TEXT SELECTION AND

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO READ

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by

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the

dissertation entitled:

TEXT SELECTION AND

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION TO READ

presented by Margaret Hoddinott, a candidate for the degree Doctor of Education and

hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Bill Ward

DEDICATION

To my husband, Michael, and our sons, Jake, Cooper, and Matthew whose energy, support, and encouragement keep me going. To my parents, Marcia and Jack, who instilled in me the transformative power of education and my stepfather, Jeff, who is always in my corner. To my colleagues, especially Annie Ward and Suzanne Carroll, whose dedication to nurturing the reading lives of all children reminds me why this work is so important. And to the countless teachers and students who have provided inspiration and motivation over the years.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between features of the books students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. After spending 15 to 20 minutes reading self-selected texts, participants (n = 340) completed the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) (Malloy et al., 2013) and provided information about their book. A significant positive correlation (p < .001, d = .361) was found between the enjoyment students experience from the book and their motivation to read. Students who loved their book had significantly higher median motivation scores compared with their peers who did not love their book. Associations between motivation and other features of the book (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features) were either very weak or not statistically significant. Follow-up semi-structured interviews (n = 8) revealed that highly motivated and unmotivated students alike know their reading preferences but that unmotivated students are afforded less freedom in their text selections. This study adds further support for the importance of matching children with compelling texts.

*Keywords:* reading, reading enjoyment, reading motivation, independent reading, reading volume, text selection, books

**Text Selection and**

**Students' Motivation to Read**

Dissertation-in-Practice

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**SECTION ONE**

**Introduction to the Dissertation-In-Practice**

## Background of the Study

As they turn page after page in a gripping thriller or lose themselves in the pages of a captivating historical fiction novel, readers may not be aware that their reading habits are more than just a pleasurable way to pass the time. People who read voluminously experience myriad benefits. Bavishi et al. (2016), for example, found that people who read books for thirty minutes a day or more lived longer than those who did not, a survival advantage that remained even after adjusting for wealth, education, cognitive ability, and a variety of other variables.

Reading also has social-emotional benefits, including empathy building and encouraging prosocial behavior (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2013). Readers can have more positive attitudes toward out-groups (Vezzali et al., 2015) and an increased ability to imagine the experiences and inner thoughts of others (Johnson, 2012).

Fostering a love of reading is especially important for children. The role of reading volume as a critical driver of academic success has been well documented (Allington, 2009a, 2011, 2012, 2014; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Guthrie, 2004, 2008; Mol & Bus, 2011). In fact, time spent engaged in independent reading is the strongest predictor of reading achievement and the best predictor of gains in reading development for second through fifth-graders (Anderson et al., 1988). This is particularly true once children have learned foundational reading skills typically acquired in kindergarten and first grade (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021).

The established value of independent reading is something to pay attention to given the significant number of students who demonstrate "below basic" reading skills according to scores from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), "the

largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation's students know and can do in select subjects" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021, "The Story of NAEP" section). On the most recent NAEP assessment, 33% of fourth-graders and 27% of eighth-graders scored below basic achievement (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Specific subgroups, especially Black and Hispanic students as well as children living in poverty, fare even worse.

The long-term outcomes for students who experience early reading difficulties are troubling. By the end of third grade, children who are not reading on grade level are four times less likely to graduate from high school by age 19 than their peers who experience success with reading in their primary school years (Hernandez, 2011). Findings from Sum et al. (2009) illustrate the ripple effect of dropping out of high school due to low literacy rates. They found that about 10% of male high school dropouts end up in jail or a juvenile detention center compared with one in 35 male high school graduates. This demonstrates a clear connection between low literacy rates and the growing prison population in the United States (Styslinger, 2020).

These findings may be partly explained by the downward spiral described by Torgesen (2004) who noted that early challenges with reading skills make it difficult for children to decode unknown words. This, in turn, makes reading a frustrating and unrewarding experience and a task that striving readers avoid (Allington, 2009a).

Encouragingly, the opposite is also true, a "rich-get-richer" phenomenon referred to as the "Matthew effect" after the Gospel according to Matthew (Stanovich, 1986; see also Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Walberg & Tsai, 1983). As Cunningham and Stanovich (2003) stated,

Reading a lot is effective *regardless* of the level of a child's cognitive and

reading ability. We do not have to wait for 'prerequisite' abilities to be in

place before encouraging students' free reading . . . Since reading has such

profound consequences, it is imperative that we do not deny reading

experiences to precisely those students whose verbal abilities most need

bolstering. If we want them to get a successful early start for reading

ability, it is critical that we support their extensive engagement with print.

(pp. 37-38)

The role of voluminous reading for striving readers is further supported by Mol

and Bus's (2011) meta-analysis of 99 studies which asserts "leisure time reading is

especially important for low-ability readers" (p. 287).

Given this evidence, it seems clear that educators must understand how to

encourage voluminous reading amongst their students. A key component in fostering

reading volume is understanding factors that motivate students to read (Wigfield et al.,

2004) since reading motivation strongly predicts reading achievement in elementary

school children (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Guthrie et al., 2006). The present study aims to

add to our understanding of the relationship between texts selected for independent

reading and reading motivation.

### Statement of the Problem

A knowing-doing gap in practice (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) currently exists when it

comes to reading volume. While most teachers will say that independent reading is

important for their students' literacy growth, they tend to prioritize skill and strategy

lessons while paying little attention to whether the children are engaged in authentic

reading experiences (Allington, 2014). Drawing parallels to other fields, Hiebert &

Martin (2009) point out:

> In any domain that one can identify--whether it be medical diagnosis, flying an
>
> aircraft, or programming computers--it would be absurd to think that someone
>
> becomes proficient without participating extensively in the activity . . . When it
>
> comes to teaching students to read in schools, however, little attention is paid to
>
> the amount that students read texts. (pp. 3-4)

Providing instruction to support students in developing decoding, comprehension,

and fluency skills is necessary but insufficient (Hiebert & Martin, 2009). Reading

volume--how much reading children do--is critical for growth (Allington, 2009b).

Through the independent reading of authentic texts, children have the opportunity to put

into practice the skills and strategies they are taught.

Because reading requires effort on the reader's part, children must be motivated to

read to achieve the benefits described above (Wigfield et al., 2004). Although highly

motivated children are more strategic in their approach to reading and more often seek to

understand what they read (Logan et al., 2011), motivation to read voluminously is low.

A scant 38% of fourth-graders reported reading for fun outside of school almost every

day (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). Even more concerning is the finding

that reading engagement decreases as students get older (McKenna et al., 1995). Only

19% of eighth-graders read for fun outside of school almost every day, while 32% report

reading never or hardly at all. Guthrie (2008) found that 75 percent of fourth-graders

agreed with the statement "I think reading is interesting," but by eighth grade, 67% of

students said, "I think reading is boring." In only four years, students' reading motivation had taken a 180-degree turn.

Encouragingly, children who read voluminously enter a virtuous cycle (Harvey et al., 2021) whereby the more they read, the more confident and capable they become as readers. Along the way, they develop skills in reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Kaefer et al., 2015), vocabulary (Kuhn & Stahl, 1998; Sullivan & Brown, 2013), word recognition (Cunningham et al., 2002; Share, 1995), and reading fluency (Therrien, 2004). They also improve their thinking skills (Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998) and have opportunities to consolidate the reading skills and strategies they have learned in literacy instruction lessons (Allington, 2009b).

**Gap in Literature**

An area of the literature that remains unexamined is the relationship between students' motivation to read and the texts they choose. Students demonstrate clear preferences for various text types (Boltz, 2007; Burchard & Pilonieta, 2017; Chapman et al., 2007); however, researchers have yet to turn their attention to students' motivation to read as it relates to the enjoyment they derive from the text or to specific features of texts they read including formats, genres, presence of visual features, and thickness of the book. There is currently a gap in the literature when it comes to the relationship between the types of books students select for independent reading and their motivation to read.

<div align="center">

**Purpose of the Study**

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Guided by the tenets of the expectancy-value theory, this study set out to add to our understanding of the role books play in children's motivation to read. Questions remain unanswered when it comes to the impact of the books children choose for

independent reading on their motivation to read. Understanding features common to books read by highly motivated and unmotivated students can help us to better match them with engaging texts which will, in turn, support voluminous reading linked to literacy development (Mol & Bus, 2011).

## Conceptual/Theoretical Framework

The expectancy-value theory of motivation (Eccles et al., 1983) underpins the research in this study. This theory posits that students work harder on activities they expect to be successful with and perceive value in completing (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The expectancy-value theory guided the development of the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (Malloy et al., 2013), the tool used to measure students' motivation in the present study. This tool assesses both the value students place on reading as well as their self-concept as readers.

A look back at the development of the expectancy-value theory highlights Atkinson's (1957, 1964) foundational work on achievement motivation, which proposed that "behavior was a multiplicative function of three major components: motives, probability of success, and incentive value" (Schunk et al., 2008, p. 49). Expectancy-value theory builds on Atkinson's work with an assumption that expectancies and values are positively associated, whereby motivation comes from a person's expectation that they will be successful in performing a given task they perceive value in completing (Eccles et al., 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 2002).

Task value comprises four components under expectancy-value theory: attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Attainment value relates to engaging in a task to confirm or disconfirm elements of one's self-schema.

Intrinsic value represents the pleasure a person derives from engaging in the activity. Utility value represents the degree to which a task relates to an individual's current and future goals. Finally, cost refers to negative aspects related to the task.

Wigfield (1994) explored how young children's competence beliefs related to their subjective task values. He proposed that children perceive more value in activities that they do well for two reasons. First, when they complete a task successfully, they develop a positive association between the task and the positive effects they experience due to having completed it. Second, when tasks are difficult, children can maintain a broader sense of efficacy and self-esteem if they lower the value of those challenging tasks.

Guided by the expectancy-value theory, the tool selected to measure students' motivation to read, the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) (Malloy et al., 2013), was designed to explore children's motivation by examining their self-concept as readers and the value they place on the task of reading.

### Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. Do associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read as measured by scores on Malloy et al.'s (2013) Motivation to Read Profile-Revised?

    $H_0$: No associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read.

$H_a$: Associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read.

a. Do associations exist between features of the books students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

b. Do associations exist between features of the books American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Multiracial students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

c. Do associations exist between features of the books students receiving special education services choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

d. Do associations exist between features of the books students mandated to receive services to support them in learning English as a new language choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

2. Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for children reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced)?

$H_0$: No statistically significant differences exist in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children reading books with different

features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of

enjoyment experienced).

$H_a$: Statistically significant differences exist in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children reading books with different

features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of

enjoyment experienced).

a.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children receiving free and reduced-price

lunch who are reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre,

thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced)?

b.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian,

Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Multiracial

children who are reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre,

thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced)?

c.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children who qualify for special

education services who are reading books with different features (i.e.,

format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment

experienced)?

      d.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children mandated to receive services to

support them in learning English as a new language who are reading books

with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the

level of enjoyment experienced)?

3.  Guided by the semi-structured interview protocol included in the Motivation to

Read Profile-Revised (Malloy et al., 2013), how can we understand the individual

and collective views of highly motivated and unmotivated readers in terms of

their self-concept as readers, the value they place on reading, and the books they

choose for independent reading?

**Design of the Study**

An explanatory, sequential mixed-methods design (Mertens, 2020) was employed

to answer the research questions outlined above. First, quantitative data were gathered to

assess students' motivation to read and to gather information about the specific book each

child was reading on the day they completed the MRP-R reading survey. Subsequently,

semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of students. These conversations

explored the children's reading motivation and their experiences with various types of

books providing a more nuanced understanding of the quantitative data analysis.

Prior to recruiting participants or beginning data collection, an application for

study approval was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the University of

Missouri-Columbia. The study (IRB #2080142) was approved on December 17, 2021.

Participation in the study was voluntary and steps were taken to ensure anonymity for

participating subjects.

**Setting**

This study took place in a public school district located in the suburbs of New York City. The district has a multicultural population with approximately 3% Asian, 2% Black, 21% Hispanic, 6% Multiracial, <1% Native, and 67% White. Students in this district consistently outperform average scores across both the state and county according to results from state-wide standardized tests in English language arts and math.

**Participants**

Convenience sampling was used since proximity and access to classrooms allowed for district-wide involvement (Mertens, 2020). All children in monolingual fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms across the four elementary schools (n = 760) were eligible for inclusion in the study. Students enrolled in the district's dual-language program who are learning to read in both English and Spanish (n = 101) were excluded due to the complexities associated with biliteracy acquisition. A total of 340 fourth- and fifth-grade children from four elementary schools ultimately participated in this study.

Purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2019) was used to select a nested subset of participants from the quantitative portion of the study for follow-up interviews. Within this nested sample, extreme cases sampling defined by Mertens (2020) as individuals "that are unusual or special in some way" were chosen. Specifically, two fourth-graders and two fifth-graders with the highest motivation to read scores, as well as two fourth-graders and two fifth-graders with the lowest motivation to read scores were selected for interviews.

**Data Collection Tools**

Data collection for both the quantitative and qualitative portions of this mixed-methods study was guided by the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) (Malloy et al., 2013), a public-domain instrument. The MRP-R is a mixed-methods assessment tool based on the expectancy-value theory of motivation (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020) that includes a reading survey (see Appendices A and B) and a conversational interview (see Appendix C). It measures children's perceived value of reading as well as their self-concept as readers. This tool was chosen due to the ease of its administration, alignment with the expectancy-value theory of motivation, and the finding that its reliability and validity were "judged to be well within acceptable ranges for both classroom use and research purposes" (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 275).

*Quantitative Data Collection*

For the quantitative portion of the study, the MRP-R reading survey was administered to all 340 subjects. Administration of the survey took place in each classroom after students spent 15 to 20 minutes reading from their self-selected independent reading text. The MRP-R reading survey took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Before beginning the survey, a child assent statement was read (see Appendix D).

After completing the survey, the children provided information about the book they were reading that day. Information collected included the book's ISBN, title, author, genre, format, thickness, visual features, and how much the child was enjoying the book (see Appendix E).

*Qualitative Data Collection*

Following quantitative data collection, eight students were interviewed to gain insights into their text selections and motivation to read. These included four children with very high motivation scores and four with very low motivation scores. Informed consent was obtained from a parent or guardian (see Appendix F). Interviews were conducted via Zoom due to Covid-19-related restrictions.

To ensure students' privacy, all interviews were conducted in encrypted personal meeting rooms. An assent statement (see Appendix G) was read at the beginning of each interview which made clear that the conversation was voluntary and that the child could opt out at any time. The semi-structured interviews were guided by the conversational interview portion of the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised with follow-up questions when clarification or elaboration was needed. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

To answer the first two research questions, quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (Version 28). Responses to the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised reading survey were scored to determine a total motivation to read score for each child. To ensure anonymity, students were assigned a unique identification number. Participant names were not entered into SPSS. Finally, data related to the book the child was reading on the day they completed the MRP-R (see appendix E) were added to the dataset.

The first research question in this study asked whether associations exist between the features of the books students select for independent reading and their motivation to

read. Since the data were not normally distributed, chi-square test for independence and

Somer's delta were employed to answer this question.

Chi-square test for independence is a statistical analysis that generates a test

statistic by comparing observed frequencies of the variables in question to the frequencies

expected if the null hypothesis were true (i.e., purely by chance) (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

When an association between the variables under consideration does exist, the difference

between the observed and expected frequencies is large. The closer the association, the

greater the test statistic. Conversely, the less the variables are associated, the smaller the

gap between the expected and observed frequencies and the smaller the test statistic.

Since a book's page count and students' rating of the enjoyment they experienced

from the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R could be

converted to ordinal variables, the relationship between students' enjoyment and their

motivation to read could be further analyzed using Somer's delta (more commonly

referred to as Somer's *d*). This nonparametric measure of association determines the

strength and direction of the association between dependent and independent variables

(Somers, 1962).

To determine if there were significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for students reading books with different features, a series

of Kruskal-Wallis *H* tests were conducted. This statistical analysis, sometimes called the

one-way ANOVA on ranks, is a nonparametric test that is used to determine whether

statistically significant differences exist between two or more groups of variables (Laerd

Statistics, 2015). Kruskal-Wallis *H* tests were used to explore median motivation scores

for children reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual

features, the level of enjoyment experienced). These analyses were performed for all 340

subjects as well as with subgroups of students including children of color, those living in

poverty, children with disabilities, and students learning English as a new language. In all

Kruskal-Wallis $H$ tests, students' motivation to read scores were used as the ordinal

dependent variable while features of the book served as independent variables. Post hoc

testing was done to determine which group(s) were statistically different from with other

group(s). These pairwise comparisons were performed following Dunn's (1964)

procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted $p$-values were

analyzed to protect against the risk of a Type I error (i.e., declaring statistical significance

when it does not exist).

Following the quantitative data analysis, a subset of students was selected for

follow-up interviews. All interviews were transcribed and a unique identifier was

assigned to each transcript to protect the identity of participants. Responses were coded

by the researcher in three phases. During phase one, open coding was used to tag any

relevant data. Next, axial coding was employed to group the open codes identified in

phase one. Finally, core categories or themes emerged through the selective coding

process in phase three. Some responses were coded more than once if they included

information pertinent to numerous themes.

Mertens (2020) cautions qualitative researchers to "monitor their own developing

constructions and document the process of change from the beginning of the study until it

ends" (p. 282). To gain insights into how the researcher's understanding changed through

the study, a record of evolving hypotheses was maintained, and the researcher engaged in

peer debriefs with a colleague who shared an interest in the topic of this study. These

exercises supported the researcher's awareness of biases including confirmation bias.

## Limitations, Assumptions, and Design Controls

Several limitations are present in this study. The use of convenience sampling

means that the results of this study may not be generalizable beyond the population from

which subjects were selected (Mertens, 2020). The limited number of students with

profiles of interest (i.e., children of color, students living in poverty, students with

disabilities, and children learning English as a new language) did not allow for more fine-

grained analysis of these specific populations for all statistical tests. Further, self-

reporting measures are inherently limited by the fact that they are subjective and can be

influenced by participants' mood, attentiveness, willingness to cooperate, and other

circumstances at the time of assessment (Mertens, 2020); therefore, the validity of

findings depends on participants' willingness to answer honestly. Additionally, texts were

only analyzed for the day the students took the MRP-R. This snapshot of the child's

reading life may not accurately reflect the types of books each child typically selects for

independent reading.

## Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study:

*Graphic texts* refers to a format of books similar to comics in which sequential art is used

to tell a story or convey information.

*Manga* refers to comics or graphic novels that generally reflect an illustrative style

developed in Japan in the late 19th century.

*Reading proficiency* refers to the skills and strategies students need to read capably.

*Reading volume* refers to the amount of independent reading children do.

*Readerly identity* refers to a person's self-concept as a reader including their unique

reading interests and preferences.

*Striving readers* refers to students who experience challenges with reading development.

## Significance of the Study

Reading is critical for academic achievement (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021,

Mol & Bus, 2011), yet many children do not have a reading habit. For instance, fifth

graders read a mere 10 minutes per day on average (Anderson et al., 1988). The situation

is even worse for striving readers. Those in the 20th percentile read just three minutes per

day outside of school. Unfortunately, striving readers represent a large subset of the

population. For example, a mere 35% of fourth-graders and 34% of eighth-graders

reached proficiency on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). An analysis of subgroups reveals an

achievement gap on this assessment with proficiency rates of Black and Hispanic fourth-

graders of 18% and 23% respectively compared with 44% and 57% for white and Asian

children. Students living in poverty also experience lower rates of literacy. A scant 21%

of students who qualify for free or reduced-price lunch scored in the proficient range,

which stands in stark contrast to the 51% of economically secure peers who met this

benchmark.

The urgent need to improve students' literacy achievement is especially apparent

when one considers the long-term outcomes for striving readers. Children who do not

meet grade-level expectations for reading by the end of third grade experience lower

graduation rates (Hernandez, 2011) and increased incarceration rates (Styslinger, 2020).

Since reading requires effort on the part of the reader, "motivation is crucial to reading engagement" (Wigfield et al., 2004, p. 299). The first step towards increasing students' reading volume, it seems, is to understand how to motivate students to read. One crucial element may be the books themselves. If educators know the types of books that inspire children to read, they can curate classroom libraries to include a wide selection of books that are likely to encourage students; match students with books that are likely to foster motivation; and begin to overcome personal biases against less traditional formats, topics, and genres.

Bringing increased attention to the role of reading volume may also influence the opinions of educational leaders and policymakers--people in a position to effect large-scale change in the way we approach reading instruction.

## Summary

Voluminous reading has social benefits (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Vezzali et al., 2015) and is critical for academic success (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Krashen, 2011). Also important are reading motivation (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Taboada et al., 2009) and student choice of reading material (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Rogiers et al., 2020); however, little is known about how various text types interact with students' motivation to read.

Guided by expectancy-value theory (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020), the present study looked for associations between the texts students self-selected for independent reading and their reading motivation. Follow-up interviews explored the individual and collective views of highly motivated and highly unmotivated readers under the tenets of the expectancy-value theory of motivation. Participants included a

convenience sample of students in grades four and five who attend a public elementary school district outside of New York City.

       This study adds to the literature helping educators to understand the relationship between students' motivation to read and the books they choose, an understanding that may influence the value educators place on reading volume as a critical component of literacy programs.

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**SECTION TWO**

**Practitioner Setting for the Study**

Marshlands Unified School District is concerned about the presence of a persistent achievement gap for children of color and students experiencing poverty. A particular area of concern is literacy achievement. Through relentless focus, Marshlands has achieved demonstrable progress in accelerating the reading trajectories of many striving readers. However, due to students' movement in and out of the district, the overall number of children not yet reading at benchmark has remained relatively stable from year to year. This is particularly true for students living in poverty.

## History of the Organization

Marshlands Unified School District is a suburban public school system located north of New York City. It serves an ethnically and economically diverse population of approximately 5,400 students in grades K-12 (Marshlands Unified School District, 2021). The district welcomes students from three municipalities to its high school, middle school, and four neighborhood elementary schools.

Marshlands has experienced steady enrollment growth, with the overall student population increasing 16% from 2009-2019 (Marshlands Unified School District, 2021). Over the same period, the rate of students living in poverty has increased from 9% to 19%.

### Key Roles in Marshlands

Marshlands is overseen by a forward-thinking superintendent of schools, an innovative assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, and a dedicated district board of education. At the elementary level, three literacy coaches work to identify systemic challenges in literacy, propose solutions, and support teachers with the rollout of initiatives. Each of these coaches has a unique role. The classroom literacy

coach supports teachers with classroom instruction. The response to intervention coach coordinates services for students with unique learning needs and works with teachers to differentiate instructional approaches. The literacy ambassador guides and supports teachers in curating classroom library collections that ensure all children are well-matched with accessible, appealing texts. She also analyzes literacy data, oversees community outreach, and guides teachers in supporting students' reading volume--how much reading they actually do.

**Academic Achievement in Marshlands Elementary Schools**

Marshlands strives to create a rigorous academic environment where students are well known and feel connected to the school community. State-wide standardized test scores in English language arts and math reveal Marshlands consistently outperforms average scores across both the state and county. For example, results from the 2019 assessment, the most recent assessment not impacted by Covid modifications, demonstrated that 74% of Marshlands's third-grade students reached proficiency on the English language arts assessment versus 56% and 52% of their county- and state-wide peers, respectively (New York State Education Department, 2019). The average proficiency rate for students in grades four and five indicated even greater deltas to county and state proficiency levels.

**Use of Data**

Using data to identify red flags is a pivotal way to identify and bring attention to important issues (Bensimon, 2004; Campbell et al., 2013). Marshlands makes a regular practice of mining data for this reason. One particular area of interest is students' literacy growth at the elementary level. Marshlands monitors children's reading proficiency with

the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System 2$^{nd}$ Edition. This valid and

reliable formative reading assessment (Heinemann Publishing, n.d.) allows teachers to

confirm students' independent reading levels in October, January, and May each year.

The district has developed benchmark reading expectations across the school year for

each grade level. By comparing children's independent reading levels at various points in

the school year with grade-level benchmarks, teachers and administrators can determine

whether children are at, above, or below these benchmarks. They pay particular attention

to children who are not yet meeting grade-level expectations.

**Focus on Literacy in Marshlands**

Despite above-average standardized test results, Marshlands has set a goal for *all*

students to read capably and voluminously across genres for a variety of authentic

purposes. District leaders are particularly concerned about students who do not meet

grade-level benchmarks in reading each year. In January 2022, 20% of students in grades

K-5 were in this category for reading proficiency (Marshlands Unified School District,

2021). Unfortunately, children living in poverty and students of color are well-

represented amongst striving readers making up 32% and 11% of this population

respectively.

District administrators and literacy coaches are concerned about students

experiencing reading challenges and feel responsible for closing that achievement gap.

These concerns are substantiated by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (Hernandez, 2011),

which demonstrated that most children who do not read proficiently by the end of third

grade remain on a downward educational trajectory that often leads to school dropout;

restricted social mobility; and increased likelihood of incarceration, poverty, and health challenges.

**The Landscape of Literacy Instruction in Marshlands**

Guided by decades of substantive, evidence-based research establishing that voluminous, high-success reading is critical to students' literacy development (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Anderson et al., 1988; Mol & Bus, 2011), Marshlands's assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction has turned a great deal of attention to ensuring that students have access to books they can read and want to read, choice over what they read, and time to read. The literacy coaches have also worked tirelessly to address the adaptive and technical changes (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011) necessary to bring about organizational transformation and a shift in instructional focus towards reading volume.

Before reading volume became a district-wide focus, teachers spent most instructional time engaged in skill and strategy instruction, believing that this was the most effective way to meet students' reading needs. The district implemented adaptive change to challenge this deeply held belief and provide support to teachers as they grappled with competing perspectives. For several years, the literacy coaches in Marshlands worked with teachers to examine their beliefs about literacy and broaden their instructional focus to include reading volume. As a result of these efforts, professionals in Marshlands began paying more attention to matching children with compelling, accessible books and providing time to read while continuing to recognize the importance of skill and strategy instruction. These efforts increased the number of students making the accelerated gains necessary to close the achievement gap.

Marshlands' experience bringing about adaptive change in this way reflects research demonstrating that well-designed and implemented professional development is essential to educational systems that meet the needs of students (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

The adaptive change described above would not have been possible without simultaneous focus on the systems and resources teachers need to match children with captivating, accessible texts--a feat that required collaboration across the system. Marshlands' business office allocated funds for every teacher to purchase authentic trade books and helped them understand the process for ordering from state-approved vendors. At the same time, administrators ensured that teachers had time to curate classroom library collections and devoted staff meetings to building professional knowledge about reading volume. Finally, the literacy coaches revised the curriculum to provide more time to read during the school day and wider student choice in text selection.

## Organizational Analysis

An examination of Marshlands's current situation through Bolman and Deal's (2017) human resource frame provides insights into why teachers have embraced the research on reading volume. This frame offers a lens for examining the alignment of needs between the organization and its individuals.

### Hire the Right People

As a reasonably well-resourced district with a robust salary schedule, Marshlands can be selective when hiring employees, recognizing that "it makes sense to pay top dollar for exemplary contributions of skilled, motivated, and involved employees" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 140). District administrators know the kinds of teachers they

want and hire accordingly. As a result, most teachers come to the district with professional experience, a strong work ethic, and a desire to improve their practice.

**Invest in Employees**

Although "many organizations are reluctant to invest in developing human capital" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 144), district leaders in Marshlands recognize the long-term positive impact that professional development can have on student outcomes. As such, the district devotes resources to ensure that all teachers have opportunities to build their professional knowledge and improve their practice over time. Over the last seven years, developing a collective understanding of the role of reading volume in students' literacy trajectories and building professional capacity to better support students' independent reading lives has been an area of professional focus. District leaders have made considerable effort to ensure that teachers are familiar with research supporting reading volume and share best practices for ensuring all students are well-matched with compelling, accessible texts.

**Empower Employees**

Teachers in Marshlands may be motivated to support the district's focus on reading volume because they are respected in their professional decision-making. Teachers are given agency to engage in the work in the manner that best fits their teaching style and the needs of their students. This situation illustrates Bolman and Deal's (2017) assertion that when an organization aligns its strategy with human capital needs, "the organization benefits from a talented, motivated, loyal, and free-spirited workforce" (p. 138) where employees are "more productive, innovative, and willing to go out of their way to get the job done" (p. 138).

Marshlands recognizes that attending to the principles outlined in the human resource frame is mutually beneficial. Teachers find their work more meaningful and satisfying, while the organization benefits from the talent and energy educators put towards meeting established goals.

## Leadership Analysis

Marshland's focus on the human resource frame is only partly responsible for teachers' increased focus on reading volume. Leadership, particularly from the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction Margaret Monroe has also had a deep impact on the culture in the organization. In her role, Margaret is uniquely responsible for charting the instructional course for the district. By spending a great deal of time in classrooms across the district, she is a driving force behind the professional tone felt across the district. Her use of stories, excellent sense of humor, and unwavering focus on marginalized students has an impact on every level of the school district.

### Authentic Leadership

Margaret's leadership style closely aligns with the authentic leadership framework described by Northouse (2019). Northouse points out that authentic leaders are strong in their convictions and demonstrate a high degree of intrapersonal awareness through self-knowledge, self-regulation, and a solid self-concept. They also have strong interpersonal skills and evolve in their leadership behavior based on life experience.

In his interpretation of authentic leadership, George (2003) describes authentic leaders as those who are inspired and motivated by a true sense of purpose and a deep interest in the work they are doing. Margaret's robust commitment to literacy achievement for all students is made clear through her ability to communicate her vision,

the challenges she and the district face in doing the work, and the goals she sets for

herself and the organization (M. Monroe, personal communication, November 2017). She

has also structured her leadership within the organization not as a one-way, follower-

leader line of supervision but rather as a multi-directional form of responsibility that

allows her to "analyze information objectively and explore other peoples' opinions"

(Northhouse, 2019, p. 204). This is evidenced by the value structure she shares with the

superintendent to whom she reports as well as interactions with her followers.

When speaking about the goals she has for her direct reports, Margaret makes

clear her desire that her followers enjoy coming to work while also maintaining

professional and intellectual curiosity. She supports the growth and leadership evolution

of her subordinates, encouraging them to use design thinking to develop novel solutions

to complex problems.

**Leadership Under the Symbolic Frame**

As a result of Margaret's leadership, educators at every level of the system in

Marshlands have a clear understanding of the importance of reading volume in students'

literacy programs. The success of this leadership approach may be explained in part by

Bolman and Deal's (2017) symbolic frame, which looks at the forces driving collective

values and purpose throughout the organization.

*Stories*

Bolman and Deal (2017) suggest that "stories are deeply rooted in the human

experience. It is through story that we can see into each other's souls, and apprehended

the soul of the organization" (Bolman & Deal, 2017, p. 247). The use of stories has

become an essential mechanism for communicating big ideas in Marshlands. Members of

the district leadership team in Marshlands make a habit of looking for anecdotes that capture the essence of changes they hope to bring about across the system, describing students' lived experiences as an integral part of conversations about pedagogy or curriculum.

For example, to illustrate the importance of taking a holistic view of students' reading growth, district leaders shared the story of Lorenzo, a fifth-grader whose reading growth had slowed considerably. By taking an inquiry stance that looked not only at discrete skill and strategy acquisition, Lorenzo's teachers examined factors in and out of school that might help to explain the problem. They found that Lorenzo was one of five boys living in a one-bedroom apartment, a home environment that made independent reading extremely challenging. Proving Lorenzo with additional time to read during the school day led to rapid growth in his reading achievement. By sharing this story with educators across the system, district leaders reinforced the importance of looking at the whole child to support their academic and social-emotional growth.

Pairing engaging anecdotes with compelling research and data allows educators at all levels of the system to humanize complex concepts and show the impact various decisions have on actual students. Storytelling helps "develop compassion by getting to know others' life stories" (Northouse, 2019, p. 201) and has helped educators across Marshlands understand their impact on students' lives.

*Humor*

District leaders in Marshlands have a good sense of humor, a trait that can reduce status differences, improve flexibility and adaptiveness, and integrate various factions of an organization (Bolman & Deal, 2017). When conversations about reading volume

began across the district, teachers and administrators felt empowered to share concerns and voice skepticism largely because humor was used to make everyone feel comfortable. Through these honest interactions, teachers and administrators were able to come to a shared understanding of the district's vision for literacy instruction.

*Use of Language*

Understanding the impact of language on people's perception, district leaders promoted a shift in the words professionals in Marshlands use to discuss students who have not yet met grade-level benchmarks in reading. In working towards a shared goal of ensuring that *all* students can read, professionals at every level of the organization were challenged to break the cycle of describing children using deficit language (e.g., struggling readers, nonreaders), encouraging them instead to use asset-based language that highlights what children already know.

Building-level administrators have supported this shift in language by avoiding the path of least resistance (Johnson, 2018) when teachers revert to deficit language, reminding teachers of the expectation for viewing students from a strengths-based approach. As a result of these combined efforts, staff across the district have engaged in the hard work of examining long-held beliefs and assumptions about striving readers (Cohn & Mullennix, 2007) and have embraced an ethic of critique through which they examine social inequities that lead to differences in reading achievement (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

Strong and compassionate leadership at the highest level of the system has fostered ethical behavior across the district and has encouraged leaders throughout the system to act ethically, set norms, provide moral direction, and constantly strive for their

own self-improvement (Mihelič, Lipičnik, & Tekavčič, 2010; Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2016).

## Implications for Research in the Practitioner Setting

Marshlands Unified School District is actively working to ensure that all students can read capability and voluminously for a variety of purposes. Guided by strong district-level leadership, Marshlands has worked hard to close their achievement gap.

The work district leaders and teachers have done to attend to students' reading capability (i.e., skills and strategies) as well as their reading volume (i.e., how much reading they actually do), has laid the groundwork for the present study's examination of students' text selection and their reading motivation. When looking at the relationship between text type and students' motivation to read, this setting provides unique access to students who have access to compelling, accessible texts and choice over what they select for independent reading.

The present study aims to provide insights into the books students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. These insights may provide Marshlands with a new way to meet the needs of the students who continue to fall below grade-level reading benchmarks.

Marshlands is uniquely positioned for a study on reading motivation given the work done to ensure that students across the district have robust access to compelling, accessible texts and a great deal of choice over what they read. As a result, the study design was readily implemented; however, findings from the study may not be generalizable to districts where the same level of attention has not been paid to students' independent reading lives.

**Summary**

Marshlands Unified School District, a suburban public school system located just north of New York City, is concerned about the achievement gap that has persisted for many years, particularly in literacy. Despite solid overall results on state standardized tests, many students of color and children living in poverty do not meet grade-level expectations for reading proficiency from year to year (Marshlands Unified School District, 2021). Marshlands has facilitated the accelerated growth in the reading trajectories of many striving readers but is challenged from year to year by students entering the system below district benchmarks.

As a system, Marshlands has used data to identify specific students of concern and track their literacy trajectories over time. Guided by decades of research (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Anderson et al., 1988; Mol & Bus, 2011), Marshlands has emphasized the importance of reading volume and taken steps to ensure that students have abundant access to compelling, accessible texts and time to read.

An examination of Marshlands through Bolman and Deal's (2017) human resource and symbolic frames help to explain the alignment of needs between the organization and its individuals as well as the district's collective values and purpose. An analysis of leadership across the system sheds light on the professional culture in Marshlands which has allowed teachers and administrators to reexamine their long-held beliefs about reading instruction and come to embrace reading volume as a worthwhile area of instructional focus.

Marshlands is the ideal setting for the present study given the work educators at every level of the system have done to focus on reading volume.

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**SECTION THREE**

**Review of Literature**

Walk into any elementary school classroom during the literacy period, and you will likely see students focused on skill or strategy instruction (Allington, 1977, 2009a; Northrop & Kelly, 2019). Teaching children how to read capably with strong decoding, fluency, and comprehension abilities is undoubtedly essential, but this is only part of the equation when it comes to fostering reading proficiency (Hiebert & Martin, 2009). Educators must also attend to children's reading volume--how much reading they actually do (Krashen, 2011). Through authentic reading experiences, students grow as readers and become increasingly proficient with the skills and strategies they have been taught (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Anderson et al., 1988). Reading volume, however, remains an area of literacy instruction that is consistently undervalued (Allington, 2014), and little research has been done to study the relationship between the texts students select for independent reading and their motivation to read.

## Benefits of Voluminous Reading

Understanding the benefits of reading volume--how much readers actually read-- supports the importance of the present study. Adults who report reading books for half an hour a day or more live an average of almost two years longer than people who do not read (Bavishi et al., 2016). Readers enjoy this longevity benefit regardless of a wide range of variables, including wealth, education, health, and cognitive ability.

Reading can also make the world a kinder place. Diving into a story helps foster empathy (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013) and encourage prosocial behavior (Johnson, 2012). For example, after reading passages that deal with prejudice from *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, participants in one study displayed improved attitudes toward out-groups, including immigrants, LGBTQ+ individuals, and refugees (Vezzali et al., 2015).

Participants in another study reported an increased ability to imagine their peers'

experiences and inner thoughts after spending an academic year in classrooms that

prioritized self-paced reading of compelling, self-selected young adult literature (Ivey &

Johnston, 2013).

### Reading Volume Matters for Academic Success

Frequent reading of authentic, meaningful, and appropriately leveled texts is also

foundational to reading development and academic success (Allington, 2009b, 2014;

Allington & Gabriel, 2012; Krashen, 2011; Mol & Bus, 2011). This is particularly true

once foundational reading skills are in place (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021;

Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). In their examination of independent reading, Anderson

and colleagues (1988) determined that time spent reading was the strongest predictor of

reading achievement and the best predictor of gains in reading for second through fifth

graders.

### Current Rates of Reading Proficiency

Understanding the role reading volume plays in bolstering reading achievement is

particularly important for children experiencing challenges with reading development

(Allington, 2009b). To gain an understanding of children's reading ability across the

country, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2019) is a useful tool. First developed in the 1960s, this

congressionally mandated test is administered to students across the United States. It is

"the largest continuing and nationally representative assessment of what our nation's

students know and can do in select subjects" (National Center for Education Statistics,

2021, "The Story of NAEP" section). NAEP is currently the only measure of American children's academic proficiency.

According to NAEP, a sizable group of students experience difficulty with reading. On the most recent NAEP reading assessment, only 35% of fourth-graders and 34% of eighth-graders reached the proficient level (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019), indicating "competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills" (National Assessment Governing Board, 2018, p. 1). Concerningly, 33% of fourth-graders and 27% of eighth-graders scored below basic achievement, indicating they could not locate relevant information, make simple inferences, or support their thinking with details from the text.

Proficiency rates have somewhat improved in recent decades, as evidenced by a six percentage-point increase in the number of fourth-graders scoring at or above proficiency levels for reading since 1992. Despite this slight improvement, poor achievement has been persistent during this time period with fourth-grade proficiency scores never rising above 37% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). The problem is more pronounced for Black and Hispanic students whose rates of proficiency were 18% and 23% compared with white and Asian students who achieved proficiency rates of 44% and 57%, respectively. Similarly, students living in poverty perform worse than their more advantaged peers. Only 21% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch meals reached reading proficiency, which stands in stark contrast to the 51% of economically advantaged fourth-graders who met this benchmark.

This achievement gap is especially troubling when one looks at the long-term impact of poor reading achievement. Children who are not reading on grade level by the end of third grade are four times as likely to drop out of school when compared to peers reading on grade level (Hernandez, 2011). Worse, children who experience poverty for as little as one year are six times less likely to graduate from high school when they do not read proficiently by third grade. Inability to graduate from high school is an experience with far-reaching consequences. According to Sum et al. (2009), adolescents who do not complete high school are more likely to face unemployment, teen pregnancy, and incarceration. In fact, "the incidence of institutionalization problems among young high school dropouts was more than 63 times higher than among four year college graduates" (p. 9). As Styslinger (2020) points out, there is a clear connection between low literacy rates and the growing prison population in the United States.

**The Downward Spiral**

The high stakes of literacy achievement described above illustrate the importance of early success with reading. Torgesen (2004) describes a devastating downward spiral that is set in motion when students do not have a solid foundation of early literacy skills. Most children who find reading challenging in third grade had trouble as kindergarteners with phonological awareness (Stanovich, 1986; Torgesen, 2004). Without this critical ability to hear, segment, and blend sounds, children have great difficulty decoding unknown words when they encounter them in print (Snider, 1995). This hampers fluency, slows the acquisition of word-identification skills, and turns reading into a frustrating and unrewarding experience (Snider, 1995).

Children who experience early challenges with reading avoid the task, which, in turn, slows their reading development even further (Allington, 2009b; Guthrie, 2004; Quirk & Schwanenflugel, 2004). Torppa and colleagues (2020), for example, observed that poor comprehension and reading fluency in grades one through three were predictive of less leisure reading. This downward spiral picks up momentum as striving readers are often expected to read texts that are too difficult for them (Allington, 1977, 2009a, 2012; Chall & Conard, 1991). The combination of poor decoding skills, insufficient practice, and challenging reading material leads to disengagement with reading, a situation that amplifies in intensity over time and helps to explain the sobering school drop-out rates of children with a history of low literacy acquisition (Hernandez, 2011).

**The Matthew Effect in Reading**

The opposite of the downward spiral--a "rich-get-richer" phenomenon dubbed the "Matthew effect" after the Gospel according to Matthew--can also be observed (Stanovich, 1986; see also Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998, 2003; Walberg & Tsai, 1983). Buoyed by solid vocabularies and success with decoding, children who "crack the spelling-to-sound code early" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003, p. 35) enter a virtuous cycle whereby success with reading encourages them to read. In fact, Anderson et al. (1988) found that proficient readers average nearly 200 times as much reading as their less-proficient peers, encountering millions of additional words each year. The more children read, the more confident and capable they become as readers, accruing myriad other benefits along the way (Harvey et al., 2021). Thus, increasing the reading volume of striving readers is particularly critical (Mol & Bus, 2011).

**Reversing the Downward Spiral**

Early success with reading is a powerful driver of the Matthew effect; however, children who do not read early can still benefit from the virtuous cycle. An analysis of data from the Accelerated Reader program found that even small increases in the reading volume of striving readers (children who began the school year reading at the 25th percentile) can lead to large gains in reading achievement (Renaissance Learning, 2018). Amongst this sample, children who read 15 minutes or more each day gained 13 percentiles over the course of the year, while those who read 30 or more minutes or more experienced a gain of 15 percentiles. As Cunningham and Stanovich (2003) put it,

> Reading a lot is effective *regardless* of the level of a child's cognitive and reading ability. We do not have to wait for 'prerequisite' abilities to be in place before encouraging students' free reading . . . Since reading has such profound consequences, it is imperative that we do not deny reading experiences to precisely those students whose verbal abilities most need bolstering. If we want them to get a successful early start for reading ability, it is critical that we support their extensive engagement with print. (pp. 37-38)

Mol and Bus (2011) add further support for the important role of voluminous reading for striving readers. In their meta-analysis of 99 studies, they assert that interacting with texts allows striving readers to "practice basic reading skills more, and as a result they become more accurate and fluent in reading text than their lower ability peers who are less exposed to print" (p. 287). They go on

to say that "the findings suggest that stimulating leisure time reading should be an effective intervention for low-ability readers" (p. 287).

**Benefits of Voluminous Reading for All Children**

The positive outcomes of the virtuous cycle described above underscore the importance of promoting reading volume for all children. Beyond improvements in general reading ability, researchers have spent decades examining the impact of reading volume on specific areas of literacy development, including vocabulary, reading comprehension, word recognition, and fluency.

*Vocabulary*

Children who read voluminously develop extensive vocabularies. For instance, Sullivan and Brown (2013) found that kids who read for pleasure out-performed children who read infrequently by 14.4 percentage points on measures of vocabulary, an effect even more impactful than parent education level.

The primary driver of vocabulary development turns out to be reading volume, not oral language. After reviewing the research on vocabulary acquisition, Kuhn and Stahl (1998) concluded, "ultimately, increasing the amount of reading children do seems to be the most reliable approach to improving their knowledge of word meanings, with or without additional training in learning words from context" (pp. 135-136).

In a large-scale analysis of the frequency and complexity of words used in various contexts, Hayes and Ahrens (1988) demonstrated that written language is far more complex than spoken language. On average, children's books and comic books are two to three times as rich as the conversational language of college graduates, expert witness testimony, or prime-time television programming for adults. As children read "meeting

words where they live" (Jago, 2015, p. 27), their vocabularies expand, providing them with entry points onto the virtuous cycle (Stanovich & Cunningham, 1992).

### Reading Comprehension

Voluminous reading is a crucial mechanism for building background knowledge, or what a person knows from prior experience (Neuman et al., 2014). This knowledge base is essential for reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition (Cervetti et al., 2009). The more children read, the more they know, and the more they know, the more they understand what they are reading (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Kaefer et al., 2015). Thus, voluminous reading is a causal factor in the development of comprehension ability (Anderson et al., 1988; Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992).

### Word Recognition

Children who read voluminously develop a large bank of words they recognize within milliseconds (Cunningham et al., 2002; Share, 1995). Most readers add words to their at-a-glance reading vocabulary after 10 to 20 successive, correct readings; therefore, each reading experience is an opportunity to master additional words (Allington, 2009b). A large bank of known words allows readers to redirect cognitive energy attention away from the labor-intensive exercise of decoding toward other aspects of the reading process, including thinking deeply about the text and reading fluently (Allington, 2009b; Reis et al., 2007).

### Fluency

In a meta-analysis of studies examining repeated readings of texts, Therrien (2004) found repeated reading improves the reading fluency of both learning disabled and nondisabled students. Not only are students able to read a target text with increased

fluency, but improvements in reading fluency are transferred to new passages. Thus, repeated reading may improve children's reading fluency not only on texts that they read over and over but also on texts they have never encountered before.

### Cognition

Perhaps most striking of all, reading can improve thinking skills and may even make a person smarter. Cunningham and Stanovich (1998) noted, "reading volume is not simply an indirect indicator of ability; it is actually a potentially separable, independent source of cognitive differences" (p. 12).

### Consolidation of Reading Skills and Strategies

The studies described above demonstrate the impact of reading volume on discrete skill development. However, it is important to note that high-success reading experiences do more than just strengthen one reading skill at a time; they provide students with opportunities to consolidate reading skills and strategies, putting into practice learning from other contexts (Allington, 2009b).

## Motivation

Reading requires effort on the reader's part; thus, to achieve the benefits described above, students must be motivated to read voluminously (Wigfield et al., 2004). Highly motivated children read more strategically and seek to understand what they read (Logan et al., 2011). Unfortunately, many elementary students in the United States have low motivation to read (Wigfield et al., 2004). Worse, reading motivation declines as students grow (McKenna et al., 1995; Parsons et al., 2018). In a study of over 18,000 students in grades one through six, McKenna et al. (1995) found that children

initially held positive attitudes towards reading but expressed disinterest in the task by grade six.

In another study, 75% of fourth-graders agreed with the statement "I think reading is interesting," but by eighth grade, 67% of students said, "I think reading is boring" (Guthrie, 2008). In only four years, students' reading motivation had taken a 180-degree turn. Whatever the reason for these declines, the importance of understanding what motivates students to read seems particularly relevant.

**Types of Motivation**

Reading motivation is defined by the values, beliefs, and behaviors surrounding reading (Guthrie & Barber, 2019). In their 2004 meta-analysis, Guthrie and Humenick highlight the multi-dimensional nature of reading motivation, pointing out that motivation to read is not a binary distinction that would allow for neat categorization of students as either motivated or unmotivated. Instead, children are "likely to exhibit different forms of motivation for reading as well as different levels of these forms" (p. 330). These forms include readers' interest, dedication, and confidence. For some students, these motivators work in a positive direction propelling students toward books. For others, one or more of these motivators may work in a negative direction, pushing students away from reading.

Ryan and Deci (2000) conceptualized motivation along a continuum stretching from amotivation on one end to intrinsic motivation on the other, with various forms of extrinsic motivation making up the steps in between.

*Extrinsic Motivation*

Students who are extrinsically motivated engage in tasks like reading to earn rewards such as prizes, points, or praise (Wigfield et al., 2004). This type of motivation is driven by benefits delivered by others, not for the enjoyment of the activity itself (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004).

Critics contend that extrinsic motivation is problematic and likely to erode intrinsic motivation for the task (Schunk et al., 2008). Deci and colleagues (1991), for example, found that rewarding students who enjoy reading with extrinsic rewards (e.g., money, food, prizes) may lead to less frequent reading when the incentive is removed. The research on the use of extrinsic rewards, however, is not clear-cut. In a large meta-analysis of the use of rewards, Cameron and Pierce (1994) found that extrinsic motivators do not have an entirely positive or negative impact on intrinsic motivation. They contend that, in most situations, positive feedback leads to positive changes in both attitude and behavior for a task. Their analysis shows that extrinsic rewards are detrimental only when given to children regardless of their level of performance on the task. In these circumstances, extrinsic rewards lead to less on-task behavior.

Brennan and Glover (1980) likewise found that extrinsic rewards can improve motivation under certain conditions for tasks that are already intrinsically motivating. In their study, both external rewards and verbal instructions to engage in an inherently motivating task greatly increased engagement with the activity.

The reverse is also true, with extrinsic rewards serving as a threat to intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1975).  In one study that illustrates this finding, Lepper and colleagues (1973) selected preschool students for participation based on demonstrated inherent

interest in a drawing activity during baseline observations. Children promised a reward

for drawing displayed less intrinsic interest and produced illustrations rated as lower in

quality. Children who were not promised a reward demonstrated undiminished or

increased interest in the activity. Wang and Guthrie (2004) found similar results with

their observation that extrinsic motivation to read negatively predicts the amount of

reading students do for enjoyment.

       Wang and Guthrie (2004) caution that rewards may cause children's attention to

shift away from the text towards the prizes they stand to receive. This can lead them to

use ineffective reading strategies, make incorrect inferences, and reduce their ability to

comprehend the text. Guthrie and Humenick (2004) add further evidence by finding a

negative correlation between reading comprehension and extrinsic motivation to read.

       An important caveat is the finding that rewards themselves can be motivating

(Deci, 1975). Children who are given stickers for completing a task such as reading may

be less motivated to read but more motivated to build a sticker collection. Thus if

extrinsic rewards are to be used, books and extra time to read may be the most effective

rewards for fostering a desire to read (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008).

### *Intrinsic Motivation*

       On the other end of the motivation spectrum is intrinsic motivation, a form

defined by engagement in a task resulting from personal interest, enjoyment, and inherent

satisfaction in the activity itself (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsically motivated readers

"believe that reading is valuable and embrace the goal of reading well and reading

widely" (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, p. 332). Schiefele & Löweke (2018) found that

intrinsically motivated readers score significantly higher on measures of reading

comprehension. More broadly, several studies have found a positive correlation between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement but a negative correlation between extrinsic motivation and academic performance (Lepper et al., 2005; Wang & Guthrie, 2004). These findings may be partly explained by the discovery that students who are highly motivated to read experience greater enjoyment from books (Cox & Guthrie, 2001; Wang & Guthrie, 2004) and remain engaged with their books for longer periods (Ainley et al., 2002).

   Wigfield & Guthrie (1997) examined the reading behaviors of intrinsically and extrinsically motivated students. They found that intrinsic motivation is a stronger predictor of the amount and breadth of reading than extrinsic motivation. Baker and Wigfield (1999) found that "children who believe they are capable of reading well and are intrinsically motivated to read report that they read more frequently" (p. 470). Further, intrinsically motivated children tend to increase their reading volume over time. Students rated highest in measures of intrinsic motivation engaged in reading almost three times as many minutes per day as their peers who were least motivated.

**Gender and Motivation to Read**

   Studies have consistently found gender differences when it comes to reading motivation. Amongst elementary school children, girls are generally more motivated to read (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Bogel, 2011). This is particularly true as children grow older (McKenna et al., 1995; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

   Marinak and Gambrell (2008) observed statistically significant differences between the overall reading motivation of third-grade boys and girls on the value subscale but not the self-concept subscale. Put another way, both boys and girls believed

that they could read, but boys did not value the activity as personally gratifying as the

girls did. Applegate and Applegate (2010) found similar results in a study of 443

elementary students. Once again, boys were confident in their ability to read, but they

placed less value on the activity than the girls in the study.

**Motivation to Read Amongst Striving Readers**

Motivation may be especially important for students with less developed reading

capability or lower cognitive abilities, given the extra challenges these children face

when reading grade-level texts (Toste et al., 2020). Encouragingly, studies show that

motivation may promote reading skill development. Taboada et al. (2009) found that

fourth-grade students' internal motivation contributes to their reading comprehension

independent from factors such as background knowledge and level of questioning. Logan

et al. (2011) looked at the predictive role of reading motivation in comprehension ability

amongst high- and low-performing readers. They found that intrinsic motivation

explained significant growth in reading comprehension skills for students experiencing

challenges with reading but not for children who were proficient readers.

The solid empirical support for the link between motivation to read and reading

achievement (Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Taboada et al., 2009; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997)

suggests that understanding factors related to students' motivation to read is a worthwhile

pursuit. As Allington (2009b) put it, "if enhancing reading achievement is your goal, and

it is, then creating lessons that motivate reading activity is in your best interest because

achievement improves as reading motivation improves" (p. 155).

**Theoretical Framework: Expectancy-Value Theory of Motivation**

A lesser-known school of thought in the field of motivation research is expectancy-value theory. This theory suggests that students put greater effort into tasks that they expect to be successful with and perceive to have value (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). The tool used to assess students reading motivation in the present study, the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (Malloy et al., 2013), was designed with expectancy-value theory in mind and assesses both the value students place on reading as well as their self-concept as readers.

The roots of expectancy-value theory can be traced back to the foundational work of Atkinson (1957, 1964), who was primarily interested in understanding individuals' achievement motivation. Atkinson's work suggests that an individuals' motivation to perform a task is determined mainly by two factors: expectancy and value. Expectancy looks at whether an individual believes they can do the task, while value examines whether they want to do the task and why. Atkinson believed that value was a relatively stable disposition within each individual.

**Eccles, Wigfield, and Colleagues' Updated Expectancy-Value Model**

Eccles and colleagues (1983) brought Atkinson's work into the field of education. Their revised model deviates from Atkinson's by adding nuance to the definitions of expectancy and value. They also examine a more comprehensive array of psychological, social, situational, and cultural determinants (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). The updated model assumes expectancy and value are related to one another and grow from a person's unique experience (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). Eccles and colleagues (1983) believe that

people are motivated when they expect to experience success in performing a task they value.

The revised theory emphasizes personal efficacy expectations and looks more closely at how expectancy and value are related to psychological and social/cultural causal factors. It takes into consideration the idea that these areas are "influenced by a broad array of social and cultural factors which include socializers' (especially parents and teachers) beliefs and behaviors, children's prior achievement experiences and aptitudes, and the cultural milieu in which they live" (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020, p. 166).

### *Defining Subjective Task Value*

Eccles and colleagues (1983) initially suggested that the "value of any specific task is a function of three major components: (1) the attainment value of the task, (2) the intrinsic or interest value of the task, and (3) the utility value of the task for future goals" (p. 89). A fourth component, the cost of the activity, has been added to the framework more recently (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020).

Wigfield & Eccles (2020) provide a comprehensive overview of these aspects of task value. They explain that attainment value relates to how important it is that a person does well with the task (Wigfield, 1994). It considers the degree to which the task allows students to reinforce or distance themselves from aspects of their actual or idealized self-schema (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020)--areas such as gender identity or competence in a specific domain. For example, a child might select a book on hunting to reinforce a self-schema of masculinity or a book with lots of pages and sophisticated cover art as an outward demonstration of reading competence.

Intrinsic value is the enjoyment a person derives from engaging in the activity (Wigfield, 1994). This aspect of task value relates to intrinsic motivation; however, these constructs come from different theoretical traditions (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). A child with a strong intrinsic value for reading would often be deeply engaged with texts for long stretches of time.

Utility value relates to how closely a task aligns with an individual's current or future goals (Wigfield, 1994). In some ways, utility value can be compared to extrinsic motivation since tasks performed due to their utility value are done as a means to an end (e.g., pleasing others, seeking a reward) rather than an end itself (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). A child with a strong desire to fit in with her peers may select a popular book that is difficult for her to read because of the utility value she would gain by talking with her friends about the text.

Wigfield and Eccles (2020) point out that a fourth influence on task value--the cost of the activity--has gained prominence in expectancy-value theory in recent years. Cost refers to what a person gives up or suffers while engaging in a task. When considering a given task, people think about how much effort it will take, other activities they will be unable to do (e.g., scrolling through Instagram, playing a game), or the emotional or psychological costs involved with the task (e.g., reading a challenging text may lead to feelings of ineptitude).

When it comes to children and adolescents, the relationship between beliefs about competence with a task and expectancies for success is particularly strong. Wigfield (1994) explored how a young child's confidence about their ability to perform a given task relates to their subjective task values. He suggested that children place greater value

on activities that they do well for two reasons. First, they form a positive association between the task and the outcomes they enjoy from successfully performing it. Second, lowering the value of tasks they find difficult is an effective way to stay positive and maintain a broader sense of efficacy and self-esteem in other domains.

## Engagement

Closely related to reading motivation is reading engagement, an experience that involves time on task, affect, cognitive qualities of the reader, and activity-based attention (Guthrie, 2004). Two common threads join engagement and motivation: the active, energized connection students bring to the text and the cognitive strategies or conceptual knowledge they apply while reading.

To be considered an engaged reader under Guthrie's construct, a child must demonstrate intrinsic motivation to partake in frequent, focused, strategic reading using higher-order understandings to gain "new knowledge or experiences from a range of texts" (p. 4). They must also show that they are capable of discussing or sharing the text with friends. Thus, engaged reading goes beyond the observable behavior of eyes on print to include cognitive, motivational, and social considerations.

### Role of Reading Engagement

Reading engagement is critical for reading success since engaged reading leads to increased comprehension and increased long-term intrinsic motivation for reading (Guthrie et al., 2006). This may be because reading engagement and motivation work as self-perpetuating forces (Ainely et al., 2002)--the more students are motivated to read, the more engaged they are with their text and vice versa.

Perhaps most importantly, an analysis of the relationship between reading engagement and reading achievement in two sizable national and international data sets led to the conclusion that "engaged reading can overcome traditional barriers to reading achievement, including gender, parental education, and income" (Guthrie, 2004, p. 5).

## Access to Books and Choice in Text Selection

The question is, how can educators help students develop a love of reading so that they become intrinsically motivated, engaged readers (Barone & Barone, 2018)? Part of the solution, it turns out, is to ensure children have access to compelling books and choice over what they read since these are the two most influential factors related to reading motivation and comprehension (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004).

### Book Access

In order for students to be able to choose books that interest them, they must have access to collections that reflect their preferences (Buchard & Pilonieta, 2017). As Allington (2009b) points out, "none of us read much of anything that we don't find interesting" (p. 147), yet classroom and school libraries do not reliably contain the books children enjoy reading (Krashen, 2011). In a survey of over 1,000 students (YouGov & Scholastic, 2019), only 43% of school-aged children reported having a classroom library that is sufficiently stocked with the kinds of books they are interested in reading.

Understanding the types of texts that capture children's interest and motivate them to read allows educators to build library collections that take those preferences into account (Burchard & Pilonieta, 2017) and match readers with books that will lead to reading engagement (Hiebert & Martin, 2009). This is particularly important in light of

the finding that classroom libraries are the most reliable source of books for most students (Maynard et al., 2008).

**Text Choice**

Encouraging children to self-select their reading material and respecting the choices they make helps them develop a reading identity (Bang-Jensen, 2010) and promotes a lifelong reading habit (Clark & Rumbold, 2006). Children who have opportunities to read books they find personally interesting have more positive attitudes toward reading (Reis et al., 2007), report reading as enjoyable (Boltz, 2007), and often express a desire to continue reading during their free time (Ainley et al., 2002; Krashen, 2004). They are also more likely to understand and remember texts (Rogiers et al., 2020; Wade et al., 1999), score higher in the areas of oral reading fluency (Reis et al., 2007), and demonstrate improved language and literacy development (Krashen, 2011) when reading texts that they find interesting.

Children take many factors into consideration when selecting texts for independent reading, and although students are idiosyncratic in their preferences, commonalities do exist (Williams, 2008).

*Genres*

Researchers have not reached a consensus regarding children's preference for fiction or nonfiction texts. Some studies suggest that children--particularly girls (Parsons et al., 2018)--prefer narrative fiction (Chapman et al., 2007). Others have found that children, regardless of gender, prefer nonfiction texts (Boltz, 2007), while still others suggest more balanced preferences across genres for both boys and girls (Repaskey et al., 2017).

A look at student text selection from 2008 to 2020 (Renaissance Learning, 2021) reveals that interest in nonfiction is on the rise overall. It seems that some children "prefer stories, some prefer information text, and many children like both" (Chapman et al., 2007, p. 538). Repaskey et al. (2017) suggest:

> Teachers should no longer presume that traditional beliefs about gender and genre preferences continue to be valid. Educators cannot automatically take for granted that girls are only interested in narrative text and conversely, that boys are only interested in expository text. (p. 838)

It is important to note that students may under-represent their interest in nonfiction since they do not consistently report reading books with nonlinear text structures such as those from Totally Wacky Facts series which present a factoid or two on each page (Barone & Barone, 2018). Children may also report what they think they are "supposed to like" based on societal cues (Chapman et al., 2007).

### *Formats*

Children's books have become more visually appealing in recent years (Repaskey et al., 2017). This is notable given how a book's visual layout (e.g., illustrations, graphics, and other features) may influence children's perceptions of how interesting the book is (Schraw et al., 1995).

**Graphic Novels.** Graphic novels combine sequential art and text to tell a story or convey information (Fenty & Brydon, 2020). This engaging and motivating combination of illustration and text promotes children's reading development in several ways (Brown & Begoray, 2017). The visual and contextual support provided by illustrations offers clues that help readers decode and understand unfamiliar words (McGill-Franzen &

Botzakis, 2009). This is particularly helpful to children learning a new language who may have the background knowledge necessary to understand a story or concept but not the vocabulary. Interestingly, comic books have more rare words than traditional children's books, adult books, prime-time TV shows, expert witness testimony, or the conversational speech of college graduates (Hayes & Ahrens, 1988).

Graphic novels also support children in making inferences as they read. As McGill-Franzen and Botzakis (2009) point out,

> students can make quite complex, informed, and insightful comments from a
> small series of pictures, and this ability can then be extrapolated into the world of
> more traditional text. The use of the comics format here provides a more
> comfortable, non-threatening entry into more complex thinking and learning. (p.
> 113)

A survey of school-aged readers (YouGov & Scholastic, 2019) revealed that comic books and graphic novels are popular amongst frequent, moderate, and infrequent readers alike, a finding that helps to justify their place in classroom library collections.

**Series Books.** With their repetitive plot structures, familiar characters, and cliffhanging chapters, series books such as Alvin Ho and Jasmine Toguchi "are to the striving reader what spinach is to Popeye: a superfood!" (Harvey & Ward, 2017, p. 101). Not only do these texts promote reading volume, but their structure is also highly supportive for developing readers (Allington, 2009b) making them the most popular format for readers of all abilities (Barone & Barone, 2018).

Gender differences have been found in the selection of series books and the reasons for opting for books from a series (Maynard et al., 2008). Younger children

choose to read series books equally across genders, but beginning at age 11, boys are significantly more likely to read these books. Girls most often choose a book from a series because they "like reading about the same character or characters" while boys tend to read these books because they "know what to expect in the story."

**Magazines.** Although not often considered for inclusion in classroom libraries, magazines and other short texts "are a key" to capturing the readers' attention (Harvey & Ward, 2017). Due to their brevity, these texts appeal to readers of all levels and, since kids can read them in one session, set children up for a successful reading experience. Short texts set allow students interesting and authentic opportunities to practice reading skills and strategies. Combining several short articles into a text set can "foster collaborative inquiry and build volume" (p. 107). The popularity of magazines grows as children age and are particularly appealing to striving readers (YouGov & Scholastic, 2019).

*Topics*

Although every child's reading journey is unique and idiosyncratic (Harvey et al., 2021), Commonalities in the books kids are attracted to exist (Maynard et al., 2008). McGill-Franzen and Botzakis (2009) observed this when examining children's book selections:

> Regardless of whether the children lived in central city or rural farmland communities, or whether they were first graders or fourth graders, they self-selected the 12 same or similar books from among over 400 choices offered to them in a free book fair. (p. 103)

A survey of over 1,000 children (YouGov & Scholastic, 2019) revealed "when choosing books to read for fun, many kids want stories that make them laugh. In fact, the desire for funny books increased 10 points since 2016. But funny isn't everything" (p. 12). Kids are also interested in books that allow them to explore locations they have never traveled to, dig into topics they want to learn more about, understand the lives of others, lose themselves in stories that make them think and feel, and become inspired to do something good in the world.

A book's topic can be a primary driver of student text selection for boys (Burchard & Pilonieta 2017). After all, readers tend to read things that interest them (Allington, 2009b), and texts related to familiar topics impact students' perception of how interesting the book is (Schraw et al., 1995).

### *Diversity*

In 1965, the dramatic and sobering overrepresentation of white characters in children's literature was brought to light (Larrick, 1965). Over the next half-century, Larrick's observation that "integration may be the law of the land, but most of the books children see are all white" (p. 63) had changed very little. Of the 4,035 books received by The Cooperative Children's Book Center (n.d.) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Education in 2019, only 0.1%, featured Pacific Islanders, 1% featured Arabs, 2% featured Indigenous characters, 6% featured Latinx characters, 9% featured Asians, 12% featured Blacks or Africans.

Although finding books that represent the diversity of our world remains a challenge, Rudine Simms Bishop (1990) highlights the importance of tracking down these books and including them in our collections, reminding us that

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or

imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and

readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever

world has been created and recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are

just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human

experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own

lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then,

becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in

books. (p. ix)

Hammond (2020) urges educators to go a step further, decolonizing our classroom

libraries rather than diversifying them. She points out

When we take a simple "multicultural" approach to diversity our libraries, we add

books with more brown faces, but we may still be perpetuating stereotypes. The

multicultural approach doesn't position us to analyze our picture books, chapter

books, and non-fiction texts for the subtle negative messages and narratives about

families of color or immigrant students and families.

Why does this matter? If we are using books as windows and mirrors, then

we need to pay attention to the messages our books give to White students in the

majority culture (the windows) so we are not unknowingly perpetuating deficit

views of African Americans and other people of color. Currently, we have many

mirrors for White children and limited windows for them. What's more, some of

the existing windows reflect distorted images of diverse communities. On the

other hand, there are not enough mirrors for children of color that are affirming.

(para. 1-2)

Overall, kids and their parents are increasingly interested in reading books

featuring diverse storylines, characters, and settings (YouGov & Scholastic, 2019).

Multicultural experts have theorized that children are more motivated to read when they

have access to texts that reflect their own cultures and experiences (Banks & Banks,

2001). Empirical evidence to support this stance was found by Williams (2008) who

discovered that participants in one study "were often motivated to choose books that

represented a piece of their identity" (p. 60).

### Physical Appearance

Despite the adage "Don't judge a book by its cover," children do consider the

look of a book when making text selections. Children often choose books based on visual

features such as the cover or pictures inside the book (Bogel, 2011; Maynard et al.,

2008). This is especially true for younger readers but remains a consistently important

consideration for boys of all ages (Bogel, 2011). Boys are also significantly less willing

to choose books that have a book if perceived as a "girl's book" based on its cover art

(Munson-Warnken, 2017).

### Popular Characters

Children are drawn to books that include characters or plotlines from television

shows and movies (McGill-Franzen & Botzakis, 2009). In one study, close to a third of

participants (31.5% of girls and 28.9% of boys) reported having seen the book on TV or

video as a reason for selecting the title, adding traction to the idea that TV and film

adaptations of children's books may encourage reading (Maynard et al., 2008). These

familiar characters and stories can spark enduring interest in reading (Cho & Krashen, 2015).

### *Text Complexity*

The importance of high-success reading experiences for children's reading development is well established (Allington, 2009a; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Reis et al., 2007, Rodgers et al., 2018). For example, reading books with 95% or greater accuracy is the best predictor of reading achievement for early striving readers, whereas reading with less than 90% accuracy was "absolutely deleterious" to reading progress (Rodgers et al., 2018, p. 152). The more reading children read at this frustration level, the greater the negative impact on their reading achievement. Even when accuracy is 90% or higher, comprehension of texts well above grade level falls below adequate levels (Amendum et al., 2016).

Perhaps because children also find texts they can comprehend easily more interesting (Schraw et al., 1995), text difficulty has been found to impact students' stamina, engagement, and persistence with their books (Allington, 2009b; Hiebert & Martin, 2009). Gambrell and colleagues (1981), for instance, found that students reading easy texts spend almost twice the time reading than those given more challenging books. Specifically, children who read easy books (those they could read with 95% accuracy or better) spent 42% of their time reading, while students who had difficult texts (books read with less than 95% accuracy) spent 22% of the time reading. This may be explained, in part, by the finding that "texts that are too difficult and require too much effort are likely to be considered less interesting than ones that are more accessible" (Wade et al., 1999, p. 210). As children are given increasingly challenging texts, the frequency of mind-

wandering increases in a linear fashion, a finding that holds true across a wide range of

text difficulty levels (Kahmann et al., 2021). This finding may be mitigated in part when

children have self-selected their texts and are reading difficult books that they are

interested in (Fulmer et al., 2015).

## Summary

The importance of engaged, voluminous reading for the myriad social (Bal &

Veltkamp, 2013; Bavishi et al., 2016; Johnson, 2012), emotional (Ivey & Johnston, 2013;

Vezzali et al., 2015), and academic (Allington, 2009b, 2014; Allington & McGill-

Franzen, 2021; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Krashen, 2011) benefits students

experience is well established. So, too, is the critical role of reading motivation (Baker &

Wigfield, 1999; Schiefele & Löweke, 2018; Taboada et al., 2009) and student choice of

reading material (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Reis et al., 2007; Rogiers et al., 2020).

This study aims to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between text

selection and students' motivation to read. This knowledge will help educators curate

classroom library collections that match student interests and guide children to select

books that are likely to lead to engaged, voluminous reading.

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**SECTION FOUR**

**Contribution to Practice**

The following whitepaper will be presented to Marshlands Unified School District where the study took place. Marshlands is a district that relies on research-based practices; thus, the evidence gathered through this study will support ongoing program design and review.

## Statement of the Problem

When it comes to reading volume, a knowing-doing gap in practice (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) currently exists. Many educators understand that independent reading is important for literacy development; however, skill and strategy instruction often take precedence with little attention paid to children's reading volume–how much reading they actually do (Allington, 2014). It is commonly understood that students benefit from support in developing skills in the areas of decoding, comprehension, and fluency; however, instruction in these areas, while necessary, is insufficient (Hiebert & Martin, 2009). Reading volume is critical for growth and provides an opportunity for children to put into practice the skills and strategies they have been taught (Allington, 2009a). Drawing parallels from other fields, Heibert and Martin (2009) point out:

> In any domain that one can identify--whether it be medical diagnosis, flying an aircraft, or programming computers--it would be absurd to think that someone becomes proficient without participating extensively in the activity . . . When it comes to teaching students to read in schools, however, little attention is paid to the amount that students read texts. (pp. 3-4)

Since reading requires effort, it is important to foster reading motivation amongst students (Wigfield et al., 2004). Not only do highly motivated readers accrue vital

reading volume; they are also more strategic in their approach to reading and more often seek to understand what they read (Logan et al., 2011).

Additionally, children who read voluminously enter a virtuous cycle (Harvey et al., 2021) whereby the more they read, the more confident and capable they become as readers. They also develop skills in reading comprehension (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Kaefer et al., 2015), vocabulary (Kuhn & Stahl, 1998; Sullivan & Brown, 2013), word recognition (Cunningham et al., 2002; Share, 1995), and reading fluency (Therrien, 2004). They also improve their thinking skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998) and have opportunities to consolidate the reading skills and strategies they have learned in literacy instruction lessons (Allington, 2009b).

**Gap in Literature**

An area of the literature that remains unexamined is the relationship between the texts students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. Students demonstrate clear preferences for various text types (Boltz, 2007; Burchard & Pilonieta, 2017; Chapman et al., 2007); however, researchers have yet to turn their attention to students' motivation to read as it relates to specific features of texts including formats, genres, visual features, thickness, and the joy children derive from their books. There is currently a gap in the literature regarding the relationship between features of the books students choose to read and their reading motivation.

<div align="center">**Purpose of the Study**</div>

This study examines the relationship between the books students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. Findings from this study will help educators understand the role of text selection as it relates to their students' reading

motivation. Armed with this knowledge, educators can more effectively guide children to select texts that will keep them engaged, thus accruing vital reading volume.

## Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are as follows:

1. Do associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read as measured by scores on Malloy et al.'s (2013) Motivation to Read Profile-Revised?

> $H_0$: No associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read.

> $H_a$: Associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read.

   a. Do associations exist between features of the books students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

   b. Do associations exist between features of the books American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Multiracial students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

    c.  Do associations exist between features of the books students receiving special education services choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

    d.  Do associations exist between features of the books students who are mandated to receive services to support them in learning English as a new language choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read?

2.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for children reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced)?

    $H_0$: No statistically significant differences exist in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for children reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced).

    $H_a$: Statistically significant differences exist in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for children reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced).

    a.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for children receiving free and reduced-price

lunch who are reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre,

thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced)?

b.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian,

Black, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and Multiracial

children who are reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre,

thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced)?

c.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children who qualify for special

education services who are reading books with different features (i.e.,

format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment

experienced)?

d.  Are there statistically significant differences in the median levels of

motivation not due to chance for children mandated to receive services to

support them in learning English as a new language who are reading books

with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the

level of enjoyment experienced)?

3.  Guided by the semi-structured interview protocol included in the Motivation to

Read Profile-Revised (Malloy et al., 2013), how can we understand the individual

and collective views of highly motivated and unmotivated readers in terms of

their self-concept as readers, the value they place on reading, and the books they

choose for independent reading?

**Methods**

To answer the research questions outlined above, an explanatory, sequential mixed-methods design (Mertens, 2020) was employed. Quantitative data were gathered first to assess students' motivation to read and to record the specific book each child was reading on the day they completed the MRP-R reading survey. Subsequently, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subset of students to explore their reading motivation and experiences with various types of books. These qualitative data provide a more nuanced understanding of the quantitative data analysis.

Before recruiting participants or beginning data collection, an application for study approval was submitted to the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri-Columbia. The study (IRB #2080142) was approved on December 17, 2021. Participation in the study was voluntary and steps were taken to ensure anonymity for participating subjects.

**Setting**

This study took place in a public school district located in the suburbs of New York City. The district has a multicultural population with approximately 3% Asian, 2% Black, 21% Hispanic, 6% Multiracial, <1% Native, and 67% White.  Results from statewide standardized tests in English language arts and math reveal that students in this district consistently outperform average scores across both the state and county. In 2019, the most recent assessment year not impacted by Covid-related testing modifications, 73% of fourth-grade and 63% of fifth-grade students reached proficiency on the English language arts assessment versus 48% and 38% of their state-wide peers, respectively (New York State Education Department, 2019). The average proficiency rate for students

in grades four and five indicated even greater deltas to county and state proficiency levels. Despite the strong achievement scores, a persistent achievement gap exists in the district for children of color and those living in poverty. The district has invested heavily in curating classroom libraries to include high-interest, accessible texts for all readers.

## Participants

Convenience sampling was used since proximity and access to classrooms allowed for district-wide involvement (Mertens, 2020). The district superintendent granted permission to conduct the study. All children in monolingual fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms across the four elementary schools (approximately 755 children) were eligible for inclusion in the study. Students enrolled in the district's dual-language program who are learning to read in both English and Spanish (n = 101) were excluded due to the complexities of biliteracy acquisition.

A total of 340 fourth- and fifth-grade children from four elementary schools participated in this study. Participants included 171 fourth-grade and 169 fifth-grade students from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Of the total sample, 49% were female, 51% were male, 11% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 12% qualified for special education services, 26% were children of color, and 2% were learning English as a new language (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Demographics of Survey Participants*

| Grade | Female students | Male students | Students of color | Students in poverty | Special education students | English language learners | Total |
|-------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-------|
| Four  | 89  | 82  | 43 | 17 | 24 | 4 | 171 |
| Five  | 76  | 93  | 45 | 20 | 16 | 4 | 169 |
| Total | 165 | 175 | 88 | 37 | 40 | 8 | 340 |

Purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2019) was used to select a nested subset of participants from the quantitative portion of the study for follow-up interviews. Within this nested sample, extreme cases sampling defined by Mertens (2020) as individuals "that are unusual or special in some way" were chosen. Specifically, two fourth-graders and two fifth-graders with the highest motivation to read scores, as well as two fourth-graders and two fifth-graders with the lowest motivation to read scores were selected for interviews. This group included four females and four males. Three children identified as Hispanic, two were living in poverty, and one received special education services. None of these students was learning English as a new language.

**Data Collection Tools**

Data collection for both the quantitative and qualitative portions of this mixed-methods study was guided by the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) (Malloy et al., 2013), a public-domain instrument. The MRP-R is a mixed-methods assessment tool that includes a reading survey (see Appendices A and B) and a conversational interview (see Appendix C). It is based on the expectancy-value theory of motivation (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield & Eccles, 2020) and measures children's perceived value of reading as well as their self-concept as readers. This tool was chosen due to the ease of its

administration, alignment with the expectancy-value theory of motivation, and the finding that its reliability and validity were "judged to be well within acceptable ranges for both classroom use and research purposes" (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 275).

Reliability ensures that a data collection tool is consistent in its findings (Mertens, 2020). The authors of this assessment tool verified its reliability using Cronbach's alpha which "revealed an $\alpha = .87$ for the full scale, an $\alpha = .85$ for the value subscale, and an $\alpha = .81$ for the self-concept scale" (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 275). Validity, which demonstrates that the tool measures what it claims to measure (Mertens, 2020), was confirmed using a root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). "An RMSEA estimate of .089 was revealed with a confidence interval of .081-.098. The probability of RMSEA $\leq = .05$ was .000" (p. 275).

### Quantitative Data Collection

For the quantitative portion of the study, the MRP-R reading survey was administered to all 340 subjects after they spent 15 to 20 minutes reading their self-selected independent reading text. Administration of the survey took place in each classroom just after the independent reading portion of the school day and required approximately 20 minutes to complete. Before beginning the survey, a child assent statement was read (see Appendix D).

Odd-numbered questions on the survey assessed students' self-concept as readers while even-numbered items measured the value students place on reading. The MRP-R uses a four-point ordinal rating scale whereby responses are ranked and fall along a continuum. To ensure validity of results, the order of responses varied with some

questions ordered from most to least motivated and others listed from least to most motivated.

After completing the survey, the children provided information about the book they were reading that day. Information collected included the book's ISBN, title, author, genre, format, thickness, visual features, and how much the child was enjoying the book (see Appendix E).

Students' responses were verified as the data were transferred from the student response sheet to the data collection spreadsheet. Each book was found on Amazon.com where the researcher verified its title, author, genre, format, thickness, and visual features. In most instances, children's responses matched the information on Amazon.com. When discrepancies were found, information from Amazon.com as well as physical copies of the text helped to ensure the correct information was recorded in the dataset.

Since students' assessments of their book's thickness were varied, this metric was entered into the database based on each title's page count. Student assessments of the amount of white space in their book varied widely. Without access to each complete text, the researcher was unable to verify the accuracy of data collected for this variable, thus, it was removed from consideration.

### *Qualitative Data Collection*

Following quantitative data collection, eight students were interviewed to gain insights into their text selections and motivation to read. These included four children with very high motivation scores and four with very low motivation scores. Informed consent was obtained from a parent or guardian (see Appendix F) and each student's

teacher was contacted to schedule a time for the interview that did not interfere with instruction.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom due to Covid-19-related restrictions. While in-person interviews have traditionally been the norm, a growing body of research supports the use and highlights the benefits of remote interviews (Jenner & Myers, 2019; Krouwel et al., 2019). Interviews conducted remotely are comparable to in-person interviews in terms of rapport-building, depth of information shared, and efficacy of interview methods. Further, video-based interviews generally surpass in-person interviews in overall duration.

These findings align with anecdotal experiences reported by teachers working with students in a remote setting during the Covid-19 related school closures. These teachers reported that children tended to connect quickly and share personal information they might be hesitant to share in front of peers given the private nature of online interactions. This was especially true when students wore headphones or were physically distanced from classmates. An added benefit of video-recorded interviews was that the recording allowed for an examination of participants' body language and facial expressions captured during the interview.

To ensure students' privacy, all interviews were conducted in encrypted personal meeting rooms. An assent statement (see Appendix G) was read at the beginning of each interview which made clear that the conversation was optional and that the child could opt out at any time. The semi-structured interviews were guided by the conversational interview portion of the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised with follow-up questions

when clarification or elaboration was needed. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes.

**Data Analysis**

To answer the first two research questions, quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS (Version 28). Responses to the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised reading survey were scored to determine students' motivation to read. Each question on the MRP-R reading survey has an associated value ranging from one to four points. Using the survey's scoring guide (see Appendix B), points were assigned for each question based on the child's response. These item-level scores were entered into the study database. Scores for each child's response to odd-numbered questions were summed to determine that child's self-concept as a reader subscore, while even-numbered questions were summed to provide a sub-score for the value the child places on reading. Combining these two sub-scores revealed a total motivation to read score for each child.

To ensure anonymity, each child was assigned a unique identification number. Participant names were not entered into SPSS. Finally, data related to the book the child was reading on the day they completed the MRP-R (see appendix E) were added to the dataset.

The first research question in this study asked whether associations exist between the features of the books students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. To answer this question, chi-square test for independence and Somer's delta were employed. Chi-square test for independence is a statistical analysis that generates a test statistic by comparing observed frequencies of the variables in question to the frequencies expected if the null hypothesis were true (i.e., purely by chance) (Laerd Statistics, 2015).

When an association between the variables under consideration does exist, the difference between the observed and expected frequencies is large. The closer the association, the greater the test statistic. Conversely, the less the variables are associated, the smaller the gap between the expected and observed frequencies and the smaller the test statistic.

Since chi-square tests for independence work only with nominal variables, the continuous variable total motivation was transformed into a nominal variable. To do this, students were separated into four groups based on their total motivation score on the MRP-R: very high motivation (67 points or higher), high motivation (62-66 points), low motivation (58-61 points), and very low motivation (57 points or less) (see Table 2). These categories were created using the Visual Binning tool in SPSS. The Equal Percentiles Based on Scanned Cases option was selected to create groups with a similar number of participants.

**Table 2**

*Motivation to Read Score Bins*

|  | Students | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Motivation | Motivation score | Number of students |
| Very low | $\leq 57$ | 100 |
| Low | 58-61 | 74 |
| High | 62-66 | 84 |
| Very high | $\geq 67$ | 82 |

*Note.* Motivation scores were calculated based on the total number of points participants scored on the MRP-R reading survey.

The same procedure was used to transform the continuous variable page count into the nominal variable thickness. The following categories were created based on the

total page count in each book: thin (1 to 192 pages), medium (193 to 288 pages), and thick (289 or more pages).

Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to identify associations between students' motivation to read as measured by scores on the MRP-R and the following features of their independent reading book: format, genre, thickness, the presence of visual features (e.g., illustrations, photographs), and the level of enjoyment the child derived from the text. To ensure that all variables met the chi-square test for independence's assumption that expected cell frequencies are greater than five, categories were collapsed in some instances. Specifically, in the area of format, the categories compendium, early reader, joke book, periodical, picture book, and reference were collapsed into a category named other formats. In the area of genre, the categories biography/memoir, narrative nonfiction, poetry, traditional tales, and mystery were collapsed into a category named other genres.

Since a book's page count and students' rating of the enjoyment they experienced from the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R could be converted to ordinal variables, the relationship between students' enjoyment and their motivation to read could be further analyzed using Somer's delta (more commonly referred to as Somer's $d$). This nonparametric measure of association can determine the strength and direction of the association between dependent and independent variables (Somers, 1962). This test is a measure of the agreement between pairs of ordinal variables which examines the strength and direction of the relationship between variables (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Since Somer's $d$ is used with two ordinal variables, the nominal categories for the book's thickness and students' total motivation scores were converted

to ordinal variables and the values were ordered from lowest motivation to highest

motivation.

To answer research question two which asked whether there were significant

differences in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for students reading

books with different types of books, a series of Kruskal-Wallis $H$ tests were conducted.

This statistical analysis, sometimes called the one-way ANOVA on ranks, is a

nonparametric test that is used to determine whether statistically significant differences

exist between two or more groups of variables (Laerd Statistics, 2015). Kruskal-Wallis $H$

tests were used to explore median motivation scores for children reading books with

different text features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features) as well as the level

of enjoyment each child derived from the text. These analyses were performed for all 340

subjects as well as with subgroups of students including children of color, those living in

poverty, children with disabilities, and students learning English as a new language.

In all Kruskal-Wallis $H$ tests, students' motivation to read scores were used as the

ordinal dependent variable while features of the book served as independent variables.

Post hoc testing was done to determine which group(s) were statistically different from

with other group(s). These pairwise comparisons were performed following Dunn's

(1964) procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted p-

values were analyzed to protect against the risk of a Type I error (i.e., declaring statistical

significance when it does not exist).

Following the quantitative data analysis, a subset of students was selected for

follow-up interviews. All interviews were transcribed and a unique identifier was

assigned to each transcript to protect the identity of the participants. Responses were

coded by the researcher in three phases. During phase one, open coding was used to tag

any relevant data. Next, axial coding was employed to group the open codes identified in

phase one. Finally, core categories or themes emerged through the selective coding

process in phase three. Some responses were coded more than once if they included

information pertinent to numerous themes.

Mertens (2020) cautions qualitative researchers to "monitor their own developing

constructions and document the process of change from the beginning of the study until it

ends" (p. 282). To gain insights into how the researcher's understanding changed through

the study, a record of evolving hypotheses was maintained, and the researcher engaged in

peer debriefs with a colleague who shared an interest in the topic of this study. These

exercises supported the researcher's awareness of biases including confirmation bias.

### Results

A total of 340 fourth and fifth graders completed the MRP-R reading survey and

provided information about the book they were reading on the day they completed the

survey. All students were in monolingual classrooms in one of four elementary schools

across the same school district. Participants included 171 fourth-grade and 169 fifth-

grade students from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Of the total sample, 49% were

female (89 fourth-grade and 76 fifth-grade girls) and 51% were male (82 fourth-grade

and 93 fifth-grade boys), 26% identified as students of color ($n = 88$), 11% were living in

poverty as measured by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch ($n = 37$), 12% qualified

for special education services ($n = 40$), and 2% were learning English as a new language

($n = 8$) (see Table 1).

### *Research Question One*

The first research question asks whether associations exist between features of the books students choose for independent reading (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the level of enjoyment experienced) and their motivation to read as measured by scores on Malloy et al.'s (2013) Motivation to Read Profile-Revised. To answer this question, chi-square tests of independence were performed to determine whether associations between the variables exist and, if so, the strength and statistical significance of those associations. This statistical analysis compares the observed frequencies of a given variable with the frequencies you would expect to see if an association between the two variables in question did not exist.

For each chi-square test of independence, associations were explored between different aspects of the books students selected for independent reading and their motivation rating (i.e., very low motivation, low motivation, high motivation, very high motivation). Although research question one also asked whether associations between features of the book and students' motivation to read hold true for specific subgroups of children (i.e., children of color, students living in poverty, children who qualify for special education services, children who are mandated to receive services to support them in learning English as a new language), the sample size of students in subgroups of interest were too small to analyze with a chi-square test of independence.

After completing chi-square tests of independence, two Somer's *d* analyses were performed. The first explored the relationships between the thickness of the child's book and the child's reading motivation. The second looked at the relationship between the

enjoyment they reported experiencing in their book and their reading motivation. These analyses were possible given the ordinal nature of the variables under consideration.

**Format.** A chi-square test of independence was conducted between students' motivation to read and the format of the book they were reading on the day they took the MRP-R. No statistically significant associations were found ($\chi^2(27) = 23.213$, $p = .674$); however, 27 cells (67.5%) had expected counts less than five with a minimum expected count of .22.

The chi-square test of independence operates under the assumption that each cell has an expected count of five or more, otherwise one cannot be sure that the results are valid (Laerd Statistics, 2015). As a result, the categories compendium, early reader, joke book, periodical, picture book, and reference were collapsed into a category named other formats and the chi-squre test of independence was recalculated. Expected frequencies were greater than five in all cells. There was no statistically significant association between students' motivation and the format of the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R ($\chi^2(9) = 7.984$, $p = .536$). The null hypothesis was supported.

**Genre.** To explore possible associations between students' motivation to read and the genre of the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. No statistically significant associations were found ($\chi^2(30) = 19.907$ $p = .919$); however, 25 cells (56.8%) had expected counts less than five with a minimum expected count of .44.

The categories biography/memoir, narrative nonfiction, poetry, traditional tales, and mystery were collapsed into a category named other genres and the category animal fantasy was combined with the science-fiction/fantasy. The chi-square test of

independence was then recalculated. Expected frequencies were greater than five in all

cells except informational books for students with low motivation where the expected

frequency was 4.8. No statistically significant association between students' motivation

and the genre of the book they were reading on the day they took the MRP-R was found

($\chi^2(12) = 8.491$, $p = .746$). The null hypothesis was supported.

**Thickness.** A chi-square test of independence was performed to analyze potential

associations between students' motivation to read and the thickness of the book they were

reading on the day they completed the MRP-R. The group reading eBooks (n = 10) was

excluded from this analysis. Associations between students' motivation and the thickness

of their book were not statistically significant ($\chi^2(6) = 11.852$, $p = .065$). All cells had

expected counts greater than five.

The relationship between students' motivation to read and the thickness of their

book could be further examined using a Somer's *d* test. This nonparametric measure of

association explored the possible correlation between students' motivation to read

(dependent variable) and the thickness of their book (independent variable). There was a

statistically significant but weak positive correlation between motivation and thickness

($d = .146$, $p = .004$). This positive correlation held true when the book's thickness was

examined as the dependent variable and motivation as the independent variable although

the association in this direction was even weaker ($d = .130$, $p = .004$).

**Visual Features.** To examine associations between students' motivation to read

and the visual features present in their texts (i.e., color illustrations, black and white

illustrations, photographs, multiple types of visuals, no visuals), a chi-square test of

independence was performed. No statistically significant associations were found

($\chi$2(12) = 20.713, $p$ = .055); however, eight cells (40%) had expected counts less than five with a minimum expected count of 1.96.

To satisfy the chi-square test of independence's requirement that all cells have an expected count of five or higher, the categories multiple types of visuals and photographs were combined into a category labeled other visual features. Likewise, color and black and white illustrations were collapsed into a more general illustrations category. The chi-square test of independence was recalculated with these broader categories and statistical significance was achieved ($\chi^2(6)$ = 16.254, $p$ = .012); however, three cells (25%) continued to have an expected count less than five.

Categories of visual features were collapsed further creating a binary distinction between books with and without visuals. The chi-square test of independence was again statistically significant ($\chi^2(3)$ = 7.866, $p$ = .049). This time, no cells with an expected count less than five. The association, however, was very weak (Cohen, 1988) with Cramer's V = .152. Post hoc analysis of adjusted standardized residuals indicated that readers with very low motivation provided the greatest evidence against the null hypothesis (see Table 3). More students with very low motivation read books with visual features and fewer books without visual features than would be expected if an association between motivation and visuals did not exist.

**Table 3**

*Crosstabulation of Motivation to Read and Visual Features*

| Motivation | No visual features | | | Visual features | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *n* | Expected *n* | Adjusted residual | *n* | Expected *n* | Adjusted residual |
| Very low | 42 | 51.8 | -2.3 | 58 | 48.2 | 2.3 |
| Low | 36 | 38.3 | -0.6 | 38 | 35.7 | 0.6 |
| High | 48 | 43.5 | 1.1 | 36 | 40.5 | -1.1 |
| Very high | 50 | 42.4 | 1.9 | 32 | 39.6 | -1.9 |

*Note.* Statistical significance was confirmed at the $p = .049$ level.

**Enjoyment.** Participants were asked to choose from four options in response to

the question "how much are you enjoying this text?" The options were "I love it," "I like

it," "I don't like it," or "I really don't like it." To examine associations between students'

motivation and the level of enjoyment they derived from their book, motivation and

enjoyment were first treated as nominal variables so that a chi-square test of

independence could be conducted. Although there was a statistically significant

association between students' motivation and their level of enjoyment in the book,

$(\chi^2(9) = 50.384, p < .001)$, eight cells (50%) had expected counts less than five with a

minimum expected count of .65.

Since the chi-square test of independence assumes that all cells have an expected

count of five or more, the categories "I don't like it" and "I really don't like it" were

collapsed and the chi-square test of independence was recalculated. A statistically

significant association was found again $(\chi^2(6) = 46.608, p < .001)$; however, four cells

(33.3%) this time had expected counts less than five with a minimum expected count of 1.96.

Categories were collapsed even further to create a binary distinction between "I love it" and the three remaining categories. A chi-square test of independence was calculated again and remained statistically significant ($\chi^2(3) = 43.521, p < .001$) with all expected cell frequencies greater than five. The association was moderately strong (Cohen, 1988) with Cramer's V = .358. A crosstabulation of the distribution of enjoyment in the text across levels of motivation is provided in Table 4.

*Table 4*

*Crosstabulation of Motivation to Read and Enjoyment*

| Motivation | Enjoyment | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Do not love the book | | | Love the book | | |
| | *n* | Expected *n* | Adjusted residual | *n* | Expected *n* | Adjusted residual |
| Very low | 58 | 37.9 | 4.9 | 42 | 62.1 | -4.9 |
| Low | 26 | 28.1 | -0.6 | 48 | 45.9 | 0.6 |
| High | 36 | 31.9 | 1.1 | 48 | 52.1 | -1.1 |
| Very high | 9 | 31.1 | -5.8 | 73 | 50.9 | 5.8 |

*Note.* Statistical significance was confirmed at the $p < .001$ level.

To more easily visualize the difference between observed and expected frequencies of different levels of motivation, bar charts are presented in Figure 1 for students who reported loving their book and Figure 2 for students who did not love their

book. The lighter bars show the number of students one would expect to see if a

relationship between reading motivation and level of enjoyment of the book did not exist

while the darker bars represent the number of students who reported loving their book

(Figure 1) or not loving their book (Figure 2).

**Figure 1**

*Observed and Expected Levels of Motivation for Students Who Loved the Book*
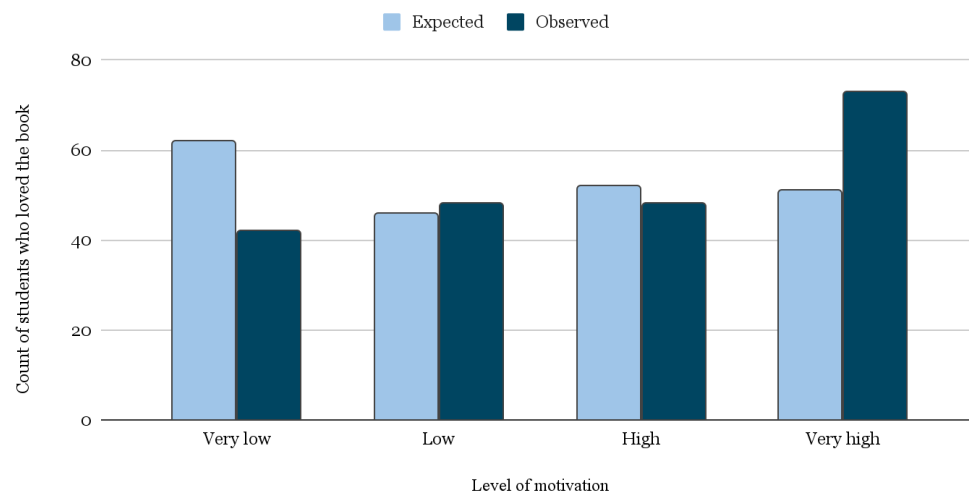


*Note.* Bars represent the count of students who loved the book they were reading across

levels of motivation. The moderately strong association between motivation and

enjoyment was statistically significant.

*Figure 2*

*Observed and Expected Levels of Motivation for Students Who Did Not Love the Book*



*Note.* Bars represent the count of students who did not love the book they were reading across levels of motivation. The moderately strong association between motivation and enjoyment was statistically significant.

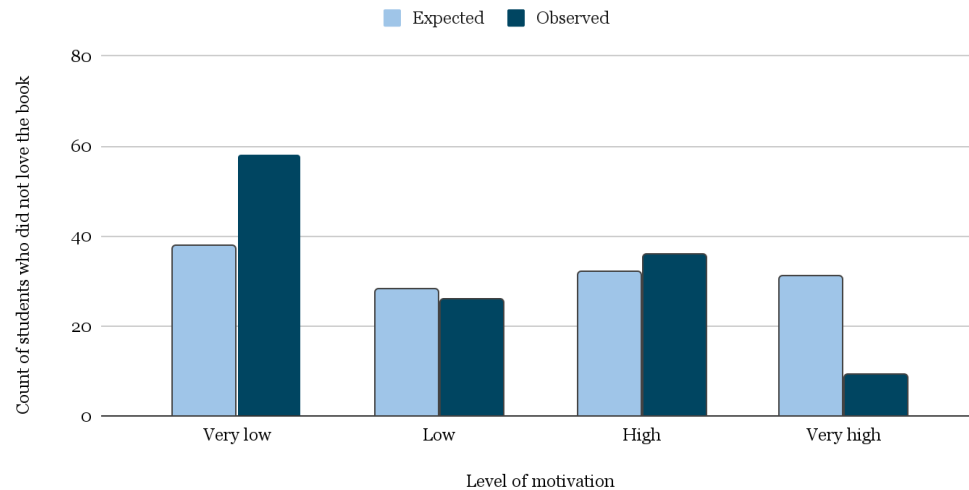Further analysis of the relationship between students' motivation to read and the level of enjoyment they derived from their book was performed using a Somer's *d* test. This nonparametric measure of association looked for a correlation between students' motivation to read (dependent variable) and the enjoyment they reported finding in their book (independent variable). There was a moderately strong, statistically significant positive correlation between motivation and enjoyment ($d = .361$, $p < .001$). This positive correlation held true when enjoyment was examined as the dependent variable and motivation as the independent variable although the association in this direction was small ($d = .236$, $p < .001$).

**Subgroups of Students.** Although sample sizes were too small to perform chi-square tests of independence with subgroups of students, Somers *d* tests could be

performed. The small sample sizes for students living in poverty (n = 37), students with

Individualized Education Plans (n = 40), and children learning English as a new language

(n = 8) should be considered when interpreting the following findings.

Somers $d$ test results for subgroups were consistent with findings from the larger

sample with a moderately strong positive correlation between motivation and enjoyment

for students living in poverty ($d$ = .453, $p$ = .006) and students with special learning needs

($d$ = .421, $p$ = .002). A weak positive correlation was found for students of color

($d$ = .399, $p$ < .001). Finally, although a similar pattern held for children learning English

as a new language, these results were not statistically significant ($d$ = .333, $p$ = .516).

When enjoyment was examined as the dependent variable, a small, statistically

significant, positive correlation was found for students of color ($d$ = .245, $p$ < .001),

children living in poverty ($d$ = .278, $p$ = .006), and for students with special needs ($d$ =

.327, $p$ = .003). A very small, positive correlation was found for students learning English

as a new language; however, this finding was not statistically significant ($d$ = .182, $p$ =

.516).

### Research Question Two

The second research question in this study asked whether there are statistically

significant differences in the median levels of motivation not due to chance for children

reading books with different features (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features, the

level of enjoyment experienced) and whether these differences hold true for specific

subgroups of children (i.e., children of color, students living in poverty, children who

qualify for special education services, children who are mandated to receive services to

support them in learning English as a new language). To answer this question, students'

total motivation score on the MRP-R served as the dependent variable, and various features of the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R served as independent variables.

**Format.** Kruskal-Wallis *H* testing revealed no statistically significant differences in the median levels of motivation ($\chi^2(6) = 9.527$, *p* = .155) for students reading books of the following formats: early readers (n = 4), graphic texts (n = 69), compendia (n = 10), novels (n = 97), picture books (n = 6), reference texts (n =10), and series (n =144).

Given the very small sample of children reading certain texts and to keep the analysis consistent with modifications made to satisfy the requirements of the chi-square test of independence, the categories compendium, early reader, joke book, periodical, picture book, and reference were collapsed into a category named other formats and the statistical analysis was recalculated. Kruskal-Wallis *H* testing with this new set of variables revealed no statistically significant differences in median levels of motivation between groups reading books with different formats ($\chi^2(3) = 4.272$, *p* = .234). Thus, differences in levels of motivation were due to chance or factors other than the book's format.

Using the format categories novels, graphic texts, series, and other formats, subsequent Kruskal-Wallis *H* analyses of specific subgroups of students yielded no statistically significant differences across different book formats for students' motivation to read for children of color ($\chi^2(3) = 3.086$, *p* = .379); students living in poverty ($\chi^2(3) = 1.595$, *p* = .660); children with disabilities ($\chi^2(3) = .605$, *p* = .895); or children learning English as a new language ($\chi^2(2) = .142$, *p* = .931).

**Genre.** Kruskal-Wallis $H$ testing revealed a similar pattern when differences in median motivation scores were analyzed across genres. No statistically significant differences were found ($\chi^2(10) = 4.261$, $p = .935$) for students reading biography/memoir (n = 14), historical fiction (n = 29), informational texts (n = 22), joke books (n = 2), narrative nonfiction (n = 4), poetry (n = 2), realistic fiction (n = 136), science-fiction/fantasy (n = 88), traditional tales (n = 7), mystery (n = 7), or animal fantasy (n = 29).

Given the small sample of children reading certain genres, the categories biography/memoir, narrative nonfiction, poetry, traditional tales, and mystery were collapsed into a category named other genres. Animal fantasy was combined with the science-fiction/fantasy category. Kruskal-Wallis $H$ testing with this new set of variables revealed no statistically significant differences in median levels of motivation between groups reading books with different genres ($\chi^2(4) = 2.326$, $p = .676$). Thus, differences in levels of motivation were due to chance or factors other than the book's genre.

Further Kruskal-Wallis $H$ analyses of specific subgroups of students yielded no statistically significant differences in students' motivation to read across the condensed book genre groups (i.e., informational, science-fiction/fantasy, realistic fiction, historical fiction, other) for children of color ($\chi^2(4) = .352$, $p = .986$); students living in poverty ($\chi^2(4) = 4.827$, $p = .306$); children with disabilities ($\chi^2(4) = .536$, $p = .970$); or children learning English as a new language ($\chi^2(2) = 1.908$, $p = .385$).

**Thickness.** A Kruskal-Wallis $H$ test was conducted to determine whether there were differences in motivation scores between children reading books that differed in thickness: thick books (n = 103), medium books (n = 117), thin books (n = 110). eBooks

(n = 10) were excluded from this analysis. Distributions of motivation scores were

similar for all groups as assessed by a visual inspection of a box plot. A statistically

significant difference in motivation scores between groups was found ($\chi^2(2) = 8.273$, $p =$

.016) (see Table 5).

Subsequently, pairwise comparisons were performed following Dunn's (1964)

procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted $p$-values are

presented. This post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in

motivation scores between the group of students reading thick books (64.00) and thin

books (61.00) ($p = .015$) but not between any other group combination.

**Table 5**

*Motivation Scores for Students Reading Books of Varying Thickness*

| Thickness of book | N | Median | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Thin | 110 | 61.00 | 60.21 |
| Medium | 117 | 61.00 | 61.55 |
| Thick | 103 | 64.00 | 63.62 |

*Note.* Differences in median motivation scores were significant between students reading

thick books and thin books ($p = .015$) but not between any other group combination.

Additional Kruskal-Wallis H testing of student subgroups revealed no statistically

significant differences in median motivation scores across children reading books of

varying thicknesses for students of color ($\chi^2(2) = 1.503$, $p = .472$); those living in poverty

($\chi^2(2) = 2.060$, $p = .357$); children with disabilities ($\chi^2(2) = .507$, $p = .776$); or children

learning English as a new language ($\chi^2(2) = .455$, $p = .796$).

**Visual Features.** A Kruskal-Wallis test was performed to determine if there were

differences in motivation scores between groups that read books with different types of

visual features including color illustrations (n = 80), black and white illustrations (n = 64), photographs (n = 11), multiple styles of illustrations (n = 9), and no visuals (n = 176). The analysis rejected the null hypothesis that the distribution of motivation scores was the same across categories of books with different visual features ($\chi^2(4) = 12.346$, *p* = .015); however, this unadjusted *p*-value represents the statistical significance you would see if looking at each pairwise comparison in isolation, increasing the risk of a Type I error (i.e., claiming statistical significance when it does not exist). To determine whether statistically significant between-group differences existed, a post hoc analysis using Dunn's (1964) procedure with a Bonferroni adjustment was performed taking into consideration multiple pairwise comparisons. Between-group differences were not statistically significant when adjusted *p*-values were considered.

Since the sample size of students reading books with photographs (n = 11) and multiple styles (n = 9) were quite small, and to keep the analysis consistent with the adjustments made to explore research question one, median motivation levels were compared for students reading books with visual features (e.g., illustrations, photographs, diagrams) and those without. Since only two categories were compared, an Independent Samples Mann-Whitney *U* Test was performed in place of a Kruskal-Wallis *H* test. Distributions of motivation scores for students reading books with and without visual features were similar as assessed by visual inspection. Median motivation scores for students reading books with (60.00) and without visual features (62.50) were statistically different, ($U = 11,871$, $z = -2.831$, $p = .005$) (see Table 6).

**Table 6**

*Motivation Scores for Students Reading Books With and Without Visual Features*

| Book type | N | Median* | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Without visual features | 176 | 62.50 | 62.53 |
| With visual features | 164 | 60.00 | 60.35 |

*Between-group differences in median motivation scores were statistically significant (p = .005).

Subsequent Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney $U$ Testing of student subgroups revealed consistent findings for children of color ($U = 695.5$, $z = -2.277$, $p = .023$, n = 88), but no statistically significant differences in median motivation across books with and without visual features for students living in poverty ($U = 120$, $z = -.514$, $p = .625$, n = 37), children with disabilities ($U = 179$, $z = .101$, $p = .932$, n = 40), or children learning English as a new language ($U = 4$, $z = -.675$, $p = .643$, n = 8). The small sample sizes of these groups should be noted.

**Enjoyment.** A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to determine whether there were differences in the median motivation scores for children who reported experiencing different levels of enjoyment from the books they were reading on the day they took the MRP-R. Median motivation levels were statistically significantly different between groups ($\chi^2(3) = 43.763$, $p < .001$).

To pinpoint where statistically significant inter-group differences existed, a post hoc test was conducted using Dunn's (1964) procedure with a Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. Adjusted $p$-values are presented. The post hoc analysis revealed statistically significant differences in mean motivation scores between the children who

responded to the question "How much are you enjoying this text?" with "I don't like it" (53.00) and "I love it" (63.00) ($p = .002$) and between students who answered "I love it" and "I like it" (59.00) ($p < .001$), but not between any other group combination.

Since the sample size of students who reported that they did not like (n = 6) or really did not like (n = 3) their book was quite small, and to keep the analysis consistent with the analysis done with the chi-square test of independence, the categories "I like it," "I don't like it," and "I really don't like it" were collapsed and differences in median motivation scores were reevaluated. With only two categories being compared, an Independent Samples Mann-Whitney $U$ Test was performed in place of a Kruskal-Wallis $H$ test. Distributions of motivation scores for students reading books they loved and those reading books they did not love were similar as assessed by visual inspection. Median motivation scores for students reading books they loved (63.00) and those they did not (58.00) were statistically different, ($U = 19,140$, $z = 6.295$, $p < .001$) (see Table 7).

**Table 7**

*Motivation Scores for Students Who Loved the Book and Those Who Did Not*

| Level of enjoyment | N | Median* | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Loved the book | 211 | 63.00 | 63.65 |
| Did not love the book | 129 | 58.00 | 57.93 |

*Between-group differences in median motivation scores were statistically significant (p < .001).

***Enjoyment for Specific Subgroups of Students.*** The data were subsequently disaggregated and Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney $U$ Tests were employed to examine whether differences in motivation scores across levels of enjoyment students

derived from their book were statistically significant for specific subgroups of students.

Results were consistent with findings from the larger sample. Median motivation scores

for students reading books they loved and those they did not were statistically different

for students of color ($U = 1{,}265$, $z = 3.481$, $p < .001$), children living in poverty ($U = 227$,

$z = 2.487$, $p = .012$), and children with special learning needs ($U = 295$, $z = 2.627$, $p =$

.008). Between-group differences were not statistically significant for children learning

English as a new language ($U = 9$, $z = .843$, $p = .429$) (see Table 8). The small sample

size of students learning English as a new language should be noted (n = 8).

**Table 8**

*Motivation Scores for Students Experiencing Different Levels of Enjoyment in their Book*

*Disaggregated by Student Profile*

| Level of enjoyment | N | Median | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Students of color[*] | | | |
| Loved the book | 30 | 62.00 | 61.68 |
| Did not love the book | 58 | 57.00 | 57.40 |
| | | | |
| Students living in poverty[**] | | | |
| Loved the book | 25 | 61.00 | 61.84 |
| Did not love the book | 12 | 56.00 | 53.92 |
| | | | |
| Students with disabilities[***] | | | |
| Loved the book | 22 | 60.00 | 60.77 |
| Did not love the book | 18 | 55.00 | 54.61 |

*Note.* Reported *p*-values represent the statistical significance of between-group median

motivation scores.

*($p < .001$) ** ($p = .012$) *** ($p = .008$).

### Research Question Three

       The final research question asked how we can understand the individual and

collective views of highly motivated and unmotivated students in terms of their self-

concept as readers, the value they place on reading, and the books they choose for

independent reading. To answer this question, eight students participated in semi-

structured interviews guided by questions from the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised

conversational interview protocol (see Appendix C). Four of these students had amongst

the highest scores on the MRP-R reading survey while four were in the group with the

lowest scores.

A total of seven major themes emerged from participant responses to questions

during the semi-structured interviews (see Table 9 for sample quotes from each theme).

*Table 9*

*Example Quotes for Semi-Structured Interview Response Themes*

| Response theme | Example quote |
|---|---|
| Intrinsic value of reading | "I could just like disappear into a book. I can just be sitting there for like hours and can't hear anything around me." |
| Readerly identity | "I like to read more nonfiction stuff. Have you ever heard of Weird But True? Those are my favorite type of books because I like them. They're pretty long so it takes me at least two days for me to read them. And there's a whole bunch of them. You learn facts. Every page has at least two to five facts. And they're just kind of fun also to read." |
| Evolution of reading preferences | "I used to like picture books . . . [now] I want to read books that have cliffhangers . . . [when I'm older] I think I'll do big books. Like huge giant chapter books." |
| Adult influence on text selection | "[My teachers] wanted me to start reading some more realistic books. Not any of the random fact books and stuff." |
| Access to books | "My parents started giving me like all these different books. Like every week." |
| Perception of the importance of reading volume | "What you have to do is, you have to practice reading." |
| Utility value of reading | "If you can read and write, then you can get a better job because you can become like a doctor." |

Wigfield (1994) defines intrinsic value as the enjoyment a person derives from engaging in a given activity. It may come as no surprise that highly motivated students experienced strong intrinsic value from reading; however, less motivated readers also described stretches of intrinsically motivated reading. What seemed to separate these groups of readers was the consistency with which they found watershed books--those that lit a flame of interest and led to deeply engaged reading (Harvey & Ward, 2017). Highly

motivated students described experiencing the intrinsic value of reading almost every time they picked up a book. For example, one student shared that she loved reading all different sorts of books "because it's fun!" She added,

> It's like you get sucked up into a whole new world. There's a bunch of plot twists and sometimes you could just read for hours and imagine you're like in the book . . . it's just really fun for me."

Less motivated readers, on the other hand, described these experiences as uniquely memorable events rather than the norm. When asked if he could remember a time when reading was really fun, one student with low motivation scores replied, "Yeah, Amulet. I read every single one and every book only took me like two days to finish. And there's also eight of them."

Students' readerly identity did not seem to be affected by their motivation to read. Highly motivated and unmotivated students alike could clearly describe the kinds of books that grabbed their interest. Interestingly, all of the highly motivated students reported that the adults in their lives gave them leeway to explore their reading preferences without interference. Highly unmotivated readers, on the other hand, described the negative impact adult influence on their text selection had on their reading lives. They reported being told to stop reading the books they had self-selected in favor of texts their teachers deemed more suitable.

Highly motivated readers who were allowed to read whatever appealed to them described how their reading preferences evolved and their text selections became more sophisticated over time. One highly motivated reader said, "I basically started to want to read more different things. Like to experiment with different [types of books]."

Students with high reading motivation described more robust access streams than their less motivated peers. All four readers with strong motivation scores told of families who actively supported their reading lives by ordering books, taking trips to the bookstore, and visiting the public library on a regular basis. One student credited her parents' attention to book access as a driving force behind the widening of her reading interests stating, "my parents started giving me like all these different books, like every week." Less motivated readers, on the other hand, relied more often on the classroom library for independent reading texts.

Highly motivated students also described a constellation of people who helped them find interesting books over the years including parents, siblings, friends, and teachers while less motivated students reported far less support with book matching. In discussing why she did not read much when she was younger, one student reported, "I couldn't find interesting books." When asked if anyone tried to help her find interesting books, she replied, "Sometimes. Not really."

Interviews revealed that teachers seem to be more successful in matching highly motivated readers with books than their less motivated peers. One such reader stated, "If your teacher takes the time to help you, which my teacher does, they will help you find a good book." In contrast, students with low motivation to read scores reported that their teachers did not have the same success when it came to matching them with interesting books. When asked how his teacher might help him become a better reader, one unmotivated reader stated, "[she could] help me find what I want to read." Although their teachers sometimes attempted to match unmotivated readers with books, their attempts missed the mark.

Students understood the importance of voluminous reading regardless of motivation level. Seven of the eight participants discussed reading as an important part of future reading growth. As one student plainly put it when discussing how he might progress as a reader, "[I need to] read more books." Students on both ends of the motivation to read continuum also recognized the important role educators can play in fostering reading volume. One student suggested that teachers could support her in becoming a better reader by "recommending books they think I would like."

All participants discussed the utility value proficient reading would impart in the future. Several students discussed the role reading plays in academic success and to achieve career goals (e.g., "To be a video game engineer or YouTuber or anything, you need to know how to read.") while others talked about the importance of being able to read signs and labels (e.g., "If you're driving a car and can't read the sign–what it says– then how are you going to know what it says? You'll get in big trouble.").

**Discussion**

Previous studies have explored the role of reading volume–how much reading children actually do–as an important driver of academic success. (Allington, 2009b, 2011, 2012, 2014; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Guthrie, 2004, 2008; Mol & Bus, 2011). Since the time children spend reading independently is the strongest predictor of reading achievement, (Anderson et al., 1988) it is necessary to understand what motivates children to read. This study sought to expand our understanding of the relationship between the texts students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. To do this, a mixed-methods approach was employed. First, each child's motivation to read was measured using the Motivation to

Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R). Information about the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R was also collected. Subsequently, follow-up interviews were conducted with highly motivated and highly unmotivated students to better understand the relationship between the books they choose and their motivation to read.

Overall findings reveal that, in many ways, children's reading preferences are as unique as they are. What matters most, it seems, is helping children to find books that they love. When children love the book they are reading–not like it, but *love* it–they are likely to have higher motivation to read. Therefore, it is important to understand the formats, genres, and book features that matter to each individual student, help them find those books, and allow them to read them without judgment.

**Format.** When it comes to the book's format, no statistically significant associations were found between students' reading motivation and the format of the book they were reading. Similarly, the observed differences in median motivation scores of children reading books with different formats were not statistically significant.

Interviews suggest that books of different formats appeal to highly motivated and unmotivated students alike. Graphic texts, for instance, had nearly universal appeal, with highly motivated and unmotivated readers reporting positive experiences with this format. When discussing stretches of intrinsically motivated voluminous reading, seven of the eight students interviewed discussed graphic novels or manga. One reader with low motivation scores became markedly more animated in his interview responses while talking about his experience reading the Amulet series, proudly recounting how he made his way through the eight-book series in a matter of days.

A book's format seems to be a particular area of interest for teachers, especially when it comes to less motivated readers. Highly motivated students described unfettered access to a wide variety of different types of books. They recall having been given leeway to follow their interests and preferences without judgment, spending many months or years reading graphic novels, picture books, magazines, and other less traditional formats.

Unlike highly motivated readers, however, all four of the students with low motivation reported having been told to put away graphic novels, manga, and compilations of facts that they had selected for independent reading in favor of a format their teacher deemed more appropriate. When asked whether any grown-ups had told him to read different books from those he chose, one participant with low motivation stated:

Yeah. Pretty much every teacher has. [They said] I should start to read more higher books. Like chapter books or something . . . It was kind of annoying and hard at the same time . . . because, I mean, I don't like chapter books. They're really long and then, if someone distracts me while I'm reading, I lose what I'm doing . . . It's so hard to find a chapter book you're gonna like.

Highly motivated readers with experience reading a wide range of formats described how their preferences evolved over time, leading them into more sophisticated texts as they gained reading experience. One reader shared,

I had mostly just read graphic novels, but I started exploring more and then I started to want to learn about wars and other just interesting parts of history . . . I basically started to want to read more different things. Like to experiment with different [books] I could find.

**Genre.** Similar findings emerged when it came to genre. The distribution of books of different genres was strikingly even across levels of motivation. As such, it may come as little surprise that there was no statistically significant association between motivation and genre. There were also no statistically significant differences in the median motivation scores of children reading books from different genres. Kids' all all motivation levels are drawn to books from a wide and overlapping variety of genres. During conversational interviews, both highly motivated and unmotivated readers discussed an interest in genres such as biography, fantasy, nonfiction, and scary books. This aligns with other studies of student text selection. When given the opportunity to self-select books for summer reading, children from a wide range of backgrounds selected "the same or similar books from among over 400 choices offered" (McGill-Franzen & Botzakis, 2009, p. 103).

**Thickness.** Although no statistically significant association was found between students' motivation to read and the thickness of the book they were reading on the day they completed the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised, children who read thick books had significantly higher median motivation scores than their peers who read thin books. This may relate to attainment value, which is the degree to which children use the books they select as a means of reinforcing or distancing themselves from aspects of their actual or idealized self-schema (Wigfield & Eccles, 2020). None of the students interviewed mentioned the book's thickness as a factor that they considered when selecting a text; however, it is possible that children who select thick books do so to reinforce a specific readerly persona. Whatever the reason, it seems important to ensure that all students have access to thick books that are compelling and accessible.

**Visual Features.** The sample size of students reading books with different types of visual features was small; therefore, it is difficult to draw nuanced conclusions about the association between a book's visual features and students' motivation to read. An analysis of the relationship between books with and without visual features found a statistically significant but very weak association. Students reading books without visual features had higher median motivation scores than their peers reading books with visuals. Data from the qualitative portion of the study indicate the visual features may spark reading interest that, when allowed to grow unfettered by adult influence, leads to increased reading motivation down the road.

All of the students who participated in follow-up interviews discussed the important role books with visual features, most notably graphic novels, had in their reading lives. While teachers are likely motivated to encourage children to move away from graphic texts by a belief that more traditional formats will lead to greater gains in reading achievement, children have a metacognitive awareness of the ways different features of the books they choose foster their reading development. One highly motivated reader who had read graphic novels almost exclusively for over a year explained how they supported her ability to visualize as she reads, stating,

> When I [used to] read graphic novels, the pictures were like just there. Then I started imagining what it could really be like in my head. So then I started experimenting [with books that do not have visual features] and now the pictures are just like naturally in my head.

Implicit or explicit restrictions on students' independent text selection may have played a role in the quantitative findings on visual features in the present study. One

unmotivated reader discussed how he was discouraged from reading manga in school despite the fact that this was his strongly preferred format.

**Enjoyment.** Children's reading preferences appear to be largely unique and idiosyncratic. What motivates one child to read may not interest or motivate another, while other texts may appeal to motivated and unmotivated readers alike. What does matter, it seems, is how much an individual book speaks to an individual child. The level of enjoyment children experience in their independent reading texts is positively correlated with their motivation to read. Children who love their books–not just like them, but *love* them–experience higher levels of reading motivation than peers who are reading books they do not love.

Follow-up interviews with highly motivated and unmotivated readers revealed that both groups of students had strong readerly identities. They could easily describe the types of books that grabbed their interest; however, a stark distinction in this area relates to the latitude children were offered to read the books that appealed to them. Highly motivated readers reported having always had unconstrained choice in their text selections and adults who encouraged experimentation in reading a wide variety of books. Less motivated readers, on the other hand, all reported having been told to put away their self-selected text in favor of a book their teacher deemed more worthy of their time. When asked if he had ever been told to read different books, one reader with low motivation scores replied, "Yeah, pretty much every teacher has."

Educators who interfere with children's text selection likely do so with the best intentions, hoping that certain texts will lead to greater gains in reading development. They may also fear that children will fixate on a specific text type; however, the

experiences described by highly motivated readers should ease the concerns of teachers

who worry that less-traditional books may have a detrimental impact on their students'

reading development. Data from this study suggest that when children are allowed to read

books they love regardless of the text's format, genre, or other considerations, motivation

to read benefits.

Encouragingly, follow-up interviews with highly motivated readers suggest that

when allowed to follow their reading passions, children move on to a wider range of text

types. It seems that repeated experiences with beloved books spark an interest in reading

that ultimately leads kids into wider reading territory and more sophisticated texts over

time. When asked if his text preferences had changed over time, one motivated reader

replied, "It's evolved. I used to like picture books, then I kind of liked chapter books with

pictures, and books with short chapters." He went on to talk about the types of books that

appealed to him at the moment which included books about science as well as books

from the Harry Potter, Who Would Win, and the Dangerous Things on the Planet series.

The readers interviewed all understood the importance of reading volume;

however, highly motivated readers described a more robust network of individuals they

could rely upon for book recommendations, including parents, teachers, and friends.

Unmotivated readers, on the other hand, reported limited support with finding compelling

books to read. One student recalled, "I didn't read much when I was younger . . . I

couldn't find interesting books." When asked if anyone helped him to find interesting

books he replied, "Sometimes. Not really."

When teachers did attempt to match the interviewed students with books, their

efforts appeared to be more successful amongst students who were already motivated to

read. This may be due, in part, to the types of books that fill classroom library collections. As one less motivated student put it, "[My teacher] may have a lot of books [in our classroom library]. Just not the type of books I like."

<div align="center">**Limitations of the Study**</div>

There were several limitations to this study. First, the subjects were selected by convenience sampling. As such, the results of this study may not be generalizable beyond the population from which subjects were selected (Mertens, 2020). The limited number of students with profiles of interest (i.e., children of color, students living in poverty, students with disabilities, and children learning English as a new language) meant that more fine-grained analysis of these specific populations was not possible for all statistical tests. There were a limited number of students who reported disliking or really disliking their book, as well as those who were reading books with different types of visual features. This may be due to the setting in which this study was conducted–a school district with a robust commitment to independent reading, student self-selection in text choice, and classroom library curation that ensures access to accessible and appealing texts. Findings from this study may not be generalizable to districts that do not have these conditions in place.

The small samples of students representing subgroups of and those who participated in follow-up interviews suggest that replicating both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study with larger samples may provide more generalizable insights into the relationship between text selection and reading motivation.

Self-reporting measures are inherently limited by the fact that they are subjective and can be influenced by participants' mood, attentiveness, willingness to cooperate, and

other circumstances at the time of assessment (Mertens, 2020). The validity of findings

depends on participants' willingness to answer honestly. Additionally, texts were only

analyzed for the day the students took the MRP-R. These may or may not be

representative of the books each child typically reads.

### Recommendations

Award-winning novelist James Patterson once said, "There's no such thing as a

kid who hates reading. There are just kids who love reading and kids who are reading the

wrong books. We need to help them find the right books" (2014, p. 216). The results of

this study bring added weight and empirical evidence to this observation. Book love, it

seems, is an important factor in students' motivation to read. Teachers who care about the

reading development of their students should make it an instructional priority to match

readers with compelling and accessible books, guiding them to explore their own unique

interests and reading preferences. This is especially true for students with low motivation

to read.

Since motivation to read scores were significantly higher amongst students

reading thick books compared with their peers reading thin books, it seems important to

include books with high page counts in classroom libraries that are accessible to all

readers in the room. Increasingly, publishers are printing thicker volumes of accessible

texts such as three-books-in-one compilations. Classroom and school libraries should also

contain books representing a wide range of formats, genres, and visual features.

As educators engage in the work of matching children with compelling books,

they should be encouraged to put aside preconceived notions of the types of texts they

believe are best and instead allow all students, not just highly motivated readers, to

pursue their interests and preferences when it comes to the material they select for

independent reading. The experiences of highly motivated readers demonstrate the

impact of allowing children to follow their reading interests and preferences. From a

teacher's perspective, a year of reading graphic texts may seem like an eternity; however,

that year may have a lasting, positive impact on the child's long-term reading life. Rather

than limiting student choice, a more effective tactic may be to inquire into how the

student's text selection supports their reading development. The students interviewed for

this study were remarkably intuitive about their reading experiences. They also had a

strong sense of when it was time to move on to new reading territory.

Teachers should also work with students to monitor their reading engagement

over time, stepping in when it is clear that the book love is gone to provide support

helping the child to re-engage with their book or switch to a different book that is more

likely to lead to book love. The instructional value of matching children with books that

will "delight and fascinate us and keep us up well past our bedtimes" (Bridges, 2014, p.

9) cannot be underestimated.

## Implications for Future Research

The finding from this study that the enjoyment children experience from their

texts is directly related to students' reading motivation has implications for future

research. Further analysis of the relationship between students' motivation and the

pleasure they derive from their texts should be explored, particularly with subgroups of

students such as children of color, students experiencing poverty, children with special

learning needs, and English language learners.

Given the frequency with which highly motivated readers discussed the increasing sophistication of their text selections over time, exploring the reading trajectories of highly motivated readers may reveal patterns that could expand our understanding of the impact of unfettered self-selection of texts for independent reading on students' motivation to read and their overall reading development.

Further exploration into the role of visual features in fostering or hindering reading motivation seems warranted given the limitations of this study's quantitative analysis of visual features. It may also be worthwhile to replicate this study in additional school districts that have not made a parallel investment in classroom library curation.

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**SECTION FIVE**

**Contribution to Scholarship**

The University of Missouri Statewide Cooperative Doctor of Education (EdD) program in educational leadership and policy analysis is designed to produce scholarly practitioners. As such, the traditional five-chapter dissertation has been redesigned under the guidance of the Carnegie Foundation Project on the Educational Doctorate to include an article ready for dissemination in a scholarly journal.

## Target Publication

In an effort to share the knowledge gained through this study with a larger audience, major findings will be submitted to *The Reading Teacher*. This peer-reviewed academic journal is published six times each year on behalf of the International Literacy Association. It aims to disseminate classroom-ready articles on literacy-related topics including curriculum, instruction, assessment, and strategies for teaching diverse learners. Articles feature research-based best practices for educators working with children up to age 12 in the area of literacy. This target audience is a good fit for the present study given the practical application of its major findings.

### Plan for Submission

Following successful defense of the dissertation, the article will be submitted by the researcher to *The Reading Teacher* for review via the journal's online portal. Submission will follow all guidelines presented on *The Reading Teacher*'s Author Guidelines page with editable files including the article's text, figures, and tables.

**Submission Ready Article**

**Abstract**

This study explores the relationship between the books students choose and their reading motivation. After spending 15 to 20 minutes reading from their self-selected independent reading text, participants (n = 340) completed the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) (Malloy et al., 2013) and provided information about their book. A significant (p < .001, $d$ = .361) positive correlation was found between the enjoyment students experience from the book and their motivation to read. Students who loved their book had significantly higher median motivation scores compared with their peers who did not love their book. Associations between motivation and other features of the book (i.e., format, genre, thickness, visual features) were either very weak or not statistically significant. Follow-up semi-structured interviews (n = 8) revealed that highly motivated and unmotivated students alike know their reading preferences but that unmotivated students are afforded less freedom in their text selections. This study adds further support for the importance of matching children with compelling texts.

**Opening Text and Sidebars**

Children who love their books—not just like them, but *love* them--are more motivated to read. This serves as an important reminder of the importance of matching children with compelling texts.

*Pause and Ponder*

- What vivid and voluminous reading experience do you recall from childhood? How have those experiences shaped your readerly identity?

- What differences do you observe in students who have found a book they love compared with those who are reading books they like?

- What types of books have led to book love with your students, particularly striving readers and children who would benefit from support in developing their reading lives? Are they more engaged with graphic texts, magazines, series books, or novels?

- Do you afford all children including striving and unmotivated readers the same level of freedom to read books that capture their interests?

- Do you allow--or even encourage—all students to read non-traditional formats such as magazines and graphic texts?

*Take Action*

1. Take the time to explore students' reading interests and preferences, beginning with your striving readers then moving to children who do not yet have robust independent reading lives.

2. Match children with compelling texts that they can read and want to read.

3. Allow students to follow their passions even if their reading preferences include less-traditional formats such as graphic novels, wacky fact books, or magazines.

4. Recognize that children typically read themselves into more sophisticated texts over time.

5. Monitor the match over time to be sure the child maintains momentum in the book. If interest wanes, support the child to finish or help them to find a text that will be a better fit.

**Main Text**

"Books are a uniquely portable magic." So says Stephen King (2000, p. 104), an author who knows a thing or two about the transformative power of a great book. Teachers who care about reading work tirelessly to match children with books that provide those magical experiences, recognizing that the time children spend engaged with books they love will provide opportunities to put into practice important reading skills and strategies. Evidence from this study suggests that matching children with books they love–not just like, but *love*–has a positive impact on their motivation to read.

*Review of Relevant Literature*

As they turn page after page in a gripping thriller or lose themselves between the covers of a captivating historical fiction novel, many readers are not aware that their reading habits are more than just an enjoyable way to pass the time. Reading for pleasure imparts many benefits including longer life expectancy (Bavishi et al., 2016), greater empathy and prosocial behavior (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Ivey & Johnston, 2013), and more positive attitudes toward out-groups (Vezzali et al., 2015).

Fostering a love of reading is especially important for children. Reading volume– how much reading children do–is a critical driver of academic success (Allington, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2014; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Guthrie, 2004, 2008; Mol & Bus, 2011). In fact, time spent reading independently is the strongest predictor of reading achievement and the best predictor of gains in reaching achievement for second through fifth-graders (Anderson et al., 1988). This is particularly true once children have learned foundational reading skills typically acquired in kindergarten and first grade (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2021); however, "reading a lot

is effective *regardless* of the level of a child's cognitive and reading ability. We do not have to wait for 'prerequisite' abilities to be in place before encouraging students' free reading" (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003, pp. 37-38).

Teaching children to decode efficiently, comprehend deeply, and read fluently is unquestionably important (Allington, 2009). Attending to students' reading volume—ensuring that they are well matched with compelling, high-success texts--supercharges this instruction by allowing children to put into practice the skills and strategies they have been taught (Allington, 2009). This may be particularly true for striving readers. Mol and Bus's (2011) meta-analysis of 99 studies asserts "leisure time reading is especially important for low-ability readers" (p. 287).

Since reading requires effort on the reader's part, children must be motivated to accrue this important reading volume (Wigfield et al., 2004). Thus, it seems clear that educators should understand how to encourage reading motivation amongst their students. The present study adds to our understanding of the relationship between the books students select for independent reading and their reading motivation.

*Methods*

To explore the relationship between text selection and students' motivation to read, a mixed-methods design was employed. Participants first spent 15 to 20 minutes reading their current, self-selected independent reading text. They then rated how much they were enjoying their book along a four-point Likert scale (i.e., I love it, I like it, I don't like it, I really don't like it) and provided information about the text they were reading that day. Students also completed the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised (MRP-R) (Malloy et al., 2013), a survey designed to measure reading motivation. This tool was

first published in *The Reading Teacher* in 1996 and revised to "reflect the cultural and linguistic changes that occurred in the ensuing decade" (Malloy et al., 2013, p. 274).

After the quantitative data were analyzed, eight of the most highly motivated and highly unmotivated students were interviewed to explore their reading motivation and experiences with various types of books. These qualitative data provide a more nuanced understanding of the quantitative data analysis.

**Participants.** This study was conducted in fourth- and fifth-grade classrooms in four elementary schools from a school district located in the suburbs just north of New York City. Classroom library curation has been a focus in this district over the last seven years with investments of time and money dedicated to ensuring collections provide all students with access to high-interest, accessible texts.

A convenience sample of 340 fourth- and fifth-grade children from four elementary schools participated in this study. The sample included 171 fourth-grade and 169 fifth-grade students from mixed socio-economic backgrounds. Of this group, 49% were female and 51% were male, 11% were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, 12% qualified for special education services, 26% were children of color, and 2% were learning English as a new language.

Purposeful sampling (Seidman, 2019) was used to select a nested subset of participants from the quantitative portion of the study for follow-up interviews. Within this nested sample, extreme cases sampling defined by Mertens (2020) as individuals "that are unusual or special in some way" were chosen. Specifically, two fourth-graders and two fifth-graders with the highest motivation to read scores, as well as two fourth-graders and two fifth-graders with the lowest motivation to read scores, were selected for

interviews. This group included four females and four males. Three children identified as Hispanic, two were living in poverty, and one was receiving special education services. None of these students was learning English as a new language. Follow-up interviews were guided by the MRP-R conversational interview protocol.

### *Results*

The relationship between students' motivation to read and the level of enjoyment they derived from their book was first evaluated using a Somer's *d* test. This nonparametric measure of association looked for a correlation between students' motivation to read and the enjoyment they reported finding in their book. There was a moderately strong, statistically significant positive correlation between motivation and enjoyment ($d = .361, p < .001$). This positive correlation held true when enjoyment was examined as the dependent variable and motivation as the independent variable although the association in this direction was small ($d = .236, p < .001$).

An Independent Samples Mann-Whitney *U* Test was next performed to gain a better understanding of the differences in median motivation scores for students experiencing different levels of enjoyment from their independent reading book. Since the sample size of students who reported that they did not like (n = 6) or really did not like (n = 3) their book was quite small, the categories "I like it," "I don't like it," and "I really don't like it" were collapsed. Distributions of motivation scores for students reading books they loved and those reading books they did not love were similar as assessed by visual inspection. Median motivation scores for students reading books they loved (63.00) and those they did not (58.00) were statistically different, $U = 19{,}140$, z = 6.295, p < .001 (see Table 10).

**Table 10**

*Motivation Scores for Students Who Loved the Book and Those Who Did Not*

| Level of enjoyment | N | Median* | Mean |
|---|---|---|---|
| Loved the book | 211 | 63.00 | 63.65 |
| Did not love the book | 129 | 58.00 | 57.93 |

*Between-group differences in median motivation scores were statistically significant (p < .001).

In the interest of determining whether there are associations between features of a book and students' motivation to read, chi-square tests of independence were performed. No statistically significant associations were found between students' reading motivation and the format ($\chi2(9) = 7.984$, $p = .536$), genre ($\chi2(12) = 8.491$, $p = .746$), or thickness ($\chi2(6) = 11.852$, $p = .065$) of the book they were reading on the day they completed the MRP-R. A statistically significant association was found between students' motivation and the presence of visual features ($\chi2(3) = 7.866$, $p = .049$); however, this association was very weak (Cramer's V = .152).

Follow-up interviews with four students with the highest motivation scores and four students with the lowest scores revealed insights into the books children select for independent reading and their experiences with those books. Themes emerged related to the intrinsic value students place on reading, their readerly identities, the evolution of their reading preferences, adult influence on students' text selection, and access to books (see Table 11 for sample quotes related to each of these themes).

**Table 11**

*Example Quotes for Semi-Structured Interview Response Themes*

| Response theme | Example quote |
| --- | --- |
| Intrinsic value of reading | "I could just like disappear into a book. I can just be sitting there for like hours and can't hear anything around me." |
| Readerly identity | "I like to read more nonfiction stuff. Have you ever heard of Weird But True? Those are my favorite type of books because I like them. They're pretty long so it takes me at least two days for me to read them. And there's a whole bunch of them. You learn facts. Every page has at least two to five facts. And they're just kind of fun to read." |
| Evolution of reading preferences | "I used to like picture books . . . [now] I want to read books that have cliffhangers . . . [when I'm older] I think I'll do big books. Like huge giant chapter books." |
| Adult influence on students' text selection | "[My teachers] wanted me to start reading some more realistic books. Not any of the random fact books and stuff." |
| Access to books | "My parents started giving me like all these different books. Like every week." |

*Conclusions*

   This study set out to explore whether associations exist between the books students select for independent reading and their motivation to read. Overall findings reveal that, in many ways, children's reading preferences are as unique as they are. What matters most, it seems, is helping children to find books they love. When children love the book they are reading they are likely to have higher motivation to read.

   Wigfield (1994) defines intrinsic value as the enjoyment a person derives from engaging in a given activity. It may come as no surprise that the highly motivated students interviewed experienced strong intrinsic value from reading; however, less motivated readers also described stretches of intrinsically motivated reading. What

seemed to separate these groups of readers was the consistency with which they found

watershed books--those that lit a flame of interest and led to deeply engaged reading

(Harvey & Ward, 2017). Highly motivated students described experiencing the intrinsic

value of reading almost every time they picked up a book. For example, one student

shared that she loved reading all different sorts of books "because it's fun!" She added,

> It's like you get sucked up into a whole new world. There's a bunch of plot twists
>
> and sometimes you could just read for hours and imagine you're like in the book .
>
> . . it's just really fun for me.

> Less motivated readers, on the other hand, described these experiences as

uniquely memorable events rather than the norm. When asked if he could remember a

time when reading was really fun, one student with low motivation scores replied, "Yeah,

Amulet. I read every single one and every book only took me like two days to finish. And

there's also eight of them."

> Interestingly, both highly motivated and unmotivated readers had strong readerly

identities. All students interviewed could easily describe the types of books that grabbed

their interest; however, a stark distinction emerged in the latitude children were offered to

read the books that appealed to them. Highly motivated readers described unfettered

choice in reading material while highly unmotivated students recounted having been told

time and again to put away their self-selected text in favor of one recommended by a

teacher. This may help to explain why unmotivated readers described fewer stretches of

intrinsically motivated reading.

> When it came to specific features of the book, no statistically significant

associations were found between students' motivation to read and their book's format.

Interviews supported these quantitative findings and revealed that certain formats appealed to highly motivated and unmotivated students alike. Graphic texts, for instance, had nearly universal appeal, with highly motivated and unmotivated readers reporting positive experiences with these types of texts. When discussing stretches of intrinsically motivated voluminous reading, seven of the eight students interviewed discussed graphic novels or manga. A reader with low motivation scores became markedly more animated in his interview responses while talking about his experience reading the My Hero Academia manga series.

The book's format seems to be a particular area of interest for teachers, especially when it comes to less motivated readers. Highly motivated students described unfettered access to a wide variety of different types of books. They recall having been given leeway to follow their interests and preferences without judgment, spending many months or years reading graphic novels, picture books, magazines, and other less traditional formats.  All four of the students with low motivation, on the other hand, reported having been told to put away the graphic novels, manga, or fact books they had selected for independent reading in favor of a format their teacher deemed more appropriate. When asked whether any grown-ups had told him to read different books from those he chose, one participant with low motivation stated:

> Yeah. Pretty much every teacher has. [They said] I should start to read more higher books. Like chapter books or something . . . It was kind of annoying and hard at the same time . . . because, I mean, I don't like chapter books. They're really long and then, if someone distracts me while I'm reading, I lose what I'm doing and all . . . It's so hard to find a chapter book you're gonna like.

He went on to discuss how he reads less when told to read chapter books and novels because they do not grab his interest. As a result, he does not accrue the vital reading volume that provides opportunities to put into practice the skills and strategies his teachers have worked so hard to develop.

Students had a metacognitive awareness of the ways different formats foster their reading development. One highly motivated reader who had read graphic novels almost exclusively for over a year explained how they supported her ability to visualize as she reads. She explained,

> When I [used to] read graphic novels, the pictures were like just there. Then I started imagining what it could really be like in my head. So then I started experimenting [with books that do not have visual features] and now the pictures are just like naturally in my head.

Highly motivated readers who gained experience reading a wide range of formats also described how their preferences evolved over time, leading them into more sophisticated texts as they gained reading experience. One reader shared,

> I had mostly just read graphic novels, but I started exploring more and then I started to want to learn about wars and other just interesting parts of history . . . I basically started to want to read more different things. Like to experiment with different [books] I could find.

When it came to finding compelling books for independent reading, highly motivated readers described a robust network of individuals they could rely upon for recommendations, including parents, teachers, and friends. Unmotivated readers, on the other hand, reported limited support with finding compelling books to read. One student

recalled, "I didn't read much when I was younger . . . I couldn't find interesting books."

When asked if anyone helped him to find engaging books, he replied, "Sometimes. Not

really."

When teachers did attempt to match the interviewed students with books, their

efforts appeared to be more successful amongst students who were already motivated to

read. This may be due, in part, to the types of books that fill classroom library collections.

As one less motivated student put it, "[My teacher] may have a lot of books [in our

classroom library]. Just not the type of books I like."

### *Limitations of the Study*

There were several limitations to this study. The subjects in this study were

selected by convenience sampling. As such, results may not be generalizable beyond the

population from which subjects were selected (Mertens, 2020). When it came to the types

of books participants were reading, a limited number of students had selected books with

different types of visual features. Similarly, very few students reported disliking or really

disliking their book. This may be due to the setting in which this study was conducted–a

school district with a robust commitment to independent reading, classroom library

curation to provide access to accessible and appealing texts, and student self-selection in

text choice.

### *Implications for Classroom Instruction*

Award-winning novelist James Patterson once said, "There's no such thing as a

kid who hates reading. There are just kids who love reading and kids who are reading the

wrong books. We need to help them find the right books" (2014, p. 216). The results of

this study bring added weight and empirical evidence to this observation. Book love, it seems, is an important factor in students' motivation to read.

Data from this study demonstrate that reading motivation increases when children are allowed to follow their reading preferences and spend time reading books they love regardless of the text's format, genre, or other considerations. Including volume-based interventions that promote engaged reading of the texts students love may go a long way towards supporting the reading development of all students, particularly striving and unmotivated readers.

Although this subset of children are often tough customers when it comes to book matching, they crave their teachers' attention in this area and express a desire for educators to respect their reading preferences. Lockwood et al. (2018) suggest that when teachers aim to broaden a student's reading experience, they "expose, but don't impose." This can take the form of allowing children to gain experience with a broader range of text types through read alouds, shared reading, assigned texts, and small-group instruction. It might also look like gently offering texts that may nudge the child into new reading territory without requiring them to abandon their established reading preferences.

Educators who encourage children to put away their self-selected text in favor of one they deem more appropriate likely do so with the best intentions, hoping that certain texts will lead to greater gains in reading development. They may also fear that children will fixate on a specific text type. Encouragingly, follow-up interviews with highly motivated readers suggest that when children are allowed to follow their reading passions, they move on to a wider range of text types, accruing positive attitudes about reading along the way. These findings align with Krashen's (2011) research on children

who engage in narrow reading which he defines as "focusing on one topic, author, or genre according to the reader's interests" (p. 71). These students not only progress as readers, but deepen their exposure to syntax and vocabulary, expand their reading interest in reading, and venture into wider reading territory and more sophisticated texts over time.

With all of this in mind, educators who care about reading development should make it an instructional priority to understand the reading interests and preferences of their students, especially their less motivated readers, and take the time to match them with compelling and accessible books. These efforts will complement the important work teachers do to promote decoding, comprehension, and fluency by ensuring all children have compelling texts in which to practice these important skills and strategies.

### *Recommendations for Successful Implementation of Suggested Next Steps*

As educators engage in the work of matching readers with books they love, it is important to begin with striving readers and children who are not yet motivated to read. Although these students are often the hardest to match with compelling books, they are precisely the students who need the support most urgently. In addition to the work teachers do to build students' reading capability, the effort they make to understand children's reading interests and preferences has benefits that extend well beyond reading achievement. Book-matching conversations build relationships and foster a sense of inclusion, belonging, and dignity which are critical for personal well-being and academic growth (Cobb & Krownapple, 2019).

This study underscores the notion that readers' tastes are idiosyncratic. It is the responsibility of teachers who care about reading volume to put aside preconceived

notions and allow all students–not just highly motivated readers–to read what they love.

Rather than limiting student choice, a more effective tactic may be to inquire into how the

student's text selection supports their reading development. Students are remarkably

intuitive about their reading experiences and when they are ready to take on new

challenges. Teachers should also work with students to monitor their reading engagement

over time, stepping in when it is clear that the book love is gone to provide support

helping the child to re-engage with their book or switch to a different book that is more

likely to lead to deep engagement.

Teaching children the skills and strategies they need to decode efficiently,

comprehend deeply, and read with fluency are unquestionably important; however, the

instructional value of matching children with books that will "delight and fascinate us

and keep us up well past our bedtimes" (Bridges, 2014, p. 9) cannot be underestimated.

### *More to Explore*

Additional strategies for matching children with books they love can be found in

*Intervention Reinvention: A Volume-Based Approach to Reading Success* by Stephanie

Harvey, Annie Ward, Maggie Hoddinott, and Suzanne Carroll

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**CHAPTER SIX**

**Scholarly Practitioner Reflection**

As I reflected on the experience of completing this dissertation in practice, I returned to the application package I submitted to the University of Missouri in hopes of being admitted to the Doctor of Education (EdD) program. The essays I wrote at the time expressed my hope that the experiences I would gain as a member of the EdD statewide cooperative would provide me with the tools necessary to engage in formal research and offer a forum for rich professional conversation with fellow thought leaders in the field of education. As I near the end of this arduous journey, I can say that the EdD experience in general and the dissertation in practice, in particular, have exceeded my expectations, allowing for immeasurable personal and professional growth. I have had the opportunity to learn from and alongside educators representing diverse experiences and beliefs–individuals who have pushed my thinking, presented new perspectives, and provided incredible support navigating the challenges of earning a doctorate during a global pandemic. The experiences I had with the program have profoundly influenced how I approach my work, interact with others, and the degree to which I examine problems of practice through the lenses of ethics and diversity. The final requirement of the program, the dissertation in practice, has offered an opportunity to apply this learning to areas of leadership and scholarship.

## Influence as an Educational Leader

Perhaps the most significant transformation I have undergone through this experience has been in the area of leadership. One of the Carnegie Project's guiding principles for EdD program design is to prepare "leaders who can construct and apply knowledge to make a positive difference in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, and communities" (Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate, n.d.).

The University of Missouri's program has helped me to reflect on my personality traits and evolve in my leadership style in line with this objective.

**StrengthsQuest Profile**

The very first assignment I completed for the EdD program was the StrengthsQuest questionnaire. This tool provided me with a greater awareness of my strengths and weaknesses which has, in turn, made me a more effective leader. Knowledge of the way my personality impacts the interactions I have with others was particularly useful during the data collection and analysis phases of the dissertation in practice experience.

Perhaps because I am a natural introvert, I enjoy developing close relationships and work well in groups in which members subscribe to the idea that we all have commonalities (Maslow, 1943/2005). These are both features of the relator trait. I believe that my desire to develop interpersonal relations is why I was interested in the University of Missouri's statewide-cooperative cohort approach. This model encourages members to get to know each other personally (MacGregor & Fellabaum, 2016), which allows for more open, honest discussions (Lei et al., 2011). In my professional life, I work collaboratively across the district with a large number of teachers and administrators. This has allowed me to develop my emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011), especially in the areas of self-awareness and empathy. The strong relationships I had established with teachers across the district facilitated communication and allowed teachers to feel comfortable asking questions or voicing concerns. This was particularly helpful when talking with teachers about the study's goals and the insights we might glean from the data when discussing whether their class would participate.

The dissertation in practice helped solidify my commitment to marginalized students, a stance that dovetails with the significance trait which emerged from my StrengthsQuest profile. When choosing a topic for my dissertation, I felt strongly that it must be one that would be inclusive of marginalized students. As Johnson (2018) points out, "patterns of oppression and privilege are rooted in systems that we all participate in and make happen every day" (p. 73). We must actively look for and interrupt these patterns if we hope to move the needle towards equity. Interviews with students who experience low motivation to read opened my eyes to the systems educators have put in place that limit student text selection and adversely impact reading motivation.

**Leadership Theory**

Northouse's (2019) leadership text was particularly impactful in helping me to understand various leadership theories and how they manifest in my work. Three self-reflection inventories were especially helpful: the skills inventory, the authentic leadership questionnaire, and the ethical leadership style questionnaire.

*Skills Approach to Leadership*

The skills approach to leadership (Northouse, 2019) focuses on the abilities a leader needs to be effective. It was interesting to compare my strengths as viewed through this leadership lens with my StrenghtsQuest profile. The skills approach to leadership has three competency areas: technical, human, and conceptual. The most significant area of overlap is between my strength with ideation and the area of conceptual skills. These areas align for me since I enjoy looking for connections between complex ideas and turning them into actionable next steps. It also speaks to my strength in significance as I try to focus on projects likely to have a significant impact and lead to

systemic change. These leadership traits were useful when designing my dissertation study as they allowed me to synthesize the research on reading volume and apply it to a problem of practice I had observed in schools.

Authentic leadership reveals the extent to which a leader is genuine (Northouse, 2019). When I took the authentic leadership questionnaire, several areas emerged; however, self-awareness--an understanding of how one's actions impact others--was most relevant to the dissertation in practice experience. I was able to draw upon aspects of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2011) when working with teachers to understand the study, agree to participate, and schedule time for data collection during a time when stress is high due to the challenges of teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. This trait was also helpful during interviews as it allowed me to engage productively with children, allowing them to feel at ease and free to share their experiences without fear of judgment.

### *Ethical Leadership*

The Ethical Leadership Style Questionnaire (ELSQ) was perhaps the most personally meaningful leadership theory since I endeavor to approach my work with solid morals and values. According to this self-assessment tool, the most prominent area of ethical leadership I exhibit is justice, or a tendency to do what is fair. Although the ELSQ defines fairness as "distributing benefits and burdens to everyone equally" (Northouse, 2019, p. 360), findings from this dissertation have solidified my belief that fair does not always mean equal. Sometimes, we need to tip the playing field towards the underdog (Harvey & Ward, 2017) because some children face more significant challenges than others. The results of the present study underscore this idea as it makes clear the importance of focusing effort and attention on students who are not yet motivated to read.

**Influence as a Scholar**

In my work with teachers, I often stress the importance of focusing on the process of learning rather than on outcomes. Although Merriam and Bierema (2014) emphasize that this notion holds true for adult learners, when it came to my own learning, I did not always apply the advice. I was often so focused on the outcome–earning a credential or completing a degree–that I did not always take the time to slow down and fully engage in the process of learning. The EdD program provided many opportunities to change this pattern of learning behavior by encouraging me to examine long-held beliefs, question assumptions, and evolve in my approach to learning.

The EdD program has helped me to become a much more "reflective practitioner" (Meriam & Bierema, 2014, p. 115). Throughout the experience, I was encouraged not only to expand my understanding of foundational theoretical principles but to integrate this learning within my professional life. In so doing, it became abundantly clear that the more I learned, the more I recognize how much I still need to learn. This has only deepened my commitment to lifelong learning.

Gaining an understanding of the epistemological staircase (Holmes, 2010) helped me to understand the progression of ways of knowing. The dissertation in practice provided an opportunity to develop contextual relativism which is characterized by an "awareness that knowledge cannot be extricated from the context in which it exists" (p. 285). Interviews I conducted with students as part of the qualitative portion of this study helped me to better understand the complexities of text selection and the broader context (e.g., teacher influence, access to books) that inform a child's reading life. The experience has deepened my commitment to actively look for inequity and consciously

work towards avoiding the "path of least resistance" (Johnson, 2018, p. 69). While this is not always comfortable, experiencing discomfort is an integral part of the process in my journey toward greater self- and situational awareness.

This idea ties in with Gill's (2010) notion that learning goes well beyond knowledge to include "skills, attitudes, and beliefs that change the way that person perceives the world, understands information, and performs on the job" (p. 53). Part of my lifelong learning journey must always include efforts to examine and evolve not only in knowledge and skills but so in my attitudes and beliefs. One way to do this may be to take Clifton et al.'s (2006) advice to "become your own best teacher" (p. 230). This can be achieved by maintaining positive attitudes towards oneself as a learner, using challenging material to encourage growth, and turning inward to practice giving yourself positive feedback and praise.

My experience as a student in the University of Missouri EdD program has helped me to extend my theoretical and conceptual understanding of educational leadership and policy. Perhaps more importantly, it has given me additional strategies for integrating this learning into practice. As I continue my journey as an educational leader, I hope to set an example of lifelong learning and continue to impact the field of education through my scholarship.

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**Appendix A**

**Motivation to Read Profile-Revised: Student Survey**

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**MOTIVATION TO READ PROFILE-REVISED**

ID Number: _____ Teacher: _____ Date: _____

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1. I am in _____.
   - 2nd grade
   - 3rd grade
   - 4th grade
   - 5th grade
   - 6th grade

2. I am a _____.
   - Boy
   - Girl

3. My friends think I am _____.
   - A very good reader
   - A good reader
   - An OK reader
   - A poor reader

4. Reading a book is something I like to do.
   - Never
   - Almost never
   - Sometimes
   - Often

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can _____.
   - Almost always figure it out
   - Sometimes figure it out
   - Almost never figure it out
   - Never figure it out

6. My friends think reading is _____.
   - Really fun
   - Fun
   - OK to do
   - No fun at all

7. I read _____.
    - Not as well as my friends
    - About the same as my friends
    - A little better than my friends
    - A lot better than my friends

8. I tell my friends about good books I read.
    - I never do this
    - I almost never do this.
    - I do this some of the time.
    - I do this a lot.

9. When I am reading by myself, I understand _____.
    - Everything I read
    - Almost everything I read
    - Almost none of what I read
    - None of what I read

10. People who read a lot are _____.
    - Very interesting
    - Sort of interesting
    - Sort of boring
    - Very boring

11. I am _____.
    - A poor reader
    - An OK reader
    - A good reader
    - A very good reader

12. I think libraries are _____.
    - A really great place to spend time
    - A great place to spend time
    - A boring place to spend time
    - A really boring place to spend time

13. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.
    - A lot
    - Sometimes
    - Almost never
    - Never

14. I think becoming a good reader is _____.
    - Not very important
    - Sort of important
    - Important
    - Very important

15. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, _____.
    - I can never think of an answer
    - I almost never think of an answer
    - I sometimes think of an answer
    - I can always think of an answer

16. I think spending time reading is _____.
    - Really boring
    - Boring
    - Great
    - Really great

17. Reading is _____.
    - Very easy for me
    - Kind of easy for me
    - Kind of hard for me
    - Very hard for me

18. When my teacher reads books out loud, I think it is _____.
    - Really great
    - Great
    - Boring
    - Really boring

19. When I am in a group talking about books I have read, _____.
    - I hate to talk about my ideas
    - I don't like to talk about my idea
    - I like to talk about my ideas
    - I love to talk about my ideas

20. When I have free time, I spend _____.
    - None of my time reading
    - Very little of my time reading
    - Some of my time reading
    - A lot of my time reading

21. When I read out loud, I am a _____.
   - Poor reader
   - OK reader
   - Good reader
   - Very good reader

22. When someone gives me a book for a present, _____.
   - I am very happy
   - I am happy
   - I am unhappy
   - I am very unhappy

**Appendix B**

**Motivation to Read Profile-Revised: Scoring Guidelines**

| Item Number | 1st response | 2nd response | 3rd response | 4th response |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 SC | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2 V | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3 SC | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4 V | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5 SC | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6 V | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7 SC | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 8 V | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 9 SC | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10 V | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 11 SC | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12 V | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13 SC | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14 V | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15 SC | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 16 V | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 17 SC | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18 V | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 19 SC | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 20 V | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Appendix C**

**Motivation to Read Profile-Revised: Interview**

ID Number: _____     Date: _____

Reading Survey Scores:   SC = _____/40      V = _____/40     Total = _____/80

**Self-Concept as a Reader**

What kind of reader are you?

What's the easiest thing about reading?

What do you have to do to become a better reader?

How could teachers help you become a better reader?

Comments:

**Value of Reading**

What kinds of books do you like to read?

- Tell me about them (topics/genres/information and/or narrative?)

Do you read different things at home than at school?

What kinds of things other than books do you read at home? (pause for students to respond)

- eBooks (Kindle, Nook, iPad, etc.)

- Computer/laptop/iPad, etc.

- Internet (what do you do online?)

- Comunication? (e.g., email, IM, Blog, Twitter, Facebook, post, chat)

How do you find out about books you might like to read?

What books do you want to read now?

What could teachers do to make reading more enjoyable?

Is it important to learn to read well?

What kind of reading will you do when you're an adult?

Comments:

**Appendix D**

**Child Assent Statement: Survey**

Project Title: *Text Selection and Students' Motivation to Read*
Principal Investigator/Researcher: *Maggie Hoddinott, EdD candidate; Bret Cormier, associate professor and dissertation chair*
IRB Reference Number:

You are being asked to be in a research project. You do not have to be in this project if you don't want to. You can stop at any time and we won't be upset.
The reason why we are doing this project is because we want to know about the books kids pick and their motivation to read.
You are being asked to share information about the book you are reading today and to take a survey about reading. The information you share will be private. Only the researchers and your teachers will know what you said.
If you have questions about this project, you can contact me at mehgbq@mail.missouri.edu. You can also ask your parents if you have questions about this project because they said it was okay for you to be in the study. You can still say you don't want to be in the study and that is fine.

**Appendix E**

**Independent Reading Text Data Collection Fields**

- Student ID number
- Author
- Title
- ISBN
- eBook
    - No
    - Yes
- Genre
    - Biography
    - Historical Fiction
    - Informational
    - Narrative NF
    - Poetry/Verse
    - Realistic Fiction
    - Sci-Fi/Fantasy
    - Traditional
- Format
    - Early Reader
    - Graphic
    - Picture Book
    - Series Book
    - Stand-Alone Novel
    - Short Text
    - Reference Text
    - YA
- Navigation
    - Any Order
    - Choose Your Own
    - Start to Finish
- Thickness
    - Thin (≤1 mm)
    - Medium (1-3 mm)
    - Thick (4+ mm)

- Amount of White Space in the Book
    - 0-33%
    - 34-66%
    - 67-100%
- Visual Supports
    - Black and White Illustrations
    - Color Illustrations
    - Photographs
    - Other visuals (e.g., Diagrams, Charts, Graphs)
    - None
- Source
    - Borrowed from Friend
    - Borrowed from Extended Family
    - Borrowed from Tutor
    - Home
    - Library (Classroom)
    - Library (Public)
    - Library (School)
    - Library (Support Teacher)
    - Other _____
- Did anyone tell you to read this book?
    - No
    - Yes (Friend)
    - Yes (Parent)
    - Yes (Sibling)
    - Yes (Classroom teacher)
    - Yes (Support teacher)
    - Yes (Other)
- How much are you enjoying this text?
    - I love it.
    - I like it.
    - I don't like it.
    - I really don't like it.
- How long have you been reading this book?
    - Today's the first day
    - 2-3 days
    - 4-5 days
    - 6+ days
    - Rereading
    -

**Appendix F**

**Informed Consent: Qualitative Data Collection**

*Parental/Guardian Consent Form*
*Motivation to Read Profile-Revised Conversational Interview Sub Study*
*Project Title: Text Selection and Students' Motivation to Read*
*Principal Investigator Name: Maggie Hoddinott, EdD candidate; Bret Cormier,*
*associate professor and dissertation chair*
*IRB Assigned Project Number:*

*Key Information About the Study*
*Your child is being asked to participate in a research study. The purpose of the research study is to explore students' reading motivation and specific texts that may impact the degree to which students are motivated to read by examining whether aspects of the book are correlated with students' motivation to read. Your child has already is being asked to engage in a conversational interview with the principal investigator, Margaret Hoddinott. Possible benefits include a deeper understanding of your child's self-concept as a reader and the value he or she places on reading. This information may be used by your child's teachers to tailor future instruction and literacy support. Some possible risks may include questions that your child may find upsetting; however, we do not expect these to be different from the kinds of things your child might discuss with friends, family, or their teachers.*
***Please read this form carefully and take your time. Let us know if you have any questions before giving your child permission to participate. The research team can explain words or information that you do not understand. Research is voluntary and you can choose not to have your child participate. If you do not want your child to participate or choose to start the study then stop later, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled.***

*Purpose of the Research*
*Your child is being asked to participate in this study because your child completed the Motivation to Read Profile-Revised survey and shared information about the text he or she was reading on the day the survey was administered. This portion of the research study aims to explore more deeply students' motivation to read by engaging in more in-depth conversation. The purpose of the study is to explore the relationship between the texts students read independently and their reading motivation.*
*Please note that the lead researcher is also an employee of the Mamaroneck Union Free School District.*

What will happen during the study?

*Your child is being be asked to engage in a conversational interview with the principal researcher to explore your child's self-concept as a reader and the value he or she places*

*on reading. Participation is expected to last approximately 15 to 20 minutes. There will be about eight students participating in this portion of the study.*

**What are the expected benefits of the study?**

*Your child may or may not benefit as a result of their participation in the study. Information collected will be shared with your child's teacher and may be used to plan instruction, match your child with compelling texts, and/or support your child's self-concept as a reader. Information learned from the study may help other people in the future by adding to our understanding of children's motivation to read.*

What are the possible risks of participating in this study?

*There are minimal risks expected when taking part in this study. There are some that we know about and some may not know about yet. We expect that the questions your child will be ask are not different from the kinds of things they discuss with family, friends, or their teachers. Your child may skip any questions they don't want to answer, and may opt-out of participating in the study at any time.*

*To help lower these possible risks, we will obtain assent from your child prior to commencing the conversational interview by explaining the purpose of the study, describing what will happen during the conversation, and making clear that they can opt out of the study at any time.*

*We will tell you about any new important information we learn that may affect your decision to allow your child to continue to participate in this study.*

**What other choices do I have if I don't want my child to be in this study?**

*Your child is not required to be in this study. You can simply choose not to have your child participate. You can look for other research projects your child may be interested in instead of this study.*

**Will my child receive compensation for taking part in this study?**

*Your child will not be compensated for taking part in this study.*

**Are there any costs for participating in this study?**
*There are no costs associated with letting your child participate in this study.*

**Will information about my child be kept private?**
*The research team is committed to respecting your child's privacy and keeping their personal information confidential. We will make every effort to protect their information to the extent allowed by law. Your child's records will be given a code number and will not contain their name or other information that could identify them. The code number that connects their name to their information will be kept in a separate, secure location.*

*When the results of this research are shared, we will remove all identifying information so it will not be known who provided the information. Your child's information will be kept as secure as possible to prevent their identity from being disclosed.*

*We may share what we collected from your child as part of this research, after removing their identifiers, for future research without additional informed consent from you.*

***Who do I contact if I have questions or concerns?***

*If you have questions about this study or your child experiences a research-related injury, you can contact the University of Missouri researcher at mhoddinott@mamkschools.org.*
*If you have questions about your child's rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected.*
*If you want to talk privately about any concerns or issues related to your child's participation, you may contact the Research Participant Advocacy at 888-280-5002 (a free call) or email muresearchrpa@missouri.edu.*
***Do I get a copy of this consent?***
*You will receive a copy of this consent for your records.*
***We appreciate your consideration for your child to participate in this study.***

| | |
|---|---|
| | |
| ***Parent/Guardian Signature*** | ***Date*** |

| |
|---|
| |
| ***Child's Name*** |

| |
|---|
| |
| ***Relationship to Child*** |

**Appendix G**

**Child Assent Statement: Interview**

Project Title: *Text Selection and Students' Motivation to Read*
Principal Investigator/Researcher: *Maggie Hoddinott, EdD candidate; Bret Cormier, associate professor and dissertation chair*
IRB Reference Number:

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You are being asked to have a conversation with me about your experiences as a reader and the kinds of things you like to read. The information you share will be private. Only the researchers and your teachers will know what you said.
If you have questions about this project, you can contact me at mehgbq@mail.missouri.edu. You can still say you don't want to be in the study and that is fine.

**Vita**

Maggie Hoddinott grew up in Westchester, New York. After graduating from McGill University with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, Maggie joined Teach For America and taught second grade at P.S. 53 in the Bronx. She holds a Masters in Elementary Education from Pace University and a Masters in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education from the University of Arizona. She has served as a classroom teacher, Reading Recovery teacher, and teacher of students with hearing impairments. Maggie currently serves as the literacy ambassador for the Mamaroneck schools where she works to ensure all students have rich, literate lives by curating classroom libraries, matching readers with books, and fostering community partnerships. Along with Stephanie Harvey, Annie Ward, and Suzanne Carroll, Maggie authored *Intervention Reinvention: A Volume-Based Approach to Reading Success*.