

**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERESTS AND READING
PREFERENCES OF THIRD GRADE PUPILS**

BY

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AN INVESTIGATION OF THE INTERESTS
AND READING PREFERENCES OF
THIRD GRADE PUPILS

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by
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[Handwritten signature: Shirley Rose Crenshaw]
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Research Paper written by Shirley Rose Crenshaw entitled "An Investigation of the Interests and Reading Preferences of Third Grade Pupils." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education, with a major in Curriculum and Instruction.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND DEFINITION OF TERMS

Over seventy years ago John Dewey focused attention on children's interests. The subject is still being studied even though the Progressive Education Movement has given way to more recent innovations. Much of the research on interest today is used as a starting point for teachers and librarians to guide children's reading. This particular survey is concerned with the interests and reading preferences of elementary students at the third grade level.

I. THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. It was the purpose of this study to investigate the interests and preferences of third grade children. Some of the following questions were explored: What activities do they prefer?; What do they like to read?; Are there any differences between boys and girls in regard to reading preferences?

Importance of the study. Thousands of words have been written about the importance of using interests to motivate better reading. If we start where children's interests are, we can build upon this foundation to develop taste and discrimination. The importance of this study is primarily

personal. The writer's curiosity about children's interests was aroused during a research project on individualized reading. This study was planned to be of assistance to the participating teachers, and ultimately to assist the students. If it accomplishes no more than to help the teachers to know more about the reading interests and preferences of their students, it will have fulfilled a purpose.

II. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Although the words are often used inter-changeably, some distinction should be made between the meaning of interest and preference.

Interest. This may be defined in the context of motivational theory. It is distinguished from preference or drive. Hurlock says "an interest is a learned motive that satisfies a need."¹ Getzels defines interest as "a characteristic disposition . . . which impels an individual to seek out particular objects or activities for attention."² Austin suggests that interests include the things that children like

¹Elizabeth B. Hurlock, Child Development (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1956), p. 594.

²J. W. Getzels, "The Problem Of Interests: A Reconsideration," Reading: Seventy Five Years of Progress, H. Alan Robinson, editor (Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading held at the University of Chicago, Vol. 28. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 98.

to do, the people they like to know about, and the things they want to learn how to do.³ Therefore the word interest is used here to mean a motivational force that directs attention to certain related culminating activities.

Preference. A preference is defined in the context of discriminatory activities. One makes choices between alternatives. Getzels defines a preference as "a disposition to receive one object as against another."⁴ One may prefer spinach over squash but have absolutely no interest in either one.

³Martha Lou Austin, "A Survey of Current Reading Interests in Kindergarten Through Grade Three," Developing Permanent Interest In Reading, Helen Robinson, editor, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 53.

⁴Getzels, op. cit., p. 97.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Reading interests and story preferences have been the subject of more than 300 studies.⁵ According to Townsend, the greatest number of studies related to research of reading interests occurred in the period between 1938 and 1953. She suggested that research is just as important now because "it keeps the pupil in the center of our attention and recognizes him as a growing highly motivated organism."⁶ Cleary cautions that individual interests serve only as general guides and should be treated as such.⁷

I. LITERATURE RELATED TO METHODOLOGY

Much of the literature is concerned with the methods of obtaining information about interests and preferences. The most common methods are interest inventories, which include questions or check lists about favorite activities and

⁵William S. Gray, "Physiology and Psychology of Reading," Encyclopedia of Educational Research, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1960), p. 1105.

⁶Agatha Townsend, "What Research Says to the Reading Teacher: another look at reading interests," The Reading Teacher, XIII (April, 1960), p. 302.

⁷Florence Damon Cleary, Blueprints For Better Reading, (New York: The H. W. Wilson Company, 1957), p. 35.

book or story preferences. Kottmeyer,⁸ Harris,⁹ Russell,¹⁰ and Strang¹¹ have published sample inventories.

Another method either included in an inventory, or given by itself, is the "three wishes" survey. The child is asked to express his choice of three wishes. Larrick,¹² Bell,¹³ and Harris¹⁴ have made use of this method.

Zimet was quite critical of methodology in her review of research on interests and suggested a refinement of obtaining such information.¹⁵ In response to this criticism, Ford and Koplyay devised a new technique. This was a

⁸William Kottmeyer, Handbook for Remedial Reading (St. Louis: Webster Publishing Company, 1959), pp. 36-39.

⁹Albert J. Harris, How To Increase Reading Ability (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1956), p. 479.

¹⁰David H. Russell, Children Learn to Read (New York: Ginn and Company, 1949), pp. 364-366.

¹¹Ruth Strang and Dorothy Kendall Bracken, Making Better Readers (Boston: D.C. Heath and Company, 1957), p. 69.

¹²Nancy Larrick, "Making the Most of Children's Interests," Education, LXXIII (May, 1953), p. 531.

¹³Betty Bell, "Classroom Methods For Developing Reading Interests," Developing Permanent Interest In Reading, Helen Robinson, editor (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 120.

¹⁴Harris, op. cit., p. 468.

¹⁵Sara F. Zimet, "Children's Interest and Story Preferences: A Critical Review of the Literature," The Elementary School Journal, LXVII (December, 1966), p. 124.

non-verbal method in which the children were asked to circle a picture indicating the story which they would most like to read.¹⁶

Weintraub emphasized the methodology of research techniques rather than the findings. He suggested that:

Findings are to a large extent influenced by the particular research techniques employed. Studies of interests and preferences must be viewed from the standpoint of the methods employed.¹⁷

Byers was interested in methodology and used tape recorders to obtain information on interests and preferences. She recorded the children's sharing time reports.¹⁸ Rankin and Thames also made use of the tape recordings. The children were asked to indicate their preference after listening to recorded stories.¹⁹

Thorndike used an annotated fictitious title procedure to measure differences in reading interests. He

¹⁶Robin C. Ford and Janos Koplyay, "Children's Story Preferences," The Reading Teacher, XXII (December, 1968), 233-37.

¹⁷Samuel Weintraub, "Children's Reading Interests," The Reading Teacher, XXII (April, 1969), 659.

¹⁸Loretta Byers, "Pupil's Interests and the Content of Primary Reading Texts," The Reading Teacher, XVII (January, 1964), 227-233.

¹⁹E. F. Rankin and Charlotte Thames, "A Methodology for Studying Children's Reactions to Stories in First Grade Readers," The Reading Teacher, XXII (December, 1968), 245.

devised a list of imaginary titles and asked the children to choose the ones they would most like to read.²⁰

Many of the methods included personal interviews, free choice reading selections, observation of free play, parent-teacher conferences, and individual experience stories. In addition to these, Bell also suggests leisure-time reading records, sharing period conversations, and student drawings.²¹

In referring to methodology, Strang observed:

None of the methods used in studying reading interests are entirely satisfactory. . . . The best method is daily observation supplemented by the informal interview and freely written type of questionnaire.²²

The difficulty of objective measurement is pointed out by Jeanne Chall: "Interest is a subtle thing even to observe. I have formed the distinct impression that pupil interest, like beauty, is to a great extent in the eyes of the beholder."²³

²⁰Robert L. Thorndike and Florence Henry, "Differences in Reading Interests Related to Differences in Sex and Intelligence Level," Elementary School Journal, XL (June, 1940), 751-63.

²¹Bell, op. cit., p. 124.

²²Strang, op. cit., p. 68.

²³Jeanne Chall, Learning to Read: The Great Debate (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 269.

Many methods have been used to measure both interests and preferences. The next two sections of this chapter report studies related to general reading preferences of children and to some of the variables that possibly affect their reading interests.

II. LITERATURE RELATED TO GENERAL READING PREFERENCES

It is assumed that the preferences reported in these studies are a manifestation of children's interests. There is no way to be certain.

Smith reports that first graders in free-choice library selection chose books dealing with humor and fantasy first, real animals second, and nature and science third. She pointed out the discrepancies in children's preferences and the subject matter of basal reading texts.²⁴

Peltola studied children's book choices compared to the choices of experts in the field of children's literature. There was a significant difference between the choices of the children and the opinion of the experts. The primary choices of the children included action, humor, and unusual characters.²⁵

²⁴Ruth C. Smith, "Children's Reading Choices and Basic Reader Content," Elementary English, XXXIX (March, 1962), 202-09.

²⁵Bette J. Peltola, "A Study of Children's Book Choices," Elementary English, XXXX (November, 1963), 690-95.

Rogers and Robinson found the three top preferences of first graders to be make-believe, happiness, and humor.²⁶ Bougere reported similar results. In his study of primary children, he found that they preferred stories with humor and surprise, stories of animals, and stories of make-believe.²⁷

In 1958, Norvell surveyed the reading preferences of more than 24,000 children in grades three through six in New York. He discussed the factors of age, sex, ability, expert opinion, and mass media as they related to the subject. He found that there was some gradual change in interests according to age. The most evident difference was that between boys and girls. In responding to a questionnaire, the boys in these grades favored books which dealt with animals, adventure, physical struggle, humor, courage, and patriotism. On the other hand, boys did not care for excessive description, romantic love, sentiment, heroines, or stories that moralized. The girls in Norvell's study preferred reading

²⁶Helen Rogers and H. Alan Robinson, "Reading Interests of First Graders," Elementary English, XXXX (November, 1963), 707-11.

²⁷Marguerite Bougere, "Fostering Interest In Reading In Kindergarten Through Grade Three," Reading: Seventy-five Years of Progress, H. Alan Robinson, editor (Proceedings of the Annual Conference on Reading held at the University of Chicago, Vol. XXVIII, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 107-110.

about adventure, home and school life, animals and pets, romantic love, mystery, and the supernatural. They did not like violent action, fierce animals, excessive description, or characters younger than themselves. Both boys and girls liked animal stories. The boys gave them first place and the girls chose them second only to "girls" books. Biography ranked high with both groups.²⁸

III. LITERATURE RELATED TO VARIABLES THAT MAY AFFECT INTEREST

Reading interests and preferences are related to many variables. Jewett and Gunderson insist that:

Reading preferences depend upon age, sex, intelligence, reading ability, home-community environment, family education, socio-economic background, personal and cultural values, and availability of interesting books.²⁹

In this section, the variables of age, sex, ability, socio-economic environment, and the influence of current interests are reported.

²⁸George W. Norvell, What Boys And Girls Like To Read (Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett Company, 1958), 274 pp.

²⁹Arno Jewett and Doris V. Gunderson, "Developing Reading Interests and Attitudes," New Perspectives In Reading Instruction, Albert J. Mazurkiewicz, editor (New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1964), 392-401.

Age. Sister Mary Edith found that age does play a role in influencing preferences and interests in reading. Those of primary age (6-8) were interested in stories about children, animals and fantasy. As the age increased there was an increase in interest in scientific and historical selection.³⁰

Norvell found that changes in interest pattern were gradual from year to year but that changes were more rapid in elementary grades than in Junior High and High School.³¹ In Wolfson's study of 2,000 children in grades three through six, it was found that the pattern of interests did not change from grade to grade.³²

Sex. This is the factor that is most often quoted as a significant variable. A study by Witty showed some definite differences in interests and preferences. In games liked best, baseball was tops with boys while playing house was first with girls. The boys preferred dogs as pets and the girls preferred cats. It is interesting that they agreed

³⁰Sister Mary Edith and Sister Mary Amatora, "The Age Factor in Children's Interest in Free Reading," Education, LXXI (May, 1951), 567-71.

³¹Norvell, loc. cit.

³²Bernice J. Wolfson, "What do children say their reading interests are?" The Reading Teacher, XIV (November, 1960), 81-82.

on animal stories as their first choice in reading preferences, but they differed on their second choice. The boys preferred space stories and the girls preferred stories about children in other lands. In activity preference, both boys and girls gave top rating to watching television. In second place, the boys preferred playing outdoors and the girls preferred reading.³³

In studying reading interest of first graders, Rogers and Robinson found definite variations in interests between the sexes. In listing the order of preference, the boys ranked adventure first and history second. The girls selected make-believe and humor as their first and second choices.³⁴ Wolfson found that the boys' choices differed significantly from the girls on inventoried reading interests. The boys' three highest interests were adventure, sports, and physical science, while the girls preferred fantasy, personal problems, and social studies.³⁵

Thorndike directed a study on differences in sex and intelligence as related to reading interests. He found large differences between sexes but few between ability

³³Paul A. Witty, "Pupil Interests in the Elementary Grades," Education, LXXXIII (April, 1963), 451-62.

³⁴Rogers and Robinson, loc. cit.

³⁵Wolfson, loc. cit.

groupings. He says that "in a determination of the pattern of reported reading interests, sex is a vastly more important factor than even the large difference in intelligence level characterizing these groups."³⁶

Ability. What difference does ability make in expressed interests and preferences? Although Thorndike felt that sex was the most important factor in difference of reading interests, he did find that intellectual ability made some difference. In this particular study, pupils were asked to choose from a list of fictitious book titles, the ones they would most like to read. The slow learners chose with reliably greater frequency one or more titles in the following categories:

1. useful feminine activities
2. hobbies
3. science and invention
4. biography
5. self-improvement
6. money-making and practical themes
7. mild adventures of children.

Those students with greater intellectual ability favored titles whose subjects dealt with war.³⁷

³⁶Thorndike, op. cit., p. 762.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 751-63.

The results of Rogers' and Robinson's study of first grade children³⁸ agreed with Wolfson's research³⁹ on differences related to I.Q. and reading ability. There were no significant differences. Roderick studied the relationships between creativity and reading preferences, but found that choices were more related to sex than to creativity, with the exception of biographies.⁴⁰

Socio-economic environment. Vandament and Thalman researched the types of fantasy preferred by children. There were differences between boys' and girls' choices, but less significant differences between the various socio-economic groups.⁴¹

Robert Emans did a study on the preferences of inner-city children and found their preferences to agree with most other groups. He found that they chose the usual family, friends, and pets themes over the multi-ethnic subjects.⁴²

³⁸Rogers and Robinson, loc. cit. ³⁹Wolfson, loc. cit.

⁴⁰Jessie A. Roderick, "Some Relationships Between Creativity and the Reading Preferences and Choices of a Group of Sixth Graders," Educational Leadership, I (October, 1968), 49-52.

⁴¹William E. Vandament and W. A. Thalman, "An Investigation into the Reading Interests of Children," Journal of Educational Research, XLIX (February, 1956), 467-70.

⁴²Robert Emans, "What Do Children in the Inner-City Like to Read," The Elementary School Journal, LXIX (December, 1968), 119-22.

Ford and Koplyay did an interesting study of children's preferences in grades one, two, and three, using a picture-story test. The children were chosen from two groups. One was from the upper middle class in suburban Chicago. The other group was predominately negro from an urban ghetto area. Ten pictures were chosen from children's literature to represent six categories:

1. children in general
2. children in the inner-city
3. negro heritage
4. history-science
5. animals
6. fantasy.

The most interesting discovery was that 79 per cent of the total group indicated that the category of negro heritage was the most interesting. The surprise was not that the inner-city group made such a choice, but that the upper middle class children expressed such an interest. It was possible that the novelty of the subject made an impact.⁴³ There have been very few surveys which included it as a possibility. While these findings concurred with those of many similar studies, that there was little significant difference between socio-economic groups, an interesting

⁴³Ford and Koplyay, loc. cit.

question arises concerning the influence of current affairs on reading interests.

Current interests. Zimet wrote a critical review of the literature related to children's interests and concluded that children's stories and interests reflect the times and the culture.⁴⁴

Browman and Templin undertook a comparative study of the story content preferences in the period of 1927-1929 and the period of 1952-1955. They felt that the influence of changing times was evident. There was more preference for fairy stories and fantasy in 1927-1929. In the period of 1952-1955, there was more emphasis on everyday happenings and realistic animal stories.⁴⁵ It appeared there was a shift from an interest in fantasy to an emphasis on reality.

Burns and Lowe point out that numerous studies over a period of years show that some reading interests seem to remain constant, while others change, reflecting the current interests of the times.⁴⁶ Larrick agrees that current

⁴⁴Zimet, op. cit., pp. 122-29.

⁴⁵Margaret Trickey Browman and Mildred C. Templin, "Stories for Younger Children in 1927-29 and in 1952-55," The Elementary School Journal, LIX (March, 1959), 324-27.

⁴⁶Paul C. Burns and Alberta L. Lowe, The Language Arts In Childhood Education (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1966), pp. 110-143.

interests influence children's interests. She gives the example of children's interest in reading about Eisenhower and collecting souvenirs during the time of the Presidential campaign in 1952, but noted that this was a temporary interest.⁴⁷ Jewett suggests that topics of interests or fads greatly influence interest but are subject to rapid change.⁴⁸

Byers found that first grade children are not influenced as much as older children by the times. Her subjects had little interest in the space age or new technology. They were more concerned with their immediate environment.⁴⁹ This is where age seems to be a factor.

Traxler reported a review of research on reading interests in the period of 1953-1957 in which he found that the results were similar to the findings in previous years, but there was an increased interest in science and its related fields.⁵⁰

In summary, the results of the related research were given varied interpretations. The criticism of methodology was probably deserved, since so much depended upon the materials used and the techniques employed.

⁴⁷Larrick, loc. cit. ⁴⁸Jewett, op. cit., p. 395.

⁴⁹Byers, loc. cit.

⁵⁰Arthur E. Traxler, "Recent Findings and Trends in Research on Reading," The Reading Teacher, XIII (December, 1959), 90.

Some of the research indicated that children's preferences differ from the opinions of the experts in children's literature. Baker suggests that even teachers are not always aware of the interests of their own students.⁵¹ There was evidence of a discrepancy between the subjects of basal text books and the expressed preferences of children.

There were some variables that affected choices of reading material. Most researchers agreed that the most important one was sex.

The most obvious results of the review of related literature is that children are interested in a variety of things.

⁵¹Eugene H. Baker, "Realistic Tastes In Reading," The Instructor, LXXVII (April, 1968), 34.

CHAPTER III

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

This section deals with the sources of data, the method of procedure, and the technique of data analysis. It will include a description of the groups studied with a brief description of the school environments.

I. SOURCES OF DATA

The chosen subjects were pupils enrolled in the third grades at three different schools. In the comparative results, the schools are designated by A, B, and C. While no attempt has been made to categorize them specifically into socio-economic levels, there was a general difference in environment.

School A was located in an area where the majority of the families would fall into the lower half of the socio-economic scale. Afro-American students were in the majority by 70 per cent. However, due to a relatively small sampling at this school (16 girls and 13 boys), no conclusive results may be shown as to the effect of school environment upon their reading interests and preferences.

School B was really more of a cross section of the population. There were 101 students (47 girls and 54 boys)

that represented all socio-economic levels. Approximately 30 per cent of the school population were Afro-American.

School C may be classified by its location to represent the upper half of the socio-economic scale. There were no Afro-American students enrolled in this particular situation. The sample at this school included 68 girls and 50 boys, making a total of 118.

The total number of participants from the three schools equaled 248 (131 girls and 117 boys). There was no subdivision according to race. It was mentioned only to give a more adequate description of the school populations.

II. SURVEY MATERIAL

The interest inventory used was designed by the writer after researching sample copies of questionnaires. An attempt was made to include the best features and ideas of those samples. It was also planned to meet the comprehension level of third grade children. The design was planned to be self-directing so that a minimum of direction was all that was necessary to gather the data. (See APPENDIX A.)

The inventory had sections to indicate preferences by the method of checking a list of items. The given list of categories could be checked: (I like), (I don't like), or could

be left blank, indicating no preference for or against. Other parts of the inventory included free-choice, fill-in answers in an attempt to discover real interests. It is not known whether or not real interests can actually be identified. The investigator does not claim to have performed this accomplishment.

III. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

First, permission was obtained from the superintendent of schools to consult with the principals and enlist their cooperation. Next, conferences were arranged with the third grade teachers in each school. Here, copies of the inventory were given to the teachers for analysis and evaluation. An opportunity was given to the teachers to ask questions and suggest changes. After a discussion of the purpose of the study and the best method for obtaining the results, the teachers were given a choice. Either the investigator would administer the survey, or the teachers could do it themselves. The majority of the cooperating teachers preferred to administer the survey to their own classes and were allowed to do so. The investigator directed the procedure in one school with the teacher's assistance.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The returned inventories were divided according to schools and subdivided according to sex. The data from one school was analyzed according to reading ability, but the results were so inconclusive, the analysis was not included in this report. The check list items were tabulated according to likes, dislikes, and no opinion. The fill-in items were categorized and the most frequently mentioned category was given first place. For example, the "three wishes" section was analyzed in relation to the number of times a particular item appeared as a first choice.

The data was analyzed in various ways and an arbitrary choice was made to include the results most pertinent to this study. Some of the interesting sidelights had to be excluded. The results vary according to the particular data chosen.

CHAPTER IV

THE INVENTORY RESULTS

After forty pages of tabulations, inventory results take on a new meaning. The results have been analyzed in nine separate categories corresponding to the sections of the inventory. There were two major divisions in the inventory: Activity preferences and interests, and reading preferences and interests. This chapter reports the general results of each of the nine categories and includes a summary of the whole inventory.

I. ACTIVITY PREFERENCES AND INTERESTS

Check list of activities. The first part of the inventory presented a list of activities that third grade children might or might not like. They could indicate their preference by checking, (I like) or (I don't like), or they could leave the spaces blank to indicate no opinion. The blank items were recorded as neutral responses. TABLE I on page 51 shows a breakdown of the responses according to schools and is subdivided according to sex. In tabulating the total responses of the boys and girls, there appears to be a difference in their preferences for certain activities.

The boys' choices of activities were the following:

1. Watching television (95.7 per cent).
2. Playing ball (94.9 per cent).
3. Going to movies (94 per cent).

The boys' most disliked activity was jumping rope, followed by singing or music, and listening to radio.

The girls preferred the following activities:

1. Making things (96.2 per cent).
2. Bicycle riding (94.7 per cent).
3. Watching television (92.4 per cent) and Movies (92.4 per cent).

The girls disliked listening to the radio, playing ball, and collecting things. The percentages given here mean that of the total group of girls, 96.2 per cent said that they liked making things. Of the boys, 95.7 per cent indicated that they liked watching television.

Free-choice preference of activities. The next item was a free-choice fill-in question. They were to complete the statement: Most of all I like to _____. Because of the wide diversity of responses, the categories were rather numerous. In the final tabulation, the boys chose playing ball as the most interesting activity, and the girls chose playing with friends. It is interesting to notice the difference in the results of the check list items and the fill-in part. The inventory was designed to find out if there would be a consistency in the results of the two methods of responding. This pointed out the limitations of an inventory.

Playing with friends was not included in the list of items to check. There was a consistency in the fact that the boys' choice of playing ball in the check list section took second place by the difference of only one response. One hundred eleven boys indicated they liked playing ball and 112 boys said they liked television.

Three wishes results. The objects suggested in this section, by the children, ranged from wanting a castle to the resurrection of Robert E. Lee. There were about 75 different categories suggested. These were narrowed to about 20. Those that did not fit into a category were listed by themselves. TABLE II of APPENDIX B shows some of the interesting results. The first 5 categories listed contain 52 per cent of the total responses. Those categories were: a bicycle, money, toys, a horse, and books. The boys' first wish was for a bicycle (motorized or regular). Their second and third wishes were for money and toys. The girls desired money first, then a horse, and there was a tie for third place between books and a bicycle. The most evident finding here was the great diversity and individuality of the interests of 248 children.

II. READING PREFERENCES AND INTERESTS

This part of the inventory showed some differences in relationship to the three schools. Some of the items

reported in this section include the types of books preferred, the types of stories most enjoyed, the favorite subject for writing a book, and the favorite books for reading.

Preference in types of books. This section included a list of types of books: Story books, Magazines, Comic books, Reading books (texts), Poetry books, and Science books. The children were asked to check their likes or dislikes in this area. TABLE III indicates some of the slight differences according to schools. The boys at schools A and B chose comic books as their best-liked reading material, while the boys at school C liked science books best. The most obvious speculation at this point would be that the boys in the higher socio-economic school environment would have more encouragement and possibly more access to science materials. This is just a speculation. The girls' preferences were the same in all three schools. Story books and reading books were liked equally well. In TABLE IV, it is interesting that both boys and girls at school A disliked both poetry and science books. The boys at school B disliked poetry most, while the girls disliked magazines. Both boys and girls agreed at school C in their dislike for magazines.

FIGURE I illustrates the percentage of responses that indicated a preference for the various categories of books. A comparison is shown between boys and girls responses. In

TABLE III

TYPES OF BOOKS LIKED BEST BY BOYS
AND GIRLS IN THREE SCHOOLS

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Comic books	Comic books	Science books
GIRLS	Reading and Story books	Reading and Story books	Reading and Story books

TABLE IV

TYPES OF BOOKS DISLIKED MOST BY BOYS
AND GIRLS IN THREE SCHOOLS

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Poetry and Science books	Poetry books	Magazines

TABLE V

TYPES OF BOOKS BEST LIKED BY BOYS AND
GIRLS IN FREE CHOICE RESPONSES

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Comic books	Comic books	Science books
GIRLS	Reading and Poetry books	Story books	Poetry books

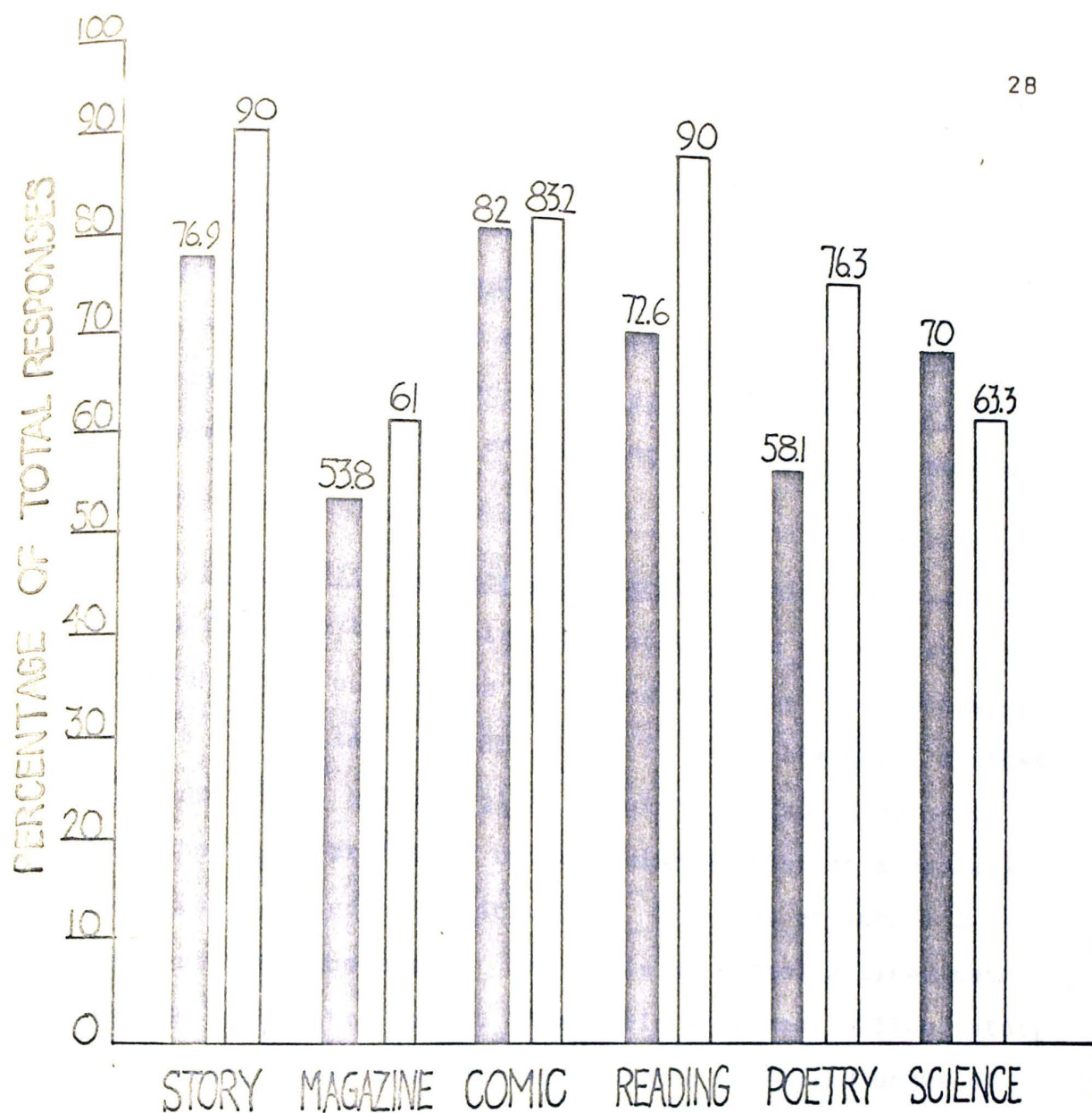


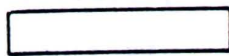
FIGURE 1

TYPES OF BOOKS PREFERRED: A COMPARISON
BETWEEN BOYS AND GIRLS PREFERENCES

BOYS



GIRLS



general the boys preferred comic books. Eighty-two per cent of the boys indicated they liked them, while 76.9 per cent said they liked story books. The girls liked equally well both story books and reading books (90 per cent). Eighty-three and two-tenths per cent of the girls said they liked comic books. It appeared that story books were the first choice with comic books and reading books tying for second place.

Free-choice preference of books. This item was included to check the consistency between the check list preferences of pupils and those indicated by free choice. TABLE V is similar to TABLE III. In fact, the boys' choices were identical, but the girls' choices varied. The boys' free choice of preferred books indicated that at schools A and B they preferred comic books. The boys at school C preferred science books. The girls at school A liked both reading and poetry books. The girls at school B liked story books best, while the ones at school C preferred books of poetry.

Story preferences. This data was obtained by a check list similar to the previous ones. Here the categories were: Animals, Funny things, Make-believe, Family stories, Sports, Famous People, Science, Mystery and adventure, Space travel, Children like me, and Children different from me. TABLE VI shows the indicated preferences of boys and girls in the

TABLE VI
TYPES OF STORIES PREFERRED BY BOYS AND GIRLS

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Animals	Humor	Mystery and Adventure
GIRLS	Humor	Humor	Humor and Mystery-Adventure

TABLE VII
TYPES OF STORIES DISLIKED BY BOYS AND GIRLS

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Children not like me	Children not like me	Children not like me
GIRLS	Children not like me	Sports	Space travel

TABLE VIII
THE FAVORITE STORY SUBJECTS OF BOYS AND GIRLS

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Make-believe	Sports	Mystery-Adventure
GIRLS	Make-believe	Humor	Make-believe

three schools. The boys' preferences differed from school to school but they all agreed on what they did not like. The boys at school A preferred animals, at school B, humor, and at school C, mystery and adventure. At all three schools, the boys said they disliked stories about children that were not like themselves. TABLE VII on page 30 indicates the most disliked story subjects. The girls at schools A and B agreed on humor as their first choice. The girls at school C liked both humor and mystery and adventure. They differed in their dislikes. At school A the girls agreed with the boys in disliking children unlike themselves as a story subject. The girls at school B said they disliked sports and the girls at school C disliked stories about space.

FIGURE 2 on page 32 shows a comparison between boys' and girls' preferences for story material. Percentages of total responses by boys and girls are recorded. Humor led the list with an average percentage of 94.3. Mystery and adventure were next (88.3 per cent). Animals were third with 87.9 per cent of the total responses. There were some noticeable differences in the categories of space, sports, and families. In comparing the 76 per cent of the boys' responses to 38 per cent of the girls' in their preference for space stories, it was observed that nearly 82 per cent of the girls preferred family stories to only 61.5 per cent of the boys. The interest in sports is reversed. The boys indicated

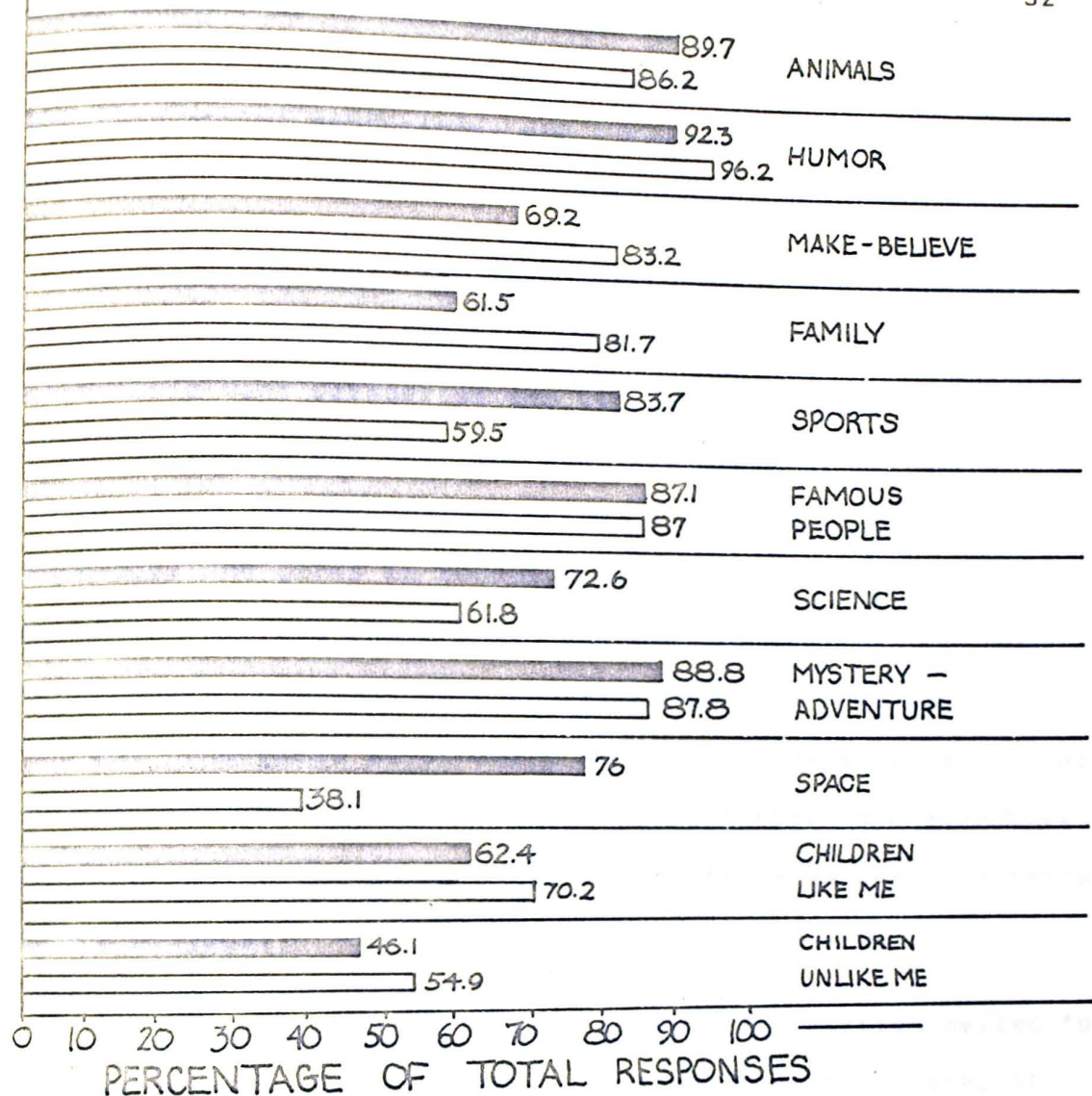


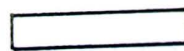
FIGURE 2

A COMPARISON OF THE STORY
PREFERENCES OF BOYS AND GIRLS

BOYS



GIRLS



their preference by 83.7 per cent, while only 59.5 per cent of the girls were interested. This seems to indicate that boys' and girls' preferences and interests are different at the third grade level.

Favorite story subjects. This was a free choice completion item: My favorite story is _____. Again there were many categories and titles suggested. The most accurate tabulation that was possible for this writer resulted in the information given in TABLE VIII on page 30. Both boys and girls in school A chose make-believe stories as their favorite (Snow White and similar types). The boys at school B indicated they preferred stories that dealt with sports. The girls at school B chose humorous stories as their favorites. The boys at school C liked mystery and adventure stories, while the girls chose make-believe as their favorite story subject.

Preference for writing a book. This section called for a completion to the sentence: If I could write a book, it would be about _____. If children were going to do creative writing, what subject would they choose? It was interesting to find that the subject of animals led the list. Many of the girls were interested in make-believe and some of the boys indicated a preference for sports as a book subject, but on the whole, animals were the top choice. The

speculation here is that they are probably more exposed to animal books and stories. Many of the previous studies indicated that children were most interested in animal stories. One might question how much exposure to a subject influences an interest in it.

Favorite book choices. This last item was the most difficult to evaluate. Some of the children wrote specific titles, while others suggested general categories. Since there were many titles that could fit several categories, it would be impossible to give accurate information. However, an attempt was made to place specific book titles into a general category, such as: Uncle Funny Bunny under the heading of "humor." It is just as possible to consider it under the category of "animals." With the caution of these great limitations, the following results are reported. The boys and girls in school A chose animals as their favorite book subject. The boys in school B liked sports and the girls preferred animals. The boys in school C indicated a preference for science and space subjects, while the girls chose animals. The girls were consistent in all three schools in their preference for animals. See TABLE IX.

Summary. TABLE X is an attempt to summarize the general results of the nine items on the inventory. The boys indicated they liked watching T.V. and playing ball. A bicycle

TABLE IX
THE FAVORITE BOOK CHOICES OF BOYS AND GIRLS

	SCHOOL A	SCHOOL B	SCHOOL C
BOYS	Animals	Sports	Science and Space travel
GIRLS	Animals	Animals	Animals

TABLE X
A GENERAL SUMMARY OF INVENTORY RESULTS

SECTIONS	BOYS	GIRLS
Activities (check list)	Watching T.V.	Making things
Activities (write in)	Playing ball	Playing with friends
Three Wishes	Bicycle	Money
Book preferences (check)	Comic	Reading-story
Book preferences (write in)	Comic	Story, poetry, and Make-believe
Story preferences (check)	Humor	Humor
Story preferences (write in)	Sports and Mystery-adventure	Make-believe
Write a book subject	Animals	Animals
Favorite book choices	Sports	Animals

was the item most desired. They preferred comic books and in story preference they liked humor, sports, and mystery and adventure. If they could write a book it would have animals as the main subject. The boys' over-all favorite books to read would be about sports.

The girls' preferences were different from the boys' on every item but one. The girls said they preferred making things and playing with friends. Their first wish was money. In book preferences, they liked reading books, story books, poetry and make-believe. They preferred humor and make-believe in stories. They chose animals to write about and as their over-all favorite book subject.

This seems to indicate that boys' and girls' preferences are different and quite varied. *What of boys and girls?*

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter includes a summary of the results of this research project, some related conclusions, and some proposed recommendations.

I. SUMMARY

The purpose of this survey has been an attempt to answer certain questions concerning interests and preferences of third grade children. They were: what activities do they prefer?; what do they like to read?; and are there any differences between the preferences of boys and girls?

A review of the literature indicated that elementary children were interested in a variety of subjects. There were significant differences in the preferences of boys and girls. The problem of methodology and its relationship to the results of research projects was reviewed. Some of the literature focused attention on the variables that affect preferences.

This particular study was conducted in three different schools. The 248 third grade children that participated represented various backgrounds and levels of ability. The girls outnumbered the boys by 131 to 117. The inventory used

was a composite of ideas from various sources, and it was designed to meet the comprehension level of third graders.

In the area of activity preference, the boys liked television and playing ball. The girls indicated they liked making things and playing with friends. In the results of expressed wishes, the objects most desired were bicycles, money, and horses.

The results of the book preferences indicated that the boys liked comic books best and the girls preferred story books and reading books. They both liked humorous stories. The boys also enjoyed mystery and adventure as well as stories about sports, while the girls liked stories of make-believe. Animal stories were interesting to both boys and girls.

In answering the question concerning differences, boys and girls differed in every category surveyed except one. They both chose animals as the preferred subject for writing a story. There was an indication of differences among the schools represented. The most noticeable was the expressed interest in science by the boys in the higher socio-economic environment.

II. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of this limited research the following conclusions were reached:

1. Children's interests were varied and quite individualized. It was difficult to make any general conclusions in reference to over-all interests and preferences of third grade children.

2. There were identifiable differences in the preferences of boys and girls. This conclusion agreed with the results of the related literature.

3. There was some indication of a difference in the preferences of pupils in the different school environments. The interest in science that appeared in one school population was probably significant enough for further investigation.

4. There did not appear to be any particular influence of current interests upon preferences or interests of this sample of third grade students. In a society that is geared to the space age, only a few children indicated any preferences for reading about space subjects. In fact, it was included in the table of disliked materials.

5. In the check list of story subjects, the children, particularly the boys, indicated a strong dislike for reading about children that were different from themselves. They were rather consistent in checking the dislike column for this item.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

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In reference to the previous conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Since it appeared that children's interests and preferences were varied and individualized, it is recommended that teachers survey their own pupils to find the individual preferences of each child. This information may then be used to evaluate needs and prescribe related material.

2. Because there are recognizable differences between the interests and preferences of boys and girls, it is recommended that curriculum planners take the responsibility of developing programs to meet these diverse needs. Also, teachers need to make provisions for these differences in the classroom. This could possibly be implemented in a supplementary program of individualized reading.

3. Since there did appear to be some difference in the preferences of children from the different socio-economic levels, it is recommended that further research be carried on to check this variable.

4. The fact that there did not appear to be very much interest in current affairs leads one to question the amount of emphasis given to the subject in the school program. It is recommended that teachers seek to develop an awareness of current affairs and provide a means for using the information.

5. In view of the evidence that there was a dislike for reading about children that were different, it is recommended that further research be done to determine whether or not this is a significant factor in reading preferences and interests. Also, it is recommended that teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their social studies programs if this factor is evident in their own classrooms.

This project has attempted to give some information related to interests and reading preferences of third grade children. It has indicated some of the general interest and preference patterns of the individual pupils involved. The subject of children's reading interests is still a vital research topic because of the relevance of reading interests to the motivation of better readers. The necessity of beginning where a child is in terms of what he likes to read is self-evident. Research studies of interests and preferences can be used by teachers, librarians, and other educators as a starting point to motivate good reading.

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APPENDIX A

WHAT DO YOU LIKE?

Name _____ Age _____ Boy _____ Girl _____
 School _____ Grade _____
 * * * * *

I like I don't like

Movies

Playing ball

School

Watching T.V.

Bicycle riding

Roller skating

Jumping rope

Reading stories

Listening to radio

Making things

Drawing pictures

Card games

Comic books

Collecting things

Singing and music

Most of all I like to _____

If I could have three wishes--I would ask for

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I like

I don't like

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Story books
Magazines
Comic books
Reading books
Poetry books
Science books

Best of all, I like _____

I like

I don't like

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Stories about:

Animals
Funny things
Make-believe
Families
Sports
Famous people
Science
Mystery and adventure
Space travel
Children just like me
Children not like me

My favorite story is _____

If I could write a book, it would be about _____

If I could read only three books, I would choose:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

TABLE I

NUMBERS OF RESPONSES OF BOYS AND GIRLS ON ACTIVITY
CHECK LIST, BY SCHOOLS A, B, AND C

ACTIVITIES	SCHOOL A		SCHOOL B		SCHOOL C		TOTALS		
	B	G	B	G	B	G	BOYS	GIRLS	BOTH
Movies	12	15	51	42	47	64	110	121	231
Playing ball	12	12	51	30	48	55	111	97	208
School	7	14	43	39	37	55	87	108	195
Watching T.V.	13	14	51	41	48	66	112	121	233
Bicycle	13	16	53	43	42	65	108	124	232
Roller skates	10	15	35	41	41	64	86	120	206
Jumping rope	8	15	8	37	8	55	24	107	131
Reading	12	15	43	39	41	63	96	117	213
Radio	11	11	36	29	31	51	78	91	169
Making things	12	15	43	45	48	66	103	126	229
Drawing	12	11	46	46	39	63	97	120	217
Card games	12	11	45	34	41	56	98	101	199
Comic books	11	9	45	41	35	52	91	102	193
Collecting	8	8	38	36	43	56	89	100	189
Music-singing	10	11	22	40	37	56	69	107	176

TABLE II

NUMBERS OF RESPONSES OF BOYS AND GIRLS
ON THREE WISHES SURVEY

EXPRESSED WISHES	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Bicycle (motorized and regular)	27	11	38
Money	16	17	33
Toys	10	10	20
Horse	3	15	18
Books	6	11	17
Television	5	6	11
New house	3	7	10
Clothing	0	10	10
Roller skates	4	6	10
Recreational equipment	6	3	9
Changes in school	5	3	8
Own car	5	2	7
Pets	2	4	6
Occupational desires	2	4	6
Addition to the family (baby)	2	4	6
Radio	3	1	4
Good health	1	3	4
Musical instrument	0	3	3
Jewelry	0	3	3
Candy	2	1	3
More wishes	3	0	3
Swimming pool	0	2	2
Travel	1	1	2
No more wars	0	1	1
Castle	0	1	1
Robert E. Lee alive	1	0	1
Miscellaneous	10	1	11