EXPLORING INTERESTS: ARE THERE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GENERAL

INTERESTS, READING INTERESTS, AND PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS?

A Dissertation

by

COURTNEY ANN WEST

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2008

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Exploring Interests: Are There Relationships among General Interests, Reading Interests,

and Personality Dimensions?

(August 2008)

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This study explored the relationships among high school students' general interests, reading interests, and personality dimensions. Two hundred and fifty one 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students in a rural school district in east central Texas completed three questionnaires. General interests were determined by the Strong Interest Explorer, personality dimensions were determined by the Big Five Inventory, and book reading interests were determined by the Reading Interest Rating Scale. The reading interest scores were adjusted for reading ability based on Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) English/Language Arts scale scores.

A factor analysis including six general interest variables, five personality variables, and four reading interest variables was conducted. The analysis yielded five factors. Factor 1 had the highest loadings from Holland's general interest types. Factor 2 was dominated by the book categories (Contemporary Fiction, Fact-based Literature, Poetry, and Modern Fantasy). Factors 3, 4, and 5 had the highest loadings from the

personality dimensions. Factor 3 included Openness, Factor 4 included Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, and Factor 5 included Extraversion.

Factor 3, which accounted for 11.67% of the variance, was the only factor where a personality variable (Openness), a general interest variable (Artistic), and a reading interest variable (Modern Fantasy) loaded moderately to highly together. In this particular case alone, teachers may help students select materials that match their personal needs and personalities (Lau & Cheung, 1988) by recommending texts in the modern fantasy genre to those who exhibit openness and value artistic expression.

With the exception of Openness, none of the Big Five Personality Dimensions loaded with a book category. There was also only one strong book category and general interest loading. Reading interests appear to be exclusive of general life interests and personality dimensions. Based on the findings, it appears that text-based situational interest is evoked by topics or ideas that are universally appealing (Hidi & Anderson, 1992). Since text-based interest can be controlled by teachers to some degree (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992; Schraw, Flowerday, & Lehman, 2001), promoting student independence and choice should broaden students' interests and help increase intrinsic motivation to read (Deci, 1992).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

NOMENCLATURE

ALITERACY   Having the ability to read but choosing not to read.

ATTITUDES   Beliefs and feelings that are developed as result of prior experiences.

INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS   Personal interests that come from within and tend to remain consistent.

INTERESTS   Specific things that people prefer and want to learn more about.

MOTIVATION   Elements that drive or do not drive people to partake in certain activities.

PERSONALITY   Personal characteristics that reflect each person's individual differences.

READING MOTIVATION   A combination of factors that leads one to make or not make the decision to read.

SITUATIONAL INTERESTS   Interests that are more flexible than individual interests and tend to be stimulated in the moment by external factors.

TEXT-BASED INTERESTS   Situational interests which are driven by features of the text such as uniqueness, relevance, concreteness, etc.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE

OF THIS RESEARCH

In a national poll of International Reading Association (IRA) members, which included teachers, reading specialists, and administrators, "creating interest in reading" was the most frequently cited issue (O'Flavahan, Gambrell, Guthrie, Stahl, Baumann, & Alverman, 1992, p. 12). A specific concern is that individuals are making the decision not to read even when they possess the skills and ability to read (Alverman, 2004; Beers, 1996; Toppo, 2003). According to Sebesta and Monsoon (2003), the number of young adults who are "avid readers" appears to be decreasing as almost fifty percent of 15-17 year olds identify themselves as low frequency readers (Yankelovich & Scholastic, 2006). The National Endowment of the Arts (2007) found that teenagers are reading only 7-10 minutes per day, and nearly half of all Americans ages 18-24 read no books for pleasure. To change this alarming trend of aliteracy, a problem which does not receive enough attention and is rarely addressed (Sullivan, 2002), educators and policymakers are focusing on incorporating relevant, meaningful materials that adhere to student's interests and needs (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; McCombs, 1997; Sullivan, 2002).

When the emphasis on literature based instruction increased, studies were conducted to examine children's reading interest of children's literature (Galda, Ash, & Cullinan, 2001; Kincade, Kleine, & Vaughn, 1993; Morrow, 1983). During this time,

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This dissertation follows the style of *Reading Research Quarterly.*

reading interest studies with adolescents often focused on literary elements (Beyard-Tyler & Sullivan, 1980; Mitchell, 1994; Nielsen, 1994), but did not examine personal interest components, such as individual text preferences, in depth. This type of research provided valuable information pertaining to interests evoked by certain characteristics of texts, but it only revealed general information related to students' personal reading interests. Therefore, the construct of personal reading interests remains largely unexplored.

To help understand this construct, an examination of reading materials of interest to students with differing personal characteristics was conducted. In this study, the researcher explored the extent to which general life interests, reading interests, and personality dimensions are related. The prediction was that certain latent variables would emerge and analyzing them would improve our understanding of the construct of personal reading interests.

CHAPTER II

INVESTIGATING READING INTERESTS, LIFE INTERESTS, AND PERSONALITY

Review of Literature

Motivation

Motivation may be defined as an internal state that stimulates or sustains behavior and gives it direction (Huitt, 2001; Kleinginna & Kleinginna, 1981). It is a construct which helps explain why individuals do or do not choose to participate in certain activities. Reading motivation is "not isolated from the language or cognitive process of reading, but gives energy and direction to them" (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004, p. 329). Reading motivation is considered a complex and multidimensional construct (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004; Watkins & Coffey, 2004) because it includes beliefs about achievements or self-efficacy, purposes for doing an activity, and social considerations (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). In a meta-analysis of 22 studies including 131 comparisons, Guthrie and Humenick, revealed that the availability of student choice had an effect size of .95 on reading motivation, and the nature of texts had an effect size of 1.15 on reading motivation. Therefore, it appears that student preference and the types of texts that are made available for students to read are powerful influences on reading motivation.

Unlike general motivation theories, the exploration of motivation as it relates to reading has not been examined in great depth. Even though reading motivation has been articulated as a major issue by teachers and administrators, measures of reading motivation are only beginning to be developed (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). In 1996, Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni, developed the

Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) so that elementary teachers would have an instrument to assess student reading motivation. This measure included two types of instruments: a twenty item survey with a four point scale to measure self-concept and value of reading, and fourteen open ended interview questions to assess narrative reading, informational reading, and general reading. Since the MRP was designed for use with elementary school students, Pitcher et al., (2007) revised the profile by altering language, the number and types of questions, etc., to create an Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP). The survey part of the instrument was administered to 384 middle grades students, and a subset of 100 students was interviewed. Since this instrument is relatively new and no research has been published empirically confirming the MRP (Watkins & Coffey, 2004), further investigation of the reliability and validity of the AMRP is needed.

Wigfield and Guthrie (1997) constructed an 82 item reading motivation measure entitled the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ). After it was initially pilot tested and revised, it was administered to one-hundred 4th and 5th grade students, and a factor analysis was conducted to determine which factors could be extracted in an effort to better conceptualize reading motivation. Based on the findings, eleven scales of the MRQ were identified. The important components of student motivation that may influence reading are: beliefs about achievements (self-efficacy, challenge, work avoidance), intrinsic motivation (curiosity, involvement, importance), extrinsic motivation (recognition, grades, competition), and social considerations (social and compliance) (Pressley, 2002; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). However, further investigation of the underlying factor structure of the MRQ is needed due to replication difficulties (Edwards & Bagozzi, 2000; Kline, 1998; Watkins & Coffey, 2004).

After conducting two studies with 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students, Watkins and Coffey (2004) suggested that the MRQ not be used in reading motivation research because additional studies are needed to establish the reliability and validity of the scale prior to its use as a reading motivation instrument. Lau (2004) also identified several weaknesses of the MRQ such as "the lack of an attribution construct and its length and complexity" (p. 847). Therefore, she modified the instrument, developed the Chinese Reading Motivation Questionnaire, and conducted a study to initially validate her instrument. In addition to the reading motivation research which has been somewhat inconclusive, the MRQ was designed for use with elementary students from 3rd through 5th grade. Therefore, the MRQ would not be an applicable instrument for the present study which was conducted with high school students. Based on the limited number of reading motivation instruments, it is apparent that additional research is needed to provide deeper insight into reading motivation.

Intrinsic motivation, which appears to affect the amount and breadth of reading, needs to be examined in greater detail (Guthrie, 2001). Typically, people will be intrinsically motivated to partake in interesting activities that appeal to novelty, challenge, or aesthetic value (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Interests are not only related to intrinsic motivation, but also reflect a person's psychological needs, and represent personality specific orientations (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992; Tirre & Dixit, 1995). The current study could provide insight into the intrinsic motivation construct since "intrinsic motivation requires nutriments to function effectively" (Deci & Ryan, 2000, p. 240). The key to unlocking the door to reading motivation might be determining what drives personal interest.

General Interests

According to Dewey (1917 as cited in Schiefele, 1991), interest is a highly personal, active, dynamic state based on real objects. As different views emerged, interest research began focusing on occupational interests and intrinsic interests (Holland, 1992; Schiefele, 1991). Then, the concept of interest was divided into two components – individual interests and situational interests (Hidi & Anderson, 1992). Individual interests are considered to be relatively stable, based on preexisting knowledge, associated with positive emotions, and derived from personal experiences (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004; Schiefele, 1999). Situational interests tend to be shared among individuals, have small, short term influence, are based on spontaneous engagement, and appear to be related to novel content (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004; Krapp et al., 1992; Renninger & Hidi, 2002; Schraw, Flowerday, & Lehman, 2001). Research has indicated that interest development is initiated by situational interest which is context specific and not by innate personal interests that apply in all circumstances (Brantmeier, 2006; Krapp, 2000; Renninger et al., 1992). Therefore, situational interests, which are related to text novelty, organization, and imagery (Flowerday, Schraw, & Stevens, 2004), appear to often "precede and facilitate the development of personal interest" (Krapp et al., 1992, p. 19).

Individual interests may be arranged by Holland's (1992) types which provides the opportunity to examine general themes by combining interests into broad interest categories (Elsworth, Harvey-Beavis, Ainley, & Fabris, 1999). The model, known as the RIASEC, includes: R for realistic, I for investigative, A for artistic, S for social, E for enterprising, and C for conventional (Holland, 1992). The flexibility of the model is

demonstrated by the hexagonal format which represents correlation among the types. For example, those who are realistic tend to prefer working with tools and other objects and not with people (Aiken, 1999). Investigative types also tend to prefer working with things and data over people, but investigative types like solving complex, abstract problems (Holland, 1992). Artistic types value aesthetics, are original, and like working with ideas, while social types are more interested in working with people, but like to work in flexible environments as well (Aiken, 1999; Holland, 1992). Enterprising types like to work with people but are concerned with organizing, managing, and leading. Conventional types are interested in organizing and structure, but they do not tend to be interested in leadership positions (Holland, 1992).

It is possible that certain individual interests exist that do not fall into Holland's interest types. However, the basic interest scales appear to encompass a wide range of interests and have been used as descriptive components of the Strong Interest Inventory (SII) for over 75 years (Donnay, Thompson, Morris, & Schaublat, 2004). The SIE, which is derived from the SII, was chosen for this study because it incorporates Holland's interest types, it was designed for use with high school students, and it has acceptable reliability and validity (Consulting Psychologists Press, 2002).

Reading Attitudes and Interests

When exploring reading motivation, researchers have often focused on attitudes and interests (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996; Mathewson, 1994; McKenna, Kear, & Elsworth, 1995; Pitcher et al., 2007). Attitudes are learned, not innate, and develop over time as a result of day to day experiences with reading (McKenna & Stahl, 2003). Attitudes are highly related to interests but are thought of as

broader, more generalized, and sometimes subconscious feelings that affect individual behavior (Carrillo, 1976). Values also affect attitude which in turn affects intrinsic motivation (Mathewson, 1994). Attitude models such as Mathewson's (1994) model and McKenna's (1994 as cited in McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995) model stress the importance of internalized attitudes and their influence on motivating reading behavior. However, these models of reading attitudes have not really defined what drives individual reading choices.

The success of reading programs is somewhat reliant on integrating materials that adhere to students' interests; so, it is important for teachers to become familiar with their students' reading preferences (Higginbotham, 1999). Specific knowledge of individual reading preferences can facilitate the development and selection of highly interesting material (Beyard-Tyler, & Sullivan, 1980). Examining the concrete evidence of choice (Chance, 1999) will enable us to study interest and motivation in a unique way by utilizing the tangible entity: text selection.

When teachers are familiar with contemporary texts, they may be better able to evaluate what types of books students select and suggest books and authors in similar genres (Hopper, 2005). According to Foster (1977 as cited in Hopper, 2005) "to help students read efficiently, critically, and habitually…the keystone…must be the development of individual, personal reading interests" (p. 118).

Literature Categories

Books are usually classified on the basis of subject, purpose, and/or type of writing (Stamboltzis & Pumfrey, 2000). Since there has been an emphasis on incorporating a wide variety of texts in the classroom so students are familiar with

various modes of writing (Sullivan, 2002), some researchers have investigated the relationship between reading and text genre (Boraks, Hoffman, & Bauer, 1997; Kirk & Pearson, 1996; Morfidi & Pumfrey 1998). Despite the efforts to categorize literature for children and adolescents, deciding on specific book categories has been difficult. For example, in their study, Kirk and Pearson used the genres: story, reading scheme, poetry, and informational, while Morfidi and Pumfrey grouped their texts into narrative, autobiographical and informational categories.

In 1992, Norton wrote the book entitled *The Impact of Literature-based Reading.* In this text, she identified five book categories: folklore, modern fantasy, poetry, contemporary realistic fiction, and historical fiction/biography/informational literature. The folklore category consisted of folktales, fables, myths, and legends that revealed people's ancient beliefs and values. Modern fantasy included literary folktales where oral tradition did not provide the foundation. The poetry genre included writings that enabled poets and readers to experience the world through a variety of sensory elements. Contemporary realistic fiction consisted of texts with realistic plots, characters, and settings that could exist in the world as we know it. The last category included historical fiction, biography, and informational literature. Historical fiction was set in the past where the settings and types of conflicts are realistic for the particular time period. Biographies were nonfictional stories that told about characters who actually lived, and informational literature included accurate facts and provided an opportunity for students to gain knowledge about the world. Historical fiction, biography, and informational literature were grouped together because they are all rooted in fact (Norton, 1992). Even though elements of the stories presented in historical fiction texts did not actually happen,

the writings still contain accurate information for the particular time period in history that is represented.

Although empirical evidence to support Norton's (1992) categorization of texts is not available, the categories appear to be widely used and accepted. For example, Boraks et al., (1997) conducted a study with third through fifth grade students where students completed an open-ended survey identifying their favorite books. The titles were then categorized by literary genre that were "selected to mesh with commonly used categories in children's literature: picture books, realistic fiction, historical fiction, fantasy, poetry, and nonfiction (including biography)" (p. 318). Comparing these categories to Norton's, one can see that the only element which is excluded is picture books. Perhaps the reason picture books were not incorporated is because they can also be placed into one of the other genres. Unfortunately, there are not clearly defined rules for organizing books into categories or genres (Stamboltzis & Pumfrey, 2000). However, the practice of organizing books in this way is important because it enables one to evaluate and/or compare book types.

Personality Theory

Personality is being investigated in this study because it is a significant psychological force that influences our behavior (Heinstrom, 2000). Furthermore, "personality characteristics are the nexus of attitudes, beliefs, and values guiding our cognitive and affective interactions with the social environment" (Weaver, Brosius, & Mundorf, 1993, p. 310). Other factors, such as environment and cognitive ability, work in conjunction with personality to shape our behavior, but personality appears to be the root of engagement and/or lack of engagement. The importance of personality matching is

consistent with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which describes the development of intrinsic motivation in terms of environmental support for the individual's needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991).

Since each person has his/her unique pattern of traits, thoughts, and behaviors that are believed to remain relatively stable (Kraaykamp & VanEijck, 2005; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999), identifying personality dimensions could provide valuable insight into individual reading interests. If so, an increased knowledge of reader personality traits could facilitate teachers' assistance with the selection of highly interesting material (Beyard-Tyler & Sullivan, 1980). The ability to select specific materials that match students' personal characteristics may also influence reading ability. For example, proficient readers have been found to read more often, have more positive views of reading, and tend to expand their overall reading interests (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1999). Possessing the knowledge to place the right books in certain student's hands may have a positive influence on reading ability.

Approximately seventy-five years ago, in an effort to provide a more complete description of the construct of personality, personality researchers began focusing on factor analytic studies (Digman, 1990). Five traits were identified prior to 1970, but the five factor model did not receive much recognition in the form of replication studies until Goldberg (1981 cited in Digman, 1990) indicated that the five dimensions could provide a "framework for many theoretical organizations of personality concepts and can be used to characterize individual differences" (p. 422). The five-factor model of personality became a practical generalization about personality traits and consists of five personality

dimensions: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (McCrae & Costa, 1999).

According to John and Srivastava (1999), "extraversion implies an energetic approach toward the world; agreeableness includes the traits of altruism, trust, and modesty; conscientiousness is defined as socially prescribed impulse control; neuroticism contrasts emotional stability; and openness is openness to experience including the breadth, originality, and complexity of an individual's life" (p. 30).

The five factors have been found to be stable over a 45-year period beginning in young adulthood (Kraaykamp & VanEijck, 2005; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). Stability coefficients in the Rantanen, Mesapelto, Feldt, Pulkkinen, and Kokko (2007) seven year study were moderate to high with a range of .65 to .95. Since cross-cultural comparisons have yielded high congruence coefficients (McCrae & Costa, 1997), and revealed the same five dimensions (Pervin & John, 1999), the five factors are considered universal (McCrae & Costa, 1997). As a result of the stability across cultures, the Big Five has appeared in numerous languages such as Dutch, German, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian (Digman, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1997).

"Knowing one's placement on the factors" is considered "useful for insight and improvement" (Costa & McCrae, 1992, p.7). The five-factor model was selected for this study because it is believed to be a fairly complete description of personality types (Costa & McCrae, 1992; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Saucier & Goldberg, 1998). Therefore, the set of five dimensions will be used to characterize individual differences (Digman, 1990), and provide an "integrative descriptive model for this research" (Pervin & John, 1999, p. 122). The Big Five Inventory (BFI) is being used in this study because it is a reliable and

valid instrument (John & Srivastava, 1999; Pervin & John, 1999) that can be used to measure the Big Five personality traits of high schools students in a brief amount of time without sacrificing reliability (Saucier, 1994). This ability to characterize individual differences in this way may provide an opportunity to investigate individual reading interests in a novel manner.

Prior Research on Personality and Reading Interests

Schutte and Malouff (2004) conducted a study with 251 Australian university students in order to examine their preference for different types of reading materials. Then, a subset of 136 students was selected to complete the Big Five Inventory (BFI), to log materials they read, and to document the number of hours spent reading per day. The multivariate set correlation analyses indicated that the Big Five personality dimensions did predict reading preferences. Regression analyses revealed that Openness and Conscientiousness were the largest personality dimension predictors of reading preference. Individuals with high Openness scores preferred culture and science related materials, while people with low Openness scores preferred people focused materials. Those with high Conscientiousness expressed interest in science and event related materials. For example, preference for science fiction loaded on the same component as historical fiction. This would lead one to conclude that a student who enjoys reading science fiction would also be interested in historical fiction. Furthermore, preference for a certain type of material tended to predict time spent reading in both recreational and non-recreational settings. The ability to predict time spent reading could be related to reading ability and/or reading achievement, but that was not the focus of the study, and it was not investigated.

Schutte and Malouff (2004) concluded that relationships between personality dimensions and motivation associated with adult reading patterns may be useful to increase adult reading engagement. However, the findings should not have been generalized to adult readers because the participants were college students and would not accurately represent the population of adult readers. The researchers indicated that "high school students have not been studied extensively, so reading research needs to examine the perceptions and abilities of students at this level to examine whether the relationships between preference dimensions and personality hold true for different populations" (Schutte & Malouff, 2004, p. 293). This statement implies that there is other research available that examines the relationship between personality dimensions and reading interests at the college level. However, other studies of this nature were not located. The possible conclusion is that reading interests have been investigated more extensively at the college level than at the secondary levels. Since there appears to be a gap in high school level reading interest research, the present research was an attempt to fill that void.

In 1995, Tirre and Dixit conducted a study with 471 USAF airmen to examine how individual differences in reading interests related to personality traits and cognitive abilities. A reading interest survey consisting of 81 single topics with a 6 point scale, a 16 Factor Personality Survey consisting of 187 items, four subtests of the Culture Fair Intelligence Test, and the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) were administered. The factor analysis and subsequent regression analyses indicated that those rating high in emotional stability expressed reading interests in psychology and philosophy, arts and crafts, religion and scripture and science and math, but demonstrated

minimal interest in entertainment related topics. Extraverted individuals preferred fitness, health, sports, and entertainment related topics.

Tirre and Dixit (1995) concluded that reading interests correlate more with certain cognitive factors such as verbal ability, quantitative ability, and technical knowledge than with personality, but that "personality traits do appear to precede reading interests" (p. 737). In the present study, cognitive factors were not incorporated because the correlation among reading interests, general interests, and personality dimensions was the focus. As a result, reading ability was controlled for so that cognitive factors would not skew the interpretation as the relationships among general interests, reading interests, and personality dimensions were examined. The purpose was to investigate Tirre and Dixit's conclusion by controlling for reading ability and examining if personality traits do in fact precede reading interests.

Lau and Cheung (1988) examined the relation of reading interests of 2,114 Chinese secondary school students to their personality values and to the reading interests of their family and peers. The amount, type, interest, and preference of certain types of books were examined as was the influence of personality on these reading decisions. The participants completed a questionnaire including the amount of reading, the type and availability of reading material, the Scott value scale, and a 15 item subset of the Eysenck and Eysenck personality instrument to determine introversion and extraversion.

Since the Chi-square results indicated that a strong relationship between reading behaviors and personality existed, the researchers suggested that more attention be paid to studying the relationship due to practical implications. For example, the data indicated that introverts tend to be drawn to quiet and serious types of reading while extraverts tend

to prefer action and interactive materials. According to the researchers, efforts should be made to select materials that correlate with individual's personal needs and personality characteristics to promote intellectual curiosity. This statement is a strong one considering these two researchers only investigated introversion and extraversion and the relationships with reading achievement. Further investigation of personality dimensions and their association with reading interests is need in order to determine if student reading tends to increase as text-interest matching is practiced (Lau & Cheung, 1988). The current study was intended to address this concern.

In 1982, Gooden conducted a study with 139 8th and 9th grade students to examine vocational interest and its relationship to reading interest as well as whether personality type revealed a pattern of reading interest. The students completed the 160 item Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI) and the Bookmatch Interest Inventory which included 125 books and summaries. Since the Social category only had a small group size, the type was eliminated from the analyses. Discriminant analysis findings indicated that Realistic types are highly interested in animals and not particularly interested in the arts, war and military, and the paranormal, while Investigative types tend to be interested in animals, science, politics, the arts, war and military, and the paranormal, but not usually in human drama (Gooden, 1982). Artistic and Conventional types differed in that Artistic types preferred the arts while Conventional types did not. However, both types shared interest in agrarian materials and were not interested in animals. Enterprising types demonstrated interest in human drama and politics and low interest in animals, science, and the paranormal (Gooden, 1982).

Gooden (1982) indicated that additional research needs to investigate the relationship between reading interest and personality constructs. Despite this suggestion over thirty five years ago, only three other researchers have delved into this realm. Perhaps the reason is because measuring constructs that are difficult to define and conceptualize is not always endorsed. However, researchers need to partake in this type of research because intellectual progress is gained when people to reach beyond that which is readily available. Gooden (1982) indicated that reading interest appears to be related to vocational interest, but the nature and structure needs to be examined in greater depth. The current study is an attempt to investigate this relationship between vocational interest and reading interest.

According to Gooden (1982), "vocational and leisure interests comprise a larger domain of interest, which includes reading interest. If interest is reflective of personality, then reading interest should also reflect personality" (p. 42). The view is that interests are derived from personality and that reading interest is a subcomponent of general interest. This would lead one to assume that reading interests can be explained by general interests which can be explained by personality characteristics. The present research is an attempt to investigate this pattern of proposed association.

Since reading interest and intrinsic reading motivation are complex and appear to be related constructs (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991), it is important to investigate personality elements because they may provide additional insight. In this study, adolescents were asked to identify aspects of their personalities, indicate their general interests, and provide information related to reading interests so that commonalities among them could be investigated.

Method

Participants

From a total of 606 high school students, 251 9th, 10th, 11^{th,} and 12th graders in a rural school district in east central Texas volunteered to participate in the study, received parental consent, and had English/Language Arts Texas Assessment Knowledge and Skills (ELA TAKS) scale scores. The sample that was derived from a low socioeconomic status, Title I district, was 41% male and 59% female and was 50% Caucasian, 32% Hispanic, and 18% African-American. The sample's gender and ethnic characteristics were fairly consistent with the campus profile except for a slight inflation in the number of female participants.

The number of participants per grade level, and the distributions of gender and ethnicity are as follows: 9th grade – 109 participants, 50% male, 50% female, 43% Caucasian, 36% Hispanic, and 21% African American; 10th grade – 49 participants, 39% male, 61% female, 63% Caucasian, 24% Hispanic, and 14% African American; 11th grade – 49 participants, 24% male, 78% female, 52% Caucasian, 32% Hispanic, and 17% African American; 12th grade – 44 participants, 47% male, 53% female, 43% Caucasian, 36% Hispanic, and 21% African American.

Measures

The data used in the study came from four sources: The Strong Interest Explorer (SIE), which yielded general interests; The Reading Interest Rating Scale (RIRS), which specified reading preferences; The Big Five Inventory (BFI), which identified personality dimensions; and the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)

English/Language Arts (ELA) Scale Scores, which provided an estimate of reading ability.

The Strong Interest Explorer. The SIE is an alternative to the Strong Interest Inventory (SII) and was designed for use with high school students (Chartrand, 2004). Even though this instrument was not utilized in any of the prior studies described due to its fairly recent development, it was used in this study because it is self-scoreable, yields general interest scores for each student, typically takes 8-10 minutes to complete, and provides a coherent account of preferences and choices across a broad range of topics, activities, and contexts (Consulting Psychologists Press (CPP), 2002; Elsworth et al., 1999). The inventory consists of a checklist containing subjects, activities, and topics that measures the types of general items the individuals deem interesting (e.g., accounting, singing in a choir, working outdoors, security guard). It measures fourteen basic interest types which fall under Holland's six general interest themes. Holland's themes and the basic interest types are: Investigative (Analyzing) includes working with numbers and health/science; Artistic (Creative Expression) includes music/arts, and writing/mass communications; Social (People Oriented) includes cultural relations, helping others, and teaching/training; Enterprising (Business-Oriented) includes law/politics, and business/sales/marketing; Conventional (Organizing) includes office/project management, and working with computers; Realistic (Active, Hands-On) includes outdoor environment/plants/animals, construction/engineering, and protective services (Chartrand, 2004).

According to the Consulting Psychologists Press (2002), the SIE was constructed from a subset of items from the 1994 Strong Interest Inventory (SII) and the 2002 SII

revision, which are backed by 75 years of research and extensive normative data. For example, the most recent revision of the SII has reported Cronbach alphas of .91 for all scales (Donnay, Thompson, Morris, & Schaublat, 2004), only demonstrated minimal difference in patterns of interest by ethnicity (Fouad & Mohler, 2004), and included a norming sample of 7,000 participants (Donnay et al., 2004).

The basic interest scales of the SIE have reported Cronbach alphas of at least .80 in all samples (CPP, 2002). In 2002, the CPP administered the SIE to three samples including 321 college students, 343 high school students, and 143 employed adults. The test retest reliability was .70, and the instrument demonstrated internal consistency of .80-.91 in the high school sample. Validity testing with the sample of employed adults, which examined the relationship between self-expressed interest and basic interest scale scores measured by the SIE, indicated positive correlations of .55 in all scales and was consistent with self-expressed interest in each area (CPP, 2002). For example, adult participants generally indicated higher interests in the area they were working and/or expressed higher interest in their desired field of work. The use of this instrument presented an opportunity to examine general life interests and to determine how they relate to both reading interests and personality dimensions.

The Reading Interest Rating Scale (RIRS). The RIRS was developed by the researcher and consists of adolescent books and annotations from the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy (JAAL)* (Young Adult's Choices, 1999-2006) and a booklist for senior high students created by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (1982). The Young Adult's Choices list includes the top 30 vote receiving books that were selected from a collection of new publications and read and by

approximately 4500 students in grades 7-12 from five different regions of the United States.   Each year, the adolescent booklist is announced at the National Reading Conference and subsequently published in *JAAL*.

Due to the lack of prevalence of poetry texts included in the *JAAL* annotated booklists, four poetry books that appeared to transcend time were selected from the NCTE senior high booklist and included in the rating scale. For each book in the RIRS, a 7 point Likert-type scale was included so students were able to rate each text according to their interest in the book. A one on the scale indicated no interest, while a seven indicated high interest.

A consistent set of categories derived from research with adolescents is not available, so Norton's (1992) children's literature categories of Folklore, Modern Fantasy, Poetry, Contemporary Realistic Fiction, and Historical Fiction, Biography, and Informational Literature were utilized due to their wide use and acceptability. Sixty-five book summaries were independently categorized into Norton's categories by two experts in the field of adolescent literacy and interrater reliability was calculated. The reliabilities for Modern Fantasy, Contemporary Fiction, and Fact-based Literature (Historical Fiction, Biography, and Informational Literature) were 1.00. The Poetry category had an interrater reliability of .82, while the Folklore category's reliability was .33. Since the interrater reliability was low for the Folklore category due to the fact that most of the texts possessed a modern twist and were often classified as Modern Fantasy, the category was eliminated. For example, the book *Chinese Cinderella* was based on a classic tale, but was retold in the context of 20th century China. Therefore, one rater placed it in the Folklore category, while the other placed it into the Modern Fantasy

category. When the four categories of Modern Fantasy, Poetry, Contemporary Realistic

Fiction, and the Fact-based Literature were finalized, each one consisted of eleven books.

For the 44 books included in the RIRS, the overall interrater reliability was .93.

      The Big Five Inventory. John, Donahue, and Kentle's (1991) Big Five Inventory

(BFI) was utilized because it is a short, reliable instrument consisting of only 44 items for

students to rank on a 5 point Likert-type scale. The inventory includes brief phrases such

as "is talkative," "tends to find fault with others," "worries a lot," "is easily distracted,"

etc., which are based on trait adjectives known to be prototypic markers of the Big Five

(John & Srivastava, 1999).   It is presented in a straightforward manner and the adjective

mini-markers developed by Saucier (1994) do not include vocabulary that is difficult for

high school students. Reported alpha reliabilities of the BFI range from .75 to .90, and

the test-retest reliabilities range from .80 to .90 (Pervin & John, 1999). A Confirmatory

Factor Analysis (CFA) conducted by John and Srivastava (1999) demonstrated

standardized validity coefficients of .92 for the BFI, .87 for the Trait Descriptor Analysis

(TDA), and .79 for the NEO Five Factor Inventory (FFI). Therefore, it was concluded

that the five factors are captured most closely by the BFI making it the most valid

instrument of those tested (John & Srivastava, 1999).

      The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) English/Language Arts

(ELA) Scale Scores. The TAKS test is intended to provide a "snapshot of student

performance" (Texas Education Agency, 2004, p. 3). It is based on the Texas Essential

Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which are the student expectations and objectives that

provide a framework for instruction. In the summer of 1999, the Texas Education

Agency, (TEA) began a three year test development program. Committees identified

TEKS for each grade and subject area and sent a survey to middle and secondary teachers for review. Then, a second draft of objectives and student expectations were developed that aligned with the TEKS and were designed to become more rigorous as grade level increased. In 2000, TEA sent this draft to campuses to receive educator input to ensure that an appropriate and valid measure of the objectives would be created. Proposed items are reviewed before and after field-testing, and due to the advanced content at the high school level, a panel of recognized experts in each subject are selected to complete an annual content validation review (TEA, 2004). The internal consistency reliabilities for the TAKS assessment range from .83-.93 (TEA, 2007). The reported Cronbach alpha is .88 for the ELA test (TEA, 2007).

The TAKS ELA consists of a literary selection, an expository selection, and a visual representation selection that are linked by a common theme or idea. The test objectives include: basic understanding, literary elements and techniques, analysis and evaluation, and revising and editing (TAKS, 2007). Reading comprehension is assessed by multiple choice items as well as open ended questions. This criterion referenced test yields a scale score for each student. Last year, in 2007, minimum proficiency on the TAKS ELA portion of the test was 2100, while commended performance was 2400. A scale score of less than 2100 would prevent a high school senior from graduating. Thus, one could postulate that an individual with a low scale score on the TAKS ELA portion is not a proficient reader.

Procedure

A pilot study was conducted with a sample of 18 high school students in a rural school district in east central Texas to test the reliability of the RIRS. Since the primary

goal of the study was to explore the relationships among reading interests, general interests, and personality dimensions, it was important to investigate the variation of the responses on the RIRS so that the factor analysis would be stable. In all book categories, students ranked the 44 texts from 1 to 7 according to their interest or lack of interest in the books.

The means and standard deviations for the book categories were: Modern Fantasy (mean = 4.03, SD = 1.25), Contemporary Realistic Fiction (5.24, .92), Poetry (3.73, 1.24), and Fact-based Literature (4.35, 1.01). Because the data indicated variability in responses, the RIRS was deemed an adequate instrument for measuring reading interests. In the pilot study, it appeared that the students took the book rating task seriously as they inquired about the existence of the books and requested the opportunity to make a record the books they rated highly. This would suggest that students viewed the activity as interesting and valuable.

After the pilot study was completed, the English/Language Arts teachers were contacted and days to visit their classrooms to conduct the research were scheduled. The data collection instruments were distributed in two sessions of 45-50 minutes two or three days apart dependent upon the course schedule. The order of the questionnaires was systematically counterbalanced. Eight versions of the RIRS were randomly created so that each class per grade level received a different variation of the instrument. The participants' TAKS ELA scale scores were also obtained from school records so that reading ability could be taken into account. The magnitude of the relationship between the scale scores and the book category ratings was 6%. Even though the strength of the relationship was not moderate to high, the TAKS ELA scale scores were used to adjust

the ratings of the book categories so that the scores would not be biased by reading ability. This was achieved by regressing the ratings on reading ability as measured by TAKS ELA scale scores and using the predicted scores as the variables for analysis.

The analysis of the data consisted of descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, a factor analysis, and regression analyses. Principal components extraction with Varimax rotation was used, and factors which met the Eigenvalue of 1.0 were extracted. The scree plot illustrated in Figure 1 was also generated to determine the number of factors to be extracted. Since the results were consistent with the Eignevalue conclusion, five factors were retained.

Figure 1
Scree plot
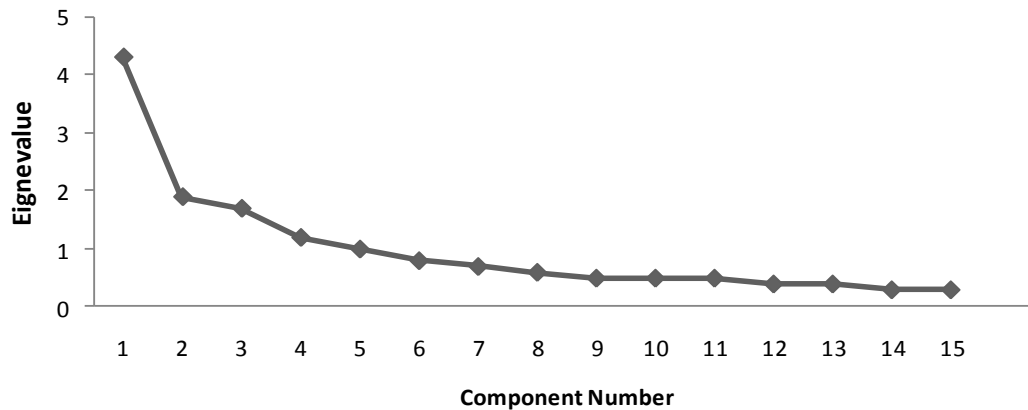
Principal components analysis was utilized because it is a widely accepted and commonly used procedure which would be difficult to improve (Nunnally, 1978; Nunnally & Berstein, 1991). There were fifteen variables entered into the factor analysis – six general interest variables, four reading interest variables, and five personality dimensions. Standardized predicted scores were used in the factor analysis for the four

reading interest variables. In the multiple regression analyses, the dependent variables were the standardized predicted scores for the four book categories, while the eleven independent variables consisted of the five personality dimensions and the six general interest types.

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

Item means, standard deviations, and inter-item correlations are presented in Table 1. The bivariate correlations revealed some moderate relationships, so multivariate analysis was used to sort them out. For example, moderate correlations among the general interests were evident and the factor analysis enabled the researcher to examine them further. The TAKS ELA scale scores had a mean of 2260.93, and a standard deviation of 148.50. The passing scale score for the ELA portion of the TAKS test which would indicate minimum proficiency is 2100. This means that students who do not score at least 2100 have difficulty with reading comprehension and could be viewed as poor readers. Cronbach's alpha reliability was calculated for the scores in each instrument. The Strong Interest Explorer (SIE) alpha reliability was .86. The Reading Interest Rating Scale (RIRS) alphas were: Modern Fantasy, $\alpha = .80$, Poetry, $\alpha = .89$ in Contemporary Realistic Fiction, $\alpha = .89$, and Fact Based Literature, $\alpha = .84$. The Big Five Inventory alphas were: Extraversion, $\alpha = .79$, Agreeableness, $\alpha = .68$, Conscientiousness, $\alpha = .68$, Neuroticism, $\alpha = .75$, and Openness, $\alpha = .71$. According to the coefficients, the reliability of the instruments is acceptable.

Table 1
Item Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-item Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	Mean	SD
BFI Personality Dimensions																		
1. Extraversion	___																3.61	.75
2. Agreeableness	.10	___															3.79	.56
3. Conscientious	.07	.39	___														3.46	.59
4. Neuroticism	-.25	-.26	-.18	___													2.88	.74
5. Openness	.19	.09	.11	-.01	___												3.39	.62
SIE General Interests																		
6. Artistic	.18	.04	-.08	.17	.47	___											2.29	2.07
7. Social	.08	.06	.05	.21	.25	.53	___										2.63	2.19
8. Enterprising	.14	.02	.09	-.04	.16	.36	.48	___									1.81	1.95
9. Conventional	.07	-.12	.09	.06	.25	.38	.44	.56	___								2.08	2.33
10. Investigative	.01	.01	.06	.04	.16	.30	.49	.44	.48	___							2.81	2.04
11. Realistic	.07	.02	.01	-.04	.27	.34	.33	.42	.46	.40	___						2.53	1.94
RIRS Literature Categories																		
12. Modern fantasy	-.11	.03	.01	.15	.40	.35	.24	.17	.26	.21	.31	___					3.86	1.20
13. Poetry	-.05	-.13	-.11	-.18	-.29	-.39	-.35	-.18	-.12	-.26	-.13	-.47	___				3.13	1.57
14. Contemporary Fiction	.03	.19	.12	.20	.07	.20	.34	.14	.08	.17	.04	.41	-.54	___			4.56	1.22
15. Fact-based Literature	.09	.19	.15	.11	.25	.22	.39	.27	.18	.23	.18	.41	-.58	.66	___		3.91	1.03
Reading Ability Estimate																		
16. TAKS ELA scale scores	.01	.13	.13	-.11	.17	.11	.13	.11	.01	.02	.15	.10	-.07	.03	.11	___	2260.93	148.50

$r = \pm.10$, significant at $p < .05$
$r = \pm.13$, significant at $p < .01$

Factor Analysis

The principal component analysis with Varimax rotation yielded five factors with Eigenvalues greater than 1. The solution including the five factors accounted for 67.2% of the total variance. The factors in the order of variance explained were: Factor I (Eigenvalue = 2.89, variance explained = 19.26%), Factor II (2.62, 17.49%), Factor III (1.75, 11.67%), Factor IV (1.62, 10.78%), and Factor V (1.20, 8.01%). Communalities (h^2), which represent the extent of overlap between the variables and the five factors, ranged from .57 to .83.

The results of the factor analysis are displayed in Table 2. An arbitrary loading of .4 is the cut-off coefficient used to determine whether a variable loaded on a particular factor. Factor 1 had the highest loadings from Holland's general interest types. All six general life interests measured by the SIE loaded on Factor 1. However, Artistic loaded higher on Factor 3. Factor 2 was dominated by book categories. It had the highest loadings from 3 of the 4 included book categories, and a moderate loading from the fourth. On Factor 2, Contemporary Fiction and Fact-based Literature were positively loaded, and Poetry received a high negative loading. The fourth literature category Modern Fantasy loaded moderately on Factor 2 but had a higher loading on Factor 3.

Factors 3, 4, and 5 had the highest loadings from the personality dimensions. Factor 3 was the only factor where a personality variable, general interest variable, and a reading interest variable loaded moderately to highly together. On Factor 3, Openness loaded highly and Modern Fantasy and Artistic loaded moderately. Factor 4 received the highest loadings from 3 of the 5 personality dimensions. Conscientiousness and Agreeableness loaded positively while Neuroticism loaded negatively. Factor 5 only

received a high loading from Extraversion. Other than on Factor 3, for the most part, the

factors were self contained in that the general interests, personality dimensions, and

reading interests were not loading on factors together. The Poetry category loaded

negatively with all five factors, while Fact-based literature loaded positively with all five

factors.

Table 2
Factor Loadings, Communalities, Eigenvalues, and Total Variance

	I	II	III	IV	V	h^2
BFI Personality Dimensions						
Extroversion	.05	.03	.08	.11	.90	.83
Agreeableness	-.07	.22	.05	.74	.10	.61
Conscientiousness	.10	.12	-.03	.77	-.10	.62
Neuroticism	.02	.36	-.01	-.60	-.32	.59
Openness	.12	.08	.84	.09	.16	.76
SIE General Interests						
Artistic	.41	.25	.56	-.22	.29	.67
Social	.65	.43	.09	-.12	.15	.65
Enterprising	.79	.12	-.00	.06	.16	.66
Conventional	.80	-.02	.19	-.04	-.04	.67
Investigative	.75	.17	.02	.03	-.08	.59
Realistic	.64	-.08	.38	.08	-.07	.57
RIRS Literature Categories						
Modern Fantasy	.15	.42	.64	-.01	-.32	.71
Poetry	-.10	-.75	-.33	-.02	-.01	.67
Contemporary Fiction	.06	.87	-.01	.07	-.02	.77
Fact-based Literature	.18	.80	.12	.15	.04	.71
Eignevalues	2.89	2.62	1.75	1.62	1.20	
Cumulative Variance	19.26	36.75	48.42	59.20	67.21	

With the exception of Openness, none of the other Big Five Personality

Dimensions loaded on the same factor with any book category. Therefore, it appears that

typically reading interests cannot be predicted by an examination of personality traits.

Likewise, there were no strong book category loadings with the general interests with the

exception of Artistic revealed by the Strong Interest Explorer. This would lead one to conclude that reading interests are not a subset of general life interests. Reading interests appear to be mutually exclusive from general interests and personality factors. Thus, text features and type of writing must be important factors in eliciting text-based interest.

Multiple Regression

Multiple linear regression analyses were also used to predict students reading interests from their general interests and personality dimensions. The eleven predictor model was able to account for 27% of the variance in Modern Fantasy, $F(11, 285) = 9.41$, $p < .001$. The predictor variables Openness and Extraversion had a significant ($p<.01$) regression weight coefficient with Modern Fantasy. The variables Realistic and Artistic had a significant ($p<.05$) regression weight coefficient.

The eleven predictors also accounted for 26% of the variance in Poetry, $F(11, 285) = 8.67$, $p < .001$. The Neuroticism and Artistic predictor variables had a ($p<.01$) regression weight coefficient with Poetry, and the variables Openness, Conventional, and Investigative had a significant ($p<.05$) regression weight coefficient.

According to the data, the predictor variables only accounted for 19% of the variance in Contemporary Realistic Fiction, $F(11, 285) = 5.77$, $p < .001$. The predictor variables Neuroticism, Agreeableness, and Social all had a significant ($p<.01$) regression weight coefficient with Contemporary Fiction.

In the Fact-based Literature category, the independent variables accounted for 23% of the variance. $F(11, 285) = 7.48$, $p < .001$. The Openness, Agreeableness, and Social predictor variables had significant ($p<.01$) regression weight coefficients, while the variables Neuroticism and Enterprising had a significant ($p<.05$) regression weight

coefficient with Fact-based literature. The proportion of variance accounted for by the eleven predictors ranged from 19-27% for each book category. Based on the small amount of variance accounted for by the predictor variables, a strong relationship does not appear to exist among reading interests, general interests, and personality dimensions.

CHAPTER III

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the interrelationships among general/life interests, reading interests, and personality dimensions. Factor analysis provided an opportunity to examine the factors that emerged and analyze how each variable loaded on the factors to gain insight into the reading interest construct. Based on the factor analysis, general life interests do not appear to be strongly related to reading interests or personality. For example, Factor 1 contained exclusively general life interests, Factor 2 was dominated by book categories, and Factors 3, 4, and 5 contained personality dimensions.

In the regression analyses, statistically significant predictor variables were difficult to interpret as some were similar to those revealed in the factor analysis, while others differed. For example, according to the regression, interest in Modern Fantasy appears to be predicted by Openness, Extraversion, Artistic and Realistic. The significant regression weight coefficients for Modern Fantasy are similar to the loadings on Factor 3 in the factor analysis with the exclusion of Extraversion and Realistic. Although the regression findings are interesting, they would be difficult to incorporate into practice because teachers would have to try to match texts with those who possess certain characteristics such as Openness, Extraversion, Artistic, and Realistic. Furthermore, only a small proportion of the variance was accounted for by the eleven predictors of general life interests and personality dimensions which means even if student characteristics

could be identified, only 19-27% of the time would the type of text actually interest the student.

Based on the factor and regression analyses, one may conclude that reading interests are influenced more by text characteristics than general interests or personality dimensions. Reading interests appear to be triggered in the moment as responses to something in the situation, such as specific text features, that catch our attention and motivates us to focus on it and explore it further (Brophy, 2004).

Research has indicated that stimulated situational interest promotes learning and often leads to the development of individual interest (Brophy, 2004; Hidi & Renninger, 2006; Schraw et al., 2001). Since text based interests are more controllable by teachers than individual personal interests (Krapp et al, 1992), this study illuminates the value of providing students with a variety of texts and numerous opportunities to engage in reading quality materials. Guthrie and Humenick (2004) revealed the nature of texts had an effect size of 1.15 on reading motivation, and student choice was found to have an effect size of .95 on motivation. Based on the findings in these prior studies, it is apparent that educators do not have to be "brokers" using their knowledge of books, on the one hand, and children's interests, on the other, to recommend appropriate matches (McKenna & Stahl, 2003). Instead, teachers may assume the role of facilitator and provide "autonomy support" by providing meaningful book alternatives (Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2006).

Factor 3 alone might suggest that individuals who have an open personality and are interested in art will likely be interested in reading books in the Modern Fantasy genre. Since artists often exhibit openness characteristics such as having active

imaginations, being sensitive to aesthetic details, preferring variety, and possessing intellectual curiosity (Costa & McCrae, 1992), it is reasonable that they might prefer to read books in the Modern Fantasy genre which consists of books that contain creative, sometimes supernatural, unrealistic elements. In this particular case alone, teachers may help students to select materials that best match their personal needs and personalities (Lau & Cheung, 1988) by recommending texts in the modern fantasy genre to those who exhibit openness and value artistic expression.

It is interesting that the Poetry category presented only negative loadings while Fact-based literature had only positive loadings on each factor. The negative loadings in Poetry may be the result of students not preferring books of poetry, but instead, articles of poetry. Some pieces of poetry are timeless pieces of writing, but perhaps books which only contain poetry are not readily sought after. Presenting students with opportunities to read good writing is imperative. However, interesting students in poetry may be better served in a piece by piece fashion. The positive correlations for the Fact-based genre may be influenced by the representation of books from historical fiction, biography, and informational categories. However, perhaps in today's society, students prefer Fact-based information because it is realistic, practical, related to something they are familiar with, and/or can be viewed as more applicable and relevant. This would support the belief that students will be more interested in materials in which they possess some prior knowledge (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Therefore, a variety of books which extend beyond narrative texts should be made available in the classroom.

Limitations

There are several limitations associated with this study. The most obvious limitation is that this research relies heavily on self-reporting which can be unreliable. However, the personality inventory and both interest instruments used here do not elicit right and wrong answers so participants probably did not have a tendency to answer as they thought others would deem appropriate. The reliability and validity of the BFI and SIE instruments have been demonstrated in prior studies (CPP, 2002; John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991; Pervin & John, 1999), and the reliability was replicated in this study. The reliability for the RIRS was also high. Therefore, it appears that this particular type of self reported data is reliable.

Another limitation is that the results will only be generalizable to a rural community since the sampling consists of high school students from a low socioeconomic rural school district in east central Texas. Generalizability is a problem because the sample of availability does not ensure representativeness of the population of high school students. The convenience sampling does not appear to jeopardize the study's contribution to the current knowledge about reading interests and their apparent lack of correlation with general interests and personality dimensions. However, it is suggested that this research be replicated in future studies where the sample more accurately portrays this population of secondary students to examine if the findings hold true for high school students as a whole.

In this study, book reading interests were identified by reading an annotation and not by actual book reading. Therefore, text interests were determined by subjective reports. In addition to using the Reading Interest Rating Scale (RIRS), library records

could be accessed to investigate reading interests, and reading logs could be kept to identify specific reading materials that were of interest to specific students. Future researchers may also consider work in conjunction with libraries to have the materials on the RIRS available. This would enable students to rate the annotations, check out highly rated books to see if their interest remained high as the texts were read. This type of data would provide more detailed information about what drives specific text interests. The findings may also enable one to determine if students are more interested in reading concrete as opposed to abstract texts. The effects of imagery on text-based interests should be investigated.

<div align="center">Conclusions</div>

This exploratory study yielded valuable information that will contribute to our understanding of reading motivation and may be used to enhance our students' interest in reading. Since text based interests appear to influence reading practice more than individual interests, the key to promoting student autonomy and increasing reading interest may be to inundate the classrooms with a variety of quality texts (Fader, Duggins, Finn, McNeil, 1976; Schraw et al., 2001). Providing students with the opportunity to choose from a selection of well-written texts will likely be positive influences on reading motivation (Guthrie & Humenick, 2004). Therefore, student preference and the types of texts that are made available must be carefully considered and integrated. Immersing students in good literature, providing instructional time for reading, and modeling reading practice are all factors that may enhance interest and could be necessary ingredients to the antidote to cure the aliteracy epidemic.

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest that students' book reading may be influenced by text based interest more than general life interests or personality dimensions. Since this type of interest can be controlled by teachers to some degree and can help students develop personal interest (Krapp et al., 1992; Schraw et al., 2001), promoting student independence and choice should broaden students' interests and help increase intrinsic motivation to read (Deci, 1992).

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APPENDIX A

READING INTEREST RATING SCALE

Book Categories derived from:

Norton, D.E. (1992). *The impact of literature-based reading.* New York: Maxwell

Macmillian International.

Modern Fantasy – literary folktales created by specific authors. The difference between folktales is the oral tradition. Epic fantasy - The Hobbit. Allegory – The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe. Science Fiction – A Wrinkle in Time. (p. 318-319).

Poetry – allows poets and readers to experience, see, hear, and feels the world in new ways (p.345).

Contemporary Realistic Fiction – realistic plots, characters, and settings that could and sometimes do exist in the world as we know it. The conflicts and the ways that characters overcome those conflicts must be possible in a realistic world, and the characters must be believable. (p. 360).

Fact Based Literature (Historical Fiction, Biography, and Informational Literature)
Historical Fiction – set in the past where the settings and types of conflicts must be authentic for the particular time period. (p. 382).
Biography – nonfictional story that tells about characters who actually lived. The setting must describe real places where the people lived; the events in the plot must really have happened (p. 389).
Informational Literature – provide opportunities for students to gain new knowledge about the world. All facts must be accurate. (p. 400).

Annotated Bibliographies derived from:

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senior high students. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

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http://www.reading.org/resources/tools/choices_young_adults.html

Modern Fantasy

Alosha. Christopher Pike

The first in a series, *Alosha* begins the story of Ali Warner, 13, who is determined to increase awareness of logging issues in her community. In the midst of her struggle, Ali and her friends find themselves at war with the elementals—dark fairies, trolls, and dwarves. This fantasy novel leads Ali, her friends, a leprechaun, and a troll on a quest to discover the secrets to controlling the Yanti—a window that will prevent the elementals from destroying humankind.

The Boy Who Couldn't Die. William Sleator

After his best friend's death, 16-year-old Ken Pritchard sells his soul to a psychic so that he will never die. What he doesn't anticipate is becoming a zombie to carry out the orders of the psychic—orders which include murder. With the help of his friend Sabrina, Ken sets out to retrieve his soul and encounters great adventure and horror along the way.

Dragon Rider. Cornelia Funke

The dragon fantasies continue, and this one is perfect for both younger and older students—and even their parents. The dragon valley is doomed: humans plan to flood the valley and the caves. Firedrake, along with Sorrel the fairy and Ben the orphan boy, search for the Rim of Heaven, the place where dragons can live forever in peace. Though they face numerous dangers, their story is more whimsical than serious. The book is packed with adventure, mythical creatures, and dazzling experiments, and includes some black-and-white illustrations that appeal to younger readers.

Midnighters: The Secret Hour. Scott Westerfeld

Things are strange enough after moving from Chicago to a small town, but 15-year-old Jessica Day becomes even more confused when she realizes that she is a Midnighter—a group of people who can move about during the 25th hour when the rest of the world is frozen. As she settles among this group, she must battle the slithers and darklings as she learns to use her full powers. *Midnighters* is the first in a trilogy.

Full Tilt. Neal Shusterman
Nothing could prepare 16-year-old Blake for the nightmarish experiences he endures when he enters a mysterious amusement park to find and save his brother from the possibility of being lost forever. In order to rescue his brother, Quinn, Blake is challenged by the mysterious Cassandra to finish seven rides before dawn, or both he and his brother are doomed. Each ride challenges Blake's innermost fears in a "Twilight Zone" manner, creating a thrilling but harrowing ride.

Storm Catchers. Tim Bowler
Thirteen-year-old Ella is kidnapped at gunpoint by a teenage boy who keeps her captive in a cave near the raging ocean in Cornwall, England. Ella's brother, Fin, is filled with guilt over his sister's kidnapping and tries to rescue her with the help of little brother, Sammy, and his powers of extrasensory perception (ESP). The stormy coastal setting drives the story from its suspenseful beginning to its ending and the discovery of horrifying family secrets. A spooky lighthouse, a child with ESP, ghosts, infidelity, blackmail, and storms breaking on the horizon create a compelling story.

Vampire High. Douglas Rees
When Cody Elliot's parents receive his mediocre report card, they insist that he change schools immediately. His choices are Our Lady of Perpetual Homework and Vlad Dracul Magnet School.

For Cody, the choice is obvious. Before starting at the new school he has an interview with the headmaster and meets the school's yellow-eyed wolf Charon. After the first visit, Cody decides the school is definitely unlike any other he's attended. On the first day at Vlad Dracul he understands why he was admitted. Most of the students are vampires and die when they get wet. State standards require a water-polo team, so the school needs a few human kids for the team. Cody has many adventures and deals with the typical problems of most teenagers but in a most unfamiliar setting.

The House of the Scorpion. Nancy Farmer

In this unique, futuristic novel, Matt discovers he is the clone of a powerful 142-year-old drug lord and eventually learns how his fate is related to the old man's longevity. Readers will be compelled to ponder the impact of technology and what it will do to human life as we know it.

The Named. Marianne Curley

As a Guardian of the Named, Ethan Roberts is charged with secretly protecting history from the Order of Chaos, an evil group that seeks to alter the past to achieve ultimate power in the present. Ethan is given orders to train his first apprentice, 15-year-old Isabel Becket. Their stories evolve in rotating chapters.

Old Magic. Marianne Curley

Witch-in-training Kate initiates a friendship to convince a skeptical Jarrod that he has strong paranormal powers. Traveling through time to the Middle Ages, the two must use their magical powers to break the curse on Jarrod's family. A deep friendship develops along with an acceptance of differences.

The Wings of Merlin. T.A. Barron
In this fifth and final volume of the Merlin saga, the wizard faces his most daunting challenge—to unite the disparate creatures of Fincayra to battle Rhita Gawr's evil spirit-world army.With mesmerizing prose, Barron deftly reveals Merlin's hidden gifts and brings the epic to a satisfying close.

Poetry

Crank. Ellen Hopkins

"Life was good before I met the monster. After, life was great…at least for a while." Hopkins's story delves into the life of academically gifted 17-year-old Kristina Snow, who discovers crank, or methamphetamine, on a visit to her errant father. Watching "Bree," Kristina's mature alter-ego, descend into addiction gives us a look into the frightening window of the fast track to drug addiction and its life-changing consequences. Told in free-verse poetry, this chilling book for advanced readers compels you to read on, only to discover there is no happy ending when it comes to addiction.

A Geography of Poets: An Anthology of the New Poetry. Edward Field
The writings of more than 200 poets, "the authentic contemporary voices of America," are organized in this anthology according to the region of the country in which the poets live and work.

Worlds Afire. Paul B. Janeczko
This story, written in narrative verse, is a powerful account of the 1944 Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus fire in Hartford, Connecticut. The fictitious voices of circus personnel, parents, children, police, firefighters, and neighbors meticulously detail this disaster, which was

fueled by the paraffin and gasoline that waterproofed the canvas tent. These personal tales of triumph and defeat will haunt the reader long after turning the last page.

Split Image: A Story in Poems. Mel Glenn
Split Image reveals the moving story of Laura Li, a 17-year-old Asian girl struggling to hide the reality of her troubled life under the "perfect" image she presents to the world. Glenn's compelling poems speak in the multiethnic voices of Laura Li, her family, classmates, and teachers. Because Laura Li's turmoil ends in suicide, this is a read for mature teens.

Stop Pretending. Sonya Sones
In a series of heartfelt poems inspired by true events in her life, the author reveals the emotional breakdown and hospitalization of her older sister. The poems gradually reveal the poignant story and the ways that Cookie and her parents come to terms with this traumatic event in their family life. This is a poetic memoir suitable for mature adolescents.

Here There Be Angels. Jane Yolen. Ill. David Wilgus.
A collection of poems and stories about angels written by renowned author Jane Yolen. The illustrations, done in pencil by David Wilgus, have a stunning photographic clarity. A gentle read for a quiet afternoon or evening, the collection might be considered multicultural in nature.

A Pizza the Size of the Sun. **Poems by Jack Prelutsky**. Jack Prelutsky. Ill. by James Stevenson.
Prelutsky serves nuggets of word play, chunks of strong rhythm, and riots of rhymes, with heaps of humor. Over 100 poems treat food, animals, growing up, siblings, and everyday joys and dilemmas with zest and zip. First forms vary, and word play predominates.

The Voice that is Great within Us: American Poetry of the Twentieth Century. Hayden Carruth.
This anthology presents diverse works by contemporary American poets both old favorites and new voices. Each poet tells about his/her life and the time in which he/she wrote.

Pictures that Storm Inside My Head: Poems for the Inner You. Richard Peck.
The more than seventy poems in this collection express the range of human feeling – loneliness, anger, fear, and lover. It is a collection of poems about being young, feeling young, or recollecting youth as a time of special pain and joy.

Echoes of the Sea. Elinor Parker.
A lifelong love of the seashore is what lead to this collection of poetry which captures the images, sounds and the moods of the sea.

Bring Me All of Your Dreams. Nancy Larrick.
The Focus of this illustrated collection of poetry is captures in the title – dreams. Over 30 poets whose work deals with dreaming are represented in the book. In the words of one writer, "To dream/you don't have to ask permission…To dream/is a simple thing."

Realistic Fiction

The Beckoners. Carrie Mac
Mac shares a terrifying picture of bullying and violence that can be found in any school. Zoe is the new girl who is trying desperately to fit in and chooses the wrong social circle. After discovering the group's vicious and cruel control tactics, Zoe tries to extricate herself and her

friend April from their grip. The results are more violence and cruelty while trying to make things right. The religious fundamentalist parents as well as the clueless and helpless teachers and administrators make the story even more chilling.

Contents Under Pressure. Lara M. Zeises

Fourteen-year-old Lucy Doyle faces changing relationships with lifelong friends as well as rollercoaster emotions and decisions involved in dating an older boy. Add disappointment to Lucy's list: Her brother, Jack, brings home his pregnant girlfriend and is reluctant to become a responsible parent. Fast-paced, funny dialogue and a "gross out" younger brother add comic relief. Teens, parents, librarians, and even some boys will be satisfied with this "chick lit."

Fighting the Current. Heather Waldorf

Tee's life is in turmoil. After an accident leaves her father's brain damaged, Tee must revive a fragile relationship with her mother. Ethan, a new boy in town, lends insight and understanding to Tee's plight. When Ethan breaks Tee's trust, he seeks her forgiveness and delivers a strong lesson on the power of reconciliation. As Tee's parents decide to remarry, she wonders how she will fit into the new situation. Tee tries to reconstruct the past by finishing her dad's canoe project, but she realizes that her life is changed forever.

Going for the Record. Julie Swanson

Leah's life revolves around soccer, and she is determined to earn a scholarship and make the national team. Unfortunately, Leah's father has devastating news; he has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and has only three months to live. Eventually, hospice care is called to prepare the home and family for the inevitable. Her strong family, loyal friends, and faith in God make Leah's story unforgettable.

Jude. Kate Morgenroth

Jude witnesses the brutal death of his drugdealer father and is surprised to learn that the district attorney who interrogates him is his mother. Though he tries to adjust to his new suburban lifestyle, Jude is coldly betrayed by his mother's boyfriend. He spends five years in prison for a crime he did not commit. While in prison, Jude resolves to study law and to pursue justice. After his release, Jude gradually uncovers the truth about his betrayal and finds enough strength to confront his mother and her boyfriend.

Nothing to Lose. Alex Flinn

Like playing hot potato with a hand grenade, Michael Daye's description of his own life screamed desperation. At 17, Michael felt he had nothing to lose. Michael runs away to join the carnival, where he thinks there are no questions asked. In a heartwrenching journey, Michael finds that he can't run away from the questions in his own heart. In this terrifyingly believable story, readers experience abuse, isolation, friendship, and finally, hope.

After. Francine Prose

After a nearby school shooting, Tom and his sophomore classmates react to the new, harsh security restrictions imposed by a grief counselor in order to control the students. Those who refuse to conform disappear to a detention camp from which no one returns. Tom risks his own life to protect their freedoms.

Blood Trail. Nancy Springer

Starting with its dramatic cover, a trail of bloody footprints leading into a darkened room, this is a fast-paced tale of murder and suspicion. When his best friend, Aaron, is brutally murdered,

Jeremy must deal with grief and anger. When he tells the police that Aaron was afraid of someone, he is faced with unexpected hostility from the residents of their small town. Alone with his thoughts, Jeremy is tormented by guilt; could he have done something to save his friend? Even reluctant readers will keep turning pages to discover who is at the end of the blood trail.

The First Part Last. Angela Johnson
The last part (the beginning of this novel) finds 16-year-old Bobby raising newborn Feather. With little help from his mother, and none from the baby's mother, Nia, Bobby has to cope with the pressures of senior year and parenting. It is not until the end of the book that readers learn the first part and the answer to the question that permeates the entire narrative—where is Nia, and why isn't she with Bobby and Feather?

The Glass Café. Gary Paulsen
In this light comedy, 12-year-old Tony sets off a chaotic chain of events when he draws some pictures of the exotic dancers who work at the Kitty Kat Club with his mother, who is working there to finance her doctoral studies. After the sketches are entered in an art show, a child-welfare officer and police officer meet their match when they try to take Tony away from his fiercely protective mother. This first-person contemporary story is based on an incident from Paulsen's past.

Shadow of a Doubt. S.L. Rottman
Ernest (Shadow) Thompson idolized his older brother, Daniel, who nicknamed Ernest for shadowing his every move. Then Daniel ran away for seven years, giving Shadow reason to become a real shadow by being apathetic and wearing nothing but black. Now, at age 15, Shadow is starting high school and finds opportunities to change his life. He joins the forensics team, makes new friends, and struggles to cope with Daniel's surprise return. Shadow and Daniel's new relationship reminds readers of the importance of looking beneath the surface when it comes to forgiveness, second chances, and new beginnings.

Historical Fiction, Biography, and Informational

Are We Alone? Scientists Search for Life in Space. Gloria Skurzynski

This nonfiction account describes the efforts of scientists around the world to answer the question," Are we alone?" By showing the interconnectedness of the many scientific disciplines that have come together in the search for life beyond our world, the author makes a case for extraterrestrial study and creates an interesting and visually inviting book. This book provides a glimpse into the lives of committed scientists filled with superhuman amounts of tenacity, patience, hope, and vision—all required qualities for such a far-reaching and intriguing search.

The Burn Journals. Brent Runyon

Eighth grader Brent Runyon ushers the reader through the horrific day of his attempted suicide to the day, eleven months later, when he reenters life at high school. This biography describes his daily struggle to survive with 85% of his body burned. Pain, guilt, and the courage to live with the consequences of a terrible decision are exposed through this intense documentation, giving the reader some unusual insight and possibly the author some emotional healing.

Remember D-Day: The Plan, The Invasion, Survivor Stories. Ronald J. Drez

This concise narrative presents a wealth of information about the complexities of the task, the unpredictability of weather and the enemy, and the courage of all of the Allies—young and old, civilian and soldier—on one of the most important days in history. Using maps, photos, captions,

and artifacts, the author brings new understanding of and interest in World War II to readers of all ages.

For Freedom: The Story of a French Spy. Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
Life for Suzanne David, a 13-year-old French schoolgirl, dramatically changes in May 1940, when she and her best friend witness the brutal death of a neighbor killed by a bomb dropped directly in front of them. Then the Germans take over Cherbourg, and Suzanne and her family are forced from their home into poverty. Based on a true story, Bradley's book makes war very human. It's not about battles; it's about humans with doubts and fears and courage. This novel immerses readers in the horrors faced by everyday citizens during the Nazi occupation. The real story, however, is in the chilling experiences of one of France's youngest spies.

Milkweed. Jerry Spinelli
In this historical novel, set in 1939, an orphaned boy wanders the streets of Warsaw, Poland, not even knowing his name. He survives by stealing food. He cannot remember any family, so he knows nothing about his background. He meets a group of Jewish boys who befriend and protect him. He doesn't know if he's a Jew or a Gypsy, so his friends tell him to claim that he's a Gypsy— for his own safety. He eventually takes the name Misha and begins living with a Jewish family in the Warsaw ghetto. Because he is so naive, he has little understanding of what is happening around him and the devastation the German Nazi army has caused.

Wayne: An Abused Child's Story of Courage, Survival, and Hope. Wayne Theodore
This is the graphic story of Wayne Theodore and the horrific abuse endured by him and his 11 siblings. Wayne is subjected to daily beatings, torture, starvation, and abandonment but eventually faces the reality of his abusive past so that he can overcome his own drug addiction, attempted suicide, and tendency to follow in his father's footsteps. His struggle and eventual triumph attest to the resilience of the human spirit.

Mississippi Trial, 1955. Chris Crowe
This historical fiction book is based on the murder of young African American Emmett Till and the trial that followed. Chris Crowe recreates a riveting tale of the incident as seen through the eyes of 16-year-old Hiram Hillburn, who is visiting his grandfather in Greenwood, Mississippi.

Beware, Princess Elizabeth. Carolyn Meyer
This historical fiction novel traces Princess Elizabeth's life from after her father's death until she becomes the queen. It is a fast-paced, welldetailed book that succeeds in giving the reader a different perspective of the life of Queen Elizabeth I, including the difficulty of living each day with the fear of execution by her enemies.

Jimi Hendrix. Rita J.Markel
This matter-of-fact biography begins with Jimi Hendrix's difficult childhood, when his only means of expressing himself was through music. Hendrix progressed from being a backup band member to being considered by many as rock's foremost electric guitarist, only to die of an overdose in 1970 at age 27.

Hear These Voices: Youth at the Edge of the Millennium. Anthony Allison
Eighteen "at-risk" teens share their personal stories. Through interviews and photos, readers learn about survival on the streets of South Africa from a group of young men, a young girl's life in Bangkok after her stepfather sold her into prostitution, a young man's struggle to survive AIDS, and Catholic students' lives in Belfast. Their stories demonstrate strength and determination, and end with a promise of hope as they enter the new millennium.

Taking Liberty: The Story of Oney Judge, George Washington's Runaway Slave. Ann Rinaldi
This riveting historical novel starts with an 1842 interview with the elderly Oney Judge. She is recalling her life story and begins when she was a young child in 1775. Oney was Martha Washington's personal servant, which gave her opportunities other slaves didn't have. Should Oney try to free herself and risk all she has?

VITA

Courtney Ann West received her Bachelor of Science degree in kinesiology with a minor in English from Sam Houston State University in 1998. She then entered the Secondary Education program at Sam Houston State University and received her Master of Education degree in August of 2004. Her research interests include reading interests, attitudes, motivation, and personality. She plans to study these topics in depth, focusing on Texas public secondary schools.

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