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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN, GENDER, GRADE LEVEL,
AND ATTITUDE TOWARD READING FOR FIRST
THROUGH FOURTH GRADE STUDENTS

By
Meghan T. Hayes

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Science in Teaching Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University,
June 2000

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved

June 28, 2000

ABSTRACT

Meghan T. Hayes The Relationship Between Gender, Grade Level, and Attitude Toward Reading for First through Fourth Grade Students, 2000. Thesis Advisor-Dr. Randall Robinson, Masters of Science in Teaching Program.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between gender and attitude toward reading and grade level and attitude toward reading. This correlational study used a non-random, convenience sample population that was derived from an elementary school that houses one transitional-first grade, and five classes each of first, second, third, and fourth grades. The sample consisted of 153 first through fourth grade students. Forty-three students were in the first grade, thirty-four students were in the second grade, forty-three students were in the third grade, and the remaining thirty-three participants were in the fourth grade.

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey was administered to the students by the researcher. Mean, standard deviation, and t-scores for non-independent samples were calculated in order to analyze the data.

The researcher found that females in grades two and four had significantly more positive attitudes toward reading situations than the males in these grades. The researcher also concluded from the data that first grade students had significantly more positive attitudes about recreational and academic reading than did third and fourth grade students.

MINI ABSTRACT

Meghan T. Hayes The Relationship Between Gender, Grade Level, and Attitude Toward Reading for First through Fourth Grade Students, 2000. Thesis Advisor-Dr. Randall Robinson, Masters of Science in Teaching Program.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between gender and attitude toward reading and grade level and attitude toward reading for first through fourth grade students. These two independent variables were each found to be statistically significant in correlation with the dependant variable, attitude toward reading.

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CHAPTER I

The Scope of the Study

Introduction

The emotional response to reading is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read (Smith 1988). Reading attitude is a system of feelings related to reading that causes an individual to approach or avoid a reading situation (Alexander et.al 1976). An individual's attitude toward reading includes feelings about reading, readiness for reading, and beliefs about reading (Mathewson 1994). Understanding the relatedness of attitude toward reading is important for two reasons. Firstly, attitude affects the level of skill ultimately attained by an individual by influencing such things as engagement and practice. Secondly, poor attitude may cause an individual to choose not to read when other options exist, whether the individual is a struggling reader or a fluent reader (Kear et.al 1995). Individuals who are interested in the reading materials presented to them will exert more effort in the reading process than will individuals who have no interest, or negative attitudes, for the reading materials presented to them (Gettys 1996). Education professionals widely believe that the development of positive attitudes toward reading in the formative years of schooling will create individuals who are lifelong readers (Cullinan 1987). For these reasons, reading attitude is an important component of the reading process for teachers to acknowledge when planning classroom instruction (Gettys 1996).

Statement of the Problem

Does an elementary student's gender affect his/her attitude toward reading? Does an elementary student's grade level affect his/her attitude toward reading?

Statement of Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between a student's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. It was also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's grade level and his/her attitude toward reading.

Limitations

The following are limitations of this research design:

Due to time and financial restraints the researcher used a small, non-random sample in order to obtain data. The results can not be generalized to other populations because a total of 153 first through fourth grade students from the same elementary school were the only participants in the study. Another limit to the present study was that it did not measure parental intellectual level or parental attitude toward reading. A third limitation to this study was that prior reading instruction was not a controlled variable. A final limitation to this study was that skill level as it pertains to reading was not a factor in the results. There is extensive support for the idea that most successful readers have positive attitudes toward reading however, this correlation was not explored by the present study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this study:

Academic Reading: Reading and related instruction that occurs in a school setting.

Attitude Toward Reading: a system of feelings related to reading that causes an individual to approach or avoid a reading situation. An individual's attitude toward reading includes feelings about reading, readiness for reading, and beliefs about reading.

Recreational Reading: Reading that occurs as a form of recreation and is completely voluntary in nature.

CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The emotional response to reading is the primary reason most readers read, and probably the primary reason most nonreaders do not read (Smith 1988). Reading attitude is a system of feelings related to reading that causes an individual to approach or avoid a reading situation (Alexander et.al 1976). Understanding the importance of attitude in readers is important for two reasons. Firstly, attitude affects the level of skill ultimately attained by an individual by influencing such things as engagement and practice. Secondly, attitude may cause an individual to choose not to read when other options exist, whether the individual is a struggling or fluent reader (Kear et.al 1995).

This study investigated the relationship between first through fourth grade student's gender, grade level, and attitude toward reading. It was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. It was also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's grade level and his/her attitude toward reading.

Attitude Development Theories

There are various models of understanding attitudes and their development and although the concepts vary, there are three factors that are integral components of every model. Each model considers the beliefs that an individual harbors in relation to the

object, the behavioral intentions about the object, and the feelings the individual experiences about the object as integral components of attitude. In some models, these three concepts are major components and in others they are mere contributing factors (Kear, McKenna & Ellsworth 1995).

McKenna's model is a synthesis of many earlier models for attitude acquisition and development toward reading. His model is greatly influenced by the theories of Fishbein and Ajzen, and Matthewson.. McKenna's model illustrates that beliefs about the outcome of reading are formed based on an interaction between many factors such as an individual's reading ability, past reading experiences, and the lure of other activities. Reading ability can only be improved by reading, and each reading experience influences the frequency that an individual will practice reading. The individual will likely compare the outcome of reading experiences with the outcome of other activities. If an individual finds another activity more rewarding, he/she will most likely choose the latter over reading. (McKenna 1995).

Mathewson's model does not consider social norms in its tripartite view. The theory behind this model is that attitude is a conglomeration of feelings, action readiness, and beliefs. The model also illustrates that the choice to begin reading or to read for a sustained period of time is affected by external motivators and the individual's emotional state (Matthewson 1994).

Ajzen and Fishbein have theorized that attitudes are shaped by beliefs. They categorize beliefs by origin and propose three types. Descriptive beliefs are formed by personal experiences, inferential beliefs are conclusions drawn based on existing experiences and beliefs, and information beliefs are based on second hand information.

Personal beliefs about the object and beliefs about societal norms that concern the object also influence an individual's behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975).

Reading Ability and Attitude Toward Reading

Many researchers have tested hypotheses based on the idea that poor readers will choose not to read in order to avoid feeling frustrated. There is extensive statistical evidence that reading attitude is positively correlated with reading ability (Askov & Fishback 1973), (Lipsky 1983), (Martin 1984), (Ransbury 1973), (Richards & Bear 1986), (Swanson 1982), (Walberg & Tsai 1985), (Wallbrown, Vance, & Prichard 1979).

Gender and Societal Norms

In many studies where male attitudes toward reading were compared with female attitudes toward reading, girls were found to hold more positive attitudes toward reading than did boys (Askov & Fishback 1973), (Ross & Fletcher 1989), (Smith 1990). There is also evidence that girls score higher overall than boys on reading ability assessments (Mullis, Campbell & Farstrup 1993). In recent years, there has been increasing observation among education professionals that school age children view reading as a feminine activity (McKenna, E. 1997). These attitudes and societal norms have been researched as a reason for females outperforming males on reading achievement tests. The theory follows that girls read more than boys because it is more socially acceptable and that the increased frequency of reading causes an increased level of ability to read as well (Kear, McKenna, Ellsworth 1995). It is interesting to note that these gender differences found in the United States and Canada are opposite from those found in other

countries. In Denmark, Nigeria, England, and Japan, reading is regarded by males of all ages as a masculine activity (Downing 1976), (Johnson 1976). Social groups may negatively perceive enjoying school or cooperating with teachers and pressure perceived group members to refrain from reading (Festinger 1950). The McKenna model supports the theory that when a child's cultural environment encourages, models, and reinforces reading, the individual will likely hold positive attitudes toward the act of reading (McKenna 1994).

Reading Instruction

Quality of reading instruction has also been correlated with an individual's attitude toward reading. The nature of most elementary educational situations is usually such that a child will experience a number of reading instructors throughout her educational career. The student is usually introduced to a new teacher each year in the classroom and also may practice reading with family members, babysitters, or friends. Many broad concepts and specific techniques of reading instruction have been researched for their effectiveness. Ability-grouping (Wallbrown, Brown & Engin 1978), whole-language approaches (Guzzetti 1990), (Jagacinski & Nicholls 1987), (McKenna, Stratton, Grindler & Jenkins 1995), and read-aloud sessions (Herrold, Stanchfield & Serabian 1989) have all been researched in correlation with reading ability and attitude. Cloer and Pearman (1991) examined the correlation between teacher attitudes, classroom behaviors and student attitudes about academic and recreational reading. They found that positive attitudes decreased overall as the student increased in age. Cloer and Pearman (1991) also found that time spent directing the basal was significantly and positively related to

student attitudes toward reading. However, as a result of a later study, Cloer and Pearman (1992) found that simply using the lessons suggested by the basal does not create a classroom of students who view reading in a positive light. It is when teachers use the basal correctly, in conjunction with literature and writing, that positive attitudes toward reading are formed (Cloer & Pearman 1992).

Parent and Teacher Attitudes Toward Reading

In Mazurkiewicz's 1960 study, he found a strong correlation between a father's attitude toward reading and his son's attitude toward reading. It has also been found that boys, girls and teachers have significantly higher recreational reading attitudes than academic reading attitudes (Cloer and Pearman 1992).

Reading Attitude Instruments

Reading attitude is a crucial predicting factor concerning lifelong reading habits. Since observable behavior displayed by students in the classroom setting is not always indicative of a student's true attitudes, it can be very helpful to use an objective "paper and pencil" instrument to gather this important information (Bullen 1972). It is very important that educators know the characteristics of reading attitude instruments in order to select one appropriate for their students.

The characteristics of reading attitude instruments include many variables. When choosing a reading attitude instrument, one should be sure that the test was normed using a population similar to the sample being tested. It is also important to be sure that the dimensions of reading attitude that the instrument measures address those intended by the

researcher. The length of time required to administer and score the instrument, the test and response format, and reliability and validity statistics are additional variables concerning the use of reading attitude instruments (Bullen 1972).

Instruments that strive to determine attitude toward reading using yes and no answers have a limited effect because the individual cannot indicate degrees of agreement or disagreement. The four or five point Likert scale design is probably the most efficient “paper and pencil” method for assessing attitudes. A four-point Likert scale doesn’t have a neutral answer, whereas a five-point scale does (Dryden 1979).

CHAPTER III

Procedure and Design

Introduction

This correlational study examined the possible relationship between gender and attitude toward reading and grade level and attitude toward reading. The researcher used McKenna and Kear's Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS). The instrument is a four point Likert type instrument.

Population

This study used a non-random, convenience sample. The sample consisted of 153 first through fourth grade students. Forty-three students were in the first grade, thirty-four students were in the second grade, forty-three students were in the third grade, and the remaining thirty-three participants were in the fourth grade. The sample was derived from an elementary school that houses one transitional-first grade, and five classes each of first, second, third, and fourth grades. Each grade has an hour and forty-five minute block of time allotted for language arts instruction. The curriculum consists of a combination of whole-language and phonics based lessons. Basal readers and trade books are used in each of the classrooms throughout the school year.

The participants all lived in a rural community in southern New Jersey. The township consists of primarily single-family homes and its residents are primarily middle class. The first language of all participants was English.

Design

This is a post-hoc correlational study; there is no treatment or retest involved. The independent variables are gender and grade level. The dependant variable is attitude toward reading. Data about each child's gender, grade level, and attitude toward reading was reported by the individual student. Attitude toward recreational and academic reading was determined based upon individual results of McKenna and Kear's Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Mean, standard deviation, and a series of t-tests were calculated in order to analyze the data.

Procedure

The researcher first contacted McKenna and Kear in the form of a letter to obtain permission to use the Elementary reading Attitude Survey (see appendix A). McKenna replied to the researcher via electronic mail to report that the survey has been placed in the public domain and permission was therefore granted. Next, the researcher contacted the principal of the school in order to obtain permission to conduct the study (see appendix B). The proposal was then approved at the district board meeting. After notification from the Board of Education, the researcher contacted two teachers per grade level, in-person, to receive help in facilitating the research study. The eight cooperating teachers then sent permission slips home to parents regarding their child taking the

reading attitude survey during school hours (see appendix C). Dates and times were then set for the researcher to visit the individual classrooms and administer the 20-question, Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Only children that received parental consent to participate in the study and completed the survey in its entirety were included in the results of the study.

Description of the Instrument

The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey (ERAS) is administered to an entire class in about 10 minutes. It is important that the students are first familiarized with the instrument and its purpose. Practice questions are to be given to the students in order to become familiar with the answer format. The survey consists of twenty items; ten measure academic reading attitude and ten measure recreational reading attitude. Each item asks the student how he/she feels about a stated circumstance or aspect of reading. Circling one of four pictures of the cartoon character, Garfield, indicates a student's answer for each item. The four pictures each depict Garfield in a different emotional state: very happy, a little happy, a little upset, or very upset. The test administrator reads each item aloud twice as the students mark their responses. Each item is assigned 1, 2, 3, or 4 points based on each answer. Four points are awarded for the "happiest" Garfield, three for the slightly smiling Garfield, two for each mildly upset Garfield, and one point for the very upset Garfield. Three scores for each student can be obtained: the total for the first ten items (reflecting attitude toward recreational reading), the total for the second ten (reflecting attitude toward academic aspects of reading), and a composite total (Kear 1990).

McKenna and Kear used Cronbach's alpha, a statistic developed primarily to measure the internal consistency of attitude scales, to calculate reliability at each grade level for both subscales and for the composite score. These coefficients ranged from 0.74 to 0.89.

Evidence of the instrument's construct validity was extensively gathered by Kear and McKenna by several means.

For the recreational subscale, students in the national norming group were asked (a) whether a public library was available to them and (b) whether they currently had a library card. Those to whom libraries were available were separated into two groups (those with and without cards) and their recreational scores were compared. Cardholders had significantly higher ($p < .001$) recreational scores ($M = 30.0$) than noncardholders ($M = 28.9$), evidence of the subscales validity in that scores varied predictably with an outside criterion.

A second test compared students who presently had books checked out from their school library versus students who did not. The comparison was limited to children whose teachers did not require her students to borrow books from the school library. The means of the two groups varied significantly ($p < .001$), and children with books checked out scored higher ($M = 29.2$) than those who had books checked out ($M = 27.3$). (

The validity of the academic subscale was tested by examining the relationship of scores to reading ability. Mean subscale scores of the high-ability readers ($M = 27.7$) significantly exceeded the mean of low-ability readers ($M = 27.0$, $p < .001$), evidence that scores were reflective of how the students genuinely felt about reading for academic purposes. The relationship between subscales was also investigated by McKenna and Kear. The intersubscale correlation coefficient was .64, which means that 41% of the variance in one set of scores could be accounted for by the other. In order for the researchers to interpret more precisely whether the traits measured by the survey corresponded to the two subscales, they conducted factor analyses. Both used the unweighted least squares method of extraction and a varimax rotation. The first analysis permitted factors to be identified using a limit equal to the smallest eigenvalue greater than one. Three factors were identified by the researchers. Of the ten items comprising the academic subscale, nine loaded predominately on a

single factor while the tenth loaded nearly equally on all three factors. A second factor was dominated by seven items of the recreational subscale, while three of the recreational items loaded principally on a third factor. These items did, however, load more heavily on the second factor (recreational) than on the first (academic). A second analysis constrained the identification of factors to two. This time, all but one item loaded on factors associated with the two subscales. The exception was item 13 which apparently involves a slight ambiguity. Taken together, the factor analyses produced evidence extremely supportive of the claim that the survey's two subscales reflect discrete aspects of reading attitude.

-Summary of Validity Statistics provided by McKenna and Kear, 1990

Chapter IV

Analysis of Findings

Introduction

This research sought to support the null hypothesis that stated that there was not a significant correlation between an individual's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. Additionally, this study sought to support the null hypothesis that stated that an individual's grade level was not significantly related to his/her attitude toward reading. The investigator collected data about student attitudes toward reading using a twenty-question survey.

All members of the sample were students at an elementary school in a rural town in southern New Jersey. The sample was comprised of 153 first through fourth grade students. Forty-three students were in the first grade, thirty-four students were in the second grade, forty-three students were in the third grade, and the remaining thirty-three participants were in the fourth grade. Each participant completed a twenty-question, reading attitude survey that assessed attitudes concerning recreational and academic reading.

Tabulation of Raw Scores

The results of the research were in the form of nominal and interval data. The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey yielded results in the form of interval data for academic reading, recreational reading, and total reading. The highest possible scores

that could be obtained were: academic reading-40, recreational reading-40, and total reading-60. The nominal data was derived from each student's grade level and gender.

The mean was calculated for female scores within each grade level and the mean and standard deviation was computed for the entire sample of female students (see table 1). Similarly, the mean was also calculated for male scores within each grade level and the mean and standard deviation was computed for the entire sample of male students (see table 2). Mean score and standard deviation were also calculated for the entire sample of males and females in grades first through fourth (see table 3). In each table, means were found for academic reading attitude, recreational reading attitude, and total reading attitude. The mean preference for one type of reading (either recreational or academic) was also calculated in each table. Preference was calculated by finding the difference between the academic and recreational raw scores for each student and then calculating the mean difference.

table 1

Mean Female Reading Attitude Scores

	Recreational	Academic	Total	Preference
Grade 1	35.11	34.53	65.42	0.58 Rec.
Grade 2	33.10	33.00	66.10	0.10 Rec.
Grade 3	31.95	32.20	64.15	0.10 Acad.
Grade 4	29.70	27.20	56.90	2.5 Rec.
Grades 1-4	32.47	31.73	63.14	0.77 Rec.
S.D.	1.96	2.75	3.67	1.03

table 2

Mean Male Reading Attitude Scores

	Recreational	Academic	Total	Preference
Grade 1	28.77	28.68	57.45	0.36 Acad.
Grade 2	30.00	28.24	58.24	1.76 Rec.
Grade 3	26.87	25.35	52.57	1.52 Rec.
Grade 4	24.00	21.50	45.50	2.40 Rec.
Grades 1-4	27.41	25.94	53.44	1.33 Rec.
S.D.	2.26	2.87	5.07	2.06

table 3

Mean Reading Attitude Scores- Males and Females

	Recreational	Academic	Total	Preference
Grade 1	31.94	31.61	63.44	0.11 Rec.
Grade 2	31.55	30.62	62.17	0.93 Rec.
Grade 3	29.41	28.78	58.36	0.71 Rec.
Grade 4	26.85	24.35	51.20	2.45 Rec.
Grades 1-4	29.94	28.84	58.29	1.05 Rec.
S.D.	2.03	2.78	4.34	0.86

The means for attitude toward academic reading, recreational reading, and total reading were each higher for female participants than male participants in every grade level. Recreational reading was found to be preferred more than academic reading for the total female sample, the total male sample, and the overall combined sample. However, first grade males and third grade females preferred academic reading slightly more than recreational reading (0.36 and 0.10 respectively). First grade students had the highest

mean scores for attitude toward academic reading, recreational reading, and total reading (31.94, 31.61, 63.44 respectively). Students in the fourth grade had the lowest mean scores for attitude toward academic reading, recreational reading, and total reading (26.85, 24.35, 51.20 respectively).

Tabulation of t-scores

In order to determine the significance of the different attitude scores for males/females and between the grade levels, t-tests for non-independent samples were calculated. Individual scores were used to compare male and female attitudes toward reading. Separate t-test were done for each grade level and calculated for the entire sample of first through fourth grade students (see table 4). Mean scores were used to compare the attitude of students, male and female combined, between grade levels. Separate t-tests were done to measure the difference in attitude toward reading between each grade (see table 5). A significance level of ($p > .05$) was used to calculate each t-test for non-independent samples.

table 4

A Comparison of Male and Female Attitudes Toward Reading

t-scores for non-independent samples

	Df	t-score	Significant?
Grade 1	21	0.71	No
Grade 2	16	11.01	Yes
Grade 3	22	1.29	No
Grade 4	14	10.53	Yes
Grades 1-4	77	10.43	Yes

A statistically significant difference was found between male and female attitudes toward reading in second and fourth grades ($t=11.01$ and $t=10.53$ respectively). In both cases, female attitudes toward reading were found to be significantly higher than male attitudes toward reading. The total average reading attitude difference between the sexes proved to be significant due to the influence of the second and fourth grade high t -scores. Therefore, the total average reading attitude difference was significantly higher for females than males ($t=10.43$).

table 5

**A Comparison Between Grade-Level Means of Attitude Toward Reading
t-scores for non-independent samples**

	Df	t-score	Significant?
Grades 1 & 2	2	0.43	No
Grades 1 & 3	2	17.70	Yes
Grades 1 & 4	2	5.04	Yes
Grades 2 & 3	2	4.24	No
Grades 2 & 4	2	3.88	No
Grades 3 & 4	2	3.53	No

A statistically significant difference in attitude toward reading existed between students in the first grade and the third grade ($t=17.70$). A statistically significant difference also existed between first and fourth grade students ($t=5.04$). In both instances, the first grade students have more positive attitudes toward reading than the students in the comparison grade.

Analysis of Data

It was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. It was also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's grade level and his/her attitude toward reading.

Based on the tabulation of t-scores for non-independent samples, a significant difference concerning reading attitudes was found among of males and females in second and fourth grades. In both grade levels, girls possessed more positive attitudes toward both academic and recreational reading than did male participants.

Also based on the tabulation of t-scores for non-independent samples, a significant difference was found concerning reading attitudes among first and third grade students, and first and fourth grade students. In both situations, the first grade students have significantly more positive attitudes toward reading than do the third and fourth grade students included in the sample.

Conclusions

The researcher compared the attitudes toward reading of male and female students in first through fourth grade. It was hypothesized that there was no significant correlation between a student's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. It was also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's grade level and his/her attitude toward reading. Both hypotheses were rejected based on the student results of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

The tabulation of t-scores for non-independent samples indicated that there was in fact a significant difference between attitude toward reading among males and females. The females included in this correlational study had significantly more positive attitudes toward academic and recreational reading than did the males included in the study. The data also indicated that first graders have significantly more positive attitudes toward reading than do third or fourth grade students.

Chapter V

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter reviews the statement of the problem, the null hypothesis, the procedure for the study, and the findings yielded from this research. The author also discusses how the results relate to the null hypothesis as well as to the educational field. Finally, the author suggested ways to improve the research design and additional variables to include in similar future studies.

Summary of the Problem

Does an elementary student's gender affect his/her attitude toward reading? Does an elementary student's grade level affect his/her attitude toward reading?

Summary of the Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. It was also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's grade level and his/her attitude toward reading.

Summary of Procedure

The researcher received permission from the test creators and the district's Board of Education to facilitate the study. Eight teachers (two each from grades one through four) agreed to send permission slips home to parents regarding their child taking the reading attitude survey during school hours. Dates and times were then set for the researcher to visit the individual classrooms and administer the 20-question, Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. Only children that received parental consent to participate in the study and completed the survey in its entirety were included in the results of the study.

The researcher used mean, standard deviation, and t-scores for non-independent samples to analyze the data. All t-scores were based on a significance level of ($p>0.05$).

Summary of Findings

The researcher compared the attitudes toward reading of male and female students in first through fourth grade. It was hypothesized that there was no significant correlation between a student's gender and his/her attitude toward reading. It was also hypothesized that there was no significant relationship between a student's grade level and his/her attitude toward reading. Both hypotheses were rejected based on the student results of the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey.

The tabulation of t-scores for non-independent samples indicated that there was in fact a significant difference between attitude toward reading among males and females. The females included in this correlational study had significantly more positive attitudes toward academic and recreational reading than did the males included in the study. The

data also indicated that first graders have significantly more positive attitudes toward reading than do third or fourth grade students.

Discussion

In previous studies where male attitudes toward reading were compared with female attitudes toward reading, girls were found to hold more positive attitudes toward reading than did boys (Askov & Fishback 1973), (Ross & Fletcher 1989), (Smith 1990). The data collected for this study supports this trend. Due to findings that female students included in this sample had more positive reading attitudes than the males surveyed in this study, the researcher's first null hypothesis was rejected. Some researchers have found evidence that suggests that the reason girls report enjoying reading more so than boys score is because girls are also more fluent readers than their male cohorts (Mullis, Campbell & Farstrup 1993). Other research has suggested that reading is regarded as a feminine activity and that societal norms are a cause for young males to have less positive attitudes toward reading than females (Kear, McKenna, Ellsworth 1995).

Previous findings correlating student attitudes toward reading and grade level have sometimes indicated a slight decrease in positive attitude toward reading as the grade level increases. This could be due to the level of difficulty of encountered reading material, awareness of societal norms, or increasing options about ways to spend one's time (Kear, McKenna, Ellsworth 1995). Due to findings that first grade students included in this sample had more positive reading attitudes than the third and fourth grade students surveyed in this study, the researcher's second null hypothesis was also rejected.

Implications and Recommendations

This study yielded evidence that females in grades two and four have more positive attitudes toward reading than their male cohorts. This study also indicated that first grade students have more positive attitudes toward reading situations than do third and fourth grade students.

Research experiments conducted in the future similar to the present study would be improved by including a measure of causation concerning achievement in reading and attitude toward reading. In its summary of research, the Commission on Reading concluded that becoming a skilled reader requires the realization that written material can be interesting (Gettys 1996). In order for a classroom teacher to plan interesting and effective reading instruction, it is important that she realize the attitudes that her students hold toward the act of reading. If researchers can detect factors that may contribute to a student's attitude toward reading, teachers and parents may be able to offer support and encouragement that improves an individual's attitude toward reading.

The results of a similar study could be generalized to other populations if a larger or more diverse sample was used. Parental attitude toward reading could be a variable considered in a follow-up study in order to understand more completely the role that environment plays on attitude toward reading. Finally, additional reading attitude inventories could be used to obtain a more complete view of each individual student's attitude toward academic and recreational reading.

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Appendix A
Letter Written To McKenna and Kear

February 8, 1999

Dr. Dennis J. Kear

Dept. of Curriculum & Instruction

Wichita State University

Dear Dr. Kear:

My name is Meghan Hayes. I am currently working on my Masters of Science in Teaching at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. As part of my thesis dealing with the correlation between gender, grade level, and attitude toward reading, I'd like to use your Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. I am writing to request information about how I might obtain your permission to use your Reading Attitude instrument, a copy of the instrument and its key, and data about its reliability and validity.

If there is a fee for these materials, I will gladly send it to you upon your request. I would like to do the testing before I am finished student teaching in May, so I would appreciate your response as soon as possible. I have enclosed a self-addressed and stamped envelope for the purpose of facilitating your response to my request. I can also be reached via email at

Thank you very much for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Meghan T. Hayes

Appendix B
Letter Written to Principal

April 2000

Olivet Elementary School
235 Sheep Pen Road
Pittsgrove, NJ 08318

Dear Dr. Turco,

I am currently enrolled in the graduate program at Rowan University. I am conducting a research project for partial fulfillment of my Master of Science in Teaching degree. It will be a correlational study on the effects of age, years of formal schooling, number and spacing of any siblings, and attitude toward reading. Ideally, I'd like this research to be conducted before I complete my internship in May.

With your permission, and permission from parents, I would like to include first, second, third, and fourth grade students from your school. I would like to include at least two classes from each grade level in my study. The individual student and parent responses to the surveys will be kept completely confidential. Should the students be allowed to participate in this study, I will be happy to provide your school with a copy of my findings upon completion of this research.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at school, at home 856-358-6126, or by email at tchaze@aol.com. Thank you for your assistance. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Meghan Hayes
Student Teacher

Appendix C
Parental Permission Slip

May 2, 2000

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

My name is Meghan Hayes and I am currently student teaching in Mrs. Zeidler's first grade class here at Olivet School. I am also enrolled in the graduate program at Rowan University. I am currently conducting a research project for partial fulfillment of my master's degree concerning children's attitudes toward reading. I am using a student survey to collect data for the study. I am writing to ask for your permission to have your child participate in this research. The individual student responses will be kept completely confidential and Olivet School will be given a copy of my findings upon completion of this research. If you decide to allow your child to participate in this study, please complete the waiver below and have your child return it to his/her homeroom teacher.

Thank you very much for your assistance. If you have any questions, you can contact me by email at _____ or at school via letter.

Sincerely,

Meghan Hayes

I give permission for my child _____ to participate in the study.

Child's name

parent/guardian signature

VITA

Name:	Meghan Theresa Hayes
Date and Place of Birth:	October 20, 1976 Vineland, New Jersey
Elementary School:	Olivet Elementary Pittsgrove, New Jersey
High School:	A. P. Schalick High School Pittsgrove, New Jersey
College:	Douglass College-Rutgers University New Brunswick, New Jersey
Graduate:	Rowan University Glassboro, New Jersey Masters of Science in Teaching