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THE EXPRESSED READING INTEREST OF THIRD AND FIFTH GRADE  
CHILDREN IN SELECTED OKLAHOMA SCHOOLS

*The University of Oklahoma*

PH.D. 1982

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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE EXPRESSED READING INTERESTS OF THIRD AND FIFTH  
GRADE CHILDREN IN SELECTED OKLAHOMA SCHOOLS

A DISSERTATION  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

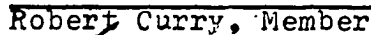
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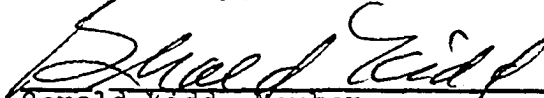
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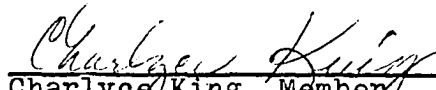
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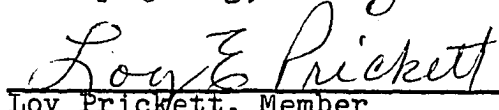
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## CHAPTER I

### THE EXPRESSED READING INTERESTS OF THIRD AND FIFTH GRADE CHILDREN IN SELECTED OKLAHOMA SCHOOLS

#### Introduction

Among educators who first studied the expressed reading interests of children were Terman and Lima. They stated that "there are certain well-defined tendencies in reading interests that change as the child's experience grows and as his imagination and reasoning powers develop."<sup>1</sup> As a result of the data collected by Terman and Lima, educators became interested in individual interests based on age and grade level. This research also stated that as children become older and mature, their interests change with them.

According to Frasher in 1978, "Reading about things that interest children may be the best--or may be the only way to develop an interest in reading."<sup>2</sup> Schulte in 1969 stated that "the child of today, because of advances in science and technology and because of increased travel and exposure to mass media, has broader interests than the child of previous

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<sup>1</sup>Lew N. Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1931), p. 31.

<sup>2</sup>Ramona S. Frasher, "Know Your Reluctant Reader's Interest," Reading World (October 1978):71.

generations."<sup>1</sup>

The Sheldon Basic Reading Series, 1957 and revised edition, 1963, was interesting to students because it contained stories dealing with experiences. The student was able to relate his own personal experiences with those stories presented in the series. The stories concerned group and family living, respecting rights of others, and understanding one's self. With the sixties came integration and readers such as The Bank Street Readers, whose content reflected a cross section of life in America. The selections were of interest to multi-cultural students because many different nationalities were represented.<sup>1</sup>

During the late sixties, research was concerned with many different areas of children's interests. One problem of the past was that of accessibility of books. Today, many of our schools and towns have libraries, as well as many books located in the classrooms in addition to the basal reader. Teachers have books available whose content might have interests for older children but contain vocabulary below the actual grade level. Kirsch stated:

Thus, in order to provide interesting reading material for young children, teachers and curriculum planners

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<sup>1</sup>Emerita S. Schulte, "Independent Reading Interests of Children in Grades Four, Five, and Six," Reading and Realism (1969):738.

<sup>2</sup>Nila B. Smith, American Reading Instruction (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1974), pp. 153-154.

must be aware of the surprising breadth and sophistication of primary children's reading interest as well as the differences in preference which are exhibited from group to group.<sup>1</sup>

Pieronek described in The Reading Teacher, 1980, that a factor to take into consideration when looking at basal readers is the amount of time it takes from the beginning written copy to final publication. She stated that basal readers have taken as long as seven years before final publication.<sup>2</sup> There may have been a change of children's interests or reversal of positions during this length of time.

During the early 1900s, Elson, author of the Elson Readers, believed that "interesting material is the most important factor in learning to read."<sup>3</sup> Schulte stated:

. . . therefore, it is evident that a study of the independent reading interests of children has significance for the school and the teacher, for the curriculum worker, for the school and the public librarian, for the parent, and for the publisher of children's books.<sup>4</sup>

Frasher believed "only if children can develop an interest in reading will they work hard at practicing and mastering the

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<sup>1</sup>Dorothy Kirsch, "From Athletes to Zebras--Young Children Want to Read About Them," Elementary English (January 1975):78.

<sup>2</sup>Florence T. Pieronek, "Do Basal Readers Reflect the Interest of Intermediate Students?" The Reading Teacher (January 1980):411.

<sup>3</sup>Nila Banton Smith, American Reading Instruction (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1974):153.

<sup>4</sup>Schulte, "Independent Reading Interests of Children in Grades Four, Five, and Six," p. 728.

skills that lead to understanding and enjoyment.<sup>1</sup>

According to Zimet, "Interests vary significantly with the times."<sup>2</sup> For this reason, educators and publishers should work together to see that the interests of the students will produce ". . . children who will read rather than merely children who can read."<sup>3</sup>

According to research, children who are interested in the material or books presented to them will read more. Research has indicated also a need to assess children's interests periodically because of the possibility of changes in children's interests and the necessity of educators to be familiar with these differences. At the same time, book publishers and authors of basal readers should consider children's interests since most classrooms rely on the basal reader as the primary reading material.

#### Problems Investigated by the Study

The problems investigated in this study concern the relationships of sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics on the individual reading interests of third and fifth grade students in rural, urban, and metropolitan areas

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<sup>1</sup>Frasher, "Know Your Reluctant Reader's Interest," p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Sara F. Zimet, "Children's Interests and Story Preferences: A Critical Review of the Literature," Elementary School Journal (December 1966):128.

<sup>3</sup>Gerald G. Duffy, "Developing the Reading Habit," The Reading Teacher (December 1967):253.



of Oklahoma. There was an attempt to determine whether the expressed reading interests of students are affected by these factors. The third and fifth grade basal readers used in these classrooms were investigated to determine whether the stories found in the readers reflect the expressed reading interests of students.

Another aspect of the problem investigated was the frequency of which the Newbery Award Books are being read by third and fifth grade students. Since this award is given yearly to the outstanding American author for his contribution to children's literature, it would seem reasonable that children would have read these distinguishable works. The frequency of students in fifth grade reporting their reading of the Newbery Award Books to the frequency of third grade students of the Newbery Award Books was determined in this study.

#### Significance of the Problem

Zimet stated, "Researchers have reported that the preferences of young children from 1925 to 1930 were different from the preferences of children from 1952-1955."<sup>1</sup> According to Martin, "The need for continual assessment and identification of children's reading interests has been postulated by writers in the field."<sup>2</sup> Witty stressed the importance of

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<sup>1</sup>Zimet, "Children's Interests and Story Preferences: A Critical Review of the Literature," p. 124.

<sup>2</sup>Robert L. Martin, "Interest Ability of Sixth-Grade Basic Readers" (doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 1972), p. 7.

interest in reading:

. . . similar studies should be made annually in order that the adult world of parents, teachers, librarians, authors, and artists may be kept informed of the general trends in the reading tastes of a fairly representative sampling of school children.<sup>1</sup>

Russell also agreed that assessments should be frequent because of rapid changes in children's interests.<sup>2</sup>

These statements suggested that in order to promote children to read more, the materials provided should reflect the expressed reading interests. Coleman and Jungeblut stated:

An underlying assumption . . . is that school children who are in the process of improving their reading skills are more likely to do so when what they read appeals to them.<sup>3</sup>

This study will have significance for teachers, curriculum planners, school librarians, and publishers of children's books and basal readers as an aid in selecting books which appeal to children's reading interests. The data revealed the current reading interests of students of the eighties.

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Witty, Ann Coomer, and Dilla McBean, "Children's Choices of Favorite Books: A Study Conducted in Ten Elementary Schools," Journal of Educational Psychology 37 (May 1946): 276.

<sup>2</sup>Ivan L. Russell, "Development of Attitudes, Interests, and Values," Educational Psychology, 3d ed., edited by Charles Skinner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959): 343.

<sup>3</sup>J. H. Coleman and Ann Jungeblut, "Children's Likes and Dislikes About What They Read," Journal of Educational Research 54 (February 1961):227.

### Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formed in order to answer previously stated questions and to form conclusions. In order to facilitate testing, three alternative hypotheses, with each restated in null form were created. The hypotheses were:

Ha<sub>1</sub> There will be significant differences between reading interests of students when measured in relationship to sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics.

Ho<sub>1</sub> There will be no significant differences between reading interests of students when measured in relationship to sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics.

Ha<sub>2</sub> When expressed reading interests are classified by categories, there will be a significant difference between the reading interests of students and the content of stories found in the students' basal readers.

Ho<sub>2</sub> When expressed reading interests are classified by categories, there will be no significant differences between the reading interests of students and the content of stories found in the students' basal readers.

Ha<sub>3</sub> There will be a significant positive relationship between age level of students and frequency of students reporting their reading of the Newbery Award Books.

Ho<sub>3</sub> There will be no significant relationship between age level of students and frequency of students reporting their reading of the Newbery Award Books.

### Definition of Terms

1. Expressed reading interests: The subject areas in which students have read or would like to read.
2. Reading interests: Materials an individual selects to be read.
3. Reading preference: To choose one book over another, but neither may be of interest.
4. Basal reader: Chief instructional material used in the elementary grades for teaching reading.
5. Basal reader content: Refers to types of stories found in the basal readers.
6. Metropolitan school: School within a city of over 300,000 population.
7. Urban school: School within a city of over 15,000 and under 75,000 population.
8. Rural school: School within a town of under 2,000 total population.
9. Demography: Statistical study of the population in relationship to its size and distribution of people.

### Assumptions

Certain general assumptions were necessary during the course of the investigation:

1. The measuring instrument provided valid indications of the expressed reading interests of third and fifth grade students.

2. The measurement instrument identified influencing factors of sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics in relation to reading interests.

3. The basal readers used in the study reflect the typical content for third and fifth grade readers.

4. The Newbery Award Books are available to students in the schools selected for this study.

#### Limitations of Study

1. Only those students who represent the expected age of third and fifth grade students were included in the study.

2. As the study was conducted in public schools, there was no control over the basal readers found in the respective classrooms.

3. The study was limited to only rural, urban, and metropolitan areas of Oklahoma.

#### Overview of Subsequent Chapters

The remainder of the study has been organized into the following chapters:

Chapter II contains a review of literature and research related to the study. Emphasis has been given to research dealing with: (1) the effects of sex on reading interests, (2) the effects of grade level on reading interests, (3) the effects of demographic characteristics on reading interests, (4) techniques of identifying reading interests, and (5) basal readers influence on reading interests.

In Chapter III the design and procedures of the study are discussed. The subjects used in the study, the treatment conditions, the nature of the measuring instrument, the method of administering the measuring instrument, and the statistics used in analysis of the data are explained.

Chapter IV discloses the findings and analysis of the hypotheses. A summary, the conclusions, and further recommendations will be presented in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

##### Broad Studies of Children's Reading Interests

Bond has stated that ". . . there is ample evidence from both clinic and classroom to show that children make greater progress in their reading when they can read about things that are highly interesting to them."<sup>1</sup> This understanding of interest and motivation are necessary for the reading process to be successful. Ragan suggested that "every child needs to develop his reading ability fully in order to succeed in school . . ."<sup>2</sup> Smith and Dechant in 1966 have stated "effective reading not only creates interests but it can be a product of interest as well."<sup>3</sup> They also believed that learning to read and interest in reading were parallels.

Kopel and Witty, 1938, felt that it was important to know children's interests and that experiences of the child were

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<sup>1</sup>Guy L. Bond, A. Miles, and Barbara B. Wasson, Reading Difficulties (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), p. 416.

<sup>2</sup>William B. Ragan, Modern Elementary Curriculum (San Francisco: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p. 250.

<sup>3</sup>Henry P. Smith and Emerald V. Dechant, Psychology in Teaching Reading (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), p. 269.

associated with reading. These experiences were given direction and purpose through reading.<sup>1</sup> Witty observed the importance of the interest factor in reading instruction has been emphasized by educational leaders over and over in the teaching of reading.<sup>2</sup> McKay in 1942 said "understanding the relationship between interest and motivation is vital to effective teaching, particularly teaching children to read."<sup>3</sup>

Veatch stated in Reading in the Elementary School, 1966, that "forcing children to read in areas in which they are not interested will hardly broaden them."<sup>4</sup> Agreeing with Veatch was Jenkinson in his review that "interest will determine not only whether an individual will learn to read, but how well he will read, how much he will read, and in what areas he will read."<sup>5</sup>

Investigations have shown that there are many different factors related to the expressed reading interests of children.

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<sup>1</sup>David Kopel and Paul Witty, "Motivation and Reading," Educational Administration and Supervision (April 1938):257-258.

<sup>2</sup>Kopel and Witty, Reading and the Educative Process (San Francisco: Ginn and Company, 1939), p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Mary Agnes McKay, "The Expressed Reading Interests of Intermediate Grade Students from Selected Schools in the Metropolitan Pittsburgh Area" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 1971), p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Jeanette Veatch, Reading in the Elementary School (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1966), p. 146.

<sup>5</sup>Marion D. Jenkinson, "Roles of Motivation in Reading" Conference on Reading, University of Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 146.



The remaining review of literature will include the effect of sex, grade level, basal readers, and demographic characteristics in relationship to children's reading interests. This investigation will also examine ways to assess the expressed reading interests of children.

#### Grade Level

Terman and Lima, 1931, introduced the idea of the development of children's interest. Their research indicated that before the age of five, children were interested in pictures and fairy tales. During the ages of six to seven, nature stories concerning trees, flowers, and birds were important. Stories of children in general and real life, as well as fairy tales were the preferences of eight year olds. Nine year olds showed an interest in real life and at this time began to develop individual interests. At ten years of age, as experience and background widen, topics concerning travel, history, and inventions were popular. At eleven years of age, adventure and mystery showed preference. Boys preferred aircraft and mechanics, while girls preferred home and school life. By the age of twelve, every field of literature showed some interest. While boys liked athletics and adventure, girls showed interests in home and school, as well as adventures of girls. After considering certain factors such as maturity, health, interest, sex, and mental ability, Terman felt that as children

grew older, their interests changed and developed.<sup>1</sup> Also Dowell and Garrison, 1931, studied third grade students, and found topics of interest to be kindness, bravery, humor, animals, love, and Bible stories.<sup>2</sup>

In studying over nine hundred children in kindergarten through eighth grade, Witty and Kopel found that fairy tales were the favorite in grade one, while all other grades favored adventure, detective, and fairy tales. Girls in first through fourth grades ranked fairy tales first, and in grades five through eight, girls ranked adventure first. Boys preferred adventure stories, mystery and detective stories.<sup>3</sup>

Rankin, 1948, found no significant differences in her studies concerning reading interests of children until the age of eight. At this time, girls preferred stories about home life and other girls, while boys preferred stories concerning horses, dogs, and cowboys. She also stated that interests continued to change in the above grades, but the amount of change decreased in high school.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Terman and Margaret Lima, Children's Reading: A Guide for Parents and Teachers, Rev. ed., (New York: Appleton and Co., 1931), pp. 3-105.

<sup>2</sup>Pattie A. Dowell and K. C. Garrison, "A Study of Reading Interests of Third-Grade Subjects," Peabody Journal of Education VII (January 1931):202-206.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Witty and David Kopel, "Studies of the Activities and Preferences of School Children," Educational Administration and Supervision (September 1938):429-441.

<sup>4</sup>Marie Rankin, "Reading Interests of Children," Religious Education 43 (May-June 1948):147-149.

In 1951, Amatora and Edith examined children's reading interests by observing the library books that the students checked out. Second and third grade students were found to prefer books where children were the main characters. It also seemed that children's interests changed in the fifth and sixth grades to stories of adventure. Amatora and Edith stated that the fourth grade was a transitional period of interest change.<sup>1</sup>

During the elementary school years there seems to be more change than any other period, according to Furness in 1963. Animals, birds and nature were preferred by primary children, while students in junior high considered adventure stories, history, biography, travel, science, animal stories, nonsense, realism, and informative books to be interesting.<sup>2</sup>

A study in the April 1974 Reading Teacher investigated the reading interests of 811 children, age seven through twelve. This study showed animals to be a favorite among all children, although it decreased in popularity among eleven and twelve year olds. Mysteries were preferred by the older children, and the areas of interests expressed by boys were science, sports, and transportation, where girls selected

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<sup>1</sup>S. M. Amatora and S. M. Edith, "Children's Interest in Free Reading," School and Society 73 (March 1951):134-137.

<sup>2</sup>Edna Lee Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," Education 84 (September 1963):3-7.

stories about people and make-believe.<sup>1</sup>

Bond and Tinker, 1979, studied 24,000 students in grades three through six to determine children's interests in reading. In grades four through eight, boys preferred books about sports and games, outdoor life, exploration and expeditions, science fiction, sea adventures, physical struggle, animals, humor, heroism, courage, mystery, patriotism, fantasy, historical fiction, and outer space. Girls preferred books concerning home and school life, human characters, domestic animals and pets, lively adventure, romantic love, sentiment, supernatural, mystery, patriotism, and poetry. From this study, cowboys and fairy tales had decreased in popularity. Bond and Tinker found that sex differences were not prominent in early grades, but were clear by the age of nine or ten.<sup>2</sup>

Researchers indicated a change in the reading interests of students as they mature. Many of these changes were gradual and overlap. The authors in the literature suggested that continuing from the fourth grades a change or reversal of children's reading interests was apparent. These changes seemed to occur until the age of puberty, at which time reading interests became more permanent and stable. After the age of fifteen, Strong stated that interests were not affected to

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<sup>1</sup>Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta, "Children's Reading Interest Classified by Age Level," The Reading Teacher (April 1974):694-700.

<sup>2</sup>Guy L. Bond, Miles A. Tinker, and Barbara B. Wasson, Reading Difficulties (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), pp. 416-419.

any great degree.<sup>1</sup>

### Demographic Characteristics

Shores studied 6,313 children in grades four through eight, from rural, urban, and metropolitan locations. He was interested in the change of reading interests as the grade level increased. Shores found all children shared an interest in animals, and an increase in the selection of mystery stories and a decrease in cowboy and fairy tales as children increase in age. The upper elementary grades showed a preference for stories about sports and recreational activities. Children in the seventh and eighth grades expressed interests in stories about children and teenagers.<sup>2</sup>

A study of the reading interests of rural and city children in the fourth, fifth, and sixth grades was conducted by Schulte in 1969. Her findings indicated that rural children have a broader scope of reading interests than children from the city. She also found boys to prefer action and adventure stories, while girls expressed a preference for stories concerning personal relations and problems.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Edward K. Strong, Jr., Vocational Interests of Men and Women (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 91.

<sup>2</sup>J. Harlan Shores, "Reading Interests and Informational Needs of Children in Grades Four to Eight," Elementary English 31 (December 1954):493-500.

<sup>3</sup>Emerita S. Schulte, "Independent Reading Interests of Children in Grades Four, Five, and Six," Reading and Realism, IRA Proceedings, 1969:728-732.

A study in 1975 by Johns investigated the reading interests of 597 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade children from four large midwestern cities. He found that ". . . inner-city children in the intermediate grades preferred to read stories and books which contained middle class settings, characters with positive self-concepts, and characters in positive group interactions."<sup>1</sup>

The authors in the literature indicated that demographic characteristics have been associated with children's reading interests; however, most of the research reveals that this factor was usually combined with another factor in the investigative studies of children's reading interests. Researchers suggested that demographic characteristics have importance in determining individual reading interests.

#### Reading Interests and Sex Differences

Heilman stated that for teachers of reading, sex differences had significance.<sup>2</sup> Lancaster studied fourth through eighth grade students in 1927. Lancaster's study determined that sex was an essential factor when considering reading interests. Boys were more interested in animal fiction, Indian stories, war stories and sports than girls, and that

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<sup>1</sup>Jerry L. Johns, "Reading Preferences of Urban Students in Grades Four Through Six," The Journal of Educational Research (April 1975):309.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur W. Heilman, Principles and Practices of Teaching Reading (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Publishing Co., 1981), p. 73.

girls read more poetry than boys.<sup>1</sup>

Taylor and Schneider's study in 1957 consisted of 5,477 elementary students in grades five through eight. They found significant differences between the reading interests of boys and girls. Over a four year period, boys' interests had changed very little, with adventure being the predominant interest. The interest of the girls had changed over the years, and in sixth grade they preferred books concerning personal adjustment and boy-girl relations.<sup>2</sup>

Norvell's study in 1958 suggested that boys preferred adventurous actions, physical struggle, human characters, animals, humor, courage and heroism, and patriotism. Girls preferred lively adventure, home and school life, human characters, domestic animals and pets, romantic love, sentiment, mystery, the supernatural, and patriotism.<sup>3</sup>

Furness concluded the following concerning sex and reading interests in 1966:

In general, studies of children's interest in reading show few sex differences up to the age of nine, except for the inordinate interest in trains on the part of

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas J. Lancaster, "A Study of the Voluntary Reading of Pupils in Grades IV-VIII," The Elementary School Journal XXXVIII (March 1928):535-536.

<sup>2</sup>Marion W. Taylor and Mary A. Schneider, "What Books Are Our Children Reading?" Chicago Schools Journal 38 (January-February 1957):155-160.

<sup>3</sup>George W. Norvell, What Boys and Girls Like to Read (Morristown, N.J.: Silver Burdett Company, 1959), pp. 400-410.

some small boys. Little girls of six to nine enjoy the same types of story as the boys of the same age. They are interested in tales about pets and animals, in comic books, and in stories that have a "sharp episodic nature." At the age of nine, or thereafter, the interests of both boys and girls broaden to include fuller concepts of the far away and long ago. Sex differences, however, are in evidence . . .<sup>1</sup>

Huus in 1964 investigated reading interests of children and found few differences between girls and boys until the age of nine. She also felt that girls read more than boys, but that boys had a wider variety of interests than girls. Girls also became interested in romantic stories before boys. She found that boys seldom enjoyed girls' books, but girls read boys' books. Boys preferred adventure stories, while girls selected fiction, although mystery stories were interesting to both.<sup>2</sup>

Porter in 1974 studied 53 children in the second and third grades to see if there was a relationship between sex and reading preferences. She found that boys preferred sports, history, science, adventure, mystery, and animal stories, in this order. The order of preference among girls was fantasy, mystery, animals, children and family, hobbies, and famous people. Boys were less interested in children and family, hobbies, foreign countries, fantasy and famous people. Girls

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<sup>1</sup>Edna Lee Furness, "Researches on Reading Interests," Education 84 (September 1962):4-5.

<sup>2</sup>Helen Huus, "Interpreting Research in Children's Literature," Children's Books and Reading, Perspectives in Reading, No. 3 (Newark, Del.: International Reading Association, 1964):125.



found sports, foreign countries, science, adventure, and history uninteresting.<sup>1</sup>

Frasher stated in 1978 that research indicated ". . . age and sex appear to be the most significant factors in determining what children read." Frasher found that young children preferred materials concerning animals, children, and fairy tales, while middle age children showed a difference according to sex. Boys liked adventure and historical fiction, while experiences of children and mysteries appealed to girls. Also he felt that boys liked scientific topics while girls preferred fanciful tales.<sup>2</sup>

The review of literature presented showed that sex differences affect reading interests at about the age of eight. Studies have indicated that nine year old boys tend to prefer geology, geography, and rockets, while girls the same age prefer reading stories about history, foreign countries, and famous authors.

#### Recording Students' Interests

Many researchers have studied how to record students' interests, and a variety of opinions have come forth. According to Jordan in 1926:

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<sup>1</sup>Jane E. Porter, "Children's Reading Interests," Elementary English (October 1974):1003-1004.

<sup>2</sup>Romona S. Frasher, "Know Your Reluctant Reader's Interest," Reading World (October 1953):163-166.

There are two general methods of discovering reading interests of children. One method is by carefully studying the withdrawal of books from the library. Another method is by questioning pupils directly as to their likes and dislikes.

He states limitations to both methods. In the study of library withdrawals, considerations must be made because many withdrawals were made to satisfy classroom assignments, or parental satisfaction. Another consideration would be that of availability of books in the library. In the direct questioning of the child, Jordan felt that there were certain factors to consider. The child may lack the ability to communicate with adults, may dislike the interviewer, or may feel the need to please the interviewer by falsifying answers. Both of these methods are time consuming, and if a large number of students are to be studied, neither method would be practical.<sup>1</sup>

Thorndike preferred the written questionnaire method over the library withdrawal and interview methods. He described the written questionnaire method in the following statement:

In order to get reactions to a wide range of different topics and materials within a feasible testing time, the time devoted to a single item must necessarily be very brief. Practical limitations of time, materials, and reading ability make it impossible to have subjects actually read any considerable number of books and stories for purposes of an interest survey.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Arthur Melville Jordan, Children's Interests in Reading (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Robert L. Thorndike, Children's Reading Interests (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), p. 3.

Many researchers feel that the open-ended questions were a more reliable method for obtaining interests. Shores in 1954 asked open-ended questions such as, "If someone were to give you a book as a present, what would you want it to be about?"<sup>1</sup> Young criticized interest inventories, for she felt that the child answered what he thought he should, and not his actual interest. She felt that observations and creative writing were the best way to obtain true interest.<sup>2</sup>

Rogers and Robinson developed a questionnaire in 1963 where the students circled LIKE or NOT LIKE, as the teacher read the question. The limitation of this study was that the students knew the preferences of the teacher, and, therefore, in many cases answered to please the teacher.<sup>3</sup>

Although some form of questionnaire still remains the most popular to determine children's interests, research has proved no particular technique superior to others. Identifying the interests of children, according to the literature, is still an individual decision of the investigator.

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<sup>1</sup>Harlan J. Shores, "Reading Interests and Informational Needs of Children in Grades Four to Eight," Elementary English XXXI (December 1954):495.

<sup>2</sup>Doris Young, "Identifying and Utilizing Children's Interest," Educational Leadership XIII (December 1955):161-165.

<sup>3</sup>Helen A. Rogers and Alan H. Robinson, "Reading Interests of First Graders," Elementary English XXXX (November 1963):707-711.

Basal Readers

Harris studied the basal reading text of first graders to determine if the text met the needs and interests of students. His conclusion was that girls had more interest in basic readers than boys, and that better readers were less likely to select basic reader stories.<sup>1</sup>

The titles and stories of intermediate grade basal readers were studied in 1953 by Droney and others in their attempt to study children's interests. This data showed "that although boys were unwilling to choose titles or stories which dealt with girls, the girls frequently selected titles and stories that appealed to boys and in which the interest centered around adventure."<sup>2</sup>

In 1974, Brown studied 31 boys and 22 girls in the second and third grades in Lafayette, Indiana. One-third of the children were given an interest inventory and were given individualized instruction using trade books. The other two groups read the basal readers. Her results indicated that those in the individualized program had developed a broader range of reading, as they had experienced a variety of

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<sup>1</sup>James M. Harris, "The Expressed Reading Interests of First Grade Boys and Girls and the Adequacy of Current Basic Readers in Meeting These Interests" (Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 1955).

<sup>2</sup>Margaret L. Droney, Stella M. Cucciara, and Alice M. Scipione, "Pupil Preference for Titles and Stories in Basal Readers for the Intermediate Grades," Journal of Educational Research XLVII (December 1953):273.

material. Those who read only in the basal readers had not broadened their reading interests as they were only exposed to the stories selected by the editor. Porter supported this research by stating that children in an individualized program ". . . have experienced a greater variety of reading material and found it enjoyable, whereas the children in a basal reading program are exposed to editor-selected stories which does not appear to broaden their reading interest."<sup>1</sup>

Smith in her article, "Children's Reading Choices and Basal Reader Content," 1962, studied free-choice reading and compared the interests of the student to basal reader stories. The choices of the children were humor-fantasy, real animals, nature-science, holiday-birthdays, and fairy tales. Smith categorized 859 basal reader stories and found that 497 were about real animals, and the other popular interests of the students were from fifth to seventeenth in the basal readers.<sup>2</sup>

A study by Pieronek in 1980 investigated basal readers concerning intermediate students. "Basal readers are used in one form or another by eighty to ninety percent of teachers as the vehicle for teaching children basic reading skills." One important thought that she discussed was concerning the length

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<sup>1</sup>Kay D. Brown and Gerald H. Krockover, "A Reading Preference Test: Rationale, Development, and Implementation," Elementary English (October 1974):1003-1004.

<sup>2</sup>Ruth C. Smith, "Children's Reading Choices and Basal Reader Content," Elementary English XXXIX (March 1962):202-209.

of time required to write a basal reader. A production term of seven years, for example, must be a consideration in the selection of basal readers.<sup>1</sup>

Russell stated that "Somehow, psychologists, teachers, and librarians must attempt to build bridges between the needs of the reader and the ideas or emotional tones of the printed page." He also suggested frequent assessment of children's interests to keep up with the changing times. Dallmann and Stanchfield supported Russell and agreed that the teacher has the responsibility of making materials available to the student of various topics.<sup>2</sup>

Children of today seem to be reading more than previous generations, partly because of improved school and public libraries, and the increased number of publications available in the classroom.<sup>3</sup> According to Dallmann, "We must find the interest which impels the child to seek meaning on the printed page."<sup>4</sup> Karlin stated, "It is believed that children will do more reading if they are given the opportunity to read what

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<sup>1</sup>Florence T. Pieronek, "Do Basal Readers Reflect the Interest of Intermediate Students?" The Reading Teacher (January 1980):408-412.

<sup>2</sup>Ivan L. Russell, "Development of Attitudes, Interests, and Values," Educational Psychology, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959), p. 343.

<sup>3</sup>Emerita S. Schulte, "Independent Reading Interests of Children in Grades Four, Five, and Six," Reading and Realism (1969), p. 728.

<sup>4</sup>Martha Dallman and John Deboer, The Teaching of Reading (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 303.

they are interested in."<sup>1</sup> Crane has added, "Every book salesman is an advance agent for culture and for better citizenship, for education and for the spread of intelligence."<sup>2</sup>

R. Smith, 1962, stated:

. . . the broad span of children's reading choices serves as an indication of the need for book publishers and writers of children's reading materials to expand the interest content to include more of the child's everyday world and its activities.<sup>3</sup>

Dallmann stated that ". . . the process of stimulating reading interests involves the expansion and enrichment of the child's general interests."<sup>4</sup> Due to the increasing amount of research concerning children's interests, Chiu has noted "It is contended that the challenge to get the right book to the right person at the right time can be met only if educators know children's reading interests or preferences."<sup>5</sup> According to Zimet, "Interests vary significantly with the times."<sup>6</sup> For this reason,

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Karlin, Teaching Elementary Reading (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1980), p. 424.

<sup>2</sup>Frank Crane, "Reading," The New Dictionary of Thoughts: A Cyclopedia of Quotations (Garden City, N.J.: Standard Book Co., 1966):545.

<sup>3</sup>Ruth C. Smith, "Children's Reading Choices and Basal Reader Content," Elementary English (March 1962):209.

<sup>4</sup>Martha Dallmann, Roger Rouch, Lynette Char, and John DeBoer, The Teaching of Reading, rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1982), p. 306.

<sup>5</sup>Lian-NWang Chiu, "Reading Preferences of Fourth Grade Children Related to Sex and Reading Ability," Journal of Educational Research (April 1978):369.

<sup>6</sup>Sara F. Zimet, "Children's Interests and Story Preferences: A Critical Review of the Literature," Elementary School Journal (December 1966):128.

educators and publishers should try to work together to see that the interests of the students will produce ". . . children who will read rather than merely children who can read" according to Duffy.<sup>1</sup> Schulte stated:

Therefore, it is evident that a study of the independent reading interests of children has significance for the school and the teacher, for the curriculum worker, for the school and the public librarian, for the parent, and for the publisher of children's books.<sup>2</sup>

In Chapter III the procedures followed in the study are discussed. The sample used in the study, the nature of the measuring instrument, the method used in administering the measuring instrument, and the statistics employed in analysis of the data are explained.

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<sup>1</sup>Gerald G. Duffy, "Developing the Reading Habit," The Reading Teacher (December 1967):253.

<sup>2</sup>Emerita S. Schulte, "Independent Reading Interests of Children in Grades Four, Five, and Six," Reading and Realism (1969):729.



## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics on the individual reading interests of students, and the frequency extent to which the students have read the Newbery Award Books. This study also investigated basal readers to determine whether the content reflected the expressed reading interests of students.

#### Setting and Subjects

The schools selected for this study were based on their willingness to participate as well as their demographic characteristics to represent rural, urban, and metropolitan areas in Oklahoma. The 1981 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas in Oklahoma<sup>1</sup> was used in order to select schools for the study based on the current demographic information. The schools selected to represent metropolitan areas of Oklahoma were located in Oklahoma County with a population of 377,003 in 1980. The schools which represented urban areas of Oklahoma were located in Carter County and are among the Ardmore Public Schools. According to the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas, the Ardmore population in 1980 was 23,689. Schools in

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<sup>1</sup>1981 Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas in Oklahoma, Oklahoma Employment Security Commission, Oklahoma State Employment Service, Census Enumerations, released July 1981.

Garvin County were used to represent rural characteristics of Oklahoma. All the schools participating in the study were elementary schools and only the third and fifth grade students were investigated. Six third grade classes and six fifth grade classes were participants from each of the demographic areas, rural, urban, and metropolitan, in Oklahoma.

The subjects for the study consisted of students, evenly divided between third and fifth grades, and drawn from schools to represent equal numbers of rural, urban, and metropolitan classes in Oklahoma. There was almost equal distribution of third and fifth grade boys and girls.

#### Reading Interest Inventory

The Reading Interest Inventory selected for this study was used in 1969 by Mary McKay at the University of Pittsburgh in which she tested the reading preferences of 228 metropolitan students in grades four, five, and six. Additional Newbery Award Books have been added and Part I of the test was changed by adding the category Have Not Read.

Part I of the Interest Inventory was designed to assess the frequency extent to which the students have read the Newbery Award Books. In this part, a list of fifty children's books, of which ten are Newbery Award Books, ask the student to indicate whether they felt the book was Very Interesting, Fairly Interesting, Uninteresting, or Have Not Read. The Newbery Award Books are the winners from 1971 through 1980.

A list of these books is included in Appendix A.

Part II of the inventory contains twenty-eight interest categories. The students circled the category they preferred to read. Before this step, they placed an (X) beside the kind of books they liked. This step was included so that the participants would familiarize themselves with all twenty-eight categories before committing themselves to one particular category of preference. (See Appendix B.)

The basal readers used to determine the content interest were those basal readers presently used in the respective classrooms. (See Appendix C.)

#### Administering Reading Interest Inventory

The examiner was the homeroom teacher in each classroom and received written instructions which were read to the students. The participants were assured that they were not taking a test, and the results would not affect their grade. They were encouraged to be truthful in answering the questions as there were no right or wrong answers.

The teacher read the title of each book in Part I of the testing instrument while the students marked the appropriate column to indicate if they had read the book or not and to what degree of individual interest the book contained. The choices represented by the four columns were: Very Interesting, Fairly Interesting, Uninteresting, and Have Not Read. The purpose for having four possible selections from which to choose allowed

each student the opportunity to make a written mark for each book title. The same procedure was used for all fifty titles and for both third and fifth grade classrooms.

All of the students were instructed on Part II of the testing instrument to place an (X) beside as many of the twenty-eight categories of interest which they found interesting. They were instructed to circle the one category they found most interesting over all the other selections. The twenty-eight interest categories were: adventure, animals, biography, cookbook, fairy tales, historical events, holidays, home life, how to make or do things, humor, Indians, make-believe, music, mystery, nature, other countries, plays, poetry, recreation, religion, romance, school activities, science, space and space travel, sports, today's world, travel, and western-cowboys.

The testing instruments were collected by the teacher and given to the principal, who also distributed the test in the beginning, and returned them to the investigator when completed. The inventory took approximately twenty minutes to administer to each individual group of third and fifth grade classrooms.

### Selection of the Variables

The variables in this study were the basal reader subject matter, rural, urban, and metropolitan demographic characteristics, sex, grade level, and the extent of Newbery Award Books read. This study investigated the effects of these variables on the expressed reading interests of students.

### Analysis of the Data

The information for each student was coded for analysis. Of the twenty-eight identifiable interest categories in the Reading Interest Inventory, only the top ten categories were selected for analysis, although all categories were discussed. The top ten categories were determined on the basis of frequency of selection by the participating third and fifth grade students.

For testing hypothesis one, there will be significant differences between reading interest of students when measured in relationship to sex, grade level, and geographical location, ANOVA procedures were used to analyze the effect of sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics (independent variables) on the expressed reading interests of students. The .05 level of significance was accepted. By reviewing the twenty-eight interest categories, each student was assigned one category as his expressed reading interest. This was determined by the category that each student circled on Part II of the testing instrument.

To test for sex differences, all third grade students were placed in one of two groups, male or female. The top ten categories selected by both groups were compared to determine

the differences that existed among third grade boys and girls. The same procedure was used for analyzing sex differences in reading interests for fifth grade students.

Grade level differences were analyzed by compiling the expressed reading interests of all third grade students into one group and the expressed reading interests of all fifth grade participants into a separate group. Again using only the top ten categories, an attempt was made to discover differences in interests between third grade students and fifth grade students by using the ANOVA.

Differences that existed between rural, urban, and metropolitan demographic areas of Oklahoma were tested by combining all third grade rural students into one group, all third grade urban students into another group, and third grade metropolitan students into a separate group. A comparison was made among the third grade students using the top ten interests categories of each demographic location with the other third grade students representing the two remaining locations. The ANOVA determined differences among demographic characteristics on the Reading Interest categories. The same procedure was repeated using fifth grade students in the selected demographic locations of Oklahoma.

In testing hypothesis two, when expressed reading interests were classified by categories, there will be a significant difference between the reading interest of students and the content of stories found in the students' basal readers.

The same top ten interests categories selected by the students in the third and fifth grades were used for analysis. The investigator individually examined each story contained in the third and fifth grade basal readers used in the respective classrooms. Based on the individual content of each story, one of the top ten categories was assigned to each story. Each third and fifth grade basal reader was analyzed in the same manner. A Spearman rho-rank order correlation was used to assess the extent of congruence between third grade basal readers interest content and the expressed reading interest of third grade students. This assessment was made on each third grade classroom and the individual basal reader used in the selected class. The same procedure was used in the fifth grades to determine the differences between the top ten expressed reading interests of students and the content of stories found in the students' basal readers.

Part I of the testing instrument was used to determine the existing relationship between third grade students and the frequency of Newbery Award Books which had been read by the students. The response from each third grade student was recorded concerning the ten Newbery Award Books on the Interest-Inventory and placed in the appropriate column as designated on the testing instrument. All columns were individually tabulated and tested using a correlational analysis for reading frequency. Each Newbery Award Book was then analyzed by the individual response concerning only that particular selection

and the number of third grade students which had read each book. The same procedure was used for fifth grade students and a correlational analysis was used to test the relationship between the frequency of Newbery Award Books read in the third grades to the frequency of the same books read by fifth grade students. This was used to test hypothesis three, there will be a significant positive relationship between age level of students, in relationship to grade, and frequency of students reporting their reading of the Newbery Award Books.

The findings regarding the reading interests of the entire sample are presented in Chapter IV. The results of the statistical analysis are presented and appraised.



## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS

When the completed Reading Interest Inventories were collected, they were classified according to sex, grade level, and demographic location. Inventories were analyzed using the Statistical Analysis System F 9.5 and the University of Oklahoma IBM 370 Computer to detect differences among the expressed reading interests of students. Differences examined included those by sex, grade level, demographic characteristics, content of stories found in the basal readers, and the frequency with which students reported reading the Newbery Award Books. The total sample size was 750 students, of which 362 were third graders and 388 were fifth graders.

#### Findings

Hypothesis one stated that there would be no significant differences between reading interests of students when measured in relationship to sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics. Hypothesis one contains three subhypotheses which must be addressed separately. The first of these subhypotheses is that there will be no significant difference in reading interests of students when measured in relationship to sex. This subhypothesis shall be called  $H_{01a}$ . The second subhypothesis

is that there will be no significant difference in reading interests of students when measured in relationship to grade level. This subhypothesis shall be called  $H_{01b}$ . The third subhypothesis is that there will be no significant difference in reading interests of students when measured in relationship to demographic area. This subhypothesis shall be called  $H_{01c}$ . To test these hypotheses using ANOVA, it was necessary to group responses according to sex, grade level, and demographic area.

Analysis of the data for the third grade,  $H_{01a}$ , revealed a significant difference in reading interests between males and females (F ratio = 6.73, p .0099). In determining sex differences in reading interests among fifth grade students, analysis of this data revealed no differences between males and females in relationship to the expressed reading interests in this grade. These analyses included all twenty-eight interest categories in the Reading Interest Inventory.

Analysis of the data, using only the top ten interest categories selected by the third grade students, revealed no differences between males and females, while in the fifth grade, there was a highly significant difference between male and female reading interests when the analysis included only the top ten interest category rankings (F ratio = 46.53, p .0001).

To test  $H_{01b}$  for grade level differences, all third grade and fifth grade responses were analyzed. There were no significant differences in the expressed reading interest of

students based on grade level when the data from all twenty-eight interest categories were analyzed. When using only the top ten reading interest categories of third and fifth grade students, there were significant differences ( $F$  ratio = 6.49,  $p$  .0111).

An ANOVA was also used to determine differences among rural, urban, and metropolitan students in the third and fifth grades,  $H_{0c}$ . When analyzing the data including all twenty-eight categories, there were no significant differences in the expressed reading interest among students representing each selected demographic location. These results were found in third and fifth grades. Analysis of the data including only the top ten interest categories revealed no significant differences were found in either the third or fifth grades.

Based on the analysis, it must be concluded that when considering all possible twenty-eight categories, there was a significant difference in reading interests between males and females in the third grade; however, when only the ten most frequently chosen interest categories were included in the analysis, this difference disappeared. Oddly, just the obverse was true when fifth graders were considered. That is, there was no difference between males and females when all twenty-eight interest categories were considered, but there was a highly significant difference when only the ten most frequently chosen were included in the analysis. Therefore, this portion of hypothesis one,  $H_{0a}$ , was rejected for the third grade when all

twenty-eight interest categories were included and was rejected for the fifth grade when the top ten interest categories were included in the analysis.

Subhypothesis  $Ho_{1b}$ , that is, there will be no difference in the interest categories selected by third graders when compared to those selected by fifth graders, was rejected when only the top ten interest categories were considered. However, when all twenty-eight categories were included, the data failed to reject this portion of  $Ho_1$ .

Subhypothesis  $Ho_{1c}$ , that is, there will be no difference in interest categories when compared to demographic location, was not rejected by the data.

Hypothesis two stated that when expressed reading interests were classified by categories, there will be no significant difference between the reading interest of students and the content of stories found in the students' basal readers. Correlational analysis of third grade reading interests and the content of third grade basal readers, analyzing all twenty-eight categories, reflected a nonsignificant slightly negative correlation. Analysis of the top ten expressed reading interest categories of third graders resulted in a slight negative correlation. This correlation was also nonsignificant.

In correlating the reading interests of fifth grade students and the interest content of fifth grade basal readers, a nonsignificant slightly positive correlation was found when using all twenty-eight categories. Analysis of only the top

ten selected categories also produced a slightly positive correlation.

Results of these correlational analyses revealed essentially no relationship between the interests expressed by the third and fifth graders sampled and the content of the basal readers found in their classrooms. Because of this results, hypothesis two cannot be rejected.

Hypothesis three stated that there will be no significant relationship between age level of students and frequency of students reporting their reading of the Newbery Award Books. In correlating the individual responses of students reporting their reading of the Newbery Award Books, both third and fifth grades reflected a nonsignificant correlation between age, based on grade level, and the number of books read. In comparing the number of books read in the third grade to the responses of fifth grade students, a positive correlation, significant at the .05 level ( $p .035$ ), was reflected. Results of this correlational analysis indicated essentially no relationship between age and number of Newbery Award Books read within grade level. This hypothesis  $H_{03}$  was not rejected by the data. The small, but significant correlation between grade level and number of Newbery books read was to be expected.

Additional analysis of the data by rank order produced the following findings:

The findings of students based on sex according to the twenty-eight categories were:

1. Third and fifth grade females expressed a preference for two categories. They were romance, with a student count of 74 and 20.32%, and mystery, 67 being the student count and 18.40%. Three of the twenty-eight were least popular. The three least popular categories were other countries, space and space travel, and today's world. Each received one student count, and each with a percentage of 0.27 (see Table 1).

2. A combined preference of third and fifth grade males found one category to be the most popular, that being sports, with a student count of 75 and 19.43%. The second most popular category among males was western-cowboys, receiving a student count of 52 and 13.47%. The least popular category was travel, with one student count and 0.25%.

3. The most popular categories selected by third grade females were mystery, with a student count of 29 and 17.57%, and romance, with a student count of 25 and 15.15%. Four categories appeared to be the least popular, biography, other countries, travel, and today's world, with each receiving one student count and a percentage of 0.60 (see Table 2).

4. Third grade males selected sports as the most popular category with a student count of 45 and 22.84%. This was followed by western-cowboys, student count of 36 and 18.27%. Third grade males found five categories to be the least popular. They were home life, poetry, travel, recreation,

TABLE 1

TOP TEN CATEGORIES AS EXPRESSED BY BOTH  
THIRD AND FIFTH GRADE MALE AND FEMALE

Category	Student Count	Percent
Female 280		
1. Romance	74	20.32
2. Mystery	67	18.40
3. Animals	49	13.46
4. Sports	15	4.12
5. Fairy tales	15	4.12
6. Cookbook	14	3.84
7. Nature	13	3.57
8. Music	13	3.57
9. Religion	11	3.02
10. Western-cowboy	9	2.47
Male 306		
1. Sports	75	19.43
2. Western-cowboy	52	13.47
3. Space and space travel	32	8.29
4. Mystery	31	8.03
5. Animals	29	7.51
6. Romance	23	5.95
7. Science	18	4.66
8. Adventure	18	4.66
9. Humor	14	3.62
10. Historical events	14	3.62

TABLE 2  
TOP TEN CATEGORIES AS EXPRESSED BY  
THIRD GRADE MALE AND FEMALE

Category	Student Count	Percent
Female 130		
1. Mystery	29	17.57
2. Romance	25	15.15
3. Animals	15	9.09
4. Nature	11	6.66
5. Music	10	6.06
6. Fairy tales	9	5.45
7. Cookbook	9	5.45
8. School activities	8	4.84
9. Sports	7	4.24
10. Religion	7	4.24
Male 160		
1. Sports	45	22.84
2. Western-cowboys	36	18.27
3. Space and space travel	17	8.62
4. Romance	14	7.10
5. Mystery	13	6.59
6. Indians	9	4.56
7. Animals	8	4.06
8. Adventure	8	4.06
9. Science	7	3.55
10. Music	7	3.55



and school activities, each with one student count and 0.50%.

5. Fifth grade females definitely preferred three categories. Those being romance, with a student count of 49 and 24.62%, mystery, with a student count of 38 and 19.09%, and animals, student count of 34 and 17.05%. The next category of popularity only received eight student count with 4.02%, thus showing the popularity of the three categories mentioned above. Three categories, plays, school activities, and space and space travel, were the least popular categories, each receiving one student count and 0.50% (see Table 3).

6. Fifth grade males preferred sports with a student count of 30 and 15.87%. This was followed by romance with a student count of 21 and 11.11%. Six categories, holidays, home life, poetry, recreation, religion, and school activities were least popular, each receiving one student count and 0.52%.

The findings of students based on grade level according to the twenty-eight categories were:

1. The fifth grade, both male and female, preferred three categories above the remaining twenty-five to be the most popular. They were romance, with a student count of 58 and 14.94%, mystery, with a student count of 56 and 14.43%, and animals, with a student count of 55 and 14.17%. One category was least popular to fifth graders, school activities, with a student count of 22 and 0.51%.

2. The third grade, both male and female, expressed a strong preference for one category, sports, with a student

TABLE 3  
TOP TEN CATEGORIES AS EXPRESSED BY  
FIFTH GRADE MALE AND FEMALE

Category	Student Count	Percent
Female 160		
1. Romance	49	26.62
2. Mystery	38	19.09
3. Animals	34	17.09
4. Sports	8	4.02
5. Humor	6	3.01
6. Fairy tales	6	3.01
7. Home life	5	2.51
8. Cookbook	5	2.51
9. Biography	5	2.51
10. *See below	4	2.01
Male 152		
1. Sports	30	15.87
2. Animals	21	11.11
3. Mystery	18	9.52
4. Western-cowboys	16	8.46
5. Space and space travel	15	7.93
6. Humor	12	6.34
7. Science	11	5.82
8. Historical events	10	5.29
9. Adventure	10	5.29
10. Romance	9	4.76

\*Six categories tied for tenth place. They were western-cowboys, religion, make-believe, how to make or do things, holidays, and adventure.

count of 52 and 14.35%. The least popular categories were biography, home life, other countries, recreation, and today's world, each receiving one student count, and each with a percentage of 0.27 (see Table 4).

The findings of students based on demographic characteristics according to the twenty-eight categories were:

1. Metropolitan students found two categories to be the most popular. They were sports and romance, each with a student count of 36 and 15.45%. Home life, make-believe, and recreation were the least preferred categories by metropolitan students with a student count of one each and 0.42% (see Table 5).

2. Mystery, with a student count of 40 and 15.93%, followed by animals, with a student count of 33 and 13.14%, were the two most popular categories among rural students. The least popular categories, each receiving one student count and 0.42%, were holidays, other countries, plays, and poetry.

3. The two most popular categories among urban students were romance, with a student count of 39 and 14.66%, and mystery, with a student count of 36 and 13.53%. Three categories were least appealing, recreation, school activities, and today's world, each category receiving one student count and 0.37%.

The findings of the Newbery Award Books based on the third and fifth grade students were:

TABLE 4

TOP TEN CATEGORIES AS EXPRESSED BY BOTH  
MALE AND FEMALE IN THE THIRD  
AND FIFTH GRADE

Category	Student Count	Percent
Third 272		
1. Sports	52	14.36
2. Mystery	42	11.60
3. Western-cowboys	41	11.32
4. Romance	39	10.77
5. Animals	23	6.35
6. Space and space travel	17	4.69
7. Music	17	4.69
8. Nature	15	4.14
9. Cookbook	14	3.86
10. Indians, fairy tales	12	3.31
Fifth 299		
1. Romance	58	14.94
2. Mystery	56	14.43
3. Animals	55	14.17
4. Sports	38	9.79
5. Western-cowboys	20	5.15
6. Humor	18	4.63
7. Space and space travel	16	4.12
8. Adventure	14	3.60
9. Historical events	13	3.35
10. Science	11	2.83

TABLE 5

TOP TEN CATEGORIES AS EXPRESSED BY MALE AND FEMALE,  
THIRD AND FIFTH GRADE, ACCORDING TO  
DEMOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Category	Student Count	Percent
Metropolitan 223		
1. Sports	36	15.45
2. Romance	36	15.45
3. Mystery	22	9.44
4. Animals	15	6.43
5. Cookbook	14	6.00
6. Western-cowboys	13	5.57
7. Music	12	5.15
8. Space and space travel	9	3.86
9. How to make or do things	8	3.43
10. Fairy tales	8	3.43
Urban 266		
1. Romance	39	14.66
2. Mystery	36	12.53
3. Animals	30	11.27
4. Sports	26	9.77
5. Western-cowboys	23	8.64
6. Space and space travel	18	6.76
7. Adventure	11	4.13
8. Religion	9	3.38
9. Nature	9	3.38
10. Humor	9	3.38
Rural 251		
1. Mystery	40	15.93
2. Animals	33	13.14
3. Sports	28	11.15
4. Western-cowboys	25	9.96
5. Romance	22	8.76
6. Science	10	3.98
7. Humor	10	3.98
8. Adventure	9	3.58
9. Nature	7	2.78
10. How to make or do things	7	2.78
11. Historical events	7	2.78

1. The third grade, with 362 students, reported reading 448 Newbery Award Books, with a mean of 1.24. Also in the third grade, 196 students, or 54.29%, had never read any of the books investigated in this study (see Table 6).

2. The fifth grade, with 388 students, reported reading 590 Newbery Award Books, with a mean of 1.52. Of these students, 196, or 45.36%, had never read any of the books investigated in this study.

3. One third grade student reported reading all ten books, and one student reported reading eight of the selections, 0.27%. One fifth grade student reported reading all of the selections, and five fifth graders, 1.28%, had read nine of the books.

4. The third and fifth grades combined reported 372 students, with a percentage of 49.66, had not read any of the selections. Two students, 0.26%, had read all ten of the books listed in this study.

### Results

The twenty-eight categories represented in the study are listed in Table 7 and contain the frequencies and percentages of the total sample of third and fifth grade students investigated. Table 8 shows the top ten categories as selected by the students, and the percentages according to the category.

The results of the analysis of data considering the top ten rankings (Table 8), indicated that there were no

TABLE 6

NUMBER OF NEWBERRY AWARD BOOKS READ  
BY THIRD AND FIFTH GRADES

Number of Books Read	Student Count	Percent
Third		
0	196	54.29
1	57	15.78
2	33	9.14
3	29	8.03
4	19	5.26
5	13	3.60
6	5	1.38
7	7	1.93
8	1	0.27
9	0	0.27
10	1	0.27
Fifth		
0	176	45.36
1	78	20.10
2	42	10.82
3	36	9.27
4	19	4.89
5	11	2.83
6	10	2.57
7	6	1.54
8	4	1.03
9	5	1.28
10	1	0.25

TABLE 7

INTERESTS OF THIRD AND FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS  
ON THE TWENTY-EIGHT CATEGORIES

Category	Frequency	Percent
1. Adventure	24	3.20
2. Animals	78	10.40
3. Biography	8	1.06
4. Cookbook	22	2.93
5. Fairy tales	20	2.66
6. Historical events	17	2.26
7. Holidays	11	1.46
8. Home life	7	0.93
9. How to make or do things	18	2.40
10. Humor	22	2.93
11. Indians	15	2.00
12. Make-believe	9	1.20
13. Music	24	3.20
14. Mystery	98	13.06
15. Nature	22	2.93
16. Other countries	1	0.13
17. Plays	6	0.80
18. Poetry	9	1.20
19. Recreation	5	0.66
20. Religion	14	1.86
21. Romance	97	12.93
22. School activities	11	1.46
23. Science	22	2.93
24. Space and space travel	33	4.40
25. Sports	90	12.00
26. Travel	5	0.66
27. Today's world	1	0.13
28. Western-cowboys	61	8.13



Catego	arc
1. Myster	3.
2. Romanc	2.
3. Sports	12.3
4. Animal	10.
5. Wester	8.1
6. Space	4.4
7. Advent	3.3
8. Music	3.
9. Cookbo	2.3
10. Humor	2.3
11. Nature	2.
12. Scienc	2.

TABLE 8  
TOP TEN SELECTED CATEGORIES OF THIRD  
AND FIFTH GRADE STUDENTS

Category	Frequency Selected	Percent
1. Mystery	98	13.06
2. Romance	97	12.93
3. Sports	90	12.00
4. Animals	78	10.40
5. Western-cowboys	61	8.13
6. Space and space travel	33	4.40
7. Adventure	24	3.20
8. Music	24	3.20
9. Cookbook	22	2.93
10. Humor	22	2.93
11. Nature	22	2.93
12. Science	22	2.93

detectable differences between male and female third grade reading interests. A highly significant difference was found in the fifth grade in relationship to reading interests and sex. Based on the findings of this study and previous findings of others cited in the review of literature, it would seem that sex becomes a determining factor concerning children's reading interest at about the age of nine.

There were also significant differences among the top ten interest categories as expressed by third and fifth grade students. These results were in agreement with previous studies in that the range of reading interests expands with age and experiences.

There were also no significant differences indicated in this study in relationship to demographic locations. Sports, romance, and mystery were popular categories among the students of all demographic areas.

The basal readers investigated in this study indicated that the top ten interest categories as expressed by the students in relationship to the readers found in the classrooms is only slightly positive. Table 9 lists the top ten categories according to the content of the basal readers. Table 10 compares the percentages of the top ten student selections to the top ten as recorded from the content of the basal readers. Of the top ten categories as expressed by the students, only five of the categories were among the top ten categories found in the basal readers. They were animals, mystery, nature,

TABLE 9  
TOP TEN CATEGORIES OF BASAL READERS

Category	Frequency of Stories	Percent of Stories
1. Animals	42	10.12
2. Fairy tales	38	9.15
3. Mystery	34	8.19
4. Make-believe	29	6.98
5. Nature	25	6.02
6. How to make or do things	24	5.78
7. Adventure	21	5.06
8. Historical events	21	5.06
9. Sports	20	4.81
10. Other countries	17	4.09

TABLE 10  
TOP TEN STUDENT SELECTED CATEGORIES WITH  
STUDENT AND BASAL READER PERCENTAGES

Category	Selected Student %	Selected Reader %
1. Mystery	13.06	8.19
2. Romance	12.93	0.48
3. Sports	12.00	4.81
4. Animals	10.40	10.12
5. Western-cowboys	8.13	0.72
6. Space and space travel	4.40	0.48
7. Adventure	3.20	5.06
8. Music	3.20	2.65
9. Cookbook	2.93	1.44
10. Humor	2.93	2.41
11. Nature	2.93	6.02
12. Science	2.93	3.37

adventure and sports. Only one category of the twenty-eight categories did not appear in any of the basal reader stories investigated for this study, that category being number 20, religion, in which fourteen of the students indicated this category as their primary reading interest.

In testing the number of Newbery Award Books which had been read, only two students reported reading all ten of the Newbery Award Books listed in the Reading Interest Inventory. Three hundred seventy-two students reported reading none of the books investigated. The data indicated a difference between the response of third and fifth grade students.

In Chapter V, the findings of the study are summarized. Based on this investigation, the conclusions and recommendations are presented.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although children's reading interests have been previously investigated, recent technological developments and newer medias of communication, as well as an increase in the number and variety of books, have influenced the individual reading interests of children. A search of the literature revealed the possibility for a study of children's reading interests in Oklahoma. Other parts of the country had reported similar studies, but none were found that investigated the reading interests of students in Oklahoma.

#### Summary

This study investigated the differences in the expressed reading interests in selected schools in Oklahoma in relationship to sex, grade level, and demographic characteristics. An attempt was also made to determine the extent to which the students had read the Newbery Award Books. The basal readers found in the classrooms were investigated to determine whether the content reflected the individual reading interests of students.

The sample for this study consisted of 750 students, 362 of which were third graders, and 388 students representing

the fifth grade. The schools were divided among rural, urban, and metropolitan areas of Oklahoma.

The Reading Interest Inventory was used to determine the number of Newbery Award Books read by each student as well as their expressed reading interest. The inventory was distributed by the principal of the school to the homeroom teacher. The basal readers investigated in this study were the readers presently being used in the classrooms being tested. The inventory was returned to the principal upon completion. When the data were collected by the investigator, the individual responses were tabulated and computed to determine significance of differences.

The analysis of the data resulted in the following findings:

1. There was no significant difference found between third grade male and female students in their expressed reading interests, although fifth graders revealed a highly significant difference in reading interests in relationship to sex at the .01 level ( $F$  ratio = 46.53;  $p > .0001$ ).

2. To test the significance of difference of third grade students reading interests with the expressed reading interests of fifth grade students, ANOVA was used to analyze the data. It was determined that a significant difference existed at the .01 level ( $F$  ratio = 6.49;  $p > .0111$ ).

3. There was no significant difference in the reading interests as expressed by the students in relationship to



demographic location, rural, urban, or metropolitan areas of Oklahoma.

4. There was a nonsignificant correlation between the expressed reading interests of third grade students when correlated with the content of the basal reader stories. It was determined that no significant difference existed.

5. To test the significance of difference when the content of the basal readers was compared to the expressed reading interests of the students, a Spearman rho-rank order correlation was used to analyze the data. It was determined that no significant difference existed.

6. A correlational analysis was used to test the relationship between the frequency of Newbery Award Books read in the third grades to the frequency of the same books read by fifth grade students. It was determined that a positive correlation, significant at the .05 level ( $p .0357$ ), existed.

7. When analyzing the number of Newbery Award Books that had been read in relationship to age, there was a non-significant correlation.

### Conclusions

Generalizing from the findings of this study and related research, the following conclusions can be made:

1. Classroom teachers need to survey carefully the reading interests of the students in their classes to determine

the specific reading interests of the students.

2. Since interests vary with the times, assessment of individual interests should be a continuous process.

3. Teachers as well as librarians should promote the reading and interest of the Newbery Award Books in the third and fifth grades.

4. To promote additional reading among students and to broaden the interests of students, recreational reading should be a part of the curriculum.

5. Teachers should be aware of the basal reader content in regard to meeting the interest needs of the students.

6. Since basal readers serve as the primary reading material in the classroom, publishers of basal readers should consider and be aware of the current interests of the students. They should adapt the stories to meet the needs of the students involved in the reading of their basal readers.

#### Recommendations

Based on the search of the literature and the findings of this study, the following problems have not been resolved and, therefore, they are being recommended for further study:

1. Explore the differences in reading interests of children from different socioeconomic and ethnic groups.

2. Investigate the effect of sibling position on reading interests and parental occupations and education level.

3. Examine the relationship of age and grade level with particular reference to children who have been retained or socially promoted.

4. Explore the effects of intelligence and level of reading achievement in relationship to individual reading interests.

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APPENDIX A

NEWBERY AWARD BOOKS

## NEWBERY AWARD BOOKS

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APPENDIX B

TESTING DIRECTIONS AND READING

INTEREST INVENTORY

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## APPENDIX C

### BASAL READERS

## BASAL READERS

## Third Grade Rural:

A Painted Ocean -- Economy  
Air Pudding -- Economy  
Catching Glimpses -- American Book Co.  
Far Back Morning -- Economy  
Spinners -- Houghton Mifflin  
Weavers -- Houghton Mifflin

## Fifth Grade Rural:

Banners -- Houghton Mifflin  
Crossing Boundaries -- American Book Co. (2 schools)  
Majesty and Mystery -- Allyn and Bacon  
Reaching Out -- Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

## Third Grade Urban:

Catching Glimpses -- American Book Co.  
Spinners -- Houghton Mifflin  
Weavers -- Houghton Mifflin

## Fifth Grade Urban:

Banners -- Houghton Mifflin  
Crossing Boundaries -- American Book Co.

## Third Grade Metropolitan:

Catching Glimpses -- American Book Co.  
Hidden Wonders -- Scott Foresman  
Rainbow Shower -- Scott Foresman

## Fifth Grade Metropolitan:

Crossing Boundaries -- American Book Co.  
Sky Climbers -- Scott Foresman