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Literacy rates of urban adolescents are staggeringly low in comparison with that of their peers. Forty-three percent of urban 8th graders scored "Below Basic" on one national reading test as compared with only 24 percent in suburban and 25 percent in rural regions. Research shows a link between the leisure reading habits of adolescents, and reading attitude and performance. Because of this link, ensuring that students living in low-income urban communities have access to materials they are interested in is key to encouraging reading, and consequently improving their reading performance. Using a list of leisure materials that have been found to be of interest to urban adolescents, 20 school library media center collections in an urban community in North Carolina were analyzed to see if these materials were within the school library collection.

Headings:

School libraries--North Carolina

Reading--Leisure reading

Reading--Preferences

Libraries and teenagers

Teenagers--Books and reading--United States

Urban libraries

LEISURE READING MATERIALS AND URBAN ADOLESCENTS: DO SCHOOL LIBRARIES COLLECT FOR THESE READERS?

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Introduction

Literacy rates of urban adolescents are staggeringly low in comparison with that of their peers. Forty-three percent of urban 8th graders scored “Below Basic” on one national reading test as compared with only 24 percent in suburban and 25 percent in rural regions (Department of Education, 2005). With No Child Left Behind placing added emphasis on end-of-year test scores, this disproportion becomes even more evident and directs attention toward the problems this disparity signifies. Additionally, children growing up in low-income urban areas are generally not exposed to the same amount of print sources in their households and communities as those living in higher income communities, thus limiting their emergent literacy skills from birth (Neuman & Celano, 2001; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). This inequity immediately puts low-income urban children at a literacy deficit, especially when compared with their higher-income, suburban peers. Both of these disparities indicate that special attention needs to be paid to finding ways to bridge this literacy gap.

In an attempt to make reading a primary focus, many schools have created literacy programs aimed at remediation, putting a focus on reading comprehension, and encouraged reading outside of school (McGrath, 2005). While literacy programs have direct control over the habits that are taught and the material that is read within the school setting, there is less accountability for reading outside of school. This is an issue, as links have been found between reading outside of school, or leisure reading, and academic

achievement (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Ivey & Broadus, 2001; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999; Stanovich, 1986). Additionally, many literacy programs offer extrinsic motivation for the number of books or minutes read outside of school, but miss the point by not encouraging intrinsic motivation for reading on one's own. The problem lies in finding materials that appeal to adolescents so that they want to read without being forced (Worthy 1996).

While the reading habits and preferences of adolescents is an often studied topic, rarely does this research focus on specific subgroups of teenage readers. Because of the generality of the research conducted, we are primarily aware of the reading preferences of the average adolescent student. Although there is not a significant amount of literature on the reading preferences of urban teens, several studies have shown that urban young adults do read for pleasure outside of school and that much of their reading materials come from school and public libraries (Hughes-Hassell in press; Hughes-Hassell & Rode 2007). Unfortunately, urban school libraries tend to be underfunded as compared to schools in higher income areas, and therefore may not have as many applicable and current resources (Scott 2004).

In order to encourage and support leisure reading, school libraries must house reading materials that are of interest to students. This study seeks to determine how well urban school libraries do this. Specifically, do the middle school libraries in one large North Carolina urban community contain materials that have been identified in the literature as appealing to urban teenagers?

Literature Review

Because the research directly dealing with the reading preferences of urban adolescents is limited, this literature review is intended to give an overview of several aspects surrounding the topic. This includes the subject of leisure reading in general, the reading attitudes of children and adolescents, the link created between leisure reading and academic achievement, and studies of general adolescent reading preferences and where their reading materials come from. Using this as background knowledge, the remainder of the literature review is focused on low-income urban adolescents and the effect their location and socioeconomic status has on reading levels and access to print. Finally, the review will focus on a study of urban adolescent reading habits and preferences and will take a further look at materials geared toward this demographic.

What is leisure reading and why is it important?

The term leisure reading is in need of definition. The term has been called many things, including recreational reading, independent reading, reading for pleasure, and free voluntary reading, among others. While not every study that researches this concept clearly defines the term, there are some that do.

Greaney (1980), who studied the aspects of elementary school students' lives that related to the amount of time they engage in leisure reading, used the term leisure reading to mean, "reading of any kind, excluding school texts and other materials assigned at school" (p. 344). He further defined the leisure reading as an activity that takes place during non-school hours, and specifically did not limit leisure reading to reading books, as other studies have. Gearney found that students were spending little of their leisure

time engaged in reading (5.4% of time available), and that they were more likely to read books than comics or newspapers (Greaney, 1980). While this study focused on elementary school children, it is important because of its flexible definition of reading and its emphasis on that fact that leisure reading encompasses more than reading books. This definition is critical in the 21st century, as more adolescents are reading non-traditional formats, including websites, blogs, wikis, e-mails, and text messages. As Braun (2007) points out, these formats allow adolescents to read and are not necessarily of a lower value than traditional textual formats.

With minor variations, Greaney's (1980) study was repeated and expanded upon in the United States. Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding (1988) studied students' out-of-school activities and the relationship between these activities and reading achievement. Students completed forms telling how much time they spent doing non-reading activities (listening to music, eating dinner, etc.), how much time they spent reading, and the title and author of the book they read. Over the course of the study, students' reading achievement was tested, including a reading proficiency test, a vocabulary test, and a reading speed test.

Of the out-of-school activities in which the students participated, reading, and especially book reading, was found to be the greatest predictor of reading proficiency. Surprisingly, Anderson et al. (1988) showed that no out-of-school activity interfered with reading; the amount of television the students watched, for example, did not have a significant effect on whether or not the students read. This study was important because it established the connection between leisure reading and reading proficiency. These

findings are supported by other research that demonstrated a positive link between reading for pleasure and achievement (Krashen, 1993; Short, 1995).

The finding that students who read outside of school are academically good readers is explained by what Stanovich (1986) calls the “Matthew effects”. This concept, which can be summarized as ‘the rich get richer and the poor get poorer’ in regards to reading achievement, asserts that if students are good readers and like to read, they will do well in reading. If they are not good readers and do not read for pleasure, their reading scores will suffer.

Cunningham and Stanovich (1991) researched the effect reading and print exposure had on fourth-grade students. Students were given a series of academic tests, including phonological coding, word recognition and verbal fluency. They were also given a title recognition test, where the names of real books and made-up books were together in a list, and the student marked the titles that they knew were books. Using these tests as indicators of academic achievement and exposure to print, researchers found that print exposure is a significant predictor of reading achievement. Cunningham and Stanovich further interpreted these findings to mean that students that are good readers tend to read more and are therefore more likely to do well academically. Given the relationship between reading, reading ability, and academic achievement, it would seem natural to encourage students to read in their leisure time.

Reading attitudes

Before looking at what students are reading, it is important to find out if they are reading at all. McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) completed a nationwide survey of

elementary school students to determine their attitude toward both academic and recreational reading and how this attitude relates to reading ability, gender, and ethnicity. The study was stratified by gender and ethnicity in line with national distributions and included at least one school from every state. Attitude was measured using the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey, a Likert-type scale that used pictures to denote attitude (McKenna, et al., 1995).

McKenna et al. (1995) found that overall, students' attitudes toward both recreational and academic reading was most positive mid-way through the first grade and became more negative as students progressed through school. While attitudes toward recreational reading became increasingly negative with each year, the mean recreational reading attitude was still higher than the academic reading attitude (the drop from first to sixth grade was 0.54 for recreational reading and 0.8 for academic reading). There was also a correlation between a negative attitude toward reading and reading ability, as low-level readers tended to have the most negative attitudes towards reading.

These findings make a case for devising a way to increase motivation and interest among all readers, but particularly for low-level readers. The findings also relate to the idea that the less students read, the lower their reading levels tend to be. If interest is lacking, it makes sense that attitude toward reading and reading abilities would be lower.

Reading preferences of adolescents and where they get their reading materials

Even though attitudes toward reading seem to wane as children progress in school, children and adolescents still have preferences for certain types of reading and get their materials from specific places. A study by Worthy, Moorman, and Turner (1999)

sought to determine the reading preferences of middle school students, how these preferences relate to specific student traits (gender, income, attitudes, and achievement), where students obtain their reading materials, and if their reading preferences are available within the students' school. The schools where this research was conducted were economically varied. Researchers used a combination of surveys and interviews to gather information about the students, and interviewed teachers and librarians to gain insight as to what they believed students' interests in reading were and how library and classroom collections reflected these preferences.

The results found that students have very clear preferences and asserted that the existence of these preferences indicates that students are reading. There were no significant differences between the reading preferences of low-income students and their higher-income peers. The materials that students preferred were not always of the highest literary merit, as most preferred to read scary books, cartoons and comics, mysteries, and some science fiction/fantasy, while many students preferred to read "other materials", such as magazines (Worthy et al., 1999). The researchers make a point to note that the study shows students are reading and is not a judgment on the 'quality' of what they are reading. Worthy et al. did find, however, that the schools did not provide extensive access to these materials. While higher-income students often purchased their reading materials, low-income students obtained most of their reading materials from the school library, and therefore, did not have access to the materials they preferred. This finding also speaks to the McKenna et al. (1995) research of children's attitudes toward reading as it may provide a reason why students develop an increasingly negative

attitude toward reading. If students do not have access to books that interest them, this may contribute to why they do not like reading.

Ivey and Broaddus' study (2001) built on Worthy et al.'s research by studying middle school students' reading motivations within the classroom. Citing Worthy et al.'s (1999) findings that what students like to read is difficult to find in schools, the researchers sought to find out what students liked to read, what motivated them to read in and out of the classroom, and if their classroom instruction and the classroom collection reflected their reading preferences. In line with Worthy et al.'s finding, the materials students most liked to read were magazines, adventure books, mysteries, scary stories, and joke books. Comic books and series books were also a popular choice (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001).

While the research lent insight to reading within the classroom context, it also provided new findings about student's out-of-school reading habits. In survey responses, students stated that being able to find desirable reading materials and getting to choose these materials was very important to them, but did not mention that materials were what they liked about their classroom (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). In addition, students were able to name more individual titles and authors when asked about what they were reading at home than they were when asked about what they were reading in school. This would indicate that students were more engaged and interested by what they were reading at home. Students' at-home reading spanned a variety of genres, including non-fiction, comics, magazine, and poetry. When asked where they get the materials they like to read, students in both the survey and the interviews were more likely to purchase books from a bookstore, bring them from home, and get them from the public library than to get books

from the school library or classroom collection. This would suggest that the in-school collections do not have titles and/or subjects that the students are interested in reading about. Again, if the school does not provide the reading materials that students prefer, low-income students are at a disadvantage.

Two similar studies were executed in the United Kingdom. Hopper (2005) completed a study using structured and semi-structured self-assessment questionnaires to find out what teenagers are reading and what their reading habits are. Her findings corroborate the Worthy et al. study (1999) in that students tended to pick books in the genre of horror or scary books and mystery, and were also interested in reading non-book texts such as magazines, the internet, and tabloid and local newspapers (Hopper 2005). The inclusion of the internet as a source of reading material in Hopper's study is a function of its currency. Research by Coles and Hall (2002) focused on adolescents' (ages 10, 12, and 14) reading choices and the differences in these choices between genders. Across the sexes, researchers found that adventure, horror/ghost, romance, animal-related, and science fiction were the most popular reading choices (Coles & Hall 2002). It is notable to point out the similarities between most preferred topics in each of these studies and the theme of non-book items as one of the more popular preferences.

Reading levels of students in low-income urban communities

While there is a link between independent reading and reading test scores, there is also a clear link between attending urban schools and low reading test scores. According to data from the U.S. Department of Education (2005), in 2003 43 percent of urban 8th graders scored "Below Basic" on one national reading test. Urban schools are more

likely to have higher percentages of black and Hispanic students than white students and to have more than 75 percent of students on free or reduced-price lunch (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). Based on these statistics, narrowing the achievement gap between low-income minority students and their higher-income peers is of the utmost importance. Before this can be done, researchers need to determine why there is a gap between low-income urban students and their higher-income peers.

Most recently, Moje, Overby, Tysvaer, and Morris (2008) studied the relationship between adolescent reading motivation and academic achievement, focusing specifically on a low-income community in a Midwestern city that is mainly Latino. Data was gathered using a combination of survey, reading tests, school record data, interviews, and ethnographic interviews and observations. On average, students read for pleasure about once a week, with 30 percent of the students reading weekly and 12.3 percent reading daily (Moje et al., 2008). This study defined reading very broadly, allowing for more reading material possibilities. Students mostly read websites, letters and notes, music lyrics, e-mail, magazines, and novels or short stories outside of school. While the reading frequency of online materials was high, researchers found via interviews that many of students do not have easy access to the internet outside of school, which may affect their online reading frequency. Researchers also found that 30 percent of the students read novels regularly outside of school and 68 percent of these students were able to name a favorite novel and author (Moje et al., 2008).

The study also tested Stanovich's (1986) assertion that reading outside of school has an effect on academic achievement. The researchers found that novel reading had an effect on language arts achievement, as students who most often read novels outside of

school tended to score better on language arts tests, but that novel reading did not have an effect on science grades or overall GPA. Reading in general seemed to have no effect on overall test scores (Moje et al., 2008). While these findings do not corroborate past findings, the researchers offer some possible explanations. One assertion is that reading and vocabulary in non-language arts classes may not be an indicator of achievement in getting good grades in a specific class, but may explain poor national test achievement (Moje et al., 2008). If national testing measures require a greater handle on reading fluency and content area vocabulary, it is possible that reading within and outside of these classes may be beneficial to national test achievement. While this study may seem to be at odds with the Stanovich (1986) and Cunningham and Stanovich (1991), it is important to note that those studies concentrated on elementary school aged students. It may be that because more reading is required in all content areas once students reach adolescence, the reading students do is more complicated.

Neuman and Celano (2001) sought to find out if access to print in low-income communities differed from higher-income communities and how this could affect early literacy development in children. Researchers intensively studied four neighborhoods in Philadelphia (two middle-income and two low-income) by surveying reading materials available in stores, child-care centers, school libraries and public libraries, and assessed the conditions of public places available for reading. They found that children's access to print materials differed greatly between the low-income and middle-income communities. In the middle-income communities there were significantly more stores that sold children and young adult reading materials than in the low-income communities. School libraries had larger collections in better condition and were more likely to be staffed by qualified

media specialists, and public libraries too had larger collections and longer hours of operation.

The results of this study show how access to print can differ even within the same city, and that it differs on many levels, including the number of resources, quality of resources, and presence of reading role models. While the number of private institutions in each community contributed to these differences (presence of a bookstore, number of books carried in drug stores, etc.), there was a great disparity in the quality of the public institutions, including the school and public libraries. The combination of the Moje et al. (2008) study and the Neuman and Celano (2001) study provides a good overview of the unique issues facing adolescents in low-income urban areas.

Reading preferences of urban adolescents and where they get their reading materials

Although the reading preferences of urban young adults have not been extensively researched, Hughes-Hassell (in press) has completed some research on the topic. The purpose of her studies was to determine the leisure reading habits of urban students. To do this, she surveyed middle school students at two low-income middle schools, one predominately African American and the other predominately Hispanic, and students at one urban high school. The survey included questions asking students about their reading preferences (including what they read), habits (including if they read, when reading occurs, where reading materials come from), and motivating factors (including why they read and who encourages them to read).

Hughes-Hassell (in press) found that the leisure reading habits of urban adolescents do not vary greatly from the reading habits of adolescents in general: 72% of the students surveyed indicated that they engage in leisure reading and females were more likely to read independently than males. While their leisure reading habits were consistent with other studies of adolescent habit studies, the materials the students read were much different. Because the high school students' reading material preferences varied from the middle school students, their results are not included here. Middle school students preferred reading magazines over other reading materials, followed by comics/graphic novels and the internet. Popular magazine topics include sports, music, fashion and beauty, and video gaming. Students most wanted to read about celebrities, people/characters like themselves, people their age who have done cool or amazing things, sports figures, and people/characters wrestling with tough issues. The topics they are interested in reading about seem to explain the media they chose to read, as books about celebrities and sports figures are generally not as current as magazines and the internet.

Based on the findings of this study, Hughes-Hassell (in press) makes several recommendations to librarians in order to better serve this community. Among these suggestions is the need to provide materials that students want to read in the library collection. Manga, graphic novels and comic books; magazines; nonfiction; and books about people like them were highlighted in the data collected from students as being of interest to them.

Another popular genre identified by the students in Hughes-Hassell's (in press) study is street lit, or urban literature. A study of a teen urban lit book club in Philadelphia

by Morris, Hughes-Hassell, Agosto, and Cottman (2006) explored why this genre is popular with urban teens by observing the club's discussions of specific street lit titles. The researchers found that members of the book club were able to relate to the characters in the book and their lifestyle, seeing both themselves and their friends and family in the characters. While the books are sometimes criticized for their explicit sexual content and description of drug deals, verbal and physical abuse, and violence, the members of the book club were able to analyze the choices the characters made. While it would be rash to make the assumption that all urban teenagers would be interested in street lit, these books could serve as a means of encouraging reading among some teens in this demographic. Being informed about this genre is important to studying the reading preferences of urban adolescents and their motivations to read.

Methodology

For this study, content analysis was used to analyze the materials available to urban students in 20 school library media centers. According to Babbie, content analysis is "the study of recorded human communications" and can consist of any matter of items, including magazines, books, newspapers, web pages, and songs (2007, p. 320). Content analysis can vary greatly depending on the sample selection and the unit of analysis, and each of these depends on the other. Units of analysis are the pieces that are being analyzed (ex: paragraphs) and the sample selection is where the units of analysis can be found (ex: books). These distinctions can become more or less specific depending on the

topic. For analysis to take place, data is coded to create a structural sketch of the general concept (Babbie, 2007).

In general, there are many advantages for using content analysis as a means of research. One advantage of using this method is that it is entirely unobtrusive. Many public school library catalogs are available online and can be accessed by the general public. This allowed the researcher to conduct the study without needing the assistance of the school library media specialist. Another advantage of content analysis is that specific titles identified from previous research can easily be searched for in the catalog, thus allowing the researcher to not only gain an overview of titles and categories of materials that are present in the collection, but also to see if the materials are in circulation.

That said, content analysis also has some disadvantages. The search terms used to explore the online catalogs may not result in an exhaustive list of titles. Also, because the data are collected by a single researcher, some items may not be included because of oversight. Finally, this type of research only accounts for items available through the online catalog. It does not consider the media specialists' reasons for purchasing or not purchasing certain materials, the individual interests of students at each school, budgeting concerns, or other unique issues that are school specific.

Sample selection

North Carolina, because of its proximity to the researcher, was chosen as the site for the study. The U.S. Census Bureau defines an urban area as a territory that has a population of at least 50,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2009a). Using 2006 estimates, 14

cities in North Carolina are considered urban areas with populations ranging from 57,057 to 630,478 (U.S. Census Bureau 2009b). The three cities with the highest populations and the subsequent school districts that serve these cities were considered for the study sample. These included Charlotte and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), Raleigh and the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS), and Greensboro and Guilford County Schools (GCS).

The next step in choosing the sample was to identify the single district that would be studied. The decision to study a single district was made for two reasons. First, this would allow a large number of schools to be studied, therefore creating a clearer picture of the materials available to students within that district. The key factor used for deciding which of the three systems to study was the presence on an online cataloging system that allows for searching by Dewey call number. CMS is the only one of the three districts that met this criterion, and was therefore selected.

Finally, since the purpose of the study is to assess the availability of preferred reading materials to adolescents, only middle schools (grades 6-8) were considered for inclusion. CMS has 172 schools within their system, 31 of which are middle schools (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools n.d.). In order to determine which middle schools to include in the study, student demographic information was examined. Student demographic data from all of CMS's middle schools was collected from the *Great Schools* website <http://www.greatschools.net> and entered into a table. In order to ensure that the schools studied have a diverse student body, schools with 40% or more white students were eliminated from the study. Out of the 31 middle schools, 20 schools were selected to be included in the study (See Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic information for schools included in study

School Name	Total Enrollment	% Black	% Hispanic	% White	% Asian	% Economically Disadvantaged
Albemarle Road Middle	779	55%	34%	6%	4%	80%
Spaugh Middle	503	90%	5%	2%	3%	93%
Cochrane Middle	653	72%	21%	4%	3%	80%
Coulwood Middle	1127	63%	11%	21%	4%	57%
Eastway Middle	920	48%	36%	8%	8%	87%
James Martin Middle	1356	71%	18%	6%	4%	63%
J.M. Alexander Middle	1522	56%	10%	29%	5%	35%
J.T. Williams Middle	614	89%	7%	1%	3%	91%
Kennedy Middle	660	53%	27%	13%	6%	60%
McClintock Middle	738	63%	21%	15%	2%	69%
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	986	65%	29%	4%	2%	81%
Northeast Middle	995	44%	16%	36%	3%	48%
Northridge Middle	809	70%	19%	6%	4%	69%
Piedmont Open Middle	979	72%	4%	19%	5%	44%
Quail Hollow Middle	1004	40%	25%	31%	3%	60%
Randolph Middle	920	55%	12%	25%	6%	53%
Ranson Middle	1127	81%	10%	5%	2%	69%
Sedgefield Middle	427	56%	35%	8%	1%	86%
Southwest Middle	1197	46%	18%	31%	4%	45%
Wilson Middle	778	64%	18%	8%	9%	80%

Procedure: Identification of titles to be searched

Two pieces of existing literature were used to identify broad categories of materials and specific titles that appeal to urban teenagers. In her book *Serving Urban Teens* (2008), Paula Brehm-Heeger includes lists of recommended materials, as well as specific titles that may appeal to teens living in an urban area. These lists were used in conjunction with results from the Hughes-Hassell (in press) study to build different search categories

Fictional titles

Three formats that appeal to urban teens are manga, graphic novels, and comic books. Brehm-Heeger (2008) provides an extensive list of recommended manga titles (see Table 2), and these were specifically searched for within each online catalog using the “Title Keyword” search function. The presence of each title and the number of copies available was noted in an Excel document.

Table 2: Manga series information

	Title	Author	Publication Date
Popular Manga Series	<i>Mar</i>	Anzai, Noboyuki	2003
	<i>Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle</i>	Gerard, Anthony	2004
	<i>Hellsing</i>	Hirano, Kohta and Duane Johnson	2003
	<i>Saiyuki Reload</i>	Minekura, Kazuya	2005
	<i>Dragon Head</i>	Moxhizuki, Minetaro	2006
	<i>Death Note</i>	Ohba, Tsugumi and Obata Takeshi	2005
	<i>Inu Yasha</i>	Takahashi, Rumiko	2004
	<i>Shaman King</i>	Takei, Hiroyuki	2003
	<i>Dr. Slump</i>	Toriyama, Akira	2005
	<i>Sgt. Frog</i>	Yoshizaki, Mine and Fukami Yuko	2004
For Guys	<i>Flame of Recca</i>	Anzai, Noboyuki	2003
	<i>Naruto</i>	Kishimoto, Massashi	2003
	<i>Neon Genesis Evangelion</i>	Sadamoto, Yoshiyuki	1998
	<i>Yu Yu Hakusho</i>	Togashi, Yoshihiro	2003
	<i>Chronicles of the Cursed Sword</i>	Yuy, Beub-Ryong	2003
For Girls	<i>Pet Shop of Horrors</i>	Akino, Matsuri	2003
	<i>Boys over Flowers</i>	Kamio, Yoko	2003
	<i>Kare First Love</i>	Miyasak, Kaho	2002
	<i>Tarot Café</i>	Pak, Sang-son	2005
	<i>Fruits Basket</i>	Takaya, Natsuki	2004
For Younger Teens	<i>Sugar Sugar Rune</i>	Anno, Moyoko	2006
	<i>Mail Order Ninja</i>	Elder, Joshua (Erich Owen)	2006
	<i>Whistle!</i>	Higuchi, Daisuke	2004
	<i>Prince of Tennis</i>	Konomi, Takeshi	2004
	<i>Hikaru No Go</i>	Obata, Takeshi	2004

Although specific titles of graphic novel and comic books were not included in Brehm-Heeger's book, each media center's online catalog was canvassed for titles that fit into this category. This was done by searching by the Dewey call number 741.5. Each unique title was counted and copied into a Microsoft Word document. The resulting list was then searched by separating manga, graphic novel, and comic book titles from other

books under this call number. The subjects of the other books in this Dewey range included how-to-draw, cartooning career information, comic collection information, comic and manga character encyclopedias, author biographies, and general information about manga, graphic novels, and comic books.

Another aspect of each collection that was examined was the fiction collection's ability to appeal to African American and Hispanic students as represented by young adult novels featuring characters of color. Again, specific titles were searched for based on Brehm-Heeger's (2008) recommendations. Like the manga, graphic novel, and comic book section, individual titles were searched for in the online catalog using the "Title Keyword" search function. The presence of each title and the number of copies available at each library was noted in an Excel document. Tables 3 and 4 include the specific titles.

Table 3: Titles with Hispanic characters

Fiction with Hispanic Characters	Author	Publication Date
<i>Before We Were Free</i>	Alvarez, Julia	2002
<i>Finding Miracles</i>	Alvarez, Julia	2004
<i>Tequila Worm</i>	Canales, Viola	2005
<i>Call Me Maria</i>	Cofer, Judith Ortiz	2004
<i>Cinnamon Girl</i>	Herrera, Juan Felipe	2005
<i>La Linea</i>	Jaramillo, Ann	2006
<i>Cuba 15</i>	Osa, Nancy	2003
<i>A Different Kind of Heat</i>	Pagliarulo, Antonio	2006
<i>Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood</i>	Saenz, Alire	2004
<i>Finding Our Way: Stories</i>	Saldana, Rene	2003
<i>So Hard to Say</i>	Sanchez, Alex	2004
<i>The Afterlife</i>	Soto, Gary	2003
<i>Accidental Love</i>	Soto, Gary	2006

Table 4: Titles with African American characters

Fiction with African American Characters	Author	Publication Date
<i>Jimi and Me</i>	Adoff, Jamie	2005
<i>The Making of Dr. Truelove</i>	Barnes, Derrick	2007
<i>Whale Talk</i>	Crutcher, Chris	2001
<i>Jason and Kyra</i>	Davidson, Dana	2004
<i>Played</i>	Davidson, Dana	2005
<i>Romiette and Julio</i>	Draper, Sharon	1999
<i>Darkness before Dawn</i>	Draper, Sharon	2001
<i>Begging for Change</i>	Flake, Sharon	2003
<i>Who Am I Without Him?: Short Stories about Girls and the Boys in their Lives</i>	Flake, Sharon	2004
<i>Bang</i>	Flake, Sharon	2005
<i>Keesha's House</i>	Frost, Helen	2003
<i>Bronx Masquerade</i>	Grimes, Nikki	2002
<i>First Part Last</i>	Johnson, Angela	2003
<i>Spellbound</i>	McDonald, Janet	2001
<i>Street Love</i>	Myers, Walter Dean	2007
<i>Harlem Hustle</i>	McDonald, Janet	2006
<i>Hoopster</i>	Sitomer, Alan Lawrence	2005
<i>Hip Hop High School</i>	Sitomer, Alan Lawrence	2006
<i>Simply Divine</i>	Thomas, Jacquelin	2006
<i>Rooftop</i>	Volponi, Paul	2006
<i>Broken China</i>	Williams, Lori Aurelia	2005
<i>True Believer</i>	Wolff, Virginia Euwer	2001
<i>Emako Blue</i>	Woods, Brenda	2004
<i>Hush</i>	Woodson, Jacqueline	2002

The last category of fiction searched for was street lit. Brehm-Heeger (2008) provides a list of “Twenty-Five Urban Fiction Authors You Should Know” (p. 137). Each author was searched for using the “Author Keyword” search option (see Table 5).

Table 5: Street lit authors

Urban Fiction Authors	
Bailey-Williams, Nicole	Miller, Karen
Brown, Tracy	Moore, Y. Blak
Chunichi	Poole, Daaimah, S.
Goines, Donald	Slim, Iceburg
Holmes, Shannon	Souljah, Sister
Hunt, La Jill	Stringer, Vicki
Hunter, Angel	Swinson, Kiki
Jackson, Brenda	Turner, Nikki
Jihad	Tyree, Omar
Jones, Solomon	Weber, Carl
K'wa	Whyte, Anthony J.
Long, Thomas	Williams, Kashamba
Woods, Teri	

Specific street lit titles and series were obtained from Brehm-Heeger (2008). The online catalogs were searched using the “Title Keyword” search function, and as before, the individual titles and number of copies were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet (see Tables 6 and 7 for complete titles).

Table 6: Street lit series titles

Street Lit Series	Titles within Series	Author	Year Published
Bluford High Series	<i>Lost and Found</i>	Anne Schraff	2002
	<i>A Matter of Trust</i>	Anne Schraff	2002
	<i>Secrets in the Shadows</i>	Anne Schraff	2002
	<i>Someone to Love Me</i>	Anne Schraff	2002
	<i>The Bully</i>	Paul Langan	2002
	<i>The Gun</i>	Paul Langan	2002
	<i>Until We Meet Again</i>	Anne Schraff	2002
	<i>Blood is Thicker</i>	Paul Langan & D.M Blackwell	2004
	<i>Brothers in Arms</i>	Paul Langan & Ben Alirez	2004
	<i>Summer of Secrets</i>	Paul Langan	2004
	<i>The Fallen</i>	Paul Langan	2007
	<i>Shattered</i>	Paul Langan	2007
	<i>Search for Safety</i>	John Langan	2007
	<i>No Way Out</i>	Peggy Kern	2009
	<i>Schooled</i>	Paul Langan	2009
Drama High Series	<i>The Fight</i>	L. Divine	2006
	<i>Second Chance</i>	L. Divine	2006
	<i>Jayd's Legacy</i>	L. Divine	2007
	<i>Frememies</i>	L. Divine	2007
	<i>Lady J</i>	L. Divine	2008
	<i>Courtin' Jayd</i>	L. Divine	2008
	<i>Hustlin'</i>	L. Divine	2009
Platinum Teen series	<i>Dymond in the Rough</i>	Precious & KaShamba Williams	2005
	<i>The Ab-solute Truth</i>	Juwel & Precious	2005
	<i>Runaway</i>	Precious	2006

Table 7: Street Lit Individual Titles

Street Lit Individual Titles	Author	Year Published
<i>Imani in Never Say Goodbye</i>	Jackie Hardrick	2004
<i>Ride Wit' Me</i>	Katina King	2006
<i>Teenage Bluez: A Collection of Urban Stories</i>	K. Cain et al.	2005
<i>Teenage Bluez II</i>	Marketa Salley, et al.	2006
<i>Brother Hood</i>	Janet McDonald	2004
<i>Indigo Summer</i>	Monica McKayhan	2007
<i>Tyrell</i>	Coe Booth	2007

Nonfiction materials

To collect data about each library's nonfiction collection, specific criteria and search terms were developed and applied. First, based on the findings of several studies of urban teen reading preferences (Hughes-Hassell in press; Hughes-Hassell & Rodge 2007), the general categories of music, sports, fashion and actor/actresses were selected. In order to determine the appeal of the titles in these categories to urban teens, selection criteria were established for each category. The selection criteria and search terms used are listed in Table 8. All searches were conducted using the "General Keyword" search function. The search was limited to books within the biography and nonfiction sections of the collection. Books of poetry and short stories were not included, nor were reference materials that could not be checked out of the media center. Once material was deemed relevant, unique titles were counted and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet under the appropriate category. In addition, the entire list of titles was recorded in a Word document.

Table 8: Nonfiction Inclusion Criteria

Music		
Criteria	NOT	Search Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication dates from 1999-2009 - About current popular musicians - About a specific, popular genre - About how to start a band - About careers in the industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of music in general - How-to-play instruments - Historically significant musicians 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - music* - rap - hip hop - rock - singers
Sports		
Criteria	NOT	Search Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication dates from 1999-2009 - About current popular athletes - About a specific team and/or sport - About careers in the industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of a sport - How-to-play sports - Historically significant athletes - Car types - Fundamentals of a sport (equipment, playing tips, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sport* - wrestling - football - basketball - soccer - baseball
Fashion		
Criteria	NOT	Search Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication dates from 1999-2009 - About current fashion icons - About careers in the industry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of fashion/fashion during a specific period - Crafting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fashion - clothes - clothing
Actors/Actresses		
Criteria	NOT	Search Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Publication dates from 1999-2009 - About current popular actors, actresses, and others related to movies and television 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - History of acting/movies/television - Historically significant actors/actresses - Scripts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actors - Actresses - Movies

Magazine titles were also collected and compiled into a master list by school. Only 10 of the 20 schools studied had magazine collection information available. In order to determine the intended audience and subject matter of each title, the magazine's website was examined. Criteria were determined during website analysis. First, the magazine's intended audience was established: children (0-11), teens (12-20), or both; for girls or for boys; geared toward African Americans; and geared towards Hispanics. Magazines could fall into more than one of these categories. Next, subject-areas were determined: sport-focused, activity-focused, celebrity-focused, music-focused, curriculum-oriented, news, technology-focused, about North Carolina, professional

development, other, and if the magazine is actually a comic book. Data was compiled into an Excel spreadsheet.

Finally, internet materials were analyzed by examining the media center's website on the school webpage. If a media center webpage was not present on the school webpage, this section was not assessed. The materials looked for included: links to e-books, links to the online catalog, reading encouragement materials/event information (for example, recommended book lists, Battle of the Books information) and, links to other online resources. If a factor was present on the webpage, this was recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. Additional notes were recorded as necessary to provide a more detailed record. In addition, if the website had material that did not fit into the predetermined category, this information was recorded in a section on the spreadsheet marked "Other".

Results and Discussion

In this study, a total of 20 online middle school media center catalogs from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools were searched for materials that have been found to appeal to urban adolescents. Specifically the materials included manga, comic books and graphic novels, fiction that features African American and Hispanic characters, street lit titles and urban fiction authors, and nonfiction materials. In addition, the libraries' magazine collections and the media center webpages were examined. The results show that while the library collections contain some materials that are of interest to urban adolescents there are still many changes that can be made to better serve this population.

Manga, comic books, and graphic novels

Only 7 of the 20 schools studied had any of the 25 specific manga titles recommended by Brehm-Heeger (2008) (see Table 10). Albemarle Road had the highest number of individual titles with four in their collection (*Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle*, *Naruto*, *Fruits Basket*, and *Mail Order Ninja*). Northeast and James Martin had two titles in their collections, while Eastway, J.M. Alexander, McClintock and Ranson each had one title. *Naruto* was present in six of the seven collections. *Naruto* follows the story of a young boy who leaves his village to train as a ninja, and the problems he encounters when he returns (*Naruto Shippuden* n.d.). However, most of the schools with *Naruto* in the collection only had one or two titles of the entire series. Albemarle Road had 19 titles in the series and J.M. Alexander has 13 titles in the series.

Table 10: Manga series results

Series Title	Number of Schools with at Least One Title	# of Copies Available
<i>Mar</i>	0	0
<i>Tsubasa Reservoir Chronicle</i>	2	3
<i>Hellsing</i>	0	0
<i>Saiyuki Reload</i>	0	0
<i>Dragon Head</i>	0	0
<i>Death Note</i>	0	0
<i>Inu Yasha</i>	1	5
<i>Shaman King</i>	0	0
<i>Dr. Slump</i>	0	0
<i>Sgt. Frog</i>	0	0
<i>Flame of Recca</i>	0	0
<i>Naruto</i>	6	37
<i>Neon Genesis Evangelion</i>	1	1
<i>Yu Yu Hakusho</i>	0	0
<i>Chronicles of the Cursed Sword</i>	0	0
<i>Pet Shop of Horrors</i>	0	0
<i>Boys over Flowers</i>	0	0
<i>Kare First Love</i>	0	0
<i>Tarot Café</i>	0	0
<i>Fruits Basket</i>	1	5
<i>Sugar Sugar Rune</i>	0	0
<i>Mail Order Ninja</i>	1	2
<i>Whistle!</i>	0	0
<i>Prince of Tennis</i>	0	0
<i>Hikaru No Go</i>	0	0

When looking at the total number of books in the 741.5 collection as a whole, the number of books in each collection varies greatly from library to library. Table 11 shows both the number of books in each library's 741.5 collection and each school's total enrollment.

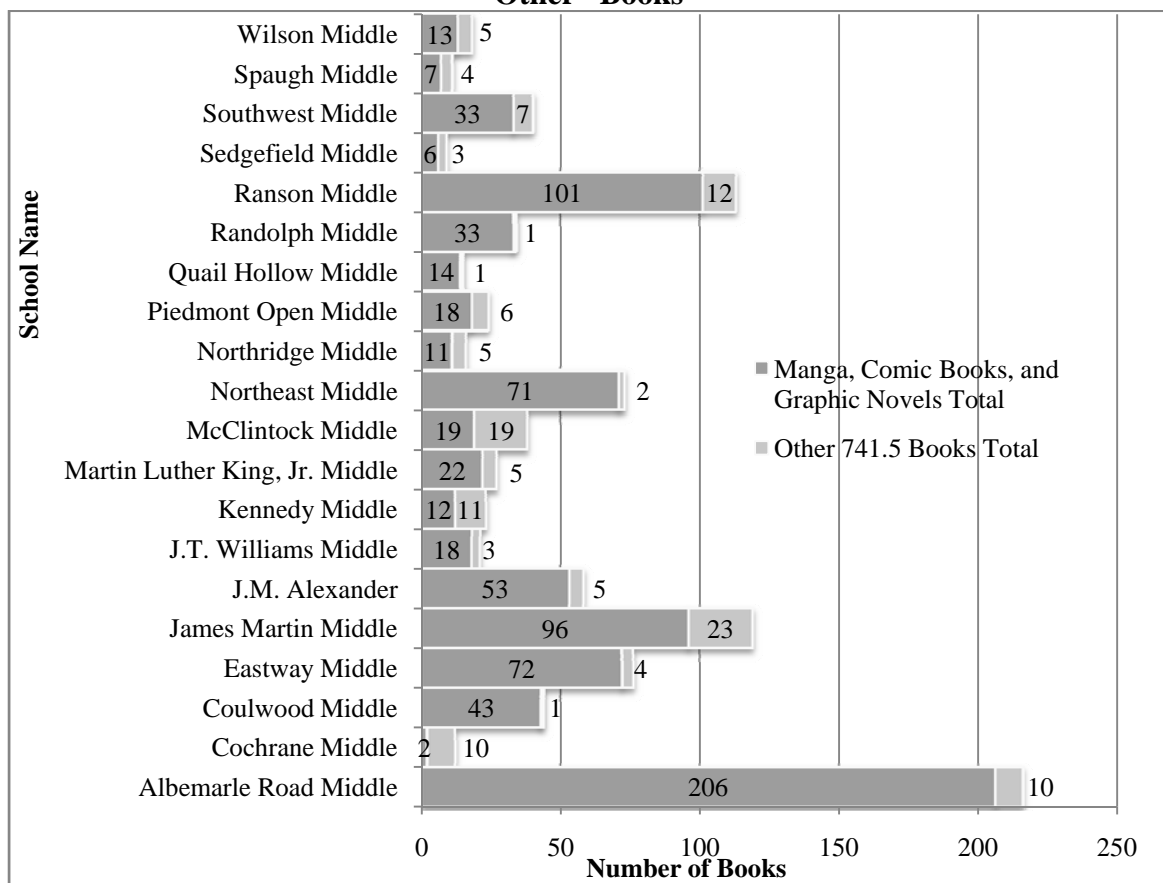
Table 11

School Name	Number of 741.5 Unique Titles	Total Enrollment	Enrollment Ranking
Albemarle Road Middle	216	779	13
James Martin Middle	119	1356	2
Ranson Middle	113	1127	4 (tie)
Eastway Middle	76	920	10 (tie)
Northeast Middle	73	995	7
J.M. Alexander Middle	58	1522	1
Coulwood Middle	44	1127	4 (tie)
Southwest Middle	40	1197	3
McClintock Middle	38	738	8
Randolph Middle	34	920	10 (tie)
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	27	986	15
Piedmont Open Middle	24	979	9
Kennedy Middle	23	660	16
J.T. Williams Middle	21	614	18
Wilson Middle	18	778	14
Northridge Middle	16	809	12
Quail Hollow Middle	15	1004	6
Cochrane Middle	12	653	17
Spaugh Middle	11	503	19
Sedgefield Middle	9	427	20

It is also important to look at the types of books included in this section of the collection. As noted earlier, the 741.5 call number includes not only manga, comic books, and graphic novels, but other genres including joke books, how-to-do books, and so on.

Figure 1 highlights the breakdown for each collection.

Figure 1: 741.5 Collection by Manga, Comic Books and Graphic Novels and “Other” Books



It appears that these three genres (manga, graphic novels, and comic books) are well represented in several of the library collections. In 12 of the 20 schools, manga, graphic novels, and comic books represent more than 80% of the titles in the 741.5 section of the collection. However, at Cochrane only 16.67% titles in the 741.5 section were manga, comic books, or graphic novels. While this was the only school with a clear majority of “other” books, there were still 8 schools total with 25% or more “other” books. In large collections these percentages would probably not make a difference in judging the strength of the collection. When the collections are small, having 25% of the collection

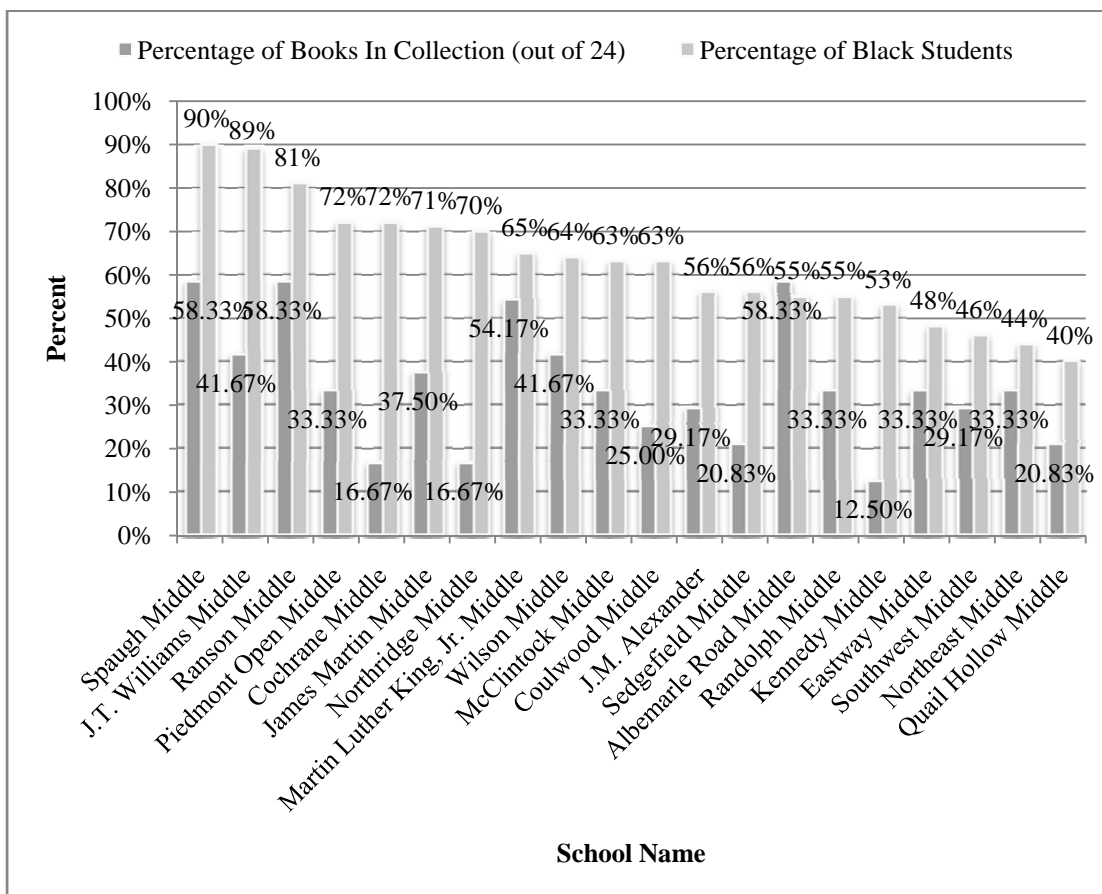
consist of books that don't entirely fit the genre can detract from the purpose of this section.

Fiction with African American characters

The number of books featuring African American characters in each collection varied. Of the 24 books recommended by Brehm-Heeger (2008), and searched for in the catalog, each school had at least 3 of the titles; 3 of the schools had 14 of the titles. One important aspect to consider when looking at the results is the percentage of African American students at each school. Table 12 shows the demographics of African American students paired with the percentage of titles searched for that are available in the catalog, ordered by the percentage of African American students. Figure 2 shows this data in graph form. Spaugh and Ranson middle schools are 90% and 81% African American respectively (452.7 and 912.9 students), yet only have 14 of the 24 titles searched for (58.33%). Although the number of books found at these two schools are among the highest of the schools canvassed, schools with much lower percentages of African American students had the same number of books. Albemarle Road's student population is 55% African American (428.5 students), yet they too have 14 of the 24 books. Other schools with large numbers of African American students, such as Sedgfield, Quail Hollow, Cochrane, Northridge, and Kennedy, had fewer than six titles. Given the fact that African American students represent the majority of the student body at each school, even the schools with the highest numbers have a surprisingly low number of the recommended titles.

Table 12

School Name	# of Unique Titles	# of Copies Available	% of Titles (out of 24)	% Black Students	Total Enrollment	Total # Black Students
Spaugh Middle	14	33	58.33%	90%	503	452.7
J.T. Williams Middle	10	23	41.67%	89%	614	546.5
Ranson Middle	14	34	58.33%	81%	1127	912.9
Piedmont Open Middle	8	20	33.33%	72%	979	704.9
Cochrane Middle	4	11	16.67%	72%	653	470.2
James Martin Middle	9	13	37.50%	71%	1356	962.8
Northridge Middle	4	14	16.67%	70%	809	566.3
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	13	20	54.17%	65%	986	640.9
Wilson Middle	10	21	41.67%	64%	778	497.9
McClintock Middle	8	32	33.33%	63%	738	464.9
Coulwood Middle	6	16	25.00%	63%	1127	710.0
J.M. Alexander Middle	7	36	29.17%	56%	1522	852.3
Sedgefield Middle	5	15	20.83%	56%	427	239.1
Albemarle Road Middle	14	44	58.33%	55%	779	428.5
Randolph Middle	8	19	33.33%	55%	920	506.0
Kennedy Middle	3	17	12.50%	53%	660	349.8
Eastway Middle	8	23	33.33%	48%	920	441.6
Southwest Middle	7	16	29.17%	46%	1197	550.6
Northeast Middle	8	35	33.33%	44%	995	437.8
Quail Hollow Middle	5	11	20.83%	40%	1004	401.6

Figure 2: Percentage of Books in the Collection and Percentage of Black Students

The titles most often found in the collections included *Romiette and Julio* and *Darkness Before Dawn* by Sharon Draper, *Begging for Change* and *Who Am I Without Him?: Short Stories about Girls and the Boys in their Lives* by Sharon Flake, *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes, *Spellbound* by Angela Johnson, and *Hush* by Jacqueline Woodson. All of books were written by acclaimed African American writers and published in the last 10 years (1998-2008). *Romiette and Julio* and *Bronx Masquerade* have been or are currently on the North Carolina School Library Media Association's (NCSLMA) Battle of the Books list (North Carolina School Library Media Association 2009).

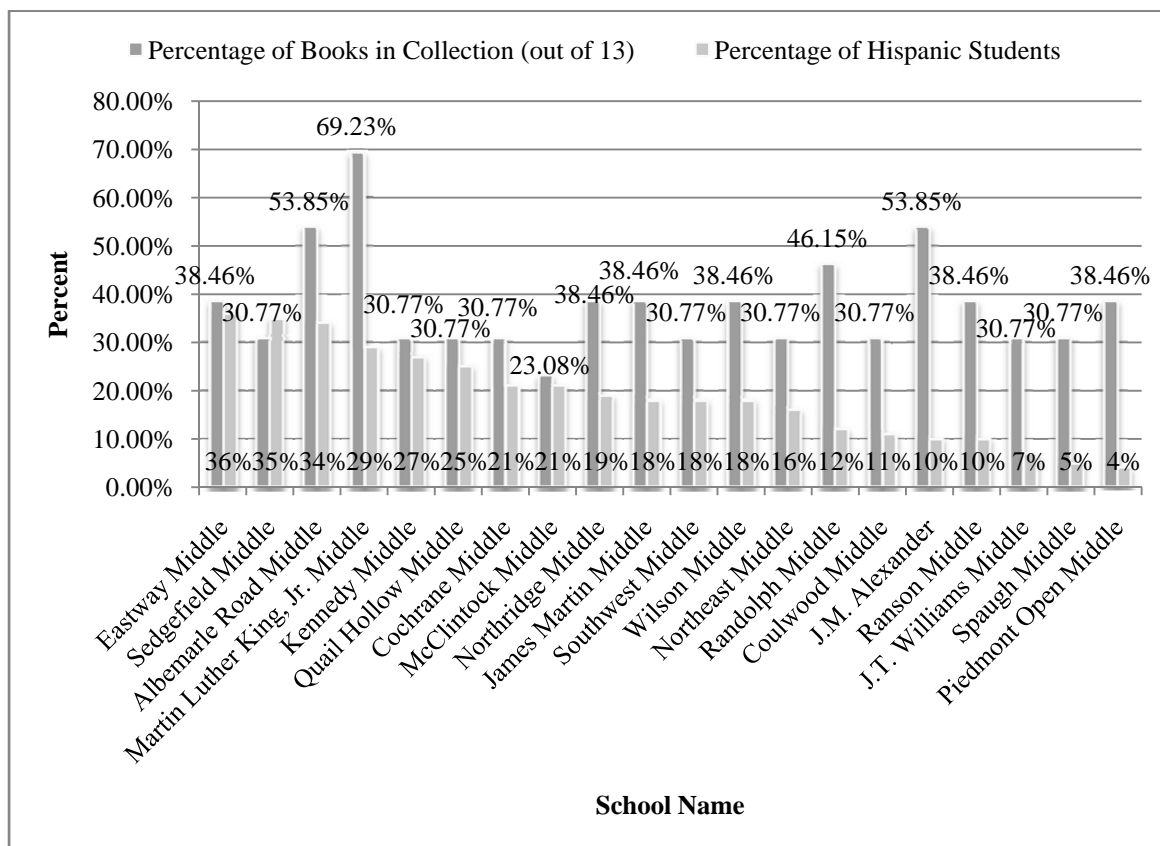
Of the titles available to students, it is also important to consider the number of copies each school has available. Every school except for James Martin had at least twice the number of unique titles available via multiple copies. However, there was no correlation between number of unique titles available and the total number of copies available. At most, Albemarle Road has an additional 30 copies of the 14 books searched for available in the media center. From all of the schools, majority of the duplicate copies were of *Romiette and Julio* and *Bronx Masquerade* which were on the Battle of the Books list.

Fiction with Hispanic characters

The percentage of Hispanic students in each of the schools ranged from 36% at Eastway to 4% at Piedmont Open. Table 13 shows the demographics of the schools and the data from the books searched. Figure 3 compare the percentage of Hispanic students at each school and the percentage of books found based on the titles searched.

Table 13

School Name	# of Unique Titles	# of Copies Available	% Unique Titles (out of 13)	% Hispanic Students	Total Enrollment	Total # Hispanic Students
Eastway Middle	5	8	38.46%	36%	920	331.2
Sedgefield Middle	4	10	30.77%	35%	427	149.45
Albemarle Road Middle	7	13	53.85%	34%	779	264.86
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	9	11	69.23%	29%	986	285.94
Kennedy Middle	4	6	30.77%	27%	660	178.2
Quail Hollow Middle	4	10	30.77%	25%	1004	251
Cochrane Middle	4	13	30.77%	21%	653	137.13
McClintock Middle	3	11	23.08%	21%	738	154.98
Northridge Middle	5	9	38.46%	19%	809	153.71
James Martin Middle	5	5	38.46%	18%	1356	244.08
Southwest Middle	4	8	30.77%	18%	1197	215.46
Wilson Middle	5	11	38.46%	18%	778	140.04
Northeast Middle	4	7	30.77%	16%	995	159.2
Randolph Middle	6	9	46.15%	12%	920	110.4
Coulwood Middle	4	7	30.77%	11%	1127	123.97
J.M. Alexander Middle	7	9	53.85%	10%	1522	152.2
Ranson Middle	5	12	38.46%	10%	1127	112.7
J.T. Williams Middle	4	12	30.77%	7%	614	42.98
Spaugh Middle	4	8	30.77%	5%	503	25.15
Piedmont Open Middle	5	10	38.46%	4%	979	39.16

Figure 3: Percentage of Books in the Collection and Percentage of Hispanic Students

Martin Luther King, Jr. had the most titles searched for at nine. Both Albemarle Road and J.M. Alexander had 7 of the 13 books searched for, and all other schools had fewer than 6. While Albemarle Road and J.M. Alexander had the same number of titles, they have vastly different numbers of Hispanic students. Albemarle Road has 34% Hispanic students and J.M. Alexander has 10%. The schools with the highest and lowest Hispanic student populations, Eastway and Piedmont Open, each had 5 of the 13 titles.

The majority of the books searched for were found in at least one of the school catalogs; only *Cinnamon Girl* by Juan Felipe Herrera and *A Different Kind of Heat* by Antonio Pagliarulo were not found in any of the collections. *Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez and *Call Me Maria* by Judith Ortiz Cofer were found in 19 of the 20

collections, and *The Tequila Worm* by Viola Canales and *Cuba 15* by Nancy Osa were found in all 20 collections. *Cuba 15* is on the 2008-2009 NCSLMA Battle of the Books list, and has been on the list in years past (North Carolina School Library Media Association 2009). Like the titles with African American characters, each of the books searched for was published recently (2002-2006) and were written by Hispanic authors. With the exception of the four titles mentioned above, only a few of the schools had the other recommended titles. Martin Luther King, Jr. was the only school with *Finding Miracles* and was one of two with *Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood* by Alire Saenz, *Finding Our Way: Stories* by Alex Saldana, and *So Hard to Say* by Rene Sanchez. While the percentage of books featuring Hispanic characters is low across all schools, the collections that serve a lower percentage of Hispanic students have considerable collections, relatively speaking. The schools with higher percentages of Hispanic students should have more resources available to allow these students to see themselves in the literature.

Again, it is important to consider the number of copies available to students. There was no real correlation between number of unique titles found and number of multiple copies, but ten of the schools with only 3-5 unique titles had twice the number of duplicate copies. Only James Martin did not have any duplicate copies. From all of the schools, majority of the duplicate copies were of *Cuba 15*, which is on the Battle of the Books list.

Street Lit

Of the 25 authors searched, only one school had any of the authors in their collection. Martin Luther King, Jr. had Sister Souljah's *The Coldest Winter Ever*.

The series titles searched for yielded varying results (see Table 14). None of the schools had the *Platinum Teen* series in their collection, and only Albemarle Road had the *Drama High* series. Of this series, Albemarle Road had four of the seven titles in the series, with the exception of the second book *Second Chance* and the most recent titles *Courtin' Jayd* and *Hustlin'*.

Table 14: *Bluford High* series results

School Name	# of Unique Titles	% of Titles (out of 15)	Number of Copies Available
Albemarle Road Middle	13	86.67%	45
Cochrane Middle	8	53.33%	14
Coulwood Middle	13	86.67%	133
Eastway Middle	9	60.00%	43
James Martin Middle	5	33.33%	9
J.M. Alexander	0	0.00%	0
J.T. Williams Middle	12	80.00%	32
Kennedy Middle	5	33.33%	20
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	0	0.00%	0
McClintock Middle	14	93.33%	73
Northeast Middle	12	80.00%	56
Northridge Middle	0	0.00%	0
Piedmont Open Middle	8	53.33%	11
Quail Hollow Middle	1	6.67%	1
Randolph Middle	7	46.67%	10
Ranson Middle	13	86.67%	53
Sedgefield Middle	10	66.67%	10
Southwest Middle	11	73.33%	26
Spaugh Middle	15	100.00%	57
Wilson Middle	11	73.33%	15

The *Bluford High* Series produced much different results. Only J.M. Alexander, Martin Luther King, Jr., Northridge, and Quail Hollow middle schools did not have any

books in the series. Albemarle Road, Coulwood, and Ranson each have the entire series with the exception of the last two books, *No Way Out* and *Schooled*, both published in 2009. McClintock had all of the books with the exception of *No Way Out*. Only Spaugh had the complete collection. Of the remaining schools, there was some consistency with the books in the series that were and were not collected.

Of the individual street lit titles searched for, only eight of the 20 schools had any of the seven titles in their collections. Albemarle Road and Spaugh had two titles each, and J.T. Williams, Martin Luther King, Jr., Peidmont Open, Randolph, and Wilson each had one title. Of the seven titles searched for, the schools had the same three titles in their collections. *Imani in Never Say Goodbye* by Jackie Hardrick was present in two collections, *Brother Hood* by Janet McDonald was present in five collections, and *Tyrell* by Coe Booth was in six of the collections searched.

Table 15: Individual Street Lit Titles

School Name	# of Unique Titles Found	% of Titles (out of 7)	# of Copies Available
Albemarle Road Middle	2	28.57%	3
Cochrane Middle	0	0.00%	0
Coulwood Middle	0	0.00%	0
Eastway Middle	0	0.00%	0
James Martin Middle	0	0.00%	0
J.M. Alexander	0	0.00%	0
J.T. Williams Middle	1	14.29%	1
Kennedy Middle	0	0.00%	0
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	1	14.29%	1
McClintock Middle	0	0.00%	0
Northeast Middle	1	14.29%	1
Northridge Middle	1	14.29%	1
Piedmont Open Middle	0	0.00%	0
Quail Hollow Middle	0	0.00%	0
Randolph Middle	1	14.29%	1
Ranson Middle	0	0.00%	0
Sedgefield Middle	0	0.00%	0
Southwest Middle	0	0.00%	0
Spaugh Middle	2	28.57%	2
Wilson Middle	1	14.29%	1

Based on these findings, it seems that street literature is lacking a presence in these collections. While many of the schools have taken the initiative to collect the *Bluford High* series, some have not even collected this series. One of the benefits of this series in particular is that the content is somewhat mature, the text is written at a 6-8th grade reading level (Townsend Press 2009). This makes the series ideal for a middle school reluctant reader who may be struggling with less engaging, more difficult reading materials. One reason these books may not be present in these middle school collections is the general opinion that street lit is too violent and graphic for a young audience. Among schools that collected any part of the *Bluford High* series, nine did not have *The Gun* and/or *Search for Safety*, and six did not have *The Fallen* and/or *Shattered*. One reason these books may be excluded from the collections are the content matter. While

not necessarily more perverse than the other titles in the series, this may be one reason for the trend of not having these titles. It is also important to note that three of these four books are sequels to another in the series. Not having the titles that continue the story of earlier books may not be providing readers the materials they want. Both Coulwood and McClintock have class sets of most of the books in the series, including the four titles not included in many of the collections. This may be a good solution to include all books in the series in the collection, as providing the resources for whole-class discussion may allows students to read the books in a supervised setting. At the same time, if students want to read these books on their own time, having only a class set will not meet that need.

While the provocative nature of street lit may be apparent a quick glance, there is much more meaning in the books when these acts are contextualized within the plot as a whole. For example, many of these books allow readers to make their own judgments about the decisions characters make and teach meaningful lessons through the story (Morris et al. 2006; Wright 2006). Given that the schools studied are located in an urban area and most of the schools have a majority of economically disadvantaged students, these books should appeal to these readers.

Nonfiction

The number of relevant nonfiction titles varies from school to school. In general, there is not a correlation between the number of relevant titles and total student enrollment. While J.M. Alexander has the highest student population, they have only the 10th highest number of relevant nonfiction titles. This is behind J.T. Williams and

McClintock, who have student populations of 614 and 738, respectively. Table 16 shows the number of relevant titles for each category as well as the range, and the total student enrollment of each school.

Table 16: Nonfiction Results

School Name	Music	Sports	Fashion	Actors	Total	Total Enrollment
J.M. Alexander	27	114	6	28	175	1522
James Martin Middle	50	238	13	35	336	1356
Southwest Middle	25	121	6	28	180	1197
Coulwood Middle	14	144	12	30	200	1127
Ranson Middle	62	74	4	22	162	1127
Quail Hollow Middle	31	169	3	29	232	1004
Northeast Middle	13	40	4	6	63	995
Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle	28	186	13	29	256	986
Piedmont Open Middle	34	55	4	38	131	979
Eastway Middle	49	139	11	12	211	920
Randolph Middle	18	52	4	4	78	920
Northridge Middle	32	42	4	26	104	809
Albemarle Road Middle	48	137	9	9	203	779
Wilson Middle	20	87	9	6	122	778
McClintock Middle	19	157	4	19	199	738
Kennedy Middle	26	68	3	11	108	660
Cochrane Middle	26	81	9	13	129	653
J.T. Williams Middle	25	137	11	15	188	614
Spaugh Middle	16	80	11	8	115	503
Sedgefield Middle	16	84	12	5	117	427
Range	13-62	40-238	3-13	4-38	63-336	

Music titles that were found often featured modern singers and rap artists, and often gave an overview of a specific music genre such as hip hop, reggae, or rock music. Many schools had series on rap artists that were published in the past few years, highlighting popular musicians. Ranson, for example, has a series on rap artists published by Mason Crest Publishers and featuring artists such as Chris Brown, Jay-Z,

and Ludacris. Almost all of the schools had a series on how to start a band, including titles such as *Booking a First Gig* and *Forming a Band*.

Sports titles were the most abundant in all of the collections; every school searched had more sports books than the other categories. There was a surprising number of extreme sports related books in all of the collections. For 10 of the schools searched, extreme sports made up approximately 25-50% of their relevant sports books. The majority of the books about extreme sports belonged to a series and included topics such as skateboarding, BMX, and snowboarding. Also included in the series were less popular sports such as kiteboarding, barefoot waterskiing, and ice climbing. Also commonly found in sports collections were series following the history of a specific team or league (the American League West in the NFL, for example).

Fashion books were not abundant in any of the collections. Most of the schools had books exploring the fashion industry as a potential career and a few had biographies of famous designers such as Vera Wang or Russell Simmons. A few schools had a series from Capstone Press that looks at different areas of the fashion industry. Titles from this series include *Fashion Design School: Learning the Skills to Succeed* and *Fashion Modeling: Being Beautiful, Selling Clothes*.

Titles featuring actors were often outdated and were often not about actors that would be of interest to urban teens. For example, Coulwood had a biography on Elijah Wood published in 2004. While this book fits the criteria established and may be of interest to some teens (especially those following the *Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy), this book may not appeal to a majority of teens. Many of the collections featured

multiple titles on the same artist. Northridge, for example, had multiple biographies on Cameron Diaz, Jennifer Lopez, and Oprah Winfrey.

Magazines

Even though only 10 of the 20 schools had magazine collection information available, there was still a wide range of the magazines offered in the middle school media centers. On average, each school subscribed to 21 magazines. From the 10 schools with information available, there were 98 separate titles the schools subscribed to. Of these 98 titles, 6 were for children (ex: *Your Big Backyard*, *Click*, *Cobblestone*), 15 were specifically for teens (ex: *American Cheerleader*, *Current Health*, *Intune*, *Seventeen*), and 14 were for both children and teens (ex: *Sports Illustrated for Kids*, *Right On*, *Girl's Life*, *Boy's Life*). Table 17 shows the magazines that four or more libraries subscribed to. Of these 19 titles, only 3 are explicitly for teens; 5 would appeal to both children and teenage audiences.

Table 17: Magazine data

Magazine Title	# of Schools with Subscriptions	For teens or children?
<i>Shonen Jump</i>	9	No
<i>Girl's Life</i>	8	Both, ages 10-15
<i>Six78th</i>	7	Teens
<i>Sports Illustrated for Kids</i>	7	Both, ages 8 and up
<i>Faces</i>	6	Children, for "young readers"
<i>J-14</i>	6	Teens
<i>National Geographic</i>	6	No
<i>Newsweek</i>	6	No
<i>Motor Trend</i>	5	No
<i>Our State Magazine (NC)</i>	5	No
<i>American Cheerleader</i>	4	Teens
<i>Boy's Life</i>	4	Both, "for all boys"
<i>Cobblestone</i>	4	Children, for "young history buffs"
<i>Discovery for Girls</i>	4	Both, ages 8 and up
<i>Dog Fancy</i>	4	No
<i>Ebony</i>	4	No
<i>Kids Discover</i>	4	Children, ages 8-12
<i>Nick</i>	4	Both
<i>Transworld Skateboarding</i>	4	No

Only 10 magazines specifically appealed to black and Hispanic audiences.

American Legacy, *Ebony*, *Jet*, *Right On*, and *Hype Hair* are geared toward black audiences, and *Iguana*, *LaTeen Magazine*, *National Geographic en Espanol*, *People en Espanol*, and *Hispanic Magazine* focus on Hispanic audiences. Of these titles, only two are targeted directly at teens. Two of the Hispanic titles are Spanish language translations of popular English magazines. Table 18 shows which schools had these magazines and includes the demographic breakdown for each school.

Table 18: Magazines for African American and Hispanic students

School Name	% Black Students	# Magazines for Audience	% Hispanic Students	# Magazines for Audience	# Other Magazines
Albemarle Road Middle	55%	1	34%	4	23
Eastway Middle	48%	1	36%	2	27
McClintock Middle	63%	2	21%	1	22
Northeast Middle	44%	1	16%	0	18
Piedmont Open Middle	72%	0	4%	0	20
Quail Hollow Middle	40%	1	25%	1	17
Randolph Middle	55%	0	12%	0	14
Ranson Middle	81%	1	10%	0	15
Southwest Middle	46%	0	18%	0	19
Spaugh Middle	90%	3	5%	0	21

Spaugh has the highest percentage of African American students and also has the most magazines for this population. Eastway and Albemarle Road have the highest percentage of Hispanic students have two and four magazines, respectively, that are specifically for a Hispanic audience. Again, given the high percentages of African American students in the schools studied, there should be many more magazine resources available to these students. Piedmont Open, Randolph, and Southwest have almost 50% or more African American students, yet they do not have any magazines that are targeted at African Americans.

There are many magazines that would not seem to appeal to a middle school audience at all. *Cooking Light*, *Better Homes and Gardens*, and *Prevention* magazines were present in at least one school's collection and are probably meant to serve as leisure reading for the teachers at the school. While the teachers are an audience that needs to be considered, this money could be better spent on professional journals or on more magazines for the students.

Internet resources

Very few of the media centers used their webpages to provide resources for pleasure reading. Six of the schools (Coulwood, James Martin, J.M. Alexander, Kennedy, Spaugh and Wilson) did not have a page specifically for the media center. Of the 12 remaining schools, none of the schools had links to e-books or other online reading materials, or provided lists of recommended books. Some of the schools had reading encouragement information on the webpage. Three mentioned taking part in Scholastic's Reading Counts program, Eastway provided a PowerPoint presentation showing students building a reading garden, and six of schools had information about Battle of the Books, a book competition hosted by the North Carolina School Library Media Association. Only two of the school libraries provided links to the public library and their programs. J.T. Williams linked to BookHive, the Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County's children's literature guide, and Quail Hollow linked to Library Loft, the public library's teen website.

Limitations

There are many limitations to this study that could be avoided in future studies. First, searches on the online catalog were limited to the reliability of the catalog; if materials were not properly input into the cataloging system, they did not show up in this study. Second, this study included all materials as long as they were present in the catalog. In other words, missing or lost items were included in the counts. Excluding missing or lost items may change the outcome of this study. For example, if the materials are missing, students are not able to check them out for leisure reading. Additionally, the

study does not consider whether the recommended materials actually meet the interest of the students in each school. Student demographic information alone does not provide a complete picture of student interests; however, it does provide a non-invasive look into each community.

Conclusions

In order to encourage teens in low-income urban environments to read, school library media centers need to provide more materials that appeal to them. In general, the materials indicated as desirable to urban teens in other studies were not heavily represented in the 20 catalogs canvassed. Shortcomings and recommendations are discussed below.

Manga, graphic novel, and comic book collections were generally lacking. Most of the schools did not collect the majority of the manga series searched for, nor did they collect other series. Interestingly, nine of the ten schools with magazine data subscribed to *Shonen Jump*, a magazine about Japanese animation and manga. This indicates that media specialists are aware of manga's popularity, but still do not heavily collect these titles. While this could be because of a lack of funding, these collections should be more developed. Media centers with *Shonen Jump* in their collection can use it as a resource guide to learn more about these materials.

The number of fiction titles with African American and Hispanic characters was low given the number of African American and Hispanic students attending the 20 schools. Based on the data, none of schools seemed to base collection development decisions on the racial make-up of their students. The titles searched for were all

published in the past 10 years, yet only some of the titles were available in the media centers studied. Given the newness of the titles, their absence from the collections may mean many things. Budgetary restrictions may have kept media specialists from purchasing new books. While this is a viable reason for not having some of the titles, purchasing 24 titles over 10 years would not be a huge part of the budget. Schools may not have these specific titles because they have purchased books that fulfill the same community need. There was no way to account for the purchase of similar titles in this study, and may be an aspect that was overlooked in creating the method used in this study. These possibilities aside, the research more definitively indicates that media specialists may not be actively collecting materials that would appeal to these demographics. Using resources such as *Serving Urban Teens* (Brehm-Heeger, 2008), *MultiCultural Review*, and *Criticas* would provide media specialists with reviews of multicultural titles that may make good additions to their collections.

Street lit is another aspect of these collections that should be concentrated on. Young adult street lit is meant specifically for urban teens, yet only one series searched for was prevalent in the schools' catalogs. Given that this genre is intended for the students these schools serve, it would seem logical that media centers would provide these items for student use. While the subject matter of these books may seem perverse at a cursory glance, the lessons learned and realistic depictions of living in an urban environment would be beneficial to these readers. Media specialists should spend time reading these books to determine their relevance in the collection.

As a whole, the nonfiction sections studied have materials that may be of some interest to urban teens. However, the content of these collections shows that they need to

be maintained on a regular basis. One of the problems with looking at a school's nonfiction section for popular materials is that these books are quickly outdated. Even though this study focused on the past 10 years, many music artists and actors will seem irrelevant to students today. For example, in 1999 *Dawson's Creek* was a popular television show for teens. Many of the schools searched had biographies for actors featured on this show, such as Katie Holmes. Not only is Katie Holmes not on a popular teenage television show, but her biography has changed drastically since. In order to have these books as part of a collection, weeding irrelevant and incorrect titles is vitally important.

As a whole, the magazine offerings at these middle schools do not seem to be supporting the leisure reading needs of their audience. To have only 35 titles for children or teens and only 15 specifically intended for teens out of 98 total titles does not seem reasonable in a middle school library setting. While there are magazines in each collection that support the curriculum or a sports interest, there should be more magazines specifically for the age group and demographic being served.

Media center websites are not being used at all to promote leisure reading. This is an underutilized resource that could be of great value to the students. Putting thematic reading lists, new titles, and student recommendations on the media center website would allow students to use this as a supplement to the online catalog to search for leisure reading materials. This would be especially helpful for readers who may not want to approach the media specialist for assistance in choosing reading material, but who would get help passively. Students can also access the media center webpage from home, allowing them to get recommendations when they are not in the media center. Linking to

the public library websites is another simple, yet powerful way of providing access to leisure reading materials.

While some attempts have been made to provide leisure reading materials for urban adolescents, it seems that these 20 school library media centers have fallen short of this goal. As a whole, the literature shows a positive correlation between leisure reading and academic performance (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1991; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999; Stanovich, 1986), and that students prefer reading certain materials about specific subjects more than others (Coles & Hall, 2002; Hopper, 2005; Ivey & Broaddus, 2001; Worthy et al., 1999). Because of the link between urbanicity, socioeconomic status and low reading performance and the link between leisure reading and higher academic performance, it seems logical to encourage leisure reading among low-income urban students. However, studies have also shown that students in low-income areas have less access to print materials and get majority of their materials from the school library (Hughes-Hassell & Rodge, 2007; Moje et al., 2008; Neuman & Celano, 2001). In order for these students to have access to print materials that they like to read, the school library needs to represent these preferences within its collection. Magazine collections should be geared towards the teens in the school. Nonfiction collections should be weeded of outdated materials as a standard practice, but particular attention should be paid to sections that students would read in their leisure time. Fiction sections should include modern titles and should show the faces of the students being served. Media specialists should explore genres like manga, graphic novels, and comic books and should encourage students to read these materials. Street lit should be a thriving part of these collections. Media center websites should also encourage reading for pleasure by

providing information about desirable materials in the collection. Perhaps most importantly, media specialists need to consider not only the needs of their readers, but their wants and preferences in collection development.

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