GENDER DIFFERENCES IN READING PREFERENCE: EVIDENCE FROM A MOBILE PHONE PLATFORM

Kelly de Villiers
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Cape Town, South Africa
kellydevilliers123@gmail.com

Johann Louw
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Cape Town, South Africa
johann.louw@uct.ac.za

Colin Tredoux
Department of Psychology
University of Cape Town
Cape Town, South Africa
colin.tredoux@uct.ac.za

ABSTRACT

Two studies were conducted to investigate gender differences in a sample of young South African readers from poor communities. In the first study, the self-reported reading preferences of 2 775 readers on a mobile phone platform supplied by the FunDza Literacy Trust were surveyed. Both male and female readers indicated that they liked four genres in particular: romance, drama, non-fiction, and stories with specific South African content. There were nevertheless some differences, such as that a higher percentage of males liked stories

involving sport. The second study examined the unique FunDza site visits made by readers, as a proxy measure of what they actually were reading. Four genres stood out: romance, drama, biography, and action/adventure. Again the similarity between male and female readers was noticeable, although many more females than males read content on the site.

Keywords: gender, reading preferences, enjoyment, reading content, literacy, mobile phone technology

1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that male learners perform more poorly on tests of reading achievement than female learners (Machet 2002; Van der Berg 2008). Van der Berg (2008), for example, found that male school children in 14 African countries perform significantly worse than females on reading tasks, regardless of socio-economic status. One possible reason for this disparity is that males engage less frequently in self-initiated reading for leisure (Clark 2011). Engagement in turn is a key factor in males' reading performance, as indicated in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted in several countries (Brozo, Shiel and Topping 2008). Krashen (2004, 7) has gone further, and links free voluntary reading and literacy achievement quite explicitly: 'the relationship between reported free voluntary reading and literacy development is not always large, but it is remarkably consistent'.

Many young South Africans find it difficult to access reading material that engages and holds their interest. In under-resourced communities, public libraries are often far away, and difficult to access; schools typically do not have adequate library facilities; and the costs involved in purchasing books personally are very high, and thus many young people do not have a variety of books to read.

Mobile phones are increasingly seen as a viable way to provide reading content to young people who are interested in reading but who have limited access to books. Mobile phone technology is extensively used in South Africa (Aker and Mbiti 2010). Kreutzer (2009) surveyed high school students in a Cape Town township school, and found that 97 per cent of them reported using a mobile phone on the previous day. At least two non-profit organisations (NGOs) have developed projects to deliver reading materials to young people via this medium. One is the m4Lit project, funded by the Shuttleworth Foundation to establish whether 'm-novels' (novels accessed via a mobile phone) are viable alternatives to printed literature (Vosloo 2010). The study found that m-novels attracted over 60 000 reads and over 30 000 comments, suggesting that mobile phone-based reading is becoming popular and offers potential for the future.

The second NGO, the FunDza Literacy Trust (hereafter FunDza 2014), is the one of interest for the present study. FunDza was established in 2011 to address

some of the problems with accessing reading content mentioned above, with the aim of increasing literacy skills. It provides readers with locally-written material in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu, Sesotho, siSwati and Sepedi through the mobile social application Mxit, or through FunDza's website (http://www.fundza.co.za). Mxit was chosen as a platform because it is especially popular amongst the youth; according to Nielsen Southern Africa (2011), 61 per cent of mobile users reported using it. It furthermore works on a wide range of mobile phones, including older 'non-smartphone' models, so that users from poorer communities with basic mobile phones can access the readings.

There is evidence from FunDza's own monitoring data that males access the material less frequently than females, and read less material in total. Machet (2002) sampled approximately 2 000 school children in Gauteng from Grade 5 to Grade 10 and established that males read significantly less than females overall. Martino's (2001, 61) summary finding in Canada may apply equally to South African readers: 'These males reject reading and define it in opposition to practices that they find more enjoyable and worthwhile.' Pottorff, Phelps-Zientarski and Skovera (1996) have suggested lack of male role models for this pattern, as mothers tend to read books as much as ten times more than fathers. Furthermore, reading environments, such as school reading groups and recreational book clubs, are often uncomfortable to males, because of the more sedentary and self-reflective nature of such activities (Sullivan 2004).

Furthermore, the types of books that males prefer reading are not commonly selected by librarians and teachers, who are mostly female and select more female appropriate content (Sullivan 2004; Weih 2008). In Millard's (1997) study, males reported a preference for discussing certain types of reading content in classroom reading discussions, such as computer and hobby magazines, as well as comic books, and these were discouraged by teachers. Males are also less likely to cross gender boundaries in reading content than females (Dutro 2002; Merisuo-Storm 2006), which adds to the problem that the content males prefer is less available. The author Jon Scieszka launched a literacy initiative to address issues like these, to 'get guys to read' (see the web site www.guysread.com).

Chiu and McBride-Chang (2006) found that enjoyment accounted for 42 per cent of the gender difference in reading achievement; thus, the challenge for programmes like FunDza is to find ways to entice more males to 'read-for-enjoyment' as a leisure activity. One way to do this is to develop reading content that is particularly attractive to young males, and that would motivate them to start reading, or to read more if they were already interested in reading.

Information about men's reading preferences in the South African context is rather limited. From studies elsewhere we know what males typically like to read. Gurian and Henley (2001) found that males enjoy content which is multi-sensory and practically engaging, such as books containing pictures (e.g. comic books),

or having a higher likelihood of adventure, horror, or practical advice. Similarly, Sullivan (2004) and Weih (2008) found that males enjoy reading fantasy, science fiction, adventure and comic books. Gurian and Henley (2001) also found that more males than females prefer non-fiction, but Clark and Foster (2005) indicated that their male participants enjoy certain types of fiction as much as females do.

We thus set out in the present study to examine gender differences in a sample of young South African readers from poorer communities, in terms of their self-reports on reading preferences, but also in terms of what they actually read according to computer records kept by FunDza. Our primary interest was a practical one: to assist the organisation in tailoring reading content that would interest males. In addition, the study results ought to throw light on the nature of gender differences regarding reading material, especially as we were able to include information about actual reading behaviour in the analysis.

2.   METHOD

The study consisted of two parts: in the first, we examined the reported reading content preferences of male and female adolescents via a brief online survey. In the second part, the reading behaviour of visitors was explored via an analysis of visits to the online reading website.

2.1. Participants

For the first part of the study, all male and female users of the FunDza reading programme were asked to complete an online survey. A total of 2 775 readers (males = 661; females = 2 113) responded, but since we were primarily interested in young readers, only the responses of 1 638 (358 males and 1 280 females) readers between the ages of 13 and 19 years were analysed.

In the second part, 12 436 males and 28 450 females were identified as falling within the appropriate age group (between the ages of 13 and 19 years), and as having visited the FunDza reading site within a specific six-month period in 2014.

2.2. Questionnaire

A brief, simple questionnaire was desired, as we delivered the survey to participants through the same Mxit platform that they were using to read the stories, and limitations exist in regard to completing a questionnaire on a mobile phone. For example, the questions can take a long time to load, especially on older phones, and the users may also get bored or distracted if the questionnaire is too long, as they may be completing it in a busy space.

The participants were presented with ten genres, chosen partly on the basis of Clark and Foster's (2005) survey in the United Kingdom (the items are given in the

Appendix), and were asked to rate each of them on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 'really like' to 'really don't like'.

2.3. Procedure

For the first part of the study, FunDza sent out the questionnaire in the last week of July 2014, offering respondents the opportunity to win a prize by lottery, as incentive. After completion of the questionnaire, participants were entered into a draw to win 1 000 Mxit Moola, an online currency which could be exchanged for books, for example. The questionnaire was available on the Mxit site for two weeks, after which it was taken down.

For the second part of the study, the aim was to rank the stories on the FunDza site in terms of the number of visits they received from males and females during the six months: FunDza keeps a record of user log files in the form of uniform resource locators (URLs). Thus, two lists containing the URLs were generated by the NGO: one for males, and one for females. For each URL, the researchers also received information about the visit date and time; the Mxit user's identity number; as well as the user's country, city, date of birth, and gender. Some URLs were deleted, such as those that reflected visits to the home or contact pages, or error pages. After these deletions, we were left with 1 348 735 URLs for females and 261 858 URLs for males.

2.4. Ethical considerations

The study was approved by the Ethics Review Committee of the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Cape Town. The major ethical concern involved potential invasion of privacy working with online log files. FunDza provided us with only two possible identifiers, namely, date of birth and unique Mxit identity number. It was not possible for the researchers to identify individual readers from this information. Furthermore, according to the Electronic Code of Federal Regulations in the United States, these fall under the category of 'Directory Information', which is not considered harmful to the user if disclosed (Privacy Technical Assistance Center 2014).

Mxit furthermore has a privacy policy that states that the users' visits to the site may be used in research, but that their identities will be protected, and Mxit users agree to this when downloading the application. In addition, Mxit has an agreement with the applications (such as FunDza) that user statistics may be used for research on the condition that users' identities are protected.

The brief questionnaire included only questions about reading preferences, with no questions about sensitive issues. Readers responded on a completely voluntary basis, and again the researchers could not identify respondents from the data. Also, FunDza frequently sends such surveys to its users for marketing and research

purposes, to receive feedback from its users for improving its reading programme. This particular survey was thus very similar to the usual FunDza surveys.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Part 1: Questionnaire

The first finding of note (see Table 1) was that male and female readers liked four genres in particular: romance, drama, non-fiction, and stories with specific South African content.

Initial analyses of responses to the questionnaire items revealed that the data distributions were considerably skewed, and we therefore treated the data as categorical rather than continuous, and used Chi-square analyses to examine possible gender differences. Table 1 contains the results of these tests for each of the ten genres we asked about, arranged from largest to smallest effect sizes: effect sizes were considered more important information than significant tests in the present study, due to the relatively large sample sizes, which tend to render even small effects statistically significant. Significant differences (at least at the $p < .05$ level) were found for all but the South African genre, but with small effect sizes. The tables containing the actual percentages are too detailed to warrant inclusion here, but we discuss the most significant ones for each genre.

Table 1:   Inferential tests and effect sizes for contingency tables assessing the differential distribution of gender across reading genres

Genre	Chi-square	Female % positive ratings	Male % positive ratings	Cramer's V
Sport	181.50*	11.2	37.4	0.333[4]
Romance	60.75*	86.2	69.3	0.193[3]
Drama	43.47*	81.0	66.2	0.163[2]
Science fiction	18.39**	23.8	24.0	0.106[2]
Non-fiction	13.41**	76.0	66.8	0.090[1]
News	12.09**	43.7	48.9	0.086[1]
Action/Adventure	11.03**	46.3	53.6	0.082[1]
Fiction	10.36**	42.5	37.2	0.080[1]
Biography	9.99**	40.8	40.2	0.078[1]
South African	6.07	68.3	69.3	n/a

[1]Very small effect size; [2]Small effect size; [3]Relatively small effect size; [4]Medium effect size
*p < 0.001; **p < 0.05
df = 4 for all Chi-square tests reported here

The strongest gender difference emerged for stories involving **sport**, which was rated positively by a much higher percentage of males than females. The difference was statistically significant, with Cramer's V indicating a medium effect size. This was also the genre that most females 'dislike', as 36.3 per cent indicated either 'don't like' or 'really don't like' it.

As expected, a high percentage (86.2%) of females rated **romance** as a genre they 'really like', but so did 69.3 per cent of males (as indicated, all gender differences we remark on here were statistically significant). A similar pattern emerged for **drama**: 81 per cent of females rated drama as a genre they 'really like', in comparison to 66.2 per cent of males. **Science fiction** did not receive high ratings from both groups; in fact, it was rated quite negatively (42% of males and 32% of females indicated that they 'don't like it'). Both groups viewed **non-fiction** quite positively: 76 per cent of females and 66.8 per cent of males reported that they 'really like' the genre. Similarly, the participants reported that they 'really like' stories involving **action/ adventure** (53.6% of males and 46.3% of females), **fiction** (42.5% of females and 37.2% of males), and **news** (48.9% of males and 43.7% of females). Although males and females did not differ in their liking for South African stories, both groups liked this genre a lot: 69.3 per cent of males and 68.3 per cent of females gave 'really like' responses.

3.2. Part 2: Webpage visits

For the webpage visits, we followed a conservative strategy to reduce possible errors in assessing access to the stories. For a start, we counted unique visitors, via their Mxit identities, rather than URLs. Some stories had more chapters than others, so if a user visited multiple chapters of one story, it would show more visits to it than stories without multiple chapters, or stories with fewer chapters. In addition, we removed multiple visits by an individual reader to particular stories. This gave us 346 226 visits from females, and 69 247 visits from males to analyse.

It is a weakness of the study that the URLs simply indicate visits to a story, and thus at most an interest in a story. How far into, or how much of a story was read, could not be determined, and thus we do not know how many pages were read. This in theory could be possible to determine, but in practice would require a tremendous amount of manual capturing of data.

Two lists were constructed, one for males and one for females, each containing the 25 stories with the most visits, ranked in descending order of number of visits. Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient (r_s) was used to determine the extent to which the top 25 stories were correlated for males and females (in total there were 28 stories, because the lists did not correspond exactly). This indicated a strong positive correlation between the two lists: $r_s = .73$, $t(26) = 5.49$, $p < 0.01$.

The most visited stories were then categorised according to: content type (book, short story/article, poetry/plays); fiction/non-fiction; genre (sports, news/information, biography, science fiction/fantasy, comedy, religious, romance, drama, and action/ adventure); and South African (yes or no). The categorisations were based in large part on the questionnaire genres to see if the visits were consistent with the reported preferences, discussed above. Table 2 tabulates visits to stories by male and female readers, according to category and genre.

Table 2:   Percentage visits by males and females to sites containing different types of stories

	Male % (*n*)	Female % (*n*)
Category		
Books	61.8 (13 778)	66.4 (77 710)
Short stories/Articles	34.3 (7 632)	31.6 (36 991)
Poetry/Plays	3.9 (870)	2.0 (2 374)
Genre		
Drama	62.2 (13 501)	63.1 (65 224)
Romance	20.4 (4 440)	19.7 (20 345)
Biography	15.0 (1 640)	9.0 (9 275)
Action/Adventure	5.9 (1 273)	6.0 (6 176)
Fiction/Non-fiction		
Fiction	86.3 (19 217)	88.7 (91 745)
Non-fiction	9.8 (2 193)	9.0 (9 275)
Other	3.9 (870)	2.3 (2 274)
South African		
South African	94.2 (20 989)	94.7 (97 940)
Non-South African	5.8 (1 291)	5.3 (5 455)

Note: *Percentages calculated within each gender*

Table 3 contains the results of the Chi-square analyses to examine gender differences in terms of how males and females visited these stories.

Table 3:   Chi-square statistics for type of story cross-tabulated with gender

Type of story	Chi-square	df	Cramer's V[1]
Category	383.31*	2	0.052
Genre	251.76*	4	0.045
Fiction/Non-fiction	211.86*	2	0.041
South African	9.70**	1	0.009

[1]*All effect sizes small*
* p < 0.001; **p < 0.05

In summary, we can say the following about the results reported in tables 2 and 3:

- All the analyses showed significant differences between males and females, but with small effect sizes.
- Females visited sites containing books more often, with a higher percentage of males visiting shorter pieces of writing, such as short stories and poetry.
- The most popular genres for both males and females were: drama, romance, biography, and action/adventure. (These are the only ones presented here, as the numbers for the other categories were too low to be comparable.)
- Clearly both groups much preferred reading fiction rather than non-fiction. This contradicts the findings in Table 1, where those who responded to the survey indicated that they liked non-fiction more than fiction.
- Overall, South African content was overwhelmingly preferred to non-South African content by both males and females.

4. DISCUSSION

The results firstly indicate that many more females (n = 28 450) read content on the site than males (n = 12 436), which is consistent with the literature regarding reading engagement (Martino 2001; McKenna, Kear and Ellsworth 1995; Millard 1997; Smith and Wilhelm 2002). It would also be in line with Machet's (2002) South African finding that males read significantly less than females overall.

The overall patterns we established are clear, and sometimes quite surprising. In terms of actual visits to web pages, the similarity in the rankings of site visits between females and males is quite striking. Not only were the most visited stories highly correlated, but both groups preferred books over other categories. In terms of the genre, males and females preferred drama and romance; followed by biography and action/adventure; they read much more fiction than non-fiction; and they showed a strong preference for content with a South African flavour.

The readers' preference for the South African genre deserves a brief comment. The analysis of both the survey data and the website visits confirmed that the readers 'really like' these stories. For instance, one of the most popular stories was a drama written in Xhosa. It received 535 unique male visitors and 1 340 unique female visitors for the period. Stories in other South African languages were also well supported: for example, a Zulu drama received 938 unique female visitors and 376 unique male visitors, and an Afrikaans children's story received 171 unique female visitors and 47 unique male visitors. In the m4Lit project discussed earlier, an evaluation of a Xhosa 'm-novel' provided evidence of the popularity of multi-lingual content among South African youths (Walton 2010). Thus, it is not only gender that is an important factor in reading behaviour, but also the potential of multi-lingual reading content to draw young readers into this activity.

The responses to the questionnaire, about what readers would prefer to read, did not differ much from the picture that emerged from the visits to the website. For both groups romance was the genre that got the highest percentage of 'really like' ratings, followed by drama, non-fiction, South African (although in slightly different order for males and females). It was notable that males seemed to enjoy the genres of drama and romance, a result that is not typically found in the literature (Sullivan 2004; Weih 2008).

Despite these similarities, some statistically significant differences between males and females did emerge in the preferences they expressed. We caution, however, against over-interpretation of these findings, as the effect sizes found in the present study were on average quite small. The largest effect size (.33) was established in males' preference for reading about sport. Nevertheless, although males preferred reading about sport over females, fewer of them rated sport as a genre they 'really like' when compared to romance and drama. Also, in terms of actual reading on the site by males, 62.2 per cent of the top 25 story visits were visits to drama stories, by far the most popular genre for males on this measure. More females visited drama stories than males, and rated the category more highly in terms of what they liked. For romance, a slightly higher percentage of males visited stories in this category than females. The questionnaire results showed a different trend, in that females rated romance higher than males. Perhaps Clark and Foster's (2005) work comes closest to our findings on sport, drama and romance: they found that females preferred content, such as romance and poetry, whereas males preferred content with sport and war/spy-related themes.

One possible explanation for the findings is that there is a limited variety of content available on the FunDza site. The majority of the content does seem to be fiction, drama and romance (female-appropriate content according to the literature), which could have, and probably did, play a role in the appearance of these types of content in the top 25 ranked stories. However, if males disliked certain types of content enough, and preferred other types, they could find those on the site, regardless

of them being fewer in number. Data on how long the readers stayed with a particular story would have helped to interpret this finding, since it could be that males skipped through a number of genres to finally settle on something to read. There is also the possibility that males might have been so eager to read that they would engage with content that was not their first choice. These explanations would have been more feasible if the survey results reflected a quite different picture to what was seen in the site visits, but this was not the case. Males also reported romance, drama and fiction as the genres they liked most on the survey. Martino (2001) suggests that within male peer groups it is not considered masculine behaviour to 'read', but much more information will be needed to address that question. For example: Is it possible that reading material on a mobile phone is easier to 'hide' from one's male peers, and thus escape that particular peer pressure? The fact that fewer males participated in this online reading programme would caution against ambitious interpretations. Perhaps the best that could be said at this stage is that among a group of young male readers there seemed to be very few differences in their reading preferences when compared to their female counterparts. But we still do not know what would account for the fact that males read a lot less in total than females.

The results on the fiction/non-fiction preferences of males and females are mixed. A higher percentage of both males and females indicated that they liked non-fiction, compared to fiction. The percentage of women liking non-fiction was higher than that for males, but a higher percentage of them also liked fiction more than men. Despite this expressed preference, both males and females visited fiction stories much more than non-fiction stories, which calls into question the preference indicated on the questionnaire. The results suggest that males visited non-fiction slightly more than females, and females visited fiction more than males (Gurian and Henley (2001) predicted that this would be the case). Again, however, we need to point out that the effect size for the analysis was very small.

5. CONCLUSION

A particular strength of studies of online reading activities is that they allow for large amounts of data to be collected on actual reading behaviour. The current study was no exception, and we were able to analyse patterns in more than 400 000 unique visits to individual stories on the FunDza site pages. This, together with the self-reports of reading preferences, provides useful data about reading preferences and behaviour among young South Africans with limited access to reading materials.

It is clear that a large number of young people are interested in reading online material. More than 40 000 young people between the ages of 13 and 19 visited the FunDza site in a six-month period. They visited the site more than 420 000 times, which is an indication of at least some interest in reading the stories (it would be ideal to also get a sense of how much they read when they visit, and such a study is

currently underway). Taken together with Vosloo's (2010) study of the m4Lit project, the data suggest that there is a substantial number of young people who are interested in reading, but do not have the access to printed literature that would meet their need. Thus, they turn to reading on mobile phones, even though the reading experience on these instruments might be less rewarding than the alternatives.

The study results therefore are encouraging for programmes such as the ones presented by FunDza. Large numbers of readers are attracted to the site, and are sufficiently interested in the materials available to engage with them quite seriously. Ideally we would have liked to recommend to FunDza genres of reading material that would appeal to specifically males, but given the limitations of the present study it is better to be cautious in this regard. There is sufficient evidence from the study that action/adventure stories do well, as do stories about sport and those with a specific South African bent. We are less sure about what to make of the evidence from both the brief survey and the weblogs that males read and like drama and romance as genres. Further investigation would be required to explain this particular finding, and what it may mean for providing future content.

REFERENCES

Aker, J. C. and I. Mbiti. 2010. Mobile phones and economic development in Africa. Working Paper 211. http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/1424175 (accessed July 28, 2015).

Brozo, W. G., G. Shiel and K. Topping. 2007. Engagement in reading: Lessons learned from three PISA countries. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* 51(4): 304–315.

Chiu, M. M. and C. McBride-Chang. 2006. Gender, context, and reading: A comparison of students in 43 countries. *Scientific Studies of Reading* 10(4): 331–362.

Clark, C. 2011. *Setting the baseline. The National Literacy Trust's first annual survey into young people's reading – 2010.* London: National Literacy Trust.

Clark, C. and A. Foster. 2005. *Children's and young people's reading habits and preferences: The who, what, why, where and when.* London: National Literacy Trust.

Dutro, E. 2002. 'But that's a girl's book!': Exploring gender boundaries in children's reading practices. *The Reading Teacher* 55(4): 376–384.

FundZa Literacy Trust. 2014. http://www.fundza.co.za (accessed July 28, 2015).

Gurian, M. and P. Henley. 2001. *Males and females learn differently: A guide for teachers and parents*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Krashen, S. D. 2004. *The power of reading*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Kreutzer, T. 2009. Assessing cell phone usage in a South African township school. *International Journal of Education and Development using Information and Communication Technology* 5(5): 43–57.

Machet, M. 2002. Young people's reading interests in South Africa. *Mousaion* 20(1): 44–72.

Martino, W. 2001. Boys and reading: Investigating the impact of masculinities on boys' reading preferences and involvement in literacy. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy* 24(1): 61.

McKenna, M., D. Kear and R. Ellsworth. 1995. Children's attitudes towards reading: A national survey. *Reading Research Quarterly* 30(4): 934–956.

Merisuo-Storm, T. 2006. Girls and boys like to read and write different texts. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 50(2): 111–125.

Millard, E. 1997. Differently literate: Gender identity and the construction of the developing reader. *Gender and Education* 9(1): 31–48.

Nielsen Southern Africa. 2011. Mobile phones dominate in South Africa 2011. http://www.nielsen.com/us/en/newswire/2011.html?sortbyScore=false&tag=Category%3AMobile (accessed July 28, 2015).

Pottorff, D., D. Phelps-Zientarski and M. E. Skovera. 1996. Gender perceptions of elementary and middle school students about literacy at school and home. *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 29(4): 203–211.

Privacy Technical Assistance Center. 2014. Protecting student privacy while using online educational services: Requirements and best practices. http://ptac.ed.gov/sites/default/files/Student%20Privacy%20and%20Online%20Educational%20Services%20%28February%202014%29.pdf (accessed July 28, 2015).

Smith, M. W. and J. D. Wilhelm. 2002. *Reading don't fix no Chevys*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Sullivan, M. 2004. Why Johnny won't read: Schools often dismiss what males like. No wonder they're not wild about reading. *School Library Journal* 50(8): 36.

Van der Berg, S. 2008. How effective are poor schools? Poverty and educational outcomes in South Africa. *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 34(3): 145–154.

Vosloo, S. 2010. mLearning in Africa: Lessons from the m4Lit project. http://www.slideshare.net/uocunescochair/m4-lit-unescobarcelonaoct2010sprinkling (accessed July 28, 2015).

Walton, M. 2010. *Mobile literacies and South African teens: Leisure reading, writing, and Mxit chatting for teens in Langa and Guguletu*. Cape Town: Shuttleworth Foundation.

Weih, T. G. 2008. A book club sheds light on males and reading. *Middle School Journal* 40(1): 19–25.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Please rate the following types of stories according to how much you like them:

1. True stories
2. Made up stories
3. South African stories
4. Stories about sporting teams
5. Stories about romantic relationships
6. Stories with lots of action

7. Stories about aliens and other worlds
8. Stories about friendship and family
9. The latest news
10. Life stories of famous people

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

KELLY DE VILLIERS was a postgraduate student in the Department of Psychology at the University of Cape Town (UCT), South Africa, at the time the study was conducted.

JOHANN LOUW is a professor in the Department of Psychology, UCT, specialising in programme evaluation.

COLIN TREDOUX is a professor in the Department of Psychology, UCT, specialising in research methodology.