

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 101 665

IR 001 515

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TITLE The Junior High Years, a Profile.
PUB DATE 74
NOTE 24p.

EDRS PRICE MF-\$0.76 HC-\$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; After School Activities; Athletics;
*Junior High Schools; *Junior High School Students;
Leisure Time; *Library Surveys; Listening Habits;
Reading Habits; Recreational Activities; Recreational
Reading; School Libraries; *Student Characteristics;
*Surveys; Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS *Student Profile

ABSTRACT

To determine the reading, listening, and general habits of junior high school students, a survey was conducted in the spring of 1970 in a suburban junior high school under the direction of the school library. The results are compiled in a series of charts which include: home audiovisual equipment; time spent watching television; free time activities; participation in sports; use of school libraries; number and kinds of books read; and names and number of magazines read. The last chart contains student suggestions for improving the school library. The results of the survey point the way to a reanalysis of library acquisition and library improvement in a junior high school, in addition to providing a fuller understanding of the junior high school student. (KC)

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THE JUNIOR HIGH YEARS, A PROFILE
Nancy Jacobson

In times such as these when youth appear so different from those in other times, it seems wise to stop for a moment and reconsider whether this is so. The press is always the first to bring out the sensational; and sometimes parents as well as teachers digest the news items whole without considering the numbers involved. Times have changed, no question. The choices, both good and bad, flood the very air the children breathe. Yet, in spite of this there is a thread of consistency with the past that should not be overlooked. This article attempts to show the less conspicuous aspects of the young teenagers and demonstrate the un-newsworthy parts often omitted or not considered at all by those who bother to write about them.

The junior high for some reason seems the least discussed in educational circles. There are fewer books dealing specifically with it than with elementary and high school. Even Silberman in Crisis in the Classroom advances the supposition that the junior high is a step-child in the school system when he dismisses it with one succinct sentence. "And the junior high school, by almost unanimous agreement, is the wasteland--one is tempted to say cesspool of American education."

Those who work with this age child generally feel it is a most difficult age, if not the most difficult of all. A thirteen year old is neither fish nor fowl and only time will change that fact; in the meanwhile, he must

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cope with fascinating and frightening inner forces at the same time as he must cope with more mature expectations from the outside. The most gratifying factor in the outcome of this report was the positive, mature and sometimes even satisfied side of the children.

The survey on which this is based was conducted in the spring of 1970 in a suburban junior high under the direction of the school library. The school is not exceptional. It is housed in an old building that sometimes stymies contemporary programs. Teachers are a mixture of traditionalists and experimentalists. The economic background (with emphasis on the affluent) and the mental capacity of the students run the gamut. The survey was concerned with reading, listening, and viewing habits primarily, but also included other non-school activities. Although it has a special interest for librarians, it seemed to offer a more universal understanding of this age child and therefore should have value for teachers, parents, and others working with young teenagers.

In order to more easily interpret the vast accumulation of information, one might take a hypothetical student out of the mass of data. Karen, an eighth grade girl who considers herself an average student, one who usually receives B's and C's on her report card, is a good candidate. At home she spends most of her time watching television, often two or more hours a day. Someone in the family has a tape recorder and a record player. Chances are that she operates only the record player. If she were a boy, she would probably run both.

This teenager likes sports, especially swimming and tennis. The boys she knows like them too, but spend more time at them than she does, and they really prefer baseball and fishing. If she could, Karen would like to learn to ride horseback or ski.

She also spends her time reading, listening to records, "fooling around", and working, either at home or babysitting. Random items commented upon by her peers include: go to brother's apartment, design new maps, sit in on a biology class, think, hit my sister, get smashed, listen, meet some boys, explore, lie in my room, go to the races, look for girls, get in trouble, go to concerts, daydream, do things alone, play solitaire, tease my sister, walk my dog, yoga, collect china, play pool, fly, talk, watch birds, sit on a hill, and do nothing.

If she could, Karen would like to travel, read more, drive a car, and do more of what she is already doing. Some of the other students when asked what they would like to do, commented as follows: protest, be lazy, drive in auto races, try sex, get to know more people, climb roofs, go places, with dad, sky dive, leave the country, go to museums, go to weddings, look at old things, see X-rated movies, trade things, have parties, not go to school, meet a good friend, go out in the night, have my own apartment, garden, make a million, spend money, build a go-kart, drag race, shop, make my own decisions, work in a lab, teach PE, stay out as late as I want, smoke grass, my days are filled all the time, join the Peace Corps, play with a rock group, learn some languages, run away, take drugs, help the poor, buy a yacht, talk to more people, I do everything I want already, be free, be able to live in the woods, establish a relationship with a girl, make up wallpaper, climb a mountain, train another falcon.

Last year Karen read ten books in addition to those assigned for school work. They were mostly fiction stories of teenage girls, mysteries, novels, and biographies. The boys read more sports stories and non-fiction. In a yearly favorite book contest Black Like Me is always a front runner as well as

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the perennials, To Kill a Mockingbird and Gone With the Wind. Other books in the top five each year are titles like: Up the Down Staircase, Death Be Not Proud, Catcher in the Rye, Cheaper By the Dozen, and The Hobbit. An occasional book written for the age level succeeds. It's Like This, Cat and My Side of the Mountain have both made it once. A sampling of other books students have read and liked goes like this: The Godfather, Goodbye Columbus, Exodus, 2001, Bobby Orr and the Big Bad Bruins, I Never Promised You a Rose Garden, Hawaii, Keys of the Kingdom, The Fountainhead, Lord of the Flies, and an infinite variety of others. There was no pattern from the seventh to the ninth grade save that of variety.

Most of the books Karen reads she borrows from the school library which she visits twice a week. By the time she is in the ninth grade, she will buy them for the most part, and will use the school library less as she uses the public library more. Although she visits the public library twice a month, it is the third source for obtaining her reading material.

At home her family receives at least two newspapers, one of which is local and the other statewide. The periodicals most often read are those involving current events such as Life, Time, Look, Newsweek, and the newspapers. Seventeen and American Girl are her favorite teenage magazines, but she also likes fashion magazines, particularly Vogue. The boys prefer Sports Illustrated, Playboy, and Hot Rod.

Interests in books and magazines taken together range from auto repair manuals, biographies, ESP, fishing, Germany, the classics, the Hardy Boys, surfing, cars, magic, outdoors, revolution, sex, drugs, population, flying, fish, space, handwriting analysis, adventures, mysteries, novels, to all of the

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best sellers. Less than ten percent of the books listed were written for a teenage audience.

Perhaps here are many of the reasons why adults working with the junior high age persevere in spite of all the headaches. The activities listed individually by students may not provide any consensus per se but by their very variety and tone give life to the teenagers who wrote them and provide more insight than all the charts put together. Their diversity is as great as that of the adult population. The endless types of interests, the maturity and lack of it, the happiness and dissatisfaction all are part of the polliwog stage of being or maybe caterpillar is more apt; and just think, no two with the same spots!

CHART A

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Number of Students Surveyed

	Boys	Girls	TOTAL	By Percentage
7th Grade	94	116	210	34
8th Grade	98	98	196	32
9th Grade	95	117	212	34
Total	287	331	618	
Percentage	46	54		100

CHART B

Grades in Percentage

	AB	BC	CD	DF
7th Grade	36	47	16	0
8th Grade	24	47	26	1
9th Grade	19	55	27	4

CHART C

Home Audio Visual Equipment
By Percentage

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	One	One or More	Percentage of reported equip. now operating	Percentage of reported equip. run by students
Television	.4			
Black & White		90		
Color		42		
Tape Recorder	24	75	77	71
Slide Projector	57	41	97	64
Film Projector	57	40	94	58
Record Player	4	95	97	96

CHART D

Time Spent Watching Television
By Percentage

Never	7
1-2 hours per day	48
3 hours or more per day	31
Only weekends	12
Total watchers	91

CHART E

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17 Most Mentioned Free Time Activities

GRADE	By Rank			<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>By Percentage</u>
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>		
Participating in sports	1	1	1	1	78
Television watching	2	2	2	2	44
Reading	3	3	3	3	40
Playing or fooling around	3 *	4	5	4	25
Listening to records	4	6	4	5	15
Working or baby sitting	5	5	8	6	13
Visiting with friends and telephoning them	7	8	7	7	9
Studying	8	7	8	8	9
Listening to radio	9	13	6	9	8
Walking	7	11	7	10	7
Going to town	6	9	16	11	6
Sewing	11	11	10	12	6
Riding bikes	6	13	15	13	6
Eating	14	15	9	14	6
Practicing instrument	12	14	12	15	5
Art work	9	10	17	15	5
Household chores	10	12	17	16	5

*Any repeat of a number indicates a tie.

CHART F10 Most Popular Sports Participated In

GRADE	Rank			Total
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	
Baseball	1	1	1	1
Swimming	2	2	2	2
Fishing	3	3	5	3
Tennis	4	4	5	4
Horseback riding	6	5	3	5
Skiing	5	7	4	6
Basketball	5 *	8	5	7
Hockey	7	5	8	8
Track	10	9	6	9
Gymnastics	8	11	7	10

The "total" figures were determined by the number of times mentioned.

*Any repeat of a number indicates a tie

CHART G

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17 Most Mentioned Free Time Activities
Students Would Like to Participate in
Or Do More If They Could

	GRADE	Rank			TOTAL	By Percentage
		7th	8th	9th		
Sports		1	1	1	1	50
Travel		2	2	2	2	14
Read		4	3	10	3	6
Drive a car		8	5	3	4	5
Play and fool around		3	7	11	5	5
Go to the beach		10	4	5	6	4
Art work		6	4	8	7	4
Visit with friends		5	8	7	8	4
Sleep		10	10	4	9	3
Watch television		7	7	10	10	3
Go to parties		10	7	9	10	3
Date		-	9	6	11	3
Go to movies		10	6	10	12	2
Get a job		8	10	8	12	2
Ride a mini bike		12	5	11	13	2
Ride a motorcycle		11	12	7	14	2
Ride a bike		9	9	12	14	2
Same as already doing in Chart E		% 24	% 28	% 20		24
No Comment						4

CHART II

10 Most Popular Sports
Students Would Like to Participate In
Or Do More

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GRADE	Rank			TOTAL
	7th	8th	9th	
Swimming	1	1	1	1
Horseback riding	2	2	2	2
Skiing	5	3	3	3
Tennis	3	4	6	4
Fishing	7	5	4	5
Water skiing	6	7	5	6
Sailing	8	5	6	7
Baseball	4	7	-	8
Boating	8	6	7	9
Camping	5	9	-	10

Some just want to do more of what they are doing
already as listed in #10.

CHART I

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Use of School and Public Library

GRADE	Percentages			TOTAL
	7th	8th	9th	
School library visits per week				
Never	9	12	33	18
Once	43	31	29	34
Twice	28	38	22	29
Three or more times	19	20	14	18
School Library Users One or more times per week				
	90	90	65	81
Public Library visits per month				
Never	25	18	20	20
Once	28	23	29	28
Twice	22	24	20	22
Three or more times	25	32	30	29
Public Library Users One or more times per month				
	74	81	80	77
Public Library card holders				
Yes	82	90	85	86
No	13	6	9	10
No answer	5	2	5	4

CHART J

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Where Students Obtain Most of Their
Books and Magazines

GRADE	Rank			TOTAL
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	
Books				
Buy	2	2	1	1
School Library	1	1	3	2
Public Library	3	3	2	3
Borrow and/or other	4	4	4	4
Magazines				
Buy	1	1	1	1
School Library	2	2	3	2
Borrow	3	3	2	3
Public Library	5	5	5	4
*Other	4	4	4	4

*Usually means parent's subscriptions to magazines

CHART K

Newspapers Received

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GRADE	Percentage			TOTAL
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	
Lawrence Eagle Tribune	85	87	89	86
Andover Townsman	60	60	61	60
Boston Globe	45	48	54	49
Boston Herald Traveler	35	35	32	34
New York Times	13	13	16	14
Other	24	19	23	22
None	1	0	.9	.8
Those receiving three or more	50	42	34	41

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CHART L

Number of Books Read

	GRADE	Percentage			TOTAL
		7th	8th	9th	
Last year					
None		3	6	6	5
One		3	3	6	3
2-10		29	32	34	32
10 or more		56	56	52	54
No answer		8	3	2	6
Last month					
None		13	11	18	14
One		27	37	32	32
2-5		39	33	27	33
5 or more		14	13	12	14
No answer		7	6	12	7

CHART MAudio Visual-Printed Matter Preference

GRADE	Rank			TOTAL	By Percentage
	<u>7th</u>	<u>8th</u>	<u>9th</u>		
See a film	1	1	1	1	86
Look at a magazine	4	3	2	2	56
Read a book	3	2	3	3	51
Listen to a tape	2	5	4	4	41
See a film strip	5	4	5	5	32

CHART NKinds of Books Students Usually Check Out

By Rank

	Checked Out From Library			TOTAL	Library Needs More Of			TOTAL
	7th	8th	9th		7th	8th	9th	
Fiction	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Sports	3	2	4	2	2	2	4	2
Mysteries	2	3	4	3	4	3	4	4
Biographies	7	4	2	4	9	7	7	8
Scientific	6	5	6	5	-	5	5	7
Non-Fiction	5	9	3	5	5	4	2	3
Adventure	4	6	7	6	7	-	10	14
Research	10	8	6	7	3	10	3	5
History	9	7	8	8	7	13	8	12
All Kinds	6	1	6	8	7	6	7	6
Science	8	8	8	9	10	9	6	10
Cars	8	10	8	10	8	8	7	10
Animals	8	9	10	11	7	13	10	13
Romance	9	10	9	12	-	-	-	-
Horse	8	9	10	13	9	13	9	14
War	9	9	-	13	-	-	-	-
Motorcycles					9	13	8	13
Teenagers					9	-	7	13
Drugs					6	12	9	11
Sex					6	-	10	13
Poetry	8	-	9	14				

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CHART O

Magazines Library Needs More Of

	GRADE	By Rank			TOTAL
		7th	8th	9th	
Sex		1	5	1	1
Teenage Girl		2	4	1	2
Newspapers		4	4	2	3
Sports		3	1	6	4
Car and Motorcycle		5	2	3	4
Mad		6	3	5	5
Fashion		-	6	5	6

CHART PKinds of Newspapers and Magazines
Read Most Often

GRADE	Rank			TOTAL
	7th	8th	9th	
News	1	2	1	1
Sports	2	1	2	2
Fashion	3	3	3	3
Teenage girls	6	4	4	4
Cars	4	5	5	5
Comics	6	6	7	6
Playboy	5	-	8	7
Motorcycles	8	8	7	8
Womens	7	10	8	9
Science	8	7	-	10
Fishing	-	8	10	11
Underground	9	11	9	12
Electronics	-	9	11	13
Nature	7	-	11	13
Obscene	-	11	9	13

CHART QNames of Magazines Read Most Often

GRADE	Rank			TOTAL
	7th	8th	9th	
Life	1	1	1	1
Lawrence Tribune	2	2	5	2
Time	5	3	2	3
Look	5	5	4	4
Seventeen	7	4	3	5
Sports Illustrated	4	8	7	6
Boston Globe	7	7	6	7
Andover Townsman	6	6	10	8
Playboy	7	9	8	9
Newsweek	9	9	9	10
Herald Traveler	8	13	13	11
American Girl	6	15	15	11
National Geographic	10	10	13	12
Hot Rod	10	12	14	13
Mad	10	11	16	14
Vogue	14	12	12	15
McCall	11	19	11	16
Ingenuue	14	13	14	17
Reader's Digest	17	7	17	18
Field and Stream	17	14	16	19
Car and Driver	14	16	17	19
Teen	18	19	13	20
Boy's Life	12	19	20	21

CHART QNames of Magazines Read Most Often (continued)

GRADE	<u>7th</u>	<u>Rank 8th</u>	<u>9th</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Sixteen	16	21	15	22
Outdoor Life	17	17	19	23
New York Times	15	21	18	24
Popular Mechanics	13	21	20	24
Ladies Home Journal	18	22	14	24
Popular Science	17	18	20	25
Better Homes & Gardens	17	20	19	26
Family Guide	16	19	21	26
Glamour	19	21	17	27
Record American	19	21	18	28
Sport	-	20	18	29
Mademoiselle	18	22	19	29
Women's Day	18	19	-	29
Skiing	-	33	16	30
Motor Trend	-	22	17	30
U.S. News	19	-	18	31
Ebony	18	-	19	31
Ski	17	23	21	31
Cycle	-	23	18	32
Red Book	18	23	21	32
Sporting News	18	22	-	32
Co-Ed	-	21	21	33
Holiday	-	21	21	33
Esquire	18	-	21	33

CHART QNames of Magazines Read Most Often (continued)

	GRADE	7th	Rank 8th	9th	TOTAL
Good Housekeeping		18	-	-	34
Stag		-	-	19	34
Parent's Magazine		-	21	-	34
Model Railroader		-	21	-	34

CHART R

Suggestions for Improving the Library

	GRADE	Rank			TOTAL	By Percentage
		7th	8th	9th		
No Comment		1	3	2	1	22
More time		3	2	1	2	20
More books		2	1	3	3	18
Enlarge		4	4	4	4	15
O.K. now		5	5	6	5	5
More listening room		9	6	5	6	4
More Magazines		-	6	6	7	3
More talking		6	7	10	8	2
More freedom		7	-	8	9	2
A place to talk		8	8	8	9	2
Piped in music		8	-	7	10	1
AV tapes, etc.1		8	9	9	10	1
Air conditioning		7	-	9	11	1
More quiet		8	-	9	11	1

CHART S

Of All the Materials
Needed or Wanted
Library Fulfills

	Percent			
All	2	3	2	3
Most	42	37	32	35
Some	34	37	34	35
Few	15	13	18	16
None	7	3	8	6