Need Help Choosing Good Books for Students?
A Book Selection Study, Book Selection Checklist, and a Discussion of How Educators Can Select Books that Engage Young Readers of Color and Possibly Improve Reading Achievement

Beth Kara Dawkins, Ph.D.
Trinity Washington University
School of Education
125 Michigan Avenue Northeast
Washington, DC 20017
United States of America
&
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
School of Education
Campus Box 3500
Peabody Hall
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3500
United States of America

Abstract

This study examined book selection strategies of young African American and Latino readers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, with the intent of uncovering more information about the content of books these students find engaging. As national achievement data show, African American and Latino students, and individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are scoring below level in reading (NAEP, 2009; 2011), and the ultimate goal of this inquiry was to gain insight towards closing the reading achievement gap for these students. A mixed-methods study using qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis strategies was conducted with 160 kindergarten students in the Southern region of the United States, and informing the study was a prior international experience in Albania, Eastern Europe. Results indicated that students select books that contain well-developed story content as well as culturally-relevant content, and emerging from the study is a book selection checklist that educators can use to select quality literature for young readers. Although the study focused on specific groups of students, the results can be utilized across many cultures and groups of students.

Keywords: Multicultural Literature, Reading Achievement, Reading Engagement, Interesting Texts, Book Selections, Picture Books, Book Selection Checklist, Young Readers

Introduction and Study Framework (Section 1)

Over time, national reading achievement data has shown that African American and Latino elementary students are consistently scoring below level in the subjects of reading and literacy (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2009, 2011). The achievement gap in reading and literacy for African American and Latino students has persisted far too long, and this article outlines a research inquiry and results that offer strategies towards closing the above described achievement gap, and improving reading achievement among African American and Latino students.

A number of studies indicate a relationship among reading achievement and reading amount (Allington, 2001); Anderson, Wilson & Fielding, 1988), reading engagement (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Sturm, 2001), and reading interest (Mohr, 2003; Brooks & McNair, 2009). Reading amount, the volume of both required and recreational literature an individual reads, can have positive effects on reading achievement. Frequent and consistent exposure to print and interactions with text can improve literacy skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, summarizing, recall, and reading ease and speed (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).

The Matthew Effect in Reading, as outlined by Keith Stanovich (1986),also indicates a strong relationship between reading amount and reading achievement, and suggests a reciprocal effect with reading achievement stemming from reading amount. Increased reading and frequent interactions with text can improve reading skills; in turn, readers with more developed reading skills tend to read more and read with more ease. On the contrary, readers with less developed reading skills, poorer vocabularies and comprehension skills, tend to read less and at a slower rate. Reading less and having infrequent interactions with text may impede literacy development and reading achievement.

Reading amount is potentially connected to reading engagement. Reading engagement is defined as the joint operation of motivations, strategies, and knowledge used for reading activities (Guthrie, Anderson, Alao, & Rinehart, 1999). Engaged readers often become immersed in the text they are reading (Sturm, 2001), experience a state of absorption and flow with reading (Csikszentmihalyi, 1991), exhibit intense curiosity about what they are reading, and desire to continue reading until the completion of the text (Nell, 1988; Tierney & Shanahan, 1990). Engaged readers often read by choice (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992), and find reading to be a pleasurable, rewarding experience and opportunity to learn and discover. Engaged readers tend to develop a fondness for reading which spans across time, transfers to a variety of genres, and often culminates in valued learning outcomes and higher reading achievement (Cipielewski & Stanovich, 1992; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000).In sum, readers who experience engagement with reading, tend to read more and have more positive perceptions of reading and text.

Multiple factors can influence reading engagement and the ability for young readers to experience the absorption, immersion and flow often connected to reading engagement, including, but not limited to, teaching involvement, praise and rewards, classroom learning environment, student efficacy, and interesting texts (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Interesting texts, defined as literary works that match the topical interests and cognitive competency of the reader, have also been documented as being a key factor in book selection, and served as a focal point in this research inquiry. Interesting stories are more likely to be rated higher in comparison to non-interesting stories (McLoyd, 1979; Walker & Kintsch, 1981)and interesting texts may have a positive influence on story recall, story comprehension, and motivation to read, reread, and recommend a text (Anderson, 1982; Anderson, Mason & Shirey, 1984). Interesting texts, and the concept of reading interest were studied synchronously in this study in order to shed more light on why students select certain books. Similar in meaning, reading interest describes how interested, engrossed, or enthusiastic an individual may be about text and reading.

Reading interest based on a variety of factors has been outlined by a wide variety of scholars, including the factors of gender (Chick & Heilman-Houser, 2000; Simpson, 1996; Sturm, 2006), book genre (Mohr 2003; 2006; Moss & McDonald, 2004), the presence of familiar versus novel content (Bodrova & Leong, 2007; Meadows, 1993; Nodelman, 1988;), and the influence of peers and teachers (Dorion, 2003; Kragler, 2000; Mohr, 2006; Wendelin & Zinck, 1988). This study examined the less researched factor of cultural content in books, and its influence onreading interest and book selections of young African American and Latino readers. Cultural content in books encompasses themes, characters, illustrations, and other book material that depict a group of individuals (Brooks, 2006). African American and Latino students may experience more enjoyment and engagement with books containing culturally-relevant content. Seeing oneself and one's culture positively and accurately reflected in a book often allows the reader to have pride in themselves and their culture (Brooks & McNair, 2009), and to "walk tall in the world" (Bishop, 1990). Cultural literature is vital to African American and Latino students, but can be beneficial to all students. Not only can cultural literature serve as a mirror reflecting one's culture, it can also serve as a window into other cultures (Holmes, Powell, Holmes & Witt, 2000; Mohr, 2006). In addition to cultural content in books supporting social-emotional development, it also may support literacy development. Literacy skills such as comprehension, story recall, and story interpretation may be enhanced when book content matches the reader's culture (Banks & Banks, 2001; Boyd, 2002, 2006; Copenhaver, 2001).Students of color who were previously hesitant to engage in reading activities may gain enthusiasm for reading when presented with texts containing culturally-relevant content (Parker, 2008). In a study conducted with African American families who were given books containing culturally-relevant content, McNair (2007) found that the parents increased the amount of time spent reading aloud to their children, developed a stronger appreciation of reading and literature, and recommended the book titles to friends, family members and co-workers. Overall, young African American and Latino readers may experience more engagement, interest, and literacy development when reading books with cultural content.

This research inquiry was designed to investigate the book selections of elementary African American and Latino students, and gather student data to ascertain the strategies used to make book selections and recommendations. The research questions were, "In comparison to their Caucasian and Latino peers, how do African American kindergarteners describe book selections they make for themselves, and peers of similar/different races?" and "In comparison to their Caucasian and Latino peers, do African American kindergarteners select books based on multicultural [cultural] content?"
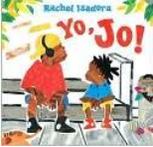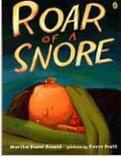
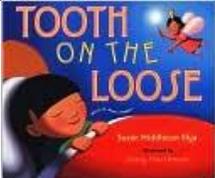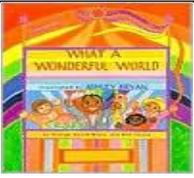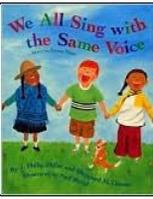## *Albania Experience* (Section 2)

In addition to prior research outlining book selection strategies among younger readers and my hypotheses indicating that young readers will find interest in books that reflect their culture, an additional international experience informed this research inquiry. Several years ago, as a consultant with the International Orthodox Christian Charities in the country of Albania, Eastern Europe, the power of culturally relevant literature became overwhelmingly apparent. Based in Tirana, the capitol city of Albania, the author's consultant responsibilities included traveling to the many early childhood and elementary schools around the country and supporting teachers in improving the educational program for students. Teachers and program administrators were advised on instruction, curriculum, physical classroom arrangement, budget allocation, and the mechanics of teaching English to young students. Developmentally-appropriate instruction was also modeled through teaching bilingual lessons to the students.In traveling to the different schools throughout the country, one observation that was consistent in each school was the poor selection of literature for the students. Most classrooms contained bookshelves with fewer than five books, and the literature contained content that most educators would assess as inappropriate for the respective group of students. Many of the books contained fairy tale story content, incorrect translations, and illustrations depicting children with light-colored hair and eyes, unlike the majority of the Albanian students. In response to the lack of quantity and quality of literature in the school system, the author wrote and published a bilingual children's book that contained quality story elements, and cultural content consistent with the specific geographic region of the world. The book, *Good Afternoon, Miredita*, was donated to the children of many Albanian schools, orphanages, churches and group homes. Over time, the author had the opportunity to visit and follow-up with many of the students, teachers, and administrators present at the schools where the books were donated. Plentiful comments emerged from students describing the book as "fun to read," and "easy to read," and one student remarked, "the little girl has brown hair like me." One student commented, "this is a book for me," and later explained that the book contained content he was familiar with and that he could identify with the words and pictures. Several teachers and administrators voiced appreciation to have a literature selection that reflects the realities of the Albanian students in their schools. The experience of writing a children's book in response to the need for quality and culturally-relevant literature for the students present in the schools, in 2003, provided a foundation for the present research inquiry which further delved into the question of book content young children find interesting.

The Study… "Talks with the Book Lady" (Section 3)

The study was conducted across nine elementary classrooms in a Southern, United States, school district, with approximately one hundred and sixty kindergarten students identifying primarily as African American, Caucasian and Latino. The majority of students in each school were considered from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, as indicated by high percentages of students receiving free or reduced lunch. Each classroom was given a set of eight age-appropriate, fictional picture books representing four groups- African American, Caucasian, Latino, Multicultural (many cultures)(see Table 1). The set of books used for the study was compiled using the support of local librarians, local and national booklists outlining texts reflecting African American, Caucasian and Latino cultures, and booklists of award-winning children's books. The set of eight books was given to each classroom and each book was read aloud to the students by the classroom teacher. Subsequent to all books being read aloud to all students, participants were interviewed individually and asked to select the book they liked best, and asked follow-up questions to explain their book selection. Participants were also asked to select a book for an African American, Caucasian, and Latino peer, and were asked follow-up questions to explain the peer book selections. The significance of investigating book selections of young readers is to gather information regarding what these readers find interesting about a book, which connects to reader interest, reading engagement, reading amount, and ultimately reading achievement. Younger students are often capable of making intentional book selections, and using sophisticated strategies to select books.

Based on previous studies investigating book selections of younger readers, book preferences, book selections, and book reselections were evident in kindergarten and first grade students (Childress, 1985; Robinson, Larsen, Haupt & Mohiman, 1997).

Table 1: List of Picture Books Used in the Study

	Book Title/Author/Copyright Date	Description
	Jazz Baby by Lisa Wheeler 2007	African American culture Fiction
	Yo, Jo by Rachel Isadora 2007	African American culture Fiction
	Knuffle Bunny by Mo Willems 2004	Caucasian culture Fiction
	Roar of a Snore by Marsha Diane Arnold 2006	Caucasian culture Fiction
	Bebe Goes Shopping by Susan Middleton Elya 2006	Latino culture Fiction
	Tooth on the Loose by Susan Middleton Elya 2008	Latino culture Fiction
	What a Wonderful World by George David Weiss & Bob Thiele 1995	Multicultural Fiction
	We All Sing in the Same Voice by J. Phillip Miller & Sheppard M. Greene 2005	Multicultural Fiction
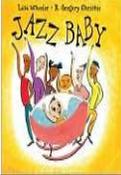
4

Data Analysis and Results (Section 4)

Students' book selections were analyzed using the quantitative method of multinomial logistic regression (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). For each book selection opportunity, students had a total of eight possible options, as the book set contained two books representing African American culture, two books representing Caucasian culture, two books representing Latino culture, and two books that representing many cultures (Multicultural). Each student was asked to make a book selection for themselves, and for an African American, Caucasian, and Latino peer. In response to the interviewer's request for students to select a book for themselves, the majority of African American students selected African American books (43.24%), similar to the majority of Caucasian students selecting Caucasian books (41.18%). Based on quantitative analyses, African American and Caucasian students most frequently selected books containing content matching their culture. (See Table 2) There were no significant correlations regarding book selections made for peers of various cultural backgrounds.

Table 2: Book Selections of Study Participants (Quantitative Data)

	African American Books	Caucasian Books	Latino Books	Multicultural Books
African American Participants (n=37)	16 (43.24%)	10 (27.03%)	7 (18.92%)	4 (10.81%)
Caucasian Participants (n=85)	25 (29.41%)	35 (41.18%)	23 (27.06%)	2 (2.35%)
Latino Participants (n=16)	8 (50.00%)	4 (25.00%)	3 (18.75%)	1 (6.25%)
Bi-racial Participants (n=21)	8 (38.10%)	4 (19.05%)	8 (38.10%)	1 (4.76%)
Native American Participants (n=1)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)

Note. Chi-Square Value Probability (.245) or P= .245 at the p=.05 significance level

Participants were asked follow-up interview questions in order to gather explanations for self and peer book selections. All follow-up interviews were transcribed and analyzed using the qualitative methods of coding in order to identify major themes and categories for book selection explanations. Students' responses for book selections were grouped into eight themes: Book Elements, Character Elements, Cultural Elements, External Elements, Prior Knowledge, Random, and Story Elements. The most frequent explanations for book selections, for all participant groups, were Story Elements (48.25%), Cultural Elements (17.25%), and Book Elements (16%). (See Table 3)

Table3: Frequencies of Rationales for Book Selections (Qualitative Data)

	African American (n=37)	Caucasian (n=85)	Latino (n=16)	Multi-racial (n=21)
Story Elements	331 (46%)	540 (50%)	83 (50%)	228 (47%)
Cultural Content	128 (18%)	201 (18%)	21 (13%)	82 (20%)
Book Elements	117 (16%)	167 (15%)	27 (16%)	81 (17%)
Character Elements	64 (9%)	96 (9%)	18 (11%)	30 (6%)
External Influences	25 (3%)	27 (2%)	1 (1%)	14 (3%)
Prior Knowledge	24 (3%)	32 (3%)	1 (1%)	16 (3%)
Random	29 (4%)	24 (2%)	14 (8%)	17 (4%)

Story Elements describe responses related to the book's theme or genre, or describing the story as boy or girl content, suspenseful, funny, rhythmic or humorous. Story Elements also include responses related to illustrations, being that illustrations in picture books aid in communicating story meaning and content. Cultural Elements include responses related to physical appearance of characters, skin color or hairstyle, dress, language, music, or comments specific to cultural identity. "She looks like me," "my brother wears his hair like that," "that's how my sister dresses," or, "we talk like that at my house," are examples of comments included under Cultural Elements. The third most frequent response, Book Elements, consists of responses describing physical book characteristics such as the size, shape, length or color of the book, font type or size, or page layout. Book Elements also includes comments in reference to the cover of the book or the book being an award-winner text, as evidenced by the presence of an award emblem. Based on qualitative data analyses, young readers most frequently selected books based on the story elements, the presence of cultural content or content matching their culture, and attractive physical book characteristics.

Implications and a Book Selection Checklist(Section 5)

Students' book selections and follow-up interviews provided more insight into book content that young, economically disadvantaged, African American and Latino readers find interesting. Study participants described their strategies for selecting books for themselves and peers based on the book's story content, cultural content, and physical book characteristics. Providing readers with books they find interesting may inspire more reading and interactions with text (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000), which may improve reading and literacy skills such as comprehension, vocabulary, story recall, and overall development of reading and literacy skills (Hidi& Baird, 1986; Hidi & McLaren, 1988). Educators, parents/guardians, and other individuals responsible for selecting literature for young readers can utilize information on book selections in order to provide texts that students are more likely to read, reread, and enjoy, and that more closely align with students' reading interests.

Based on data derived through the study and student interviews, a book selection checklist was created that is instrumental in supporting teachers as they strive to provide students with quality, and culturally-relevant literature for instructional and recreational reading (see Table 4).The Book Selection Checklist, a tool to assist educators in making better books selections for young readers, contains data derived from the study that teachers can use to evaluate existing literature selections, and to inform future literature selections for early childhood and elementary-aged readers. The checklist displays the most frequent explanations for book selections from study participants, categorized under the themes of Story Elements, Cultural Elements, and Book Elements. The objective of the checklist is to serve as a resource to support teachers in making thoughtful, intentional book selections for students and providing reading material that students will enjoy, find interesting, and that may encourage reading.

Table 4: Book Selection Checklist

Book Selection Checklist for Selecting Quality, Culturally Rich Picture Books for Young Readers			
The checklist below is designed to evaluate the quality of picture book selections used with early childhood and elementary aged readers. Younger students describe story elements, cultural content, and physical book characteristics as key criteria in making book selections (Dawkins, 2010). Rate each picture book, on a scale of 1 to 5, based on the criteria and descriptions below in the categories of Story Elements, Cultural Content, and Book Elements. Picture books rating higher on the scale are more likely to inspire reader interest and engagement, and more likely to be selected and reselected by younger readers (Dawkins, 2010).			
1= Poor 2= Below Average 3= Average 4= Good 5= Excellent			
	(1) Story Elements (characteristics about the story, writing, illustrations and characters)		**Score/ Comments**
Storyline	Storyline is funny, contains age-appropriate humor;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Storyline contains material most young readers will find interesting and engaging;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Storyline contains suspense;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Storyline offers opportunities for prediction;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Plot is well-developed, well-rounded, multidimensional;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Story contains a logical sequence of events;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Storyline contains action;		

Illustrations	Illustrations are bright;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Illustrations are contain vivid colors;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Illustrations are visually engaging;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Illustrations support the storyline;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Illustrations aid in communicating story content, action and events;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Character Elements	Characters are well-rounded and multi-dimensional;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Character roles demonstrate equality with leadership roles and decision-making; characters of varied genders, races, and ages serve as leaders;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Vocabulary	Vocabulary is age-appropriate for the age/grade level of the child;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Vocabulary is developmentally-appropriate for the age/grade level of the child;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Vocabulary contains rhyme and rhythmic content;		
Length	Length of the book is appropriate for the age/grade level,	1 2 3 4 5 NA	

	(2) Cultural Content (book content that depicts one or many cultural groups)		**Score/ Comments**
Vocabulary & Language	Book contains vocabulary and language that match the culture of the reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Illustrations	Illustrations depict characters matching physical likeness of the reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Inclusive Content	Book contains story content or pictures depicting hairstyles, hair types or hair color matching the culture of the reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains fashion or styles of dress consistent with the culture of the reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content or pictures depicting skin tones matching the culture of the reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content or pictures depicting characters of various sizes, shapes and height;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content or pictures depicting physical characteristics consistent with the culture of the reader; (ex: facial features)	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content or pictures consistent with the socioeconomic status of the reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Activities	Book contains story content or illustrations depicting activities or traditions consistent with the culture of the reader; (ex: dancing, music, cooking or foods, rituals, ceremonies, celebrations)	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Window into Other Cultures	Provides a window into cultures not matching the culture of the reader	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Accuracy	Book contains story content and pictures that accurately depict the history of the culture;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content and/or pictures that accurately depict physical characteristics of the reader's culture; (ex: hairstyles, facial features)	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content and/or pictures that accurately depict interactions from members of the reader's culture;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	
	Book contains story content and/or pictures depicting the reader's culture that are uplifting and positive;	1 2 3 4 5 NA	

	(3) Book Elements (physical book characteristics)		Score/ Comments
Size & Shape	Book is large in size; Book is square or rectangular in shape;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Font	Font type is attractive; Font is clearly readable and not covered by illustrations; Font is large and easily readable or interpretable by the reader; Font color is easy to view by reader;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Appearance of Pages and the Front Cover	The appearance of the book pages is glossy, not matte; The appearance of the book cover is glossy, not matte;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Supplemental or Accompanying Materials	Compact disc or media accompanies the book; Compact disc or media supports or extends book/story content;	1 2 3 4 5 NA 1 2 3 4 5 NA	
Author: Beth Kara Dawkins, Ph.D References: Dawkins, B. (2010). Book Selections of Economically Disadvantaged African American Students. ProQuest/UMI Dissertation Publishing, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Council on Interracial Books for Children (1998). California State Department of Education.			

In 2016, a group of ten practicing early childhood and elementary teachers utilized the Book Selection Checklist in their classrooms as a strategy to make better and more informed book selections for their students. The teachers evaluated their classroom book collections to assess whether the texts offered students quality story content, rich cultural content, and engaging physical book characteristics. The teachers commented that the checklist provided substantial support in selecting or assessing picture books, and encouraged them to be more cognizant of the types of books available to students. The teachers also noted that the checklist provided substantial support with selecting diverse titles that contain accurate and positive dialogue and illustrations. The teachers also provided feedback on the experience of using the Book Selection Tool, regarding its user-friendliness, clarity and reliability of the results. The majority of teachers indicated that the presence of instructions for using the checklist would be helpful, and that having a rating scale to assist with evaluating the book for each category would be beneficial. Other teachers commented that inserting descriptions for the criteria in each category would bring more clarity to the checklist. Based on the teachers' feedback, the Book Selection Checklist was updated to enhance user-friendliness and clarity of results. The checklist is intended for use with educators, and also families and members of the community, to support efforts to select quality and culturally-rich books for young readers.

Conclusion and Further Inquiry (Section 6)

In light of the achievement gap in reading and literacy existing for African American and Latino students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, the study sought to discover more information about the reading interests of these students. Intentional effort and attention must be given towards improving the long-standing epidemic of African American, Latino, and economically disadvantaged students performing below level in reading achievement. The insight uncovered through the research inquiry can also be beneficial in supporting book selections and literacy development in all groups of students, across cultures, economic levels and geographic locations.

Based on the study's results, more information is available regarding why students select certain books to read, reread, and recommend to peers. Also, based on the study's results, the Book Selection Checklist serves as an evaluative tool to help educators assess current book collections, and make more informed and effective choices of picture books for young readers. Educators, policymakers, administrators, families and communities must consistently be intentional about addressing the discrepancy in reading achievement among African American and Latino students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and strive to create and implement strategies for reading and literacy improvement. Examining the book selections of younger readers offers a window into the picture book content these students find interesting, which may influence reader interest, reading engagement, reading amount, and ultimately reading achievement.

References

Allington, D. (2001). *What really matters most for struggling readers: Designingresearch based programs*. New York: Addison-Wesley.

Anderson, R. (1982). Allocation of attention during reading. In A. Flammer& W.

Kintsch (Eds.), *Discourse processing* (pp. 292-313). Amsterdam: North Holland Publishing Company.

Anderson, R., Mason, J., &Shirey, L. (1984). The reading group: An experimental

investigation labyrinth. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *20* (1), 6-38.

Anderson, R., Wilson, P., & Fielding, L. (1988). Growth in reading and how children spendtheir time outside of school. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *23*, 285-303.

Banks, J., & Banks, C. (2001). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives(4ʰed.).*New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Bishop, R. (1990). Walk tall in the world: African American literature for today'schildren. *Journal of Negro Education*, *59*, 556-565.

Bishop, R. (1990). Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors. *Perspectives, 6*, (3), ix-xi.

Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. (2007). *Tools of the mind: The Vygotskian approach to earlychildhood education (2ⁿᵈed.).* Columbus, OH: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Boyd, F. (2002). Conditions, concessions, and the many tender mercies of learning through multicultural literature. *Reading Research and Instruction*, *42*, 58-92.

Boyd, F. (2006). Teaching *warriors don't cry* with other text types to enhance comprehension. *English Journal*, *95*, 61-68.

Brooks, W. (2006). Reading representations of themselves: urban youth use culture and African American textual features to develop literary understandings. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *41* (3), 372-392.

Brooks, W., & McNair, J. (2009). "But this story of mine is not unique": A review of research on African-American children children's literature. *Review of Educational Research*, *79* (1), 125-162.

Chick, K., &Heilman-Houser, R. (2000). Children's literature choices: Gender stereotypesprevail. *Pennsylvania Reading: Journal of the Keystone State Reading Association, 1* (2), 3-13.

Childress, G. (1985). Gendergap in the library: Different choices for girls and boys. *Top of the News*, *42* (1), 69-73.

Cipielewski, J., &Stanovich, K. (1992). Predicting growth in reading ability from children'sexposure to print. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, *54*, 74-89.

Copenhaver, J. (2001). Listening to their voices connect literary and cultural responses to small group read-alouds of *Malcolm X: A Fire Burning Brightly*. *The New Advocate*, *14*, 343-359.

Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1991). Literacy and intrinsic motivation. In S. R. Graubard (Ed.), *Literacy* (pp. 115-140). New York: Noonday.

Dawkins, B. (2010). Book Selections of Economically Disadvantaged African AmericanStudents. ProQuest/UMI Dissertation Publishing, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Dawkins, B. (2003). *Good Afternoon, Mirëdita.* Vernon Publishing, Tirana, Albania. (received U.S. copyright in 2004)

Doiron, R. (2003). Boy books, girl books. *Teacher Librarian*, *30* (3), 14-18.

Guthrie, J., Anderson, E., Alao, S., & Rinehart, J. (1999). Influences of concept- oriented reading instruction on strategy use and conceptual learning. *The Elementary School Journal, 99* (4), 343-366.

Guthrie, J., &Wigfield, A. (2000). Engagement and motivation in reading. In M. L.

Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (Vol. 3, pp. 403-424). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hidi, S.,& Baird, W. (1986). Interestingness- A neglected variable in discourse processing. *Cognitive Science*, *10*, 179-194.

Hidi, S., & Baird, W. (1988). Strategies for increasing text-based interest and students'recallof expository texts. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *23*(4), 465-483.

Hidi, S., & McLaren, J. (1988, April). *The effect of topic and them interestingness on children's school performance.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

Holmes, K., Powell, S., Holmes, S., & Witt, E. (2007). Readers and book characters: Does race matter. *Journal of Educational Research*, *100* (5), 276-282.

Hosmer, D., &Lemeshow, S. (2000). *Applied logistic regression*. New York: Wiley and Sons.

Kragler, S. (2000). Choosing books for reading: An analysis of three types of readers. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education,14* (2), 133-141.

McLoyd, V. (1979). The effects on extrinsic rewards of differential value on high and lowintrinsic interest. *Child Development*, *50*, 1010-1019.

McNair, J. (2007, April). *"I'm excited to see little girls that look like my little girls on the cover!" Parents and children reading African American children's literature together*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association,Chicago, IL.

Meadows, K. (1993). *The child as a thinker: The development and acquisition of cognition inchildhood*. London: Routledge.

Mohr, K. (2003). Children's choices: A comparison of book preferences between Hispanic and non-Hispanic first-graders. *Reading Psychology*, *24*, 163-176.

Mohr, K. (2006). Children's choice for recreational reading: a three-part investigation of selection preferences, rationales, and processes. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *38* (1), 81-104.

Moss, G., & McDonald, J. (2004). The borrowers: Library records as unobtrusive measures of children's reading preferences. *Journal of Research in Reading*, *27*, 401-412.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (2009). Achievement gaps: How black and white students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the national assessment of educational progress. NCES document. Retrieved November 1, 2017, from

https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2009455.aspx

National Assessment of Educational Progress (2011). Achievement gaps: How Hispanic and white students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the national assessment of educational progress. NCES document. Retrieved November 1, 2017, from

https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/studies/2011459.aspx

National Center for Educational Statistics. (1997). Average reading scale scores, by student Eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch, grades 4 and 8: 1997-2003. NCES document. Retrieved June 1, 2009, from

http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/results1997/lunch.asp

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2004). Average reading scale scores, by student eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch, grades 4 and 8: 1998-2004. NCESdocument. Retrieved June 1, 2009, from

http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/results2004/lunch.asp

National Center for Educational Statistics. (2007). Average reading scale scores, by student eligibility for free/reduced-price lunch, grades 4 and 8: 2003-2007. NCES document. Retrieved June 1, 2009, from

http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/results2004/lunch.asp

Nell, V. (1988). The psychology of reading for pleasure. *Reading Research Quarterly*,*23*, 6-50.

Nodelman, P. (1988). *Words without pictures: The narrative art of children's picture books*. Athens: The University of Georgia Press.

Parker, K. (2008). My boys and my books: Engaging African American young men in emancipatory reading. In W. Brooks & J. McNair (Eds.), *Embracing, evaluating, and examining African American children's and young adult literature* (pp.111-126). Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Robinson, C., Larsen, J., Haupt, J., &Mohiman, J. (1997). Picture book selection behaviors of emergent readers: Influence of genre, familiarity and book attributes. *Reading Research and Instruction*, *36*, 287-304.

Simpson, A. (1996). Facts and fictions: An investigation of the reading practices of girls and boys. *English Education*, *28* (4), 268-279.

Stanovich, K., (1986). Matthew effects in reading: Some consequences of individualdifferences in the acquisition of literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, *21*, 360-407.

Sturm, B. (2001). The reader's altered state of consciousness. In Kenneth Shearer and Robert Burgin (Eds.), *The readers' advisor's companion* (pp. 97-117). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited.

Sturm, B. (2006). The information and reading preferences of North Carolina children.

Retrieved on May 26, 2006, from American Library Associations. Available at

http://www.ala.org.ala/aasl/aaslpubsandjournals/slmrb/slmrcontents/volume62003/readingpreferences.htm

Tierney, R., & Shanahan, T. (1991). Research on the reading-writing relationships, interactions, transactions, and outcomes. In M. L. Kamil, P. B. Mosenthal, P. D.

Pearson,& R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of Reading Research* (Vol. 2, pp. 246-280). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

Walker, W., &Kintsch, W. (1981). *Interest and elaboration as macrostrategies* (Tech. Rep.).Boulder, CO: University of Colorado.

Wendelin, K., &Zinck, R. (1983). How students make book choices. *Reading Horizons,23,* 84-88.