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**THE ROLE OF LEISURE-TIME READING IN
IMPROVING BASIC READING SKILLS
A COMPARATIVE STUDY**

**AN ABSTRACT OF
A THESIS
PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
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OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF SCIENCE**

**by
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The purpose of this study was to (1) to compare in quantity and quality the leisure-time reading of a group of seventh graders, both before and after an intensive program of voluntary reading; (2) to present student attitudes and interests with regard to reading as revealed through a questionnaire study; and (3) to consider the influence of leisure-time reading on three basic reading skills: (a) speed and accuracy, (b) reading vocabulary, and (c) comprehension.

Eighteen culturally deprived seventh graders from a Waterbury Public School were used as subjects. To determine the intelligence quotients of the group the Otis Quick Scoring Mental Ability Test: Beta: Form A was administered. The Gates Reading Survey, Forms I and II were administered to determine the pre and post study reading abilities of the subjects. An informal interest questionnaire consisting of sixty-five items was used to determine the students' interest areas in reading.

Under the supervision of the Children's Room of the Silas Bronson Library, Waterbury, Connecticut, 325 books were selected to compensate for the absence of a central library in the school housing the subjects. During the twenty weeks of the experiment, each pupil was asked to read as many books as possible. Twenty minutes of each school day were allotted to recreational reading, and the students were also permitted to take books home. Informal checks were carried out to be

sure that books taken were actually read. No charts or other types of extrinsic motivational devices were used. The recreational reading program was designed as an adjunct or supplement to the Ginn Basal Reading Program.

The major findings resulting from the recreational reading of the eighteen subjects were as follows:

1. Prior to the study only forty-two percent of the total group showed interest in owning library cards. During the study, every one of the eighteen students took advantage of the books found in the school library established by the writer.
2. The group reported reading a total of thirty-four books, or approximately two books per student, four months prior to commencement of the study. The data showed that the group read a total of 290 books, or an average of sixteen books per pupil, during the twenty weeks of the study.
3. There were marked sex differences in most of the choices of reading materials. The girls favored books written about the minority groups and mystery stories. The boys indicated their favorite types of books to be war and space travel.
4. The movie and comic sections of the newspaper were favored by both sexes.
5. The entire group indicated a preference for watching television rather than read a book.
6. Gains in individual grade scores in Speed and Accuracy ranged from 0.6 to 4.8.
7. The individual gains in vocabulary development ranged from -0.8 to 2.9.
8. Individual gains in comprehension of reading ranged from -2.7 to 2.6.

As a result of the findings the writer concludes that:

1. There is a need for a fully equipped library and experienced librarian in the school attended by the culturally deprived students living in this area.

2. The recreational reading of the subjects had a very little influence, if any, in promoting growth in speed and accuracy, vocabulary knowledge, and comprehension of reading materials.
3. Sex is the dominant factor in determining reading and recreational interests of young people.
4. The reading attitudes and interests of the subjects were enhanced as a result of the study.