

A STUDY OF THE INDEPENDENT READING  
PREFERENCES OF INTERMEDIATE GRADE  
CHILDREN IN THREE SELECTED  
AREAS OF NEWFOUNDLAND

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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**A Study of the Independent Reading  
Preferences of Intermediate Grade  
Children in Three Selected Areas of Newfoundland**

by



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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the independent reading preferences of children in grades four, five, and six, in three selected areas of Newfoundland, and to determine whether there were significant relations between these preferences and the grade level, sex, and geographical locations of the students.

The instrument used in this survey was identical to that used by Drs. Edward G. Summers and Ann Lukasevich of the University of British Columbia in a survey they did of the reading preferences of intermediate-grade children in three Canadian cities in 1978. Fourteen representative categories of reading were included in the inventory, and following the paired comparison format were, organized so that each category appeared first and second about an equal number of times, and a total group of ninety-one pairs was presented in random order.

The sample consisted of 747 grade four, five, and six, classes from three areas in the province; namely, Gander, Glovertown, and Fogo Island. Whole classes, irrespective of ability, were included in the study. Testing was done within a six-week period during the fall term of the 1984-85 school year.

An analysis of the rank order of reading preferences indicated that the most popular categories for students in

this survey were mystery, adventure, romance, fantasy, and humour. The survey indicated, however, that reading preferences are affected by the variables of sex, grade level, and to a lesser extent, geographical location. An analysis of variance results (ANOVA) indicated highly significant preference difference for seven of the fourteen categories for the three communities; for five of the fourteen categories for grades four, five, and six, and eleven of the fourteen categories for boys and girls. Significant interactions were also found in combinations of community, grade, and sex for many of the fourteen categories. The survey indicated that Gander students and Glovertown students were fairly similar in their reading preferences, but that Fogo students varied significantly in their reading preferences, when their reading preferences were compared with either the reading preferences of Gander students or Glovertown students. There were also clear maturational changes in reading preferences for the three grades.<sup>①</sup> The reading preference inventory (RPI) and the related index of reading preference (IRP) proved to be useful and reliable tools for measuring and ranking reading preferences in the intermediate grades, and could be used by teachers, librarians, and reading specialists, to help identify, develop and stimulate reading interests.



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CHAPTER I  
THE PROBLEM.

Introduction

Dewey (1964), in one of the earliest definitions of "interest", identified it thus:

Interest and aims, concerns and purposes are necessarily connected...such words as interest, affection, concern, motivation, emphasize active desire to act to secure possible result (p. 125).

Hurlock (1956), in defining "interest" with respect to the child, made this observation:

An interest is a learned motive which drives the individual to act in accordance with that interest. It is defined as preoccupation with an activity when the individual is free to choose. When the child finds an activity satisfying, it continues to be an interest (p. 440).

Thus, capable educators cognizant of the importance of interest in learning, utilize this factor in planning the curriculum, and nowhere is this more important than in the area of reading. The importance of interest to reading is described by Barbe (1963) as follows:

The teacher who can develop within her children permanent interests in reading has succeeded in her goal of teaching reading. The child may then continue learning, even without help of the teacher, and his education will continue throughout his life. The importance of the interest factor in the reading program must not be minimized for it is the keystone of the child's learning (p. 490).

This study is concerned specifically with identifying reading interests as reflected by the choices of reading materials that intermediate-grade students make for pleasure or for information. The study does not take into consideration any materials that students read for the purpose of satisfying a teacher or a parent.

### The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the independent reading preferences of children in grades four, five, and six, in three selected areas of Newfoundland, namely Fogo Island, Gander, and Glovertown. Most of the students attend schools which are under the jurisdiction of the Terra Nova Integrated School Board. The schools on Fogo Island were considered a unit of study although there are seven small primary-elementary schools feeding into one central high school. This school is jointly administered by the Terra Nova Integrated School Board and the Gander-Bonavista-Connaigre Roman Catholic School Board. The elementary schools on Fogo Island come under several jurisdictions: one is a Pentecostal school, two are joint services operated by the Roman Catholic and Integrated School Boards, three are Integrated, and one is a Roman Catholic school.

The answers to two major questions were sought:

1. What are the independent reading interests of

children in the middle grades?

2. Are there significant relations between these interests and
  - a. grade level?
  - b. sex?
  - c. geographical location?

#### Statement of the Problem

Although there are now literally hundreds of studies of children's reading interests, the vast majority of those have been carried out in the United States. With the exception of those of Minkler (1948), Ashley (1972), Landy (1977), Burdenuk (1978), and Summers and Lukasevich (1983), few studies have been done which explored the reading interests of Canadian children. Very little has been done on reading interests in the province of Newfoundland, especially in the intermediate grades. Brett (1964) surveyed the leisure reading of grade nine students in Central High schools of the province, and Crocker (1967), the leisure reading of high school students in Newfoundland, library facilities in the schools, and home background as it related to reading. Practically nothing has been done on the reading interests of intermediate-grade children except Galway's (1980) study which explored the reading interests of beginning grade six students under the jurisdiction of one particular school board, and the congruency of those interests with selected basal reading programs.



Meanwhile, there is increasing evidence that children of today are reading more, and more widely than any previous generation (Landy, 1977; Ashley, 1972; Summers & Lukasevich, 1983). There are many reasons given for this and, one that seems to predominate is that there are more books available today than ever before, and because of improved library facilities and programs, those books are made available to more and more children. Within this province, as elsewhere, elementary schools are establishing libraries within the schools, and some school boards are employing trained resource people to coordinate library programs with the school curricula. Most teachers include courses in children's literature and library science in their training program. Public libraries, too, are giving increased attention to their children's sections, with the expressed aim of increasing communications with the home and school and of promoting more reading and a more effective use of library facilities.

There is also an increased popularity in children's book clubs, often sponsored by classroom teachers. Children are able to buy reprints of quality literature in inexpensive paperbacks, some of which include reproductions of original illustrations. Modern children's literature is reflecting changes in society and the resultant concerns brought about by these changes. In view of this, it is logical to expect children's reading interests to change. Also, because of

technological changes brought about by television, their interests are extending beyond the confines of home, school, and community, and their awareness of the world and its problems is broadening.

Mackintosh (1957) summarized the influence of the contemporary scene as follows:

Children as human beings have not changed over the years, but in the last decade science has modified various aspects of their environment in such a way as to create new interests. As one example, more children than ever before have travelled beyond the boundaries of their own county, city, state, and even nation. Children are on the move as parents seek new jobs, or as their work requires that they move from one place to another. Changes in transportation and communication have brought about increased mobility of population (p. 142).

Thus, this study sought to identify the reading interests of children in the intermediate grades in three geographical areas of Newfoundland namely, Fogo Island, Gander, and Glovertown. It also tried to determine whether such factors as sex, age, and geographical location, affected these interests, and whether these interests are changing. The findings should be useful in aiding teachers, librarians, and reading specialists, to bring books and children together.

#### Limitations of the Study

1. The investigation of children's reading interests in this particular study was confined mainly to children in one

educational district of the province, the Terra Nova Integrated School Board. The exception was Fogo Island where children attend schools operated by the Terra Nova Integrated School Board, the Gander-Bonavista-Connaigre Roman Catholic School Board, the Pentecostal School Board, and those operated jointly by the Terra Nova Integrated and Roman Catholic School Boards.

2. Although the subjects were urged to react to the questions on the inventory in the ways they really felt, it can be assumed that social pressures and expectations had some influence on the subjects' responses.
3. Since it was considered necessary in the instructions to encourage the students to make choices, even in cases where they might find it very difficult to decide which of the two alternatives they preferred, a somewhat artificial situation may have resulted where a preference is stated to exist where there may not have been one.
4. No attempt was made to consider the relationship of other factors such as intelligence, library facilities, and home background, to children's reading interests. The scope of this particular investigation made such considerations prohibitive.

### Organization of the Thesis

This chapter has presented the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, and the limitations of the study.

Chapter II includes a review of relevant literature. First, the writer discusses the general relevancy of interest to reading and then how the factors of sex, age, and geographical location, each in turn, affect reading interests. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of the literature reviewed.

The methodology for the study is given in Chapter III. It explains the choice of communities and grades and the type of school used in the survey. It also describes the design of the inventory, and the collection of the data.

Chapter IV presents the major findings of the study and a discussion of the effects of the factors being analyzed.

Chapter V summarizes the study, draws conclusions, and makes comparisons, based on the findings. The thesis concludes with a discussion of certain implications and makes a number of recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Since the earliest reported study on children's reading interests by True in 1893, literally hundreds of others have been made (Witty, 1960; Harris, 1969). Many diverse methods have been employed to determine what children read, how much they read, and what factors such as sex, age, race, geographical location, and intelligence, affect children's choices of reading materials. Because this present study analyzes children's independent reading interests, and how these particular factors - sex, age, and geographical location -- may or may not influence them, the literature reviewed deals mainly with these several factors and how they influence what children read.

#### Interest as a Determinant in Reading Success

Most reading people feel that the student, irrespective of ability, will do well when materials used are interesting. White (1972) set forth evidence to show that if books are interesting, students will read materials above their present grade level. Lowry (1968) said that interest helps a child make "those intuitive insights frequently referred to as using context clues" (p. 14). Jenkinson (1964), in stressing the importance of interest to reading, stated:

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 (p. 123).

Byers (1964), in discussing the importance of interest as a key factor to reading development, said:

The importance of vital, interesting material for reading is uncontested. What a child reads with interest is rewarding to him and may lead to further reading; what a child reads without interest may assist in the development of reading skills but may impede the formation of positive attitudes toward reading and the desire to do more reading. There is also evidence that interest in materials read correlates highly with reading comprehension (p. 227).

The role of the teacher in recognizing the importance of interest is described by Barbe (1963):

The teacher who can develop within her children permanent interest in reading has succeeded in her goal of teaching reading. The child may then continue learning, even without the help of the teacher, and his education will continue throughout his life. The importance of the interest factor in the reading program must not be minimized, for it is the keystone of the child's learning (p. 490).

Understanding the relationship between children's ability to read and their interest in it, is of paramount importance to educators, not only in teaching children how to read, but in a proper development of the reading process.

#### Sex and Reading Interests

In most of the studies reviewed, sex was found to be the

most important determinant of differences in reading. The researchers reported that girls read more and matured earlier in reading ability than boys did, whereas boys have wider reading interests than girls. They also contended that cultural influences and sexual maturation (or the lack of it) were reasons for these differences. A great deal of evidence supported the theory of social conditioning as the basis for this sex-typed behaviour. Researchers and social scientists (Elder and Carpenter, 1929; DeBoer, 1958; Row, 1968) have suggested that because boys and girls have been trained differently, they behave differently; that sex differences in reading interests are not so much a result of inborn characteristics as they are of cultural training. With reference to an article written by Dunn (1921), McKay (1971) observed that even then there was ground for belief that certain sex differences in reading interests were probably acquired.

Lazer (1937), in studying over 2,000 middle-grade pupils in thirteen New York City schools, and with specific reference to girls' reading of so-called "girls" books, made a similar observation:

...girls read these books because social opinion has prescribed them. Teachers, parents, librarians and book dealers, when asked to recommend books for girls, will probably select those that tradition has sanctioned for girls. Girls are continually exposed to such types of books. They like them because they do not know any other kind (p. 92).

Yet, in spite of this observation, Zimet (1966) reported that Lazer went right on finding and reporting sex differences without suggesting the possibility that it was not sex differences, per se, but cultural differences that made sex one of the most highly significant factors in reading interests. With respect to the books chosen by children, Zimet found that both boys and girls chose mystery stories first, but that boys chose, next in order, adventure stories, detective stories, stories of an historical nature, and stories of invention; girls chose stories related to activities at home or at school. She also noted that girls read more.

Terman and Lima (1931), in assessing children's reading interests, also found that sex differences were apparent from the age of nine, and became more marked as the years advanced. The results of their study showed that boys preferred stories of adventure and vigorous action, while girls preferred fairy tales, poetry, and "sentimental" fiction. They also found that girls read more than boys at every level, but that boys read more non-fiction, such as biography and information books, than did girls. The results of this study were similar to those of a study conducted by Jordan (1921), one of the earliest studies of reading interests and sex differences.

In comparing the reading interests of slow and fast learning children, Thorndike and Henry (1940) also made a



comparison of the reading interests of boys and girls. Their results, too, showed a consistent pattern of sex differences cutting across all age and grade levels. The authors commented on the "point-blank refusal" of many boys to have anything to do with so-called girls' books, such as stories of romantic love and family life, or those in which the leading characters were girls. They observed that girls, on the other hand, often read boys' books, that is, books of valour, chivalry, adventure, and the like, in which the main characters were always boys. In fact, he found that such books were very popular with girls.

One of the most comprehensive studies on sex differences in reading interests was done by Norvell in 1958. The report was based on 960,000 expressions of opinion made by 24,000 children in grades three through six assembled by teachers in schools of all sizes in New York. This information, along with that collected earlier (1946, 1950), brought the total data to more than four million expressions of opinion from 124,000 children, and spanned twenty-five years. Norvell reported that from the fifth grade to adulthood, the sex of children has a dominating influence on their reading choices. Boys, he found, were interested in detective stories, stories of physical struggle, courage and heroism, invention and science, but responded unfavourably to description, didacticism, fairy tales, stories of romantic love, of physical weakness in males, and stories in which females were

the leading characters. Girls showed a marked dislike for stories of violent action, didacticism, and fierce animals. Hildreth (1958), Furness (1963), and Zimet (1966) made similar observations.

In examining the contents of intermediate-grade basal readers to determine objectively children's interests in the titles and stories in such readers, in a study involving over two thousand children, equally distributed by sex and grade in seven communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, Dronev, Cucciova, and Scipione (1953) concluded that sex preferences were noted. Boys rejected titles which included a female character, whereas girls did not reject titles which included a male character.

Boys, it would seem, read more comics than girls do. Witty (1941), by use of a questionnaire and interviews, found that, on an average, boys read fourteen comics per week while girls read eleven. Zorbaugh (1944), citing the results of a nationwide survey by Market Research Company of Canada, revealed that ninety-five percent of the boys and ninety-one percent of the girls between the ages of six and eleven read comic books regularly.

In a comprehensive study of the voluntary reading interests of children in Canadian elementary schools, Minkler (1948) concluded that the sex of the child was the strongest determinant of reading interest. In a survey that encompassed rural, suburban, and urban schools in four areas

of Canada -- the Maritimes, Ontario, the Prairies, and British Columbia -- it was shown that girls at each grade level read more and had a greater range of interests than boys did. This latter observation is contrary to most studies, which indicate that boys have a wider range of interests than girls do (Wolfson, 1960; King, 1967). Although Minkler discovered that girls generally rejected stories having to do with sports and recreational activities, there was some indication that as their interests in these activities increased, their desire to read about them also increased.

Stanchfield (1969) found in her particular study that girls read significantly better than boys did. In attempting to determine the reason, she talked with the teachers involved in her study, and found that boys had negative attitudes about school, that they liked stories about sports, and the outdoors, but disliked stories about home life and school. Teachers of all-boy groups reported their inability to interest them in reading matter that lacked action and excitement. Teachers of all-girl groups reported the opposite, and that there was little difficulty in holding the interest of girls in a variety of reading material.

By administering an interest inventory containing 120 items, Wolfson (1960) investigated the reading interests of two thousand pupils in grades three through six in schools in Connecticut. Boys showed a high interest in mechanics and

science, whereas girls displayed a high interest in family life, music, art, and the like. In keeping with many earlier studies, Wolfson also found that boys displayed a wider range of interest than girls did.

In her appraisal of research to date on this topic, King (1967) reported that there were few sex differences in reading interests up to age nine, but marked differences appeared thereafter. She also found that boys read more widely than girls did. Girls will read a book considered of interest to boys, but boys will not read a book considered of interest to girls. By the sixth grade, the girls outnumbered the boys two to one in their choice of mystery books and children's stories, whereas the boys almost reversed the scores in preferences for non-fiction.

A study by Feeley (1974), involving 250 boys and 282 girls in grades five and six in New Jersey schools, also showed that there were marked differences in the reading interests of boys and girls. Boys' high-scoring clusters were sports, excitement-fantastic, recreational, excitement-realistic, and informational. Their low-scoring categories were fantasy-comedy, social/empathy, people, recreation and hobbies. Girls' favourites were social empathy, fun and excitement, fantasy, and people; while social studies, science and sports were the least favoured. Feeley concluded that sex continues to be a major determiner of middle-grade children's reading interest and that they

seemed not yet affected by the feminist movement of the times.

Landy (1977) surveyed the entire grade seven population of schools in Regina to find the amount of voluntary reading engaged in by this group. He also found that girls read an average of twelve books a year while boys read only two per year. Boys read far more non-fiction such as biographies and books concerned with sports than did girls, but girls read far more books pertaining to topics of adolescent development than did boys. Animal stories were equally popular with both groups. Like so many other studies done previously, this study also showed that girls read boys' books, such as the Hardy Boy series, but that boys rarely read girls' books such as the Nancy Drew series.

Schofer (1981) studied the reading preference of British and American elementary children by using a ten-item rank order preference list developed and field tested from categories identified by children. The responses were then analyzed and compared by sex, age, and maturity. Schofer found that reading preferences were only minimally differentiated by sex with the five most popular categories in the same sequence. The researcher speculated on this lack of acute differentiation by sex, as the first indication of the results of the implementation of a non-sex differentiated curriculum, and concluded that children are obviously reading across what had previously been perceived as sex appropriate.

boundaries.

In a study involving intermediate-grade children in three Canadian communities, Summers and Lukasevich (1983) found highly significant differences between the reading interest of boys and girls in eleven of fourteen categories of literature. An examination of the results revealed that boys had a stronger preference for history/geography, sports, science, fantasy, and travel than did girls; girls had a stronger preference for animal stories, children and family life, poetry and romance, than did boys. Girls and boys had similar preferences for adventure, humour, and nature study.

Galway (1980), in analyzing the reading interests of a group of beginning sixth grade pupils in an educational district in Newfoundland, found that when the pupils were grouped on the basis of sex, significant differences were found at the 0.05 level between boys and girls in ten areas of literature: adventure, mystery, school stories, family and home life, aviation and space, factual stories, hobbies, science and invention, sports, humorous and nonsensical poems. Also, when the same pupils were grouped on the basis of sex, boys and girls showed different levels of interest in the basal readers.

With very few exceptions, researchers agree that sex is the most important personal determinant of differences in reading preferences. Purves and Beach (1972) offered as an explanation for these differences in preference, children's

identification with sex-related characters. Peltola (1965) suggested sex-role stereotypes. She found sharp sex differences in fourth and sixth graders in types of characters preferred. Klein (1968) measured interests as related to occupation and sex of short story main characters and found sex-appropriate occupations were rated high in interest by each sex. He found that boys rated male characters significantly higher than female characters, while girls likewise rated female characters higher than males in each occupation. Feeley (1974) aptly summed up the then present state of affairs:

Generally it would seem that the culturally related variables of sex and social class continue to be effective in shaping children's interests. The middle-grade children of 1971 continue to reflect the traditional "boy" and "girl" patterns. They seem not yet to have been affected by the unisex, women's lib movements of the times (p. 1003).

#### Age and Reading Interests

Most researchers in their efforts to discover the various factors that affect reading interests place particular emphasis on a child's age to determine if it has any influence on the type of material the child chooses to read. Furthermore, if it is considered an influential factor, they then try to ascertain in what ways it controls the selection of reading material. It is the general conclusion of most researchers that at the early elementary level, at least through age nine, there is very little

difference between the reading habits of boys and girls at a particular age level, but marked differences exist for the children as a group from one age level to the next. Freeland (1964) described these early elementary years as the "golden years" of reading. She contended that during this period children reach their peak in reading, and that they will read more than they will ever again, and that the teacher of this group has a very fertile field in which to promote personal growth through reading.

As early as 1925, Terman and Lima discussed the progression of reading interests of boys and girls. Their study showed that at age nine boys were mainly interested in real-life stories; at ten they preferred stories about travel; by eleven their interest was in mystery, adventure, and science, and by the age of twelve when, according to their research, the point of greatest reading interest is reached, boys enjoyed stories of hero worship. They found that nine-year-old girls still wanted to read fairy tales; ten-year-old girls, like their male classmates, preferred stories about travel. Eleven-year-old girls requested stories about home and school life, and twelve-year-old girls, like boys, enjoyed stories of hero worship.

In a later study conducted in 1931, Terman and Lima concluded that as children's experiences grow and as their reasoning powers and imagination develop, certain well-defined tendencies in reading interest change. They



observed that few differences in reading choices appeared until age nine when, as they put it, "the divergence is very marked and the breach continues to widen up to adult life" (p. 131).

Norvell (1946), in his twelve-year investigation of the reading habits of over 50,000 children in all types of communities in New York State, found that there was a gradual change in reading habits of children from primary grades to upper elementary grades. In a 1950 publication, Norvell reported that stories in one grade were usually liked equally well by children in grades as many as three levels above or below it, and that age was more influential in governing reading choices in the elementary school than in the secondary school.

Minkler (1948), in one of the first Canadian studies on children's reading interests, found that age, grade, mental ability, and reading skill, influenced reading interests, but to a lesser extent than does the sex of the child. He also concluded "that mental age, reading age, and reading grade, influence reading interests more definitely than do chronological age and school grade" (p. 80).

In a study in which he analyzed children's taped conversations, McAulay (1961) sought to identify children's social studies interests. Three hundred ninety-seven children in grades four, five, and six, made up part of his study group. Analyzing the responses of these children he

was able to make the following generalizations:

Fourth-grade children have broad interests in particular areas of the earth's surface...and, in the general social processes of those geographic areas...the Queen of England, the religions of Japan.

Fifth-grade children are interested in those geographic areas which dominate the current news - the Middle East, Russia, China...the historical reasons for large social problems that appear on the national and international scene.

Sixth-grade children have social studies interests similar to fifth-graders. However, the interests are deeper. Sixth-grade children indicate an interest in ideas, their beginnings and trends; for example, the beginnings of communism, the development of the cold war (pp. 407-409).

As a result of questionnaires sent to children, their parents, their teachers, and librarians in 270 census regions in the United States, Rudman (1955) was able to conclude that from grades four to eight interest in mystery stories, sport stories, and stories about other recreational activities increased, while interest in cowboy stories and fairy tales decreased. Interest in animal stories, however, was maintained throughout the grade levels studied. Peterson (1955) in a study of the reading interest of children in five elementary schools in Chicago found that for both sexes there was a decreasing interest in stories of folklore, fairy tales, and tales of long ago, but an increasing interest in mystery stories, and stories of careers. For girls in particular there was an increasing interest in romance stories.

Stanchfield (1969), studied the reading interests of 153 boys in grades four, six, and eight in Los Angeles city schools. She found through personal conferences that there were no significant differences found in the choices of boys who were reading below grade level, at grade level, or above grade level. As for differences by grade levels, there were ten categories which received significantly different ratings, but she concluded that "these differences appeared to be in the expected direction of change in tastes with increasing age and maturity" (p. 43). A similar study was conducted by Geeslin and Wilson (1972) which attempted to answer the following questions:

1. Does the eight-year-old pupil who is two years accelerated in reading ratify the choices of his classmates or does he prefer the favoured books of fifth graders?
2. Does the twelve-year-old who is two years retarded in reading like the books favoured by seventh graders better than those preferred by his reading peers, the fifth graders?

They concluded that there was no evidence that members of either chronological age group, when the group was taken as a whole, were more influenced by reading age than by chronological age.

In a survey to assess the expressed reading interests of 791 elementary school children in grades four, five, and six,

in selected schools in urban and suburban Pittsburgh, McKay (1971) found that those areas selected as most interesting to nine-year-olds were adventure and mystery; ten-year-olds indicated a preference for mystery, adventure, and animals. Most interesting to eleven-year-olds were mystery, adventure, and sports, while the areas chosen as most appealing to twelve-year-olds were mystery, adventure, and animals.

Ashley (1972), in a comprehensive survey of the reading habits of 1,500 Canadian children from grades four through to eight, found "general catholicity" in reading interests for grade four boys and girls. Both boys and girls had reached the "high tide" of reading involvement by grade five, and by grade six their tastes in literature had formed. By grade seven children were not reading nearly as indiscriminately as in earlier years.

Lawritzen and Cheves (1974) analyzed and reported on an informal study of children's reading interests carried out by the Beta Upsilon Chapter, Pi Lambda Theta, in the Kansas city area. From data relevant to the intermediate grades it was evident that nine-year-old boys in the study best liked stories about animals, transportation, science and sports; ten-year-old boys best liked animal stories, mystery stories, and science related stories; eleven-year-old boys best liked mystery stories, stories about transportation, history, sports, and science; while the two most popular categories for twelve-year-old boys were stories about animals and

science. Nine-year-old girls in the study preferred stories about animals, mysteries, and people; ten-year-old girls liked to read stories about animals, mysteries, and people; eleven-year-old girls indicated a very strong preference for mystery stories, followed by stories about animals and people; and twelve-year-old girls preferred stories about animals, mysteries, and people. A general overview of this study showed that animal stories were the most popular category for both boys and girls in all age groups. Interest in mystery stories grew for both boys and girls.

Hypothesizing that the reading preferences of Canadian children would vary in relation to grade level (as well as sex, ethnographic and socio-economic factors), Summers and Lukasevich (1983) surveyed 1,127 grades five, six, and seven children in three Canadian communities to test their hypothesis. The data were organized to see if there were significant differences over a one-year and a two-year developmental spread. When the results were analyzed and a comparison made between the preferences of grades six and seven, the results indicated a significant difference for only one of the fourteen categories; whereas, when the preferences of the grade five children were compared with the preferences of the grade seven children, significant differences were found in eight of the fourteen categories. This, according to the researchers, suggested that maturation differences in preference may occur across larger

developmental spans but not necessarily on a year-by-year basis.

Much research has thus shown that students' reading interests vary with their chronological ages, and also that the amount of reading done by students reaches its peak during the intermediate grades and then gradually decreases. There was also some indication in some previous studies that younger children today are maturing faster in their reading interest than did children in early studies. Even as far back as the early sixties, McAulay (1962) identified more mature interests in social studies materials among younger children and concluded that this was due to the influence of television, radio, movies, and travel.

#### Geography and Reading Interests

Although most research indicates that sex and age are two of the strongest personal determinants of reading interests, much of the same research concludes that socio-economic, ethnographic and demographic factors do not to any significant degree affect what children read (Byers, 1964; Ford and Kopyay, 1968; Ashley, 1972). Purves and Beach (1972) offer as an explanation for this the fact that the majority of the studies examined were students who were exposed to a literature curriculum of middle-class orientation (p. 104).

One of the questions asked by Minkler (1948) in his

examination of voluntary reading interests of intermediate children in Canadian schools was whether or not there were any significant differences in the reading interests of children in different areas of the country. The questionnaire method was adopted and his survey included a sampling from all provinces of the Dominion. (Newfoundland was not included as it was not then a Province of Canada). The results of this comprehensive survey showed that neither the type of school -- rural, suburban, or urban -- nor the geographical area -- Maritimes, Ontario, Prairies, or British Columbia -- exerted any significant influence on the reading interests of Canadian children. Minkler did discover, without speculating on the cause, that there was some indication that children attending urban schools and those residing in coastal areas of the country had a wider range of reading interests, but he felt that the general agreement of all the responses was such that those differences could not be regarded as significant.

Rudman (1957), in seeking to identify what children read about, and what information they seek in books, found little difference in the reading interests of children from rural, urban, and metropolitan centres. His conclusion was that regardless of the geographical area from which a youngster comes, and regardless of the size of the population centre in which he lives, reading interests are rather uniform across the United States.

An explicit aim of the study of Lehtovaara and Saarinen (1964), which included over two thousand intermediate-grade children from different parts of Finland, was to study the reading habits of the children from regions with different dialects and from regions with anthropologically different populations to see if there were any significant differences in their reading habits. As well, they included subjects from urban and rural areas in proportions corresponding to the ratio between urban and rural populations for the total population of the country. Their conclusion was that the reading interests of all sub-groups dealt with in the study did not differ significantly from one another.

Ashley (1972) conducted a study on the reading interests of 1,500 children in two geographical areas of British Columbia -- metropolitan Vancouver and smaller urban settlements of up-country Okanagan. Although the researcher was not primarily concerned with a comparison of the reading interests of the children of the two areas, he reported that there were no distinct differences in the patterns of reading preferences of the children for both regions.

Schulte (1967) looked at the recreational reading interests of intermediate-grade children in four states of the United States, each state representing a major geographical region in the country. Opinions of 6,568 children were reported and the results showed that there were no differences in their reading habits which could be



attributed to the geographical area in which they lived.

McKay (1971) studied a school population of 791 intermediate-grade children from three different socio-economic-geographic settings in the United States -- two urban and one suburban -- to discover if any changes had occurred in children's reading interests in "an era of such events as moon landings, political assassinations, and racial strife". He discovered that of all considered factors, the influence of geographic location was minimal.

A Canadian study of the reading interests of intermediate-grade children in three cities, was conducted by Summers and Lukasevich (1983). Using a sample of 1,124 children in two provinces -- British Columbia and Ontario -- the researchers organized the data to find out if regional differences influenced reading preferences. They hypothesized that if such differences existed, they could expect patterns of preferences for the two Ontario communities (London and Windsor) to be similar and the pattern for the British Columbia community (Richmond) to differ from the patterns of the Ontario communities. Their study, in fact, revealed that there was no marked regional effect on reading preferences.

The brevity of this section reflects the scarcity of careful research on geographical location as an important factor affecting reading interests. Most studies dealt with reading interest within a single area, usually a metropolitan

area, which included samples from urban and suburban regions. The study under review, however, indicated that of the three determinants considered, geographical location exerted the least influence on students' reading interests.

### Summary

The literature reviewed indicated that over the years children's reading preferences have changed very little. Sex differences, considered by some to be culturally and socially induced, accounted more for the differences in reading interests than did either age or geographical location, the other two factors considered. In fact, geographical location seemed to be a very insignificant factor.

Most studies indicated that intermediate-grade boys and girls like equally well the categories of adventure, mystery, and animal stories. The studies also indicated that there is a gradual change in girls' interests during these grades as their interest in the traditional fairy tales merges with other reading interests, especially fantasy, and their interests change to stories concerned with personal relations and romance. There was a general consensus that girls read more than boys do, and that they often enjoy books especially written for boys such as the Hardy Boys series.

The interests of boys remain much the same throughout the intermediate-grade years, although there is a developmental interest in sports and science-fiction. Most

researchers pointed out that while boys might read less than girls do, they have a wider range of interest than girls do. They rarely read books "designated" as girls' books such as the Bobsey Twins or the Nancy Drew series.

## CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

### Introduction

It was toward the end of the nineteenth century that educators began using scientific procedures to investigate reading interests. Steiert (1966) reported that one of the first to do so was Clark Wissler. In 1895 he conducted a study of the reading interests of nearly 2,000 intermediate children in the state of Indiana. This study dealt specifically with the best-liked stories, classified according to theme from readers used in the schools' instructional programs. Since then, numerous methods have been used to determine children's reading interests, and what factors affect their choices of reading materials. Some of the most popular methods used by researchers to assess reading interests are the questionnaire, the interview technique, and the reading record.

### Questionnaire

In surveying the studies since 1900, McKay (1968) found that the questionnaire method was the most popular, and that this method held a two-to-one numerical edge over all other methods. It has certain inherent advantages, such as the expediency with which it can be administered and interpreted. It is also flexible to the extent that additional questions may be asked when answers to previous questions make this

necessary.

There are, however, a number of disadvantages and shortcomings to this method. Meckel (1946) observed that since the reliability of the questionnaire depends to a great extent on the subject's ability to comprehend his own motives for reading, and on his subjective recall, he may recall only unique, unusual books or books recently read. Purves and Beach (1972) feared that students might respond in ways that teachers and investigators expected them to respond, or that their choices might be directed by what the school or family provided (p. 62).

#### The Interview Technique

The interview technique is used either as a separate method or as a supplement to the questionnaire method. The chief advantage of this method is that it can reveal certain personality factors, attitudes, and pertinent information about the home environment (Strang, 1942; Ennis, 1965). When it is used as a supplement to the questionnaire method, it enables the researcher to complete and check answers which are incomplete or unsatisfactory. However, Lehtovaara and Saarinen (1964), commenting on this very fact, felt that "because additional questions, presentation of different alternatives, and so forth, are always necessary, therefore, the need for, and the type of these further questions vary with the age of the subjects, and hence, the uniformity of

the method breaks down" (p. 36).

A major disadvantage of the interview technique is that it is extremely time-consuming and that it requires highly trained investigators acquainted with child psychology who would be able to detect fallacious answers. Shatter (1951) found that students overestimated the amount of reading they did. Byers (1964) also found that preferences stated by children in interviews were often different from those gained by actual observation, because students sometimes stated only culturally approved interests. Lehtovaara and Saarinen (1964) made similar observations:

Most researchers have actually found that the answers of children are by no means always in particularly good agreement with the actual state of affairs. Fairly often children want to give the most favourable possible picture of themselves, and they modify the facts in their answers accordingly...Still more frequently the answers may depart from the actual state of affairs because the subjects interviewed...give replies indicating how matters should be, or how they wish they should be (p. 18).

#### Reading Record

Another common device used to measure the reading interests of children is the reading record kept by the students themselves or their teachers or librarians. As Meckel (1946) pointed out, one can readily see the types of books borrowed by the children and the frequencies of the loans of different types of books. This device also allows the researcher to break down the subjects according to age

and sex.

As with other methods, there are certain disadvantages. Purves and Beach (1972), in commenting on selectivity factors which may bias any results, stated that the socio-economic class of subjects who frequent the library is such that the withdrawal of books is a selected sample (p. 65). Lehtovaara and Saarinen (1964) observed that children of high income families make less use of public libraries than do those from middle and low income families, and concluded that valid conclusions concerning the total population were difficult to draw (p. 22). Another shortcoming mentioned by several researchers is that librarians, as well as parents, usually select books they think most appropriate. Because libraries do not often have additional copies of popular books, the rate of borrowing of such books is much lower than it would be, were there additional books. There is also the question of whether withdrawal from a library means that a book has been read.

#### Summary

There is, therefore, much discussion on the reliability of the various means of determining reading interests. Getzels (1966) felt that there were four areas in which research in reading interest was deficient: (1) precision of definition; (2) rigor or theory; (3) depth of analysis; (4) exactness of observation. Zimet (1966) noted that often

there were conflicting results given in studies done on reading interests. These she attributed to the use of dissimilar population samples and to different methods used in assessing children's interests. Future research, she felt, should be broader, should use better instruments, and should use a more representative sampling. Weintraub (1969) felt that there should be some common basis established for categorizing responses. He used as an example the fact that an interest in "animals" might be labelled a science by one investigator or be placed under some other broad category by a second investigator. McNinch (1970), in commenting on his own findings and those of others, concluded that there was much conflict between the findings of many researchers and had this to say:

The question of defining children's interests is a problem that has not been definitely answered. Enough conflict still exists to warrant further investigation. Further investigation should not be confined merely to the determination of interests but to the construction of reliable valid tests (p. 37).

Finally, Purves and Beach (1972) summed up the then current state-of-the art on instrumentation in stating:

Little research has been directed to which of these techniques, if any, provides a more accurate picture of reading interests. Thus different techniques may have produced such different results that any generalization about results from different studies is highly suspect (pp. 66).

While the plethora of studies in reading interests has,



in sum, been plagued by methodological problems that render many of the results dubious, these studies do depict some general trends. Interest is more closely associated with the content of a book rather than the form or style of the book. Also, patterns of interest in the content of books show differences between younger and older children and between boys and girls. Comparisons with the various methods of assessing reading interests are difficult to make and perhaps of questionable value.

### The Method of Paired Comparisons

#### A Brief History of the Method and Its General Application

In the method of paired comparisons introduced in its embryonic form by G.T. Fechner in 1860 and, after considerable extensions, made popular by L.L. Thurstone in 1940, objects are presented in pairs to one or more judges. "Object" is a covering term which may stand for "item", "treatment", "stimulus", and the like. In its simplest form the comparison is between two objects, A and B, by one judge. This comparison may be made by any number of judges, and the number of objects under consideration may be greater than two, although if the number of objects is too great, then the number of comparisons becomes unmanageable. Each judgement consists of a simple preference for one or the other object, since ties are not permitted.

If more than two objects are under consideration, every

judge performs every possible paired comparison. This corresponds in the language of sports to a round robin tournament, the roles of the players in the tournament being analogous to those of the objects in the paired-comparison experiment. For  $t$  objects and  $n$  judges the number of paired comparisons will be  $n(t \setminus 2)$ .

The method of paired comparisons is used primarily in cases when objects to be compared can be judged only subjectively, as in the case of reading preferences. Other examples where this method is employed are in taste testing, and personnel rating (David, 1963).

#### Paired Comparisons and Reading Interests

Limited use to date has been made of the paired-comparison approach in measuring reading interests. Lehtovaara and Saarinen (1964) used this method with three other methods in their study of the reading interests of 2,000 Finnish children. One of the reasons they gave for using it was:

...the method of paired-comparisons offered the possibility of creating a more natural experimental situation from the point of view of the children, than the situations presupposed by other methods; and this was regarded as a point of particular value: it was likely to facilitate comparisons of different age groups, which was one of the objects of the study. The certainty that each of the elements is made, in turn, the subject of comparison, was also considered to be very valuable (p. 62).

Chiu (1973), using a 45-item questionnaire covering ten categories of books, and also employing the method of paired-comparisons, investigated the reading preferences of fourth grade children in two elementary schools in the north-central part of Indiana. Results showed that test-retest reliabilities for the ten categories with a one-month interval were relatively high with the median reliability coefficient of .72 for the total group.

In similar fashion, Fairleigh, Evard, & McDaniel (1974) developed a picture inventory to compare the reading interests of boys and girls in grades four, five, and six. Eleven different pictures were shown, representing a different category of literature. Each picture was paired with every other picture in the set, resulting in its final form of a picture inventory consisting of fifty-five pairs of pictures. The inventory was administered to 150 children, and the means and standard deviations of the scores for each category on the inventory were computed by sex and grade level. The data showed a pronounced sex difference in reading interests, and were consistent over the age-range studied with other surveys.

The method of paired comparisons was used by Summers and Lukasevich (1983) in constructing a reading preference inventory and this inventory was administered to 1,127 intermediate-grade children in three Canadian communities. Their assessment of the merits of this method was summed up

thus:

We feel that one of the more promising measurement approaches is the use of paired-comparison inventories. Paired-comparisons allow us to quantify and rank preference data. This approach alleviates many measurement problems and the measurement methodology can also be brought within the environment of the classroom teacher (p. 349).

#### Advantages of Paired Comparisons

1. Paired-comparison instruments are flexible and allow thorough comparisons of  $n$  possible combinations of preference themes.
2. Inventories are easily developed, administered, scored, and interpreted.
3. The technique avoids some of the well-known measurement problems related to affective assessment, including acquiescence, responding in a socially desirable manner, and being unduly influenced by the set of the developer of the instrument.
4. The results can be easily aggregated for statistical analysis across groups and across studies.

#### Disadvantages of Paired Comparisons

1. Because each judgement consists of a simple preference for one or the other object, and because ties are not permitted (David, 1963; p. 10), preferences may be stated where there is hardly any.
2. Problems may arise with the vocabulary, and the

laboriousness of the method especially with slow readers and with children in the early grades. In this study, there was a total of ninety-one comparisons and solutions, which would be too difficult a task for such respondents.

### The Sample

The subjects for this sample were 747 grades four, five, and six classes from three areas in the province; namely, Gander, Glovertown, and Fogo Island. This sample consisted of entire classes, irrespective of ability, enrolled in schools mainly operated by the Terra Nova Integrated School Board. An explanation of the operation of the various schools on Fogo Island is found in Chapter I. Although there are seven elementary schools on Fogo Island the researcher used the entire student body of the classes involved as one unit of study. For the purposes of the study, it was felt that this sample might be sufficiently large to provide the data necessary to determine the effect of the variables being considered. Those schools were selected for a number of reasons:

1. The schools are located mainly in one geographical area avoiding problems with distribution, testing and collection.
2. The schools represent, at least in the researcher's view, a cross-section of types of schools and the students

represent a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. The schools on Fogo Island are all small, poorly equipped, and neither has a library nor resource person. The books available are contained within the classroom. There is a public library for the whole island, and this is housed within the Central High School. This school is situated in the centre of Fogo Island and access to the library is not easy, especially for middle-grade children. Glovertown is a relatively small primary-elementary school (Grades K to VII) with a well-equipped resource centre which also houses the public library. The school employs a full-time resource person, and in addition, there is a part-time public librarian. Gander Academy is a relatively large primary-elementary school (K-6) with a well-equipped children's library and the School Board has a full-time resource person in the school.

#### Instrumentation

The instrument used in this survey employs the method of paired comparisons and was identical to that used by Summers and Lukasevich (1983). Permission was sought and obtained for the use of the same. The authors in reviewing the literature found anywhere from five to thirty content-and-form themes or categories used previously to classify books in measuring interest and preference at the intermediate-grade level. Reported classifications from

earlier research were collated and fourteen representative categories were identified and included in the inventory. The categories were adventure, history/geography, animals, children/family, sports, humor, science, poetry, fantasy, biography, travel, romance, nature study, and mystery.

In developing the inventory, the researcher organized these category pairs so that each appeared first and second about an equal number of times, and a total group of ninety-one pairs was presented in random order.

To aid in distinguishing among categories, a brief explanation was added by the researcher to provide some descriptive terms for the categories; for example, after "biography" the phrase "an account of a person's life" was added. For example, the category of mystery with biography appeared as follows:

I like most to read about:

\_\_\_ MYSTERY (ghosts, secrets, detectives, suspense)

\_\_\_ BIOGRAPHY (an account of a person's life)

To illustrate better the reading preference differences and changes, Summers and Lukasevich (1983) developed an index of reading preference (IRP). Isaac (1971) defined a scale as a measuring device allowing the assignment of symbols or numbers to individuals or groups, or their behaviours, by rule. He went on to say that such an assignment of symbols or numbers indicated the individual's or group's possession measure (p. 100). This researcher requested and was granted

permission to use the scale in this study. The IRP is calculated as follows:

$$\text{IRP} = \frac{\text{the number of times the category is selected} - \text{the number of times the category is not selected}}{\text{[the number of possible selections]}} \times 100$$

Thus, if the IRP was administered to a group of 134 subjects, the total number of possible selections for the category of adventure, if it was always selected over the other thirteen categories in all pairings would be 1,742. If, however, the category of adventure were actually selected first in all comparisons 1,201 times, there would be a balance of 501 instances where the other categories predominated. Using the above formula we obtain -

$$\text{IRP} = \frac{(1,201 - 501)}{1,742} \times 100 = 40.07$$

A separate IRP calculation is made for each category; the lower the value of the index for a category, the more the other categories are preferred to it. High preferences result in high positive values, low preferences in high negative values.

#### Procedure

The Reading Preference Inventory was administered during



the month of October, 1984, to subjects as a group in their classrooms by classroom teachers, with the exception of Fogo Island, where the researcher conducted the survey himself.

Subjects were instructed thus:

This booklet contains statements about types of books boys and girls like to read. Read each statement carefully. Decide which of the two types of books you would rather choose. Place an X in front of the one you choose. Choose only one type of book for each statement.

Teacher help was provided to subjects throughout, and no time limits were imposed. The average time to complete the inventory was a half hour.

The completed inventories were collected by the researcher or were forwarded to the researcher by the teachers immediately upon completion.

CHAPTER IV  
AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT RESPONSES

Introduction

In this chapter the responses from the seven hundred and forty seven students in the sample are reported and discussed. The investigation was concerned with the independent reading preferences of children in grades four, five, and six, in three selected areas of Newfoundland -- Fogo Island, Glovertown, and Gander. In addition, the study attempted to determine whether there were significant relations between the reading interests and grade level, sex, and geographical location.

First, there is an analysis and discussion of the various group rank orderings, and the relative changes in, and distances between the various ranks in the orderings. There is also an analysis of community differences, sex differences, and grade-to-grade fluctuations in reading preferences of the elementary children in this study. Secondly, there is an analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the community, grade level, and sex difference results.

Table 1 shows the number of students for each of the sexes for each grade for each community.

Table 1

Distribution of Students According to Community, Grade, and Sex.

Community	Grade Four		Grade Five		Grade Six	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Fogo	52	38	45	41	31	33
Gander	58	61	58	64	55	63
Glovertown	24	17	23	23	33	28

### Analyses of the Rank Order of Reading Preferences

#### The Index of Reading Preference

This research attempted to determine the reading preferences of intermediate children in the province of Newfoundland and, as well, to investigate the extent to which these preferences are affected by community, sex, and grade level. To do this the researcher has presented a rank ordering of the reading preferences for the fourteen reading preference inventory (RPI) categories organized by community, sex, and grade level, as shown in table 2. It is obvious from this table that the most popular categories of reading for the students in this survey are mystery, adventure, romance, fantasy, and humour, and that such categories as history/geography, children/family, poetry, biography, and nature study are the least popular categories of reading with this large group of children. This table also shows that

girls prefer such categories as romance and animals more than boys do, and that such categories as sports and science are more widely read by boys than they are by girls. Community differences are not so obvious, but the table does show, for example, that Fogo boys prefer romance more than do boys in either Glovertown or Gander, or that science is a more popular category of reading with both Glovertown boys and Gander boys than it is with Fogo boys. Such a table of rank orderings is not able to show relative changes in preferences, nor indicate the distances between the ranks in the orderings. Neither is such a table able to show community differences, sex variation, or the grade-to-grade fluctuations in preferences for the fourteen categories of reading. However, using the formula discussed in Chapter III, (p. 41), an index of reading preference scores is produced, which not only shows the ranked preferences for the fourteen categories, for the total 747 children, and for the various groupings according to sex, age, and community, but also shows relative changes in preferences, together with the distances between the various orderings. Furthermore, it also shows more clearly the various community differences in reading preferences, a comparison of the reading preferences of boys and girls, together with any changes in their reading interests as these students progress through the elementary grades. As stated in the discussion of the IRP in Chapter III, the higher the value of the index score for a particular

category, the greater the number of times that category is preferred, or the lower the value of the index score for a particular category, the less frequently that category is preferred. Thus, since the IRP scores range from (-100.00) to (+100.00) an IRP score of (+50.00) for any category means that the subjects in that particular group chose that category seventy-five percent of the total number of times it might have been chosen, or an IRP score of 0 means that this particular category was chosen or rejected fifty percent of the total number of times it might have been and that the children are neutral in their preference for it. On the other hand, an IRP score of (-50.00) for any particular category means that a particular group rejected this category seventy-five percent of the total number of times.

TABLE 2

Rank Order of Reading Preferences for the Fourteen Categories by Community, Grade and Sex.

R.P.I. Category	Fogo			Glovertown			Gander											
	Boys			Girls			Boys			Girls								
	4	5	6	4	5	6	4	5	6	4	5	6						
Romance	1	4	7	1	1	1	5	6	8	1	1	2	9	11	9	2	2	1
Mystery	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	3	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
Sports	3	5	3	11	10	10	6	7	3	7	9	7	3	4	4	9	6	7
Adventure	4	2	1	4	3	3	2	2	2	4	2	3	2	2	2	4	3	3
Fantasy	5	3	5	2	4	6	4	3	4	2	6	4	4	3	3	3	4	4
Humour	6	6	4	12	5	5	3	4	5	6	5	6	5	5	5	6	5	6
Travel	7	8	6	6	9	7	8	9	10	8	7	9	6	7	6	7	8	8
Animals	8	7	11	5	6	4	7	8	7	5	4	5	10	8	7	5	7	5
Hist/Geog	9	11	8	10	13	13	14	10	11	13	14	14	11	10	11	13	13	14
Nature Study	10	9	10	14	12	12	10	11	9	11	10	11	7	9	10	10	11	10
Biography	11	13	12	8	8	8	12	14	13	9	11	10	12	13	14	11	12	9
Science	12	10	9	13	14	14	9	5	6	14	13	13	8	6	8	14	14	13
Child/Fam	13	14	14	9	11	11	13	13	14	12	12	8	14	14	13	12	10	12
Poetry	14	12	13	7	7	9	11	12	12	10	8	12	13	12	12	8	9	11

### Rank Order For All Subjects

Table 3 shows the ranked preferences and the corresponding scores for the fourteen categories of reading. This table shows that the most popular categories for all the 747 subjects in this survey are mystery (57.76), adventure (45.40), romance (32.46), fantasy (27.43), and humour (14.13). The IRP scores for mystery and adventure, particularly, show that these two categories are strongly preferred by most students in this survey. The categories least preferred by this group are children/family (-43.19), biography (-37.52), poetry (-31.26), history/geography (-29.76), science (-29.68), and nature study (-25.87). The IRP scores for sports (3.81), animals (3.83), and travel (-5.85), show that the children in this survey have somewhat neutral preferences for these categories; that is, they prefer these categories in about the same proportions as they do the other categories.

Mystery and adventure were also the two most popular categories of reading for all the subjects in the survey by Summers and Lukasevich (1983). The other popular categories in their survey were fantasy, humour, and to a lesser extent, animals. The IRP scores for mystery, fantasy, and humour, were similar to those in this study. In their survey, adventure (51.86) was slightly more popular than it was with the children in this study, but romance (-9.66) was rated considerably lower in their survey than it was by children in

this survey. The categories least preferred by the students in their survey were identical to those by the students in this survey, although the rank orderings were different, and the IRP scores varied. Most notable was the category of science. Students in their survey rated this category (-10.40), while the students in this survey rated it (-29.68). Subjects in their survey were also neutral in their preferences for the categories of sports and travel, and, to a lesser extent, the category of romance.

An important conclusion that may be drawn from this table is that fiction, generally speaking, holds a much greater interest for children in the middle grades than does non-fiction.



Table 3

Rank Order of Reading Preferences for the Fourteen Categories Organized for all 747 Subjects, Regardless of Grade, Sex or Community.

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RPI Category For 747 Students  
(n = 747)

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Mystery	57.76
Adventure	45.40
Romance	32.46
Fantasy	27.43
Humour	14.13
Sports	3.81
Animals	3.83
Travel	-5.85
Nature Study	-25.87
Science	-29.68
Hist/Geog	-29.76
Poetry	-31.26
Biography	-37.52
Child/Fam	-43.19

Sex

Table 4 shows the IRP scores rank ordered for the same subjects but organized by sex. The most popular categories for the boys are mystery (56.77), adventure (51.33), fantasy (25.88), sports (21.53), and humour (17.27). Boys show a marked lack of preference for the categories of children/family (-54.66), biography (-48.65), and poetry (-41.95), and to a lesser extent, the categories of history/geography (-27.99), and nature study (-19.55). The boys in this survey are neutral in their preferences for romance (3.55), travel (0.35), animals (-2.37), and science (-7.90).

The most popular categories for the girls are romance (61.37), mystery (58.78), adventure (39.46), fantasy (28.97), and humour (10.99). The most unpopular categories for the girls are science (-51.46), history/geography (-46.07), nature study (-32.19), children/family (-31.52), biography (-26.38), and poetry (-20.57). Girls are somewhat neutral in their preference for the category of animals (9.03).

With the exception of humour and travel, all other categories of reading are differentially preferred by boys and girls. The IRP scores indicate that both boys and girls rate mystery and fantasy almost equally. Boys show a greater preference than do girls for the categories of adventure, sports, humour, travel, science, nature study, and history/geography. Girls, on the other hand, show a greater

preference than do boys, for the categories of romance, animals, poetry, biography, and children/family.

Of special interest is the great range of differences between the IRP scores of boys and girls for the categories of sports, romance, and science. Boys rate sports fairly high, fourth in rank order, and with an IRP score of 21.53, whereas girls rank this category eighth, with an IRP score of (-13.92). Although science (-7.90) is somewhat a neutral preference for the boys, it is the most unpopular category with girls, with an IRP score of (-51.46). Romance ranks sixth with boys with an IRP score of (3.55), but is an extremely popular category with the girls who rank it number one, with an IRP score of (61.37).

In the study by Summers and Lukasevich (1983) a similar table shows that mystery and adventure were the two most popular categories for boys and girls, with humour similar in ranking, but less popular with girls than with boys. With the exception of these three categories all other categories were differentially preferred by boys and girls. Sports and science were more strongly preferred by boys than girls, while romance and animals were more strongly preferred by girls than they were by boys.

TABLE 4

Rank Order of Reading Preferences for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Sex.

RPI category for males (n=379)		RPI category for females (n=368)	
Mystery	56.77	Romance	61.37
Adventure	51.33	Mystery	58.78
Fantasy	25.88	Adventure	39.46
Sports	21.53	Fantasy	28.97
Humour	17.27	Humour	10.99
Romance	3.55	Animals	9.03
Travel	0.35	Travel	-12.04
Animals	-2.37	Sports	-13.92
Science	-7.90	Poetry	-20.57
Nature Study	-19.55	Biography	-26.38
Hist/Geog	-27.99	Child/Fam	-31.52
Poetry	-41.95	Nature Study	-32.19
Biography	-48.65	Hist/Geog	-46.07
Child/Fam	-54.66	Science	-51.46

### Grade Level

Table 5 shows the ranked IRP scores for the fourteen categories organized by grade for the 747 subjects. An interesting feature of this table is that the rank ordering for the first five preferences of categories are identical for each grade. They are mystery, adventure, romance, fantasy, and humour. This indicates, at the very least, that the reading preferences of the students in the elementary grades in this survey do not change dramatically. Although the categories of mystery and adventure are top ranked by the students in the three grades, there is a marked increase in interest in these two categories as they progress through the middle grades. Thus the IRP score for mystery by grade four students is (52.18), for grade five students it is (55.54), and for grade six students it reaches a very high score of (65.81). Similarly, grade four students rate adventure (36.06), grade five students rate it (46.34), and grade six students rate it (54.29). Three other less popular categories where there is a marked increase in interest between grades four and six are humour, animals, and science. Grade four students rate humour (9.11) while grade six students rate it (15.92). Also grade four students rate animals (3.57) while grade six students rate it (7.95). Finally, grade four students rate sports (-1.37) while grade six students rate it (9.02). On the other hand, grade six students when compared with grade four students, show a

slight decline in interest for the unpopular categories of biography, poetry, and nature study.

In the study done by Sumner and Lukasevich (1983) there is an increase in interest from grade five to grade seven for the popular categories of adventure, humour, and romance, and also in the less popular categories of biography, and children/family. They also found that poetry, history/geography, and nature study, were less popular with grade seven students than they were with grade five students. Perhaps this is because poetry at the grade five level is simple, often with a pleasant beat. Children read poetry for the sheer joy of doing so. Often there is choral reading, or the teacher reads poetry to the class. By the time they reach grade seven, children are often requested to analyze poetry, which at this level is not so rhythmic nor is the language as simple. Rather, the language is often figurative and difficult. Social studies at the grade five level is usually human interest material and anecdotal, whereas by grade seven, it is more specialized, descriptive, and technical. In a similar way nature study at the grade five level is often about cuddly creatures, and the like, discussed in family-like situations. Grade five children probably identify nature study with field trips, trips to the zoo, slide shows of strange creatures, exotic flowers, insects, and birds. By the time students get to grade seven there are fewer outings, more research is required of the

students, and nature study, like social studies, becomes more specialized.

The developmental fluctuations found in the reading preferences of the students in this survey, are also consistent with those of previous research. Terman and Lima as early as 1925 found that younger children were more interested in animal stories and fairy tales, but by the time they reached the age of twelve, they were more interested in mystery, adventure, and hero worship. Norvell (1946) also found a gradual but consistent change in the reading habits of primary grade children to those of upper elementary grades, where, he found, reading interests generally stabilized. Rudman (1957) also concluded that from grade four to grade eight, interest in mystery stories and sports stories increased, but interest in cowboy stories and fairy tales decreased. Ashley (1972) found that the reading interest of grade four boys and girls did not vary much, but by the time they reached grade six, both sexes had developed distinct reading tastes.

TABLE 5

Rank Order of Reading Preferences for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Grade.

RPI category for grade 4 (n=250)		RPI category for grade 5 (n=254)		RPI category for grade 6 (n=243)	
Mystery	52.18	Mystery	55.54	Mystery	65.81
Adventure	36.06	Adventure	46.34	Adventure	54.29
Romance	33.91	Romance	28.35	Romance	33.97
Fantasy	24.48	Fantasy	27.68	Fantasy	24.98
Humour	9.11	Humour	17.87	Humour	15.92
Animals	3.57	Sports	4.66	Sports	9.02
Sports	-1.37	Animals	-1.57	Animals	7.95
Travel	-1.47	Travel	-3.60	Travel	-7.19
Nature Study	-20.00	Poetry	-26.29	Science	-27.38
Poetry	-29.35	Nature Study	-28.47	Nature Study	-28.90
Biography	-29.35	Science	-29.68	Poetry	-38.90
Science	-30.95	Hist/Geog	-37.25	Hist/Geog	-39.54
Hist/Geog	-33.97	Biography	-41.91	Biography	-41.75
Child/Fam	-37.11	Child/Fam	-71.90	Child/Fam	-47.01



### Grade and Sex

Table 6 shows the ranked preferences and the corresponding IRP scores for the fourteen categories of reading organized by sex for grades four, five, and six girls. Although the four most popular categories -- mystery, romance, adventure, and fantasy -- are the same for the three grades, the IRP scores show that from grade four to grade six there is an increase in interest in the categories of mystery, romance, and adventure, but a decline in interest in the category of fantasy. The IRP scores of grade four girls for mystery, romance, and adventure are (51.59), (50.40), and (30.11) respectively. Grade five girls gave these categories (53.00), (62.02), and (37.98) respectively, and grade six girls (71.46), (70.97), and (49.75) respectively. Humour (1.33) is a neutral preference with grade four girls. It is, however, considerably more popular with grade five girls (19.11), and with grade six girls (19.56). Although sports is not a popular category with the girls in either grade, there is a marked increase in interest from grade four (-22.68) to grade six (-10.79).

The only one of the popular categories where there is a decline in interest is fantasy. Grade four girls rate this category (40.05), grade five girls (29.00), and grade six girls (19.60). Although the categories of poetry, travel, biography, nature study, and history/geography, are unpopular categories with the girls in the three grades, they are less

popular with grade six girls than they are with grade four girls. Meanwhile, the IRP scores indicate that there is no marked increase or decline in interest in the categories of animals, children/family, and science, with the girls in grades four, five, and six, in this survey.

TABLE 6

Rank Order of Reading Preferences for the Fourteen Categories Organized for Grades Four, Five, and Six Girls.

RPI category for grade 4 (n=116)		RPI category for grade 5 (n=128)		RPI category for grade 6 (n=124)	
Mystery	51.59	Romance	62.02	Mystery	71.46
Romance	50.40	Mystery	53.00	Romance	70.97
Fantasy	40.05	Adventure	37.98	Adventure	49.75
Adventure	30.11	Fantasy	28.00	Fantasy	19.60
Animals	13.26	Humour	19.11	Animals	14.39
Humour	1.33	Animals	0.00	Humour	16.66
Travel	-6.76	Sports	-9.01	Sports	-10.79
Poetry	-14.46	Travel	-13.22	Travel	-15.76
Sports	-22.68	Poetry	-14.72	Biography	-27.79
Biography	-22.81	Biography	-28.25	Child/Fam	-31.89
Nature Study	-26.79	Nature Study	-33.29	Poetry	-32.51
Child/Fam	-27.19	Child/Fam	-35.10	Nature Study	-36.10
Hist/Geog	-38.46	Hist/Geog	-46.27	Science	-49.63
Science	-50.00	Science	-54.21	Hist/Geog	-52.98

Table 7 shows the ranked preferences and the corresponding IRP scores for the fourteen categories of reading organized by sex for grades four, five, and six boys. Although the rank ordering for the categories mystery, adventure, and fantasy, are the same for the three grades, the IRP scores show that these categories are increasingly more popular with grade six boys than they are with grade four boys. Mystery, adventure, and fantasy are rated, respectively, (52.70), (41.23), and (20.32), by grade four boys; (58.11), (54.82), and (27.37) respectively, by grade five boys; and (59.47), (59.02), and (30.58), respectively, by grade six boys. Sports and humour are also two other fairly popular categories with the boys in this survey, and become more popular with them as they progress through the middle grades. Science is not a popular category with grade four boys (-14.12), but it increases in popularity with grade five boys (-4.76), and with grade six boys (-4.20).

Romance is a fairly popular category with grade four boys (19.63), but becomes considerably less popular with grade five boys (-5.86), and with grade six boys (-4.59). Grade six boys are also less inclined to read the unpopular categories of nature study, biography, and children/family, than are grade four boys. The IRP scores for the three grades seem to indicate that there is no dramatic change across the three grades in interest for the categories of history/geography, poetry, travel, and animals.

A comparison of tables 6 and 7 show that for both boys and girls in this survey there is a rise in interest from grade four to grade six in the categories of mystery, adventure, and humour. Romance is considerably more popular with grade six girls than it is with grade four girls, but is considerably less popular with grade six boys than it is with grade four boys. Fantasy, on the other hand, is more popular with grade six boys than it is with grade four boys, but is less popular with grade six girls than it is with grade four girls. Sports is a popular category with the boys in this survey, but is much more popular with grade six boys than it is with grade four boys. On the other hand, sports is a rather unpopular category with the girls in all three grades in this survey. Sports, however, is more popular with grade six girls than it is with grade four girls, but the increase in interest across the grades is much more marked with boys than it is with the girls. The category of science is a neutral preference with the boys in this survey. There is, however, an increase in interest from grade four to grade six, whereas with the girls, there is no marked difference from grade four to grade six.

TABLE 7

Rank Order of Reading Preferences for the Fourteen Categories  
Organized for Grades Four, Five, and Six Boys.

RPI category for grade 4 (n=134)		RPI category for grade 5 (n=126)		RPI category for grade 6 (n=119)	
Mystery	52.70	Mystery	58.11	Mystery	59.47
Adventure	41.23	Adventure	54.82	Adventure	59.02
Fantasy	20.32	Fantasy	27.35	Fantasy	30.58
Romance	19.63	Sports	18.56	Sports	29.67
Sports	17.11	Humour	16.61	Humour	19.59
Humour	15.84	Animals	-3.17	Travel	1.75
Travel	3.10	Travel	-3.91	Animals	1.23
Animals	-4.82	Science	-4.76	Science	-4.20
Science	-14.12	Romance	-5.86	Romance	-4.59
Nature Study	-14.12	Nature Study	-23.57	Nature Study	-21.40
Hist/Geog	-30.00	Hist/Geog	-28.08	Hist/Geog	-28.53
Biography	-35.13	Poetry	-38.22	Poetry	-45.57
Poetry	-41.90	Biography	-55.25	Biography	-56.30
Child/Fam	-45.69	Child/Fam	-56.53	Child/Fam	-62.76

Community

Table 8 shows the ranked IRP scores for the fourteen categories organized by community. The five most popular categories -- mystery, adventure, romance, fantasy, and humour -- are the same for each community, but the rank ordering (with the exception of humour) and the IRP scores vary from community to community. The rank orderings and IRP scores for Fogo students are romance (59.67), mystery (49.77), adventure (37.46), fantasy (23.25), and humour (7.51). For Glovertown students they are mystery (54.33), adventure (42.79), romance (37.21), fantasy (27.11), and humour (14.16). For Gander students they are mystery (64.78), adventure (52.90), fantasy (30.42), romance (20.30), and humour (19.04). Similarly, this table shows that for each community the unpopular categories - children/family, science, nature study, history/geography, biography, and poetry, are also the same, but the rank ordering (with the exception of children/family which is last ranked by all three communities) and the IRP scores are different for each community. Thus, except for the categories of humour, travel, and children/family, which are rank ordered fifth, eighth, and fourteenth by the three communities, there is a wide variation in the reading preferences of the three communities. The IRP scores show that Gander students have a greater preference for the categories of mystery, adventure, fantasy, humour, and travel, than do students in either Fogo

or Glovertown. In addition to these categories, Gander students have a greater preference than do Fogo students for the categories of animals, nature study, and science, and a greater preference than do Glovertown students for the category of history/geography. The IRP scores show that Glovertown students have a greater preference than either do Fogo students or do Gander students for the categories of animal, nature study, and science. As well, Glovertown students show a greater preference than do Gander students for the categories of romance, poetry, biography, and children/family, and a greater preference than do Fogo students for the categories of mystery, adventure, fantasy, humour, and sports. The IRP scores for Fogo students show that they have a greater preference than either Glovertown or Gander students for the categories of romance, poetry, biography, history/geography, and children/family. In addition to these categories, Fogo students show a greater preference than Glovertown students for the category of travel. Since romance is not usually a popular category with boys (Peterson, 1955; Summers and Lukasevich, 1983) it is interesting to note that Fogo boys rank ordered this category first, with an IRP score of (59.67). It is difficult to speculate why this is so. It is undoubtedly true that since Glovertown students and Gander students are separately housed in single buildings, and that each school has a qualified librarian, students are exposed to what is considered "good"

books. It is not likely that such personnel would consider 'romance', if it is equated with Harlequin novels, and the like, as good reading material for elementary children. Elementary students on Fogó Island, on the other hand, attend a number of schools and neither has a library nor a librarian. Also, this researcher noted that there was a large selection of Harlequin romances at the high school library, and in conversation with the librarian there, was informed that these books were the most popular ones with students in the school. Elementary students were undoubtedly being exposed to these books through their older brothers and sisters. An elementary teacher also expressed dismay that the boys and girls in her class were very interested in 'love stories' and indicated that this was the only type of reading material available in many homes.



TABLE 8

Rank Order of Reading Preferences of 747 Students for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Community.

RPI Category for Fogo (n=240)		RPI Category for Glovertown (n=148)		RPI Category for Gander (n=359)	
Romance	59.67	Mystery	54.33	Mystery	64.78
Mystery	49.77	Adventure	42.79	Adventure	52.90
Adventure	37.46	Romance	37.21	Fantasy	30.42
Fantasy	23.25	Fantasy	27.11	Romance	20.30
Humour	7.51	Humour	14.16	Humour	19.04
Animals	-0.34	Animals	8.83	Sports	8.06
Sports	-1.27	Sports	-0.49	Animals	3.89
Travel	-4.64	Travel	-12.78	Travel	-3.08
Poetry	-20.45	Nature Study	-23.89	Nature Study	-26.84
Biography	-24.86	Science	-25.43	Science	-29.26
Hist/Geog	-25.81	Poetry	-34.03	Poetry	-34.57
Nature Study	-29.91	Biography	-42.52	Hist/Geog	-41.19
Science	-33.98	Hist/Geog	-44.88	Biography	-43.80
Child/Fam	-36.81	Child/Fam	-45.24	Child/Fam	-47.51

### Community and Sex

Table 9 shows the ranked preference ordering and the corresponding IRP scores for the girls in the three communities. An interesting feature of this table is the similarity in the rank orderings and the IRP scores of Fogo girls and Glovertown girls in the more popular categories of romance, mystery, adventure, fantasy, animals, and humour, and the similarity in the rank orderings and the IRP scores of Gander girls and Glovertown girls in the less popular categories of children/family, biography, history/geography, poetry, science, nature study, and travel. It is difficult to explain why this is so.

The most popular categories for Fogo girls are romance (68.90), mystery (53.34), adventure (36.57), and fantasy (27.56). The unpopular categories are science (-45.97), history/geography (-34.53), nature study (-33.51), sports (-24.39), and children/family (-24.25). They are somewhat neutral in their preferences for animals (5.51), humour (2.52), poetry (-4.90), and, to a lesser extent, for the categories of travel (-8.57), and biography (-12.25). The only one of the popular categories for which Fogo girls show a greater preference than either Gander or Glovertown girls is romance. However, the IRP scores for the less popular categories of poetry, travel, biography, children/family, history/geography, and science, indicate that Fogo girls are not so strong in their dislike of these categories as either

Gander girls or Glovertown girls. Also, Fogo girls show a slightly greater preference for the category of adventure than do Glovertown girls.

The most popular categories of reading for Glovertown girls are romance (65.44), mystery (52.91), Adventure (34.97), fantasy (29.25), and animals (15.38). The unpopular categories for Glovertown girls are science (-54.32), history/geography (-54.10), children/family (-31.92), biography (-29.68), nature study (-28.71), and poetry (-27.06). The only category that Glovertown girls show a neutral preference for is humour (4.24). Glovertown girls show a greater preference than either Fogo girls or Gander girls for the category of animals, a greater preference than Fogo girls for the categories of humour, sports, and nature study, and a greater preference than Gander girls for the categories of romance, biography, and children/family.

The most popular categories for Gander girls are mystery (64.46), romance (59.26), adventure (42.64), fantasy (31.11), and humour (18.99). The unpopular categories are science (-54.40), history/geography (-50.54), children/family (-35.33), biography (-33.41), nature study (-32.49), and poetry (-22.02). Gander girls are somewhat neutral in their preferences for animals (9.24), sports (-7.12), and travel (-12.25). Gander girls show a greater preference than either Fogo girls or Glovertown girls for the categories of mystery, adventure, fantasy, humour, and sports. They also

show a greater preference than Fogo girls for the categories of animals, nature study, and a greater preference than Gloyertown girls for the categories of travel, poetry, and history/geography.

TABLE 9

Rank Order of Reading Preferences of All Girls for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Community.

RPI category for Fogo (n=112)	RPI category for Glovertown (n=68)	RPI category for Gander (n=188)
Romance 68.90	Romance 65.44	Mystery 64.46
Mystery 53.34	Mystery 52.91	Romance 59.26
Adventure 36.57	Adventure 34.97	Adventure 42.64
Fantasy 27.56	Fantasy 29.25	Fantasy 31.11
Animals 5.51	Animals 15.38	Humour 18.99
Humour 2.52	Humour 4.24	Animals 9.24
Poetry -4.90	Sports -16.03	Sports -7.12
Travel -8.57	Travel -16.21	Travel -12.25
Biography -12.25	Poetry -27.06	Poetry -22.02
Child/Fam -24.25	Nature Study -28.71	Nature Study -32.49
Sports -24.39	Biography -29.68	Biography -33.41
Nature Study -33.51	Child/Fam -31.92	Child/Fam -35.33
Hist/Geog -34.53	Hist/Geog -54.10	Hist/Geog -50.54
Science -45.97	Science -54.32	Science -54.40

Table 10 shows the ranked preferences and the corresponding IRP scores for the fourteen categories of reading, organized by community for boys. This table shows that there is more similarity between the reading preferences of Gander and Glovertown boys than there is between the reading preferences of Fogo and Gander boys or Fogo boys and Glovertown boys in the more popular categories of reading. The five most popular categories -- mystery, adventure, fantasy, humour, and sports -- are the same for Gander boys and Glovertown boys, with only a slight variation in the rank ordering. Fogo boys rank romance number one, while Glovertown and Gander rank it sixth and ninth respectively. Humour is a fairly popular category with Glovertown boys and Gander boys but only a neutral preference with Fogo boys. There is, however, a great similarity among the three communities in the rank orderings of the five most unpopular categories of children/family, biography, poetry, history/geography, and nature study. Science is also an unpopular category with Fogo boys, but a neutral preference for both Glovertown and Gander boys.

The most popular categories for Fogo boys are romance (50.44), mystery (46.20), adventure (38.35), sports (21.84), and fantasy (20.95). The unpopular categories are children/family (-48.97), biography (-37.46), poetry (-36.00), science (-20.00), nature study (-18.33), and history/geography (-17.09). Their neutral preferences are

travel (-0.72) and animals (-6.18), and to a lesser extent, humour (-12.49). Fogo boys show a greater preference than either do Glovertown boys or Gander boys for the more popular categories of romance and show less dislike than either Glovertown boys or Gander boys for the less popular categories of children/family, biography, poetry, nature study, and history/geography. As well, Fogo boys show a greater preference than Glovertown boys for the categories of sports and travel.

The most popular categories for Glovertown boys are mystery (55.75), adventure (50.60), fantasy (25.30), humour (21.29), and sports (15.05). The unpopular categories are children/family (-58.56), biography (-55.35), poetry (-41.00), history/geography (-35.65), and nature study (-19.07). Glovertown boys are neutral in their preferences for the categories of romance (8.99), science (3.46), animals (2.28), and travel (-9.34). They show a greater preference than Fogo boys and Gander boys for the categories of humour and science, and as well, a greater preference than Fogo boys for the categories of mystery, adventure, fantasy, and animals, and a greater preference than Gander boys for the categories of romance and nature study.

The most popular categories for Gander boys are mystery (66.10), adventure (63.16), fantasy (39.72), sports (23.24), and humour (19.09). The unpopular categories are children/family (-59.79), biography (-54.19), poetry

(-47.11), history/geography (-31.83), nature study (-21.18), and romance (-18.66). The neutral categories with Gander boys are travel (6.10), animals (-1.47), and science (-4.13). Gander boys show a greater preference than either Fogo boys or Glovertown boys for the categories of mystery, adventure, fantasy, sports, and travel. As well, Gander boys show a greater preference than Fogo boys for the categories of humour, animals, and science, and a greater preference than Glovertown boys for the categories of history/geography and biography.



TABLE 10

Rank Order of Reading Preferences of All Boys for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Community.

RPI category for Fogo (n=128)	RPI category for Glovertown (n=80)	RPI category for Gander (n=171)
Romance 50.44	Mystery 55.75	Mystery 66.10
Mystery 46.20	Adventure 50.60	Adventure 63.16
Adventure 38.35	Fantasy 25.30	Fantasy 39.72
Sports 21.84	Humour 21.29	Sports 23.24
Fantasy 20.95	Sports 15.05	Humour 19.09
Travel -0.72	Romance 8.99	Travel 6.10
Animals -6.18	Science 3.46	Animals -1.47
Humour -12.49	Animals 2.28	Science 13
Hist/Geog -17.09	Travel -9.34	Romance -18.66
Nature Study -18.33	Nature Study -19.07	Nature Study -21.18
Science -20.00	Hist/Geog -35.65	Hist/Geog -31.83
Poetry -36.00	Poetry -41.00	Poetry -47.11
Biography -37.46	Biography -55.35	Biography -54.19
Child/Fam -48.97	Child/Fam -58.56	Child/Fam -59.79

Community and Grade

Table 11 shows the ranked preferences and corresponding IRP scores for the fourteen categories of reading, organized by community for grade four. Although the first four preferences -- romance, mystery, fantasy, and adventure-- are the same for the three communities, the rank orderings and IRP scores are different. Gander grade four students rank mystery number one with an IRP score of (61.79). Glovertown students also rank this category number one but with a lower IRP score of (51.68). Fogo students rank this category number two with an IRP score of (39.50), Gander students rank adventure number two with an IRP score of (45.33), Glovertown students rank this category number three with an IRP score of (35.77), and Fogo students rank it number four with an IRP score of (23.32). There is very little variation among the three communities in the IRP scores for fantasy. Romance, however, is the fourth choice for Gander with an IRP score of (18.26); it is number two for Glovertown with an IRP score of (48.68), but is the number one choice for Fogo with an IRP score of (49.36). Humour is also a fairly popular category of reading for both Glovertown (16.52) and Gander (15.38) but is considerably less popular with Fogo students (-6.80). All three communities show a somewhat neutral preference for the categories of sports, travel, and animals. Although there is some variation in the rank orderings and IRP scores, all grade four students show

very little preference for the categories of poetry, history/geography, nature study, children/family, and science.

TABLE 11

Rank Order of Reading Preferences of All Grade Four Students for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Community.

RPI category for Fogo (n=90)	RPI category for Glovertown (n=41)	RPI category for Gander (n=119)
Romance	Mystery	Mystery
49.36	51.68	61.79
Mystery	Romance	Adventure
39.50	48.68	45.33
Fantasy	Adventure	Fantasy
31.32	35.37	29.15
Adventure	Fantasy	Romance
23.32	33.17	18.26
Animals	Humour	Humour
4.52	16.52	15.38
Travel	Animals	Animals
2.21	6.81	4.37
Sports	Sports	Travel
-3.43	-2.72	-1.38
Humour	Travel	Sports
-6.80	-9.58	-3.58
Poetry	Nature Study	Nature Study
-13.29	-22.12	-15.55
Hist/Geog	Poetry	Poetry
-18.00	-25.10	-31.56
Biography	Biography	Science
-18.66	-32.81	-33.89
Nature Study	Science	Biography
-25.07	-36.58	35.26
Child/Fam	Child/Fam	Hist/Geog
-25.54	-37.50	-38.58
Science	Hist/Geog	Child/Fam
-25.90	-53.59	-43.83

Table 12 show the ranked preferences and corresponding IRP scores for the fourteen categories of reading organized by community for grade five. Mystery is the number one choice for grade five students in Gander with an IRP score of (65.06). Mystery is also the number one choice for Glovertown students, but with a much lower IRP score of (42.48). Although mystery is the number two choice for Fogo students, they rate it only (49.14). Gander and Fogo students are similar in their IRP ratings of fantasy with scores of (31.40) and (30.05) respectively, but Glovertown students rate it much lower, with a score of (12.38). Humour is a fairly popular category with Fogo and Glovertown students. Their IRP scores are (14.47) and (10.37) respectively. However, this category is considerably more popular with Gander students, who rate it (25.68). Romance is the sixth choice in the rank ordering for Gander students, with an IRP score of (10.46); is the third choice for Glovertown students, with an IRP score of (38.29); but is the first choice for Fogo students with an IRP score of (52.59). Sports is considerably more popular with Gander students (15.05) than it is with either Glovertown students (-13.04) or Fogo students (-0.74). All grade five students in the three communities show a neutral preference for the categories of animals and travel, and show a lack of preference, with varying degrees of rank orderings, and different IRP scores, for the categories of children/family,

science, history/geography, biography, nature study, and poetry.

TABLE 12

Rank Order of Reading Preferences of All Grade Five Students for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Community.

RPI category for Fogo (n=86)		RPI category for Glovertown (n=46)		RPI category for Gander (n=122)	
Romance	52.59	Mystery	42.48	Mystery	65.06
Mystery	49.14	Adventure	45.15	Adventure	54.84
Adventure	35.45	Romance	38.29	Fantasy	31.40
Fantasy	30.05	Fantasy	12.38	Humour	25.68
Humour	14.47	Humour	10.37	Sports	15.05
Sports	-0.74	Animals	6.69	Romance	10.46
Animals	-4.24	Travel	-7.70	Animals	-2.95
Travel	-9.40	Sports	-13.04	Travel	-8.30
Poetry	-18.96	Science	-23.08	Science	-25.46
Nature Study	-25.50	Poetry	-29.43	Nature Study	-29.96
Biography	-29.39	Nature Study	-29.77	Poetry	-30.45
Hist/Geog	-34.12	Hist/Geog	-41.14	Hist/Geog	-37.79
Science	-37.72	Biography	-48.83	Child/Fam	-46.49
Child/Fam	-41.67	Child/Fam	-51.51	Biography	-47.94

Table 13 shows the ranked preferences for the fourteen categories of reading, organized by community for grade six students. Although there is some variation in the rank orderings and the IRP scores, the five most popular categories -- mystery, adventure, romance, humour, and fantasy -- are the same for the three communities. Fantasy, however, is considerably more popular with Glovertown students (35.78), and Gander students (30.70), than it is with Fogo students (7.39), who rank it a rather neutral preference. Also the categories of sports and animals are preferred more by Gander students (12.72, 10.24) and Glovertown students (14.29, 13.00) than they are by Fogo students (-1.37, 6.76). Gander students show neutral preferences for the categories of sports, animals, and travel, while Glovertown students do not show clearly any neutral preferences. All three communities show, with varying degrees of rank orderings, and with different IRP scores, a lack of preference for the categories of history/geography, biography, nature study, poetry, children/family, and science. Glovertown students also show a lack of preference for the category of travel.

TABLE 13

Rank Order of Reading Preferences of All Grade Six Students for the Fourteen Categories Organized by Community.

RPI category for Fogo (n=64)	RPI category for Glovertown (n=61)	RPI category for Gander (n=118)
Mystery 60.56	Mystery 68.83	Mystery 67.50
Adventure 53.11	Adventure 47.84	Adventure 58.54
Romance 40.32	Fantasy 35.78	Romance 32.27
Humour 14.87	Romance 24.94	Fantasy 30.70
Fantasy 7.39	Humour 15.59	Humour 16.07
Animals -1.29	Sports 14.29	Sports 12.72
Sports -1.37	Animals 13.00	Animals 10.24
Travel -6.76	Science -16.64	Travel 0.45
Hist/Geog -25.31	Nature Study -19.76	Science -28.44
Biography -26.53	Travel -21.06	Nature Study -35.01
Nature Study -27.21	Hist/Geog -40.02	Poetry -41.69
Poetry -29.11	Biography -45.91	Hist/Geog -47.19
Science -35.35	Child/Fam -46.71	Biography -48.35
Child/Fam -43.24	Poetry -47.47	Child/Fam -52.36

### Summary

This researcher feels that the index of reading preferences was an effective tool in illustrating reading preferences. It shows the relative changes in the rank orderings, and the distances between the ranks in the orderings. As well, it shows the community differences, sex variations, and the pattern of grade to grade fluctuations. The scaled preference values for the 747 subjects in the study are illustrated graphically in Figures 1 and 2. These figures provide a clear picture of category preferences, variation by community and sex. They also show fluctuations in preferences by grade level and possible interactions between community, grade, and sex, across the fourteen categories of reading. These graphs illustrate that the categories of mystery, adventure, and romance, are the most popular categories overall, although differences can be seen to exist within communities, grades, and sex, in preference for other categories. Children/family, history/geography, and poetry, are the least preferred categories overall, but even these results are influenced by interaction between the three variables.



Figure 1: Rank-order reading preferences by community and grade for males.

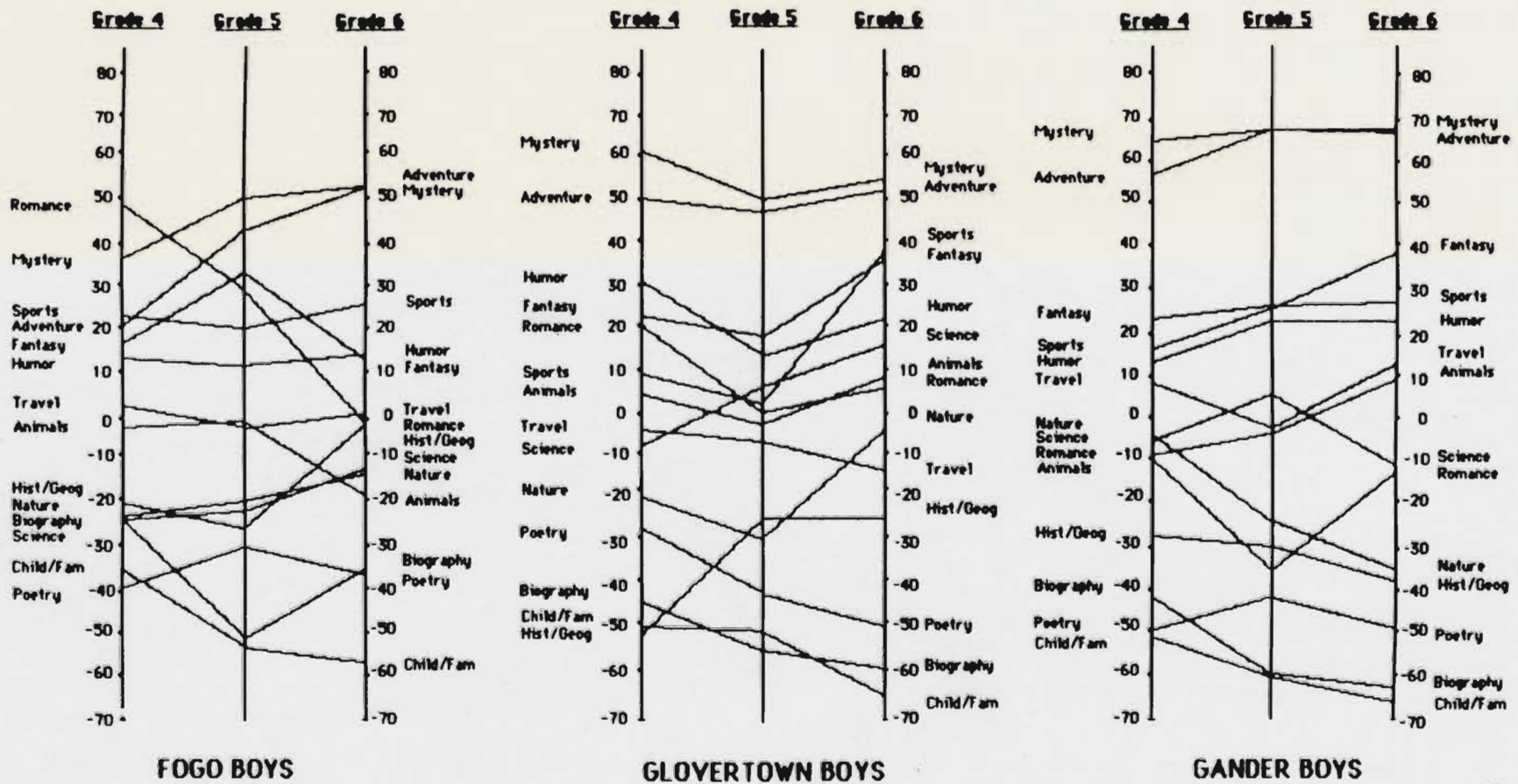
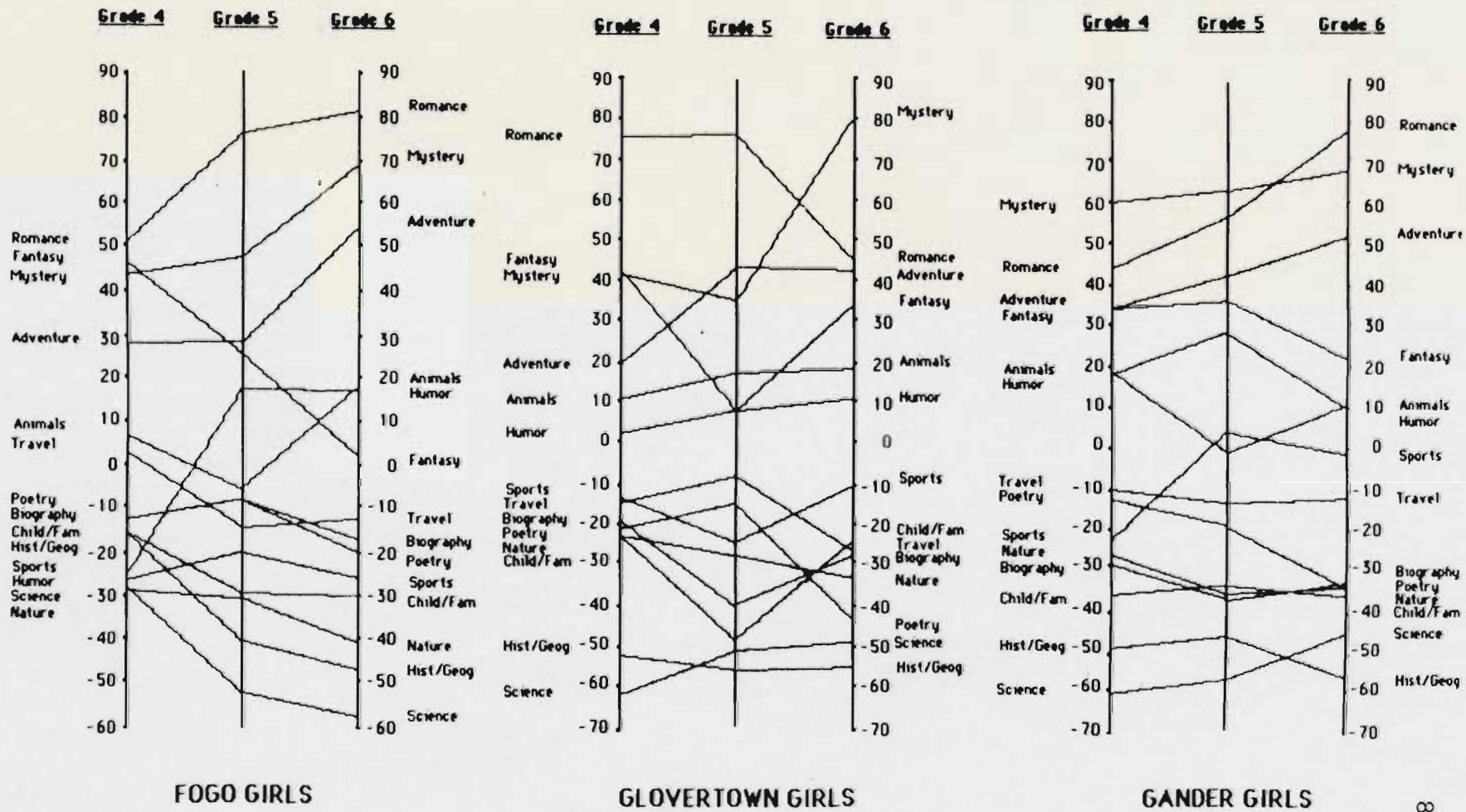


Figure 2: Rank-order reading preferences by community and grade for females.



## Comparative Analyses by Community, Grade, and Sex (ANOVA)

### Introduction

To determine statistically significant reading preference differences, separate three by three by two analysis of variance (community by grade by sex) were computed, using the raw score values for each of the fourteen categories. Such an analysis shows whether community, sex, and/or grade have significant influence on reading preferences, and whether there are interactions among the variables.

### Community Results

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) results for the three communities revealed highly significant differences in preferences for seven of the fourteen categories (table 14). These categories were adventure, history/geography, animals, children/family, biography, romance, and science. In the study by Summers and Lukasevich (1983), the ANOVA results for the three communities revealed highly significant differences in preference for eight of the fourteen categories. These categories were adventure, children/family, poetry, fantasy, travel, romance, nature study, and mystery.

The ANOVA results also showed significant interaction between community and grade level for the categories of romance and science, and between community and sex for the categories of adventure, sports, and science (table 14).

This means that to some extent boys and girls differ in their preferences for some categories according to their community location, and that preferences for some categories are also influenced by grade levels within these communities. In the study by Summers and Lukasevich (1983) there were significant interactions for community by grade for the categories of children/family, science, and romance, and for community and sex for the categories of animals, romance, and nature study.

The data were also organized to show whether or not regional differences in reading preferences existed (table 15). Thus, a comparison of the pattern of reading preferences of children attending school on Fogo Island with the pattern of reading preferences of students attending school in Glovertown showed significant differences for nine of the fourteen categories. These categories were adventure, history/geography, animals, children/family, science, biography, romance, and mystery. A comparison of the reading preferences of children attending school on Fogo Island with the reading preferences of children attending school in Gander showed significant differences in preference for eight of the fourteen categories. These categories were adventure, history/geography, animals, children/family, poetry, biography, romance, and mystery. A comparison of the reading preferences of children attending school in Glovertown with the reading preferences of children attending school in Gander showed significant differences in preference for only

two of the fourteen categories. This indicates that the reading habits of children attending school on Fogo Island contrasts greatly with the reading habits of children attending school in either Glovertown or Gander but that the reading preferences of children attending school in Glovertown and Gander are somewhat similar. The results of this part of the study are at odds with that of Summers and Lukasevich (1983) who concluded that there were no marked regional differences in reading preferences by the students in their survey. A possible explanation for this, as noted earlier, is the fact that all elementary students in both Gander and Glovertown, separately, attend single schools, with adequately equipped libraries, and qualified resource people. Elementary students on Fogo Island attend six separate schools, operated by three Boards. Neither school has a library nor librarian, and access to good books is obviously limited. Glovertown students and Gander students also have a greater access to bookstores in urban areas than do Fogo students who live on an economically depressed island where transportation and communication facilities are limiting factors. Teachers on Fogo Island also have a more limited access to workshops and resource people than do their counterparts in either Glovertown or Gander.

#### Grade Level Results

When the data were organized by grade level, highly

significant differences in reading preferences were found for five of the fourteen categories (table 14). These categories were adventure, children/family, poetry, biography, and mystery. Also, significant interaction between grade level and sex was found for the categories of fantasy, romance, mystery, and science. These results confirm that to some extent boys and girls differ in their reading preferences according to their level of maturation. In the study by Summers and Lukasevich (1983), with the data organized by grade level, highly significant differences in preference were found for the categories of adventure, history/geography, children/family, poetry, biography, romance, nature study, and mystery. Significant interaction between grade level and sex were found for the categories of animals, humour, biography, romance, and nature study.

The data were also organized to show possible differences in reading preferences using a one-year developmental spread between grade five and grade six, and a two-year developmental spread between grade four and grade six. The results indicated significant differences for only one of the fourteen categories, poetry, for the grade five and grade six comparison, while significant differences were found for the categories of adventure, history/geography, children/family, sports, poetry, biography, nature study, and mystery for the grade four and grade six comparison. In the study by Summers and Lukasevich (1983) the results indicated

significant differences for the category of mystery for the grade six and grade seven comparison while significant differences were found for the categories of adventure, history/geography, children/family, poetry, biography, romance, nature study, and mystery for the grade five and grade seven comparison. These results suggest that maturational differences in reading preferences may occur across larger developmental spans, but not necessarily on a year-by-year basis.

#### Sex Difference Results

The ANOVA data organized by sex showed highly significant differences for eleven of the fourteen categories (table 14). These categories were adventure, history/geography, animals, children/family, poetry, biography, travel, romance, nature study, sports, and science. Summers and Lukasevich (1983) found significant differences in the categories of history/geography, animals, children/family, sports, science, poetry, fantasy, biography, travel, romance, and mystery. The results of their survey and of this one show that the reading preferences of boys and girls vary greatly.

TABLE 14

ANOVA Results for Main Effects and Interactions by Community, Grade, and Sex

RPI Themes	Community		Grade		Sex		C x G		C x S		G x S	
	F Value	signifi- cance	F Value	signifi- cance	F Value	signifi- cance	F Value	signifi- cance	F Value	signifi- cance	F Value	signifi- cance
Adventure	5.81	p<.003*	12.03	p<.000*	4.06	p<.044*	1.61	p<.17	2.92	p<.045*	2.11	p<.12
History/Geography	5.61	p<.004*	0.88	p<.414	20.58	p<.000*	3.04	p<.17	0.75	p<.474	0.39	p<.67
Animals	4.06	p<.018*	0.71	p<.494	10.05	p<.002*	1.00	p<.41	1.88	p<.154	0.18	p<.83
Children/Family	3.63	p<.027*	3.94	p<.020*	62.22	p<.000*	0.30	p<.88	0.73	p<.470	1.65	p<.193
Poetry	2.84	p<.059	11.19	p<.000*	28.10	p<.000*	1.95	p<.10	0.16	p<.85	1.23	p<.292
Fantasy	0.31	p<.731	0.16	p<.851	0.20	p<.655	1.68	p<.15	0.89	p<.410	8.20	p<.000*
Biography	13.47	p<.000*	5.80	p<.003*	32.84	p<.000*	1.16	p<.325	1.13	p<.324	1.88	p<.153
Travel	2.41	p<.09	1.39	p<.249	15.29	p<.000*	1.54	p<.189	1.01	p<.361	.17	p<.843
Romance	7.40	p<.001*	0.60	p<.548	77.72	p<.000*	2.02	p<.051*	2.82	p<.060	6.91	p<.001*
Nature Study	1.33	p<.264	2.07	p<.127	6.36	p<.012*	0.47	p<.754	0.71	p<.490	.39	p<.678
Mystery	1.78	p<.169	11.93	p<.000*	3.10	p<.079	0.94	p<.441	0.90	p<.409	4.25	p<.015*
Sports	0.79	p<.452	2.29	p<.102	66.28	p<.000*	1.61	p<.171	4.48	p<.012*	1.74	p<.176
Humour	0.39	p<.674	0.21	p<.808	1.36	p<.243	.10	p<.982	1.53	p<.216	.56	p<.573
Science	6.18	p<.002*	1.21	p<.300	157.50	p<.000*	2.05	p<.05*	3.43	p<.033*	5.62	p<.004*

\*Any F Value with a probability of occurring by chance equal to or less than .05 was considered significant.



TABLE 15

## ANOVA Results for Community and Grade Contrasts

	Pogo vs. Glovertown		Pogo vs. Gander		Glovertown vs. Gander		Grade 4 vs. Grade 6		Grade 5 vs. Grade 6	
	F Value	significance	F Value	significance	F Value	significance	F Value	significance	F Value	significance
Adventure	0.97	p<0.001*	11.4	p<0.001*	0.58	p<0.45	28.7	p<0.00*	1.72	p<0.19
History/Geography	9.89	p<0.002*	53.9	p<0.013*	1.20	p<0.27	7.98	p<0.005*	1.42	p<0.23
Animals	7.21	p<0.008*	4.86	p<0.028*	0.83	p<0.36	0.19	p<0.66	0.78	p<0.38
Child/Family	7.18	p<0.008*	5.28	p<0.022*	0.59	p<0.45	8.72	p<0.003*	1.01	p<0.32
Sports	0.12	p<0.73	0.42	p<0.52	0.43	p<0.84	4.36	p<0.04*	1.37	p<0.24
Humour	0.68	p<0.94	0.41	p<0.51	0.39	p<0.53	0.13	p<0.72	0.22	p<0.64
Science	12.15	p<0.001*	1.99	p<0.16	6.19	p<0.01*	2.33	p<0.13	0.14	p<0.99
Poetry	4.21	p<0.04*	3.99	p<0.05*	0.24	p<0.62	16.66	p<0.000*	21.5	p<0.000*
Fantasy	0.19	p<0.66	0.44	p<0.51	0.91	p<0.92	0.69	p<0.79	0.71	p<0.39
Biography	20.86	p<0.001*	20.39	p<0.000*	1.19	p<0.28	15.37	p<0.000*	0.54	p<0.94
Travel	2.11	p<0.15	0.58	p<0.45	4.52	p<0.03*	3.05	p<0.08	0.18	p<0.67
Romance	6.16	p<0.01*	11.85	p<0.001*	0.11	p<0.74	0.59	p<0.44	2.02	p<0.16
Nature Study	0.96	p<0.33	0.57	p<0.45	20.55	p<0.09	4.80	p<0.03*	0.84	p<0.36
Mystery	4.48	p<0.04*	4.48	p<0.04*	0.12	p<0.73	29.96	p<0.000*	2.93	p<0.08

\*Any F value with a probability of occurring by chance equal to or less than .05 was considered significant.

### Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate the reading preferences of intermediate children in three communities -- Fogo Island, Glovertown, and Gander, in the province of Newfoundland and to determine how these reading preferences were affected by the variables of sex, community, and grade level. The research found that there was a strong similarity in preference for the popular categories of mystery, adventure, fantasy, humour, and romance. Other researchers (Summers and Lukasevich, 1983; Ashley, 1972) also found that these were the categories of reading preferred most by middle-grade children. Also, the children showed similar degrees of dislike for the least preferred categories of children/family, poetry, biography, nature study, and history/geography.

An examination of Figures 1 and 2 reveals that, generally, boys have a stronger preference for the categories of science, sports, adventure, humour, travel, nature study, and history/geography than do girls. Girls have a stronger preference for the categories of romance, animals, poetry, biography, and children/family, than do boys, and that boys and girls have similar preferences for the categories of mystery and fantasy.

The independent variables of sex, community, and grade level were found to differentially affect reading preferences, and interaction among the three variables also

influenced the choice for many of the fourteen categories.

## CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study explored the reading interests of intermediate-grade children in the province of Newfoundland. It focussed specifically on a group of 747 children in grades four, five, and six in one geographical area of Newfoundland. The writer feels that this was a reasonably good sample of Newfoundland children, although the selection was not drawn randomly. The children were classified according to three types of criteria. The first classification was based upon grade placement or maturation. The second classification was made according to geographical location and included three distinct areas; one, a large town, Gander (population approximately 10,000); two, a small town, Glovertown (population less than 2,500), and three, a sparsely populated area, Fogo Island, made up of six small communities, with populations ranging from less than 200 to 1,000. The third classification was based on sex.

To help determine the reading interests of the children in this study, and the effects of the various factors on these interests, the researcher used a reading preference inventory (RPI) developed by Dr. Edward Summers of the University of British Columbia. Fourteen categories of literature provided the content for a 91-item RPI and

followed the paired comparison format. Testing was done during the fall term of the 1984-85 school year. With the exception of Fogo Island, where the writer himself administered the inventory, all other testing was done by classroom teachers who willingly participated in the study. Teachers and principals were extremely interested in obtaining the RPI ranked results in order that they might determine the reading likes and dislikes of their children which in turn might serve as an aid in structuring activities to further develop reading interests. All data were collected and collated, and the statistics for the same were presented in Chapter IV.

#### Conclusion

The following are some conclusions based on the results of the survey which were discussed in Chapter IV.

1. The first five categories, regardless of subgrouping, in the rank order of independent reading interests of children in grades four, five and six, were mystery, adventure, romance, fantasy, and humour. It can therefore be concluded from this that the predominant independent reading interests of children in these grades were fictional in nature. Although this does not necessarily mean that the children were not interested in reading non-fiction, it is likely that children read non-fiction for informational purposes rather than for enjoyment.

2. The results of the index of reading preference (IRP) showed many differences among the reading interests of boys and girls in grades four, five, and six. These results indicated little or no disagreement with the findings of most earlier research, although recent thinking suggests that sex differences in reading result not so much from an innate difference between the sexes, but stem more from the societal conditioning of sex-typed behaviour (Lazer, 1937; Peltola, 1965; Zimet, 1966; Feeley, 1974; Schofer, 1981). Boys had a stronger preference than girls for the categories of adventure, sports, humour, travel, and science. Girls on the other hand had a stronger preference than boys for the categories of romance, animals, poetry, biography, and children/family. This provided evidence that boys were more interested in stories of adventure and action than girls, who showed a greater preference than boys for the more passive categories of reading.

3. The results of the ANOVA showed that when the reading preferences for the children attending school on Fogo Island were compared with the reading preferences of children attending school in Gander, there were significant differences for nine of the fourteen categories. Similarly, when the reading preferences of children attending school on Fogo Island were compared with the reading preferences of children attending school in Glovertown, there were significant differences in preference for eight of the

fourteen categories. However, when the reading preferences of children attending school in Glovertown were compared with the reading preference of children attending school in Gander, there were significant differences in preference for only two of the fourteen categories. This provided evidence to indicate their differences in reading preference vary according to geographical location, with greater contrasts between Fogo and Glovertown, and Fogo and Gander, than between Gander and Glovertown.

4. The data showed only minimal differences in reading preference when organized to show possible differences over the one-year time span from grade five to grade six. However, significant differences were found for eight of the fourteen categories when the reading preferences were compared using a two-year time span from grade four to grade six. A conclusion here is that maturational differences in reading preferences may occur across larger developmental spans but not necessarily on a year-by-year basis. Although a change in interests was evident as students progressed through the grades, some few categories of interest remained constant.

5. The RPI provided a useful measure for showing the reading preference of groups of children. The intermediate-grade children in this study seemed to focus only on a few of the reading categories, but a close study of the various tables shows variability of reading preference by

grade, geographical location, but more particularly by sex. The index also demonstrated that reading preferences changed from grade to grade for both boys and girls. Thus, it can be concluded, that reading preferences of individuals can be reliably measured using this instrument.

### Implications

The results of this study confirm the original hypotheses put forward in this thesis, that the reading preferences of intermediate-grade children, according to this sample, differ significantly by community, grade level, and sex, and, furthermore, that these preferences will also be influenced by interactions among the three variables. Thus, based on the results of this study, a number of implications for teachers, librarians, reading specialists, and all others whose responsibility it is to bring the child and the book together, become evident.

1. Although the data do not provide strong support for the notion of regional patterns of preference, the communities themselves may exhibit dissimilar patterns of preference. Teachers, librarians, reading specialists and others should be aware of this and provide reading material more specifically preferred in certain communities, as it is possible that the ethnographic and socioeconomic factors inherent within the community can also influence preference choices.



2. Because maturational differences in reading preferences may occur across a developmental span of at least two years, teachers, librarians and reading specialists should provide a variety of graded reading material that will meet this growth in children.

3. Since this study showed that the reading interests of girls and boys in grades four, five, and six differ, it is important that all those responsible for providing those children with the appropriate reading material be cognizant of this fact. Although it is imperative that both the sexes be provided with books they seem to prefer, the onus must be on teachers, to broaden the reading interests of children by interesting them in those genres of literature they seem least interested in. This may be accomplished through book talks, projects, or by the teacher reading aloud to the class.

4. Generally speaking, all those whose responsibility it is to provide the appropriate reading material for children and to encourage these children to read, should understand the nature of children's reading interests, and use these interests as motivational forces in reading, and encourage and expand these reading interests. Teachers, librarians, reading specialists and others should keep abreast of the reading interests of children and thus be able to supply them with a variety of reading materials, that will meet the wide range of interests of boys and girls of this

age group.

5. Although what might be construed as aberrations in reading preferences appeared in this study (eg. Grade four boys in Fogo placing "romance" as their number one choice) teachers and librarians should be tolerant of students' initially expressed choices for certain types of reading material, and use these choices as springboards for guiding students to expand and improve their preferences.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations are proposed for further research:

1. As this study was concerned with the relationship of children's independent reading interests to three specific determinants: geographical location, sex, and maturation, further research should be conducted on the relationship of children's independent reading interests to such factors as intelligence, reading achievement, socio-economic status, general academic achievement, and the educational background of their parents.

2. In addressing the question of the effect of maturation on the reading preferences of intermediate-grade children the study took into consideration only a one-year and a two-year developmental span. Research should be undertaken on a wider range of grade and age levels than were studied in the present investigation in order to identify the

scope and sequence of children's independent reading interests at the various levels and to locate points of significant changes in children's reading interests.

3. In view of the fact that a great deal of evidence and opinion support the theory of social conditioning as the basis for sex-typed behaviour (Lazer, 1937; Peltola, 1965; Zimet, 1966; Feeley, 1974; Schofer, 1981), and thus sex differences in reading interests may not be so much a result of inborn characteristics as they are of culture training, research should be undertaken to determine to what extent social pressure or training may be the most significant factor behind observed "sex differences",

4. Research should be conducted to determine what relation there is between the expressed independent reading preferences and observed reading preferences.

5. A longitudinal study of children's independent reading interests, using a similar RPI, should be conducted in order to identify changes in interests, especially between the sexes, and to determine the factors which cause any perceived change.

6. Research should be conducted to determine the relationship of children's independent reading interests to the nature of the reading programs in the curricula of the elementary schools. Investigations should be undertaken to analyze and categorize the content of selected basal reading programs to compare and/or contrast children's expressed

reading interests with the content of basal reading programs.

7. Research should be undertaken to determine how reading compares with other spare-time activities of elementary school children. A more specific study should be conducted to assess the influence of movies and television programs upon reading interests.

8. The sample for this study though reasonably large, was drawn from one geographical area in northeastern Newfoundland. Replication of this study should be undertaken in other areas to determine whether or not the findings are accurate and can be generalized.

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APPENDIX

Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Boy \_\_\_\_\_ Girl \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_

**DO NOT write in these**

Adventure \_\_\_\_\_ Fantasy \_\_\_\_\_

History/Geography \_\_\_\_\_ Biography \_\_\_\_\_

Animals \_\_\_\_\_ Travel \_\_\_\_\_

Child/Family \_\_\_\_\_ Romance \_\_\_\_\_

Sports \_\_\_\_\_ Nature Study \_\_\_\_\_

Humour \_\_\_\_\_ Mystery \_\_\_\_\_

Science \_\_\_\_\_ Total \_\_\_\_\_

Poetry \_\_\_\_\_

**READING PREFERENCE INVENTORY**

This booklet contains 90 statements about types of books boys and girls like to read. Read each statement carefully. Decide which of the two types of books you would rather read. Place an X in front of the one you choose. Choose only **ONE** type of book for each statement.

**SAMPLE COMPLETED STATEMENT:**

I like most to read about:

\_\_\_\_\_ MYSTERY (ghosts, secrets, detectives, suspense)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ POETRY (rhymes)

**ASK YOUR TEACHER IF YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND THESE DIRECTIONS**

B.L. Hewitt  
 Memorial University  
 St. John's, Nfld.

A. I like most to read about:

- TRAVEL (trips, voyages, exploration)  
 FANTASY (monsters, myths, make-believe, fairy tales)

B. I like most to read about:

- NATURE STUDY (outdoors, plants, animals, rocks, fish)  
 HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY (past events, other countries)

C. I like most to read about:

- ROMANCE (boy-girl stories, love, novels)  
 POETRY (rhymes)

1. I like most to read about:

- HUMOUR (jokes, riddles, funny stories)  
 CHILDREN/FAMILY (home and school life)

2. I like most to read about:

- FANTASY (monsters, myths, make-believe, fairy tales)  
 SPORTS (games, hobbies, recreational activities)

3. I like most to read about:

- ADVENTURE (excitement, danger, thrills, action)  
 CHILDREN/FAMILY (home and school life)

4. I like most to read about:

- SCIENCE (machines, science fiction, space, plants)  
 BIOGRAPHY (account of a person's life)

5. I like most to read about:

- SPORTS (games, hobbies, recreational activities)  
 TRAVEL (trips, voyages, exploration)

6. I like most to read about:

- ANIMALS (animal stories)  
 HUMOUR (jokes, riddles, funny stories)

7. I like most to read about:

- ROMANCE (boy-girl stories, love, novels)  
 BIOGRAPHY (account of a person's life)

8. I like most to read about:

- SCIENCE (machines, science fiction, space, plants)  
 POETRY (rhymes)

9. I like most to read about:

- BIOGRAPHY (account of a person's life)  
 CHILDREN/FAMILY (home and school life)

10. I like most to read about:

- SCIENCE (machines, science fiction, space, plants)  
 ADVENTURE (excitement, danger, thrills, action)

11. I like most to read about:

- ANIMALS (animal stories)  
 CHILDREN/FAMILY (home and school life)

12. I like most to read about:

- POETRY (rhymes)  
 CHILDREN/FAMILY (home and school life)

13. I like most to read about:

- FANTASY (monsters, myths, make-believe, fairy tales)  
 ANIMALS (animal stories)

14. I like most to read about:

- HUMOUR (jokes, riddles, funny stories)  
 HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY (past events, other countries)

15. I like most to read about:

- POETRY (rhymes)  
 TRAVEL (trips, voyages, exploration)

16. I like most to read about:

- SPORTS (games, hobbies, recreational activities)  
 HUMOUR (jokes, riddles, funny stories)

17. I like most to read about:

- BIOGRAPHY (account of a person's life)  
 HUMOUR (jokes, riddles, funny stories)

18. I like most to read about:

- ANIMALS (animal stories)  
 ROMANCE (boy-girl stories, love, novels)

19. I like most to read about:

- BIOGRAPHY (account of a person's life)  
 NATURE STUDY (outdoors, plants, animals, rocks, fish)

20. I like most to read about:

- POETRY (rhymes)  
 FANTASY (monsters, myths, make-believe, fairy tales)

21. I like most to read about:

- ANIMALS (animal stories)  
 POETRY (rhymes)

22. I like most to read about:

- SCIENCE (machines, science fiction, space, plants)  
 ROMANCE (boy-girl stories, love, novels)



23. I like most to read about:

- MYSTERY (ghosts, secrets, detectives, suspense)  
 HUMOUR (jokes, riddles, funny stories)

24. I like most to read about:

- CHILDREN/FAMILY (home and school life)  
 SPORTS (games, hobbies, recreational activities)

25. I like most to read about:

- NATURE STUDY (outdoors, plants, animals, rocks, fish)  
 TRAVEL (trips, voyages, exploration)

26. I like most to read about:

- HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY (past events, other countries)  
 SPORTS (games, hobbies, recreational activities)

27. I like most to read about:

- FANTASY (monsters, myths, make-believe, fairy tales)  
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