CHILDREN'S READING INTERESTS**

In Jamaica we are aware that some of children of our elementary age children often fail to master basic reading skills, and even when they do very often they undertake little voluntary reading. This has long been a concern of educators who know that reading is the foundation of learning and this makes it essential for the child not only to master the mechanics but to keep on reading since this improves performance and personal knowledge. Research has shown that certain personal and social factors affect children's attitude to and interest in reading, and so a knowledge of how some of these variables operate should help in the search for answers to the problem of motivating children to read.

With this in mind I have decided, as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Toronto, to conduct a national survey into some of the relevant variables for my dissertation which will focus on the **Voluntary Reading Interests and Habits of Jamaican Sixth Graders**. I am therefore writing to find out if you would be willing for your school to participate in this study since it was one of the ten schools randomly chosen out of the 795 primary / all-age schools in Jamaica. Please note that your participation would be voluntary, although I would appreciate it very much if you agreed to do so.

Participation will involve the following:

a. Making available a randomly selected sample of 42 sixth graders, depending on the size of your sixth grade population, on a set date in late September or early October 1993 to complete a questionnaire about their reading interests and habits. The completion of the instrument should not take more than 45-60 minutes and either a representative or myself will be responsible for administering the instrument, with assistance from the class teachers.

.../2

15

b. Providing access to the names of all registered sixth graders registered in September 1993 so that the students can be selected at random in keeping with principles of scientific research.

c. Furnishing information on the academic and reading performance of the sample of students selected.

d. Completing a very brief questionnaire about the school and its library facilities.

e. Facilitating contact with children chosen for in-depth interviews as a follow-up to the larger survey. If any child from your school is selected I would need your assistance as a point of contact for the child, and to provide facilities for conducting the interview, if school is the most convenient place.

The participation of your school is vital to making the sample truly representative of the sixth grade population in Jamaica and to the success of this study. It is the first of its kind for this age group in Jamaica, and hopefully, it will provide some useful insights into children's reading behaviour and so help educators and librarians to develop better strategies for motivating children to read.

I have already obtained permission from the Ministry of Education to conduct this investigation subject to the approval of individual principals within the schools. Please note that the participation of individual students will be voluntary and the data supplied by the children and the school will be treated with strictest confidentiality by the researcher and her assistants.

Neither the children nor the school will be named in the study, and identification numbers will be used mainly to facilitate tracing the children who will be needed for the follow-up interviews.

A copy of the completed dissertation will be made available to the Ministry of Education and a summary of the findings will be sent to all the participating schools.

Whatever your response kindly let me know as soon as possible by completing the enclosed form and returning it in the stamped self-addressed envelope.

If you need any further information please feel free to contact me at the above address or telephone me at 92-72944 during work hours.

Thank you for your kind assistance.

Yours sincerely,

.....  
Cherrell V. Robinson (Mrs.)  
Lecturer (U.W.I.)  
and Doctoral Student (University of Toronto)

Encl...

**RESPONSE FORM FOR REQUEST FOR SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN READING INTEREST SURVEY 1993**

Please complete and return this form at your earliest convenience.

**PART A:**

Name of School: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PARISH: \_\_\_\_\_

I am **WILLING / NOT WILLING** (Cross out whichever does not apply) for my school to participate in the study on **The Voluntary Reading Interests and Habits of Jamaican Sixth Graders** during the Christmas Term 1993.

Name of Principal: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**PART B:**

**If you decide to take part could you kindly provide the following additional information:**

Current School Population:

Number of sixth grade classes: \_\_\_\_\_

Size of Current sixth grade population:

Boys: \_\_\_\_\_ Girls: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 7 : SECOND LETTER TO PRINCIPAL RE  
PARTICIPATION IN SURVEY**

456

Department of Library Studies,  
University of the West Indies,  
P.O. Box 181, Kingston 7, Mona.

October 12, 1993.

Dear.....,

**RE: RESEARCH INTO CHILDREN'S READING  
INTERESTS**

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the above study. I am now writing to set a date and time for the administration of the questionnaires and the collection of the additional data re the school and each participant's academic record.

I will need access to the names of all current sixth graders for this academic year so that I can randomly select 42 children (21 girls, 21 boys) to participate. I would therefore like to know if it will be convenient for me to visit the school one day during the week of October 25 - November 5, 1993 at a time convenient to you so that I can select the students and administer the questionnaires.

Having obtained permission from the Ministry of Education to conduct the survey in the schools, I was further informed that it would not be necessary to get parental permission for each child to participate in the survey once the local principal had consented to the school's participation. I will therefore need you to sign a statement to this effect for the purpose of my Ethics Committee and so I am enclosing a release form for you to sign and return to me.

Kindly let me know as soon as possible which of the dates is suitable, as well as the time of day, so i can confirm both with you.

Once again, thank you very much for agreeing to participate, and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Yours sincerely,

.....  
Cherrell V. Robinson (Mrs.)  
Lecturer (U.W.I.)  
and Doctoral Student (University of Toronto)

Encl...

**Form to be Signed by Principals Releasing the Researcher from the need to Obtain Parental Consent for Each Child to Participate in the Research**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to state that in my capacity as Principal of the

.....  
(Name of School)

I have given permission for the sixth grade students to participate in the **READING INTERESTS SURVEY** being conducted by Mrs. Cherrell Robinson from the University of the West Indies and the University of Toronto, and as such she has no further need to seek parental permission for each child to participate.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Principal

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 8: THIRD LETTER TO PRINCIPAL RE INTERVIEWS

Department of Library Studies,  
University of the West Indies,  
P.O. Box 181, Kingston 7, Mona.

March 11, 1994.

Dear.....,

### RE: RESEARCH INTO CHILDREN'S READING INTERESTS

I am now writing to you about the second stage of my research following upon the administration of questionnaires to some of the sixth graders at your school last term. As mentioned in my first letter, a part of the study include follow-up interviews with a small number of the original sample. I am at this stage now where I need to contact these students for interviewing.

The following student/s have been chosen from your school: .....

I therefore need your promised assistance in informing the student/s and obtaining parental consent to interview them. For this reason, I am enclosing two letters for each child - one addressed to the student and the other for his/her parent/guardian. The child should return to you a completed form from the parent indicating whether or not he/she consents to the interview. I will then telephone you in the next few days for the response.

As we had agreed previously, I will be conducting the interviews at the school and in order to ensure some degree of privacy, it would be helpful if you could make available a fairly quiet place where I can meet with the student/s when the time comes.

Please let me know as soon as possible what is the answer from both parents and students so that I can find replacements, if needed, and so we can set a definite date for the interviews.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank you for your assistance with my research so far.

Yours sincerely,

.....  
Cherrell V. Robinson (Mrs.)  
Lecturer (U.W.I.) and  
Doctoral Student (University of Toronto)

Encl...

**APPENDIX 9: LETTER REQUESTING PARENTAL CONSENT  
FOR INTERVIEWING OF CHILD**

Department of Library Studies,  
University of the West Indies,  
P.O. Box 181, Kingston 7, Mona.

March 11, 1994.

Dear Parent/Guardian,

**RE: PERMISSION FOR YOUR CHILD TO BE  
INTERVIEWED AS PART OF A READING INTEREST SURVEY**

During the Christmas Term last year, your child....., with the permission of the Principal of the school, took part in a survey of children's reading interests that I am conducting as part of my doctoral studies at the University of Toronto. At that time ..... completed a questionnaire, and now she has been selected as one of the handful of students that I would like to talk to some more about her reading interest and habits.

I am therefore requesting your permission for me to interview..... at school at a date to be agreed on by the Principal and myself. I would like to let you know that participation is completely voluntary, and please be assured that in reporting the research, I will not identify your child or the school by name. No one, but myself, will know what your child said, and this will be held in strictest confidence.

I do hope you will allow me to talk to your child as what I learn from her can assist educators and librarians in the search for answers about how to develop and maintain a love of reading among children.

Kindly complete the enclosed form and return it to the school at your earliest convenience so that I can know whether or not you will allow me to interview your child.

Yours sincerely,

.....  
Cherrell V. Robinson (Mrs.)  
Lecturer (U.W.I.) and  
Doctoral Student (University of Toronto)

**APPENDIX 9...Continued**

**FORM TO BE SIGNED FOR BY PARENT FOR CONSENT TO INTERVIEW HIS/HER CHILD**

I Give / Do Not Give (cross out whichever does not apply) permission for my child.....  
(child's name)

to be interviewed by Mrs. Cherrell Robinson as a part of her study being conducted on Children's Reading Interests.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Name

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX 10: LETTER TO CHILD INFORMING HIM/HER  
ABOUT THE INTERVIEW**

Department of Library Studies,  
University of the West Indies,  
P.O. Box 181, Kingston 7, Mona.

March 11, 1994.

Dear.....,

I hope you can remember taking part in a study I was doing last term and how you answered some questions about your reading interests and habits. Let me thank you for helping me with my research then. At that time, I also mentioned that I would be choosing a few of you to talk to at a later time. Well, I am now writing to let you know that you have been chosen as one of the very few children that I would like to talk to some more about the kinds of books you read and how you go about your reading.

Please do not be shy or afraid, this will not harm you in any way, and if you do not feel like doing it you can say no. If you agree to take part, no one else but me will know what you say as your name or that of your school will not be told to anyone.

I would like to talk to you at school, but first I must get your parent's/guardian's permission and so I have sent the principal a letter to give you to take home. Please talk about it with your parent/guardian, and ask him/her to sign the form and return it to the principal as soon as possible.

I do hope you will want to talk to me and that your parent/guardian will also agree. Please let me hear from you, whatever you and your parent/guardian decide.

Your sincerely,

.....  
Cherrell V. Robinson (Mrs.)  
Lecturer (U.W.I.) and  
Doctoral Student (University of Toronto)

**APPENDIX 11: ANOVA SUMMARIES FOR QUESTIONS  
4, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12**

**QUESTION 4: INTEREST IN DIFFERENT TYPES OF BOOKS**

**ANOVA Summary for Adventure Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	4.2477	1.4159	3.20	0.0233
Within Groups	399	176.3974	0.4421		
Total	402	180.6451			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.5535	0.5535	1.25	0.2638
SEX	1	1.8369	1.8369	4.16	0.0422
GEO*SEX	1	1.9877	1.9877	4.50	0.0346

**ANOVA Summary for Animal Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.8763	0.9587	1.95	0.1203
Within Groups	403	197.7379	0.4906		
Total	406	200.6142			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.0961	1.0961	2.23	0.1358
SEX	1	0.4202	0.4202	0.86	0.3553
GEO*SEX	1	1.4251	1.4251	2.90	0.0891

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Dancing**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	16.0627	5.3542	8.40	0.0001
Within Groups	398	253.5616	0.6370		
Total	401	269.6243			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.9092	1.9092	3.00	0.0842
SEX	1	13.8474	13.8474	21.74	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.3036	0.30369	0.48	0.4903

**ANOVA Summary for Fairy Tales**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	5.4010	1.8003	3.60	0.0137
Within Groups	392	196.0207	0.5000		
Total	395	201.4217			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.5170	1.5170	3.03	0.0823
SEX	1	3.6822	3.6822	7.36	0.0069
GEO*SEX	1	0.1562	0.1562	0.31	0.5764

**ANOVA Summary for Family Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.3797	1.1265	2.72	0.0443
Within Groups	397	164.4806	0.4143		
Total	400	167.8603			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.4772	0.4772	1.15	0.2838
SEX	1	1.2803	1.2803	3.09	0.0795
GEO*SEX	1	1.6472	1.6472	3.98	0.0468

**ANOVA Summary for Fantasy**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between groups	3	1.0043	0.3347	0.48	0.6962
Within Groups	388	270.4957	0.6971		
Total	391	271.5000			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0703	0.0703	0.10	0.7509
SEX	1	0.1147	0.1147	0.16	0.6852
GEO*SEX	1	0.8079	0.8079	1.16	0.2824

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Growing Up**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	6.5636	2.1878	3.96	0.0084
Within Groups	399	220.4438	0.5524		
Total	402	227.0074			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.7131	2.7131	4.91	0.0273
SEX	1	1.5415	1.5415	2.79	0.0956
GEO*SEX	1	2.3987	2.3987	4.34	0.0378

**ANOVA Summary for Books on History**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	0.2573	0.0857	0.15	0.9267
Within Groups	401	222.3994	0.5546		
Total	404	222.6567			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.1051	0.1051	0.19	0.6635
SEX	1	0.0166	0.0166	0.03	0.8625
GEO*SEX	1	0.1313	0.1313	0.24	0.6267

**ANOVA Summary for Horror Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.9386	0.9795	1.31	0.2718
Within Groups	394	295.3026	0.7494		
Total	397	298.2412			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.5086	1.5086	2.01	0.1568
SEX	1	1.3189	1.3189	1.76	0.1854
GEO*SEX	1	0.0544	0.0544	0.07	0.7876

**ANOVA Summary for Humorous Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	7.7762	2.5920	5.37	0.0012
Within Groups	391	188.6389	0.4824		
Total	394	196.4151			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	6.9721	6.9721	14.45	0.0002
SEX	1	0.5749	0.5749	1.19	0.2756
GEO*SEX	1	0.2288	0.2288	0.47	0.4914

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Lives of Famous People**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.0762	0.6920	1.39	0.2449
Within Groups	398	197.9362	0.4973		
Total	401	200.0124			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.1304	0.1304	0.26	0.6088
SEX	1	1.3664	1.3664	2.75	0.0982
GEO*SEX	1	0.5857	0.5857	1.18	0.2785

**ANOVA Summary for Love Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	9.9148	3.3049	6.32	0.0003
Within Groups	390	203.9863	0.5230		
Total	393	213.90101			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	6.7368	6.7368	12.88	0.0004
SEX	1	2.1382	2.1382	4.09	0.0439
GEO*SEX	1	0.8849	0.8849	1.69	0.1941

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Machines**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	22.0029	7.3342	14.00	0.0001
Within Groups	394	206.4795	0.5240		
Total	397	228.4824			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	9.4721	9.4721	18.07	0.0001
SEX	1	12.0334	12.0334	22.96	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.5087	0.5087	0.97	0.3251

**ANOVA Summary for Mystery Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.5607	1.1868	2.09	0.1016
Within Groups	385	219.1128	0.5691		
Total	388	222.6735			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0696	0.0696	0.12	0.7267
SEX	1	1.8581	1.8581	3.26	0.0716
GEO*SEX	1	1.6011	1.6011	2.81	0.0943

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Music**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	10.3988	3.4662	5.51	0.0010
Within Groups	394	247.7921	0.6289		
Total	397	258.1909			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	5.5720	5.5720	8.86	0.0031
SEX	1	4.9939	4.9939	7.94	0.0051
GEO*SEX	1	0.0180	0.0180	0.03	0.8656

**ANOVA Summary for Books on People in Other Lands**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.2285	0.4095	0.93	0.4265
Within Groups	397	174.9460	0.4406		
Total	400	176.1745			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.5050	0.5050	1.15	0.2850
SEX	1	0.6438	0.6438	1.46	0.2275
GEO*SEX	1	0.0581	0.0581	0.13	0.7167

**ANOVA Summary for Poetry**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	5.9722	1.990	4.45	0.0043
Within Groups	400	179.0872	0.447		
Total	403	185.0594			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.9563	1.9563	4.37	0.0372
SEX	1	4.0195	4.0195	8.98	0.0029
GEO*SEX	1	0.1381	0.1381	0.31	0.5788

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Riddles and Jokes**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.3550	0.4516	1.80	0.1472
Within Groups	403	101.3083	0.2513		
Total	406	102.6633			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.9319	0.9319	3.71	0.0549
SEX	1	0.3920	0.3920	1.56	0.2124
GEO*SEX	1	0.0416	0.0416	0.17	0.6842

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Science**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.8198	0.9399	2.24	0.0831
Within Groups	400	167.8237	0.4195		
Total	403	170.6435			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.8934	0.8934	2.13	0.1453
SEX	1	1.8650	1.8650	4.45	0.0356
GEO*SEX	1	0.0892	0.0892	0.21	0.6449

**ANOVA Summary for Science Fiction**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.8391	1.2797	2.47	0.0614
Within Groups	395	204.5268	0.5177		
Total	398	208.3659			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.2370	0.2370	0.46	0.4990
SEX	1	1.3153	1.3153	2.54	0.1118
GEO*SEX	1	2.3190	2.3190	4.48	0.0349

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Sports**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	8.3495	2.7831	5.60	0.0009
Within Groups	398	197.7300	0.4968		
Total	401	206.0796			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0168	0.0168	0.03	0.8542
SEX	1	8.2751	8.2751	16.66	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.0367	0.0367	0.07	0.7858

**ANOVA Summary for Books on Things to Make and Do**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	6.9770	2.3256	5.86	0.0006
Within Groups	399	158.4026	0.3969		
Total	402	165.3796			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.7202	0.7202	1.81	0.1788
SEX	1	6.3090	6.3090	15.89	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.0656	0.0656	0.17	0.6844

**ANOVA Summary for Understanding Myself and Others**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	9.1392	3.0463	6.01	0.0005
Within Groups	395	200.0838	0.5065		
Total	398	209.2230			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.4553	1.4553	2.87	0.0909
SEX	1	5.3741	5.3741	10.61	0.0012
GEO*SEX	1	2.2769	2.2769	4.50	0.0346

**ANOVA Summary for War Stories**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	30.0189	10.0063	15.08	0.0001
Within Groups	399	264.7304	0.6634		
Total	402	294.7493			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.6312	2.6319	3.97	0.0471
SEX	1	27.1695	27.1695	40.95	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.00004	0.00004	0.00	0.9936

**QUESTION 7: SOURCES OF BOOKS****ANOVA Summary for Class Library**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	4.4846	1.4948	1.44	0.2316
Within Groups	395	411.0392	1.0406		
Total	398	415.5238			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0680	0.0680	0.07	0.7984
SEX	1	4.4262	4.4262	4.25	0.0398
GEO*SEX	1	0.0096	0.0096	0.01	0.9232

**ANOVA Summary for Friends**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	18.0488	6.0162	4.26	0.0056
Within Groups	395	558.2569	1.4133		
Total	398	576.3057			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	10.6440	10.6440	7.53	0.0063
SEX	1	6.7375	6.7375	4.77	0.0296
GEO*SEX	1	0.59563	0.5956	0.42	0.5166

**ANOVA Summary for Home**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	0.4759	0.1586	0.12	0.9488
Within Groups	395	525.5140	1.3304		
Total	398	525.9899			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.2672	0.2672	0.20	0.6543
SEX	1	0.0499	0.0499	0.04	0.8464
GEO*SEX	1	0.1386	0.1386	0.10	0.7470

**ANOVA Summary for Public Library**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	9.6148	3.2049	2.47	0.0612
Within Groups	395	511.6784	1.2953		
Total	398	521.2932			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	8.1070	8.1070	6.26	0.0128
SEX	1	1.5776	1.5776	1.22	0.2704
GEO*SEX	1	0.02416	0.0241	0.02	0.8914

**ANOVA Summary for Relatives**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.1046	0.7015	0.65	0.5863
Within Groups	395	429.4041	1.0870		
Total	398	431.5087			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.4140	0.4140	0.38	0.5375
SEX	1	1.0442	1.0442	0.96	0.3276
GEO*SEX	1	0.6330	0.6330	0.58	0.4458

**ANOVA Summary for School Library**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.7816	0.5939	0.49	0.6867
Within Groups	395	474.8850	1.2022		
Total	398	476.6666			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.4777	1.4777	1.23	0.2682
SEX	1	0.1345	0.1345	0.11	0.7382
GEO*SEX	1	0.1282	0.1282	0.11	0.7441

**ANOVA Summary for I Buy Them Myself**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.7816	0.5938	0.49	0.6867
Within groups	395	474.8851	1.2022		
Total	398	476.6666			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.4777	1.4777	1.23	0.2682
SEX	1	0.1344	0.1344	0.11	0.7382
GEO*SEX	1	0.1282	0.1282	0.11	0.7441

**ANOVA Summary for Other Sources**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.3556	0.7852	1.14	0.3307
Within Groups	395	270.9075	0.6858		
Total	398	273.2631			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.1283	0.1283	0.19	0.6655
SEX	1	2.1681	2.1681	3.16	0.0762
GEO*SEX	1	0.1021	0.1021	0.15	0.6998

**QUESTION 9: SOURCES OF READING GUIDANCE****ANOVA Summary for Friends**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	10.0085	3.3361	2.48	0.0607
Within Groups	412	554.3737	1.3455		
Total	415	564.3822			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.7986	2.7986	2.08	0.1500
SEX	1	4.2607	4.2607	3.17	0.0759
GEO*SEX	1	3.1330	3.1330	2.33	0.1278

**ANOVA Summary for Librarians**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.7845	1.2614	1.15	0.3281
Within Groups	412	451.3477	1.0955		
Total	415	455.1322			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	3.6617	3.6617	3.34	0.0682
SEX	1	0.0331	0.0331	0.03	0.8621
GEO*SEX	1	0.0951	0.0951	0.09	0.7685

**ANOVA Summary for Parents**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	16.1853	5.3950	3.45	0.0166
Within Groups	412	643.9685	1.5630		
Total	415	660.1538			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	3.8899	3.8899	2.49	0.1154
SEX	1	8.1280	8.1280	5.20	0.0231
GEO*SEX	1	4.2062	4.2062	2.69	0.1017

**ANOVA Summary for Relatives**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.6868	0.5622	0.66	0.5792
Within Groups	412	352.8107	0.8563		
Total	415	354.4975			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.0507	1.0507	1.23	0.2686
SEX	1	0.1514	0.1514	0.18	0.6743
GEO*SEX	1	0.4750	0.4750	0.55	0.4568

**ANOVA Summary for Teachers**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.7609	0.5869	0.42	0.7413
Within Groups	412	580.7679	1.4096		
Total	415	582.5288			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.6421	1.6421	1.16	0.2811
SEX	1	0.1153	0.1153	0.08	0.7750
GEO*SEX	1	0.0205	0.0205	0.01	0.9039

**ANOVA Summary for No One**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	6.2475	2.0824	1.97	0.1176
Within Groups	412	435.1371	1.0561		
Total	415	441.3846			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	5.6127	5.6127	5.31	0.0216
SEX	1	0.5751	0.5751	0.54	0.4610
GEO*SEX	1	0.1341	0.1341	0.13	0.7218

**ANOVA Summary for Other Persons**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	0.0603	0.0200	0.52	0.6658
Within Groups	412	15.7858	0.0383		
Total	415	15.8461			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0087	0.0087	0.23	0.6325
SEX	1	0.0401	0.0401	1.05	0.3064
GEO*SEX	1	0.0104	0.0104	0.27	0.6011

**QUESTION 10: The Ranking of Reading As A Leisure Time Activity****ANOVA Summary for Being With Friends**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	5.3772	1.7924	1.82	0.1428
Within Groups	412	405.6780	0.9846		
Total	415	411.0552			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.2151	0.2151	0.22	0.6404
SEX	1	5.1808	5.1808	5.26	0.0223
GEO*SEX	1	0.0017	0.0017	0.00	0.9664

**ANOVA Summary for Doing Arts and Craft**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	1.1451	0.3817	0.46	0.7088
Within Groups	412	340.2395	0.8258		
Total	415	341.3846			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.8015	0.8015	0.97	0.3251
SEX	1	0.1011	0.1011	0.12	0.7266
GEO*SEX	1	0.2652	0.2652	0.32	0.5712

**ANOVA Summary for Going Out**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.1919	1.0639	2.40	0.0674
Within Groups	412	182.6542	0.4433		
Total	415	185.8461			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.7811	0.7811	1.76	0.1851
SEX	1	1.8409	1.8409	4.15	0.0422
GEO*SEX	1	0.5713	0.5713	1.29	0.2570

**ANOVA Summary for Listening to Music**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	6.6989	2.2329	2.62	0.0504
Within Groups	412	351.1063	0.8521		
Total	415	357.8052			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0013	0.0013	0.00	0.9680
SEX	1	6.2942	6.2942	7.39	0.0069
GEO*SEX	1	0.4010	0.4010	0.47	0.4931

**ANOVA Summary for Listening to the Radio**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	0.8366	0.2788	0.71	0.5467
Within Groups	412	161.9230	0.3930		
Total	415	162.7596			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0449	0.0449	0.11	0.7354
SEX	1	0.6041	0.6041	1.54	0.2157
GEO*SEX	1	0.1942	0.1942	0.49	0.4825

**ANOVA Summary for Watching Television**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	7.3471	2.4490	1.87	0.1348
Within Groups	412	540.9004	1.3128		
Total	415	548.2475			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.9592	0.9592	0.73	0.3932
SEX	1	0.0076	0.0076	0.01	0.9393
GEO*SEX	1	6.4716	6.4716	4.93	0.0269

**QUESTION 11: Hindrances to Reading****ANOVA Summary for Less School Work**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	10.8855	3.6284	2.79	0.0401
Within Groups	412	535.3356	1.2993		
Total	415	546.2211			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	6.6758	6.6758	5.14	0.0239
SEX	1	1.8049	1.8049	1.39	0.2392
GEO*SEX	1	2.2426	2.2426	1.73	0.1897

**ANOVA Summary for A Library with Many Books Nearby**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	2.3281	0.7760	0.59	0.6197
Within Groups	412	538.8810	1.3079		
Total	415	541.2091			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0363	0.0363	0.03	0.8677
SEX	1	2.0284	2.0284	1.55	0.2137
GEO*SEX	1	0.2621	0.2621	0.20	0.6546

**ANOVA Summary for Someone to Help Me Know What Books to Read**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	11.1897	3.7298	5.56	0.0009
Within Groups	412	276.1564	0.6702		
Total	415	287.3461			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	7.7155	7.7155	11.51	0.0008
SEX	1	1.8457	1.8457	2.75	0.0978
GEO*SEX	1	1.4711	1.4711	2.19	0.1392

**ANOVA Summary for Playing Indoor Games**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	10.6384	3.5461	5.32	0.0013
Within Groups	412	274.4168	0.6660		
Total	415	285.0552			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.5773	0.5773	0.87	0.3524
SEX	1	4.5853	4.5853	6.88	0.0090
GEO*SEX	1	5.5084	5.5084	8.27	0.0042

**ANOVA Summary for Playing Outdoor Games**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	20.9457	6.9819	4.51	0.0040
Within Groups	412	637.9365	1.5483		
Total	415	658.8822			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	5.9680	5.9680	3.85	0.0503
SEX	1	15.1380	15.1380	9.78	0.0019
GEO*SEX	1	0.0366	0.0366	0.02	0.8778

**ANOVA Summary for Playing Video Games**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	14.2035	4.7345	6.58	0.0002
Within Groups	412	296.5056	0.7196		
Total	415	310.7091			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.8599	2.8599	3.97	0.0469
SEX	1	11.1038	11.1038	15.43	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.1540	0.1540	0.21	0.6438

**ANOVA Summary for Reading**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	40.2735	13.4245	9.78	0.0001
Within Groups	412	565.6399	1.3729		
Total	415	605.9134			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.8577	0.8577	0.62	0.4297
SEX	1	39.2121	39.2121	28.56	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.0983	0.0983	0.07	0.7891

**ANOVA Summary for Fewer Chores to Do at Home**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.5005	1.1668	1.97	0.1179
Within Groups	412	244.0379	0.5923		
Total	415	247.5384			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.6773	2.6773	4.52	0.0341
SEX	1	0.6401	0.6401	1.08	0.2991
GEO*SEX	1	0.1837	0.1837	0.31	0.5778

**ANOVA Summary for Having a Place of My Own to Read**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	5.2698	1.7565	1.97	0.1182
Within Groups	412	367.8624	0.8928		
Total	415	373.1322			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.1083	0.1083	0.12	0.7277
SEX	1	1.1629	1.1629	1.30	0.2544
GEO*SEX	1	4.0448	4.4448	4.53	0.0339

**ANOVA Summary for Watching Less Television**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	4.3412	1.4470	1.28	0.2814
Within Groups	412	466.4063	1.1320		
Total	415	470.7475			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	1.0330	1.0330	0.91	0.3400
SEX	1	1.3649	1.3649	1.21	0.2728
GEO*SEX	1	1.8947	1.8947	1.67	0.1965

**ANOVA Summary for Being Good at Reading**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	28.3987	9.4662	8.43	0.0001
Within Groups	412	462.7335	1.1231		
Total	415	491.1322			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.0584	2.0584	1.83	0.1765
SEX	1	26.4766	26.4766	23.57	0.0001
GEO*SEX	1	0.0135	0.0135	0.01	0.9126

**ANOVA Summary for Parents Who Encourage Me to Read**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	3.4214	1.1404	2.14	0.0940
Within Groups	412	219.1074	0.5318		
Total	415	222.5288			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.2994	0.2994	0.56	0.4535
SEX	1	0.8010	0.8010	1.51	0.2204
GEO*SEX	1	2.2923	2.2923	4.31	0.0385

**ANOVA Summary for Having My Own Books**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	9.9676	3.3225	3.41	0.0177
Within Groups	412	401.9915	0.9757		
Total	415	411.9591			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	7.4857	7.4857	7.67	0.0059
SEX	1	2.2950	2.2950	2.35	0.1259
GEO*SEX	1	0.0851	0.0851	0.09	0.7679

**ANOVA Summary for Spending Less Time With Friends**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	7.1509	2.3836	2.63	0.0501
Within Groups	412	374.0702	0.9079		
Total	415	381.2211			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	6.1468	6.1468	6.77	0.0096
SEX	1	0.1885	0.1885	0.21	0.6488
GEO*SEX	1	0.7348	0.7348	0.81	0.3688

**ANOVA Summary for Liking to Read**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	10.5519	3.5173	4.44	0.0044
Within Groups	412	326.1572	0.7916		
Total	415	336.7091			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	8.5977	8.5977	10.86	0.0011
SEX	1	1.3707	1.3707	1.73	0.1890
GEO*SEX	1	0.5693	0.5693	0.72	0.3969

**ANOVA Summary for Other Hindrances**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	0.1692	0.0563	1.07	0.3609
Within Groups	412	21.6769	0.0526		
Total	415	21.8461			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0096	0.0096	0.18	0.6679
SEX	1	0.1498	0.1498	2.85	0.0923
GEO*SEX	1	0.0096	0.0096	0.18	0.6679

**QUESTION 12: Preference for Eurocentric or Afrocentric Book Characters****ANOVA Summary for White Boys and Girls from Africa**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	0.5173	0.1724	0.27	0.8447
Within Groups	414	261.2338	0.6309		
Total	417	261.7511			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	0.0317	0.0317	0.05	0.8227
SEX	1	0.2465	0.2465	0.39	0.5323
GEO*SEX	1	0.2465	0.2465	0.39	0.5323

**ANOVA Summary for Black Boys and Girls from Africa**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	16.2584	5.4194	4.28	0.0055
Within Groups	414	524.6411	1.2672		
Total	417	540.8995			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	11.0319	11.0319	8.71	0.0034
SEX	1	4.6081	4.6081	3.64	0.0572
GEO*SEX	1	0.4570	0.4570	0.36	0.5485

**ANOVA Summary for White Boys and Girls from England**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	14.0819	4.6939	5.33	0.0013
Within Groups	414	364.3319	0.8800		
Total	417	378.4138			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	10.8330	10.3330	12.31	0.0005
SEX	1	1.7515	1.7515	1.99	0.1591
GEO*SEX	1	1.2741	1.2741	1.45	0.2296

## ANOVA Summary for Black Boys and Girls from England

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	4.6972	1.5657	1.72	0.1617
Within Groups	414	376.3004	0.9089		
Total	417	380.9976			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	3.5412	3.5412	3.90	0.0491
SEX	1	1.0880	1.0880	1.20	0.2746
GEO*SEX	1	0.1021	0.1021	0.11	0.7376

## ANOVA Summary for White Boys and Girls from Jamaica and the Rest of the Caribbean

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	6.1018	2.0339	1.47	0.2220
Within Groups	414	572.5991	1.3830		
Total	417	578.7009			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	5.3956	5.3956	3.90	0.0489
SEX	1	0.6255	0.6255	0.45	0.5016
GEO*SEX	1	0.1612	0.1612	0.12	0.7329

## ANOVA Summary for Black Boys and Girls from Jamaica and the Rest of the Caribbean

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	34.7281	11.5760	7.16	0.0001
Within Groups	414	669.3675	1.6168		
Total	417	704.0956			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	5.2697	5.2697	3.26	0.0717
SEX	1	0.9967	0.9967	0.62	0.4328
GEO*SEX	1	28.9284	28.9284	17.89	0.0001

## ANOVA Summary for White Boys and Girls from the United States and Canada

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	14.8598	4.9532	5.91	0.0006
Within Groups	414	346.8650	0.8378		
Total	417	361.7248			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	2.8918	2.8918	3.45	0.0639
SEX	1	10.2220	10.2220	12.20	0.0005
GEO*SEX	1	1.5636	1.5636	1.87	0.1726

**ANOVA Summary for Black Boys and Girls from the United  
States and Canada**

Source	DF	SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
Between Groups	3	8.2976	2.7658	3.24	0.0221
Within Groups	414	353.4823	0.8538		
Total	417	361.7799			

Source	DF	Type III SS	MS	F Value	Pr > F
GEO	1	7.6618	7.6618	8.97	0.0029
SEX	1	0.5325	0.5325	0.62	0.4301
GEO*SEX	1	0.0593	0.0593	0.07	0.7922

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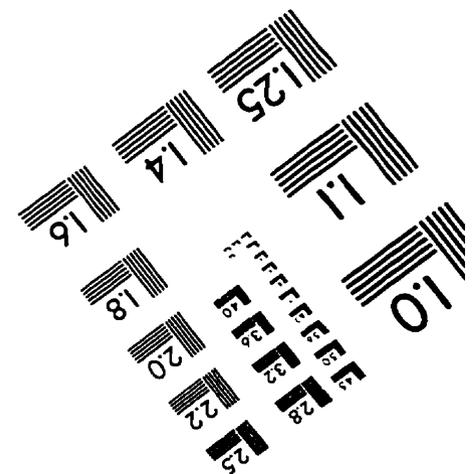
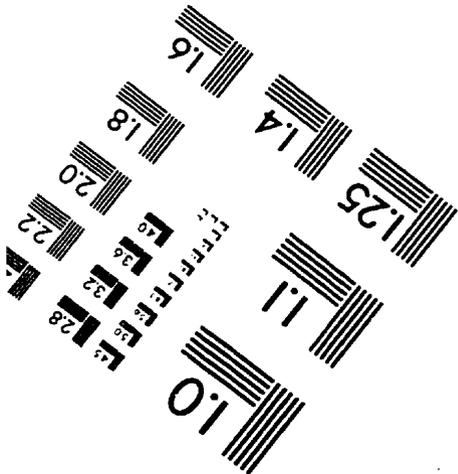
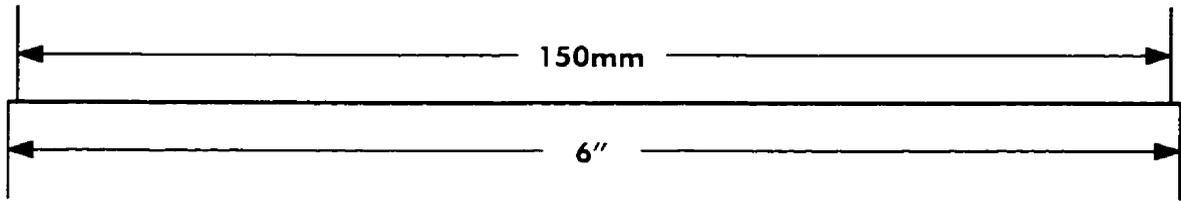
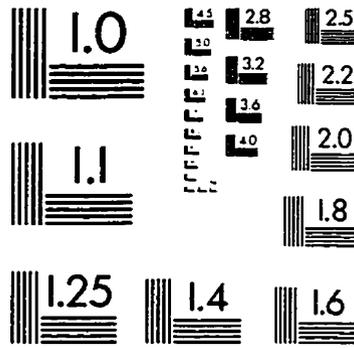
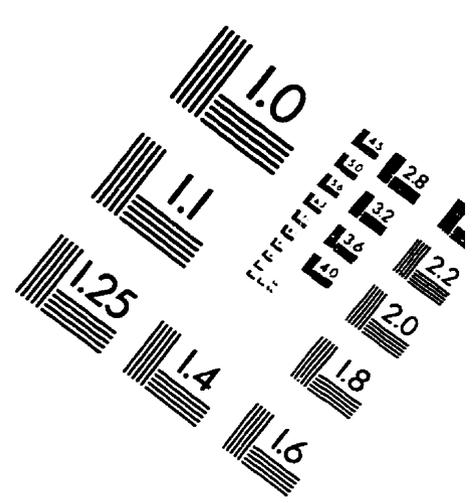
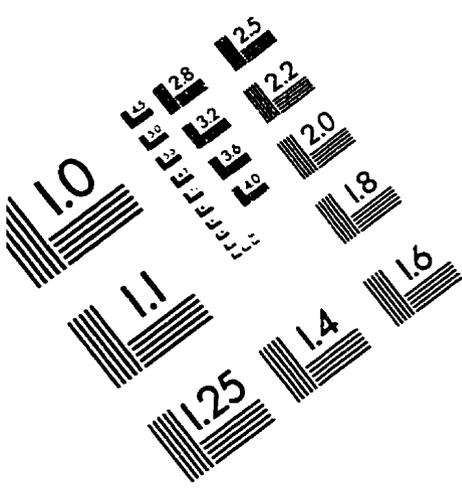
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