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# Relationship of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools: A Quantitative Study

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**Relationship of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Award books  
on students' reading motivation in three Illinois rural  
middle schools: A quantitative study**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the  
Faculty of Argosy University Schaumburg  
College of Education**

**In Partial Fulfillment of  
The Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Education**

**by**

**Roxanne Marie Forgrave**

**April, 2010**

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**Chair: Narjis Hyder, Ed.D**

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**David B. VanWinkle, Ph.D.**

**Department: College of Education**

## **Abstract**

Motivating students to read is challenging, and 49 states have children's choice book programs whose main purpose is to motivate students to read. This quantitative research study determined if, in three rural middle schools, a relationship exists between sixth, seventh, and eighth graders reading the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Award (RCYRBA) books and reading motivation. The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (Pitcher, et al., 2007) survey was used for data collection; the data was analyzed using multiple regression. The results indicate there is a relationship between middle school students' reading motivation and the reading of RCYRBA books, gender, grade level, and reading grades. Future research should study the causal relationship between reading motivation and students' reading of the RCYRBA books.

## Table of Contents

|                                                                | Page      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Table of Appendices.....                                       | viii      |
| Table of Tables.....                                           | ix        |
| <b>Chapter One: The Problem .....</b>                          | <b>1</b>  |
| Research Problem .....                                         | 4         |
| Problem Background .....                                       | 7         |
| Purpose of the Study .....                                     | 11        |
| Research Questions .....                                       | 12        |
| Research Hypotheses.....                                       | 13        |
| Limitations and Delimitations .....                            | 14        |
| Definitions .....                                              | 16        |
| Importance of the Study.....                                   | 20        |
| <b>Chapter Two: Review of the Literature .....</b>             | <b>23</b> |
| Introduction .....                                             | 23        |
| Motivation Theory .....                                        | 23        |
| Extrinsic Motivation .....                                     | 24        |
| Intrinsic Motivation .....                                     | 27        |
| Self-determination Theory.....                                 | 27        |
| Expectancy Value Theory .....                                  | 29        |
| Intrinsic Motivation and Rewards .....                         | 30        |
| National and International Reading Studies.....                | 33        |
| Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) ..... | 33        |
| Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) .....    | 35        |
| To Read or Not to Read Study.....                              | 36        |
| Reading Motivation .....                                       | 37        |
| Students' Choice.....                                          | 38        |
| Gender.....                                                    | 41        |
| Grade Levels.....                                              | 45        |
| Academic Achievement .....                                     | 49        |
| Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile .....                    | 52        |
| Children's Literature.....                                     | 54        |
| Genres of Children's Literature .....                          | 54        |
| Benefits of Children's Literature .....                        | 54        |
| Historical Perspective .....                                   | 55        |
| John Newbery Medal .....                                       | 56        |
| Other Adult Selected Book Awards.....                          | 58        |
| Children's Choices Book Award Programs .....                   | 58        |
| International Reading Association Book Lists .....             | 58        |
| Children's Choices Book List .....                             | 59        |
| Teachers' Choices Book List.....                               | 60        |
| Young Adult Choices Book List.....                             | 60        |
| State Children's Choice Book Awards .....                      | 61        |

|                                                                      |           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Varied Grade Levels .....                                            | 61        |
| Selection Process .....                                              | 62        |
| Voting Statistics .....                                              | 65        |
| William Allen White Award .....                                      | 66        |
| Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Program .....              | 67        |
| State Children's Choice Award Research Studies .....                 | 70        |
| Summary .....                                                        | 73        |
| <b>Chapter Three: Methodology .....</b>                              | <b>75</b> |
| Introduction .....                                                   | 75        |
| Research Design .....                                                | 76        |
| Correlational Quantitative Study .....                               | 76        |
| Survey Method .....                                                  | 76        |
| Sample of Convenience .....                                          | 77        |
| Cross Sectional Survey .....                                         | 77        |
| Dependent Variables .....                                            | 78        |
| Self-Concept .....                                                   | 78        |
| Value of Reading .....                                               | 78        |
| Independent Variables .....                                          | 79        |
| Number of RCYRBA Books Read .....                                    | 80        |
| Study Participants' Gender .....                                     | 80        |
| Study Participants' Grade Level .....                                | 81        |
| Study Participants' Reading Quarterly Grade .....                    | 82        |
| Research Questions and Hypotheses .....                              | 83        |
| Research Question and Hypothesis One .....                           | 83        |
| Research Question and Hypothesis Two .....                           | 84        |
| Research Question and Hypothesis Three .....                         | 85        |
| Research Question and Hypothesis Four .....                          | 86        |
| Research Question and Hypothesis Five .....                          | 87        |
| Selection of Subjects .....                                          | 88        |
| Instrumentation .....                                                | 90        |
| Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) .....                               | 90        |
| Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) .....                   | 91        |
| Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Reading Survey .....           | 92        |
| Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile Conversational Interview ..... | 94        |
| Other Studies Using AMRP .....                                       | 95        |
| Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award List .....                 | 95        |
| Assumptions .....                                                    | 96        |
| Limitations .....                                                    | 97        |
| Procedures .....                                                     | 98        |
| Internal Review Board .....                                          | 98        |
| Setting .....                                                        | 98        |
| Study Participants .....                                             | 99        |
| Data Collection Instruments .....                                    | 100       |
| Analysis .....                                                       | 101       |
| Research Questions, Null Hypotheses, & Hypotheses .....              | 101       |



|                                                                      |            |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Statistical Package for the Social Sciences .....                    | 103        |
| Descriptive Statistics .....                                         | 104        |
| Regression Analysis .....                                            | 104        |
| <b>Chapter Four: Results .....</b>                                   | <b>106</b> |
| Descriptive Results .....                                            | 108        |
| Hypothesis Testing .....                                             | 117        |
| Conclusion .....                                                     | 128        |
| <b>Chapter Five: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations .....</b> | <b>130</b> |
| Procedures .....                                                     | 135        |
| Summary of Findings .....                                            | 137        |
| Research Question One .....                                          | 137        |
| Research Question Two .....                                          | 137        |
| Research Question Three .....                                        | 138        |
| Research Question Four .....                                         | 138        |
| Research Question Five .....                                         | 139        |
| Conclusions .....                                                    | 140        |
| Limitations .....                                                    | 147        |
| Implications for Practice .....                                      | 148        |
| Implications for Research .....                                      | 150        |
| Recommendations .....                                                | 152        |
| Concluding Remarks .....                                             | 155        |
| References .....                                                     | 158        |
| Table of Appendixes .....                                            | viii       |
| Appendix A .....                                                     | 172        |
| Appendix B .....                                                     | 175        |
| Appendix C .....                                                     | 179        |
| Appendix D .....                                                     | 181        |
| Appendix E .....                                                     | 183        |
| Appendix F .....                                                     | 185        |
| Appendix G .....                                                     | 188        |
| Appendix H .....                                                     | 190        |
| Appendix I .....                                                     | 192        |
| Appendix J .....                                                     | 194        |

## Table of Tables

| Table .....                                                             | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Letter Grade Numerical Equivalents .....                             | 82   |
| 2. Participation by Site – Site 1 .....                                 | 108  |
| 3. Participation by Site – Site 2 .....                                 | 108  |
| 4. Participation by Site – Site 3 .....                                 | 109  |
| 5. Student Participants and Possible Participants by Grade Level .....  | 110  |
| 6. Participants' Gender .....                                           | 111  |
| 7. Participants' Grade Level.....                                       | 111  |
| 8. Letter Grade Numerical Equivalents .....                             | 112  |
| 9. Participants' Reading Grade and Number of Books Read .....           | 113  |
| 10. Mean and Standard Deviation of AMRP Survey Questions.....           | 115  |
| 11. Model Summary – Self-Concept of Reading as Dependent Variable ..    | 122  |
| 12. Coefficients for Self-Concept of Reading as Dependent Variable..... | 124  |
| 13. Model Summary –Value of Reading as Dependent Variable .....         | 126  |
| 14. Coefficients – Value of Reading as Dependent Variable .....         | 127  |

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## **Dedication**

To my husband, children, and grandson  
who have loved and supported me throughout this journey  
to help me achieve this lifelong dream

## **Chapter 1: The Problem**

In education today, major issues concern schools nationwide. Four of those issues in particular include students' reading skills and motivation, globalization, educational funding, and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). All students must be able to read, comprehend, and think critically about what they read. Berman and Biancarosa (2005) elucidate this idea by explaining that occupations of the future will require employees to have exemplary reading skills as well as extensive education. Currently, among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, referred to as middle school students, reading motivation declines and "only three out of 10 U.S. eighth-graders are proficient readers" (Berman & Biancarosa, p. 1). While attempting to produce student readers, teachers must truly motivate all students, especially students in grades six, seven, and eight, to become passionate, critical readers who can meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century employment opportunities.

Globalization refers to decreasing the distance around the world through technology. It also includes the economic, technological, and cultural impact on education. Kagan and Stewart (2005) affirm the definition of globalization briefly when they assert "What happens in one nation affects life in others" (§ 1). After studying three countries which participated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), Brozo, Shiel, and Topping (2007/2008) expressed the belief that educators need to be concerned about the PISA results because middle school students must increase their motivation to read, so they can become lifelong learners who are competitive within this global society. Today

and in the future, more than in any previous time period, students will need to acquire more advanced reading skills (Berman & Biancarosa, 2005). Teachers must motivate middle school students to read so they can improve their reading skills in preparation for future employment.

Unfortunately, many schools have limited libraries and classroom libraries because of a lack of funds. Since many schools currently face budget crises, school boards and administrators must remove qualified employees from the payroll. Unfortunately, librarians are some of the first district employees to be eliminated. In spring of 2002 (G. M. E., 2002), Springfield, Illinois school districts released many school librarians in a \$10-million budget reduction; thus, some schools are no longer staffed with certified librarians or only operate with parent volunteers. Because teachers and administrators are concerned about children not returning books, some schools allow only the teachers to borrow books.

In 2007, Illinois state government contributed only 28% of school children's educational costs; in 2004, the state's contributing percentage was 33%. Within the United States, Illinois ranks 49<sup>th</sup> in the monies the state government provides for children's education (Berkowitz, 2008). Currently in the 2009 – 2010 school year, the state is millions of dollars behind in payments to schools for educational funding. Because state support has been declining, schools have been forced to reduce the teaching force including librarians, utilize outdated instructional materials, and release thousands of educational support staff such as library aides. Schools need funds to provide students with contemporary, high interest reading materials such as award winning books and

books from state children's choice book lists such as the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) list.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001) requires states to create standards for third through eighth grade students in reading and mathematics as well as to monitor those students' progress. This act emphasizes teachers' qualifications, research-based instruction, assessment of learning standards, and the schools' accountability for all students' learning (Kimmelman, 2006; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001; Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Schools have aligned their curriculum to the state standards and have based evaluations on those standards. Berman and Biancarosa (2005) declare "The average percentage of *all* students meeting fourth- and eighth-grade NAEP [National Assessment of Educational Progress] reading proficiency standards is *less than 50 percent in every state*" (p. 6). Hoff (2008) testified to the magnitude of the situation by stating "Almost 30,000 schools in the United States failed to make adequate yearly progress under the No Child Left Behind Act in the 2007-2008 school year" (¶1). The most recent study by Dee and Jacob (2009) indicates that since 2002, there is "no evidence that NCLB increased reading achievement in either 4th or 8th grade" (p. 4), although multiple reading programs have been integrated and implemented into schools' curriculum.

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) is the annual improvement schools must attain to meet full compliance under the NCLB Act (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). Knowing that all students must meet AYP by 2014, schools are concerned with students improving their reading skills. As students



advance through the grade levels of the education system, their motivation to read for enjoyment diminishes which affects their learning (Gottfried, 1985; Ruddell & Unrau, 1997). Students who read more will have improved grades (Allington, 2002; 2007; 2009; Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Krashen, 2002; 2006; 2009; Miller, 2009; 2010; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).

An educational tool that can enable middle school students to improve their reading motivation is book lists of quality literature such as created in the 190 children's choice book award programs within 49 of the 50 states (Hilbun & Claes, 2010). While being promoted by many teachers and librarians across the nation, minimal research has actually been conducted on the effectiveness of these children's choice book award programs. In Illinois the RCYRBA program annually includes a select list of 20 books published in the last five years for students in grades four through eight. One of the purposes for the creation of this award is to encourage or motivate students to read (Fox, 1990; Obert & Barr, 2004; Rebecca Caudill, 2010). Thus, research needs to be conducted on whether or not the books enumerated on this state children's choice book list motivate student readers, especially middle school readers in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades.

### **Research Problem**

With the emphasis on meeting AYP for all students by 2014 based on the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2001), sixth, seventh, and eighth grade middle school students need to increase their reading

motivation and read more so they can improve their reading scores. Reading motivation among middle school students has decreased as the students have aged (Gottfried, 1985; Guthrie, 2001; Ruddell & Unrau, 1997). Intrinsic motivation needs to be developed within students to help them gain the desire to read because as Guthrie (2008) states “intrinsic motivation drives students’ amount of reading” (p. 2). As students experience enjoyment and read books of interest to them, their intrinsic motivation increases. Thus, students read more. Because they read more, their academic achievement improves, including their grades (Gallagher, 2009; Krashen, 2009; Miller, 2009; 2010; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). As the United States continues to compete globally, students’ reading motivation must increase so that their reading skills advance.

The RCYRBA list provides teachers and librarians a list of quality literature to recommend to middle school students. When referring to the many children’s choice state book awards created from the 1950s to the present, Obert and Barr (2004) state “These awards were created primarily for the purpose of promoting literature to children” (p. 1), yet Seagrave (2004) indicates the lack of research in this particular area. Seagrave states:

Nevertheless, a thorough literature review did not reveal any such intentional and rigorous measurable outcome assessment studies of the young participants in statewide child-choice book award programs... Statewide young readers’ choice award programs have tremendous power to have an impact on children’s literacy, yet to date these positive influences have remained largely untested in systematic, objective manner. (p. 175)

Thus, there is a gap in the literature regarding these book award programs and their impact on students, especially since some of these awards have been in

existence for more than 50 years. The RCYRBA program is 23 years old, yet minimal research exists to determine any effects it may have on students' reading, according to Brandt (personal communication, June, 2008), one of the RCYRBA committee members.

In 2009, 940 schools in Illinois registered for participation in the RCYRBA program, with 702 of those schools actually submitting votes (Rebecca Caudill, 2010). Schools enroll in the RCYRBA program by paying a nominal registration fee. Then students in grades four through eight are eligible to vote after reading at least three of the books on the current list. In February, 2009, 42,550 Illinois fourth through eighth grade students voted for their favorite book on the list (Rebecca Caudill). In February, 2010, 38,684 Illinois fourth through eighth grade students voted in the RCYRBA program (Rebecca Caudill). Schools are required minimally to possess 12 of the 20 book titles which are accessible to students. Many of the participating schools purchase multiple copies; therefore the books are available for the students (Rebecca Caudill, 2010). Teachers and librarians utilize school time and financial resources to promote the RCYRBA program, but little research exists. Thus, there is a gap in the research, validating the need for a study on this book award program.

Krashen (2006) maintains that "free voluntary reading...may be the only way to help children become better readers, writers, and spellers" (p. 43). Krashen further reports that "children become better readers by reading" (p. 43). Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students need to read high interest, quality literature. Current student, teacher, and librarian recommended literature is

provided annually through the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) list. A committee of teachers and librarians compiles a list of 20 titles based on an evaluation tool to judge literature for quality. This list is accessible through the Illinois School Library Media Association (ISLMA) website ([www.islma.org](http://www.islma.org)) and also through the actual RCYRBA website ([www.rcyrba.org](http://www.rcyrba.org)).

While the state children's choice book award programs originated in the 1950s for the purpose of encouraging students to read quality literature (Obert & Barr, 2004), minimal research has been conducted on their use, effectiveness, and effect on the thousands of students who annually participate in these state award programs. State children's choice book programs were established so that students at varying levels have a voice in book selection. In the RCYRBA program students annually read books from the list of 20 and then cast ballots for their favorite book from the list. This study will determine if middle school students who read the books on the Rebecca Caudill Children's Choice Book Award (RCYRBA) list are more motivated to read, have a better self-concept of their reading ability, and value reading.

### **Problem Background**

Eccles and Wigfield (2002) state that motivation refers to "the study of action. Modern theories of motivation focus more specifically on the relation of beliefs, values, and goals with action" (p. 110). Deci and Ryan (1985) explain that motivation is comprised of energy and a behavioral direction. Energy is affected

by internal and external needs, whereas motivational direction is also affected by internal and external incentives.

Motivation is frequently divided into two major kinds which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation means the students develop their own reasons within themselves to undertake or complete a task, such as reading. Extrinsic motivation involves outward rewards which encourage students to complete an assignment, such as reading. In this type of motivation, students may receive prizes such as books, classroom parties, or other trinkets for accomplishing a particular goal either individually or as a group (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Grades are another form of extrinsic motivation.

The theory of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is related to reading motivation. Reading motivation is defined as involving or engaging students in their reading and in the belief they are capable of reading. Gottfried (1985) performed some foundational studies indicating that the higher level of students' intrinsic motivation resulted in higher academic scores for those same students. Also, as students advance to higher grade levels through the educational system, their intrinsic reading motivation decreases. Intrinsic motivation is defined as students performing an action from within to develop their curiosity, to benefit from the experience, or to satisfy their interests (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Goslin, 2003; Gottfried, 1985). Extrinsic motivation involves performing an action to receive an outward reward or to avoid punitive measures (Dev, 1997).

Two important aspects of reading motivation include self-concept and value. Ivey and Broaddus (2001) report that when studying middle school students' motivation, the students may desire to read but be fearful because they feel inadequate or lack a positive self-concept in regard to their reading abilities. The second focus within reading motivation is value. Kasten and Wilfong (2007) studied students' reactions and resistance to independent reading and revealed that adolescent boys lack value for independent reading as compared to adolescent girls and elementary boys and girls.

A trend in reading research indicates middle school students are not as intrinsically motivated as elementary students (Anderman, Maehr, & Midgley, 1999; Gottfried, 1985; Lepper, Corpus, & Iyengar, 2005; McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995; Sturtevant et al., 2006). Thus, middle school teachers must be cognizant of current, quality literature and provide accessibility of such literature enabling sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students to become motivated readers.

Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) explain that within reading motivation theory several important aspects exist. One motivator of reading is that students have book options at their interest and reading ability levels (Gambrell et al., 1996; Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencevich, 2004). Middle school students seek reading materials that have real world personal connections to themselves (Gambrell et al., 1996; Guthrie, 2008). Williams et al. (2008) explain that providing children the opportunity to decide upon their own reading materials empowers them. Kasten and Wilfong (2007) affirm that idea by stating:

Students need to be able to choose what they read at least most of the time, and especially until they are firmly and unshakably hooked into reading. In order to achieve our literacy educator goals, students must fall in love with the stuff of books, and this happens in books they care about, find themselves in, and those that are in harmony with their interests. (§ 8)

Hollingworth (2007) agrees with Kasten and Wilfong (2007) by stating “Real readers read real books and select books about topics that are interesting to them” (p. 340). Atwell (2007) concurs that student choice is important by stating “The only surefire way to induce a love of books is to invite students to select their own” (p. 12).

Teachers and librarians need to create an educational climate that encourages reading motivation among students (Layne, 2009; Wigfield et al., 2004). Books on the RCYRBA list are quality literature of interest to students (Obert & Barr, 2004). One of the purposes of the RCYRBA program is to introduce students to quality literature (Rebecca Caudill, 2010).

Many of the state children’s choice book award programs began for the purpose of encouraging students to read quality literature especially for pleasure (Obert & Barr, 2004). Most states have their own children’s choice book award program. These individual state lists are created annually for particular grade levels and are composed of three to 75 books of varying genres. Students, teachers, and librarians recommend books for these lists, and a committee of students, teachers, and librarians select a final list for that year. During the school year, students read at least one of the books or an established minimum number of books before voting for their favorite. The author of the winning book receives the state award. By developing and promoting these children’s book

award programs, teachers and librarians desire to further the love of reading and reading motivation among students at all grade levels.

In Illinois for grades four through eight, the RCYRBA has been in existence for 23 years, since the 1987-1988 school year. Students have the opportunity to participate in the book nomination process, thus creating a higher level of voice, choice, and control among the students. A committee of teachers and librarians meet to select the 20 books for the annual list. Teachers and librarians across the state use this list in varying ways to encourage or motivate students to read, especially for pleasure. Students have approximately one year to read the minimum of three books from the list before casting a ballot for their favorite book (Obert & Barr, 2004; Rebecca Caudill, 2010).

The books on state children's choice book award lists such as the RCYRBA list are current, high interest books which create real life experiences for the students (Obert & Barr, 2004; Rebecca Caudill, 2010). Students, especially middle school students, must see the relevancy of the reading so they can internalize it. Since books on these award lists are recommended by students, as well as teachers and librarians, students experience a degree of voice and selection in their reading materials.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The state children's choice book award programs were launched in the 1950s to intentionally persuade students to read quality literature, but minimal research has been conducted on their use, effectiveness, and effect on the



thousands of student participants. The purpose of this study is to determine if sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who read the books on the Illinois Rebecca Caudill Children's Choice Book Award (RCYRBA) list are more motivated to read, have a better self-concept of their reading ability, and experience a greater value of reading.

### **Research Questions**

1. Is there a relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
2. Is there a relationship between the gender of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading, to determine if boys or girls are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
3. Is there a relationship between the grade level of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
4. Is there a relationship between middle school students' reading grades and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more

motivated to read based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

5. Will the following set of variables pertaining to middle school students': number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades significantly predict their reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores?

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. Middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books will be more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007).
2. Middle school girls, as opposed to middle school boys, will be more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher, et al., 2007).
3. Sixth grade students, as opposed to seventh grade students or eighth grade students, will be more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher, et al., 2007).
4. Middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and

higher value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007).

5. The following set of variables pertaining to middle school students: number of RCYRBA books read, gender, age, and quarterly reading grades will significantly predict their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

One of the limitations for this study is the availability of the RCYRBA titles in each of the schools where students were surveyed. The schools could have a limited number of the titles available for many students to read. Some schools only purchase one copy of each of the titles for the library, while other schools purchase multiple copies of each of the titles. Within the schools, individual teachers support the program by purchasing copies of each of the titles for check-out from their own classroom libraries. For schools to participate in this program, school libraries are required to purchase only 12 of the 20 titles for their collection (Rebecca Caudill, 2010). Because many students must read these books to qualify for participation in the program through voting, schools should make available multiple copies of all titles. School library funding affects this limitation.

Schools that have employed certified library information specialists who are active in the state organization of Illinois School Library Media Association

(ISLMA) are familiar with the RCYRBA program. New teachers may lack knowledge of the program unless teachers and/or librarians inform them. Some schools in Illinois employ only non-certified library aides who are unaware of this program. If these aides are only part-time employees, they will experience inadequate planning time and lack of educational opportunities to promote additional programs from the state level. Because of the aides' limited knowledge about the program, the students are unable to participate in the program. According to the RCYRBA website (Rebecca Caudill, 2010), if schools do not register for the program, then public libraries can register, allowing students who do not vote at a school to cast a ballot at the public library.

Some schools promote this program more than other schools, which can affect the number of participants at the selected schools. School libraries and teachers may offer extra points, free books, parties, or other extrinsic incentives for those who read various numbers of the titles. The researcher only used schools which granted permission and students whose parents granted permission. Because it is a voluntary Illinois reading program, the number of students who participated varied among the three selected Illinois schools.

While this study is pioneering a new area, several delimitations exist. First, the study was conducted in three middle schools in rural, central Illinois. The researcher selected schools that were easily accessible and that granted permission for the study. Annually, thousands of Illinois students participate in the program, which include students from both rural and urban schools, yet this study was limited to three rural central Illinois middle schools. It is unknown

whether the results can be generalized to students who attend urban or suburban schools.

Because the study was completed in Illinois, it is not known whether the results can be generalized to all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who participate in their own state's Children's Choice Book Award program. Other states' requirements or rules and book titles differ from the Illinois Children's Choice Book Award program's requirements, guidelines, and book titles.

### **Definitions**

The following terms used in this study are specifically defined here to avoid misunderstandings.

1. Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) – is a published survey instrument which was used in this study. Pitcher et al. (2007) modified the Motivation to Read Profile by Gambrel et al. (1996) so that the terminology in the survey was more applicable to adolescents or students in grades six through twelve.
2. Caldecott Medal – is the award given to a picture book each year. The award is for the illustrations. It is named after Randolph Caldecott who illustrated children's books in the 1800s. This award is an adult choice award, sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA) (Marks, 2006).

3. Children's choice awards – are book awards sponsored by individual states “in which students, grades kindergarten through high school, read and vote on the awards” (Obert & Barr, 2004, p. vi).
4. Children's choice book lists – is a program which is sponsored by the International Reading Association (IRA) and the Children's Book Council (CBC). Schools register to participate in reading books and choosing their favorites. Then the list is posted and students vote online for their favorite. This is a national endeavor and not sponsored by individual states. (Children's Choices, 2009).
5. Extrinsic motivation – is defined as the external rewards given to encourage students to accomplish a task or goal. Such rewards offered are grades, candy, trinkets, books, or other items (Dev, 1997). The reward may or may not relate to the task.
6. Intrinsic motivation – is the internal desire to pursue and accomplish a task. Deci and Ryan (1985) state that students are intrinsically motivated when “they experience interest and enjoyment, they feel competent and self-determining” (p. 34).
7. Librarian – is the certified professional who works in the library or the library media center. Various titles have been used for librarians in the past several years, such as library media specialist and library information specialist. In this paper the term librarian is used to refer to this certified professional.

8. Middle school students – In this study sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students are considered middle school students. “Middle school student describes a student approaching adolescence and in transition between elementary school and high school” (Moje, Young, Readence, & Moore, 2000, p. 400).
9. Motivation - is defined as “the study of action...more specifically the relation of beliefs, values, and goals with action” (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002, p. 110). Bandura (1994) defines it as “activation to action” (Glossary, ¶3).
10. Newbery Medal – is the award given to the chapter book or novel that is considered to be the best quality book written for that particular year. It is named after John Newbery who was one of the first authors of children’s books. Sponsored by the American Library Association (ALA), it is an adult choice award for children’s books (Marks, 2006).
11. RCYRBA – This acronym refers to the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers’ Book Award, which is the Illinois children’s choice book award, sponsored by Illinois School Library Media Association (ISLMA), Illinois Reading Council, and the Illinois Association of Teachers of English (Rebecca Caudill, 2010).
12. Self-concept – Self-concept is what people think of themselves based on their experiences and abilities; it is one’s self-image. Self-concept is “a composite view of oneself” (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003, p. 2). “Academic self-concept refers to individuals’ knowledge and perceptions about themselves in achievement situations” (p. 6). In this study, it refers to

students' "self-concept as a reader;" what students believe they are capable of reading and accomplishing (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 388).

13. Self-efficacy – is defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce effects" (Bandura, 1994, "Glossary," ¶ 4). This definition mimics Bong and Skaalvik's (2003) definition of "academic self-concept" because they both refer to what people assume about themselves and what the people are capable of accomplishing academically. Current researchers are employing the expression self-efficacy and not self-concept. In this study the term self-concept will be used since that is utilized in Pitcher's et al. (2007) Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP), the survey instrument being implemented.
14. SPSS – is the acronym for the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. This is a common statistical software package used in many colleges and universities. This software program was used in this study for data entry and data analysis.
15. Value of reading – The value of reading refers to students realizing a purpose or need to learn, such as learning to read (Brophy, 2004). Middle school students question the value of activities and learning. They want to know why they have to learn various concepts and what purpose that learning has for their future (Ivey, 1999).



### **Importance of the Study**

This study addresses the relationship of one of the children's choice book award programs, the Illinois Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) program, to students' reading motivation. State awards have existed since the early 1950s. Storey (1990) conducted a study using the state award programs in Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Carolina, and Texas as well as the Caldecott and Newbery awards. The study examined which books people would purchase, Caldecott, Newbery, or the state award books. A study on the Texas Bluebonnet Children's Choice Book Award (Miller, 2003) is a qualitative study which reviews the various interests and topics covered in the award book list. Currently, there is minimal research on the Illinois' RCYRA program. Thus, there is a gap in the educational literature.

Several studies (Anderman et al., 1999; Lepper et al., 2005; McKenna et al., 1995; Sturtevant et al., 2006) indicate that among middle school or sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students, the motivation to read decreases as they age and advance through the educational grade level system. Thus, sixth grade students are more motivated to read than eighth grade students. Middle school students are very concerned with their own self-concept and question the value of reading as well as learning. This study adds to the reading motivation research through the new aspect of the Illinois RCYRBA program which is one of the 190 Children's Choice Book Award programs in the United States (Hilbun & Claes, 2010).

Since the purpose of the award is to encourage students to read, this foundational research studied the relationship between students reading the books on the Illinois RCYRBA list and those same students' reading motivation. Future research may use the motivational results found in this study and determine if and/or how those results affect students in other grade levels or participants in other book award programs. This is purely a quantitative study within this subject, as well as an initial study which can lead to additional research projects on the Illinois children's choice reading program, the RCYRBA. This study can be developed into further research on other Illinois children's choice reading programs such as the Monarch Book Award, the new Bluestem Award, and the Abraham Lincoln Award. Finally this study can be modified and applied to any of the additional 48 states' children's choice reading lists and award programs.

This study analyzes whether middle school students in three rural Illinois schools are more motivated to read if they read more of the RCYRBA books. By using the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007), all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students whose parents granted permission in the three middle schools were surveyed. Within the three schools, this researcher surveyed 411 student participants for the study, but only 388 students submitted valid surveys. The AMRP has two parts of which the first part is a 20 question closed question survey which measures students' reading motivation in the areas of reading self-concept and value of reading. The second part is a conversational interview which focuses on instructional reading practices, so this

researcher administered only part I, the 20 question reading survey, of the AMRP (Pitcher et al.).

As a correlational study, the survey results were analyzed using descriptive statistics; hierarchical regression was conducted to test the hypotheses. By using the four independent variables of number of RCYRBA books read, gender, grade levels, and quarterly reading grades, the researcher isolated the relationship of the RCYRBA program books on the two dependent variables of students' self-concept and their value of reading.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

This research investigated the relationship of the Illinois' Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Award (RCYRBA) books on reading motivation among middle school students in grades six, seven, and eight in three rural middle schools in central Illinois. This chapter reviews the general theory of motivation, as well as reading motivation as it affects middle school students' reading self-concept and value of reading. Additionally, this chapter addresses a brief description of children's literature in general, including various children's book award programs, in particular, the Illinois' children's choice state book award program, the RCYRBA.

### Motivation Theory

Motivation is defined in multiple ways. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008) define motivation as "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (p. 4). Ryan and Deci (2000) identify motivation as being "moved to do something" (p. 54). Dewey (1913) states that "'Motive' is the name for the end or aim in respect to its hold on *action* and its power to *move*" (p. 60). Definitions of motivation include such words as beliefs, values, and goals, but always including action (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). That action may be physical or mental (Schunk et al., 2008). Additionally, behavior and energy are vital components of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Motivation is a physical or mental drive which

causes students to initiate, continue, and complete an assignment (Schunk et al., 2008). Motivation explains why students decide to complete tasks.

Teachers frequently inquire how to motivate students. When studying motivation, Kohn (1999) states “What matters is not how motivated someone is, but *how* someone is motivated (p. 257). Kohn posits the importance of student collaboration, student choice, and the content of learning which needs to be relevant and important to the students. Students must understand the need to learn and be provided a variety of educational opportunities for gaining knowledge. Two main styles of motivation include extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

**Extrinsic motivation.** The theory of rewards is extrinsic motivation (Brophy, 2004). Schunk et al. (2008) define extrinsic motivation as “motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end” (p. 236). Students will complete educational tasks or behave in a particular manner because they receive such rewards as stickers, food, or teacher praise. Additionally, students avoid punitive measures. Rather than extrinsic motivation, Brophy (2004) refers to it as extrinsic rewards. Frequently these rewards are unrelated to the activity (Brophy, 2004; Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Vansteenkiste et al. (2006) explain that researchers view extrinsic motivation differently by stating “Autonomous motivation involves the experience of volition and choice, whereas controlled motivation involves the experience of being pressured or coerced” (p. 19).

Teachers offer various extrinsic rewards to students for completing tasks, following the rules, or meeting expectations. Providing students with these

extrinsic rewards usually results in short-term learning or behavioral adaptations (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Agreeing with Kohn (1999), Brophy (2004) posits that if learning activities are engaging, then extrinsic motivational rewards are unnecessary. Students participating in such engaging educational experiences will be intrinsically motivated because they identify the value of the learning. Behaviorists control students' behavior by offering rewards for students' actions.

Schunk et al. (2006) explain that rewards can be beneficial when they are connected to students' learning progress. When students succeed in a learning experience or show learning improvement and receive a related reward, then the students become more self-confident and more motivated. Also, giving a reward related to the actual task can be motivating.

Providing students with rewards just because they complete an assignment is extrinsic motivation which can damage students' intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Schunk et al., 2006; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Upon student completion of the task and reception of the reward, students may not pursue the work further. Students may prefer meeting minimal expectations rather than excelling (Kohn, 1999).

Some researchers have found that generally adolescents do not respond well to extrinsic motivations. If they have experienced multiple extrinsic motivations such as stars, candy, grades, or free time, adolescents lose interest in those rewards (Crawford, 2004; Williams et al., 2008). If students are originally intrinsically motivated and then rewarded with extrinsic items, students' intrinsic motivation decreases (Steinberg, 1997). Adolescents' desire for the extrinsic

rewards may increase, until the students no longer desire those tangible rewards; the significance of which has waned. Thus, intrinsic motivation is weakened (Steinberg).

Layne (2009) combined forms of extrinsic motivation with developing passionate readers by creating a reading corner with bean bag chairs and books, or reading lounge in the classroom and then in the school; students were anxious to leave their desks and read in the “lounge.” Also Layne developed parties centered on reading activities to encourage a positive atmosphere filled with excitement. When referring to the implementation of party-like reading activities, such as reading clubs, cafes, and poetry or magazine breaks, Layne said that experience indicates these activities are “tremendously motivating and extremely effective in working with kids at a myriad of grade levels” (p. 115). The classroom decorations, atmosphere, and party reading activities can act as extrinsic motivators leading to a reading passion or intrinsic motivation for students of all grades.

Similar to Layne’s (2009) experience, Hoffman and Nottis (2008) studied eighth grade students’ motivation when preparing for standardized tests. The results indicated that students are motivated extrinsically when practicing for these high-stakes tests. For example, these students were promised a picnic if they performed well on the test. In the qualitative segment of the study, students indicated that sweets, snacks, and the picnic were motivators for them to do their best. Hoffman’s and Nottis’s results contradict other studies, but their study was limited to 215 eighth graders.

**Intrinsic motivation.** Intrinsic motivation is defined by Schunk et al. (2008) as “motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake” (p. 377). Students will participate in educational activities because of desirability and enjoyment. Brophy (2004) states “intrinsic motivational strategies apply when students value (or can learn to value) participation in the activity itself” (p. 183). Intrinsic motivational theories emphasize control, cognitive aspects, and affective qualities of student participation in their learning experiences. When learning material is relevant to students’ lives and they have choice as well as experience success, intrinsic motivation increases (McRae & Guthrie, 2009).

***Self-determination theory.*** One intrinsic motivation theory is the self-determination theory which Deci and Ryan (2000; 1985) have studied. Within this theory, Deci and Ryan (2000) explain that people have three essential “psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy” (p. 228).

Within education, competence refers to students’ belief that they are able to achieve goals or complete tasks (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). Schunk et al. (2008) state “students’ beliefs about their capabilities relate to motivation” (p. 6). If students believe they can achieve a goal, such as to complete an assignment or successfully read a book, they will be motivated to accomplish it.

Relatedness refers to individuals feeling connected with the learning as well as with peers and adults. Learners understand the importance or value of the learning as it affects their own lives. Also, learners experience a connection with others, especially those with whom they share the same values (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000; Schunk et al., 2008).



The third need is autonomy, which refers to learners' choices and self-determination within their education (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). Kohn (1999) agrees that if students are provided choices to encourage their learning, it "allows students to be active participants in their learning" (p. 221). Thus, choice becomes intrinsically motivating in an educational setting.

Covington (2002) believes that the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000) explains adolescents' motivation. The period of adolescence from approximately grades six through twelve is a time of change, growth, development, and new responsibilities (La Guardia & Ryan, 2002). Thus, the self-determination theory which acknowledges students' needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy define adolescents.

Adolescents are concerned about their self-worth and ability to perform well, especially in the presence of their peers. Social relationships are vital for adolescents, for they need friends and depend on them for affirmation. Finally, adolescents require choices. Adolescents are initially sensing more responsibility or power, so they are more motivated to complete their academic work if they are provided with more assignment options (Covington, 2002; Deci & Ryan, 2000; La Guardia & Ryan, 2002).

Deci and Ryan (1985; 2000) posit that if the needs of competence, relatedness, and autonomy are satisfied, then students will achieve intrinsic motivation. Brophy (2004) agrees with Deci and Ryan's (1985; 2000) intrinsic motivation theory because it emphasizes three psychological needs of learners rather than the absence of extrinsic motivation.

***Expectancy-value theory.*** Another intrinsic motivational theory which applies to educational motivation is expectancy-value theory (Eccles, 2005). Through this theory, people determine goals according to their beliefs about themselves or self-concept, as well as the usefulness or value of the experience. Bandura (1994) uses the term self-efficacy for how people perceive their abilities in comparison to what they can accomplish. In this paper, the word self-concept will be used.

Self-concept can also be viewed through domains such as people's academic self-concept and performance self-concept (Schunk et al., 2008). Students have different perceptions of their abilities based on past performances. In math, students may perform well, but struggle with reading. Thus, their math self-concept is strong, but their reading self-concept is weak. These perceptions will affect their performance in these subjects as well as the types of future risks they will take or avoid. Self-concept affects students' choices.

Educators must encourage students and enable them to improve their self-concept. Posting grades or rankings in classes sustains positive and negative students' self-concept beliefs. If students earn high standings, their self-concept is strong, but those who have a lower grade status will believe they are failures and maintain a fragile self-concept (Schunk et al., 2008).

Another aspect of the expectancy-value theory is people's perceived value of an experience (Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008). Students must see value in their education. Self-concept and value act together. If students have a positive

self-concept and believe they can successfully accomplish a task, they will find value in that performance.

Four components of the task value theory are “attainment value, intrinsic value, utility value, and cost belief” (Schunk et al., 2008, pp. 62-63). Attainment value is the significance of performing a task well (Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008). Intrinsic value is the pleasurable experience of completing or participating in a task (Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008). Utility value provides the effectiveness of the task (Schunk et al., 2008). Students frequently inquire why they must learn a particular subject. The cost belief causes the participants to determine the sacrifices they may have to make because of involvement in a particular task (Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008). These four aspects develop value within students in relation to their educational and life experiences.

Blackburn (2005) asserts that adolescents are more motivated when they sense value through “variety, attractiveness, locus of control, utility, and enjoyment” in the classroom (p. 62). Adolescents need involvement in learning experience selection to enable them to recognize real life connections (Crawford, 2004; McRae & Guthrie, 2009).

***Intrinsic motivation and rewards.*** Marinak and Gambrell (2008) report on a study which links intrinsic motivation and rewards. Rewards are generally considered to be implemented with extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic motivation. Learning and reading are cognitive experiences which appear to thrive through intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2000). Marinak and Gambrell (2008) explain that “without the intrinsic

motivation to read, students may never reach their full potential as literacy learners” (p. 9).

Gambrell (1996) performed a reading motivation study on first graders. The Running Start program was implemented which immersed the students in an entire curriculum of books. Students received stickers, bookmarks, and finally books when they achieved the final goal of reading 21 books. The first graders coveted the book reward which enabled the students to experience greater value of reading.

More recently, Marinak and Gambrell (2008) conducted a study in three mid-Atlantic elementary school districts. The researchers selected 75 third grade students for the study. The independent variables were the type of reward (literacy or non-literacy reward) and the choice of the reward (book, token, or nothing). Reading as an intrinsic motivation was the dependent variable.

The first activity in the study was for students to read and nominate a book for the school library media center collection. Secondly, the students had free choice time in which they could read a book, play a game, or complete a puzzle. If students were given a choice of reward, they could select either a book or a token. Other students received no reward or were just given a reward of either a book or a token with no choice (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008).

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) (Gambrell et al., 1996) was administered to the students before conducting the study activities (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008). The MRP (Gambrell et al., 1996) evaluates students’ reading motivation through their reading self-concept and reading value. Marinak and

Gambrell (2008) evaluated intrinsic reading motivation through the “first activity selected, number of seconds spent reading, and number of words read” (p. 15).

After analyzing the results, Marinak and Gambrell (2008) concluded that the third grade students who received a book or who received no reward were more motivated to read than those students who received a token. “Books are less undermining to intrinsic motivation than rewards less proximal to reading, such as tokens” (p. 22). Although some researchers (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Vansteenkiste, 2006; Schunk et al., 2006) believe that rewards weaken intrinsic motivation, this study indicates that “rewards proximal to the desired behavior, such as books to reading, do not undermine intrinsic motivation to read” (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008, p. 22). This study implies that teachers should either use books or nothing as rewards for reading. Small (2009) agrees with Marinak and Gambrell’s (2008) study because students, when able to select books as rewards, will choose those at their interest levels, which helps them practice the skill more.

Within the theory of motivation, future research might be conducted implementing the same framework as Marinak and Gambrell’s (2008) study with early adolescents or middle school students. The study of Marinak and Gambrell’s research generates the question whether middle school students are intrinsically motivated when offered books as rewards.

## **National and International Reading Studies**

Reading is an important subject taught as soon as students enter school. In the past 20 years “national concern about the reading proficiency of U. S. adolescents has increased in intensity” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 7) to being referred to as a “crisis” (p. 7). Strommen and Mates (2004) state the “ability to read is regarded as the most fundamental goal of education” (p. 188).

**Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).** In 1991, the United States participated in an international study of fourth graders’ reading ability sponsored by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). In 2001, the IEA implemented a new study to be conducted every five years. Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) is an “internationally comparative reading assessment” (Delaney, 2007, About PIRLS, ¶ 1).

In 2001, PIRLS assessed fourth graders in 35 countries to determine fourth graders’ reading attitudes and interests (Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez, & Kennedy, 2003). Concerning this study, Guthrie (2008) reports “In reading for their own interest outside of school, an indicator of intrinsic reading motivation, the U.S. students ranked 32<sup>nd</sup>” (p. 4). Only the Czech Republic and Belize scored below the United States. The five highest scoring countries were Iran, Moldova, Macedonia, Greece, and Romania (Mullis et al., 2003).

On the 2001 PIRLS, the fourth graders who reported frequent, pleasurable reading outside of the classroom also had “higher average reading achievement” than students who read minimally for pleasure outside the classroom (Mullis et

al., 2003, p. 265). When identifying the total score for students' reading attitudes, the United States' fourth graders ranked 35 out of 35 countries (Guthrie, 2008, p. 4). Sweden scored the highest of all countries (Mullis et al., 2003).

In 2006, another PIRLS survey was conducted. Twenty-six of the 40 countries participated in both the 2001 and 2006 studies providing them with comparative data (Mullis & Martin, 2007). The United States' fourth graders were assessed in both studies. Internationally, eight countries showed a statistically significant improvement in students' reading achievement from 2001 to 2006 (Mullis & Martin). Those countries were the Russian Federation, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore, Slovenia, Slovak Republic, Italy, Germany, and Hungary. Unfortunately, the United States was not one of them. Fourth graders in the United States scored 2 points lower in 2006 than in 2001. In 2001 the average score was 542, and in 2006 the average score was 540. This difference was not statistically significant (Mullis & Martin).

Hong Kong SAR and Singapore instituted major modifications to their reading programs in 2001 (Delaney, 2007). Using the PIRLS framework for testing, Hong Kong revised their reading comprehension tests and modified their bilingual reading instruction (Hegarty, 2007). Other modifications included more resources for primary level classrooms and adjustments to pre-service teachers' education as well as teachers' professional development. All parents of newborn children received a book about early childhood development of language skills, and parents of school age children were strongly encouraged to become involved in their children's reading progress and development (Hegarty). These

educational adjustments proved successful. Hong Kong SAR and Singapore students soared on their scores, ranking second and third to Russia.

**Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).** In another international comparison studying 15 year old students in 28 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the United States' students ranked 24<sup>th</sup> out of 28 countries in the number of students who read books, and 20<sup>th</sup> of the 28 countries when referring to the total score of reading time and interest. Several of the top scoring countries were "Finland, Norway, Germany, France, Japan, Canada, and Korea" (Guthrie, 2008, p. 3). According to Brozo, Shiel, and Topping (2007/2008), Finland was number one in both 2000 and 2003, while the United States received average scores and were "in the middle of the distributions of participating countries" (p. 306).

The purpose of the PISA test differs from other tests in that it attempts to measure how well 15 year old students are prepared to read in real world experiences by gaining knowledge, applying that knowledge, and using analytical reading skills. Instead of emphasizing students' ability to read, it tests students' higher order thinking skills and their ability to learn through their reading, especially outside of the school environment (Brozo, Shiel, & Topping, 2007/2008). Every three years, the test emphasizes one particular subject such as 2000 reading, 2003 mathematics, and 2006 science, yet reading is still tested through the content areas and is always evaluated (Schleicher, 2007).

In 2006, 400,000 students from 57 countries participated in the test which emphasized science, yet also included questions for reading and mathematics.



All 30 OECD countries participated. By testing all three subject areas in differing degrees every three years, results can be analyzed to determine changes over the periods of three, six, and nine years. Unfortunately, the United States' student test takers received test booklets which contained errors in the instructions for the reading portion, so the data was compromised and could not be accurately reported (Schleicher, 2007).

**To Read or Not to Read Study.** The National Endowment for the Arts (2007) published the updated version of the 2004 *Reading at Risk* report, entitled *To Read or Not to Read: A Question of National Consequence* in 2007. This report indicates that as children get older and advance into the upper grades, their leisure reading time decreases. "Less than one-third of 13-year-olds are daily readers" (p. 5). The newest study by the National Endowment for the Arts (2009) indicates that reading among young adults, people aged 18 to 24, has increased by almost nine points (p. 4).

These studies indicate the need to improve middle school students' reading motivation. Gottfried (1985) explained that at that time a trend in research indicated "middle school students are less intrinsically motivated for reading than elementary students" (p. 61). Unfortunately, that trend of declining reading motivation among older students is continuing based on the newest studies and the reading statistics cited in this research.

## **Reading Motivation**

Very young children often embark on their educational journey with excitement, enthusiasm, and an eagerness to learn. As those same children progress through the grade levels into middle school, that enthusiasm or motivation seems to wane (McKenna et al., 1995). Teachers, library information specialists, and administrators wonder how to maintain that high level of reading motivation so that all children become lifelong readers for the purposes of learning and pleasure. Teachers daily face the challenge of motivating students, especially middle school students, to read. In the past ten years, more researchers have been studying reading motivation, especially for older students or adolescents (Jacobs, 2008; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004).

Adolescents are those students enrolled in grades six through twelve. Early adolescents are considered to be those students registered in grades six through eight or ages 10 to 14 (Roeser, Strobel, & Quihuis, 2002). Others may refer to them as junior high students or middle school students, defining them according to the type of school which they attend. This study will include students who are in grades six through eight and refer to them as middle school students. As defined by Moje et al (2000), the term middle school student “describes a student approaching adolescence and in transition between elementary school and high school” (p. 400).

Greenberg, Gilbert, and Fredrick (2006) conducted a study on middle school students’ reading interests in an inner-city and rural school. Over 1100 students total participated. The researchers created their own questionnaire

using work by previous researchers. The instrument measured middle school students' reading interests and behaviors. When surveying the results overall, Greenberg et al. stated "the middle school students in our study are not interested in reading and spend very little time engaged in various reading activities" (p. 165).

Krashen's research (2009) differs from that by Greenburg et al. (2006) in regard to middle school students not reading. Krashen states that educators complain "that students will not read. But if interesting, comprehensible reading material is available, they do" (p. 21).

Thus, educators must study middle school students' educational interests and behaviors. Several variables such as students' choice of reading materials, gender, school grade levels, and reading grades affect middle school students' reading motivation.

**Students' choice.** One motivator of reading is that students have many books from which to choose that are at their interest and reading level (Bass, Dasinger, Elish-Piper, Matthews, & Risko, 2008; Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie, 2008; Morrow, 2004; Strommen & Mates, 2004). Classroom libraries and school libraries are important components of a positive school environment which integrates student choice (Sloan, 2007; Worthy, 1996). These libraries should be comprised of books of multiple reading levels, genres, and topics of interest (Allington, 2007; Bass et al., 2008; Sanacore, 2006; Strommen & Mates, 2004). By allowing students choice in outside reading as well as some of their

classroom reading assignments, middle school students feel empowered and gain a sense of responsibility (Bass et al., 2008).

Fisher (2004) conducted a study on sustained silent reading in an urban high school. The problem was that classrooms lacked reading materials for students to read when they did not bring them to class. Shin (2004) states “simply supplying access to books has a positive effect on students’ reading habits” (p. 47). As a teacher Layne (2009) experienced that positive effect by adding book shelves, books, and a reading corner in the classroom. Students were eager to go to that area, select books, relax, and read.

Allington and McGill-Franzen (2008) performed a study on students’ reading during the summer. In order for lower income students to read during the summer, the students received 12 books of their choice. The researchers stated “If we want students to read voluntarily, then offering them the opportunity to select the books seems to be a crucial factor” (p. 22). Since school libraries provide books during the school year, summer access to books needs to be considered so that students will not regress.

While growing up and trying to find their identity, middle school students desire to become responsible learners (Lenters, 2006). When surveying adolescent readers, Lenters reported that the adolescents said they did not read because they need choice, real purposes for reading, and materials of interest to them.

Middle school teachers and librarians need to observe and listen to their students to learn their interests. If teachers choose primarily award-winning

fiction, middle school students may be too limited in their choices (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Preddy (2007) states “Building effective readers requires latitude in what they may read. They demand that their reading decisions are trusted and respected” (p. 26). Atwell (2007) agrees student choice is important by stating “The only surefire way to induce a love of books is to invite students to select their own” (p. 12).

With more defined curriculum in today’s schools, limited student choice may be permitted, but Allington (2002) says that “managed choice” (p. 18) is giving students several choices of assignments. Through book talks and modeling, teachers can connect student readers with teacher-selected books (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). As a teacher, Layne (2009) discovered that through book chats with students their interest in the book piqued and they desired to read the book. Depending on the teacher presentation, this limited student choice can still provide students with a sense of autonomy and choice (Allington, 2002). Students at all reading levels need “frequent opportunity to read in teacher-selected books and on their own in self-selected books” (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003, p. 36).

Some students value book selections recommended by teachers or close friends. Guthrie, Hoa, Wigfield, Tonks, Humenick, and Littles (2007) conducted a study of reading motivation on fourth grade students in several mid-Atlantic states. Highly motivated students linked personal book choice with their interests. Other students reported being motivated by books selected for them by “close,

trusted others” (p. 306). These fourth graders provided some interesting reasons for allowing others to help them select books. Guthrie et al. (2008) reported:

Some expressed to us that teachers and parents made better choices of reading materials for them, and that when they were given opportunities to choose books, they sometimes made mistakes. These students preferred the guidance of adults, rather than their own autonomy, in selecting reading materials. It would be interesting to see if this pattern changes as these students get older. Finally, some students reported that they liked both choosing their own books, and having close others choose books for them, showing that it is possible to be motivated by both. (p. 295)

Thus, choice motivates readers, but some readers enjoy the selection of reading materials for them by others. As Guthrie et al. (2007) stated, it would be interesting to conduct this study using middle school students to determine if the results are similar or if middle school students prefer total autonomy or self-selection. Varying levels of choice provide students with a sense of autonomy.

**Gender.** When studying reading motivation, researchers (Cavazos-Kottke, 2006; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006; Graham, Tisher, Ainley, & Kennedy, 2008; Greenberg et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2008; Sax, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005) have discovered that gender is an important variable. Whitmire (2010) reports that at the fifth and sixth grade levels boys’ reading interest declined. Scieszka (as cited in Bafile, 2005), a children’s author and former teacher, states “Literacy statistics show that we are not giving boys what they need to be successful readers. Boys need our help. And the greatest challenge to boys’ literacy is probably getting people to understand that boys do need help” (¶ 2). Scieszka has been authoring picture books, chapter books, and novels that have the boy appeal needed.

In two international reading studies the results were similar; girls outperformed boys at fourth grade and as 15 year olds. Kennedy (2008) analyzed the results of the 2001 PIRLS and 2006 PIRLS for 26 participating countries' fourth graders. Kennedy investigated the aspect of reading motivation and reading enjoyment by studying the gender and achievement of the top third and bottom third of students' PIRLS scores. Particular questions on the PIRLS testing instrument enabled the researcher to identify students' reading self-concept as well as their reading attitudes or value of reading. Kennedy used separate regression analyses with reading self-concept and reading attitudes as the dependent variables. Gender and achievement were the independent variables.

The results indicated that the independent variables of gender and achievement were statistically significant for reading attitudes of students in 25 of the 26 countries (Kennedy, 2008). In Indonesia, only reading achievement effects were significant. For both the PIRLS 2001 and PIRLS 2006, three similar patterns emerged. First, there were "differences between top- and bottom-achieving students, regardless of gender" (p. 7). Secondly, there were "differences between girls and boys, regardless of achievement" (p. 7). Finally, there was "an interaction between achievement and gender" (p. 7).

Regarding the third pattern about the relationship between achievement and gender, Kennedy (2008) found intriguing results. Girls outscored the boys; although in the top third of the ability grouping based on the achievement scores, the gap was not as wide as for the bottom third of the students. Of the United

States' fourth graders tested on the PIRLS 2006 test, the top third girls' overall score was 619 while the boys' score was 617, two points variance. At the bottom third, girls scored 466, but the boys scored 450, a 16 point variance (Kennedy, Table 2).

Chiu and McBride-Chang (2006) tested 199,097 students, aged 15, in 43 different countries in reading comprehension. Students also completed a questionnaire about attitudes and habits related to reading. The researchers' general finding was that "in every country, girls outscored boys" (p. 331). The gender difference related to reading for pleasure and achievement is not a problem for just the United States, but is worldwide. This correlational study was conducted through the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Program for International Students Assessment (PISA). The variables included gender, socioeconomic status, number of books owned, and reading for pleasure. When compared with boys, girls were better readers and more interested in reading.

Results such as these regarding gender differences in reading have also occurred on tests within the United States. Costello (2008) reports that boys are at least 1.5 years below girls at all grade levels according to the United States Department of Education. According to the Nation's Report Card (Lee, Grigg, & Donahue, 2007) United States eighth graders' mean score was one point higher than in 2005. Gender results indicate that in all 50 states, as well as other jurisdictions of the United States, girls' mean score was 5 to 15 points higher than the boys' mean score. In Illinois, the variance was eight with girls higher



than boys. These statistics indicate that school educators should be more cognizant of boys' reading needs and interests..

When analyzing middle school girls' and boys' reading needs, educators must consider girls' and boys' interests and reading levels. Girls enjoy reading for pleasure, especially books of fiction with which they can identify (Kommer, 2006; Sax, 2007; Sutton, 2007). Scieszka (as cited in Sutton, 2007) says that girls take pleasure in books "where you're inside someone's head" (§ 16). Boys enjoy books about trucks, adventure, and nonfiction (Whitmire, 2010).

Boys have different needs than girls. Mitchell, Murphy, and Peters (2008) affirm that reading material about which boys are passionate is not found in the literature offered in the normal American classroom. Mitchell et al. describe a book club initiated to encourage boys to read. In this club boys experience book choice, genres, topics, and real-life experiences for the adolescent male. This book club "manages to motivate and inspire not only the students, but the teachers and parents as well" (p. 71).

Competitions appeal to boys. Gustafson (2008) created a reading contest in the library and discovered that reading participation by the boys increased with boys winning the monthly prizes three of five months. Adding posters with contest totals appeals to the visual and keeps boys motivated. Gustafson used this method to increase boys' reading since the boys' reading achievement scores were lower than the girls' scores. Gustafson concluded "So...if you want to create a culture of readers at your school that includes both genders, consider competition!" (p. 17).

Boys enjoy reading nonfiction (Costello, 2008; Sullivan, 2004; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005), graphic novels (Costello, 2008; Sutton, 2007; Whitmire, 2010; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005), magazines (Costello, 2008; Sullivan, 2004), action or adventure books (Costello, 2008; Sutton, 2007), science fiction (Wilhelm & Smith, 2005), humor, comic books (Sullivan, 2004; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005), newspapers (Sutton, 2007), and some fantasy (Wilhelm & Smith, 2005). Thus, teachers and librarians must provide reading materials of varied genres and types to appeal to the interests of both boys and girls.

**Grade levels.** Another variable related to reading motivation is students' grade level. Ryan and Deci (2000) posit that "intrinsic motivation becomes weaker with each advancing grade" (p. 60). Increased reading activity is associated with intrinsic motivation. As students progress through school, their reading motivation decreases. Early elementary students enter school usually excited about learning to read. As students observe other children in the classroom performing better than they are, discouragement may occur. Wigfield and Tonks (2004) assert "the largest decreases in reading motivation seem to occur across Grades 1-4, the time when many children work to develop competent reading skills" (p. 263).

Kush and Watkins (1996) conducted a three year study of reading attitudes of students in grades one through four. In one school district, 319 first through fourth grade students were given The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey in the fall of 1990 and in the spring of 1993. The study results indicate

that students' reading motivation and attitude toward both school and pleasure reading declined across the years. The differences were significant.

An earlier study by McKenna et al (1995) also used the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey in late 1989. The sample included 18,185 first through sixth grade students. Although it was not a longitudinal study as Kush and Watkins' study (1996), the results were similar. The trends for recreational and academic reading were negative; the declines were educationally significant. In a very small study, Strommen and Mates (2004) interviewed twelve students in grades six and nine. Between the ages of 9 and 11, these students expressed a loss in pleasure reading because they had out-grown the books from their younger years and could not locate any readings of interest to them. Whitmire (2010) supports the lack of books for boys and identifies one of the causes as publishers who seek books with high sales. Since boys read less than girls, books for girls are more prevalent and better sellers than books for boys.

Other researchers posit that as students advance in the grade levels and transition from elementary school to middle school, their reading motivation continues to decline (Anderman et al., 1999; Lepper et al., 2005; McKenna et al., 1995; Sturtevant et al., 2006; Whitmire, 2010). Middle school students are at a developmental stage in which they can be more responsible for decisions and choice. This is descriptive of the self-determination theory of motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Unfortunately, the current educational system and school environments do not allow for students to formulate those choices. Thus, their intrinsic motivation, which should be increasing as they gain self-

confidence through developing autonomy, actually decreases (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wigfield & Tonks, 2004).

Unrau and Schlackman (2006) studied reading motivation in an urban middle school. As these students advanced from sixth to seventh grades and from seventh to eighth grades, “intrinsic and extrinsic motivation declined significantly” (p. 96). The researchers recommended that further studies be conducted to determine how to maintain long-term intrinsic motivation, especially among middle school students.

For 797 students in grades three through eight, Lepper et al. (2005) performed research on their extrinsic and intrinsic motivation as related to academics in general. Intrinsic motivation decreased for every grade level from third through eighth. Extrinsic motivation decreased the most from third to fourth grade, but actually increased from fourth to fifth grades and from seventh to eighth grades. Lepper et al.’s supposition is that as students advance in the grades, they are not experiencing educational opportunities that are pertinent or practical to their everyday living. Thus, their intrinsic motivation decreases throughout the grade levels.

A more recent study (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008) contradicts some of the results from the research of Lepper et al. (2005). A total of 388 sixth and eighth grade students were given The Motivation for Reading Questionnaire (MRQ) (Wigfield & Guthrie, 1995). This correlational study (Mucherah & Yoder, 2008) analyzed the MRQ, as well as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in relation to the Indiana state performance test. Eighth graders were actually more motivated to

read than sixth graders. That finding is the opposite of these other studies on middle school students. Also, sixth graders were extrinsically motivated by grades and rewards while eighth graders were more intrinsically motivated, but not extrinsically motivated.

Several studies (Kush & Watkins, 1996; McKenna, et al., 1995) evaluated both recreational and academic motivation among students, indicating a decline in both as students age. Griswold, McDonnell, and Wright (2005) were primarily interested in students' recreational reading. According to Griswold et al., Roberts and the Kaiser Foundation determined "recreational reading drops in the late teenage years (ages 15-18) down to 34%...Overall reading time declines with age, and this decline is entirely due to a drop in reading books" (p. 130).

Because many reading motivation studies are correlational, causal relationships among the variables are not studied. Roberts and Foehr (2004) offered several possible causes to the continuing decline over the years in book reading by adolescents:

As youngsters move from elementary school into middle and high school they are typically asked to engage in a good deal more school-related reading than was formerly the case, a factor that probably reduces both desire and time to read outside school. In addition, during late adolescence, myriad additional activities vie for young people's time – sports, extracurricular activities, social events, earning a driver's license, part-time jobs, dating...As seems to be the case for noninteractive screen media then, leisure time print exposure is also related to available time, and available time is related to age. (pp. 100-101)

Understanding adolescent reading motivation in relation to advancing through the grades, interest, and effects on their academic achievement is very complex. Ivey and Fisher (2005) summarize it well by stating "Getting to the

bottom of older readers' comprehension and motivation difficulties requires careful, ongoing assessment of instructional practices and students' literacy needs" (p. 9).

**Academic achievement.** Academic achievement and reading abilities are important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in relation to the current No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), the educational global competitiveness, and future employment. With decreases in reading motivation as students advance through the educational system, academic achievement also tends to decline. Researchers link the motivation to read to academic achievement (Allington, 2002; 2007; 2009; Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Krashen, 2002; 2006; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Thus, educators must review methods to increase students' reading motivation so that students' academic achievement will increase.

Krashen (2002) presents a formula for reading achievement by stating "Access to books = More reading = More reading achievement" (p. 38). This formula begins with students having availability to many books. Krashen (2009) states "If it is true that more reading leads to better reading, as well as better development of other aspects of literacy, then increasing access to books should result in better reading" (p. 21). Guthrie, Schafer, Von Secker, and Alban (2000) performed a study in Maryland with third and fifth grade students. One of their findings was that "use of abundant texts and resources were associated positively with change in achievement" (p. 211).

Nationwide research with similar findings has occurred in 19 states where student achievement has been correlated with effective school libraries (*School Libraries Work!*, 2008). In 2005, an Illinois school library study indicated that middle school students in schools which have 19 or more volumes per student, have more students who meet or exceed reading scores on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) (Lance, Rodney, & Hamilton-Pennell, 2005). Students in schools with larger libraries scored 6% to 10% better than students in schools with small libraries (Lance et al.). Since 1993, 19 school library studies in the United States and one in Canada have resulted in similar findings (*School Libraries Work!*, 2008). Thus, student access to a broad array of current reading materials at various reading levels encourages student reading motivation which then leads to greater reading achievement.

The second component of the formula is more reading. Students who read greater amounts will improve their reading abilities and then score higher on various achievement measurements (Allington, 2002; 2007; 2009; Atwell, 2007; Guthrie, 2001; Krashen, 2002; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). In 1997, Wigfield and Guthrie conducted a study with 105 fourth and fifth graders. The students who were intrinsically motivated increased their reading amount, but those who were not motivated to read were not apt to increase their amount of reading. Wigfield and Guthrie asserted “amount of reading correlates with reading achievement” (p. 429).

Atwell (2007) has implemented reading workshop in a northeastern middle school for over 20 years. Students read an average of 40 books each year. One

student read 124 books in the eighth grade (p. 106). Atwell states “The K-6 teachers and I make time every day for our students to curl up with good books and engage in the single activity that consistently correlates with high levels of performance on standardized tests of reading ability. And that is *frequent, voluminous reading*” (p. 12). As a teacher, Miller (2009) also has her students read 40 or more books every year.

Reading is identified as a skill and when evaluating other skills, such as athletic skills, practice is an important component. Allington (1977) states “If they don’t read much, how they ever gonna get good?” (p. 57). After 30 years, Allington’s (2009) conclusions are the same, agreeing with Atwell (2007) and Miller (2009) that students must experience high volume of reading practice.

Some additional motivators that encourage students to read include book talks (Atwell, 2007; Layne, 2009), teacher read alouds (Atwell, 2007; Cunningham, 2005; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001), teacher modeling (Atwell, 2007; McKool & Gespass, 2009; Sutton, 2007), and time for independent reading (Allington, 1977; 2009; Atwell, 2007; Cunningham, 2005; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Gambrell, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997). Allington (1977; 2009) explains that poor readers need time to read easy works at their interest level, so they realize success, gain confidence, and increase their motivation to read.

As students increase their reading volume, they improve their vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and thinking skills (Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003). By reading one million words annually, students will incorporate approximately 1,000



words into their vocabulary (Nagy, Anderson, & Herman, 1987). Allington (2009) states “While correlation does not necessarily equate with causation, such consistent and positive correlations between reading volume and achievement cannot be ignored” (p. 48). Research agrees with Krashen’s (2002) formula that “Access to books = More reading = More reading achievement” (p. 38).

**Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP).** Reading motivation is of interest to many educators. Gambrell et al. (1996) developed a Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) for elementary teachers to evaluate students at the beginning and end of the school year to determine reading motivation growth. This teacher-friendly published instrument has two parts, quantitative and qualitative components. The instrument evaluates readers’ self-concept and their value of reading using 10 questions for each topic equaling a total of 20 closed questions. The qualitative piece is a 13 question open-ended interview which assesses types of books and authors enjoyed by the reader. The MRP is designed for students in grades one through six.

In 2002, several attendees of a National Reading Conference were discussing adolescents and reading. Pitcher et al. (2007) decided that “understanding what motivates teens to read could be the key to improving reading instruction at the secondary level” (p. 379). Eleven researchers modified Gambrell’s et al. (1996) Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) for adolescents in grades six through twelve. Currently the authors of the AMRP are making additional modifications to the instrument to incorporate other types of reading and a third category. Pitcher (personal communication, January 17, 2009) stated

that “a team from the original group has also revised the survey to include questions about choice and technology.... The new survey gives a score for Value, Self-Concept, and Instruction.” At the time Pitcher wrote the email, the team was attempting to have the newest revision of the AMRP published.

The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007) has two components. The 20 question survey with four answer options per question is administered to students as a group, producing quantitative data. Ten questions refer to readers’ self-concept while the other 10 evaluate the students’ value of reading. The authors have created a scoring scale for each answer. The 14 question interview asks students about their experiences with books as well as their in and out of school literacy practices.

The AMRP was piloted in seven United States locations and Trinidad. The respondents of the written 20 question survey included 384 students of various ethnicities. About 100 students completed the open-ended interview (Pitcher et al., 2007).

The quantitative data supported gender research in reading. Females had a stronger self-concept and value of reading than males. Early adolescent males had stronger scores in reading self-concept and value of reading than older adolescents. Pitcher et al. (2007) summarized their study by stating that educators need to be aware of adolescents’ need to understand the meaning of literacy tasks. The researchers stated “we need to become more aware of students’ personal uses of literacy and what is important to them” (p. 395).

Since 2007, the AMRP has been implemented in at least one dissertation in 2008. Matthews (2008) utilized the AMRP when studying the impact of a language arts Webquest on seventh graders' motivation to read and their reading comprehension skills.

## **Children's Literature**

**Genres of children's literature.** According to Johnson (2009), children's literature is divided into nine different genres: traditional literature, fantasy, science fiction, realistic fiction, historical fiction, poetry, biography/autobiography, information, and digital texts. Books appear in various formats such as board books, cloth books, picture books, easy chapter books, chapter books, novels, and e-books or digital texts.

Children's books are identified as books appropriate for children from babies through eighth or ninth grade (Johnson, 2009). Overlapping those grade levels are young adult books which are usually identified for sixth or seventh grade students through twelfth grade students. Vocabulary difficulty may vary, but interest level is extremely important, for some current topics are more appropriate for the young adult as opposed to the intermediate students. Teachers, parents, and students must be aware of these variances in book topics as a guide for proper selections.

**Benefits of children's literature.** Children's literature has been used in the home and classroom to help children develop their language and reading skills. Many children's books contain a magical fantasy land into which children

can enter to expand their imagination or to escape the real world. Some books can be used therapeutically to help children deal with death, divorce, eating disorders, or other social problems. This is referred to as bibliotherapy. Other children's books preserve cultural traditions, fables, and folklore (Johnson, 2009).

Students, especially middle school students, need a wide selection of books in various genres, at different reading levels, and on a range of topics or interest (Guthrie, Schafer, Huang, 2001; Sloan, 2007). Middle schools students, who read children's literature of their own selection, improve their reading/language arts grades (Allington, 2002; 2007; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Krashen, 2002; 2006; 2009). Sloan (2007) says middle school students need various genres, lots of variety, and choice of literature for them to become fervent readers.

In addition to an abundance and variety of books, middle school students need time to practice reading so that their skills improve (Allington, 2002; Gambrell, 2007). The students need time within the school day to experience independent reading of self-selected literature (Allington, 1977; 2009; Cunningham, 2005). Cunningham and Stanovich (2003) explain that if middle school students read more, their vocabulary and cognitive skills improve.

**Historical perspective.** Literature began with the oral tradition before the invention of the printing press. Tales were passed on generationally. Most books written in the 1600s and 1700s were actually written for adults, not for children, but the children read them. Example books of that time period were *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*. Newbery expressed concern about the stories to

which children were exposed. Newbery (as cited in Marks, 2006) “felt all children should be educated” (p. 1).

Marks (2006) explained that Newbery “further believed that children could gain that education by reading more. The way to read more, he reasoned, would be to read interesting books” (p. 1). Thus, Newbery began writing books primarily for children. The first book was *A Little Pretty Pocket Book*. This was one of the first books written primarily for children (Johnson, 2009). Newbery wrote and published more than 20 books. In contrast, today “children’s book sales have grown at such a rapid rate over the past few years that the publication of children’s books now account for the majority of many book publishers’ releases” (Johnson, 2009, p. 12).

**John Newbery Medal.** In the early 1920s, more children’s books were written and published. To encourage that continued effort, in 1922 the Children’s Librarian Section of the American Library Association (ALA, 2009) created the first children’s book award and entitled it the John Newbery Medal (Johnson, 2009; Marks, 2006). At that time, one book received the Newbery Medal with five other books receiving secondary awards called honor medals (Marks).

The Newbery Award book and honor books are selected by a committee of adults who read many current children’s titles which have been published in the United States. In January, 2009, the Newbery Award was given to a book from 2008, entitled *The Graveyard Book* by Gaiman (ALA, 2009). The Newbery Award program is now managed by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association (ALA, 2009).

While the Newbery Award is the first children's book award and considered to be the most prestigious award among children's authors, some questions have occurred concerning whether or not these books appeal to children. Silvey (2008) reports that at a conference several teachers and librarians said they had not purchased several of the recent Newbery titles because they are not of interest to their students. With limited funds, only books that students will read are purchased. Silvey spoke with more than 100 educators including teachers and librarians in 15 states. Some of the comments referred to the students' lack of interest in the books' themes and the fact that library records indicate minimal circulation of these Newbery books of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It appears the committee is not considering the student popularity of the books. As a published book critic, Silvey said that educators want "a book that we can enjoy, admire, and recommend, without reservation, to children" (p. 41).

Ujiie and Krashen (2006) conducted a study of award winning books, comparing them with books on the best-seller publisher lists. Few of the award books were on the bestseller lists. The researchers analyzed the award winning book lists with the circulation records from six California library systems. Students only borrowed approximately 25% of the award winning books; students were minimally interested in the award winning books. The data revealed that students enjoyed series books most. Ujiie and Krashen define "home-run books" (p. 35) as those that motivate students to read, yet they concluded that few of those home-run books were adult selected award winning books.

Based on Silvey's (2008) observations, the Newbery committee may need to review the future award books, analyzing them not only for quality but also for popularity among students. Newbury originally wrote and published books because the books of his day were written for adults and read by children. Newbury wrote the children's books for knowledge as well as for reading enjoyment (Marks, 2006).

**Other adult selected book awards.** Currently there are 21 children's book awards which are named after 21 different people. Examples of these awards are the Hans Christian Andersen Award, Mildred L. Batchelder Award, and the Jane Addams Award (Marks, 2006). All but two of these 21 awards are determined by adults. Most of the awards are coordinated by divisions of ALA. Committees of librarians, editors, educators, and foundation members determine the winner(s). One of the two exceptions is the Margaret A. Edwards Award for which young adults can suggest books to the Young Adult Library Service Association (YALSA). The other is the Kate Greenaway Award. Readers are able to vote online for their choice of the Greenaway Award (Marks, 2006).

### **Children's Choices Book Award Programs**

**International Reading Association Book Lists.** The International Reading Association (IRA) desired to develop some quality reading lists for teachers, educators, and young adults. The IRA is comprised of educators at all levels who are interested in teaching and encouraging children to read.

***Children's Choices Book List.*** In 1969 the International Reading Association (IRA) and the Children's Book Council (CBC) began brainstorming ways to generate a recommended list of children's books for classroom use. The CBC includes United States' children's book publishers. Annually since 1974, children have been permitted to provide their opinions on books (Children's Choices, 2009).

For the 2008 list, over 12,500 children ages five through thirteen across the United States selected their favorite books from over 500 "books donated by U. S. children's book publishers" (Children's Choices, 2009, ¶ 2). In order to accomplish this, team leaders volunteer to organize students in various parts of the United States to read and review the books. For 2008, team leaders were from California, Delaware, Illinois, Mississippi, and Nebraska (¶ 5). Each team included the leader, several teachers, and over 2,000 students, ages 5 through 13 (Children's Choices).

From the children's reviews, the IRA, together with the CBC, crafts an annotated list of 100 books recommended by the children. In 2008, 98 books were selected for the list (Children's Choices, 2009). The selected books are divided into three recommended reading level categories: kindergarten through second grade; third grade through fourth grade; and fifth grade through sixth grade. This list is first announced at the International Reading Conference in May and then appears in the October issue of *The Reading Teacher* magazine. Anyone who desires to motivate students to read these books can access this list from the IRA website or from October issues of *The Reading Teacher* (Children's



Choices, 2009). The Children's Choice Book list is one means to give voice to students' reading preferences.

**Teachers' Choices Book List.** The IRA also has a Teachers' Choices Book List. United States publishers select and donate the books for this initiative. Books for the Teachers' Choices Book List are read by over 1500 teachers and librarians located in six United States' regions. From the books read, a list of 30 recommended books for children ages five through fourteen is published in the November issue of *The Reading Teacher* (Children's Choices, 2009).

**Young Adult Choices Book List.** Finally, the third choices book list is the Young Adult Choices Book List which is also sponsored by the IRA. This award list began in 1987. Similar to the other two award lists, over 4,500 middle school and high school students from six states read donated books from United States publishers and express their views about the books. The list of 30 titles with annotations is then published in the November issue of the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* (Children's Choices, 2009).

These award programs do provide parents, teachers, librarians, and students with lists of grade level books of interest to many students. One concern is that the books, which are read by the students, are selected first by the publishers of children's books. The question arises that there may be other books not selected by the publishers that may be of more interest to the students. Publishers experience the lucrative financial benefits of the sales; thus, their selections may be biased.

**State Children's Choice Book Awards.** According to Obert and Barr (2004) children's choice book awards are those state awards given to books upon which "students, grades kindergarten through high school, read and vote" (p. vi). Of the 50 states, 49 of them have at least one individual children's choice book award. Mississippi currently does not have a state children's choice award. Additionally, five northwestern states and two Canadian provinces comprise the Pacific Northwest Young Reader's Choice Award: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington, Alberta and British Columbia, Canada (Obert & Barr).

Obert and Barr (2004) researched the history of these awards in each state, as well as the programs' purposes, descriptions, and methods of selection. Since their writing, most state awards currently have their own website, Hilbun and Claes (2010) have also written a new book on the 190 different state book award programs, and many states have initiated online voting, computer videos, DVDs, online games, blogs, a podcast contest, and wikis. The new technologies prompt more social interaction among students throughout the state. Within the theory of reading motivation, providing students opportunities to discuss books with their peers promotes a passion about reading (Strommen & Mates, 2004).

**Varied grade levels.** State children's choice book awards are created for students of various grade level groupings. Some states have one award divided into as many as four levels: primary, intermediate, middle school, and high school. The Arizona Grand Canyon Reader Award (2009) has one book award with five different categories including nonfiction, picture books, intermediate, tween books, and teen books. Students cast ballots in more than one category

after satisfying the reading requirements for each individual category. The Young Hoosier Book Awards (2009) in Indiana is one award program divided into three categories of picture books for grades kindergarten through third grade, intermediate for grades four through six, and middle for grades six through eight. Students only vote within one of the divisions.

Other states have established individual awards for each of the different grade level divisions. For example, Illinois has the Monarch Award for grades kindergarten through third, the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) for grades four through eight, and the Abraham Lincoln award for grades nine through twelve. Newly created is the Blue Stem Award for Illinois students in grades three through five (Illinois School Library Media Association, ISLMA, 2009).

***Selection process.*** Among the states, the selection process, number of listed books, sponsoring organizations, and voting procedures vary. Many states have designed the awards with students having some voice in selection by permitting them to submit nominations through their teachers and/or librarians. Representative teachers and librarians from each sponsoring organization usually create the final annual list. The Colorado Blue Spruce Young Adult Book Award (2009) has a unique selection process. The 400,000 middle and high school students are the only ones who nominate books for the award list. Adults perform only organizational or managerial aspects of the award program. The number of books on the state voting lists varies. California (2009) has three to five per category, but students must read all books in the category before voting.

For the Eliot Rosewater Indiana High School Book Award (2009) the nominee list can have as many as 75 titles.

One constant among the book awards is the purpose which is to encourage or motivate children to read quality books (Kaye, 1984; Obert & Barr, 2004). Most awards state that the programs are to develop lifelong readers, expose students to quality literature, and enable them to become recreational readers. Iowa Children's Choice Award (2009) program's purpose considers not only the children and quality books, but also the authors of the books. The Iowa program desires to give recognition to the children's authors. Iowa's purpose also states the program is to "provide an avenue for positive dialogues between teacher, parent, and children about books and authors" (Iowa Children's Choice Award, "About," 2009, ¶ 1).

Kaye (1984) pointed out some possible flaws in the state children's choice book awards. Because only students vote for the award books, the question of it being a popularity contest exists. Some states, such as Alabama (Emphasis on Reading, 2009) and Colorado (Colorado Children's Book Award, 2009), eliminate any books that have already received the Newbery or Caldecott Awards. State award developers posit that other authors should be acknowledged and rewarded for their contribution to the field of children's literature. Kaye (1984) posits that California does not mention books of high quality, but their purpose for the award is for the "introduction to the enjoyment of reading for pleasure" (California, 2009, ¶ 7) to their young readers.

Then the evolving question is whether award books meet the pleasure reading needs of students. Silvey (2008) discovered that some librarians are not purchasing the newer Newbury book titles because students are choosing not to read them. Storey (1990) determined that in five states of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Carolina, and Texas, the surveyed librarians do purchase books based on popularity among the patrons. Those same librarians may not always purchase the Newbery or Caldecott titles, if the titles would not be of interest to their library patrons, the students. If the books will not circulate, the librarians will not use limited funds to purchase them, even if they are award winners. The state book award sponsoring agencies must determine if the book titles on the award list are complementing the purpose of their state award.

The issue of choice versus quality literature is interesting. Kaye (1984) posits that some of the children's choice literature is "light" reading; Krashen (1993; 2006) believes that students should begin with "light" reading as a reading motivator. If the goal is to motivate student readers at all age levels in grades kindergarten through twelve, then state children's choice book lists are an entrance point.

While the wording of the state award purposes varies, the two primary reasons are to encourage pleasure reading as well as to read quality literature. The Connecticut Nutmeg Book Award (2009) "encourages children in grades 4 – 8 to read quality literature" (About the Nutmeg, ¶ 1). Florida (2008) actually identifies its state book award program as "a statewide reading motivation program for students in grades 3-8" (About SSYRA, 2009, ¶ 1). The purpose of

Florida's "reading motivation program" is to "entice students to read high interest, contemporary literature for personal enjoyment" (§ 5). Virginia's Readers' Choice (2009) award began in 1981 with one award but evolved in 1986 into four award levels: primary, elementary, middle school, and high school.

The purpose of Virginia's Readers' Choice award (2009) encompasses the purposes of all children's choice state awards:

- To encourage young readers to become better acquainted with contemporary books with outstanding literary appeal,
- To broaden students' awareness of literature as a life-long pleasure,
- To encourage reading aloud in classrooms as a means of introducing reading for pleasure, and
- To honor favorite books and their authors. (§ 1).

***Voting statistics.*** Voting records from some of the state award programs indicates the increasing student interest for the programs. In 1981-1982, Nebraska conducted their first state award program for grades four through six and 4,185 students voted. The next year they added the primary level of kindergarten through third grades with 9,960. In 1992-1993, Nebraska added the young adult category for students in grades six through nine; 59,688 total students voted for the three awards (Golden Sower, 2009).

Connecticut's Nutmeg (2009) 2008 votes illustrate the reduced reading motivation among older students. For the fourth through sixth grade awards, 22,380 students voted, but only 8,426 seventh and eighth graders voted. The seventh and eighth grade total of 8,426 was actually an increase of 2,642 votes as compared to 2007, indicating a 45.6% increase.

Illinois State Children's Choice book awards were announced March 12, 2009, at the Children's Literature Conference. Over 154,000 students from 894 schools voted and selected *Once upon a Cool Motorcycle Dude* (O'Malley, 2005) as the winning book. This was an increase of 23,000 students and 103 schools from last year's vote (P. Storm, personal communication, March 13, 2009). For the RCYRBA, 42,550 students in grades four through eight voted for their favorite with *Lightning Thief* (Riordan, 2006) winning (E. Poppit, personal communication, March 12, 2009). The Abraham Lincoln award for ninth through twelfth graders had 1900 students voting from 220 libraries. In the fifth year of the Abraham Lincoln award program, this was the largest number of voters. High school students selected *Crank* (Hopkins, 2004) as their winner (K. Shannon, personal communication, February 27, 2009). In Illinois a total of over 200,000 students cast ballots for their favorite book, but minimal research exists with no known research on the awards and their relationship to reading.

***William Allen White Award.*** In the United States, the individual state children's choice book awards began in Kansas in 1952. White (as cited in Bogan, 1993) was an advocate of Kansas students becoming avid readers. In 1925, Gagliardo, while working for White, began a children's book review column which became a traveling exhibit and then initiated the book fair. After White died, Gagliardo wanted to memorialize White in some way. Gagliardo and Fisher, one of White's friends, first presented the children's book award idea to White's widow. On April 22, 1952, the William Allen White Children's Book Award was

first announced. The first winning book was *Amos Fortune, Free Man* by Yates (1989) with 14,759 students casting their votes (Bogan, 1993).

***Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award Program.*** The Rebecca Caudill Children's Choice Book Award (RCYRBA) began in Illinois with a task force meeting on January 18, 1985 (Fox, 1990). From 1985-1987 the sponsoring agencies changed, but the administrative committee for the award worked to prepare the guidelines. The RCYRBA was initiated during the 1987-1988 school year (Fox, 1990). It is currently sponsored by three Illinois organizations: "Illinois Reading Council, Illinois Association of Teachers of English, and the Illinois School Library Media Association" (Obert & Barr, 2004, p. 53).

Usually the state children's choice book awards are named for people or specific characteristics of the state. Rebecca Caudill was a children's author and poet who lived in Urbana, Illinois for over 50 years of her adult life (Fox, 1990). Caudill's books are known for such themes as honesty, freedom, kindness, education, and human relationships. Having been born and raised in Kentucky, Caudill wrote her books concentrating on the Appalachian culture. Later in life Caudill returned to the Appalachian area to interview people and gain a deeper understanding of the mountain culture (Warner, 1999).

The RCYRBA is a statewide program which is carried out within individual schools and public libraries. In order to take part, the school district must register, which is usually done by the librarian or a district teacher. Schools must pay a nominal charge to cover the cost of the information packet (Rebecca, 2009).

The Caudill program states that its purpose is:



To encourage children and young adults to read for personal satisfaction; to develop a statewide awareness of outstanding literature for children and young people and to promote a desire for literacy; to encourage cooperation among Illinois agencies providing educational and library service to young people. (Obert & Barr, p. 53).

During the year students, teachers, and librarians nominate books based on the selection criteria determined by the committee members. To be included on the list, the books, of any genre, must follow these selection guidelines:

1. Nominator must have read the book.
2. Book must have literary merit.
3. Book must be of interest and appeal to children in grades 4-8.
4. Book must be copyrighted within the last 5 years.
5. Book must be in print at the time of selection.
6. Book may be nonfiction, poetry, or fiction.
7. Book may not be a textbook, an anthology, a translation, part of a series or formula fiction.
8. Author must be living at the time of nomination and at the time of selection of the Master List.
9. Books cannot have appeared on a previous Master List. (Rebecca Caudill, 2009, Nominations, ¶ 3)

The 100 books are read by a state representative committee of 70 to 80 teachers and librarians from around the state. Each of the committee members reads 10 assigned books and uses a rubric for evaluation. When all book evaluation points from the committee members are totaled, the list is reduced to 50 titles. Then the committee members read as many of the 50 books as possible before meeting together on a designated day during which time they discuss and vote, determining the 20 books to be placed on the next year's list. After publishers and authors are notified, the list is published primarily through the Internet (ISLMA, 2009).

Teachers, school librarians, and public librarians use the program to promote reading within their classrooms, schools, and communities. To actually promote the program, it is beneficial if one person in the school or library acts as the program organizer. The librarian and/or teachers can book talk the books, but should first read the books or read multiple reviews about each title before integrating them into the school library and/or classroom. Individual school library selection policies should overrule the RCYRBA list (Obert & Barr, 2004).

Schools conduct this program in different ways, emphasizing it for one or two months or operating it from September through February. Other schools may limit the program to just certain grade levels although the state program is designed for all fourth through eighth graders. Some of the promotional ideas for the RCYRBA program include Webquests, book club lunches, an Internet book club, read-alouds, book projects, commercial quiz programs, book talks, and competitions.

Bayer (personal communication, March 13, 2009) rewards all participating students with a pizza party and gives book store gift certificates to students who read all 20 titles on the list. Brandt (personal communication, March 13, 2009) rewards classes that have all students eligible to vote with pop. Students who read all books on the list are rewarded with a pizza party at a local restaurant. In 2010 Brandt (personal communication, March 29, 2010) rewarded the 35 students with a trip to hear children's award winning author Schmidt speak and purchased all 35 students one Schmidt book which they had personally autographed. Guccione (personal communication, November 12, 2008) has a

variety of awards for reading different numbers of books: 3 books earns a free homework pass, 5 is a can of soda, 10 books is a treasure box prize and a banana split party, 15 books earns a pizza party, and 20 earns a book store gift card. Slovinski (personal communication, November 12, 2008) gives one book to each person who qualifies to vote and those who read all 20 titles receives a personal copy of the winning title and attendance at a Caudill party or cookout.

From March to February, students read the listed 20 books. Students who read three or more are eligible to vote for their favorite book. Schools must submit the total votes for each of the 20 books by the end of February. When the votes are tallied, winners are announced in March at the Illinois Children's Literature and Reading Conferences. The new list for the next year is published about mid-February. This schedule seems to keep the momentum building for some students (Rebecca Caudill, 2010).

***State Children's Choice Award Research Studies.*** Minimal research exists on the state children's choice awards. In 1979, Herrin wrote a dissertation about the William Allen White Children's Book Award, the first state book award program. The study was an historical perspective of the award and analyzed the voting records according to participating schools and their locations in the state as well as the genres of winning book titles. Recommendations included determining why schools were not involved in the program and attempted to discover techniques of encouraging all schools to participate (Herrin, 1979).

Storey (1990) wrote a short report to determine if librarians prefer purchasing Caldecott or Newbery Award books or the state children's choice

award books. After surveying 55 librarians in five states which have the children's choice award program, several recommendations occurred. Although a book receives the high distinctive award of either Caldecott or Newbery, librarians may not automatically purchase them. Limited funds, children's interest, and the school selection policy must all be considered when purchasing books.

Miller (2003) wrote a dissertation on the representations of characters and themes in the Texas Bluebonnet Award books from 1981 to 2002. The qualitative study analyzed the lists by such topics as genre, age depictions, gender appeal, multicultural aspects, sex roles and orientations, as well as religion and families. Miller's conclusion indicates that the Texas Bluebonnet Award book list does not provide third through sixth grade students with enough diversity in types of representation. This study has implications for not only the award program but also for books integrated into the school curriculum.

Johnson (2003) conducted a comparative study on 15 of the state children's choice book award programs. Through the development of a table, Johnson compared six aspects of the program: who selects the list, the criteria for book selection, author criteria, the copyright restrictions, and the number of titles nominated. The award programs' purposes are to encourage children to read and Johnson concludes that students who nominate a book that actually wins feel a sense of ownership and pride, thus improving their self-concept and value of reading. Johnson recommends that future studies may examine the differences and similarities between adult choice children's book award programs and children's choice book award programs.

In 2004, Obert and Barr researched state book awards and wrote a book published by Linworth Publishing Company. As former Illinois librarians, they were very familiar with the RCYRBA program. They presented the historical perspective of the state awards as well as general suggestions for promoting the awards through schools and public libraries. All information was current as of 2003. Presently, most of this information is available on the Internet as many states have created their own state award website. McCormack (2005) recommends that future research on state award programs may include the development of a website template so that information on all sites is uniform.

Seagrave (2004) conducted a literature review to determine the information that has been generated about the children's state book award programs. The basic components of the state programs were analyzed and five particular state programs were discussed in depth. Seagrave concluded that these award programs can greatly affect students' reading, and recommends that research be conducted. McCormack (2005) affirms Seagrave's (2004) conclusions by stating "A study of individual state organizations could be made to evaluate to what extent children's choice award programs contribute to reading achievement" (p. 40). These statements verify the need and importance of this RCYRBA study. This current study is the first to connect an aspect of reading with one of the state children's choice book awards, the RCYRBA program.

McCormack's (2005) master's thesis study, the newest one available which studies the state children's choice book awards, reviewed the challenge of book selection to accommodate various students' interests. One realization about

the state book awards was the variety of the award programs including selection process. McCormack believes that the rules of these programs are limiting to children's choices.

In June 2010, a book written by Hilbun and Claes (2010) will be published. This book covers all of the 49 states' children's choice book awards, their requirements, criteria, voting, and other pertinent information. Additionally the authors have included author and publisher interviews as well as analytical comparisons of the various state reward programs.

## **Summary**

The theory of reading motivation and the state children's choice book award programs meld. Research on reading motivation recommends that educators recognize student needs, help them develop their reading self-concept and value of reading, as well as provide them with choice of reading materials. Providing students with a list of recommended books such as the RCYRBA list is a beginning to children's choice which can be referred to as "managed choice" (Allington, 2002).

After reading one or more books from the list, students may experience new books and authors with whom they were previously unfamiliar. If the school participates fully in the program, then teachers and librarians will provide students a chance to recommend books to the master list committee. This provides students with autonomy, a voice, and an authentic experience. Other research indicates that if teachers and librarians model reading and share a

passion for reading, then many students will begin to experience some of that same enthusiasm.

Reading motivation is affected by students' self-concept, value of reading, gender, school grade levels, and amount of reading. Reading achievement scores are then affected by the amount of reading students complete. Reading skills need to improve and researchers recommend that students practice reading by reading. Providing students time in class to actually read silently or read in small groups such as book clubs will benefit students. Educators need to address the specific needs of boys and girls so that reading achievement scores are improved.

State children's choice book award programs vary in each state, but thousands of children participate in them every year. Schools and other related organizations spend time and money on these programs. With minimal research currently available, more research needs to be conducted, especially on their impact on students' reading.

Reading motivation is frequently studied through a correlational study. Thus, this correlational study seeks to determine if there is a relationship between students who participate in the RCYRBA program and their reading motivation. The variables studied are readers' self-concept and value of reading as well as reading motivation in relation to students' gender, grade level in school, number of books they read, and their reading achievement.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

The Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) is a 23 year old reading program whose purpose is to encourage students to read. As one of the 190 state children's choice book award programs in 49 states, minimal research exists about the RCYRBA program, yet thousands of Illinois students participate in it annually.

While the RCYRBA program is for students in grades four through eight, this research addresses students in grades six through eight. International (Brozo et al., 2007/2008; Delaney, 2007; Guthrie, 2008; Hegarty, 2007; Mullis et al., 2003; Mullis & Martin, 2007) and national studies (National Endowment for the Arts, 2007) as well as various reading researchers indicate that reading motivation among middle schools students in grades six through eight is declining.

Middle school students need choice and voice of reading materials (Bass et al., 2008; Gambrell, 1996; Guthrie, 2008; Morrow, 2004; Strommen & Mates, 2004). Motivation varies by gender (Cavazos-Kottke, 2006; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006; Graham et al., 2008; Greenberg et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2008; Sax, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005) and grade level (Anderman et al., 1999; Lepper et al., 2005; McKenna et al., 1995; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Sturtevant et al., 2006; Unrau & Schlackman, 2006), as well as affects academic achievement (Allington, 2002; 2007; Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Krashen, 2002; 2006; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997).



Therefore, it is important to identify programs that motivate middle school students to read. Since the RCYRBA program is used by some Illinois schools yet minimal research exists, this correlational quantitative study determined the relationship between reading motivation and the reading of books from the RCYRBA program by middle school students.

## **Research Design**

**Correlational quantitative study.** This study is a correlational quantitative study formulated in the survey design. While the purpose of a correlational study is to determine the relationship among multiple variables, correlational studies can be either experimental or non-experimental (Creswell, 2002). This study is non-experimental; thus, the variables are not altered, and there is no control group to compare with an experimental group. In this non-experimental study, the researcher “determined if variables occur together and whether they can predict outcomes” (Creswell, 2002, p. 60).

Several correlational study designs exist such as survey, grounded theory, ethnographic, and narrative research (Creswell, 2002). The survey method of correlational studies is the selected design for this study.

**Survey method.** Survey designed studies provide a researcher the ability to collect a large quantity of data from a sample of the population (Babbie, 2001; Creswell, 2002; 2009). Then through inferential statistics, the researcher draws inferences that may be applied to a larger population (Babbie, 2001; Creswell, 2002; 2009). By using a written survey, such as the AMRP (Pitcher, et al., 2007),

the questions are standardized because all participants will respond to the same questions (Babbie, 2001; Creswell, 2002). Since reading a survey may hinder some middle school students from accurately completing the survey (Pitcher et al., 2007), the survey questions and choices were read to the students in a group administered classroom setting.

**Sample of convenience.** In this survey designed study, the population was a sample of convenience (Creswell, 2002). Students whose parents granted permission in three local middle schools were the study participants or sample population. Students' reading motivation attitudes were self-reported through the use of the published Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) reading survey (Pitcher, et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). As many as 677 students were possible to be included in the study, if all parents of the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in the three schools had permitted their children to participate in the study. Of the 677 possible participants, 411 participated with 23 invalid surveys; thus, 388 valid surveys were used.

**Cross sectional survey.** The published survey was given once to the students to determine their reading motivation through their self- concept as a reader and their value of reading. A cross-sectional survey design is one in which the participants are only surveyed once (Babbie, 2001; Creswell, 2002). Although there are several types of cross sectional survey design studies, this study researched students' "attitudes, beliefs, and opinions" (Creswell, 2002, p. 398). An advantage of a cross-sectional survey design is that it measures "current attitudes or practices" (p 398).

**Dependent variables.** The two dependent variables or outcomes are the two subsets of the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). The answers to the odd numbered questions provide the numerical score for the readers' self-concept, and the answers to the even numbered questions provide the numerical score for the readers' value of reading. The total reading motivation score, ranging from 40 to 80 includes the addition of the participants' reading self-concept raw score and the participants' value of reading raw score.

**Self-concept.** The first dependent variable is the readers' self-concept. In the study of reading motivation, readers' self-concept indicates their beliefs, attitudes, and feelings concerning their abilities to read (Pitcher et al., 2007). According to Gambrel et al. (1996), the readers' self-concept questions "are designed to elicit information about students' self-perceived competence in reading and self-perceived performance relative to peers" (p. 522).

The readers' self-concept was identified by the participants' answers to the odd numbered questions on the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). The readers' self-concept score can range from a numerical raw score of 10 to 40. Each question has four choices scored from most negative with a value of one to the most positive with a value of four. This scoring method was created by Gambrell et al. (1996). The raw score of each reader's self-concept score was entered into the SPSS statistical program.

**Value of reading.** The second dependent variable is the readers' value of reading. According to Gambrell et al. (1996), "the value of reading items are designed to elicit information about the value students place on reading tasks

and activities, particularly in terms of frequency of engagement and reading-related activities” (p. 522). Thus, through their scored answers the researcher determined the students’ belief about the importance of reading.

This dependent variable was scored using the even-numbered questions on the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007). Each question had four options for the answers. Each option was scored from most negative receiving a score of one to the most positive answer receiving a score of four. The raw score of the value of reading was entered into the SPSS statistical program.

**Independent Variables.** For this study, the researcher has identified four independent variables which may affect students’ reading motivation. According to Fink (2003), “independent variables are also called explanatory or predictor variables, because they are used to explain or predict a response, outcome, or result – the dependent variable” (p. 31). Those variables are the number of RCYRBA books read by the middle school students, the students’ gender, the students’ grade level in middle school, and the students’ last reading quarterly grade. In order to determine if there is a relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading motivation, the researcher must identify other variables which may affect middle school students’ reading motivation. Researchers have identified students’ gender, (Cavazos-Kottke, 2006; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006; Graham et al., 2008; Greenberg et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2008; Sax, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005) students’ grade level (Anderman et al., 1999; Lepper et al., 2005; McKenna et al., 1995; Strommen & Mates, 2004; Sturtevant et al., 2006; Unrau &

Schlackman, 2006), and students' grade improvements or academic achievement (Allington, 2002; 2007; Baker & Wigfield, 1999; Cunningham & Stanovich, 2003; Krashen, 2002; 2006; 2009; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997) as factors affecting middle school students' reading motivation.

***Number of RCYRBA books read.*** Annually, a new list of RCYRBA books is created from fourth through eighth grade student, teacher, and librarian nominations. An RCYRBA committee of teachers and librarians from the three sponsoring organizations determine the final list of 20 titles for the year. These books must meet the nomination criteria as indicated on the RCYRBA website (Rebecca, 2010).

This independent variable was measured using a list of 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 RCYRBA books as well as all RCYRBA winners from 1988 – 2005 (see Appendix B). This information was gathered from the RCYRBA website (Rebecca, 2010). The RCYRBA book list was attached to the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007). Students placed an X in the blank before the title of each RCYRBA book that they had read. This numerical data (Fink, 2003) was collected by the student adding the number of books circled on the book list and writing it in the total blank provided on the first page of the list. The researcher rechecked each student's addition of titles circled to be certain the total number indicated was accurate. The total number of books read was entered into the SPSS statistical software program.

***Student participants' gender.*** The second independent variable is the gender of the student participants. Gender refers to whether the study's

participants are either male or female. According to reading motivation research, middle school female students experience higher levels of reading motivation than male middle school students (Pitcher et al., 2007). Pitcher et al. added this demographic piece of information to their survey. Gambrel et al.'s survey did not include this information. As students age, the difference between male and female reading motivation increases (Anderman et al., 1999; Lepper et al., 2005; McKenna et al., 1995; Sturtevant et al., 2006).

Identifying gender on a survey is referred to as nominal data because no numbers are involved, but the survey respondents identify with a particular group (Fink, 2003). This independent variable was measured using the "Sample 2" question on the first page of the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 381) (see Appendix A). This information was entered into the SPSS statistical software program.

***Study participants' grade level.*** The third independent variable is the grade level of the study participants, sixth, seventh, or eighth grade. These three grades comprise middle schools in the three schools included in this study. This information is referred to as nominal data because the students identified with which grade level they are members (Fink, 2003).

On the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 381) (see Appendix A), "Sample 1" question states "I am in\_\_\_\_," and then provides students with a list of grade levels from sixth through twelfth grades. For this study, only students in grades six, seven, and eight were included. The grade level marked on the survey was entered into the SPSS statistical software program.

***Study participants' reading quarterly grade.*** Middle school students earn quarterly grades for reading. Current reading motivation research indicates that as students read more, their reading grades improve (Anderman et al., 1999; Lepper et al., 2005; McKenna et al., 1995; Sturtevant et al., 2006). Thus, students who receive letter grades of an A should be more motivated to read.

To obtain the data for this independent variable, the students' teachers wrote the students' last reading report card grade on the top front page of the RCYRBA book list (see Appendix B). This maintained confidentiality and anonymity in regard to students and their last reading quarterly grade. The researcher did not have any names, just the letter grade. The grade was listed as an A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, or F.

To create a numerical reference for each letter grade, the four point grading scale was used. The letter grade was translated to a numerical score as indicated in Table 1. The numerical value of the most recent quarterly reading grade was entered into the SPSS statistical software program.

Table 1

## Letter Grade Numerical Equivalents

| Letter Grade | Numerical Value of Letter Grade |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| A            | 4.0                             |
| A-           | 3.67                            |
| B+           | 3.33                            |
| B            | 3.0                             |
| B-           | 2.67                            |
| C+           | 2.33                            |
| C            | 2.0                             |
| C-           | 1.67                            |
| D+           | 1.33                            |
| D            | 1.0                             |
| D-           | .67                             |
| F            | .33                             |

**Research Questions & Hypotheses.** To study the research questions and hypotheses, the researcher first used descriptive statistics to summarize all data collected. The central tendency components including mean, median, and mode were used to summarize variables measured as ratio or interval data, while frequency distributions were used for nominal data.

**Research question and hypothesis one.** The first research question asks: Is there a relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA



books are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores? For this first research question, the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students was determined by the number of books marked on the list of RCYRBA books (see Appendix B) attached to the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). Using the AMRP, the scoring of the odd numbered questions provided the self-concept numerical score and the scoring of the even numbered questions provided the value of reading score.

The first hypothesis states that middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). Two hierarchical multiple regressions (an inferential technique) were conducted to examine the impact of the combined and individual contributions of each predictor to reading self-concept and the value of reading scores. In the case of a significant coefficient of multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ), the Beta weight for this predictor, number of RCYRBA books read, were examined to ascertain if this variable was a significant contributor to the variance in the outcome measures, the direction of the relationship (positive or negative), and the relative impact this predictor had on the outcomes in comparison with the remaining predictors.

***Research question and hypothesis number two.*** The second research question asks if there is a relationship between the gender of middle school

students and their reading self-concept and value of reading, to determine if boys or girls are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores. The data was collected using “Sample 2” question on the first page of the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 381) (see Appendix A). Using the AMRP, scoring the odd numbered questions provided the self-concept numerical score and scoring the even numbered questions provided the value of reading score.

The second hypothesis states that middle school girls, as opposed to middle school boys, are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores, measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher, et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). Two hierarchical multiple regressions (an inferential technique) were conducted to examine the impact of the combined and individual contributions of each predictor to reading self-concept and the value of reading scores. In the case of a significant coefficient of multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ), the Beta weight for this predictor, gender, was examined to ascertain if this variable was a significant contributor to the variance in the outcome measures, the direction of the relationship (positive or negative), and the relative impact this predictor had on the outcomes in comparison with the remaining predictors.

***Research question and hypothesis number three.*** The third research question asks if there is a relationship between the grade level of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students are more motivated to read as based on their

reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores. The grade level of students was identified by Sample question one on the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). This question asked students to mark their current grade level providing them with the choices of sixth through twelfth grade. Students in this study were only sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students.

The third hypothesis states that sixth grade students, as opposed to seventh grade students or eighth grade students, are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher, et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). Two hierarchical multiple regressions (an inferential technique) were conducted to examine the impact of the combined and individual contributions of each predictor to reading self-concept and the value of reading scores. In the case of a significant coefficient of multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ), the Beta weight for this predictor, grade level, was examined to ascertain if this variable was a significant contributor to the variance in the outcome measures, the direction of the relationship (positive or negative), and the relative impact this predictor had on the outcomes in comparison with the remaining predictors.

***Research question and hypothesis number four.*** The fourth research question asks if there is a relationship between middle school students' reading grades and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores.

To collect this data, the teachers wrote the students' most recent /reading language arts quarterly grade on the top of the RCYRBA book list (see Appendix B). With the AMRP reading survey, the scoring of the odd numbered questions provided the self-concept numerical score, and the scoring of the even numbered questions provided the value of reading score.

The fourth hypothesis indicates that middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and higher value of reading scores as measured by the corresponding subscales of the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A). Two hierarchical multiple regressions (an inferential technique) were conducted to examine the impact of the combined and individual contributions of each predictor to reading self-concept and the value of reading scores. In the case of a significant coefficient of multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ), the Beta weight for this predictor, the most recent quarterly reading grade, was examined to ascertain if this variable was a significant contributor to the variance in the outcome measures, the direction of the relationship (positive or negative), and the relative impact this predictor had on the outcomes in comparison with the remaining predictors.

***Research question and hypothesis number five.*** The final research question queries if the following set of variables pertaining to middle school students': number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades significantly predict their reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores. The first four

research questions have identified these independent variables individually. Using the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher et al., 2007) (see Appendix A), the scoring of the odd numbered questions provided the self-concept numerical score and the scoring of the even numbered questions provided the value of reading score.

The final research hypothesis posits that the following set of variables pertaining to middle school students: number of RCYRBA books read, gender, age, and quarterly reading grades will significantly predict their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores. Two hierarchical multiple regressions (an inferential technique) were conducted to examine the impact of the combined and individual contributions of each predictor to reading self-concept and the value of reading scores.

### **Selection of Participants**

The sites selected for this study are three rural middle schools located in central Illinois. The three schools include other grade levels in the buildings, have approximately the same demographics, and participate in, as well as promote the RCYRBA program.

Site one is an elementary school which has pre-kindergarten through eighth grade in one building. The middle school includes grades six through eight and has its own principal in a special wing of the building. The middle school has 217 students of whom 89% are white, 3% are Hispanic, 1% are black, 1% are Asian, 1% are Native American, and 5% are Unknown. Of the students, 27%

participate in the free and reduced lunch program. Divided by grade levels, there are 67 sixth graders, 75 seventh graders, and 75 eighth graders. Students are encouraged to participate in the RCYBA program by the school librarian and the middle school teachers.

Site two is one of two elementary schools in one central Illinois school district. The school houses grades kindergarten through three and grades six through eight. In the middle school grades of six through eight, the sixth grade has 60 students, the seventh grade has 51 students, and the eighth grade has 58 students, totaling 169 students. The ethnic population is 95% white, 3% Hispanic, 1% black, and 1% unknown. Free and reduced lunch program students include 26% of the population.

Site three is the second of two elementary schools in one central Illinois school district. The school has grades kindergarten through eighth grades. This school has a slightly larger population with sixth grade having 83 students, seventh grade having 113 students, and eighth grade having 95 students. Demographics are similar to the other two schools. The population is 94% white, 2% Hispanic, 2% black, 1% Asian, <1% Native American, and <1% multiracial. Seventeen percent of the students are part of the free and reduced lunch program.

These schools were selected because in site one the researcher worked for 21 years, retiring in 2007. The researcher has maintained contact with the principal, superintendent, and teachers to possibly conduct this research in this location. The researcher lives in the school district of the other two sites.

Thus, these three sites were chosen as a sample of convenience.

Creswell (2002) explains that convenience sampling occurs when the researcher chooses research participants because they have been granted permission and/or they have given their permission. First the school superintendents and principals granted permission (see Appendixes C, D, & E). Parents of the middle school students at the three sites granted permission by signing a letter stating that their son or daughter could participate in the research study (see Appendix F). Then the middle school students themselves granted permission by consenting to and completing the survey. Because this study implemented a sample of convenience, it may not be representative of the general middle school population. Thus, the results may not be generalizable to all middle school students (Creswell, 2002).

### **Instrumentation**

The Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher, et al., 2007) (see Appendix A) is the published survey instrument which has been selected for this study. This instrument is actually based on the Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) developed by Gambrell et al. (1996). The MRP has been used for 13 years and is still being used by researchers today.

**Motivation to Read Profile (MRP).** Gambrell et al. (1996) desired to “develop a public-domain instrument that would provide teachers with an efficient and reliable way to quantitatively and qualitatively assess reading motivation by evaluating students’ self-concept as readers and the value they place on reading”

(p. 519). The MRP was designed for students in grades one through six and has been implemented in multiple research studies. In the ProQuest dissertation database, 29 published dissertations dated 1998 - 2008 are listed which used the MRP in their studies.

To establish if the self-concept and value of reading subscales were accurate measures, Gambrell et al. (1996) conducted factor analyses “using the unweighted least squares method and a varimax rotation” (p. 525). Following those analyses, the final instrument was created. When determining internal consistency, the

alpha statistic was calculated, which revealed a moderately high reliability for both subscales (self-concept = .75; value = .82). In addition, pre-and posttest reliability coefficients were calculated for the subscales (self-concept = .68; value = .70), which confirmed the moderately high reliability of the instrument. (Gambrell et al., 1996, pp. 525-526)

Additionally, the researchers found that statistically significant differences occurred with reading achievement levels and the self-concept subscale, as well as students’ grade levels and the value of reading in third and fifth grades.

Therefore, students with higher reading grades had a better reading self-concept while those in earlier elementary grades valued reading more than those in later elementary grades.

**Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP).** In 2002, Pitcher et al. (2007) were conversing at a reading convention and concluded that a similar measurement instrument such as Gambrell’s et al. (1996) MRP was needed for measuring adolescents’ reading motivation. These researchers studied the available research on adolescents’ peculiar reading needs. The majority of



reading research has been conducted for elementary level students, but in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, educators have displayed a greater interest in adolescent reading especially in the area of reading motivation (Allington & Dennis, 2007).

Consequently, Pitcher et al. (2007) modified the MRP by using current research and personal experiences. They adapted the vocabulary, included a question about racial identification, and added questions which addressed technology and adolescent students' reading needs. The new assessment instrument is entitled the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) and is to be used for students in grades six through twelve. The purpose of the AMRP is to provide researchers, teachers, and students with an instrument that can be given periodically to indicate students' developmental reading motivation.

***Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey.*** The AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) like the MRP (Gambrell et al., 1996) is comprised of two different tools. One is the AMRP reading survey, a 20 question survey multiple choice document (see Appendix A) which measures two subscales of reading self-concept and value of reading. The survey includes three demographic questions about grade level, gender, and ethnicity. Each multiple choice survey question has four choices, but those choices are specific to the exact question. The choices are not generic such as with a Likert scale ranging from strongly agrees to strongly disagrees.

The total point raw score for the 20 questions on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) is 80 points. The odd numbered questions refer to the survey participant's reading self-concept; the even numbered questions refer to the survey

participant's value of reading. The reading self-concept subscale maximum raw score is 40 points, and the value of reading subscale maximum raw score is 40 points.

For the reader's self-concept raw score on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007), questions 3, 9, 11, 13, 17, and 19 are scored with the first choice, which is more negative, as one point and increases by one number to the fourth response, which is the most positive, and worth four points. Questions 1, 5, 7, and 15 are scored in reverse. The first answer choice receives a score of four points and decreases by one so that the last choice scores one point.

The second subscale on the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) is scored the same as the reader's self-concept subscale. Questions 2, 6, 12, 14, and 16 are scored from one to four with the first listed response earning one point, the second response is two points, the third response is worth three points, and the last listed response receives four points. Questions 4, 8, 10, 18, and 20 are scored in reverse. The first listed response is scored as four points, the second response is worth three points, the third response is worth two points, and the last response receives one point.

The 20 question multiple choice survey part of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) takes approximately 10 minutes to administer to a large group of students. The teacher or survey administrator first reads the instructions (see Appendix G) to the study participants and then reads each question and each possible response to the students after explaining that they should put an X in the box

before the answer that best represents their thoughts, beliefs, or feelings about reading.

Initially, the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) 20 question survey was administered to 384 students in eight locations across the United States as well as in the Caribbean. As opposed to the MRP (Gambrell et al., 1996), the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) includes gender and ethnicity demographic information. Thus, some of the data included references to gender. One finding indicates that for all ethnicities, females “valued reading more than males ( $p = .000$ )” (p. 391). “Females had significantly ( $p = .000$ ) higher scores on the surveys than males ( $p = .012$ )” (p. 391). In relation to students’ grade levels, as students advance through the school grades, six through twelve, “females’ value of reading increased...but males’ decreased” (p. 391).

***Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile conversational interview.*** Part two of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) is a conversational interview, a four page detailed set of questions. For the initial study of AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007), 100 students were interviewed. The main purpose of the conversational interview is to identify reading instructional strategies used within and without the educational setting, which provide adolescents increased reading motivation. Qualitative themes identified were adolescents’ reading perceptions, multi-literacies, social relationships in reading, teachers’ instructional strategies, and choices.

Both Gambrell et al. (1996) and Pitcher et al. (2007) encourage educators to freely implement and even modify these two documents in their own classrooms. The researchers believe teachers must study and identify strategies

that will motivate adolescent readers because they agree with other research that indicates adolescents' reading motivation decreases as they age (Allington & Dennis, 2007). Pitcher et al. (2007) identified the findings that educators should:

- recognize the multiple literacies in which students are engaging in outside of the classroom and find ways to incorporate them into classroom instruction;
- model our own reading enjoyment;
- embrace engaging activities, such as literature circles and book clubs, into regular instruction in secondary schools;
- include reading materials of varied formats, levels, and topics in the classroom; and
- incorporate elements of choice in readings and projects. (pp. 394-395)

***Other studies using AMRP.*** Currently only one published dissertation in ProQuest dissertation database indicates the implementation of the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) as a data collection instrument. Matthews Meth (2008) used the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) in a study of the impact of WebQuests on adolescents' reading comprehension. Gray (2008) used only part one of the MRP (Gambrell, et al., 1996) in a study on the correlation among the amount of reading, genres of reading, and reading achievement of fifth graders. For the purpose of this RCYRBA quantitative correlational study, only the first part of the AMRP was implemented.

#### **Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) List.**

Another instrument implemented in this study is the RCYRBA list (see Appendix B). This list is accessed from the RCYRBA website. The annual list of the 20 books includes the author, title, publisher, publication date, and grade level reading interest levels for each title. To create the survey instrument for this study, the researcher used the 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 RCYRBA book lists

as well as a list of the Caudill winners from 1988 – 2005. This list included the title and author of the books for each of the years. Participating students were instructed to place an X in the space before each title of the books that they had read. Students then added the total number of books read, but the researcher checked these numbers. Also, this document had a space for the students' last report card reading grade which was placed on the survey by the teacher during the survey completion by the students.

### **Assumptions**

When surveying the study participants, the researcher assumes that the students accurately recalled the books from the RCYRBA list that they had previously read. Also, the researcher assumed that the participants responded honestly and accurately to all questions on the RCYRBA list and the AMRP reading survey.

Another assumption is that the students have had access to the books recorded on the RCYRBA list. These three schools are registered to participate in the RCYRBA program, but the question may be whether students were able to read all of the listed books they desired. The number of students in the school versus the number of books available may have hindered some students' level of participation in the RCYRBA program. To alleviate this possible hindrance, the researcher provided each grade level at each of the three sites with a set of at least 12 of the current 2010 RCYRBA books. Thus, each school received at least 36 of the books to make them more readily accessible for the students.

The principals at each of the three sites asked that their teachers administer the surveys to the participating students. The researcher provided the teachers with a specific list of instructions (see Appendix G) as well as copies of the surveys. The surveys were conducted on the same date in all schools and the researcher collected them after they were completed. The researcher assumes that the teachers who conducted the survey followed the instructions provided.

### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of a correlational study is that there is no causal relationship identified. Correlational studies identify the relationship between and among the various independent and dependent variables. According to Creswell (2002) inferential statistics “enable a researcher to draw conclusions, inferences, or generalizations from a sample to a population of participants” (p. 231). As a non-experimental study, none of the variables will be manipulated or controlled.

Another limitation is that the use of a sample of convenience may provide study participants who are not representative of the entire population according to ethnicity, gender, or economic level. The three schools identified for this study are primarily Caucasian. The poverty level as determined by the free and reduced lunch records ranges from 17% to 27%. While the demographics of the three identified schools for this study are similar, they may not be representative of all middle school populations in Illinois.

Within each school, the researcher only included the middle school students whose parents signed the consent form (see Appendix F) and who offered their individual consent by completing the survey. Therefore, the study participants may not be fully representative of the individual school's population.

Finally, during the data entry process into the SPSS statistical program, the researcher may inadvertently enter data inaccurately. While the researcher conscientiously attempted to avoid such errors, the human factor must be considered.

## **Procedures**

**Internal Review Board (IRB).** After a successful proposal presentation the researcher must submit the Internal Review Board (IRB) application and receive IRB approval (see Appendix H). The purpose of the IRB is to ensure that the study is not harmful to the sample population. Since this is a non-experimental study, the participants completed one teacher administered survey. There was no control group and no manipulation of the variables. No harm came to any of the participants. Results of the survey were completely anonymous. Upon receiving IRB approval, the researcher began to collect data. Before the data could actually be collected, much prior preparation was necessary.

**Setting.** This correlational quantitative study was conducted at the beginning of the school year, September 2009. Future researchers may want to conduct the study after the voting of the current year of the RCYRBA book award program for maximum results.

When conducting this research study, the researcher made an initial contact with the three schools for implementation of the study. This initial contact was made with the superintendents of the school districts. With the superintendents' approval the principals were contacted and they wrote letters granting this researcher permission to conduct the study (see Appendixes C, D, & E).

The three schools selected for this study are registered for the 2009 RCYRBA program. The identified schools willing to participate in the study have similar demographics. Finally, the participating schools must have at least 12 of the 20 books on the current 2009 RCYRBA book list (Rebecca, 2010). If the school is large, it is best that they have multiple copies of each of the titles and have as many of the 20 titles as the budget and library selection policy allows.

**Study participants.** Before surveying students, the researcher made copies of the permission letter and signature permission form (see Appendix H) and placed them in business envelopes. These envelopes were delivered to each of the three schools with enough, plus some extras, for all sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in that school. Language arts teachers distributed the letters and collected the signed permission forms.

To encourage students to return the form in a timely manner, all study participants selected a free book from a large variety of new books provided by the researcher. These free books included hardbound and paperback titles, some of which were titles on the new 2010 RCYRBA list.



Only students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at the selected schools who returned the parental permission form were eligible to participate in the survey. Students granted their individual assent to participate in the study by completing the AMRP reading survey (Pitcher, et al., 2007) (see Appendix A) and the RCYRBA book list (see Appendix B).

**Data collection instruments.** Two instruments were used for this study. First, the RCYRBA book list (see Appendix B) was used to determine the number of RCYRBA books that middle school students had read. The list was accessible on the RCYRBA website (Rebecca, 2010). Added to this instrument was a blank for teachers to write the students' last quarterly reading grade. With the teachers writing this information, it maintained anonymity and did not violate student privacy.

The other instrument, the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) reading survey (See Appendix A), is a published survey created by Pitcher et al. (2007). Before implementing this survey instrument, the researcher emailed two of the authors, Pitcher and Albright, to receive permission to use the instrument. Both authors granted permission and offered assistance if the researcher had any questions about the administration of the survey (see Appendixes I & J). Because this researcher is a member of the International Reading Association (IRA), permission from the authors was not necessary. The journal grants copyright permission to members. The AMRP reading survey is a 20 question survey which identifies adolescents' reading self-concept and value of reading.

This instrument already has the grade level and the gender as two of the demographic questions.

## **Analysis**

**Research Questions, Null Hypotheses, and Hypotheses.** This correlational, quantitative research study using the survey method answered the following questions. The null hypotheses and hypotheses are also identified.

1. Is there a relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

[H<sub>10</sub>]: There is no relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores.

[H<sub>1A</sub>]: At the .05 level of significance, there will be a stronger relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read and middle school students' reading self-concept and value of reading scores.

2. Is there a relationship between the gender of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading, to determine if boys or girls are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

[H2<sub>0</sub>]: There is no relationship between the gender of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading scores.

[H2<sub>A</sub>]: At the .05 level of significance, there will be a stronger relationship between middle school girls and their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores, as compared to middle school boys and their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores.

3. Is there a relationship between the grade level of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

[H3<sub>0</sub>]: There is no relationship between the grade level of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading scores.

[H3<sub>A</sub>]: At the .05 level of significance, there will be a greater difference in middle school students' reading motivation at the sixth grade level as opposed to the seventh and eighth grade students based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores.

4. Is there a relationship between middle school students' reading grades and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

[H4<sub>0</sub> ]: There is no relationship between middle school students' most recent quarterly reading grades and their reading motivation based on their reading self-concept and value of reading scores.

[H4<sub>A</sub>]: At the .05 level of significance, there is a stronger relationship between middle school students' most recent quarterly reading grades and their reading self-concept and value of reading scores.

5. Will the following set of variables pertaining to middle school students': number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades significantly predict their reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores?

[H5<sub>0</sub> ]: The following set of variables pertaining to middle school students': number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades will not significantly predict their reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores.

[H5<sub>A</sub> ]: The following set of variables pertaining to middle school students': number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades will significantly predict at the .05 level of significance their reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores.

**Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).** To conduct the analysis of the surveys in this study, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used. This software was developed in 1968 by N. Nie and

includes in excess of 50 statistical procedures. Regression analyses, correlation, and analysis of variance are three of the statistical methods used in this software, which were used to evaluate data collected in this study.

**Descriptive statistics.** Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the sample population. In addition, the AMRP (Pitcher et al., 2007) scores were summarized. Frequency tables and tables of means and standard deviations were used for these descriptives according to the level of measurement of each variable. A table was designed to summarize the models and coefficients data.

**Regression analyses.** Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the study's hypotheses. Hierarchical regression was selected for this study so that the individual and combined contributions of the four independent variables may be evaluated for their contribution to the variance in middle school students' reading self-concept and the value they place on reading (Creswell, 2002).

Specifically, data was entered in a cumulative fashion in four blocks as follows: student's gender, student's grade level, student's quarterly reading grade, and number of RCYRA books read. The first regression used reading self-concept as an outcome or dependent variable; the second used the value placed on the importance of reading as a dependent variable. The  $R^2$  change statistics were evaluated to provide a comparison of models so that the independent and successive contributions of the variables were assessed (Creswell, 2002). Thus it was possible to isolate the number of RCYRA books read, the major variable of

interest, apart from the demographic predictors and understand its unique contribution to the two outcomes.

In the case of a significant  $R^2$  value, the beta weights were used to determine which individual variables explained the most variance in the equation (Creswell, 2002). Prior to running these analyses, tests were conducted to assure the analyses did not violate the assumptions of normality, linearity, or homoscedasticity. In addition, tolerances were checked to avoid collinearity. The alpha level for this study was set to .05.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

In the 1950s, the state children's choice book award programs were initiated to intentionally motivate students to read quality literature; however, upon completion of an extensive literature review, it was determined that minimal research has been conducted on most of the state children's choice book award programs, including the Illinois Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) program's use, effectiveness, and effect on the thousands of student readers who participate. Thus, the purpose of this correlational study was to determine if a relationship exists between sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who read the books on the RCYRBA list and those same students' reading motivation, which includes having a better self-concept of their reading ability, and a higher value of reading (Gambrell, 1996; Pitcher, et al., 2007).

Through the review of the literature, it was also determined that other factors such as gender, grade level, and reading grades can have an effect on middle school students' reading motivation. Thus, to isolate the relationship of the reading of the RCYRBA books to reading motivation, two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to isolate the influence of each of the independent variables on the dependent variables of reading self-concept and value of reading which equals reading motivation. As in correlational studies, the independent variables of the number of RCYRBA books read, gender, grade level, and quarterly reading grades were not manipulated but studied in relation to the dependent variables of the students' reading self-concept and their value of reading (Fink, 2003).

To formulate this determination, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in three rural Illinois middle schools were surveyed regarding the number of RCYRBA books they have read. The researcher provided all student participants with a list of 99 RCYRBA books from the 2007-2010 RCYRBA lists and the RCYRBA winners from 1988 – 2006 which can be accessed from the RCYRBA website ([www.rcyrba.org](http://www.rcyrba.org)). Additionally, the students' last quarterly grade in reading/language arts was requested, and teachers provided that information for the researcher. Since grades are not accessible to an outside researcher, grades were written on the survey instrument.

Participating students then completed the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Gambrell, 1996; Pitcher, et al., 2007) survey on which students specified their grade level and gender, as well as answered 20 multiple choice questions, ten of which signified their self-concept as a reader score and ten of which related their value of reading score. Self-concept as a reader is defined as students' perception of their reading ability (Bong & Skaalvik, 2003) which is illustrated through their accomplishments as indicated by the number of RCYRBA books they have read. Students' value of reading refers to their understanding or belief in the importance of reading. Middle school students frequently ask why they must read or complete a particular assignment; they are seeking the value. By administering the AMRP survey, an answer to the inquiry whether or not the RCYRBA books create a relationship with middle school students' reading motivation was sought.



## **Descriptive Results**

All sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students at the three sites received documentation with an explanation of the study, including a required parental permission letter for participation (Appendix E). Students were instructed to take the letters home, have the parents sign them, and return them to one of their grade level teachers. The researcher was not given student addresses for mailing to protect the privacy of the students who are minors; thus, the researcher was dependent on the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students to take the paper home and return the signed parental permission. Language Arts teachers at each site and grade level collected the students' parental consent letters. Only those students who returned the permission letters signed by their parent and/or guardian, granting such permission, were allowed to participate in the study.

Table 2, Table 3, and Table 4 indicate the number of possible students who could have participated and the number of actual participants at each site and within each grade level. At the three school sites, there were a total of 677 possible participants, of which 411 completed the survey. Of the 411 surveys completed and collected, 23 of the surveys were invalid because one or more questions on the surveys were not answered and could not be included in the total data. Thus, 388 student surveys became the valid number of study participants. Of the total 388 valid participants, site one had 107 students or 27.6% of the total (Table 2); site two had 96 students or 24.7% of the total (Table 3); site three had 185 students or 47.7% of the total (Table 4).

Table 2

## Participation by Site – Site 1

| Site 1 |       |                |            |
|--------|-------|----------------|------------|
| Grade  | Part. | Possible Part. | % of Part. |
| 6      | 37    | 67             | 55.22%     |
| 7      | 34    | 75             | 45.33%     |
| 8      | 36    | 75             | 48%        |
| Total  | 107   | 217            | 49.31%     |

Part. = participants

Table 3

## Participation by Site – Site 2

| Site 2 |       |                |            |
|--------|-------|----------------|------------|
| Grade  | Part. | Possible Part. | % of Part. |
| 6      | 37    | 60             | 62%        |
| 7      | 34    | 51             | 67%        |
| 8      | 25    | 58             | 43%        |
| Total  | 96    | 169            | 57%        |

Part. = participants

Table 4 –  
Participation by Site – Site 3

| Site 3 |       |                |            |
|--------|-------|----------------|------------|
| Grade  | Part. | Possible Part. | % of Part. |
| 6      | 59    | 83             | 71%        |
| 7      | 73    | 113            | 64.6%      |
| 8      | 53    | 95             | 55.79%     |
| Total  | 185   | 291            | 63.57%     |

When breaking down this study population by participation versus possible participants at each grade level, 133 of 210 possible sixth graders participated which is 63%; 141 seventh graders of 239 possible participated which is 55%; and finally, 114 of 228 eighth graders participated equaling 50% participation rate (Table 5). Thus eighth graders had the less frequent participation rate while sixth graders had the highest participation rate.

Table 5 –

## Student Participants and Possible Participants by Grade Level

| Grade Level | Participation | Possible Participation | Percent of Participation |
|-------------|---------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 6           | 133           | 210                    | 63%                      |
| 7           | 141           | 239                    | 55%                      |
| 8           | 114           | 228                    | 50%                      |
| TOTAL       | 388           | 677                    | 57.31%                   |

The student participation in relationship to the variables of gender, grade level, reading grade, and number of RCYRBA books read are indicated by Table 6, Table 7, and Table 8. According to Table 6, a nearly equal number of males (49%) and females (51%) participated in the study. In Table 7, the data indicates that seventh graders had the greatest percent of participation with 36.3%, sixth graders were second with 34.3% and eighth graders had the least participation with 29.4% of the total representation. In order to participate in the study students had to voluntarily take the permission letter home, have their parents sign it, and return it to their teacher, which could have affected the outcomes. Interestingly, a nearly equal number of male and female students took part with eighth graders having the fewest number and seventh graders the most participants.

Table 6

## Participants' Gender

|        | Frequency | Percent |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| Female | 198       | 51.0    |
| Male   | 190       | 49.0    |
| Total  | 388       | 100.0   |

Table 7

## Participants' Grade Level

|       | Frequency | Percent |
|-------|-----------|---------|
| 6     | 133       | 34.3    |
| 7     | 141       | 36.3    |
| 8     | 114       | 29.4    |
| Total | 388       | 100.0   |

Among the students, the last quarterly reading/language arts grades ranged from an F to an A. The possible reading grades were placed on a numerical scale which is listed in Table 8. When entering the data into an Excel spreadsheet the letter grade was changed by the researcher to the numerical value for computation purposes in the SPSS statistical software system.

Table 8

## Letter Grade Numerical Equivalents

| Letter Grade | Numerical Value of Letter Grade |
|--------------|---------------------------------|
| A            | 4.0                             |
| A-           | 3.67                            |
| B+           | 3.33                            |
| B            | 3.0                             |
| B-           | 2.67                            |
| C+           | 2.33                            |
| C            | 2.0                             |
| C-           | 1.67                            |
| D+           | 1.33                            |
| D            | 1.0                             |
| D-           | .67                             |
| F            | .33                             |

Of the 388 student participants, the grades ranged from .33, an F, to 4.0, an A. Table 9 presents the mean and the standard deviation of the students' quarterly reading grade. When converted to a letter grade, the mean of 3.401 is factored as a score between an A- and B+.

In addition to illustrating the study participants' reading grades, Table 9 also indicates the mean and standard deviation of the number of books read from the RCYRBA book list. The range of books read was from 0 to 94 with the mean being 18.48 and the standard deviation being 15.88. Thus, the mean was that

students read 18 books with the standard deviation of 16, if those numbers are rounded to whole numbers equaling an entire book.

Table 9

Participants' Reading Grade and Number of Books Read ( $N = 388$ )

|                | N   | Minimum | Maximum | Mean  | Std. Deviation |
|----------------|-----|---------|---------|-------|----------------|
| Reading Grade  | 388 | .33     | 4.00    | 3.401 | .704           |
| No. Books Read | 388 | 0       | 94      | 18.48 | 15.88          |

The AMRP survey consisted of 20 questions, 10 which tested students' reading self-concept and 10 which tested students' value of reading. The odd numbered questions reported students' reading self-concept, while the even numbered questions conveyed students' value of reading. The multiple choice question responses had values ranging from one to four. Each of the multiple choice answers was worded specifically to coincide with the question asked, so each answer varied according to the meaning of the question.

For the odd numbered questions except numbers 1, 5, 7, and 15, the first choice listed was a score of one, choice two was a score of two, choice three was a score of three, and choice four was a score of four. These numerical values ranged from the lowest reading self-concept score to the highest reading self-concept score. Questions 1, 5, 7, and 15 were scored in reverse with the first choice receiving a score of four, choice two was a three, choice three was a two, and choice four was a one. The total self-concept score range was 10 to 40.

For the even numbered questions except 4, 8, 10, 18, and 20, the answer responses were scored one through four as with the odd questions. Questions 4, 8, 10, 18, and 20 were scored in reverse with the first choice earning a four down to the fourth choice earning a one. The total value of reading score range was 10 to 40.

The self-concept subsection and the value of reading subsection each had ten questions; each question had a maximum value of four; thus, the total possible raw score for each subsection was 40. Table 10 indicates the mean and standard deviation of each question, the reading self-concept score, and the value of reading score. Student raw scores for reading self-concept ranged from 19 to 40 and the mean was 30.8247 with a standard deviation of 4.7080. For the value of reading scores, the raw scores ranged from 15 to 40, and the mean was 29.2165 with a standard deviation of 5.0618.



Table 10

## Mean and Standard Deviation of AMRP Survey Questions

|                      | Mean    | Standard Deviation |
|----------------------|---------|--------------------|
| Q1                   | 2.98    | .80                |
| Q2                   | 3.16    | .77                |
| Q3                   | 2.47    | .89                |
| Q4                   | 2.23    | .80                |
| Q5                   | 3.42    | .62                |
| Q6                   | 2.75    | .88                |
| Q7                   | 3.69    | .51                |
| Q8                   | 3.02    | .71                |
| Q9                   | 3.02    | .79                |
| Q10                  | 2.87    | .94                |
| Q11                  | 3.35    | .78                |
| Q12                  | 3.49    | .69                |
| Q13                  | 3.29    | .67                |
| Q14                  | 2.71    | .93                |
| Q15                  | 3.51    | .68                |
| Q16                  | 2.97    | .63                |
| Q17                  | 2.44    | .86                |
| Q18                  | 2.78    | .90                |
| Q19                  | 2.67    | .86                |
| Q20                  | 3.22    | .79                |
| Reading Self-concept | 30.8247 | 4.7080             |
| Value of Reading     | 29.2165 | 5.0618             |

## Hypothesis Testing

Two hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to answer the research questions. Both of these analyses used identical predictor or independent variables pertaining to students (gender, grade level, last quarterly reading grade, and the number of RCYRBA books read) entered into four blocks of the multiple regression test of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). The purpose of these multiple regression analyses was to examine a unique set of variables to determine why the students scored a specific self-concept of reading score or value of reading score. These analyses look at the combined influence of some variables related to reading motivation.

Although there are only five research questions, there are actually ten relationships that were tested, two for each research question. The first regression used the reading self-concept score as the outcome or dependent variable. Therefore, the reading self-concept score or dependent variable was tested using the independent variables of gender, grade level, quarterly reading grade, the number of RCYRBA books read, as well as the combined influence of all four of the independent variables. This equaled a study of five different relationships. The second regression used the value placed on reading as the outcome or dependent variable while testing it with the independent variables of gender, grade level, quarterly reading grade, the number of RCYRBA books read, as well as the combined influence of all four of the independent variables. The second regression equaled a study of five different relationships between the

dependent and independent variables. Thus, the combined study of ten different relationships was analyzed through the two multiple regression tests.

The research questions which were answered through the data collection and analysis included:

1. Is there a relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
2. Is there a relationship between the gender of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading, to determine if boys or girls are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
3. Is there a relationship between the grade level of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
4. Is there a relationship between middle school students' reading grades and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

5. Will the following set of variables: number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades, significantly predict middle school students' reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores?

The research questions inquired if there is a relationship between each of the four independent variables of gender, grade level, the last quarterly reading grade, and the number of RCYRBA books read as well as the combined influence of the four independent variables, and the outcome or dependent variable, which was the middle school students' self-concept as a reader. Then the research questions also asked to determine if there is a relationship among all four independent variables gender, grade level, the last quarterly reading grade, and the number of RCYRBA books read, as well as the combined influence of the four independent variables and the dependent variable which was the middle school students' value of reading. Table 11 indicates the results for the four independent variables and the students' self-concept of reading.

A summary of the hierarchical regression can be found in Table 11. The  $R$  value is the measurement of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of the students' self-concept as a reader. The  $R^2$  value is the approximate amount of variance that is being explained. As this table shows,  $R^2$  values ranged from .003 to .225 across the four models.

In model one, gender was the independent variable with reading self-concept as the dependent variable. The  $R^2$  value was .003 with a  $p^{F \text{ change}}$  value of .304 which indicated no significance between gender and reading self-concept

when  $p < .05$ . Thus research question two regarding the relationship between gender and reading self-concept is not supported.

In model two, grade level was added to gender as independent variables with reading self-concept as the dependent variable. The  $R^2$  value was .015. The  $R^2$  change column indicates that grade level made a .012 (1.2%) difference when added. The  $p^{F \text{ change}}$  value became .032 which is statistically significant when  $p < .05$ . It appears that grade level is statistically significant, but further examination of the data will show that it is not, but it is close.

In model three, the students' most recent quarterly reading/language arts grade was added as an independent variable to the current regression analysis. The  $R^2$  value was .158 which indicates that the approximate amount of variance being explained was 15.8%. The  $p^{F \text{ change}}$  value was .000 which indicates statistical significance when  $p < .05$ . Thus, research question four regarding the relationship between reading grade and self-concept was supported.

Finally, in model four, the number of RCYRBA books read as reported by the students on the survey, was added as an independent variable. The  $R^2$  value was .225 which indicates that the approximate amount of variance being explained was 22.5%. The  $p^{F \text{ change}}$  value was .000 which indicates statistical significance when  $p < .05$ . Therefore, research question one regarding the number of RCYRBA books read was supported.

An examination of the  $R^2$  change statistics reveals that there were significant changes in explained variance for models two, three and four. These significant changes indicate that focus should be placed on the final or fourth

model since the explained variance was significantly increased at every step. The fourth model accounted for 22.5% of the variance in the reading self-concept scores.

An ANOVA or an analysis of variance test was run to determine if the F change made a statistically significant difference. The purpose of the F test is to test the null hypothesis. If the value of F is statistically significant, then it indicates that it is improbable that this set of variables was created at random. This means that if this study was repeated with new students the same results would likely be received (Orcher, 2005).

Model one, with gender as the independent variable and reading self-concept as the dependent variable, has an F change value of 1.059 and  $p$  score of .304. With  $p < .05$ , model one is not significant. Thus the portion of research question two regarding the relationship between gender and reading self-concept is not supported.

Model two, with grade level added to gender as the independent variable and reading self-concept as the dependent variable, has an F change value of 2.850 and  $p$  score of .059. With  $p$  set at  $p < .05$  to indicate statistical significance, the  $p$  score of .059 indicates a close relationship between grade level and reading self-concept, yet it is not statistically significant. Thus, the portion of research question three regarding the relationship between students' grade level, sixth, seventh, or eighth grades, and reading self-concept is not supported.

Model three, with the most recent quarterly reading/language arts grade added to gender and grade level as the independent variables and reading self-

concept as the dependent variable, has an F change value of 23.985. This F change value is statistically significant at  $p = .000$  ( $p < .05$ ). Research question four indicating a relationship between students' most recent quarterly reading/language arts grade and their reading self-concept is statistically supported.

Finally, model four, with the number of RCYRBA books read added to gender, grade level, and the most recent quarterly reading/language arts grade as independent variables and reading self-concept as the dependent variable, has an F change value of 27.725. This F change value is statistically significant at  $p = .000$  ( $p < .05$ ). Research question one is statistically significant regarding the relationship between reading self-concept and the number of RCYRBA books read.

Thus, it should be noted that ANOVA results indicated that models three and four were statistically significant ( $p = .00$ ), but the first two were not ( $p = .304$  and  $p = .059$  respectively). The results of the analysis for the fourth model lead to the conclusion that gender, grade level, most recent quarterly reading/language arts grade, and the number of RCYRBA books read is significantly related to students' self-concept of reading score which supports the portion of research question five regarding the relationship between the four independent variables and reading self-concept.

Table 11

## Model Summary – Self-Concept of Reading

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Change Statistics |          |     |     | Sig. F Change<br><i>p</i> |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------------------|
|       |                   |          |                   | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 |                           |
| 1     | .052 <sup>a</sup> | .003     | .000              | .003              | 1.059    | 1   | 386 | .304                      |
| 2     | .121 <sup>b</sup> | .015     | .009              | .012              | 4.632    | 1   | 385 | .032                      |
| 3     | .397 <sup>c</sup> | .158     | .151              | .143              | 65.302   | 1   | 384 | .000                      |
| 4     | .474 <sup>d</sup> | .225     | .216              | .067              | 32.955   | 1   | 383 | .000                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER

b. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, grade level

c. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, grade level, reading grade

d. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, grade level, reading grade, # books read

In the previous table, the independent variables are studied to show all four independent variables together and to determine if each makes a contribution to the relationship between them and the dependent variable which is the self-concept of reading. The coefficients test determines which independent variables indicate the strongest relationship with the dependent variable, the self-concept of reading. It answers the question, since a relationship has been determined, what is the strength of that relationship?

Thus, it is important to also look at the coefficients in Table 12 to analyze the independent contributions of the predictors or independent variables of gender, grade level, most recent quarterly language arts grade, and the number of RCYRBA books read to the variance in the reading self-concept scores.

The beta ( $\beta$ ) weights in Table 12 indicate that the largest contributor was the quarterly reading grade ( $\beta = .298$ ,  $p = .000$ ) closely followed by the number of



RCYRBA books read ( $\beta = .276$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Both of these beta weights are statistically significant because the value of  $p$  is .000 when  $p < .05$ .

In Table 12 a positive number for gender indicates males and a negative number is female. Using the Beta weights, gender was not significantly related ( $\beta = .031$ ,  $p = .502$  when  $p < .05$ ) and neither was grade level ( $\beta = -.079$ ,  $p = .083$ , when  $p < .05$ ), but grade level made an important, if not statistically significant contribution to the explained variance since the statistical significance of  $p = .083$  is very close to the  $p < .05$ . Sixth grade is indicated with a negative number and higher grade levels (seventh and eighth) with a positive number.

Specifically, students with higher reading grades, such as A's, who read a greater number of RCYRBA books tend to have higher reading self-concept scores. Also, because both the reading/language arts grades and the number of RCYRBA books read are positive, as students' reading grades improve and they read more RCYRBA books, their reading self-concept increases. If their reading/language arts grades go down and they read fewer of the RCYRBA books, then their reading self-concept decreases as well.

Table 12

Coefficients for Self-Concept of Reading as the Dependent variable

| Model 4                                   | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | <i>p</i> |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|----------|
|                                           | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |          |
| (Constant)<br>Self- Concept<br>of Reading | 25.631                      | 2.297      |                           | 11.160 | .000     |
| Gender                                    | .290                        | .431       | .031                      | .672   | .502     |
| Grade level                               | -.468                       | .269       | -.079                     | -1.740 | .083     |
| Language<br>grade                         | 1.996                       | .322       | .298                      | 6.200  | .000     |
| # Books read                              | 8.196E-02                   | .014       | .276                      | 5.741  | .000     |

A second hierarchical regression was run to answer the research questions, but the outcome or dependent variable used was the students' value of reading. The results are found in Table 13.  $R^2$  values ranged from .069 in Model one to .229 in Model four. The change statistics show that there was a significant accretion in explained variance at every step ( $p^{F \text{ change}} = .000$  in every case). Thus the fourth model will be isolated for further discussion since it explains the largest amount, 22.9%, of the variance in the value of reading scores.

Each of the models produced a significant regression ( $p^F = .000$  in every case). Model one's variance, with gender as the independent variable and value of reading as the dependent variable was .069, and the regression was statistically significant at  $p^F = .000$  when  $p < .05$ . Model two's variance, with

grade level added as an independent variable and value of reading as the dependent variable, was .122 with the regression statistically significant at  $p = .000$ . Model three's variance, with the most recent quarterly reading/language arts grade added as an independent variable and value of reading as the dependent variable, was .165 with the regression statistically significant at  $p = .000$ . Model four's variance, with the number of RCYRBA books read added as an independent variable and value of reading as the dependent variable, was .229 with the regression statistically significant at  $p = .000$ .

It may be concluded that middle school students' gender, grade level, the quarterly reading grade, and the number of RCYRBA books read can significantly predict students' value of reading scores. Thus, in relation to the value of reading scores all five research questions were statistically significant and supported and the null hypotheses were rejected through this research.

Table 13

Model Summary –Value of Reading as Dependent Variable

| Model | R                 | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Change Statistics |          |     |     | Sig. F Change<br><i>p</i> |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-------------------|----------|-----|-----|---------------------------|
|       |                   |          |                   | R Square Change   | F Change | Df1 | Df2 |                           |
| 1     | .262 <sup>a</sup> | .069     | .066              | .069              | 28.506   | 1   | 386 | .000                      |
| 2     | .349 <sup>b</sup> | .122     | .118              | .053              | 23.397   | 1   | 385 | .000                      |
| 3     | .406 <sup>c</sup> | .165     | .158              | .043              | 19.682   | 1   | 384 | .000                      |
| 4     | .479 <sup>d</sup> | .229     | .221              | .064              | 31.968   | 1   | 383 | .000                      |

a. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER

b. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, grade level

c. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, grade level, reading grade

d. Predictors: (Constant), GENDER, grade level, reading grade, # books read

An inspection of the coefficients in Table 14 shows that all of the predictors or independent variables, made significant contributions to the explained variance. The largest contributor was the number of RCYRBA books read ( $\beta = .271$ ), followed by grade level ( $\beta = -.224$ ), followed by gender ( $\beta = -.204$ ), with the quarterly reading grade providing the smallest contribution ( $\beta = .126$ ). The grade level value,  $\beta = -.224$ , which is negative indicates it refers to sixth graders as opposed to the seventh and eighth graders. Also, the negative gender beta weight,  $\beta = -.204$ , indicates females as opposed to males. Specifically, students, who read a greater number of RCYRBA books, are in lower grade levels (indicated by the negative number), are female (indicated by the negative number), and have higher reading grades, tend to have significantly

higher value of reading scores. This conclusion supports all five research questions in regard to the value of reading scores.

Table 14

Coefficients – Value of Reading as Dependent Variable

| Model 4          | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | T      | <i>p</i> |
|------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|--------|----------|
|                  | B                           | Std. Error | Beta                      |        |          |
| (Constant)       |                             |            |                           |        |          |
| Value of Reading | 35.429                      | 2.462      |                           | 14.391 | .000     |
| Gender           | -2.067                      | .462       | -.204                     | -4.473 | .000     |
| Grade level      | -1.420                      | .288       | -.224                     | -4.927 | .000     |
| Language grade   | .903                        | .345       | .126                      | 2.618  | .009     |
| # Books read     | 8.653E-02                   | .015       | .271                      | 5.654  | .000     |

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a correlation between middle school students who read more RCYRBA books and their reading motivation. In terms of the findings above, the research questions/hypotheses two and three were partially supported by the data findings, while hypotheses one, four, and five were completely supported by the findings. Each research question was tested twice, once with the dependent variable of the reading self-concept score and the second test with the dependent variable of the value of reading score.

Statistically significant were the number of RCYRBA books read and higher quarterly reading grades in relation to middle school students' reading

motivation which include higher self-concept of reading score and the value of reading score. Middle school students' gender and grade level were not statistically significant when students' reading self-concept was the dependent variable, but gender and grade level were statistically significant when the dependent variable was the students' value of reading. Finally, when all four independent variables were correlated with the reading self-concept scores and the value of reading scores the data were statistically significant. Thus, of the ten possible relationships in this study, eight of the ten were upheld by the findings.

In the next chapter, these findings will be discussed with some conclusions, professional implications, and recommendations for further research. As one of the few pieces of research on the state children's choice book award programs, this research will possibly open doors to additional studies, especially in the relationship between reading and the state children's choice book award programs.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations**

The purpose of this research study was to determine if there is a relationship between the reading of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) books and reading motivation among sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in three rural Illinois middle schools. Additionally, this study investigated the relationship between gender, grade level, and quarterly reading grades, and reading motivation. Reading motivation is divided into two components which are "self-concept as a reader" and "value of reading" (Pitcher et al., 2007, p. 388).

Reading motivation is a concern among educators given that students are tested on reading performance annually through the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and continuing legislation requires schools to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Teachers are continually seeking new methods or techniques to encourage all students to become lifelong readers, yet research indicates that as students get older their reading motivation decreases (Gottfried, 1985; Ruddell & Unrau, 1997; Guthrie, 2001).

An existing educational reading promotional program in 49 of the 50 states is the children's choice state book award programs of which states have between one and five of these annually. Although the first state book award originated in 1951 in Kansas and thousands of students participate in these programs annually across the United States, a literature review conducted by Seagrave (2004) resulted in the determination that minimal research exists, especially concerning the relationship of these state children's choice book award programs

to reading. In 2005, McCormack wrote a master's thesis and concluded that the connection between reading achievement and the state children's choice book award programs should be studied within the various states. Through the literature review, the researcher for this RCYRBA study found the same to be true. Thus, this study was needed and is one of the first to determine the correlation of reading the books on the RCYRBA list to middle school students' reading motivation. This current RCYRBA program study adds new research to the field of reading motivation and its relationship with the state children's choice book award program.

The theoretical foundation of this study involves the general study of motivation including intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in addition to the theory of reading motivation. The theory of motivation is found in several theorists' works beginning with Dewey (1913) who believed that in order to reach a goal, one must maintain action and make movement in the direction of that goal. Other motivation theorists agree with Dewey in that motivation involves action, movement, and a direction (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Eccles & Wigfield; 2002; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Schunk, et al., 2008).

Included within the motivational theory are the two types of motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic. In the theory of extrinsic motivation students are encouraged to complete a task through outside rewards, which is both supported (Hoffman and Nottis, 2008) and contested (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Kohn, 1999; Schunk et al., 2006; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) by teachers and researchers. In the RCYRBA study, students who returned the signed permission letter and



completed the survey received a book of their choice from hundreds of books, including some of the current RCYRBA books. The participation datum for this study was 57.31%, but it is unknown whether the free books influenced the participation rate. One of the schools in this study encourages all students to read all 20 of the books on the list each year, and even teachers become involved by modeling the reading of all 20. Those students who do read all 20 are usually rewarded with a pizza party. This year they attended an author event to meet one of the authors whose book was on the RCYRBA list (Brandt, personal communication, March 10, 2010). Interestingly Brandt (personal communication, March 14, 2010) reported that the students who read all 20 RCYRBA books were five girls and three boys in sixth grade, three girls and one boy in seventh grade, and four girls in eighth grade. In this example, the reward was related to the activity, which some researchers report as being important (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008), although this reward was unknown to the student participants until after they had completed the program. Also interesting to note is the decreased participation of the males from grades six through eight which agrees with the gender research (Cavazos-Kottke, 2006; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006; Graham, Tisher, Ainley, & Kennedy, 2008; Greenberg et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2008; Sax, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005).

Reading motivation is fostered through a sense of value which is intrinsic motivation (Brophy, 2004). As students improve their reading abilities, they gain a sense of success and their intrinsic motivation increases (Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008). Layne (2009) refers to reading motivation as creating a passion for

reading. Thus, this RCYRBA study is important as its purpose was to determine middle school students' reading self-concept and value of reading which equals reading motivation in relationship to the reading of the RCYRBA books.

To facilitate the isolation of the relationship between the middle school students' reading of the RCYRBA books and reading motivation, other reading motivation factors revealed through the literature review were included as independent variables, such as gender, students' grade levels, and students' most recent quarterly reading/language arts grades. Therefore, two multiple regression tests were conducted on the two dependent variables (reading self-concept and value of reading) and the four independent variables (gender, students' grade levels, students' language arts grades, and the RCYRBA books read).

The subsequent questions formed the foundation for this study:

1. Is there a relationship between the number of RCYRBA books read by middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
2. Is there a relationship between the gender of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading, to determine if boys or girls are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?

3. Is there a relationship between the grade level of middle school students and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if sixth, seventh, or eighth grade students are more motivated to read as based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
4. Is there a relationship between middle school students' reading grades and their reading self-concept and value of reading to determine if middle school students who receive A's for quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read based on their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores?
5. Will the following set of variables pertaining to middle school students': number of RCYRBA books read, gender, class grade level, and quarterly reading grades significantly predict their reading motivation as based on their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores?

The data collection instrument used was the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) which determined the student participants' reading self-concept and their value placed on reading scores (Pitcher et al., 2007). In addition students marked the RCYRBA books they had read from a list of 99 books from the 2007 to 2010 annual lists and the winning titles from 1988 to 2006. The most recent reading quarterly grades were written on the RCYRBA survey, and students marked their gender and grade level on the AMRP survey. This correlational study used quantitative data analysis in the form of two hierarchical multiple regression analyses to determine the relationship between the independent variables of the number of RCYRBA books students read,

gender, grade level, and the most recent quarterly reading grade and students' reading motivation in regard to dependent variables of their reading self-concept and their reading value.

## **Procedures**

The RCYRBA study was designed as a quantitative study using two hierarchical multiple regression analyses to determine if there is a relationship between the independent variables, factors related to reading motivation, and dependent variables, two subdivisions of reading motivation.

As a sampling of convenience, three local middle schools with sixth, seventh, and eighth graders agreed to participate. Explanatory letters including a parental consent form were sent home with each of the 677 eligible students and 411 parents granted permission for their students to take part. Unfortunately, 23 of the students failed to complete the entire survey, so only 388 formed the valid number of participants.

To study students' reading motivation the Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile (AMRP) (Pitcher et al., 2007) was administered to the students who had permission to participate in the study. This AMRP survey is comprised of two parts, a 20 question reading survey which measures students' reading self-concept scores and their value placed on reading scores, as well as a conversational interview. For the RCYRBA study, only the 20 question survey with several demographic questions was implemented, as Gray (2008) did in the

correlational study on genres, quantity, and achievement for fifth grade reading students.

The AMRP instrument, designed for adolescents, has been used previously in several research projects; thus, it has reliability and validity. Pitcher et al. (2007) designed and piloted the AMRP survey instrument which they created by revising the Motivation to Read Profile, used previously for elementary students (Gambrell et al., 1996). Additionally, Mathews Meth (2008) used the entire instrument for a study on reading comprehension using WebQuests.

In the RCYRBA study, descriptive statistics were used to categorize the participants' gender, grade level, and last quarterly reading grade. The reading self-concept scores were derived from the total score of the odd numbered questions on the AMRP, and the value of reading scores were comprised of the total score of the even numbered questions on that same survey. Using two hierarchical multiple regression tests, the independent variables were identified individually and as a whole in relation to the two dependent variables, reading self-concept and the value of reading which comprises reading motivation.

Because of the number of independent and dependent variables, the five research questions and hypotheses actually equaled ten different relationships that were evaluated in this study as described in the Summary of Findings. Of the ten relationships, eight of them were statistically significant based on the two hierarchical multiple regression tests.

## Summary of Findings

**Research question one.** The first research question inquired into the relationship between the middle school students' reading of the RCYRBA books and their reading motivation, which is subdivided into reading self-concept and their value placed on reading. Thus, the first research question was composed of two studied relationships. These two relationships were both statistically significant findings in that middle school students who read a greater number of RCYRBA books are more motivated to read which supports this study's first hypothesis as indicated by their reading self-concept scores and value of reading scores. While study participants read from 0 to 94 books from the book list, the average number read was 18 books with the majority of the students falling into the range of 2 to 34 books read. The significant coefficient level for the value of reading indicates that reading more RCYRBA books is the greatest positive factor in determining middle school students' value placed on reading and the second most important factor in their reading self-concept.

**Research question two.** The second research question inquired into the relationship between gender, male or female, and the participants' reading motivation which included their reading self-concept and their reading value. The researcher hypothesized that middle school girls, as opposed to middle school boys, would have a greater motivation to read, which was upheld partially in the research findings. This RCYRBA study found that in relation to self-concept, gender is non-significant ( $p = .502$  when  $p < .05$ ), but gender does have a statistically significant coefficient level ( $p = .000$  when  $p < .05$ ) when it is

correlated with the middle school students' value of reading. Upon data analysis, the findings indicate that female students place a greater value on reading than males; yet, in relation to middle school students' perceived reading self-concept, gender was not significant. The researcher assumes that the males who participated in this research responded honestly to the questions regarding their self-concept of reading.

**Research question three.** The third hypothesis was that younger students tend to be more motivated to read than older students; thus, the hypothesis for this study was that sixth graders will have a greater self-concept of reading and value of reading than eighth graders. While the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students in this RCYRBA study did not perceive themselves through their reading self-concept scores to be less motivated, the statistically significant data,  $p = .000$ , supported the conclusion that the sixth graders value reading more than the seventh or eighth grade students. When gender and grade level were studied in the multiple regression, their combined relationship with self-concept as the dependent variable were actually statistically significant ( $p = .032$ ). Although, when gender and grade level were studied for their individual relationships with reading self-concept, neither was statistically significant.

**Research question four.** The fourth research question of this study attempted to determine if middle school students who earn A's for their quarterly reading grades are more motivated to read according to their reading self-concept and value of reading scores. This researcher hypothesized that sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students who earn grades of A in reading/language

arts are more motivated to read and will score higher in the areas of reading self-concept and reading value. This RCYRBA study supports the relationship between higher reading grades and reading motivation. According to the Beta weight of .296, the coefficient datum for the reading grade in relation to the students' self-concept of reading score is statistically significant on its own ( $p = .000$ ), apart from the other independent variables as it makes the greatest impact on middle school readers' self-concept score. Therefore, middle school students perceive themselves to be better readers if they have higher reading academic grades, such as A's.

Also statistically significant ( $p = .000$ ) was the relationship between middle school students' value of reading scores and higher quarterly reading grades. Reading grades, while statistically significant, made the least amount of contribution to the explained variance in the value of reading scores.

**Research question five.** The fifth research question sought to determine if there is a relationship between the combined influence of all of the independent variables such as the number of RCYRBA books read, gender, grade level, and quarterly reading grades with middle school students' reading motivation in the two areas of reading self-concept and their value of reading. The researcher hypothesized that the following set of variables pertaining to middle school students: number of RCYRBA books read, gender, grade level, and quarterly reading grades (independent variables) will significantly predict their reading self-concept scores and their value of reading scores (dependent variables). When reviewing the data for the independent variables as a set, the reading self-



concept scores and the value of reading scores are both statistically significant. Female sixth grade students who get higher quarterly reading grades, such as A's, and read more RCYRBA books have a greater reading self-concept and value of reading. This statement combines the first four research questions regarding the students' self-concept scores and the value of reading scores into one major finding.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study based on a correlational design was to determine if middle school students who read the RCYRBA books each year are more motivated to read. As one of the state children's choice book award programs in the United States, the RCYRBA program has been in existence since 1988, yet very minimal research exists on its use in the educational system and its relationship to reading. In the United States 49 of the states have one or more of these types of award programs.

Illinois, in 2010 – 2011, will have four different children's choice book award programs. The first Illinois program, the RCYRBA program, began in the 1987-1988 school year and annually promotes a list of 20 books written within the last five years for students in grades four through eight to read and vote on their favorite. The other programs are the Monarch for grades kindergarten through third grade, the Abraham Lincoln for grades nine through twelve, and beginning in the 2010-2011 school year, the new Blue Stem Award for grades three through five. With state and federal mandates for accountability on all

schools, such educational and motivational programs used in schools need to be researched and their value validated, thus, the purpose of this research study.

Reading is a complex process and numerous factors affect its success or failure among middle school students including the amount of reading, gender, grade levels, and grades. While this study is not causal, it does show a strong relationship between students who read the RCYRBA books and reading motivation. Specifically, students, who read a greater number of RCYRBA books, are in lower grades, are female, and have higher reading grades, tend to have a statistically significant higher value of reading scores. Thus, if middle school students sense value in an academic area, such as reading, their intrinsic motivation is increased (Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008). Miller (2009) reiterates the value of reading by stating "...so many children don't read. They don't read well enough; they don't read often enough; and if you talk to children, they will tell you that they don't see reading as meaningful in their life" (p. 2).

Middle school teachers and librarians need to understand the factors that relate to middle school students' reading motivation so that they will be better able to encourage students to read. Such factors are indicated in this study, such as the use of book lists like the RCYRBA book list, gender differences, grade levels, and academic reading grades.

First, the results of this study show that middle school students need access to a variety of quality books to read (Atwell, 2007; Preddy, 2007), like those found on the RCYRBA list annually as well as opportunities to read within schools. Teachers and librarians should promote this Illinois state children's book

award program and provide middle school students with these books. This correlational study validates the importance of integrating the RCYRBA program into the Illinois middle schools' curriculum.

The RCYRBA study fits into the studies by Allington (1977, 2002, 2007, 2009), Atwell (2007), and Krashen (2006, 2009) who support the importance of middle school students having a variety of books from which to read. Allington states that "developing readers need an enormous volume of high-success reading experience" (p. 49). Atwell (2007) believes in "frequent and voluminous reading" (p. 12) for middle school students. Gallagher (2009) states that "To become a lifelong reader, one has to do a lot of varied and interesting reading" (p. 45). In order to do that, students need "a variety of reading materials" (Sanacore, 2006, p. 33). The RCYRBA program states that its purpose is "To encourage children and young adults to read for personal satisfaction" (Obert & Barr, 2004, p. 51). In order to achieve this goal, students need many interesting books from which to choose.

Implementing the RCYRBA list in the schools gives students a choice from 20 books. Choice is an important motivator for middle school students.

Greenberg, Gilbert, and Fredrick (2006) in their study found that middle school students have little interest in reading, but if they are given choice their reading motivation increases. The RCYRBA study can conclude a similar finding that there is a relational connection with having a wide variety or choice of books to reading motivation for middle school students because of the strong correlation

between reading more books on the RCYRBA book lists and reading motivation (reading self-concept and the value of reading).

Another conclusion is that female middle school students value reading more than male middle school students. This conclusion fits into the research today, not just nationally, but internationally as well. Kennedy (2008), who studied the results of the PIRLS 2001 and PIRLS 2006 international tests, determined that within 25 of the 26 participating countries, including the United States, girls outperformed boys at both the 4<sup>th</sup> grade level and as 15 year olds. Chiu and McBride-Chang (2006) studied fifteen-year-olds and discovered that in 43 countries girls had a higher value of reading than boys.

Through the literature review, it was revealed that gender is a factor in reading motivation in that female students are more motivated to read, (Cavazos-Kottke, 2006; Chiu & McBride-Chang, 2006; Graham, Tisher, Ainley, & Kennedy, 2008; Greenberg et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2008; Sax, 2007; Wigfield & Guthrie, 1997; Wilhelm & Smith, 2005), especially novels or continuous text, whereas males prefer such materials as graphic novels, nonfiction, and other short forms of writing like newspapers or magazines (Sullivan, 2004). Mitchell et al. (2008) explained that books boys like are not found in today's classrooms. As this current study identifies a relationship between reading the RCYRBA books, selection committee members, teachers, and librarians need to ascertain if they have placed books on the list and in their classrooms that appeal to the interests of boys.

Recently, Whitmire (2010) wrote an entire book citing multiple studies and addressing the issue of boys being left behind in the educational system.

Whitmire stated “The world has become more verbal, and boys haven’t. Boys lack the literacy skills to compete in the Information Age” (p. 5). Male middle school students need to experience the value of reading in this global society as reading is an important skill they will use for their lifetime. Therefore, this RCYRBA study points out the importance of teachers helping male students find value in their reading.

Sixth graders value reading more than the seventh and eighth graders. This study indicates that gender and grade level when related to students’ self-concept scores are statistically significant, as well as individually, grade level has the second most important influence on students’ reading value based on the coefficient. Theoretically, Ryan and Deci (2000) determined that as students progress through the grade levels in school their intrinsic motivation decreases. Intrinsic motivation is related to students’ reading (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Marinak & Gambrell, 2008).

The current RCYRBA study was conducted in three rural middle schools, but Unrau and Schlackman (2006) conducted a study in an urban middle school. They found that middle school students’ intrinsic and extrinsic reading motivation declined from sixth to seventh grades and from seventh to eighth grades.

In contradiction to these findings, using the Motivation for Reading Questionnaire and the Indiana state performance test, Mucherah and Yoder (2008) found that among 388 sixth through eighth grade Indiana students, eighth

graders were more intrinsically and extrinsically motivated. One difference is that Mucherah and Yoder tested academics and not just reading in relation to motivation. This RCYRBA study agrees with that of Unrau and Schlackman (2006) even though the studies were conducted in different settings, yet it contradicts the research of Mucherah and Yoder (2008).

Students who participate in the RCYRBA program can experience choice which may lead to further choices if books on the list encourage them to read other similar books or books by the same authors. Important in reading motivation, which is comprised of self-concept and reading value, is the idea of real learning experiences, autonomy, and choice (Lepper et al., 2005). Therefore, to help eighth graders experience self-concept and reading value through the RCYRBA book award program, they need to nominate choices for the final list through their teachers and/or school librarians. Illinois middle school students' participation in the RCYRBA nomination process is a real world experience and enables the students to experience that sense of autonomy and choice.

Higher reading grades are correlated with middle school students' value of reading. A positive correlation exists for middle school students in that as they read more RCYRBA books and they earn higher reading grades their reading self-concept increases, yet if they fail to read these books and their reading grade decreases, their reading self-concept diminishes.

This finding agrees with several researchers, although there are some researchers who disagree with these findings. In 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) determined that there is not enough clear evidence that reading

volume improves reading achievement. Allington (1977; 2002; 2007; 2009) and Krashen (1993; 2002; 2006; 2009) both believe that as students read more their academic achievement increases. Most of these studies are correlational which does not indicate causal relationships, but the connection between high volume reading of interesting material and improved academic achievement are of significance and should continue to be studied. Thus, based on the RCYRBA study, students should be encouraged to read a large amount of material.

The two hypotheses that were non-significant in this research study dealt with middle school students' self-concept in relation to their gender and their grade level. Sixth, seventh, and eighth grade males and females who participated in this study have a higher self-concept based on the AMRP scores. The gender descriptive statistics in this study support that conclusion, because a nearly equal number of boys and girls participated in the study. Concerning participation among the three grade levels, seventh grade had the greatest participation, sixth grade the second, and eighth grade had the least participation. Because of the research through the literature review, the researcher did not expect the findings associating grade level and gender to reading self-concept to be non-significant.

Self-concept is one element of reading motivation. Middle school students are extremely concerned with how their peers view them. Schunk et al. (2006) found that as middle school students succeeded in an assignment, their self-concept and motivation improved. Students view themselves through their achievements, such as academic and performance successes. The sixth,

seventh, and eighth grade students and the males in this study may have ranked themselves higher when answering the self-concept questions because they perceive themselves greatly and want others to view them that way as well, even though the survey was completely anonymous.

Possibly the students who participated in this study were the ones who perform better academically, which does produce a higher self-concept in them; thus these self-concept scores were higher. Because the participants needed the parental permission forms signed in order to take part in the survey, perhaps students who have lower self-concepts about their reading and/or academics in general may not have taken the forms home nor told their parents about the survey. Additionally, the parental attitudes toward academic experiences may also have affected whether or not the parents granted permission for their child to participate.

### **Limitations**

The schools which participated in this study were 90% or more Caucasian with limited diversity. Their low-income rates were 20% to 25% which is low in comparison with other school districts. These three schools also have full-time certified librarians. Conducting this same study in districts with more diversity and higher low-income rates, that have non-certified employees as librarians may provide different results.

When evaluating this entire research project, the researcher made some observations and identified some possible limitations. The schools which agreed



to participate in the study asked that their language arts teachers at each grade level give the survey to their students. Two schools did that and one school had the librarian administer the survey. This researcher supplied the teachers with a list of directions (Appendix G) to follow in conducting the survey and trusted that the survey was properly administered.

In the completion of the surveys, the researcher was dependent upon the responses of the middle school students who took part. They had to mark the books they had read and respond honestly to the survey questions. Even though the survey was anonymous, some students may want to impress the researcher and give answers that are not truly honest.

Finally, the researcher was dependent on the schools to have a sufficient number of the RCYRBA books available to the students. With 677 possible study participants, the three schools may only have one or two copies of the 99 books on the list. Therefore, students may not have read books they desired to because of the lack of availability.

### **Implications for Practice**

Because this study indicates the positive relationship between the RCYRBA program and reading motivation among middle school students, Illinois teachers and school librarians should promote the reading of these books among middle school students in particular. To help motivate student readers, librarians, teachers, and parents should model the reading of these books or even read the books with them (Layne, 2009). Conducting book chats or book talks with

reading hooks, so that students become interested in the titles, is another way to promote these books (Atwell, 2007).

If students become highly motivated to read these books, teachers and librarians need to have multiple copies of these books so that students can read the same title as a friend reads and not have to wait too long before checking out the book and reading it. Within the classroom, teachers can even provide time within the day's curriculum so that students can read and talk about the books they are reading (Allington, 2009; Atwell, 2007; Krashen, 2006, 2009).

Since boys tend to be less interested in books that have continuous text and see less value to reading according to this study, teachers and librarians can hook them with interesting books from the list such as *The Lightning Thief* by Riordan which is the first of a series and which boys tend to enjoy based on recent book reviews. Student readers, especially males, should consider recommending books for the next year's RCYRBA list that other boys will enjoy as well, such as graphic novels and nonfiction books. This is a real world experience in which both boys and girls can participate to promote reading motivation (Crawford, 2004; Eccles, 2005; Schunk et al., 2008).

Each year to create the RCYRBA book list, 20 titles from at least 100 nominated titles are chosen by a committee of teachers and librarians. During the RCYRBA selection process, those teachers and librarians involved should reflect on the books chosen so that the interests of both boys and girls are met. Girls will read books more interesting to boys, but boys generally will not read books that are considered to be primarily "girl" books. Because this current study indicates

that girls value reading more than boys, the list of RCYRBA books each year needs to include titles that will appeal to boys' interests to encourage them to read and participate in the children's choice state book award program.

### **Implications for Research**

This research study on the RCYRBA program contributes to the existing research in regard to reading motivation but in a new topic concerning the use of the state children's choice book award program. As the researcher located only three dissertations about other children's choice state book award programs, this current study is the first dissertation which researches an aspect of reading in relation to the RCYRBA program (McCormack, 2005; Seagrave, 2004).

Because thousands of students across the United States participate in children's choice state book award programs annually, researchers in other states may want to replicate this study to determine if similar results are obtained and if their reading lists provide books which are motivational for the various grade levels. While this current study was only done in three rural middle schools with little diversity and low poverty rates, the study could be repeated using urban middle school students. Future studies similar to this current study should also be conducted in schools with more diversity and/or higher poverty levels in both Illinois and also in any of the other 48 states with children's choice book award programs to determine if the results are similar.

As indicated in the literature review, there are multiple lists of award winning and children's choice books which can be used to encourage or motivate

student readers. Future researchers should study the impact of these other book lists on students' reading motivation at other grade levels. Silvey (2008) reports that students are not reading the Newbery books; therefore, such a study as the RCYRBA could determine if there is a relationship between the Newbery titles and students' reading motivation. Ujiie and Krashen (2006) conducted a brief sampling study by obtaining a publisher's list of best-selling children's books, collecting inventory and circulation data from 127 California libraries, and selecting eight Newbery and eight Caldecott recent award-winning books. When checking the three lists, none of them overlapped. The RCYRBA study could be conducted in relation to various book lists to determine if books selected are truly of interest or reading value to middle school students. Students need a variety and choice of books which are interesting to them.

Teachers and librarians need to learn what is of interest to their students so that they can meet their students' reading needs (Williams, Hedrick, & Tuschinski, 2008). Thus, teachers should conduct interest surveys, talk with the students, and listen to the students to determine some of their interests. Allowing students to recommend books for the library collection gives students a sense of ownership and engagement.

As an extension to this current study, researchers should move from a correlational study to a causal study dealing with other areas of reading literacy rather than just motivation. Such a study could use a control group or school which does not promote the reading of the RCYRBA books and another group or school which does promote the program. If the two groups or schools are similar

in composition in the areas of ability and diversity, then reading motivation and/or other literacy areas can be tested.

Finally, one dissertation that was written using the Texas Bluebonnet Book Award program studied the diversity represented in the genres of the books which had been on the list for the past several years. Based on the desire to meet diversity needs such as gender, race, and varied grade levels, researchers may want to study the RCYRBA lists for the past five years to determine if those various interest needs are being met through the books on the RCYRBA lists.

### **Recommendations**

Schools, especially those in which middle school students are struggling with reading problems or motivational problems should consider becoming part of the RCYRBA program. The cost is minimal and even individual teachers within a building can sign up for the program, record the students' books read, and allow the students to vote. Only one registration is needed per school and multiple teachers can participate with their classes. Teachers can provide parents with a wish list of classroom books from the RCYRBA list that the parents can purchase for the classroom. Since many teachers currently use their own money to purchase classroom items, they may search out used or discounted book stores and websites from which to purchase the RCYRBA books each year.

Also, schools that currently participate in the RCYRBA program should increase their promotion of the books and voting opportunities for all middle school students. For the 2010 reading list, one school promoted the RCYRBA

program encouraging students to read all 20 of the books. In the school, 36 students and several teachers read all 20 books. The librarian took them to hear one of the authors whose book was on the 2010 list and bought them the author's newest book, which is on the 2011 RCYRBA list (Brandt, personal communication, March 29, 2010). This type of activity aligns with research stating that rewards should be related to reading (Marinak & Gambrell, 2008) and boys will participate in reading initiatives that involve competition (Gustafson, 2008). Therefore, teachers and librarians can create simple reading initiatives using the RCYRBA book list and including reading related rewards as well as competition.

To engage middle school students in the RCYRBA program, teachers and librarians can encourage students to recommend titles for the future RCYRBA lists. The information for this is located on the RCYRBA program website ([www.rcyrba.org](http://www.rcyrba.org)). Involving students in real life reading experiences provides them with a sense of ownership (Atwell, 2007; Kasten & Wilfong, 2007; Williams et al., 2008).

Even if schools do not become part of the actual program, teachers and librarians need to purchase multiple copies of these titles and other such titles of interest to middle school readers, both boys and girls, so as to encourage "voluminous reading" as stated by Atwell (2007). When schools participate in such programs, the schools should involve parents as a support system for the students.

Teachers and librarians should conduct their own reading motivational studies within their classrooms by using the AMRP, which is free to members of

the International Reading Association. Pitcher et al. (2007) even suggested in their own study that teachers use this survey at the beginning of the year, after a particular reading intervention or unit, and at the end of the year to determine if there are differences in adolescents' attitudes toward reading. Individual classroom teachers can give the students the AMRP survey at the beginning of the school year, promote the RCYRBA books from August/September through February, conduct the RCYRBA voting, and then give the students the AMRP survey to determine motivational changes that occurred during the RCYRBA initiative. Currently, data regarding reading programs and student motivation as well as accomplishments are very important in educational settings. Teachers and librarians need to collect data that support the instructional programs they are using to show they are making a difference among their students.

Middle school teachers and parents of students at that age need to be aware that these students, especially males, tend to lose motivation to read as they get older. Teachers and librarians should provide reading role models for the students. Male students need to see males reading; teachers and parents can participate by being challenged to read all of the RCYRBA books on the list each year. If teachers, parents, and librarians work together to design motivating programs, it is possible that these students will not become part of the negative statistics.

## Concluding Remarks

Reading is a complex process; middle school students are complex individuals; and motivational theories are complex. Researchers have been studying middle school students' reading motivation or lack of it in more recent years, especially through correlational studies. What difference will it make?

When reading and hearing about the current national and international reading trends among middle school students indicating that students do not want to read, do not value reading, and score poorly on reading tests, teachers can easily become discouraged. They may question how to overcome such a lack of motivation, poor reading self-concepts, and the devaluation of reading among middle school students. So what will educators do to overcome these downward trends regarding reading motivation among middle school students?

According to this study there is a statistically significant relationship at the score of  $p < .05$  between middle school students' reading motivation (reading self-concept and value of reading) and the reading of RCYRBA books, gender, grade level, and reading/language arts grades. Sixth grade females who have reading grades of A's and who read more books from the RCYRBA book lists have a better reading self-concept and value reading more. So what? What will happen to the seventh and eighth grade females who have reading grades of B or below and who do not read books? How will this study affect sixth, seventh, and eighth grade males who have reading grades of B or lower and who do not read RCYRBA books, or any books?



While this study had strong results showing statistical significance at  $p < .05$  in eight of ten relationships, the researcher questions, so what? What will this study mean for teachers, researchers, and librarians? Will it make a difference in educators' teaching and motivating of middle school students to read?

This researcher has a passion for reading and ideally desires to share that passion with all educators and middle school students. Students need access to quality literature and one current tool available is the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) program as well as all of the other children's choice state book award programs in 49 of the 50 states. Educators need to read these books and talk with students about them, thus giving credence to their importance as well as emphasizing the value of reading.

Male and female middle school students need a variety of books to meet their differing interests, as well as opportunities, such as motivational reading programs in schools, to experience the joy of reading. The trend that as students get older and move through the grade levels they read less needs to be addressed and halted. Integrating into the current curriculum such books of variety and choice from the multiple children's choice state book award programs for students should be accomplished to motivate older students to read.

Future research needs to study the causal benefits of the children's choice book award programs such as the RCYRBA program in Illinois. Do reading these books and participating in these programs have an effect on students' academic grades? Moving from an historical study of the William Allen White Children's Book Award (Herrin, 1979), to a genre study of the Texas Bluebonnet Award

(Miller, 2003) to a 15 state comparative study (Johnson, 2003), to a literature review (Seagrave, 2004) and finally to this current correlational reading motivation study of the RCYRBA program (Forgrave, 2010) leads naturally to a causal reading study of one of the children's choice state book award program. A causal reading study should be the next step in this educational progression of studies regarding the state children's choice reading programs.

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## Appendix A

### Adolescent Motivation to Reading Profile Reading Survey

## Appendix A

Assessing adolescents' motivation to read

**Figure 1**  
**Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Sample 1: I am in \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ Sixth grade  
☐ Seventh grade  
☐ Eighth grade  
☐ Ninth grade  
☐ Tenth grade  
☐ Eleventh grade  
☐ Twelfth grade

Sample 2: I am a \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ Female  
☐ Male

Sample 3: My race/ethnicity is \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ African-American  
☐ Asian/Asian American  
☐ Caucasian  
☐ Hispanic  
☐ Native American  
☐ Multi-racial/Multi-ethnic  
☐ Other: Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

1. My friends think I am \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ a very good reader  
☐ a good reader  
☐ an OK reader  
☐ a poor reader

2. Reading a book is something I like to do.

☐ Never  
☐ Not very often  
☐ Sometimes  
☐ Often

3. I read \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ not as well as my friends  
☐ about the same as my friends  
☐ a little better than my friends  
☐ a lot better than my friends

4. My best friends think reading is \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ really fun  
☐ fun  
☐ OK to do  
☐ no fun at all

5. When I come to a word I don't know, I can \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ almost always figure it out  
☐ sometimes figure it out  
☐ almost never figure it out  
☐ never figure it out

6. I tell my friends about good books I read.

☐ I never do this  
☐ I almost never do this  
☐ I do this some of the time  
☐ I do this a lot

7. When I am reading by myself, I understand \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ almost everything I read  
☐ some of what I read  
☐ almost none of what I read  
☐ none of what I read

8. People who read a lot are \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ very interesting  
☐ interesting  
☐ not very interesting  
☐ boring

9. I am \_\_\_\_\_.

☐ a poor reader  
☐ an OK reader  
☐ a good reader  
☐ a very good reader

(continued)

**Figure 1 (continued)**  
**Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile reading survey**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>10. I think libraries are _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> a great place to spend time<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> an interesting place to spend time<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> an OK place to spend time<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> a boring place to spend time</p>                                         | <p>16. As an adult, I will spend _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> none of my time reading<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> very little time reading<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> some of my time reading<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> a lot of my time reading</p>                                                           |
| <p>11. I worry about what other kids think about my reading _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> every day<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> almost every day<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> once in a while<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> never</p>                                                                               | <p>17. When I am in a group talking about what we are reading, I _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> almost never talk about my ideas<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes talk about my ideas<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> almost always talk about my ideas<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> always talk about my ideas</p> |
| <p>12. Knowing how to read well is _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> not very important<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> sort of important<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> important<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> very important</p>                                                                                           | <p>18. I would like for my teachers to read out loud in my classes _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> every day<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> almost every day<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> once in a while<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> never</p>                                                                          |
| <p>13. When my teacher asks me a question about what I have read, I _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> can never think of an answer<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> have trouble thinking of an answer<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes think of an answer<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> always think of an answer</p> | <p>19. When I read out loud I am a _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> poor reader<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> OK reader<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> good reader<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> very good reader</p>                                                                                                        |
| <p>14. I think reading is _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> a boring way to spend time<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> an OK way to spend time<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> an interesting way to spend time<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> a great way to spend time</p>                                                    | <p>20. When someone gives me a book for a present, I feel _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> very happy<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> sort of happy<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> sort of unhappy<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> unhappy</p>                                                                                   |
| <p>15. Reading is _____.<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> very easy for me<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> kind of easy for me<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> kind of hard for me<br/> <input type="checkbox"/> very hard for me</p>                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

*Note.* Adapted with permission from the Motivation to Read Profile (Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, & Mazzoni, 1996)

## Appendix B

### RCYRBA Book List

## Appendix B

### 2010 RCYRBA Nominees

| Mark X if<br>you've<br>read the<br>book | TITLE & AUTHOR                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                         | <i>Naked Mole-Rat Letters</i><br>By Mary Amato                                             |
|                                         | <i>Home of the Brave</i><br>By Katherine Applegate                                         |
|                                         | <i>Shark Girl</i><br>By Kelly L. Bingham                                                   |
|                                         | <i>Shooting the Moon</i><br>By Frances O'Roark Dowell                                      |
|                                         | <i>Freedom Walkers: The Story of the<br/>Montgomery Bus Boycott</i><br>By Russell Freedman |
|                                         | <i>Dragon Slippers</i><br>By Jessica Day George                                            |
|                                         | <i>The Thing about Georgie</i><br>By Lisa Graff                                            |
|                                         | <b><i>All the Lovely Bad Ones</i></b><br><b>By Mary Downing Hahn</b>                       |
|                                         | <i>Crossing the Wire</i><br>By Will Hobbs                                                  |
|                                         | <i>Kimchi &amp; Calamari</i><br>By Rose Kent                                               |
|                                         | <i>Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of<br/>Life</i><br>By Wendy Mass                            |
|                                         | <i>Mozart Question</i><br>By Michael Morpurgo                                              |
|                                         | <i>A Small White Scar</i><br>By K. A. Nuzum                                                |
|                                         | <i>The Wednesday Wars</i><br>By Gary D. Schmidt                                            |
|                                         | <i>Elephant Run</i><br>By Roland Smith                                                     |
|                                         | <i>The White Giraffe</i><br>By Lauren St. John                                             |
|                                         | <i>First Light</i><br>By Rebecca Stead                                                     |
|                                         | <i>Emma-Jean Lazarus Fell Out of a<br/>Tree</i><br>By Lauren Tarshis                       |
|                                         | <i>A Crooked Kind of Perfect</i><br>By Linda Urban                                         |
|                                         | <i>Someone Named Eva</i><br>By Joan M. Wolf                                                |

## Most Recent Quarterly Reading/Literature Letter Grade

---

## 2009 RCYRBA Nominees

Winners are bolded.

| Mark X if<br>you've<br>read the<br>book | TITLE & AUTHOR                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                         | <i>Alabama Moon</i><br>By Watt Key                                                           |
|                                         | <i>Black Duck</i><br>By Janet Taylor Lisle                                                   |
|                                         | <i>Black Storm Comin'</i><br>By Diane Lee Wilson                                             |
|                                         | <i>Blood on the River: James Town 1607</i><br>By Elisa Lynn Carbone                          |
|                                         | <i>Cornelia and the Audacious Escapades of the Somerset Sisters</i><br>By Lesley M. M. Blume |
|                                         | <i>A Drowned Maiden's Hair: A Melodrama</i><br>By Laura Amy Schlitz                          |
|                                         | <i>Gossamer</i><br>By Lois Lowry                                                             |
|                                         | <i>The Green Glass Sea</i><br>By Ellen Klages                                                |
|                                         | <i>Hattie Big Sky</i><br>By Kirby Larson                                                     |
|                                         | <i>Heat</i><br>By Mike Lupica                                                                |
|                                         | <i>The Invention of Hugo Cabret</i><br>By Brian Selznick                                     |
|                                         | <i>Letters from Wolfie</i><br>By Patti Sherlock                                              |
|                                         | <i>Life as We Knew It</i><br>By Susan Beth Pfeffer                                           |
|                                         | <b><i>The Lightning Thief</i></b><br><b>By Rick Riordan</b>                                  |
|                                         | <i>Oh, Rats! The Story of Rats and People</i> By Albert Marrin                               |
|                                         | <i>Penny from Heaven</i><br>By Jennifer L. Holm                                              |
|                                         | <i>Project Mulberry</i><br>by Linda Sue Park                                                 |
|                                         | <i>Rules</i><br>by Cynthia Lord                                                              |
|                                         | <i>shug</i><br>By Jenny Han                                                                  |
|                                         | <i>Wolf Brother</i><br>by Michelle Paver                                                     |

|                                         | 2008<br>RCYRBA<br>NOMINEES                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mark X if<br>you've<br>read the<br>book | TITLE & AUTHOR                                                                                                       |
|                                         | <i>Adam Canfield of the Slash</i><br>by Michael Winerip                                                              |
|                                         | <i>Chicken Boy</i><br>by Frances O'Roark Dowell                                                                      |
|                                         | <i>Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two</i><br>by Joseph Bruchac                           |
|                                         | <i>Crooked River</i><br>by Shelley Pearsall                                                                          |
|                                         | <i>Defiance</i><br>by Valerie Hobbs                                                                                  |
|                                         | <b><i>Drums, Girls, &amp; Dangerous Pie</i></b><br><b>by Jordan Sonnenblick</b>                                      |
|                                         | <i>East</i> by Edith Pattou                                                                                          |
|                                         | <i>Listening for Lions</i><br>by Gloria Whelan                                                                       |
|                                         | <i>The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane</i><br>by Kate DiCamillo                                                  |
|                                         | <i>The Misadventures of Maude March, or, Trouble Rides a Fast Horse</i> by Audrey Couloubis                          |
|                                         | <i>MVP*: *Magellan Voyage Project</i><br>by Douglas Evans                                                            |
|                                         | <i>The Old Willis Place: A Ghost Story</i> by Mary Downing Hahn                                                      |
|                                         | <i>The Penderwicks: A Summer Tale of Four Sisters, Two Rabbits, and a Very Interesting Boy</i><br>by Jeanne Birdsall |
|                                         | <i>Princess Academy</i><br>by Shannon Hale                                                                           |
|                                         | <i>The Ruins of Gorlan</i><br>by John Flanagan                                                                       |
|                                         | <i>Shakespeare's Secret</i><br>by Elise Broach                                                                       |
|                                         | <i>The Schwa Was Here</i><br>by Neal Shusterman                                                                      |
|                                         | <i>Thunder from the Sea</i><br>by Joan Hiatt Harlow                                                                  |
|                                         | <i>Worth</i> by A. LaFaye                                                                                            |
|                                         | <i>Yankee Girl</i><br>by Mary Ann Rodman                                                                             |

## 2007 RCYRBA Nominees

| Mark X<br>if you've<br>read the<br>book | TITLE & AUTHOR                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                         | <i>Airborn</i><br>by Kenneth Oppel                                                                                          |
|                                         | <i>Becoming Naomi Leon</i><br>by Pam Munoz Ryan                                                                             |
|                                         | <i>Chasing Vermeer</i><br>by Blue Balliett                                                                                  |
|                                         | <i>Each Little Bird That Sings</i><br>by Deborah Wiles                                                                      |
|                                         | <i>Gregor the Overlander</i><br>by Suzanne Collins                                                                          |
|                                         | <i>Hachiko Waits</i><br>by Leslea Newman                                                                                    |
|                                         | <i>Hana's Suitcase: A True Story</i><br>by Karen Levine                                                                     |
|                                         | <i>Heartbeat</i><br>by Sharon Creech                                                                                        |
|                                         | <i>Ida B: And Her Plans to<br/>Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster,<br/>and (Possibly) Save the World</i><br>by Katherine Hannigan |
|                                         | <i>Last Shot</i><br>by John Feinstein                                                                                       |
|                                         | <i>Locomotion</i><br>by Jacqueline Woodson                                                                                  |
|                                         | <i>Once Upon a Marigold</i><br>by Jean Ferris                                                                               |
|                                         | <i>Peter and the Starcatchers</i><br>by Dave Barry and Ridley<br>Pearson                                                    |
|                                         | <i>Red Kayak</i><br>by Priscilla Cummings                                                                                   |
|                                         | <i>The Sea of Trolls</i><br>by Nancy Farmer                                                                                 |
|                                         | <i>Secrets of a Civil War<br/>Submarine: Solving the<br/>Mysteries of the H.L. Hunley</i><br>by Sally M. Walker             |
|                                         | <i>Shackleton's Stowaway</i><br>by Victoria McKernan                                                                        |
|                                         | <b>So B. It</b><br><b>by Sarah Weeks</b>                                                                                    |
|                                         | <i>Star of Kazan</i><br>by Eva Ibbotson                                                                                     |
|                                         | <i>Thin Wood Walls</i><br>by David Patneaude                                                                                |

## RCYRBA WINNERS

| Mark X<br>if you've<br>read the<br>book | TITLE & AUTHOR                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                         | 2006 - <i>Eragon</i><br>by Christopher Paolini                             |
|                                         | 2005 - <i>Hoot</i><br>by Carl Hiaasen                                      |
|                                         | 2004 - <i>Stormbreaker</i><br>by Anthony Horowitz                          |
|                                         | 2003 - <i>Fever 1793</i><br>by Laurie Halse Anderson                       |
|                                         | 2002 - <i>Holes</i><br>by Louis Sachar                                     |
|                                         | 2001 - <i>Harry Potter and the<br/>Sorcerer's Stone</i><br>by J.K. Rowling |
|                                         | 2000 - <i>Ella Enchanted</i><br>by Gail Carson Levine                      |
|                                         | 1999 - <i>Frindle</i><br>by Andrew Clements                                |
|                                         | 1998 - <i>Mick Harte Was Here</i><br>by Barbara Park                       |
|                                         | 1997 - <i>The Best School Year<br/>Ever</i><br>by Barbara Robinson         |
|                                         | 1996 - <i>The Giver</i><br>by Lois Lowry                                   |
|                                         | 1995 - <i>Flight #116 is Down</i><br>by Caroline Cooney                    |
|                                         | 1994 - <i>Shiloh</i><br>by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor                         |
|                                         | 1993 - <i>Maniac Magee</i><br>by Jerry Spinelli                            |
|                                         | 1992 - <i>Number the Stars</i><br>by Lois Lowry                            |
|                                         | 1991 - <i>Matilda</i><br>by Roald Dahl                                     |
|                                         | 1990 - <i>Wait Till Helen Comes</i> by<br>Mary Downing Hahn                |
|                                         | 1989 - <i>The Dollhouse Murders</i><br>by Betty Ren Wright                 |
|                                         | 1988 - <i>Indian in the Cupboard</i> by<br>Lynne Reid Banks                |

## Appendix C

### Site One School Permission Letter



## Appendix C

## Site One School Permission Letter



**Dwight Township High School District #230**  
 (815)-584-6200  
 Irvin Masching – President, High School Board  
 Bob Richardson – High School Principal  
 (815)-584-6201  
 Fax (815) 584-2911

**DWIGHT PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

815-584-6219  
 Dwight, Illinois 60420  
 Dale Adams  
 Superintendent  
 (815) 584-6216  
 Fax (815) 584-2950

Deb Conroy - Secretary  
 (815) 584-6217



**Dwight Common School District #232**  
 (815)-584-6220  
 Deb Christoff – President, Elementary Board  
 Patricia Marshall – Elementary Principal  
 (815)-584-6222  
 Mark Pagel – Junior High Principal  
 (815)-584-6221  
 Fax (815) 584-3771

March 31, 2009

RE Roxanne Forgrave  
 Dissertation Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is the official consent for Roxanne Forgrave to conduct a survey in grades 6-8 at Dwight Common School District #232. The dissertation study is to consider the "Effect of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools."

Ms. Forgrave was a 25+ year employee of Dwight Commons School District #232. She taught Middle School Language Arts and was the District's Librarian during her tenure. She is very familiar with the staff and students in our District. As District Superintendent I am very comfortable with the quality of Ms. Forgrave's work and am very happy to assist in any way in her dissertation project.

Sincerely,

Dale Adams  
 Superintendent

"May the welfare of boys and girls be our chief concern."

## Appendix D

### Site Two School Permission Letter

## Appendix D

### Site Two School Permission Letter

#### HERSCHER COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 2

William Davison, Superintendent  
Jennifer Edmonds, Curriculum Director  
Herscher CUSD #2  
501 N Main St  
Herscher IL 60941

Phone: (815) 426-2162  
Fax: (815) 426-2957

Michelle Chavers, Principal  
Andrea Lemenager, Asst. Principal  
Herscher Grade School  
391 N Main  
Herscher IL 60941

Phone: (815) 426-2242  
Fax: (815) 426-6862

Leonard Sokoloff, Principal  
Mark Taylor, Asst. Principal  
Limestone Grade School  
963 N 5000 W Rd  
Kankakee IL 60901

Phone: (815) 933-2243  
Fax: (815) 936-4123

Dennis Pankey, Principal  
Bonfield Grade School  
522 E Smith St PO Box 69  
Bonfield IL 60913

Phone: (815) 933-6995  
Fax: (815) 933-4125

Dennis Pankey, Principal  
Reddick Grade School  
210 E Main St PO Box 67  
Reddick IL 60961

Phone: (815) 365-2375  
Fax: (815) 365-2377

April 21, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

The administration of Herscher Grade School in the Herscher Community Unit School District 2 is pleased to provide consent for an educational survey of students enrolled in grades 6-8. The data collected will contribute to the dissertation study of Roxanne Forgrave titled, "Effect of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools".

Ms. Forgrave is a resident of our school district and the parent two successful young adults who are Herscher CUSD2 graduates. She is an actively involved and highly respected professional in both library and education circles in the area. We are pleased to partner with her in the pursuit of higher education and we look forward to the discovery and potential applications of this study.

Sincerely,

*Michelle Chavers*

Michelle Chavers, Principal

## Appendix E

### Site Three School Permission Letter

## Appendix E

## Site Three School Permission Letter

**Limestone Grade School**

Leonard Sokoloff, Principal  
Mark Taylor, Assistant Principal  
963 N 5000 W Rd  
Kankakee IL 60901  
(815) 933-2243  
Fax: (815) 936-4123

April 21, 2009

RE: Roxanne Forgrave  
Dissertation Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is the official consent for Roxanne Forgrave to conduct a survey in grades 6-8 at Limestone Grade School. The dissertation study is to consider the "Effect of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools".

Sincerely,



Leonard Sokoloff, Principal

## Appendix F

### Parental Permission Letter for Survey Participation

## APPENDIX F

## Parental Permission Letter for Survey Participation

Dear Parents:

Your child is cordially invited to participate in a research study entitled: Relationship of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools: A Quantitative Study.

The purpose of this research study is to determine if 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who read the books on the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award (RCYRBA) list are more motivated to read. Your child will be asked to complete a checklist, marking the RCYRBA books that they have read and answer a 20 question multiple choice reading motivation survey.

Your child's participation will take approximately 20 minutes. Participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or your child may stop completing the survey at any time during the research.

The information/data your child provides for this research will be confidential. Surveys will be coded according to gender and grade level. Your student's teacher will write the most recent quarterly literature/reading grade on the survey form while students complete the survey. No other grades will be viewed by the researcher. The grade will be listed as an A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D, D-, or F.

Thus, students will not write their names on the surveys. The records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking your child to the study will be included in any report that might be published. Research records/surveys will be stored securely in a locked file box, and only Roxanne Forgrave, the researcher, will have access to the records. After the researcher's successful dissertation final defense, by August 2010, the researcher will shred and completely dispose of all surveys. Results of the research will be reported as total summary data only. No individually identifiable information will be collected.

You also have the right to review the results of the final research study if you wish to do so. You can request a copy of the results by contacting the researcher at the address below:

Roxanne Forgrave  
2208 West Garden Drive  
Kankakee, IL 60901

The possible benefits of participation for your child include a greater awareness of the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award program which will possibly encourage them to read more of the books on the lists. Research says that the more students read the better readers they become, which eventually could lead to improved grades. Also, all students who return the signed form promptly and participate in the survey will select a new book for themselves from many choices provided by the researcher, including many of the books from the RCYRBA lists. There are no risks to your child's participation. If your child does not participate in the study, it will not affect his or her relations with the teacher, principal, or school district. The survey will be read to the students to allow equal participation by all students and not let reading ability affect participation.

Some Sample Questions are listed below:

Mark your grade level: – 6<sup>th</sup> grade; 7<sup>th</sup> grade; or 8<sup>th</sup> grade

Mark your gender: – male or female

20 questions about reading motivation such as:

1. Reading a book is something I like to do.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Often  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. Sometimes  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. Not very often  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. Never

2. I tell my friends about good books I read.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Often  
 \_\_\_\_\_ b. Sometimes  
 \_\_\_\_\_ c. Not very often  
 \_\_\_\_\_ d. Never

I have read and understand the above information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities of the participant. My signature below designates my consent for my minor child to participate in this research study, according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

If giving permission for your minor child to participate in the research study, please print the child's name here:

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Child (Circle):

Male Parent

Female Parent

Male Grandparent

Female Grandparent

Other Male Relative (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Other Female Relative

(Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Guardian (appointed by) \_\_\_\_\_

If you choose to NOT allow your child to participate, mark the line below, fill in your child's name, sign your name, and return the form to your child's teacher.

\_\_\_\_\_ I prefer that my child, \_\_\_\_\_, NOT participate in

Print Child's Name

the Rebecca Caudill Reading Motivation Survey.

Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix G

### Teacher Instructions for Administering the Survey

## Appendix G

### Teacher Instructions for Administering the Survey

1. Students should mark every book they have read at any time (not just this year) from the books on this list. There are 99 books total. (They do not have to total them on the front page bottom right corner – I can do that.)
2. Please put their 4<sup>th</sup> quarter reading/literature (language arts) grade from last year in the blank on the first page of the Rebecca Caudill Book List.
3. 20 – Question survey
  - a. The actual instructions from the writers of the survey ask that you read each question and possible answers to each question to be sure all students have equal opportunity to respond.
4. ALL questions must be answered for the survey to be valid. Please ask students to be sure that they have answered all the questions.
5. All students who complete a survey can select a FREE book from the boxes of books provided. I know that there are Caudill books within these boxes. I'll attach a list of books/titles – plus there may be a few more than on the list.
6. Please read the following statement before giving the survey:

#### Oral Instructions to Student Participants Involved in Survey Research (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> grade students)

The purpose of this research study is to determine if the books on the Rebecca Caudill Young Readers' Book Award list motivate 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students such as you to read. By completing and turning in this survey, you are giving your permission for the researcher to include your responses in her data analysis. Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will not receive a grade for completing this survey, and it will not affect your grade in your language arts/literature class. Individual responses will be completely anonymous. No one will be able to identify you by the information you put on this survey. The data will be analyzed as a group and not by your individual answers. If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by writing to the researcher or principal investigator at:

Roxanne Forgrave  
2208 West Garden Drive  
Kankakee, Illinois 60901

Your teacher will have the researcher's name and address if you would like the information.

## Appendix H

### Internal Review Board Permission

## Appendix H

## Internal Review Board Permission

Page 2 of 27

Effect of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools: A Quantitative Study – By Roxanne Forgrave

## Appendix H

**Application for IRB Review and Certification of Compliance:  
Full Cover Letter**

*Full IRB Review (Level 3) Application, High Risk  
(Full Board Review)*

IRB# 119

Date Logged: 4/29/09

Principal Investigator/Researcher's Name: Roxanne M. Forgrave Student ID Number:  
@00080191

Type of Research Project (CRP, Dissertation, describe other) Dissertation

Title of Research Project: Effect of Rebecca Caudill Young Readers Award Books on Students' Reading Motivation in Three Illinois Rural Middle Schools: A Quantitative Study

Principal Investigator/Researcher's Address: 2208 West Garden Drive, Kankakee, IL 60901

Telephone Number: 815-932-3739

Research Supervisor/CRP/Dissertation Committee Chair's Name: Dr. Narjis Hyder

College: BUS ☐ PBS ☐ EDUC ☒  
HS ☐ OTHER ☐

Program of Study: Instructional Leadership

Degree: EdD

Project Proposed Start Date: 05/20/09 Project Proposed Completion Date: 12/30/09

Signature of Principal Investigator/Researcher: Roxanne M. Forgrave 3-2009  
Date

Signature of Research Supervisor/CRP/Dissertation Committee Chair:

IRB Certification Signatures: [Signature] 6-25-09  
Date

*The above named research project is certified for compliance with Argosy University's requirements for the protection of human research participants with the following conditions:*

## Appendix I

Permission to Use AMRP Survey from Sharon Pitcher

## Appendix I

**From:** "Pitcher, Sharon" <spitcher@towson.edu>  
**To:** Roxanne Forgrave <rforgrave@olivet.edu>  
**Date:** Saturday - January 17, 2009 3:04 PM  
**Subject:** RE: Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile

---

You have my permission to use the profile. If you have any questions about the administration or how to interpret the results, don't hesitate to contact me. A team from the original group has also revised the survey to include questions about choice and technology. We are now working on trying to get that published. The new survey gives a score for Value, Self Concept and Instruction. Contact me in a few months on the status of that survey. As soon as we get that accepted for publishing, I would be glad to share it with you.

Sharon  
Dr. Sharon Pitcher  
Associate Professor  
Educational Technology and Literacy  
Towson University  
8000 York Road  
Towson, MD 21252

Email: [spitcher@towson.edu](mailto:spitcher@towson.edu)  
Website: [www.towson.edu/~spitcher](http://www.towson.edu/~spitcher)  
Office: Hawkins Hall 121 B

## Appendix J

Permission to Use AMRP Survey from Loretta Albright

## Appendix J

**From:** "Albright, Loretta" Tuesday - January 20,  
<LAlbright@mail.twu.edu> 2009 9:18 AM  
**To:** "Roxanne Forgrave" <rforgrave@olivet.edu>  
**CC:** "Sharon Pitcher" <spitcher@comcast.net>  
**Subject:** RE: Adolescent Motivation to Read Profile  
**Attachments:** Mime.822 (5377 bytes)

Roxanne,

If you are a member of the IRA, JAAL grants copyright permission in the journal to use the survey. If not, we do give permission. We ask, of course, that you credit our authorship of the survey. If you carefully read the article, the survey was not changed much from the original (Gambrell, et al, 1996) and in that article she explains the reliability procedure.

Presently, Dr. Pitcher and I have revised the survey to reflect what we learned in the first study. The new survey includes three constructs (Self, Value and Instruction) and questions about electronic resources, strategy use, etc.. We are currently submitting the revised survey for publication. .

Good luck with your research. I will look for it to be published! Don't hesitate to contact me if I can help in any other way.

Regards,

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