BOYS’ READING HABITS AS CHILDREN AND THEIR COLLEGE GRADES

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

May 2010

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to determine whether a correlation existed between boys’ reading for enjoyment in their youth and their academic performance in college. This study examined the number of days boys read as children, the genres of books they read most often, the method of reading (independent, with someone else, or a combination of the two) they used most often while reading, if they thought reading had helped them throughout their schooling and why, and their college GPA. An eight question survey was designed and given to sophomore, junior, and senior male members of an introduction to communication studies course at a public university in Northern Ohio. A mixed-methods research design was used to analyze the data. The major results were that no correlation exists between the two variables, but that a majority of the participants believed that reading for enjoyment in their youth had helped them throughout their schooling with comprehension, acquisition of vocabulary, speaking, writing, and other items. It was concluded that even though no correlation was found, the variables were skewed (GPA negatively and days read per week positively) which would impact the finding of a relationship between the two variables. A relationship could exist, but more research would need to be conducted and more diverse data would need to be attained to determine if a correlation does exist. It was also concluded that the participants believed that reading had helped them, which has great implications for the early childhood reading classroom since it appears important to success in life.
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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Reading is an integral part of any child’s education. For example, it is taught every day in every elementary school classroom and is typically allotted more time throughout the school day than other subjects (“Where Does The,” 2007). Throughout school, children are taught reading as a single subject, and then the skills learned are transferred to content reading. The most effective way to develop these reading skills is through practice. This practice does not necessarily consist of drilling the skills of reading over and over, but could instead be comprised of reading authentic texts daily. The Matthew Effect states that the more one reads, the better that person becomes at reading (Carreker, Neuhaus, Swank, Johnson, Monfils, & Montemayor, 2007). In other words, students who start out as decent readers, and continue to practice reading, will continue to improve their reading skills, whereas a poor reader who does not practice reading will probably not become a good reader. This phrase originates from the Bible and is used often today. Stating that the more people read, the better they will become at reading is similar to the phrase: the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Early good readers will continue to excel in reading with practice, but children who start out as poor readers will not get any better without practice. This practice often comes from reading instruction in class and through reading for pleasure.

By reading for enjoyment, children are able to improve their reading abilities and learn more about the world or life in general. They can use the knowledge they receive from reading books and apply this knowledge to their everyday lives and their learning. Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) support this notion. They state that the amount children read greatly impacts their knowledge of the world and how much they contribute to
discussions in the classroom and in life outside of school. Along this same line, Berkant (2009) suggests individuals must associate meaning with the information they receive to learn and understand the new concept. People are able to take what they learn from a book and associate this new knowledge with information being learned in the classroom. For example, children who are reading a book about volcanoes for pleasure would be able to better understand a class discussion about Pompeii and would be able to extend their thinking on the subject because of the knowledge that was already gained from reading the book about volcanoes. This example supports the notion that there is a positive correlation between people who read for enjoyment and the grades they receive in school. The knowledge that individuals can gain from reading for pleasure can be combined with information that they are learning to better understand new concepts.

When it comes to reading, boys have been identified as struggling readers for about seven decades (McNeil, 1964). Holbrook (1988) says that this could be the cause of a “feminine reading environment,” a classroom that addresses the needs of girls over boys, or something that is hard-wired into the male gender. Either way, Holbrook states that boys have as much potential as girls, but that potential is not being reached or used.

Although the research about boys struggling when it comes to reading goes back to 1930, Brozo (2006) states that the knowledge of boys’ struggles with reading came into the public eye around 1961 with a study done by Arthur Gates (1961). Gates completed a study of reading ability of 13,114 students in grades two through eight who were “typical in intelligence or scholastic attitude” (p. 431). Each student took three tests: a speed of reading test, a vocabulary test, and a comprehension test (Gates). The tests were given in 12 school districts in 10 different states (Gates). Gates’ study showed that
girls were more successful in learning to read than boys. He found that in all 21 comparisons, the raw scores for the girls were higher than the raw scores for the boys, and most of the differences in raw scores were significant. This study is the foundation upon which numerous other studies have been conducted in regards to boys’ success in reading achievement. Research on how to help boys achieve success in reading is still seen as important and thus continues to be studied today.

The fact that boys are a known struggling population when it comes to reading is the reason this study focused on boys. Not every girl is an excellent reader, and some boys are excellent readers, but most research highlights the gap between boys’ and girls’ scores in reading. Girls consistently score higher. National report cards state this fact, as does other research (Holbrook, 1988; Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). In fact, in the 2007 National Report Card, it was found that girls outscored boys by eight points in reading for literary experience and by five points in reading for information (Lee et al.). Both scores for boys were found to be significantly lower than girls when tested at the .05 alpha level. Further, significant gaps between boys’ and girls’ scores have been found since at least 1992 and maybe even farther back (Lee et al.). The gaps between the scores of boys and girls in reading on the 2007 National Report Card and the study done by Gates (1961), illustrates a long history of boys struggling with reading. If educators want to help boys become better readers and decrease these gender gaps, then boys need extra attention in the classroom. They need to be shown that reading for pleasure can be enjoyable in the hope that this will encourage them to be lifelong readers. If children can learn to love to read when they are younger, then this enjoyment of reading may continue throughout their lives. People can read many different genres of books for fun and learn new
information to add to their already existing schemas of the world. For example, reading a John Grisham book about politics and law will likely add political terminology to a person’s already existing schema of the political world. This newly gained information may be able to help people connect what they are learning in school to information that was gathered through reading a book for pleasure.

Statement of the Problem

Although no studies have been conducted with regards to finding a correlation between reading for enjoyment as a child and grades received in college, much research has been done in relation to different components of reading, such as comprehension and vocabulary among others, as early predictors of other components/the same components of reading. One such study by Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2008) is that “early vocabulary knowledge is a powerful predictor of young students’ reading comprehension years later” (p. 2). They stated that this relationship between vocabulary and comprehension has been shown to be true in many different studies throughout the years. Another early predictor of achievement found in the literature is self-efficacy (Bissell & Collins, 2001). According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy is the belief that people have about themselves and these beliefs influence whether people think they can or can not complete a task. Bissell and Collins state that people use self-efficacy to determine how they will perform on a task by using past performances as indicators. In relation to reading, people may have higher self-efficacy for reading or academic tasks if they have been successful in those areas in the past. In other words, the higher a person’s self-efficacy in reading and academics the better that person is likely to perform academically.
Based on the relationships described, and many others, one may perceive a positive correlation between boys who read for enjoyment when they were younger and the grades they receive in college. This positive correlation becomes an issue when looking at the research about how boys are struggling when it comes to reading. The majority of people start to read for enjoyment as children. According to Gambrell (1996), the elementary school years are the most important time in a child’s life when it comes to motivating a child to become a lifelong reader. Teachers must focus on not only teaching reading skills in the elementary years but also focus on motivating students to read; the elementary school years are the most influential on whether or not a child becomes a lifelong reader (Gambrell). Whether this is at the age of five years old or 14 years old, it is usually as a child. Since boys are an identified struggling population when it comes to reading, it could be assumed that many would not read for pleasure as young children and would not become lifelong readers. If this positive correlation between reading for enjoyment as a child and the grades one receives in college is found to be true, a problem exists. Boys who read for enjoyment as children will likely receive better grades than those who did not read for enjoyment as children. If boys are struggling and not reading for pleasure, then their college grades may suffer. This is the problem that is faced by both educators and parents. How do they create a learning environment for boys that will encourage reading for enjoyment and mold boys into lifelong readers to help them achieve greater success later in life? This is a problem that needs to be solved to help boys achieve the success that they are capable of achieving. This study is a small step towards understanding the kind of a relationship that may exist between reading for enjoyment as a young child and the grades a person receives in college.
Research Questions

This study contained two main research questions and two sub questions. The first main research question that was to be examined in this study was: Is there a relationship between boys’ self-reported reading behaviors when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? This first main research question was followed, and answered, by two sub questions: (1) What is the nature of the relationship between how many days a week boys read when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? and (2) When these participants read, what genres of books were they reading and what method of reading (independently, with someone else, or a combination of the two) were they using? The second main question to be examined was: How do participants describe their perceived value of reading as a child and how has it or has it not helped them throughout their schooling?

Rationale

The research knowledge that will be gained from this study is important to anyone who wants every child to succeed in reading and in life. If a positive correlation is found between reading for enjoyment as a child and receiving certain grades in college, then this information could be of practical value to teachers. It could show people in the education community that reading for pleasure is related to how children perform academically later in life. Although this may appear to be intuitive, the more emphasis that is put upon this knowledge, the greater chance there is of having the knowledge used to help boys become lifelong readers. Being a lifelong reader will help students throughout their lives; it will help them through college and into the career that they
decide on joining. Once these questions above are answered, it could lead to research on how to create lifelong male readers. Research could be conducted on what boys like to read and how to integrate more of these genres of books into the classroom. There is research already being done on this topic (Carnell, 2005; Cavazos-Kottke, 2005), but the driving force of knowing that reading for pleasure makes a difference in students’ lives forever could really serve as a catalyst for doing this research.

Answering these questions could also lead to more of a focus on motivation and aesthetic responses to questions in the early childhood classroom. Aesthetic response is a way of responding to literature through emotions and experiences; when reading aesthetically, one is not reading to dissect the text, but for the pleasure reading brings and the emotions that it evokes within a person (Rosenblatt, 2005). When reading aesthetically, individuals are relating the text back to prior experiences that they have had and the emotions brought up by those experiences. Rosenblatt states that people must first feel, connect with, and interact with a text before they can dissect that text. By following Rosenblatt’s advice, students will focus on the aesthetic response to a text, which will lead to the efferent response, which is the literal reading/understanding of a text and the text dissection that takes place in classrooms around the country (Rosenblatt). Focusing on the aesthetic response may motivate students to read more, which may in turn lead to lifelong readers; thus people will be able to make more connections between their lives, school work, and jobs, to books that they have read. Determining if a relationship exists between boys who read for enjoyment when they were younger and the grades they receive sophomore, junior or senior year of college is the first step in helping males to become lifelong readers.
Definition of Terms

Listed below are the major terms, and their definitions, that were used in this study.

**Aesthetic Response**- Using one’s emotions to respond to literature; thinking about how the text made the reader feel rather than what it “literally” meant (Rosenblatt, 2005).

**Efferent Response**- Dissecting and analyzing a text and responding to it literally and/or “acquiring information that we wish to retain after the reading has ended” (Rosenblatt, 2005, p. 90).

**Struggling**- Readers who have the ability to succeed in reading but are in a situation that limits them from succeeding in reading (Holbrook, 1988; Sommers, 2000; Spence, In Press).

**Reading for Pleasure/Enjoyment**- Reading done by an individual for no other reason than to just read for enjoyment or fun. Any types of books or materials can be read for enjoyment.

Limitations

As in any study, this study did have limitations. All survey research is affected by four types of error. These errors include non-response error, coverage error, sampling error, and measurement error (Cui, 2003). One limitation is that since the study was completed via anonymous survey, participants had the choice of whether or not to complete the survey. This is known as the non-response error. There was no control over whether or not all participants of the study completed the survey. This factored into the results of the study, as a smaller sample size is not as descriptive of the whole population.
as a bigger sample size. The reason behind doing the survey anonymously was so that the participants would know that no one actually knew their Grade Point Average (GPA) or what their reading habits were. It was hoped that with this level of anonymity, people would be more likely to complete the survey.

A second limitation, known as coverage error, was that the sample of boys being used in the study consisted of only sophomores, juniors, and/or seniors. Freshman level boys were not used because they have been in college for less than a year and their GPAs may not be an accurate representation of their actual academic abilities. On the other hand, by using sophomores, juniors, and seniors, every boy has had to have a certain GPA to go on to their next year in school. The sophomores, juniors, and seniors were chosen overall because their GPAs are probably a more accurate representation of their academic abilities and will yield more accurate results for the study. Also, only 72 boys were used in the study. This is a minor limitation, because it is a small sample size for the study. Due to time constraints a small sample size was needed. This small sample size is known as sampling error. Every study consists of sampling error, along with non-response error, coverage error, and measurement error. The fact that this study has all four types of errors does not mean that it was flawed to start; it simply means that there were limitations as there are in any study conducted.

A third limitation was that there was no further questioning of the males, which is known as measurement error. What they answered on the survey will be the only information available for the study. This is a limitation because not all questions can be answered simply for all people. Some of the answers may have needed more explanation, and there was no way to get this explanation. This was done to preserve the
confidentiality of the males participating. To interview anyone further, they would have had to include their name on the survey and this would have broken some of the confidentiality. A few items were added to the survey to limit this measurement error. An “other” option was added to one of the more open ended multiple choice questions, the participants were told to write their own GPA on the survey instead of choosing from a few different options (this way the GPA was 100% accurate and not a rough estimate), and the questions were written directly and concisely, as were the close-ended response options.

The fact that the study focused only on males is a fourth limitation. By not focusing on both males and females, an entire picture will not be obtained on whether or not a correlation exists; one will only be able to see if a correlation might exist with boys. This is acceptable, however, as the study is focused on boys because they are a struggling population when it comes to reading. Focusing on boys only was a choice that was made in order to get more information. If the study was to focus on both males and females, then only half of the participants would be males and the information would not be as reliable as it would be if all of the participants are males. The information gained from the study is more reliable if the sample size is larger (Pyrczak, 2007, p. 95).

Time was another limitation. There was only about a month to collect and analyze the data. That is the reason behind the small sample size. There was only enough time to analyze data from a small number of males. Response rate was also a limitation. The survey was given in person because a small number of males were being used to begin with, and the researcher needed to collect as much data as possible. Giving a survey in person gives a much better response rate than when done electronically (Yu & Cooper,
1983). To increase the response rate for the survey, a discussion was held with the participants over why they were taking the survey and how the results were going to be used. This way personal contact was made with the participants, which increased the likelihood of a response. Even though the researcher held a discussion with participants, the survey results still remained confidential and anonymous.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this chapter is to provide background about this study through related literature. The main literature topic to be reviewed is that regarding boys’ reading practices. Also discussed in this chapter is literature related to the relationship between reading and achievement, other studies showing correlations between concepts (like comprehension and vocabulary) of reading, and literature related to motivation/attitudes. Through the review of this related literature, a better understanding of the study and its purpose will be gained.

Why Boys?

As in any subject that is taught in schools, both boys and girls struggle with reading. No one gender is immune from any hardships when it comes to reading. However, this does not mean that both genders have the same difficulties with reading or have an equal amount of difficulty with reading. For many years, research has shown that boys score lower on reading assessments more often than girls. This research dates back to the 1930s. More boys have been placed in remedial reading programs than girls, with “ratios ranging from 2:1 to 10:1” (Holbrook, 1988, p. 574). Holbrook also states that girls tend to have higher scores in reading, even when intelligence is not considered. Gates (1961) found that the gap between boys’ and girls’ reading achievement increases as students’ age increases. Gates’ study also confirmed the fact that girls’ reading abilities surpass boys’ reading abilities on average. This information can be seen often in many classrooms around the country. According to the U. S. Department of Education, in the 2007 Nation’s Report Card for reading, girls’ reading scores differed significantly from boys reading scores. The report card is set up so that there is a section on fourth grade
scores and a section on eighth grade scores. Under the fourth grade section there is a heading that states that “females outperform males” (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007, p. 12). This same section also appears in the eighth grade part of the report card with the heading “score gains vary by gender” (Lee et al., p. 30).

Both sections highlight the scoring gap between the females and the males in both grade levels. The girls scored higher by an average of seven points in fourth grade, which increased to 10 points in eighth grade. In the category of “Reading for Literary Experience” the average male score was 219 and the average female score was 227; in the category of “Reading for Information” the average male score was 216 and the average female score was 221, both for fourth grade (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). In the eighth grade band, the average male score was 256 and the average female score was 267 in the category of “Reading for Literary Experience,” and in the category of “Reading for Information,” the average male score was 260 and the average female score was 268 (Lee et al.). The male scores differed significantly from the female scores in both categories in both grade levels when tested at the .05 alpha level. Also, this difference is not significantly different from the 2005 or 1992 gaps between boys’ and girls’ reading scores in either level (Lee et al.). This is not to say that every boy has a reading problem or that every girl reads wonderfully; the research merely shows that boys struggle more than girls when it comes to reading and that this performance gap widens as students’ ages increase.

Interestingly enough, boys have not always been in the limelight. Gates’ (1961) study came out in 1961 with the information that boys were scoring lower than girls in reading and were struggling. In the 1980s, however, Gilligan stated that girls were
actually struggling more than boys (Sommers, 2000). She completed a study and had results that showed this to be true; at least, the results were thought to be correct. What was found later was that in all reality, girls had not been struggling and that boys were still the struggling gender. Others have tried to recreate Gilligan’s and have not obtained similar results.

Many other researchers agree with the notion that boys are the struggling gender. Littleton, Wood, and Chera (2006) also state that boys’ performance in reading is consistently lower than the performance of girls. They discuss how using computers and/or computer software to aide in the teaching of reading to boys is a way in which to engage boys in reading and a way in which to improve their reading skills. This lower performance is not only an issue in the United States, but in other countries around the world as well. Love and Hamston (2003) discuss how boys’ reading performance is an issue in the United Kingdom and Australia, as well as in the United States. They discuss how as boys’ ages increase they tend to read less than female peers, and their attitudes toward reading become more disagreeable. This decrease in males reading compared to females is a source of the achievement gap in reading scores between genders. This gap is a rationale for why this is an issue that needs to be addressed soon (Love & Hamston).

Lynn and Mikk (2009) completed a study of international students, both boys and girls, in reading achievement. This study found that females achieved higher scores than the males in all three years (2000, 2003, and 2006) the tests were administered. Lynn and Mikk also state that as the students’ ages increase, the gap between the scores of females and males increases as well. To summarize these two articles, something needs to be
done earlier in a child’s education rather than later to help with the reading gap problem between males and females.

Chiu and McBride-Chang (2006) also completed a study about girls and boys from 43 different countries around the world and their scores in reading. They found that girls scored better than boys in all 43 countries. The difference between the scores of the boys and girls was significant in all countries except for Peru and Romania (Chiu & McBride-Chang). This is not to say that boys score lower than girls in every country, but they do in many countries. According to Sommers (2000), the average boy is behind the average girl in reading and writing by about a year and a half. She states that because of this year and a half gap, boys are not entering into college in as a large of numbers as girls; almost three million more girls are entering into college now than boys (Sommers). This is a large gap and one that needs to be addressed.

Causes of Boys’ Struggles

There are researched causes as to why boys do not do as well as girls in reading. These causes range from cultural, to developmental, to something that is different in a male’s brain from a female’s brain. Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory states that the culture and environment people grow up in greatly affects the person they become. This includes the way a person performs in school and beliefs about reading. Using this theory, the culture a boy grows up in will affect his views of reading. For example, if a boy grows up in an environment where reading is perceived as a feminine activity, then the boy may believe that reading is not as important as other activities since it is a “feminine activity.” According to Katz and Sokal (2003), even 24% of second grade
students feel that reading is a feminine activity. This is an interesting point since the elementary years are typically when most students enjoy reading on some level.

Of course reading is not only an activity for females, but it can seem that way. Spence (In Press) discusses in his research that there are not as many male role models when it comes to reading as there are female role models. This means that boys do not have an older male who they look up to showing them that reading is an activity for both boys and girls. He states that boys have more female teachers in the younger grades where reading ability is beginning to blossom and that this impacts how boys view reading. Along with female teachers, boys typically see mothers reading more than fathers and more female librarians than male librarians (Spence). All of these individuals have a great amount of influence on boys’ reading habits, but all of them are female. Boys feel a pressure to be masculine and not feminine, and this lack of role models only makes reading appear more feminine than masculine (Spence). Spence also discusses how boys need to see a connection between the activity of reading and their lives, as males; meaning, that seeing older male figures reading for enjoyment helps boys to make the connection that they can read as well.

Research has also shown that more “girl-friendly” literature is used in classrooms than “boy-friendly” literature (Carnell, 2005; Heilman, 1961; Jones & Cartwright-Fiorelli, 2003; McNeil, 1964). In a lot of classrooms more fiction material is read and what research has found is that many boys enjoy reading non-fiction material or fictional materials that are not accepted in the classroom. Farris, Werderich, Nelson, and Fuhler (2009) completed a research study about what types of books/reading materials boys enjoy reading. This study consisted of two fifth grade classrooms where the students were
paired up with university students. The students were then given different genres of books to read and wrote in dialogue e-mail journals to their university partners in regards to the book. What Farris et al. found, and Cavazos-Kottke (2005) agreed with, was that boys prefer fact books, informational books, biographies, historical fiction, graphic novels, graphic non-fiction, comics, magazines, scary stories, and books that seem to contain dangerous or adventurous plots in them. Lingo (2007) discovered these same results as well when she interviewed young boys on what they preferred to read about. She found that many boys prefer to read about action and adventure, which could include informational books, scary stories, magazines, and graphic novels.

In a study comparable to the two above, McKechnie (2006) found similar results as well in interviews with Canadian boys about their reading preferences. The boys were all between four and 12-years-old, with most boys being around eight-years-old. Her study found that most boys favored comics, books about sports, books that were humorous, game-manuals, graphic novels, and non-fiction books. These types of books are not typically read aloud or provided in classrooms. Another study, conducted by Merisuo-Storm (2006), also obtained the results of comic books, humorous books, and adventure books as the genres most preferred by male readers. She also discovered that boys do not enjoy reading poems, fairytales, or simple stories, many of which are typically preferred by girls. All of these findings can be problematic, because the one way in which to motivate children to read is to let them choose literature to read that interests them. If so called “girl books” are what are provided in the classroom, then boys are not going to be as motivated to read for pleasure as girls.
Besides boys’ low scores in reading emerging from the culture/environment in which they are raised, some research states that differences in males’ and females’ brains are the reason behind this gap in achievement. According to Spence (In Press), boys’ brains develop slower than girls’ brains by about two to six years. Spence states that “the brain of a 6-year-old boy looks like the brain of a 4-year-old girl; the brain of a 17-year-old boy looks like the brain of an 11-year-old girl” (p. 13). He adds that men’s brain development does not catch up with women until the age of 30 and in some areas men never catch up to women (Spence). This could account for the reasoning behind this achievement gap. If boys and girls are expected to perform at the same level academically, but they have a five year difference in brain development, boys could have a hard time keeping up with girls academically. Spence also states that girls use different parts of their brains than boys do when it comes to reading, which can lead to more success in reading. This difference in male and female brains is no fault of boys, but it could be a reason behind the achievement gap found in the reading scores of girls and boys.

Beyond the fact that research shows that boys score lower on reading achievement tests is the fact that boys read less than girls. According to Hall and Coles (2001), not only do boys read less than girls, but this has been the case for more than 20 years. It is no wonder that boys achieve lower scores than girls; they are reading less than girls. The reasoning behind this could be that a lot of what is read in school is not as much like what boys read for pleasure as it is like what girls read for pleasure. McNeil (1964) states that the literature being provided in classrooms is more orientated towards boys than girls. Girl oriented refers more to fiction material and boy oriented refers to more non-fiction
material. Carnell (2005) agrees with this notion and states that the kinds of texts read in school parallel the types of texts that the average girl reads, but not necessarily the types of texts that the average boy reads. For example, fiction is read a lot in school and research shows that boys do not read as much fiction as girls; boys tend to read informational texts more often than fictional texts. Many classrooms provide fairy-tales and other fictional material, but not as much non-fiction material like books about spaceships, Pompeii, and how to build an airplane are provided or fantasy/science fiction material, all of which are texts that interest boys (Cavazos-Kottke, 2006). By not reading texts that are interesting to boys, schools have a much greater chance of turning boys off to reading than they would if they read more texts in which boys are interested (Cavazos-Kottke). After completing a study on boys and reading and their attitudes, Cavazos-Kottke agrees, stating that the types of texts that boys enjoy reading are typically not present in their classrooms and teachers tend to not give a second look to the reading materials boys enjoy.

There are different reasons as to why boys read less. Some reasons, such as not having access to books that interest them, are mentioned above. Another reason is that boys do not have as many role models to look up to when it comes to reading. According to Spence (In Press), children need to see people they admire reading so that they can relate to those individuals. Many people who are seen reading are women and children. Boys need to see more men reading so they can make the connection between themselves reading and their male role models reading. Horton (2005) agrees with Spence. She believes that boys need male role models and suggests that boys need to see male teachers, fathers, and other older male role models reading to encourage boys to read.
Jones and Cartwright-Fiorelli (2003) state that this lack of male role models tends to encourage boys in thinking that reading is a feminine activity. Lingo (2007) agrees with this. She discusses how after interviewing many different boys on their reading habits, she found most boys find reading to be a feminine activity because they do not see male role models reading; they only see females reading and females were typically the people who taught them to read. Reading is not a feminine activity, but because teachers do not tend to include books that are interesting to boys or show male role models reading, boys get this impression and belief of reading as a feminine activity.

Many school environments that are already established encourage girls to be lifelong readers. Books are provided, female role models are seen, and activities take place to improve girls’ reading skills and encourage them to become lifelong readers. This is not to say that every girl becomes a lifelong reader or is good at reading, but an environment that supports this is already established. Boys on the other hand do not have the same type of encouraging environment available. By completing this study about boys, it is hoped to shed more light and information on why boys need an environment that encourages them to read and how becoming a lifelong reader can help them in their future education.

Reading and Its Effect on Achievement

The amount of time that a person spends reading appears to be related to a person’s academic achievement in not only reading, but other content areas as well (Topping, Samuels, & Paul, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Wigfield and Guthrie suggest that the amount students read greatly influences their academic achievement and contribution to the world in which they live. Their study involved 105 fourth and fifth
graders from different socio-economic backgrounds and races/ethnicities. They studied children’s reading motivations and how these motivations related to the amount of time they spent reading. Wigfield and Guthrie found that the amount of time spent reading is influenced by a child’s motivation to read. The more motivated a child is the more that child reads (Wigfield & Guthrie). They also discussed how students are able to make more connections to the content they are discussing in class or with others in their lives, which helps them to be able to achieve greater success than they would have been able to without reading. Since reading is a part of every content area, this statement makes sense.

Research has been conducted regarding the amount of time a person spends reading and that person’s academic achievement. In a study by Guthrie, Schafer, Secker, and Alban (2000) this was shown to be true. This study was done in the state of Maryland and 33 schools participated in the study; all of the schools were middle income, suburban schools (Guthrie et al.). They found that the amount of time spent reading positively influences a person’s academic achievement when using books and literature for academic and pleasure reading, as compared to basal stories. This is shown by the positive beta weights of .461 and .204 that were associated with book use/integration and achievement, and the negative beta weights of -.340 and -.222 that were associated with basal series/direct instruction and achievement (Guthrie et al., p. 220). Also, when integrating reading with other content areas, higher scores were found on achievement tests in both reading and the other subject area (Guthrie et al.).

Gaddy (1986) agrees with Guthrie, Schafer, Secker, and Alban (2000). He did a study on achievement and its effect on television viewing and reading and its effect on achievement. What he found was that reading for pleasure had a positive effect on
achievement. A positive correlation of .266 was found between reading for pleasure and vocabulary achievement and a positive correlation of .269 was found between reading for pleasure and reading achievement. Negative correlations were found between television viewing and vocabulary and reading achievement. He also found that achievement had a positive effect on reading for pleasure, which indicates that the relationship is reciprocal. Reading for pleasure positively affects achievement and achievement positively affects reading for pleasure (Gaddy, p. 353). This supports the notion that time spent reading will positively affect a student’s reading and academic achievement. Topping, Samuels, and Paul (2007) also support this thought. They discuss how many different studies have found that the more time spent reading the higher a student’s achievement is in reading and academically overall. They state that not all of the studies have this relationship as a cause and effect relationship, but some sort of correlation between the two items has been found many times.

To summarize, the amount of reading done by a student can greatly affect his or her reading and academic achievement. This can be done through simply reading or through having parents listen to their children read aloud; either way the child is reading. By reading for pleasure, students are able to contribute more to their school work and to society, therefore achieving more academically. This shows the importance of being a lifelong reader. Reading helps one to contribute to society, no matter who they are or where they were raised (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). If boys are not reading a lot, which is shown by research (Hall & Coles, 2001), then they will not typically be achieving as much as girls. This will in turn widen the achievement gap that already exists between girls’ reading achievement scores and boys’ reading achievement scores.
Correlations between Reading Skills

Although no studies have been conducted regarding reading for enjoyment as a young child and the grades received in college, studies have been conducted concerning correlations between reading skills. Research has shown that by assessing certain skills at one point in a person’s life, one is able to predict how that skill will be affected later in the person’s life depending on the assessment results. For example, according to Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2008) early vocabulary can be a great predictor of a person’s reading comprehension later in life. By assessing a student’s vocabulary knowledge at an early age, one will be able to predict that student’s level of comprehension up to more than 10 years later (Beck et al.).

Besides vocabulary predicting comprehension, studies have found that early measures of phonological awareness and rapid naming can predict the amount of growth a student will have in reading achievement (Catts, Fey, Zhang, & Tomblin, 1999). Catts, Fey, Zhang, and Tomblin conducted a study on the relationship between phonological processing and reading development. They were looking to determine whether there were deficits in phonological processing in kindergarten for poor second grade readers and also, if phonological processes and oral language abilities predicted reading achievement in second grade (Catts et al.). What they found was that poor readers had a 56% deficit in phonological awareness and a 44.7% deficit in rapid naming compared to good readers who’s deficits were only 16.6% and 9.2 respectively. Catts et al. also found a correlation of .58 between phonological awareness in kindergarten and reading comprehension in second grade and a correlation of .48 between rapid naming and reading achievement in second grade (p. 352). This shows that there are correlations between phonological
awareness and rapid naming and later reading achievement. This knowledge is useful when planning instruction for students. Knowing what concepts to work on to help a student achieve the greatest amount of success that he or she can is an important part of education.

Similarly, a study done by Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) states that early reading acquisition can be a predictor of reading comprehension in the eleventh grade. A battery of reading assessments was given to a group of first graders and followed up 10 years later in this study when the students were in the eleventh grade. Cunningham and Stanovich found that a student’s reading ability in first grade was a powerful predictor of the same student’s reading comprehension and abilities in the eleventh grade. For example, the correlation between two comprehension test scores, one given in first grade and one given in eleventh grade, was found to be .58 which is a strong positive correlation (Cunningham & Stanovich). This positive correlation shows the relationship that exists between a student’s first grade reading abilities and his or her eleventh grade reading abilities. The authors stated that this early acquisition can lead to the development of a lifelong reader, which is the goal of every student in school, even if the student’s comprehension level is not as high as it could be.

Another correlation found among reading skills is that of the ability to decode and understand print as predictors of academic achievement (Dieterich, Assel, Swank, Smith, & Landry, 2006). This makes sense, since every area of academics requires being able to read, and reading comes from being able to decode the words in a text and understanding what those words mean. Aarnoutse and van Leeuwe (1998) conducted another study over reading pleasure, frequency, comprehension, and vocabulary and whether or not these
areas could be predicted later in a person’s life and the influence that each area had on the
other areas. Twenty-one schools, from seven different communities, and 562 students
participated in the study that took place in The Netherlands (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwe).
The students were followed from grades one through six, from the years 1989 through
1995 (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwe). The students were given sets of tests three times a year,
including attitude assessments, vocabulary assessments, and reading comprehension
assessments; a different assessment was used each time so that the same assessment was
not given three times a year (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwe). The data from grade one were
not included in the study because the attitude assessment does not give accurate results in
first grade according to Aarnoutse and van Leeuwe. What they found was that each area
could be predicted later in a person’s life by a prior assessment of that area. This means
that if a child is assessed in the area of reading comprehension in second grade, then the
score that is gained from this assessment will be able to predict the same child’s score on
a reading comprehension assessment in a later grade. Comprehension and vocabulary had
better predictions than reading pleasure and frequency, but all four areas were able to be
predicted (Aarnoutse & van Leeuwe). These findings correlated well with other studies
done regarding comprehension and vocabulary, like the ones discussed above.

The fact that different areas of reading and achievement can be predicted by
assessing areas early on in a person’s life leads to the hypothesis that grades in college
and reading for enjoyment as a child are related. Vocabulary, comprehension, and
achievement can all be predicted through earlier assessments, and so grades in college
(achievement) may very well be related to reading for pleasure as a child. Using this
research as background, this study could be the beginning of new research regarding boys
and how to help them achieve as much as they possibly can later in their lives. If a positive correlation is found, then it would be one more correlation in reading that could be added to the above correlations that research has already found.

Motivation and Reading

Motivation is something that is used everyday by people to accomplish tasks. There are different theories of motivation in existence today, most of which have the same general idea. One theory of motivation is Ford’s (1992), which is mentioned by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996). This theory states that students will be motivated to complete a task if they feel that the task holds value and that they can accomplish the task. Stated simply, if the student is interested in the task and finds it important and thinks he or she can complete the task, and the student will be motivated to carry out the task. Another theory of motivation, which is very similar to Ford’s, is Eccles’ (1983) “expectancy-value” theory of motivation. This theory states that if students believe that they can do well at a task, and the task is important to them, then they will be motivated to complete the task. According to either theory students are motivated to complete tasks if they find the tasks high in value and feel that they can succeed in completing the task.

In regards to reading, motivation is an important part that is often overlooked by educators (Lever-Chain, 2008). This is shocking considering motivation is also shown to have a correlation with achievement (Lever-Chain). What happens then if students are not motivated to read? They may end up not doing as well academically. Engaging in reading is a choice made by students, and if students are not motivated to read then they will not engage in reading (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Beyond
being motivated to simply read, students must also be motivated to comprehend what they are reading. “Constructing meaning during reading is a motivated act” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999, p. 199). This is why motivation is so important to reading. If children are not motivated to read then not only will they not read, but even if they are forced to read they will not comprehend what they are reading.

Many different actions can be taken to help children become motivated to read. These include offering students choice in what they read, having students collaborate with each other, and having activities that challenge students appropriately (Turner & Paris, 1995). Turner and Paris found that out of the three ideas mentioned above, choice is the most powerful motivator. By giving students choice in what they read, they are more likely to actually read and read more than what is required of them (Turner & Paris). According to the research stated earlier about boys, boys do not have the chance to read a lot of the types of materials that they enjoy reading (Carnell, 2005; Cavazos-Kottke, 2006; McNeil, 1964). This is affecting their motivation. When boys are not given a choice of what to read, or can only choose books that do not interest them, their motivation to read is affected.

Many students state that choice is the most important motivator when it comes to reading, which aligns with Turner’s and Paris’ (1995) research. In a study by Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) this was found to be true. They interviewed students in a school in the Midwestern United States and asked them what motivated them to read. Choice was among the top three items that encouraged the students to read (Edmunds & Bauserman). Personal interest and the information they learned from the book were the other top items
chosen by the students. This study is one more indicator on how important choice is to motivation.

Research shows that girls have more positive attitudes towards reading and more motivation to read (McKenna, 1994). This could stem from the fact that the books provided in classrooms are better suited for girls than boys, which gives girls more choice when reading (McNeil, 1964). This same type of choice needs to be given to boys to motivate them to read. By giving boys choices in what they read they are being encouraged to read for pleasure, which encourages them to be lifelong readers.

Motivation is important in encouraging boys to read. To understand motivation and be able to start motivating boys to read, one needs to understand the theories behind motivation. Most theories state that if individuals find the task at hand important and believe that they will be successful in completing the task, then they will be more motivated to complete the task (Eccles, 1983; Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996). Using this information, one can begin to find ways to motivate boys to read. Boys need to believe that they can read what they are given and that what they are being given to read is of value to them. They should be given choice in what they read and challenged appropriately in the classroom to motivate them further (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Turner & Paris, 1995). Books in the classroom should appeal to boys as well as to girls (Turner & Paris). Letting boys choose reading materials, and having books that appeal to them, will motivate boys to read more. Through motivation and encouragement, boys can become lifelong readers which can lead to great achievement for them in both reading and academics overall.
Summary

Research as far back as 1930 has shown that boys struggle when it comes to reading (Holbrook, 1988). They continuously score lower than girls on achievement tests and this gap continues to widen with age. Different reasons are thought to be the cause of this gap. They range from the culture and environment that boys are brought up in to differences in the wiring of boys’ brains compared to girls’ brains (Holbrook; Spence, In Press). Research has also shown that boys tend to read less than girls. One reason behind this is the fact that classrooms are often known as “feminine environments,” because the types of books that classrooms typically have are books that interest girls and not boys, and reading is known as a “feminine activity.” This could be a factor of boys seeing females reading often, but rarely seeing older, male role models reading (Spence). The point being that boys are not reading as much as girls and this is causing a gap in the achievement scores of girls and boys.

Reading is linked to achievement in and out of school. This does not bode well for boys, considering they do not typically read a lot. This lack of reading could be due to lack of motivation to read. Boys need to be given choice in what they read to encourage them to read for pleasure and become lifelong readers (Turner & Paris, 1995). They need to become lifelong readers, because research shows that reading is correlated with achievement (Lever-Chain, 2008). Students who read a lot are typically able to participate more in their classes and society according to Wigfield and Guthrie (1997). Using this research as background information, the purpose of this study was to determine whether a correlation exists between boys who read for enjoyment when they were younger and the grades they receive sophomore, junior, or senior year of college. It
is believed that a correlation may exist based off research showing that other areas of reading can predict later achievement in reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997).
CHAPTER III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Chapter three outlines the methods and procedures that were used to carry out this study. It includes the research design, participants, and the methods and materials used. This chapter also describes the procedures that were used, what data were collected, and how the data were analyzed. The purpose of this study was to determine whether there was a correlation between boys reading for enjoyment in their youth and the grades they received sophomore, junior or senior year of college and if they believed that reading for enjoyment as a child had helped them in their schooling.

The first main research question examined by this study was: Is there a relationship between boys’ self-reported reading behaviors when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? This first main research question was followed, and answered, by two sub questions: (1) What is the nature of the relationship between how many days a week boys read when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? and (2) When these participants read, what genres of books were they reading and what method of reading (independently, with someone else, or a combination of the two) were they using? The second main question that was answered through the surveys was: How do participants describe their perceived value of reading as a child and how has it or has it not helped them throughout their schooling? The information gained will hopefully help to aid in research of how to create a school-learning environment that promotes reading for boys and encourages boys to become lifelong readers.
Methods

Research Design

This study utilized a mixed methods approach implementing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. According to Mertler (2009), mixed-methods research usually provides a “better understanding of a research problem” because two kinds of data are being collected rather than a single kind of data (p. 11). Mixed-methods research uses both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research collects and uses descriptive data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). On the other hand, quantitative research uses numerical data in its collection and analysis. Both types of research are important in different ways. Qualitative data is important because it gives insight into a subject through a descriptive or narrative answer to questions asked. Quantitative data is important because it helps a researcher determine how variables relate to each other in a clear and analytical way.

Although both qualitative and quantitative research has advantages, they both have weaknesses as well. Through the use of mixed-methods research these weaknesses can be compensated for by the opposite type of research. For example, Kelle (2006) states that combining qualitative and quantitative research methods “…could help to practically overcome limitations and to solve problems of mono-method research…” (p. 307). By using qualitative and quantitative research together participants were able to expand upon their answers through the qualitative questions (Kelle). Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, and Creswell (2005) agree with Kelle. They discuss how mixed-methods research designs help one to gain a deeper understanding of the variables being studied.
A mixed-methods research design is the overall method that was used in this study. Specifically, a concurrent triangulation mixed-method research design was implemented. In this type of research design both qualitative and quantitative research questions are asked at the same time (Hanson, Creswell, Plano Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). Within concurrent triangulation, concurrent implementation was the exact data collection technique that the study used to examine data. In this type of research both quantitative and qualitative research are given equal priority instead of one method being of greater importance than the other, and the two data sets are collected/analyzed at the same time rather than sequentially (Hanson et al.).

Within quantitative research a correlational study was used. This type of study is used to examine whether or not a “statistical relationship exists between two or more variables” (Mertler, 2009, p. 83; Pyrczak, 2007). Once a statistical relationship is found to exist, one must determine the extent to which this relationship exists. There could be a negative or a positive correlation. Correlational studies are also usually used for evaluating events that have already happened. In the case of this study, the two variables are reading for enjoyment when younger and grades received in college. These attributes have already occurred, although the grades will continue to be obtained until graduation.

Participants

A total of 72 male sophomores (n=47), juniors (n=22), and seniors (n=3) in an introduction to communication studies course at a public university in Northern Ohio participated in this study. An introductory class was chosen because it is a good way to get a diverse group of males all at once. The participants were a representative group of the sophomore, junior, and senior male students at this university because all majors have
to take this introduction to communication studies course. All participants were in their sophomore, junior, or senior year of college. These years in college were chosen to give a good grasp on the grades being received. Freshman level boys were not used because they have been in college for less than a year and their GPA’s may not be an accurate representation of their actual academic abilities. Often people come to college and have a hard time the first year. This needed to be taken into account, but also have the grades be a good reflection of the participants themselves. Although sophomores, juniors, and seniors have to maintain a certain GPA to continue on, they were chosen overall because their GPA’s are probably a more accurate representation of their academic abilities and will yield more accurate results for the study.

*Instrumentation*

A brief survey of reading perceptions in one’s youth was used in this study. For a copy of this survey, see Appendix A. The survey was eight questions long and contained quantitative and qualitative questions. Closed responses were used for the quantitative questions and some of the qualitative questions, meaning that answers were supplied and the participants chose from the choices provided. On the other hand, some of the qualitative questions were open response, meaning that the participants supplied their own answers to the questions. The survey was anonymous and consisted of five multiple choice questions and three short-answer questions. There were two demographic questions on the survey: one asked the participants their gender and the other asked the participants their year in school.
Procedures

Contact was made with the course director of the introduction to communication studies course. The course director was asked if a survey could be given to some of his communication studies introduction courses for a master’s thesis paper. Once approval was given from the course director, the specific instructors for the introductory courses were contacted to receive approval for giving the survey to their class members. After approval was given, the administrator met with the classes to explain the survey to the students. It was explained that the survey was anonymous and would be given in one sitting. Participants were told that it would be a great help if they would complete the survey and that it would only take 10 minutes or less to complete. The participants were also told that they did not have to fill out the survey; the survey was completely optional and choosing not to participate would in no way impact their standing in the class. Each participant was given a copy of the survey with two consent letters attached to the front. The participants were told to detach one consent letter and keep it for their own record. They were then told to fill out the other consent letter and the survey if they were willing to participate. It was mentioned to the participants that they had to be at least 18 years of age to give their own consent and to fill out the survey and that they did not have to complete the survey. They were told that they had to fill out the consent form to be able to complete the survey. After the survey was completed it was given back to the administrator and the consent form was detached from the survey so that the data was anonymous.
Data Collection

The data that were collected were from the survey given to the sophomores, juniors, and seniors in the introduction to communication studies classes. It consisted of information about the participants’ current college cumulative GPAs (as in their overall college GPA), their current year in school, how many days a week the participants read as young children, the types of books they read, if they read independently, with someone else, or a combination of the two, if they felt that reading for enjoyment as a child helped them throughout their schooling, and if they still read for enjoyment today. For the first three questions and two of the end questions, closed responses were provided, whereas the other three qualitative questions were left as open response questions so that participants could provide their own responses.

Data Analysis

Quantitative Data Analysis

Survey data were analyzed in a couple of different ways. Some of the questions were analyzed through quantitative methods as the goal was to determine if a correlation existed between the two variables. StatCrunch was used for all quantitative analysis. Whether or not a correlation existed was determined and if one did, it was determined whether it was a positive or negative correlation.

A Pearson correlation was used for this study. This type of correlation is used to measure the degree and direction of the linear relationship between two variables. Since this study hypothesized that as reading for enjoyment as a child increases a person’s GPA will increase, this was a good correlation test to use. Since this study is using a Pearson correlation there are three main assumptions to take into account. The first is that there is
a linear relationship between the two variables. Although this is what one wants to see, it
does not mean that an actual linear relationship exists. To check this assumption a scatter
plot is used. By looking at the scatter plot one can tell if the majority of the points fall
along the line provided. If they do, then a linear correlation exists between the two
variables; if they do not then no correlation is present. The closer the data points are to
forming a straight line the stronger the relationship between variables, the further the data
points are from forming a straight line the weaker the relationship between variables.

The second assumption is that both variables are normally distributed. To check if
both variables are normally distributed one can look at a histogram of each variable. If a
variable is normally distributed then a bell curve will appear on the chart. There should
be no skewness or kurtosis. This means that the data forms the shape of a bell curve and
does not have a majority of the points on one side of the curve or the other for appropriate
skewness. Acceptable kurtosis would not be too high or low in the center of the
distribution. If the data are not normally distributed for each variable it will be difficult
for a Pearson correlation to detect a relationship between the two variables. The final
assumption in a Pearson correlation is that there is a continuous measurement of both
variables. This means that both variables have to be quantitative variables for there to be
a continuous measurement of the variables. Again, if this is not met then a Pearson
correlation would be the wrong statistical test to use in detecting the relationship between
the two variables.

When discussing the degree of a Pearson correlation the $r$ statistic is used. The $r$
statistic ranges from negative one to positive one. An $r$ statistic of zero means that no
relationship exists between the two variables. If the $r$ statistic is between zero and
negative one that indicates a negative correlation, which means that as one variable increases the other decreases. On the other hand, if the $r$ statistic is between zero and positive one a positive correlation exists, which means that as one variable increases so does the other.

Besides determining whether the correlation is positive or negative, how strong the correlation is can be determined as well. Regardless of the sign (positive or negative), if the $r$ statistic is between zero and .39 then a weak correlation exists. A number between .4 and .59 indicates a fair correlation, .6 through .79 indicates a strong correlation, and any number between .8 and one 1.0, indicates a very strong correlation. Any number other than zero means a correlation exists, but a number between .6 and 1.0 is better because that means the correlation between the two variables is strong or very strong.

*Qualitative Data Analysis*

For some of the qualitative questions, descriptive analysis was used where the data were divided into common answers and the frequency of participants who picked that answer was tabulated. In the case of other questions, the qualitative answers were read and divided into yes or no columns first. Then a content analysis and coding were used to find common themes among the answers given. Content analysis refers to a technique used to condense a large amount of text into a few categories through the use of coding (Stemler, 2001). For this study, the specific coding used was emergent coding. Emergent coding is used when “categories are established following some preliminary examination of the data” (Stemler, p. 3). In this study, the responses were first put into two categories: yes answers and no answers. Then the explanations to the answers were read and more categories were created based on common themes that emerged
throughout the different answers. For example, if a participant said that he felt that reading for enjoyment as a young child helped him in school because he could make connections to other material, then *connections* would become a theme to look at in the other answers given by participants who answered yes to the final question. As the data were analyzed, the researcher ended up combining multiple codes together to obtain the most accurate and simple results.

Summary

To complete this study a few items needed to be accomplished. The male sophomores, juniors, and seniors (*n=72*) from an introduction to communication studies course at a university in Northern Ohio were surveyed about their reading habits when they were younger and if they believed that reading for enjoyment when they were younger helped them succeed in school. Their current cumulative college GPAs were also assessed via the paper survey. A mixed-methods research design was used since both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed. A Pearson correlation was used to analyze the relationship between the data.
CHAPTER IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Chapter four provides the results of the data from the study and is divided by research question. Under each research question the data analyzed are presented and the results are discussed briefly. In review, the main research question to be examined was: Is there a relationship between boys’ self-reported reading behaviors when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? Following this question were two sub questions: (1) What is the nature of the relationship between how many days a week boys read when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? and (2) When these participants read, what genres of books were they reading and what method of reading (independently, with someone else, or a combination of the two) were they using? A second main question that was examined was: How do participants describe their perceived value of reading as a child and how has it or has it not helped them throughout their schooling?

Data Analysis

Main Research Question Number One

Since a Pearson correlation was used in this study, the assumptions of a Pearson correlation were checked. Both variables were skewed; the number of days read per week was positively skewed and the GPAs were negatively skewed. The skewness for each variable can be seen in the Figure 1 histogram and the Figure 2 histogram. There was no problem with the kurtosis of the variables. Linearity was assessed by examining the scatter plot in Figure 3, which did not indicate a curvilinear relationship; both variables
were quantitatively measured. Therefore, the Pearson correlation was appropriate for use in this study.

Figure 1

*Histogram of Days Read Per Week*  (n=72)

Figure 2

*Histogram of GPAs*  (n=72)
The first main research question was: Is there a relationship between boys’ self-reported reading behaviors when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? This research question is answered through two sub questions.

*Sub Question Number One*

The first sub question was: What is the nature of the relationship between how many days a week boys read when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? No correlation, positive or negative, was found between the number of days boys read for enjoyment as young children and their academic performance in college. The independent variable was the number of days participants read when younger and the dependent variable was the participants’ college GPAs.

GPAs of the participants ranged from a 1.3 to a 4.0 GPA, on a scale of 4.0. The mean GPA was 2.6: the standard deviation was .53, and the median GPA was 2.8. Of these 72 participants, 11 did not read when younger which means that 61 of the participants read for enjoyment at least one day or more a week as a young child. The mean number of days read as a child was 2.38: the standard deviation was 1.78, and the median was two days. Table 1 shows the number of days read in a week as a young child and the number of participants who read that number of days.
Table 1

Number of Days Read Each Week by Participants ($n=72$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Days Read</th>
<th>Percent and Frequency of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>15% ($n=11$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>21% ($n=15$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>20% ($n=14$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>21% ($n=15$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11% ($n=8$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8% ($n=6$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0% ($n=0$)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>4% ($n=3$)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After analyzing the data, the $r$ statistic was found. The $r$ statistic for the Pearson correlation came out to .0818. According to standard guidelines for a Pearson correlation, an $r$ statistic between zero and .39 is a weak correlation. Although .0818 is considered a weak correlation, it is so close to zero that it is essentially negligible meaning virtually no relationship existed between the two variables. Consequently, the answer to research question number was that no correlation existed between boys’ self-reported reading habits as children and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior college. Also, there was no linear relationship between the variables and so no Pearson correlation can or does exist. The scatter plot, Figure 3, shows the graphed data with a best-fit linear line.
As Figure 3 shows, there is no linear relationship between the variables. If a linear relationship existed then the points would all be along a single line on the scatter plot. This scatter plot also shows how the data are skewed. There are many more dots on the left side of the graph than on the right side; there is no even distribution or bell curve. In a Pearson correlation, a bell curve is needed to make sure that all variables are distributed normally. As the scatter plot shows, this is not the case, which explains why no correlation was found between the two variables of days read per week and college GPA. In conclusion, the answer to sub question number one is that no relationship exists between the number of days a week boys read when they were younger and their
academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college, which means that there is no correlation type.

Sub Question Number Two

When these participants read, what genres of books were they reading and what method of reading (independently, with someone else, or a combination of the two) were they using? This was the second sub question in this study. Only data from participants who read at least one day a week or more were analyzed for this question (n=61). The top genre of book read by the participants was fictional books containing adventure as a main theme, with 72% of the participants ranking this genre of book in their top three books read most often as a young child. Second behind adventure were fictional mysteries, with 62% of participants ranking this genre in their top three books read most often as a child. The third ranking book genre was fantasy/science fiction. This genre accounted for 52% of the books that participants ranked in their top three books read most often as a child. Table 2 shows each genre of book listed on the survey and the percent of participants who ranked this book genre in their top three book types read most often as a child.

As Table 2 shows, of the 61 participants who read at least one day a week, most said that their preferred method of reading was a combination of both independent reading and reading with someone else; in fact, 48% of the participants marked this answer on their survey. The thought behind this question originally was that children read with their parents sometimes and sometimes read alone. Whether or not participants took the answer with this meaning is not known. They may have thought it meant reading with a group of students or a partner in school. This could account for the high number of
participants who chose this answer. Although, participants may have read with parents, and alone, as was the original thought behind this answer.

Table 2

Book Genres Read Ranked From Most to Least ($n=61$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Genre</th>
<th>Percent and Frequency of Participants</th>
<th>Ranking Genre in Their Top 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adventure (Fiction)</td>
<td>72% ($n=44$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysteries (Fiction)</td>
<td>62% ($n=38$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fantasy/Science Fiction (Fiction)</td>
<td>52% ($n=32$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports (Fiction)</td>
<td>50% ($n=31$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>45% ($n=28$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comics (Fiction)</td>
<td>40% ($n=25$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventure (Non-Fiction)/Historical Texts</td>
<td>32% ($n=20$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographies/Autobiographies (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>28% ($n=17$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational Texts (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>25% ($n=15$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysteries (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>23% ($n=14$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Texts (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>13% ($n=8$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Help Books (Non-Fiction)</td>
<td>12% ($n=7$)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Right behind the combination method of reading was independent reading with 35% of the participants ranking this as their preferred method of reading as a child. Only 17% of the participants ranked reading with someone else as their preferred method of reading as a young child. The specific answer to the second sub question is that
adventure, mystery, and fantasy/science fiction book genres (all fiction) were read most often by boys as children and those young boys typically prefer to read independently or a combination of both independently and with someone else.

Main Research Question Number Two

The second main research question of this study was: How do participants describe their perceived value of reading as a child and how has it or has it not helped them throughout their schooling? This question dealt with whether or not students believed reading for enjoyment as a child helped them throughout their schooling (elementary years through college) and why they thought that it did help them or why they did not believe reading for enjoyment helped them in their schooling. Participants were also asked if they still read for enjoyment now and why or why not. This information was used to draw conclusions about the students who did believe that reading had helped them throughout their schooling and if they continued with this habit now.

Of the subgroup of participants who indicated that they had read for enjoyment as a child, slightly over 80% (n=49) of the participants believed that reading for enjoyment had helped them throughout their school years in some way. Only 12 participants (of the ones who did read as children), just under 20%, believed that reading for enjoyment as a child had not helped them throughout their school years. Some common themes among the 12 participants who did not believe that reading had helped them were: (1) They had stopped reading at some point so they were not sure if it would have helped them in school (n=4, 33%); (2) They did not believe that they learned as well from reading as they do from visuals (n=2, 17%); (3) They did not like to read (n=3, 25%), and (4) They believe if they had read more often for enjoyment as a child then their grades in college
would be better \((n=3, 25\%)\). So, even though some participants did not believe reading as a child had helped, they did believe that if they had read more it would have helped them in college. Table 3 lists the common themes found among the participants’ answers for those who did believe that reading for enjoyment as a child had helped them throughout their schooling. It should be noted that some participants did write more than one reason on their survey as to why they believed reading for pleasure as a child helped them in their schooling. Also, themes were combined into five different categories, which were created after looking at the common themes given by participants.

Table 3
Participants’ Common Themes for Why Reading Helped in Their Schooling \((n=49)\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Themes</th>
<th>Number of Participants Who Had This Theme Listed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Skills (reading basics, speed, and comprehension)</td>
<td>(n=55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Skills (vocabulary acquisition, speaking, and writing)</td>
<td>(n=41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking Skills (different thinking/critical thinking)</td>
<td>(n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Skills (content knowledge and focus)</td>
<td>(n=33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Skills (broaden horizons, creativity, independence)</td>
<td>(n=13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Numbers do not add up to 49 since participants could write more than one theme.
According to Table 3, the two most common themes were (1) Reading Skills and (2) Communication Skills. As Table 3 shows, the majority of participants did believe that reading for enjoyment helped them throughout their schooling. They believed that not only had it helped with comprehension and vocabulary, but it also taught them to think critically, write better, speak better, broadened their horizons, helped them to learn the basics of reading, and helped them with learning content knowledge among other reasons. Participants believed ($n=55$) that they comprehend material they read better because of the reading they did as children. They also believed their vocabulary knowledge and content knowledge increased through reading for enjoyment as children because they learned about different ideas that they may not have come in contact with otherwise.

The two results that were most interesting were that two participants believed that reading as a child had helped them to be creative in their schoolwork and one believed he gained independence through reading for enjoyment as a child. He believed that he was more able to learn about things independently now because of the reading he did as a child; he does not depend on someone else to teach him about new ideas and concepts. In conclusion, the answer to the second main research question was that the majority of participants who read when they were younger did feel that it has helped them throughout their schooling with comprehension, vocabulary, content knowledge, speaking, writing, broadening their horizons about different topics, and learning the basics skills of reading among other reasons given.

Of the 49 participants who stated that they believed that reading for enjoyment as a child had helped them throughout their schooling, 24 (49%) of them stated that they
still read for enjoyment now and 25 (51%) said that they do not read for enjoyment now. Twenty-three of the 24 participants said that they read for enjoyment still today because they enjoy it, it relaxes them, and/or it helps them to expand their knowledge base. Only one participant did not put an explanation down as to why he still reads today. As for the 25 students who said they do not read for enjoyment anymore, six (24%) stated it was because they do not enjoy reading; two (8%) said they would like to but have not had a chance lately to do so; 14 (56%) participants said that they have no time to read for enjoyment since they are in school right now, and three (12%) said they have no energy to read anything else after doing their reading for classes. So, around half of the participants who believe reading has helped them still read today while the other half do not, but most believe that they just do not have the time or energy to read for enjoyment because of being in school.

Summary

In summary, there was no correlation, or relationship, found for the first research question which was: Is there a relationship between boys’ self-reported reading behaviors when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? No relationship was found between the two variables of days read per week and college GPA. The majority of boys who read for enjoyment at least one day a week or more as a child did read either independently or a combination of both independently and with someone else. These same participants also read mainly adventure books, mystery books, and fantasy/science fiction books.

As for the final research question, the majority of boys who read for enjoyment as a child did believe that it had helped them throughout their schooling with
comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, speaking, writing, broadening their horizons, and other reasons. Of the participants who believed that reading for pleasure as a child had helped them throughout their school years, about half of them still read today because they enjoy reading, believe that it helps them expand their knowledge base, and it relaxes them. The other half believe, for the most part, that they did not have the time or energy to read for enjoyment because they are in school now and are very busy with homework and classes. In conclusion, although no correlation was found between reading for enjoyment as a child and college GPA, many participants believed they were more successful and had better grades in college because they read for enjoyment as a child, and some still today.
CHAPTER V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter five is the final chapter of this thesis. This chapter contains a review of the problem, a summary of the study that was completed and how it was completed, a summary of the results that were found once the study was completed, and conclusions and recommendations. To review, the main research question that this study examined was: Is there a relationship between boys’ self-reported reading behaviors when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? The two sub questions following this question were: (1) What is the nature of the relationship between how many days a week boys read when they were younger and their academic performance sophomore, junior, or senior year of college? and (2) When these participants read, what genres of books were they reading and what method of reading (independently, with someone else, or a combination of the two) were they using? A second main question that was examined was: How do participants describe their perceived value of reading as a child and how has it or has it not helped them throughout their schooling?

Summary of Study

Reading is an important part of peoples’ lives. Almost anything that is done throughout one’s life requires a person be able to read at some level. This study focused on reading for enjoyment as a child and its relationship with academic performance later in life. Research has shown that males are a struggling population for some time now and that there is a gap between their reading achievement scores and those of females (Gates, 1961; Holbrook, 1988; Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007). Other correlations between different aspects of reading have been studied, but none have studied the exact
relationship between boys who read for enjoyment as children and their college GPAs. It was hoped through this study that the information gained would serve as a catalyst for creating a learning environment in schools that encourages boys to read and to become lifelong readers. Through reading for enjoyment as children, new concepts and ideas could be learned and integrated into existing schemas or used to better understand a new concept.

Throughout chapter two, literature related to the topics being researched and studied was reviewed. Included was research regarding boys and their struggles in reading, reading and its effect on achievement, correlations between different reading skills, and motivation and its relationship with reading. Boys have been regarded as a struggling population when it comes to reading as far back as the 1930s (Holbrook, 1988). There are a couple of different reasons behind this. Some say that reading is shown as a feminine environment and so boys do not read. Others believe that there are hard-wired differences between the brains of boys and girls, and some state that cultural and environmental differences are the causes behind this achievement gap between boys and girls (Holbrook, 1988; Spence, In Press). Whatever the reasons may be, boys are struggling more than girls when it comes to reading. They read less than girls and receive lower scores on reading assessments.

When it comes to reading, boys tend to like different kinds of books than girls like. Boys tend to like mysteries, adventure books, non-fiction books, and humorous books (Cavazos-Kottke, 2005; Lingo, 2007). Boys need a choice in what they read in classrooms to encourage them to become lifelong readers (Turner & Paris, 1995). They need the types of books listed above available in the classroom so that they will read
more. Reading is shown to be linked to achievement in both academics and life itself (Lever-Chain, 2008). With this link known, it is important to get boys to read as much as possible. Along with the link between reading and achievement in general, the assessment of certain reading skills has also been found to predict what those same skills will be like later in a person’s life. For example, Cunningham and Stanovich (1997) conducted a study and found that early reading can predict reading comprehension in high school. Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2008) also found that reading comprehension can be predicted later in life but through early vocabulary instead of early reading. Both of these correlations, along with many others, show how reading or reading skills can predict other reading skills later in life.

Finally, literature about motivation and reading was reviewed in chapter two. Motivation is very important in not only reading, but in education in general. Two theories of motivation were discussed in chapter two and they are both very similar. One was Ford’s (1992) and the other was Eccles’ (1983). Both basically state that if students feel that they can succeed at completing a task and feel that the task is important, or holds value to them, then they will be more motivated to complete that task. This is true when it comes to reading. Boys need to be motivated to read to get them to read. One way o motivate boys to read is through giving them choices in what they read. This element of choice fosters a positive attitude towards reading which encourages boys to become lifelong readers.

After reviewing the related literature, the present study was conducted. A survey with eight quantitative and qualitative questions was developed and administered to sophomore, junior, and senior males in an introduction to communication studies course
at a university in Northern Ohio. The course director for these classes was contacted and gave permission, which then led to contacting individual class instructors. Then the survey was given during a class session with a quick introduction before the survey was administered. Once the surveys were completed, the data were analyzed using a mixed methods research design. A Pearson correlation was used to determine if a relationship existed between the number of days the participants read for enjoyment as children and their GPA in college. Other data were analyzed qualitatively and used for descriptive purposes. Content analysis and emergent coding were used when analyzing some of the qualitative data.

Conclusions

No correlation was found between the number of days read per week as a child and college GPA. There are a few reasons why no correlation may have been found. One is that only 72 participants were used for the study. The small sample size was due to time constraints, but in statistics a bigger sample size may have been more representative of the population as a whole. A second reason is that only one university was used in the study. A university in Northern Ohio was used and although a diverse group of participants was used, they do all have two things in common. All of the participants attend the same university and they all take at least one class that is the same. Another reason why no correlation may have been found is that the participants may not have provided the most accurate information possible on their surveys. Since the answers received were only what the participants write down and no further questioning is used with the participants they may not have put down the correct information for a number of reasons. One reason is that they may not have remembered the exact number of days they
read or their exact cumulative GPA. They may have been close to the real number, but
not exact. For example, maybe someone actually read four days a week but they indicated
three and their GPA is a 2.9 and they reported a 2.8. Any slight mishaps like those listed
will affect the results gained from the study, resulting in measurement error. Another
reason they may have put the wrong information is that they simply did not want to report
the correct information. Even though the survey was confidential and anonymous, the
participants may have felt that they should indicate a higher GPA than they actually have
or a different amount of days read than they actually did if they thought it was socially
desirable. There is no way to be a 100% sure that all of the answers written down on the
surveys are 100% correct, which is a limitation of any study.

For the second sub question, it was determined that boys do read adventure books
(fiction), mysteries (fiction), and fantasy/science fiction for the most part, followed by
sports books (fiction and non-fiction), comics (fiction), and adventure books and
historical texts (both non-fiction). They also enjoyed reading both independently and with
someone else when they read as young children. This information gives way to a couple
of conclusions. One is that the research that has been conducted in the past with regards
to this topic has been supported and has obtained realistic results (Cavazos-Kottke, 2005;
Farris, Werderich, Nelson, & Fuhler, 2009; Jones & Cartwright-Fiorelli, 2003; Merisuo-
Storm, 2006). Another conclusion is that boys enjoy reading these genres of books
because they are very curious and interested in finding out new information. Mysteries
and adventure books fit with both of these qualities, as do historical texts. Boys also like
humorous texts, which is why comics were a common genre in the top three picks of
many of the participants.
The participants also stated that the typical reading method they used was a combination of reading independently and with someone else. This seems to fit with most children. Most children like to read independently or with others depending on how comfortable they feel reading or on the genre of book they are reading. For example, some children may believe mysteries would be more of an independent read but comics would be shared with someone else. Children like to read independently, as the survey indicated, but it seems many also like to read with others sometimes, as the survey also indicated. Maybe this stems from parents being involved with their child’s education, like reading with them, or maybe the children simply enjoyed reading with parents, siblings, friends, or other family members. Whatever the case may be, the conclusion can be drawn that most of the participants read using a combination of both independent reading and reading with someone else, followed closely by only reading independently.

Most participants believed that reading for enjoyment as a child had helped them succeed throughout their schooling. They believed that it had helped them with their comprehension of what they read, their vocabulary acquisition, speaking, writing, broadening their horizons, critical thinking, and their content knowledge among with things. Of the participants who did not believe that reading for enjoyment had helped them as a child, some believed that if they had read more as a child they would have done better in college because it would have helped them.

This brings up the conclusion that even though no correlation was found, most participants do believe that there is some sort of relationship between their reading for enjoyment as a child and the grades they receive in college. Another conclusion that was gained from the results was that reading for enjoyment as a child has helped with
becoming an independent learner as one gets older. Although only one participant actually stated that he felt he gained in dependence through reading for enjoyment as a child, others stated that it helped them with their learning of content knowledge and to think critically. These types of answers lead to the conclusion that these participants became independent in learning new knowledge. The main goal of education is to let students become independent in their learning. Reading for enjoyment is one way in which to achieve this goal.

Taking into account all of the data that was obtained from this study, a couple of conclusions can be made. One is that although no correlation was found between reading for enjoyment as children and college grades, there is a good possibility that one actually does exist. Taking into the account the limitations stated above and the fact that the majority of the participants did feel that reading for pleasure as children did have some relationship with their college GPA, this conclusion makes sense. The relationship may not have been found, but it does not mean that it does not exist in some way. Participants who have a 2.9 GPA may only have that GPA because they read for enjoyment as a child. If they had not read for enjoyment as a child maybe their college GPA would only be a 2.7. Also, participants in this study were people who were in college. People who had not gone to college were not included in this study, which leaves out a portion of the population. Leaving this part of the population of the sample could have had an impact on the results obtained from the study. This can not be known for sure, but it does lend itself to the conclusion that a correlation between the two variables could exist given different circumstances or participants.
Another conclusion that can be made from the data presented is that boys do enjoy reading as children and even today, but maybe not the types of materials that are present in most classrooms. Boys tend to enjoy reading adventure books, mysteries, science fiction, sports, and comics, many of which are not found a lot of classrooms around the country (Carnell, 2005; McNeil, 1964). About half of the participants who believed that reading had helped them throughout their schooling stated that they still read today. Of the half who said they do not read today, many of them stated that they would like to or do not believe that they have time to read for enjoyment because of all of their schoolwork. This means that of those boys who did read for enjoyment when younger and were taught the joy of reading, about half of them still read today and the other half might if given more free time to do so. This aligns with the conclusion that when shown the joy of reading as children many will continue to read for pleasure throughout their lives and use the skills they learn in their schoolwork from elementary school through college.

Implications and Recommendations

Implications and Recommendations for Teachers

The results obtained from this study offer multiple implications for teachers even though a correlation was not actually found between the two variables. Motivation is a leading factor in the development of lifelong readers. If children are not motivated to read then they will not read. Reading for enjoyment has much to offer children, as research shows, and children should be encouraged to read for enjoyment (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Because of this, teachers also need to work on motivating students to read more for enjoyment and show children how much joy reading can bring a person. Reading for
enjoyment can teach children many skills that they will use later in their lives without even realizing they are learning these skills. A majority of the participants in this study who did read for pleasure as children stated that they did believe that reading as a child had helped them throughout their schooling. Although a relationship between the two variables was not found, the participants believed it did help them and so this must be addressed by teachers. However, throughout the responses to the survey, three categories seemed to emerge: the value of choice of genre, the value of connecting reading to real life, and the value of various groupings for reading.

*Choice of Genre*

One key implication of the research is that a choice of genre is important to male readers, and most likely to female readers as well. To be motivated to read and to become lifelong readers, people must be interested in what they are reading. If they are not interested in books then they will not read. This happens many times in high schools where teachers assign classic literature and the students are not interested in the literature, and so they do not read it. Therefore, a recommendation is that teachers need to make available multiple kinds of books in their classrooms for all children, not just boys, to choose from when reading. Many of the participants listed sports books, books about adventure, mysteries, comics, fantasy/science fiction books, and historical texts as the genres of books they enjoyed reading as children. Not all classrooms include all of these genres in their classroom libraries, and the ones that do don’t have many books of each genre to even offer children (Carnell, 2005; Lingo, 2007). To motivate children to read, they need to have books to choose from that interest them and that they will enjoy reading. By teachers offering all genres of books in the classroom, children have a better
chance of finding a book that interests them than they would with only some genres offered. Having a child continue to read is easier than getting a child motivated to begin reading, which is why teachers should provide all different genres of books in their classroom libraries.

*Connecting Reading to Personal Lives*

Another implication is that children become motivated lifelong readers when they are able to make connections from their reading to their real lives. When students read books that interest them, they are better able to make a connection between their lives and the book because they are engaged in what they are reading. These connections can help students comprehend what they are reading, or expand upon what they are reading, because they can relate to the material. The best way for students to understand something is to see it through their own lens, which is what personal connections to a text does; it helps students comprehend an idea by putting it into a situation that they already understand. One way that teachers can connect reading to students’ personal lives is to let students have some time each day to simply read without being asked efferent questions about what they are reading. If teachers must build questions into the reading process, it is recommended that they ask students aesthetic questions to keep them motivated to read and to see how what they read connects to their personal lives and their learning. In addition, teachers could model aesthetic reading to students to help them connect to their personal lives that reading can be enjoyable. They could set aside 10 to 15 minutes each day for children to engage in pleasure reading and not have any type of efferent questioning attached to this reading. Hopefully, once students begin to read, and continue to read throughout their lives, the achievement gap between the male and female genders
will decrease so that neither gender is identified as struggling with reading or any other content area.

Flexible Grouping

One of the most powerful implications of this study is that many young men reported that they were engaged to read through reading with others—not simply by reading alone. This is a relatively unexplored aspect of reading instruction in classrooms. While much of reading in classrooms is focused on teacher directed reading or sustained silent reading, and perhaps having students share their reading insights during small group literacy circles, it is unclear what the young men in the survey meant when they said they preferred to read with others. In any reading classroom, one can see that every child learns differently. Some children enjoy reading independently, while others prefer to read with someone else, and still others prefer to do both. The majority of the participants stated that they usually used a combination of reading independently and with someone else when they read. Teachers need to take this information and incorporate it into their classrooms. Clearly there is room for teachers to offer multiple methods of reading to students in the classroom (Daniels, 2002). While students should be given time every day to read independently, in what is currently known as sustained silent reading, teachers should explore how students might also engage reading in other ways through reading with a partner, a small group, or perhaps as a whole class. This might be done through literature circles that engage the small group process, shared reading that engages a reading pair, or choral reading or readers’ theatre, which engage whole class or small groups. Within these different groupings, the teacher can assign a text or let students choose their own text. Also, the groupings could be assigned or
chosen by the students. The element of choice is highly motivating, but implementing
different grouping options builds on choice and provides a range of reading
configurations that just may prove effective. By letting students read in different ways,
they are more motivated to read—at least that is what students are implying in their
questionnaire responses. They know that they can read alone for some books, but that
some books are great stories to read with a friend. Also, different grouping options are
more motivating to students because they have a choice in how they read and are not
simply told how to read and when to read (Daniels).

Besides choice, different grouping options allow students to interact socially with
others and collaborate to better understand and make connections with different texts.
Short, Harste, and Burke (1996) support this notion when they state that “language is first
and foremost social” (p. 9). For example, when students discuss a book in literature
circles, they see others examples of how they viewed, read, and understood the text. This
lets students understand texts from different points of view and helps them to interact
with others in their lives. Using different grouping options also lets students learn in the
way that best suits their learning styles. Letting students learn in the way they prefer to
learn encourages students to do better in school, which can in turn lead to better grades
and more knowledgeable people.

**Implications and Recommendations for Teacher Educators**

There are many implications for teacher educators that also align with the
implications discussed in the previous section. One implication is that the first and best
way to decrease the gender achievement gap and to help boys with reading is to put great
teachers into the classroom. Teachers make the difference in the classroom and they can
make the difference in reading scores for boys. In regards to this, a recommendation is that teacher educators need to prepare their students (future teachers) to be the best teachers they can be and to help future teachers understand how students learn as a whole, and how there are differences in learning styles between males and females. It can be said that many teacher educators do not focus on the differences between male and female learning styles. There is a focus on the different ways in which students learn, but not necessarily on the differences between males and females. This difference needs to be discussed by teacher educators with their students and they need to give future teachers ways to accommodate both males’ and females’ different learning styles.

A second implication is that boys and girls enjoy reading about different topics and different genres of books (Carnell, 2005; Cavazos-Kottke, 2005; Merisuo-Storm, 2006). This needs to be taken into account and implemented in the classroom in the form of all different book genres being provided in the classroom library. It is recommended that teacher educators let their students know that they should offer a variety of book genres to their classes when they are teachers. When teacher educators teach their students about ideas like offering all book genres in classroom libraries, they are teaching their students ways in which to motivate children to read. For teachers to be able to do this they need to be taught this by teacher educators.

A third implication based on the research is that choice is a powerful motivator (Turner & Paris, 1995) and this needs to be incorporated into classrooms at every level. A recommendation might be that teacher educators demonstrate to their students how offering a variety of choices to students lets them become involved in their learning and motivates them to become lifelong readers. Teacher educators need to realize that how
they teach their students affects how those students teach their students. They need to show teachers that offering a variety of choices when it comes to reading and other activities will be a great motivator for students in regards to reading. Through showing teachers how to motivate their students, students can be motivated and encouraged to do better at reading and in school overall. This can lead to better grades, better people, and more students going to college. This country is relying more and more on college graduates to run this country, and the businesses it has, and helping students with reading can be a first step towards this goal. Teacher educators make the difference here because they teach the future teachers how to be the best they can be in the classroom and teach them how to accommodate differences in not only all learning styles, but also the different learning styles of both males and females. They show future teachers how to teach so that each child is able to learn and be as successful as they can be.

Another implication based on the research is that every child learns differently and so it is recommended that teacher educators teach their students about different grouping methods/reading methods. More curriculum regarding differentiated instruction and different grouping options, specifically in regards to reading, could be implemented in teacher education courses. This is not to say that all teacher educators do not do this or that all do, it is just recommended that this be taught to all future teachers. Teacher educators need to teach their students that children need to be able to read independently along with reading with a partner, a small group, or the whole class. Some children read/learn better independently and some do better with a partner. All kinds of reading methods should be taught by teacher educators so that every child’s diverse way of learning is met.
Finally, although no specific correlation between reading for enjoyment and academic achievement was found as a result of this study, there is still a possibility of a relationship between the two variables. Therefore, it is an implication for teacher educators to consider. This leads to the recommendation that teacher educators need to make sure that they point out to their students the importance that early reading for enjoyment has on academic achievement. This is important because if people do feel that reading for enjoyment is related to academic success, which the majority of these participants did, then more needs to be done to encourage children to read for enjoyment so that they can be as successful as they can be in their lives.

A sixth implication is that future teachers often fall back on traditional beliefs and practices when they go out into the field and come across teachers who hold such beliefs; as a result, they fall into a routine of teaching like their mentor teachers. Teacher educators can change this by teaching their students to offer a range of genres of books in the classroom, give their students choice in what they read, and implement a variety of different grouping options in regards to reading to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. In addition, they can explore with their students the importance of the relationship that may exist between reading for enjoyment and academic achievement. This way, future teachers can know and understand the best practices that exist for teaching and use these when they teach and not simply follow the guidance of other teachers.

A final implication, and perhaps the most significant, is that there are very few male teachers in early childhood education, yet research shows the influence that male role models have on boys when it comes to reading (Spence, In Press). Boys need to see
male role models reading to see the connection between reading for enjoyment and their lives. Teacher education programs need to work on getting more male teachers into their early childhood programs. This can be done through marketing their programs more towards males than they have in the past. They could send male teachers to high schools to promote future male college students becoming a teacher in early childhood. They could also have males involved in current college education programs promote their program at different college fairs, or during college visits.

Implications and Recommendations for Parents

Based on the results and conclusions gained from this study, there are a few implications for parents in regards to having their children read for enjoyment. One implication is that it is never too early to engage children in reading. By integrating reading into children’s daily lives while they are young, it becomes a part of who they are which in turn motivates them to continue to read throughout their lives. The first recommendation for parents is to read to their children when they are too young to read themselves so that they begin to learn about and enjoy books. This early reading can spark a passion for reading in a child’s life and help that child to become the best person he or she can become.

However, once children can read, the parent should read with the child and the child should read with the parent. This creates a healthy relationship with the child and shows them that reading is important and valued. Once children see value in a task, they become more motivated to complete the task, which in this case can lead to higher academic achievement. By showing children that reading is a valuable activity it encourages them to read themselves and to continue to read throughout their lives. A
second implication is that motivation is achieved through believing that one can accomplish something and that the task holds value. So, it is recommended that parents continue to encourage their children when it comes to reading. When children see that a task holds value and believe that they can complete the task, they are more likely to be motivated to read and to continue to read. Reading is important and the participants of this study felt that is was useful in helping them be successful academically so parents need to encourage their child to read as much as possible. They should not force their children to read, as this will just turn children away from reading, but they should show children the joy that reading can bring and remind children of this whenever possible. Parents want their children to be successful and motivating children to read and become lifelong readers is a step in this direction.

A third implication is that boys do not have as many male role models with regard to reading as girls do female role models and this needs to be changed (Horton, 2005). Boys need to see male adults as well as female adults reading so that they see it as an important activity for every person. An example is the child who sits and reads the newspaper just like his dad because he wants to be just like dad. Research, such as Spence (In Press), implies that boys need to see male adults, specifically, fathers, reading for enjoyment. It is recommended that dads begin to read more at home so that their male children can see that reading for enjoyment is for both males and females. When children see how much both their parents read and value reading, they are motivated to begin to read themselves. And as this study showed, many participants felt that reading for enjoyment as children had helped them academically, so it is parents’ jobs to be a good reading role model to children.
Another implication is that letting children pick what they want to read they are motivated to read and encouraged to be lifelong readers. This leads to a recommendation for parents to give their children, boys or girls, choice when it comes to reading. It is recommended that parents introduce their children to all different genres of books so that children can pick what interests them and what does not interest them and not have any genres left out. Once children find genres of books that interest them they should be allowed to read them. Any reading is good reading (except for inappropriate material). Children need the freedom and support to learn about and read books, and to experience all that reading has to offer.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

The most accurate results arise from studies that gain information from the present or longitudinal studies. One main recommendation that can be made for future research done in this area is that a longitudinal study must be conducted. A limitation of this study is that it asks participants to remember back to when they were in elementary school and recall certain pieces of information. Although many people can recall facts from when they were younger, the information may not be 100% correct. If a longitudinal study were completed, then the participants could be observed from first grade through sophomore or junior year of college and data could be collected that would be a much more accurate representation of the participants. Then a Pearson correlation could be run off of the data and the results from the longitudinal study would probably be more accurate in regards to whether or not a correlation between the two variables actually exists.
Another recommendation for future research is to ensure that the participants understand exactly what information is being asked of them. Although the researcher did explain the survey to the participants, a more in depth explanation of what was wanted could be provided in the future. For example, when students were asked what their preferred method of reading as a child was they may not have understood exactly what was being asked of them. They may have thought it meant reading with the teacher, or reading with friends, reading with their parents at home, or simply reading with a group of other children that the teacher had placed them with in class. In fact, a whole other study could be conducted in regards to this information. The study could ask children who they read with when reading with someone else and why they were reading with someone else. Did they read with others at school, at home, or in both locations? It would be a survey topic that would yield much needed background information in relation to children reading with others.

Since the data were skewed, it is also recommended that a larger sample size be used if researching this topic in the future. A bigger sample size always yields a more accurate representation of the population as a whole; 72 participants was not a bad sample size, but more participants would be better for future research. By including more participants in the study the data may be less skewed because there could be a wider range of data to begin with. It is also recommended, for a future longitudinal study, that more than one school be used in the research. By having more than one school it is likely to ensure a more diverse sample of the population. The more diverse and representative the sample is of the population, the more accurate the results of the study should be. It is also recommended that non-college participants be used in the study along with college
students. By including non-college students in the study more accurate results will be obtained because there is a more diverse group of participants. This gives way to a diverse group of individuals with regards to socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, grades, personality, and where the individuals are from. It would be more complicated, but it is definitely recommended. A final recommendation for researchers is that a longitudinal study also be done with girls. Although boys are a struggling population when it comes to reading, the point behind this study, it would be interesting to see if there is any correlation between girls who read for enjoyment as children and the grades they receive sophomore, junior, or senior year of college.

Summary

Chapter five summarized the entire study completed, the results obtained from the study, and the conclusions and recommendations that were made based on these results. One main conclusion was that although no correlation was actually found between the number of days one read for enjoyment as a child and college GPA, it is believed that a relationship of some kind does exist. A majority of the participants that read for pleasure as children did believe it had helped them academically from elementary school through college. It was determined that with a larger sample size, an even more diverse sample group, and a longitudinal study the results would maybe be different, which is why a longitudinal study was recommended for future research in this area.

It was also recommended that children have choice in the kinds of books they read and that all genres of books are provided in classrooms around the country so that children can choose what they would like to read and be more motivated to read. Another recommendation was that children should be able to read independently, with a partner,
with a small group, or as a whole class. These different reading methods would encourage more children to read because they could read in the atmosphere in which they feel most comfortable. Children should be encouraged and motivated to become lifelong readers by both parents and teachers. Overall, all this study had its limitations and the results that were expected were not achieved, it did provide some good information and insights into boys’ reading habits and how they believe these habits affect their academic performance later in life. Since most participants believed that reading for enjoyment as a child has helped them academically it is important that this information is taken and used in the education of future teachers and in classrooms around the nation. Encouraging students to read for enjoyment can help children to be as successful as they possibly can, which is the whole goal of education.
References


*Chapter 1: Visions of Literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.


APPENDIX A

READING FOR ENJOYMENT SURVEY
Childhood Pleasure Reading and Its Effects on Achievement

The purpose of this survey is to gain insight into the effects that childhood reading for enjoyment may or may not have on the grades males receive in college. This survey is strictly voluntary and may be stopped at any time. No individual responses will be seen by anyone besides the administrator and the data being collected is used strictly for educational purposes. The results are anonymous.

Directions: Please check the response that best reflects you.

1. As a child in elementary school, on average how many days a week did you read for enjoyment? (Check one)
   ___ 0 days/week  ___ 3 days/week  ___ 6 days/week
   ___ 1 day/week  ___ 4 days/week  ___ 7 days/week
   ___ 2 days/week  ___ 5 days/week

2. As a child in elementary school, did you read mostly independently or with someone else? (Check one)
   ___ Independently  ___ With someone else  ___ A combination of both

3. What genres of books did you read for enjoyment most often as a child in elementary school? Please rank with numbers 1 through 3, with 1 being the genre of books read most often, followed by 2 and 3. Notice that some genres appear under both fiction (make-believe story) and non-fiction (factual story).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiction (make-believe)</th>
<th>Non-Fiction (factual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___Comics</td>
<td>___Biographies/Autobiographies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Sports</td>
<td>___Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Mystery</td>
<td>___Mystery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Adventure</td>
<td>___Adventure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>___Fantasy/Science-Fiction</td>
<td>___Informational Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em><strong>Other:</strong></em>___________</td>
<td>___Self-Help Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___Historical Texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>___Political Books</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em><strong>Other:</strong></em>___________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Do you feel that reading for enjoyment as a child in elementary school has helped you throughout your schooling (elementary years through college)?

___ Yes  ___ No

*Please explain why or why not.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. Do you read for enjoyment now?

___Yes  ___No

*Please explain why or why not.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

6. What is your year in school?

___ Freshman  ___ Sophomore  ___ Junior  ___ Senior

7. What is your current college cumulative GPA?

_____________________

8. Are you a male or a female?

___ Male  ___ Female
APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM
Boys' Reading Habits as Children and Their College Grades

Hello. My name is Samantha Gower and I am a graduate student in the reading program at Bowling Green State University. I am doing research and collecting data for my thesis and I hope that you will be able to give me insights into your reading habits as a child and how you feel these reading habits are affecting your academic performance in college. Information related to how many days a week you read as a child in elementary school, the types of books you read, whether you read these books independently or with someone else, your college GPA, and how you feel reading for enjoyment has or has not helped you throughout your schooling will be the information that I hope to gain from your involvement in this study. The research that I am doing will benefit the education community as a whole and help educators understand the importance of reading in a child's life.

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary and only requires you to complete a 10-15 minute survey one time. In order to participate in this study, you must sign one of two consent forms that are given to you and keep the second one for your own records. Once the consent form is signed you can fill out the survey. Each participant's consent form will be detached from his survey so that the data will be kept separately and will remain anonymous. Therefore, participation will be confidential but the data will be anonymous. Again, FILLING OUT THIS SURVEY IS VOLUNTARY and your grades or academic standing will not be affected by you completing or not completing the survey. ALSO, YOU MAY CHOOSE TO STOP THE SURVEY AT ANY POINT IF WOULD LIKE TO DO SO. In order to participate in this survey you must also be at least 18 years old and able to sign your own consent form. This survey is for males only as the research being conducted is in regards to males and their reading habits. There are no perceived risks involved with completing this survey. Again, this is a one-time survey and no further participation will be asked of you after completing this survey. You will NOT write your name or any other identifying information on the survey and all surveys are anonymous. The results will be kept in a locked storage cabinet in a locked office and multiple peoples' results will be mixed together in one pile. I am not interested in individual responses but the responses of the group as a whole.

I hope that you will consider participating in this study by completing this survey. If you have any questions about the survey or the study, please feel free to contact me, Samantha Gower, through email or phone spower@bgsu.edu, 419-372-7674, or my advisor Dr. Tim Murnen at tmurnen@bgsu.edu, 419-372-7983. You may also contact the chair of the Human Subjects Review Board, Bowling Green State University, at hrsb@bgsu.edu, (419) 372-7716 with any comments, questions, or concerns about this study or about participant rights.

If you are willing to participate in this study please sign and return to the researcher one copy of this consent letter. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Samantha Gower
Bowling Green State University

By signing below, I am stating that I have read this letter, have all my questions answered, and I agree to participate in this study.

Sign here (First and last name) Date

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