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First and Fourth Grade Boys' and Girls' Preferences for and Perceptions about Narrative and Expository Text

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UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

FIRST AND FOURTH GRADE BOYS' AND GIRLS' PREFERENCES FOR AND
PERCEPTIONS ABOUT NARRATIVE AND EXPOSITORY TEXT

By

Lisa L. Repaskey

A DISSERTATION

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Coral Gables, Florida

May 2011

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FIRST AND FOURTH GRADE BOYS' AND GIRLS' PREFERENCES FOR AND
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This study focused on elementary-aged children's preferences for and perceptions about narrative and expository text. Preference refers to the children's choice of reading material for themselves, what they prefer to read. Perception refers to the children's beliefs about what their same-aged peers would like to read. The current study examined these preferences and perceptions about narrative and expository text through the lens of two distinct frameworks – social constructivism and engaged reading. The current study was a systematic replication and extension of a qualitative study conducted by Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish, and Shapiro (2007). It replicated the original study by conducting it with first grade students, and extended the original study by including fourth grade students. Equal numbers of children in the study were represented at three reading achievement levels (above, on, and below grade level). Two individually administered book preference (Open and Closed) tasks and interviews were administered and analyzed to determine elementary-aged children's genre preferences and perceptions about narrative and expository text. Qualitative research methods were used to glean an understanding of primary and intermediate students' preferences and perceptions.

The findings suggest that first and fourth grade boys preferred expository text while first and fourth grade girls demonstrated an equal preference for both narrative and expository genres for themselves. At both grade levels, both boys and girls held the perception that boys like expository text and girls like narrative text. There were no differences in terms of preferences or perceptions of both genres among children of different reading achievement levels. There were gender and grade level differences in the number of reasons provided for their book choices with girls providing more reasons than boys and fourth graders providing more reasons than first graders. However, there were not marked differences in the reasons they provided for their choices. Findings are discussed in light of implications for instruction, assessment, and future research.

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to my sister and best friend, Karen, who has been immensely supportive and encouraging of me throughout the entire process of working on my Ph. D., from the first day of class until my defense and graduation. I have learned so much from you! I love you very much!

I also want to dedicate this work to my advisor and chair, Dr. Jeanne S. Schumm, who has read and edited so many drafts. She supported and encouraged me throughout the process. I am extremely lucky to have been privy to her wisdom, and have grown tremendously as a writer because of her hard work and dedication to her students.

I want to thank all of the first and fourth grade boys and girls who participated in my study. Their enthusiasm and willingness to share their thoughts about narrative and expository text with me was such an amazing gift that I will always cherish.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Young children have a natural curiosity for just about everything. According to Donahue (1990), the creator of the Eyewitness! Books, today's children...are "information sponges – everything touches them. Children's souls may be wrapped around dinosaurs, but even more, they're wrapped around the joy of discovering and making connections" (p. 71). Some maintain that natural curiosity should be capitalized upon when teaching young children how to read. Nonetheless, many teachers in the early grades wonder why they have a handful of students, usually boys, who just don't seem to be interested in reading (Zambo & Brozo, 2009).

This lack of interest is not without consequences. According to Connell and Gunzelmann (2004), boys, on average, are developmentally about two years behind girls in both reading and writing by the time they are in 4th grade. Nationwide, boys tend to score lower than girls on standardized measures of reading achievement and are a part of remedial reading programs at a rate higher than girls (Brozo, 2006). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2008), while the average reading score for both boys and girls was at its highest level in 2008, boys' reading scores were still significantly lower than girls' at the 4th grade level [at and above both basic and proficient levels] as disseminated by the National Assessment of Educational Progress. In a national study on reading attitudes, McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) questioned if societal beliefs about reading translate into more positive attitudes towards reading in girls which, in turn, allows girls to have an advantage over boys as they are first learning to read which then propagates a more positive attitude about reading (p.

941). McKenna proposes that reading attitudes develop over time resulting from “normative beliefs, beliefs about the outcomes of reading, and specific reading experiences” (p. 939).

So if there are other activities competing with reading for the child’s attention, the act of reading needs to be perceived as a valuable activity in the eyes of the child. This is of particular importance for boys, especially young boys, whose competing activities tend to be at odds with schooling and with reading. We cannot allow reading to be seen as something they must get through or something that is a girl “thing”, thus enabling boys to become alliterate.

McKenna and colleagues also found that both recreational and academic reading attitudes tend to start out quite positively in first grade, but as a whole, end in sixth grade with relative indifference. Attitudes towards both academic and recreational reading becomes increasingly negative in relation to ability level as students progress from first to sixth grade (p. 952). So finding the right reading material is important to attitude, which affects the motivation to read.

So what can be done to engage young male readers? Zambo (2007) offered this recommendation,

...we need to help boys understand that reading is just as important for them as it is for girls. Helping boys find entry points into literacy must be a priority and it must happen early, when boys first become acquainted with literacy (p. 125).

One very clear possibility is through the expansion of our definition of what it means to be literate in a post-modern world. Literacy should not only mean one’s ability to read

and comprehend material so that it can be tested using a standardized measure of reading achievement. According to Alloway and Gilbert (1997), being literate “is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated as we become increasingly affected by technological and informational change” (p. 51). Literacies are a social construct, with meaning being constructed within the sociocultural group, and can be visual, oral, or written.

An individual engages literacies as she or he reads the world, read the word, and reads herself or himself. Accordingly, when an individual talks, reads, writes, and values, construction of meaning takes place within a particular context. This act of meaning construction that qualifies as literate is not only culturally driven but is also shaped by sociopolitical and socio-historical productions of a society and its institutions (Masny, 2005, p. 172).

Should our definition of literacy include such things as video games and other types of online gaming (Sanford & Madill, 2007)? What about other types of media such as Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games (MMORPG) that can be found all over the internet, and all of the various manuals, blogs, screenshots, and reviews that were created for each game and consume their time and attention outside of the classroom? As Sanford and Madill (2007) found,

technologically literate students are developing skill in ‘reading’ visual, multimodal texts as well as traditional print-based texts of formal schooling; they are developing skill in ‘writing’ through the same number of technologies, i.e. instant messaging, chat rooms, email, MSN, blogs, websites, computer games, as they learn to communicate effectively and efficiently, to create an array of new

texts that can be shared with their friends and acquaintances around the world in an instant. (pp. 286-287).

Blair and Sanford (2004) believe that the various types of literacy that boys are engaging in outside of the classroom may actually result in their being better prepared for life after schooling.

The abilities to navigate the Internet, experiment with alternative literacies, and “read” multiple texts simultaneously— morphing their own literacy practices to take up new literacies—will be perhaps more useful workplace skills than the ability to analyze a work of narrative or to write a narrative account (p. 459).

But the same thing holds true for most adults when it comes to literacy, to what adults “read” on a daily basis. The vast majority of the type of text most adults come into the most frequent contact with on a daily basis tends to be expository/information-based. Emails, newspapers, magazines, and technical/work-related text appear to make up the bulk of the reading done by most adults. Even when it comes to the television, channels that appear to dominate the adult life are CNN, MSNBC, and local news channels which utilize multiple literacies, such as embedded newsfeeds, video clips, and other graphics (Provenzo, Goodwin, Lipsky & Sharpe, 2011), with which a wide range of information is disseminated to the public.

Although multiple genres are in the environment of both children and adults, there are several indications that confirm the predominance of narrative text in primary classrooms before the year 2000. The influential work of Duke (2000) indicated that narrative text was the most prevalent type of text used for primary reading instruction. Duke found that only 3.6 minutes per day was being allocated to the use of expository

text, whether it was in primary reading instruction, on the classroom walls, or in the classroom library of first grade classrooms. In addition, content analyses of 1997 basal reading textbooks at the first grade level (Moss & Newton, 2002) indicated an overwhelming perception of narrative texts among basal passages. More recently however, in a content analysis of first grade reading textbooks conducted by Pilonieta (2006), there is an indication that a greater amount of expository text has been added to the first grade reading textbooks. Across the five major first grade basal publishers analyzed, 26-34% of the text is now expository, up from 18% of text in pre-1997 basal reading textbooks in Moss and Newton's (2002) study.

From reading attitudes studies, it is known that reading achievement and attitude are correlated. The more a person reads, the better reader this person becomes, and the converse is true (Stanovich, 1986). Over the years, narrative has been largely considered the domain of girls while expository being the domain of boys (Asselin, 2003). In the past decade, there has been a significant effort to include more expository text in basal reading textbooks at the beginning reading levels. Currently, one quarter to one third of text read at the first grade level in basal readers is now expository text (Moss & Newton, 2002; Pilonieta, 2006). Given this shift in the amount of expository text utilized in beginning reading instruction via newer basal reading textbooks, young readers now have greater access to both narrative and expository text.

What does this shift in expository text exposure mean to young students, but especially young boys, who are becoming readers? This shift in text exposure during reading instruction, if introduced and taught properly, should help to fuel young boys'

and girls' imaginations, exciting them, finding a common entry point into reading, and engaging them into becoming active readers.

Chapter 2, the review of literature, is organized as follows. It begins with a discussion of the importance of expository text in beginning reading instruction, which includes avoiding the 4th grade slump, the importance of expository text in beginning reading instruction, and the benefits of expository text. The review continues with a discussion of the traditional lack of expository text in beginning reading instruction, which includes beliefs about expository text and young readers. Finally, the review concludes with an examination of the role of gender and expository text and a theoretical framework concerning gender and literacy.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The review of literature, is organized as follows. It begins with a discussion of the importance of expository text in beginning reading instruction, which includes avoiding the 4th grade slump, the importance of expository text in beginning reading instruction, and the benefits of expository text. The review continues with a discussion of the traditional lack of expository text in beginning reading instruction, which includes beliefs about expository text and young readers. Finally, the review concludes with an examination of the role of gender and expository text and a theoretical framework concerning gender and literacy.

The Importance of Expository Text

The old adage about reading instruction that students first “learn to read, then read to learn” (Chall, 1967; McCarthey, Hoffman, & Galda, 1999), seems to imply that there is a natural progression for the type of text that should be utilized in beginning reading instruction. The notion is that beginning readers have “enough on their plate” with just learning how to read, consequently the text that is used to teach reading should be easily negotiable, and that more complex text, where students are simultaneously reading and learning from the text, should be required only after students mastered the mechanics of the reading process. This has long been the argument for the use of narrative text during beginning reading instruction, and for saving expository for reading instruction once students are no longer beginning readers; typically in upper elementary grades.

Unfortunately, what happens instead is that when students move into the upper grades they often encounter what is known as the ‘fourth grade slump’ (Best, Floyd, &

McNamara, 2004; Chall, 1983) when reading achievement either plateaus or declines for both boys and girls. Chall (1983) coined the term that is used to describe the sudden drop-off in reading scores of students between the third and fourth grade. According to Chall (1983, pp. 12-13), readers pass through six stages of reading development from “pseudoreading” that occurs during the preschool years to stage six, “construction and reconstruction” where proficient readers of college age and beyond integrate and synthesize text. Chall described the stages in which most readers pass through as they become proficient readers, which some researchers have believed that all readers should pass systematically through these stages. Chall’s (1983) third step in the book *Stages of Reading*, “reading for learning the new” is critical piece in reading development because it occurs between the ages of 9-13, when reading instruction switches from an emphasis on decoding and utilizing narrative text to encountering unfamiliar vocabulary and complex text that is a part of expository text (Chall, Jacobs, & Baldwin, 1990, 12-13).

There are several theories explaining why this slump occurs. Granowsky (2004) believes this slump is a result of a shift in the focus of reading instruction and that some students are unable to make the shift because of a lack of skills dealing with expository text features as well as a lack of background knowledge. Sanacore and Palumbo (2009) believe there are three reasons for this slump. First, students in early grades are immersed in narrative text in their reading instruction, and therefore, have not been prepared “for the challenges of informational text and content-specific vocabulary” (p. 67). Second, there is a lack of available reading material either in the classroom or the school library that children want to read. Third, because of the high-stakes test preparation environment in schools, students have much more limited chances to read,

and therefore reading for pleasure has inadvertently become a “frill, or necessary evil” (p. 69). Chall, Jacobs, and Baldwin (1990) found that the strongest slip in reading at this point in reading instruction for students was word meaning as the words became “increasingly complex” (p. 45) when literacy demands are increased (p. 167). Around fourth grade, the task of reading changes dramatically from recognizing and decoding familiar text to

one of comprehension of harder texts that use more difficult, abstract, specialized, and technical words. The concepts used in textbooks also become more abstract, and understanding them requires more sophisticated levels of background knowledge and cognition (p. 46).

A differing viewpoint of the fourth grade slump comes from Marcon’s 1995 study which indicated that lack of child autonomy may be a reason why some students do not fare well in the fourth grade. In the study, it was determined that an earlier push into a more formal academic atmosphere may be a reason why students do not do well in fourth grade because they have always been told by teachers what to do and how to think. Students in more student-centered classrooms outperformed others who began their schooling in more teacher-directed classrooms.

Another argument is that narrative text may be more familiar and comfortable because the language of storybooks may perhaps be similar to the everyday language of children (as cited in Fang, 2006, p. 492). But the text typically used in reading instruction beginning in fourth grade changes to expository text, which is much less comprehensible because of its content-specific vocabulary and less common text structures.

Whether the issue concerning the fourth grade slump has to do with a lack of choice in reading material in the classroom and school libraries, a lack of autonomy in one's learning being immersed in narrative text during early reading instruction, or limited reading opportunities due to focus on high-stakes test preparation, it is imperative that students are prepared to handle the complexities of their formalized reading instruction that go beyond beginning reading instruction that includes phonics and sight words to reading instruction that focuses on the complex text structures and content-specific vocabulary of expository text.

The importance of expository text in beginning reading instruction. While avoiding the fourth grade slump is important, there are several other reasons why learning to read expository text is important as well. First, with the advent of No Child Left Behind (2000), and the national argument for increased accountability in our nation's schools, high-stakes standardized testing is being utilized around the country as the measure of accountability for student outcomes. According to President Obama's position statement on education accountability, there are plans to reform No Child Left Behind by adequately funding the legislation, as well as improving NCLB's accountability system in an effort to support schools that need improvement rather than punishing them (barackobama.com, 2008). Standardized testing of our nation's children appears to be sticking around, due in large part to the proposed reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (USDOE, 2007). These tests, traditionally beginning in third grade, utilize a variety of text in reading, math, and science to measure student performance.

The impact of the increase in expository text has also been felt in both Federal and state standards for students and teacher (Conley, 2005). For example, on the 2009

National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP), at the fourth grade level, 50% of the test items are expository with the other 50% being narrative. Two states, Florida and North Carolina both show similar amounts of expository text on their respective state tests (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2008; Florida Department of Education, 2008). At grade eight, the percentage of expository test items increases to 55% with narrative decreasing to 45%, and at grade twelve, expository test items increase dramatically to 70% of the entire test and narrative test items decrease to just 30% of the test (American Institutes for Research, 2007; Florida Department of Education, 2008). Emerging evidence indicates that beginning readers are clearly capable of successfully negotiating the complexities of expository text as they learn to read, but that the skills must be taught to them (Williams, Hall, Lauer, Stafford, DeSisto, & deCani, 2005). Therefore, it seems appropriate that students begin interacting with informational text early to better prepare them for the unique complexities of these mandatory, high-stakes tests.

Second, students encounter a variety of expository text structures in secondary and post-secondary education through content-specific textbooks and internet hyperlinks, as well as a wide variety of magazines and newspapers both in paper and online. The language of the expository text secondary and postsecondary students' encounter becomes less commonsensical and more specialized (Fang, 2008). According to Fang (2008), there are four features that are a part of expository text that can and will pose challenges to the reader. They are technicality, abstraction, density, and authoritativeness. The vocabulary is increasingly technical and context-specific than in narrative text. Both the vocabulary and the concepts are more abstract, and the text is

dense which can “create cognitive overload for readers and slow down their print processing” (p. 480). Expository text also carries a sense of authority through its use of grammatical devices such as technical vocabulary, declarative sentences, passive voice, and generalized participants.

Third, children also have to be prepared how to successfully negotiate expository text, as it is read and used almost exclusively by adults in their personal and professional lives. Daily expository text exposure, as mentioned earlier, includes work-related technical reports, and media literacy, the “ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create messages in a wide variety of forms” (Hobbs, 2006), which includes the internet and its hyperlinks and news coverage on channels like MSNBC and CNN, as well as local news channels that contain multiple levels of embedded expository text, such as a scrolling news feeds, blogs, video feeds, and podcasts (Provenzo et al., 2011)

Because of the work of researchers such as Duke (2000), more expository text is being introduced into primary grade basal reading textbooks (Moss & Newton, 2002; Pilonieta, 2006). Duke (2000) looked at the amount of expository text that first graders interact with on a daily basis, whether it was in a book or located within the classroom environment. Duke’s (2000) study determined that first graders were exposed to and interacted with expository text for approximately 3.6 minutes per day. Consequently, there is a greater attention to the incorporation of expository text in primary grade basal reading textbooks. For example, the amount of expository text has increased from 18% of text in first grade basal textbooks in Moss’s 2002 study to 26-34% in Pilonieta’s 2006 study. Looking at the percentage of informational text in primary basal textbooks between the Moss and Newton (2002) study and the Pilonieta (2006) study, the amount

of expository text in beginning reading basals has definitely increased. This is a promising start as it relates to potential expository text exposure in beginning reading instruction, although, according to the 2009 NAEP (Moss, 2008), reading textbooks still fall short of the guidelines that recommend a 50/50 split of narrative and expository text in reading textbooks.

Benefits of expository in beginning reading instruction. Expository has many benefits for the beginning reader, including being a medium for reading instruction as well as a way to develop vocabulary and metacognition. Expository may be the mechanism that engages the disengaged reader (Dreher, 2003). Caswell and Duke (1998) found that for some children who struggle during the reading process, expository text was the path to becoming readers. By capitalizing on the children's interests, they became more "purposeful, perseverant, active, and prolific readers" (p. 114). It was also determined that instruction in expository text became a catalyst for students' overall literacy development (p. 109). Building background knowledge is another benefit of using expository text with beginning readers, which in turn, "supported more fluid and voluminous reading" (p. 115). Pappas (1991) interviewed students about which book was their favorite. She found that, after increased exposure to expository text, that almost all of the children in her study preferred the expository book. Pappas conducted her study more than ten years ago. Conducting follow-up research in both cases seems appropriate given the dramatic changes in opportunities for increased exposure to expository text written for beginning and early readers.

Vocabulary development is extremely important during reading instruction, but is imperative for the understanding of expository text. The introduction of expository text

during reading instruction can empower young readers to engage in the scientific process of inquiry while building vocabulary (Brassell, 2007) which is imperative for continued success during expository text instruction, because vocabulary is highly specific to the text being read. Expository text also allows students to build their vocabulary because the words are introduced more authentically and at a deeper level, which is an advantage for English language learners (Alverman & Phelps, 1994).

Most teachers believe that conversation is a great way to model metacognitive thinking strategies. However, many researchers and classroom teachers believe that these metacognitive thinking strategies are appropriate only for proficient readers because it is assumed that emergent readers are only able to do one thing at a time, which is learning the mechanics of how to read first. In her book *Reading with Meaning*, based on classroom action research, Miller (2002) demonstrates with anecdotal stories from her first grade classroom that even six and seven year olds can clearly discuss metacognitive reading strategies such as making connections, synthesizing, determining importance, asking questions, creating mental images, using background knowledge/schema, inferring, and determining importance. Also utilizing action research within the primary classroom, Cunningham and Shagoury (2005) makes similar assertions in their book *Starting with Comprehension* concerning Kindergarteners who are also English Language Learners and their ability to discuss and apply these higher level thinking strategies for themselves while reading or listening to a read aloud. According to Horowitz and Freeman (1995), students' interest in expository text correlated with the amount of exposure they received, as well as how much teacher-student conversation there was

around the text. Those conversations allowed teachers to help scaffold student understanding of both narrative and expository text.

In summary, there are many benefits of expository text in beginning reading instruction. The first is that it may be a catalyst for struggling readers. Second, expository supports the development of background knowledge that supports more fluid and voluminous reading. Third, expository in beginning reading instruction helps develop vocabulary development and metacognitive skills. Recognizing the benefits, it seems curious that expository text has been minimally included in the primary curriculum in the past.

Traditional Lack of Expository Text in Primary Grades

The focus on informational text in primary grades has been triggered largely by Nell Duke's research. In two separate studies whose work builds upon each other, (Duke 2000; Duke, Martineau, & Bennett-Armistad, 2005) the researchers discovered a severe lack of exposure to expository text in the first grade, whether it was on the wall, in the books the students learned to read from, or in the books of their classroom libraries. In her first study, Duke (2000), after conducting classroom observations for a total of 79 days in 20 different classrooms throughout 10 school districts, concluded that the first graders were exposed to and interacted with expository text for a mean total of 3.6 minutes per day for higher SES and only 1.6 minutes for lower SES. Adding to this, Duke (2000) found that the lower SES classrooms generally contained a higher mean of students per classroom than the higher SES classrooms. The result is that there are more students interacting with fewer numbers of books and other reading materials in a school and/or district that have fewer resources than other more affluent schools and/or district. These students are already at a higher risk for reading and learning difficulties, then add

to it the reality that the school and/or district they attend has less resources to spread over more students.

In a follow-up study Duke, Martineau, Frank, and Bennett-Armistad (2005) conducted research with 1st grade classrooms divided into three groups – an experimental group where teachers were asked to diversify their read alouds to 1/3 expository, 1/3 narrative, and 1/3 other as well as given money for books; exposure control group where teachers were given money for books as well as given training, but were not directed to diversify their read alouds; and traditional control group that was not involved in anything beyond the collection of data. They concluded that simply including more expository text isn't the solution. There needs to be deliberate attempts to increase exposure of expository text, as well as the intentional teaching of how to appropriately access expository text that is beneficial to the student. This must be done in order for students, both beginning readers as well as older and more experienced readers, to proficiently maneuver through the unique complexities of expository text. As children move into the upper elementary grades and further on into middle school and high school, expository text is overwhelmingly the type of text they will encounter in their content-specific classes like mathematics, history, and the sciences. Students need to be armed with the necessary tools that allow them to successfully interact with the expository text that is the dominant form that is read as they move into college and beyond. According to Fang (2008),

students don't just 'get used to' the seemingly 'foreign' language of expository texts. They need strategies for unpacking this language and for developing a keen awareness of its unique characteristics (p. 482).

This lack of expository extends into the home as well as the classroom. In two concurrent qualitative studies conducted by Yopp and Yopp (2006), it was discovered that 77% of all text read to young emergent readers both in the classroom and at home consisted of narrative text with only 7-8% of text considered to be informational or expository. Both studies seem to clearly demonstrate that young children are not being exposed to expository both in the school and in the home to a great extent. Judging from the fact that only 7-8% of text read in these two studies was considered to be expository, it is quite possible that there is a lack of knowledge of the growing body of engaging expository text geared towards younger readers by parents, teachers and administrators, as well as a lack of accessibility to these texts by both teachers and parents.

Beliefs about expository text and young readers. There are three intertwined beliefs concerning why expository text has traditionally been excluded from early elementary classrooms (Duke, Bennett-Armistad, & Roberts, 2003). First, there is a belief that young children just prefer narrative stories over expository. Research however has not completely confirmed this notion. In a study by Robinson, Larsen, Haupt, and Mohlmann (1997), young children purposefully chose familiar books, as well as those books that contain simple text, and didn't just randomly select books as previously thought. Although children preferred modern and traditional fantasy over alphabet-number and informational genres, researchers found that text difficulty was a significant factor when it came to only the alphabet-number and informational genres. This suggests that it is up to the adult to purposely chose informational texts that are within both the child's reading and developmental level in order to maintain the child's interest in that particular genre.

In Bryan, Smith, and Burrows' investigation (2007), the researchers asked children between the ages of 3-12 to choose two different books from a set of narrative and expository picture books – one that the researcher would read to the child, and the other one that the child would read to the researcher. During the interviews, when they were asked to choose a book to read, young children demonstrated a tendency to choose familiar favorites. This changed when young children were asked to choose books that were going to be read to them. At this point, they chose books that were recommended by others. This seems to indicate that young readers appear to prefer to choose books that are within their comfort zone when they are the ones who are asked to read, but are open to the unfamiliar when they are not the ones being asked to read.

Both studies pinpoint the need to increase expository text exposure to beginning readers. If young children tend to choose books based on familiarity, it is vitally important that adults utilize this information, and make a concerted effort to introduce expository text, as well as the traditional narrative text. Such selections should be geared at the child's developmental level as students could very easily choose expository if expository is also a type of text that has been frequently read and enjoyed together, thus becoming a "favorite".

The second belief is that expository text is cognitively too demanding for young children. In the early 1990's there was little research into the use of expository text with young children. In a study conducted by Hiebert, Mervar, and Person (1990), it was found that when children, in this case second graders, were exposed to expository text and were taught appropriate comprehension strategies, the children were able to talk critically about the books. In Pappas' 1993 study, she asked if we have we naively

“developed pedagogy based on an unexamined, unacknowledged ideology about young children and their cognitive/linguistic development”?

Several years later, Duke and Kays (1998) who were looking for children’s knowledge of expository text language at two different points in time – September and December – used the daily read aloud in this Kindergarten class to expose the children to expository. What they concluded was exposure to expository text should not be withheld from young children because of the belief that young children are not able to interact appropriately and effectively with expository text. Young children, when exposed to expository text over the course of several months, demonstrated their understanding of typical expository text features including timeless verb constructions, and more generic noun constructions, repetition of the topical theme, characteristic informational book openings, classificatory structures, and comparative / contrastive structures (Duke & Kays, 1998). In addition, Robinson et al. (1997) determined through qualitative interviews that the adults, whether they are teachers or parents, are critical to children’s engagement or lack of engagement in a particular genre through deliberate choosing of texts that meets the child’s developmental reading needs.

Irwin (2007) shares an example of a fourth grade student being unable to fully organize his recall of a selection in his social studies textbook. She mentions “that awareness of organizational patterns in expository materials develops much later than does an awareness of story structure” (p. 71). Perhaps young students are developmentally less capable of organizing their recall of expository text than stories, but could this also happen because young students are exposed less to expository text than older students?

Bryan et al. (2007) also found that young children also chose books based on their perceptions of whether they considered the text to be “light” or “heavy”. In the past, expository typically was found in encyclopedias and other books that contained only black and white photographs and dense amounts of print, which could potentially frustrate a beginning reader, thus turning him or her off of expository text. Today’s expository text contains colorful and engaging pictures and photographs as well as reader-appropriate text for the beginning reader. There is an influx of expository books that are specifically geared towards the youngest and most emergent readers.

The third belief is that children should first “learn to read, then read to learn” (Chall, 1967; McCarthy, Hoffman, & Galda, 1999). This belief stems from the Chall’s (1967) description of the stages that children go through in their development as readers. What has happened is that some researchers have taken this to mean that all children should go through these stages (Duke, Bennett-Armistad, & Roberts, 2003) in a specific progression and timeline which may rigidly restrict younger students from accessing expository text until they are deemed “capable” of handling it.

As stated earlier, there is growing evidence that students need to be knowledgeable about the unique complexities of expository text as well as armed with the necessary tools that allow them to be successful as they move into high school and beyond. Hall, Sabey, and McClellan (2005) conducted a quasi-experimental pretest/posttest multi-group comparison design study with six second grade classrooms that were randomly assigned to one of three types of guided reading instruction that included expository text: Text Structure, Content, and No Instruction. The study demonstrated the strength of teaching expository text structure despite the fact that the

study was only six weeks in length. The authors do (and should) question what the outcome measures would be if this intervention was longer in length. How might student outcomes change if they were systematically taught the unique expository text structures regularly instead of every once in a while or for a short period of time? Young students are capable of learning these strategies alongside learning how to read. They just have to be taught these strategies early so they are ready for the complexity of the reading material in later grades, which is almost exclusively expository.

Williams, Hall, Lauer, Stafford, DeSisto and deCani (2005) investigated the effectiveness of an instructional program designed to teach 2nd graders how to comprehend compare-contrast expository text utilizing a strategy that consisted of the use of recall of compare/contrast clue words, locating compare/contrast clue words, and a graphic organizer. The main outcomes consisted of: summarization, explicit teaching, immediate transfer, near transfer, far transfer, and structure transfer, with vocabulary concepts and details being a content outcome. The classes involved were randomly assigned to three treatment groups: text structure, content only, and no instruction utilizing a pretest/posttest design. The results were that it is possible to teach text structure so that the knowledge they gain improves their text comprehension. The text structure group was able to transfer to content beyond that used in instruction. According to the authors expository instruction should not be withheld from younger students on the basis that their fluency and word recognition skills are limited. Instead, this comprehension instruction will benefit them as demonstrated through the program they created for this study.

In summary, there have been three beliefs concerning expository and beginning readers. First, young children just prefer narrative text. As the research demonstrates, there is growing evidence that suggests that it is up to the adults in the children's lives to introduce and share developmentally appropriate expository materials that engages young children's curiosity (Bryan et al. 2007; Robinson et al.1997). Second, the belief is that expository is cognitively too demanding for the beginning reader. There is evidence that young children can interact successfully with expository text if taught the strategies needed to comprehend them (Duke & Kays, 1998; Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005; Williams et al, 2005). Therefore, deliberate instruction in the structural and linguistic complexities of expository text is warranted with beginning readers. Last, the belief is that children should go through specific stages of reading development (Chall, 1967) as they develop as readers. Clearly, these stages should not be considered "set in stone" as young children have demonstrated that they are capable of handling the complexities of expository text when they are deliberately taught comprehension strategies (Duke & Kays, 1998; Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005; William et al, 2005). This growing body of evidence affirms the appropriateness of expository text with young readers and addresses earlier concerns about keeping expository away from young children.

Gender and Reading

Research on gender differences in reading achievement and attitudes toward reading has a long history. In a 1961 landmark study, Arthur Gates studied gender differences in reading ability. Gates tested over 13,000 boys and girls from second to eighth grade to determine who the better readers were, boys or girls, utilizing reading tests that measured speed, comprehension, and vocabulary. Overwhelmingly, girls

outscored boys consistently throughout the grade levels. Gates stated that he believed that the data suggested that environmental factors rather than hereditary may be why the reading ability of boys were consistently lower than girls. He proposed that the types of choices that girls typically make are better suited towards and rewarded for reading while the choices that boys make cause them to fall behind and stay behind girls throughout the grades, and if true, would explain

the boys' lower mean scores in reading ability throughout the grades, the greater variability of the boys' abilities, and their predominance at the bottom of each grade group without a corresponding accumulation at the top (Gates, 1961, p. 432).

Dysktra and Tinney (1968) looked at the entire existing 1st grade programs that were being used at the time. They looked at first grade basal reading instruction in this country using data from the USOE Cooperative Research projects. Two significant highlights of this study were that girls consistently outperformed boys in reading and that there was no significant difference in the method or the materials used to teach first graders.

Dwyer (1973, p. 455) looked at gender differences in reading in her evaluation and critique of reading theories that existed at the time. Dwyer referred to the major factors in sex differences as causal factors to help explain the differences in reading between boys and girls. They are different rates/levels of maturation with girls ready to read before boys, content of reading material used in schools that favored girls, negative treatment of boys by female teachers, and cultural expectations for the male sex role and its perceived conflict with that of school and reading.

After sifting through other studies that looked at sex roles and reading, Dwyer (1973) concluded that boys may appear to see reading as a feminine pursuit, and because of this, as well as cultural expectations for what it means to be male, this conflict interferes with their acquisition of reading skills and the motivation to become good readers.

Wolf and Gow (1986), in their longitudinal study of Kindergarteners through third grade, found that girls had the advantage over boys in terms of linguistic processing and basic word recognition while the boys had the advantage when it came to semantic-based processes.

Specifically, the particular combination of boys' semantic strengths and their delay in developing reading automaticity may help produce in some male readers an early arrested strategy (that may prove to be semantic-based) that is inappropriate to reading acquisition (Wolf & Gow, 1986, p. 102).

In the early 1990's, the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement conducted a comparative survey study to determine the average levels of reading literacy of nine and fourteen year olds in their member countries. What was found was that girls saw reading as engaging and social and boys viewed reading, especially at school, as unrelated to themselves and their interests. In the same study, girls consistently outscored boys on standardized reading achievement tests throughout the world (Elley, 1992; Topping, Samuels, & Paul, 2008). Recent studies continue to confirm these findings (Ontario Ministry of Education, n.d.; Taylor, 2004).

Over the course of the last decade, the media has written much about what they amount to a 'boy crisis', not only in the U.S. but in the U.K, Canada, and Australia,

fueling the debate about whether boys were being left behind when the attention was on girls and science and math literacy (Foster, Kimmel, & Skelton, 2001; Smith, 2003; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). According to the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), fourth grade boys' reading scores were the equivalent of a year and a half behind girls, and this was despite whatever accommodation was allowed (Donahue, Finnegan, Luftus, Allen, & Campbell, 2001). Several researchers (Brozo, 2008; Smith, Wilhelm & Newkirk, 2002; Rowan, Knobel, Bigum, & Lankshear, 2002) hope to help male students connect the relevance of reading to their lives by encouraging schools to reconsider and to broaden the concept of what it means to be literate in the 21st century. This includes both home and work-related literacy that value computer literacy and reading for information (Cole & Hall, 2001).

When it comes to the genre young readers choose, a widely held generalization is that girls prefer narrative while boys prefer expository. Chapman, Filpenko, McTavish and Shapiro (2007) were interested in whether gender affected the personal preferences of narrative or information books among first graders. They were also interested in whether gender played a role in first graders' perceptions of what other boys and girls might prefer to read. The researchers conducted interviews and book preference tasks with first graders using what the researchers felt were gender-neutral book selections of both narrative and expository books. The students were encouraged to take a closer look at the narrative and expository book choices and choose the ones that they might like to read or that another boy or a girl might like to read. Then they were asked to give their reasons why they selected books for themselves, as well as for others. Last, they were shown a picture of a boy and a girl of the same age, and were asked to choose a book for

them. The researchers coded children's oral responses into eight categories. They were visual appeal, topic interest, humor, award/merit, tactile quality, gender, observation, and connection.

The results of the study indicated that first grade boys and girls choose both narrative and expository books for themselves, but tend to choose books for other boys and girls along gender stereotypic lines. Both boys and girls tended to choose stories more often for girls and expository for boys, and that the perception that boys and girls prefer different types of text was not supported. Girls tended to prefer the same types of books that their male counterparts enjoyed when choosing books for themselves. The researchers concluded that the belief that girls only prefer narrative stories or make-believe and that boys only prefer expository or real things is really nothing more than stereotypical, gender-based generalizations based on the child interviews.

Both studies appear to demonstrate how socially constructed gender perceptions intentionally or unintentionally influence young boys and girls concerning their views and attitudes around different types of text. Gender is the way in which each of us defines others and ourselves as ranging from feminine to masculine related to a focus on femaleness and maleness. "The meaning of gender is constructed by society, and each of us is socialized into that construction. Thus, gender is a set of socially constructed relationships which are produced and reproduced through people's actions" (Henderson, 1994, p. 121). Literacy is also seen through the same gender construct with some seen as more able than others. The gender construct interacts with reading ability from which differences in reading outcomes is evident (Moss, 2007, p. 1), as well as what type of reading material is perceived as what boys like versus what girls like.

Theoretical Framework

Two theoretical frameworks that have potential for guiding our understanding of gender differences of text preference are social constructivism and engaged reading. Social constructivism is a theory that originated in Sociology (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). The belief is that human beings construct the meanings, the realities about the world through our social interactions with others “within the many social contexts in which people live, and that this is a collective endeavor, undertaken by and in a myriad of social groups (Paechter, 2007, pg. 1). Gender is one such reality. Henderson (1994) states that

the meaning of gender is constructed by society, and each of us is socialized into that construction. Thus, gender is a set of socially constructed relationships which are produced and reproduced through people’s actions” (p. 121).

Children aren’t just children, but they are boys and girls as well. They belong to different social classes and ethnic groups, so similarities and differences must also be attributed to their membership in these groups (Panter-Brick, 1998). In respect to culture,

Culture makes two sorts of contributions to the child’s intellectual development. First, children acquire much of their thinking (knowledge) from it. Second, children acquire the processes or means of their thinking (tools of intellectual adaptation) from the surrounding culture. Therefore, culture provides the children with the means to, what to think and how to think (Kristinsdottir, 2000).

Paechter (2007) postulates that children are exposed to the social construction of gender in three places in our society: within the family, within peer groups, and at school.

Church (2005) adds one more place where we (children included) are exposed to the

social construction of gender, stating that “images of men and women in popular culture both reflects and helps construct [our] gender identities...[and that] gender possibilities change over time through the influence of social movements” (p. 59). Children spend much of their waking hours five days a week in school, so there are multiple opportunities for the social construction of gender to take place. School is a powerful place with a hegemonic influence on what is masculine and feminine. It is enacted “through power relations, through division of labour, through symbolisation, through subject offerings and through discipline” (Connell, 1998).

So the possible impact of gender-influence in reading material could occur in any of the three places, especially in schools. Au (1998) states, “From the perspective of social constructivism, it may be argued that both success and failure in literacy learning are the collaborative social accomplishments of school systems, communities, teachers, students, and families” (p. 298).

Another theoretical framework that has relevance to our understanding of gender differences in text preference is the concept of engaged reading (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999) which began in the mid 1990’s, as the issue of motivation entered the research surrounding reading. According to proponents of this theory:

engaged readers are those who are intrinsically motivated to read and who therefore read frequently. Engaged readers are also mentally active, using metacognitive strategies to build their understanding of the conceptual context of texts. Engaged readers are frequently social, often talking with others about what they’re reading and learning. Thus Engagement Theory contains the central

elements of Metacognitive Theory but also emphasizes motivational, conceptual, and social aspects of learning (Tracey & Morrow, 2006, pp. 64-65).

Once linear, texts now include all manner of communications that students encounter...daily, including the nonlinear, interactive, dynamic, and visually complex materials via audiovisual media [as well as]...discussions that occur...around both traditional and alternative forms of text (Alexander & Fox, 2008).

But with this shift comes a need for students to learn new strategies in order to comprehend these new types of text that they are encountering during reading instruction. The student who is engaged in the process of making meaning from text will be more willing than a reluctant reader to put forth effort, to be persistent, and be willing to engage in the work of comprehending these new types of text (Guthrie & Anderson, 1999). Engagement requires motivation, as well as actively participating in the learning process (Alexander & Fox, 2008) which, in turn, is reflected in a more positive attitude about reading (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). If a reader is motivated to read a particular text out of a curiosity for a certain topic, s/he will sustain attention long enough to make it through obstacles that may occur along the way.

Summary

These studies contribute to our knowledge that young children need additional exposure to expository text in the primary grades, but more importantly, they need the skills necessary for successful interaction with the unique features of expository that are different from the skills they are taught to be successful with narrative text. These studies also indicate that there has been a significant increase in both the quality and quantity of

expository text that is being written for the beginning reader since Duke's (2000) influential study. It is imperative that administrators, teachers, and parents keep abreast of the growing expository book market that is geared towards young readers, making sure that children are exposed to and have opportunities to interact with expository text. Finally, these studies indicate that young readers tend to rely on socially constructed gender stereotypic perceptions of what males and females might choose to read, despite enjoying both narrative and expository during self-chosen reading.

However there is still so much to be learned. According to Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish and Shapiro (2007), "there is little extant literature about whether gender differences occur in younger children's genre preferences, nor inquiries into young children's perceptions about the relationship between gender and genre" (p. 533-534). Their study added to our understanding of the perceptions and preferences of Canadian first grade children from working class backgrounds. Still unanswered are studies with children from the United States that represent a greater age span, as well as across various socio-economic levels, English Language Learners, and urban settings, which is the focus of this study.

Chapter 3

Method

Setting

This large urban school district, according to 2009-2010 data, has an ethnic makeup of students which is 64 percent Hispanic, 25 percent Black, non-Hispanic (including 5.1 percent Haitian according to the district data on students' home language), 9 percent white non-Hispanic, and 1 percent Multiracial, Asian and Native American students. District-wide, 68 percent of students are in free or reduced lunch programs, and 17 percent were designated limited English proficient.

In 2009-2010, the school district did not make their Annual Yearly Progress (AYP), with 64% of the criteria met. Adequate Year Progress (AYP) is an accountability criterion that is part of the No Child Left Behind legislation, which are specific yearly targets in reading and math. The State of Florida grades all public schools based on the results of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The school district received an overall grade of "B" with 64% of students meeting high standards in reading, 71% of students meeting high standards in math, 88% of students meeting high standards in writing, and 41% of students meeting high standards in science.

Three elementary schools (Table 3.1) were chosen to be a part of this current study. All three schools have similar reading programs guided by state standards, local benchmarks, a comprehensive district reading plan, and common basal reader. Banyan Creek Laboratory School was the school where both the study's procedures and selected books for the two book tasks were piloted. The research sites were Briley Springs Elementary School and Eagle Canyon K-8 School because the ethnic make-up of the

student body at both schools is within approximately 15 percentage points of those of the school district.

Pilot study. Banyan Creek Laboratory School, according to their 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan statistics, has an enrollment of 262 students. Over the past 8 years, Banyan Creek received a performance grade of “A” from the State of Florida. All of the national AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) benchmarks were met, with 100% of students proficient in reading and 100% of students proficient in math on the 2009 FCAT tests.

The Open and Closed book tasks, as well as book topics, were field tested on approximately 12 first grade and 12 fourth grade students for a total of 24 students. There were 6 boys and 6 girls at both levels, with at least 2 students representing each of the three reading ability levels.

Research sites. Briley Springs Elementary School, according to the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan, has an enrollment of 507 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. Briley Springs Elementary School has self-contained gifted classrooms at all grade levels, and thirty three percent of the students are enrolled in the gifted programs. Briley Springs Elementary School received a school grade of “A”. Eighty one percent of students in grades three through five were proficient in reading, and seventy seven percent of students were proficient in math according to the 2009-2010 FCAT test results.

Eagle Canyon K-8 School, according to the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan, has an enrollment of 826 students in grades Pre-Kindergarten through eighth grade. Eagle Canyon K-8 School has several self-contained gifted classrooms, including one at the fourth grade level, and nine percent of the total students are enrolled in the gifted

programs. Eagle Canyon K-8 School received a school grade of “A”, and met all of the Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) categories that are part of No Child Left Behind (NCLB).

Table 3.1

Demographics of District, Pilot, and Research Sites

	District	Banyan Creek Laboratory Elementary (pilot)	Briley Springs Elementary (research site)	Eagle Canyon K-8 School (research site)
Hispanic	64%	52%	46%	67%
Black, non- Hispanic	25%	18%	21%	15%
White, non- Hispanic	9%	27%	24%	14%
Other	1%	3%	9%	4%
English Language Learners	17%	1%	19%	8%
Free/Reduced Lunch	68%	18%	45%	55%
Overall grade	B	A	A	A

Participants

The participants for this study were 84 students (Table 3.2) at the two elementary school research sites. There were 42 first grade students consisting of 21 girls and 21 boys, and 42 fourth grade students consisting of 21 girls and 21 boys, and selected an equal number of boys and girls from each of the three reading achievement levels (above, on, and below grade level). In the present study, children were divided into above, at, and below grade reading levels, with teacher confirmation used to verify levels.

Table 3.2

Gender, Ethnicity, and Numbers of Participants

Grade and gender	Hispanic	Black	White	Asian/Other
1 st grade boys	7	4	8	2
1 st grade girls	14	1	5	1
4 th grade boys	15	4	2	0
4 th grade girls	13	4	3	0

Recruitment Procedures.

The researcher met individually with both of the two schools' Reading Coaches to discuss the study and to elicit their support in identifying and recruiting potential students into the study. Permissioning packets were then distributed to all of the first and fourth grade students in each of the two schools. In the case of above average readers more children returned permissions than were needed. Thus, children were randomly selected to be included in the study.

The researcher approached the classroom teachers to seek their judgment (based on state, district, and classroom assessments) as to the particular reading levels (above, on, or below grade level) for the students who received parental permission to participate. Teacher judgment is used on an almost daily basis in the classroom to make a variety of curricular decisions as well as whether children should be referred because of difficulties in the classroom. In a meta-analysis conducted by Hoge and Coladarci (1985), across the sixteen studies reviewed, the researchers determined "these data support the validity of the teacher judgments of academic achievement" (p. 308). Begeny, Eckert, Montarello,

& Storie's (2008) findings were consistent with Hoge and Colardarci (1985), stating that their "correlational data suggested that teachers had relatively good judgments about their students' reading ability levels" (p. 52). This was an important finding because, as the researchers stated

teachers were generally quite able to rank their students' reading accuracy and reading fluency skills, which has positive implications if teachers are in the practice of providing additional assistance for students who need assistance most (p. 52).

The school's reading specialist was then asked to confirm the accuracy of the classroom teacher's judgment as to the reading levels of the children involved in the study.

Measures

In the current study, there are three measures used: an Open book task, a Closed book task, and child interviews. In the Open book task students can select any or all 5 narrative and 5 expository books. In the second book task, Closed, students are forced to make a decision between the narrative and expository books for each specific topic. The interviews were used as a follow up to both the Open and Closed book tasks.

Both Open and Closed tasks were similar at the outset. For both tasks, each child was shown the set of 5 narrative and 5 expository books. Each narrative/expository pair was on the same topic. The child was encouraged to closely examine and explore the set of narrative and expository books. The interviews were conducted following both Open and Closed book tasks.

Open book task. For the Open task, which is also called the free-choice task, the children were free to choose up to all 10 books (narrative and expository titles) presented

to them. During the Open task, each student was asked to indicate which of the 10 books he or she would choose for him or herself. On the tally sheet for each task, a checkmark was made under each book selected. The child could select as many books as possible, up to all 10. After the choosing of the books in the Open task, the child was asked to share his or her reasons for the choices in books. These questions focus on the child's particular preferences towards narrative and expository text. As a part of the Open task, the children were asked to choose which books, up to all 10, that they believed boys and girls their age would like to read. The child was then asked to share his or her reasons for the choices in books. These questions focused on the child's perceptions about what other same-aged boys and girls would like to read.

Closed book task. The Closed task is also called the forced-choice task. For this task, the students were instructed to choose either the storybook or the information book from the five pairs of books. These 10 books (five narrative and five expository) were different titles than the ten books used in the Open task, but each of the narrative/expository pairs share the same topic. Unlike the Open task where the students can choose any or all of the books presented, in the Closed task the students are forced to choose between a narrative and expository book on the same topic. Instead of choosing up to 10 books, during this task, the children may only choose five total books. Just like the Open book task, the child was then asked to share the reasons why he or she selected the particular books. The child was also asked to select the books that s/he perceives that a same-aged peer (male and female) would prefer to read, and to share the reasons for the particular choices.

Interviews. As previously mentioned, for both the Open and Closed book tasks, the children were asked a series of questions (Appendix A) that will guide the Book task interview. However, all “off-topic” talk during the interviews was also included and analyzed.

“The interview is a negotiated text, a site where power, gender, race, and class intersect” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 633). According to Seidman (1998),

“the purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses, and not to ‘evaluate’ as the term is normally used. At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience.”

The book tasks and the interviews facilitate an examination of students’ preferences and perceptions of narrative and expository text as it relates to choices for themselves and other boys and girls their age. The interviews were also semi-structured with a few primary questions asked of each participant, but also included following their “train of thought” that may temporarily take the interview into a new direction, but may contain important information not included in the interview questions. Interviewing allows the researcher to enter into the mind of the interviewee in an attempt to understand the meaning that is made of the behavior of the participant. It gives the researcher the ability to put the participant’s behavior into context, as well as access to understanding it (Seidman, p.4, 1998).

Interviewing children. Children can bring a great deal to the interview because they offer a unique perspective that is unlike an adult perspective, but are generally undervalued as an important source of data because there have been assumptions that

children are not able to articulate in the same as adults or that the information they provide is unreliable or faulty. Understanding the developmental levels of children should be paramount in the researcher's mind because children are always growing and developing. With this information, the researcher is able to create rapport, an environment where children feel safe to talk and share their opinions. There is a power differential between adults and children because children are so dependent on adults for most things. Because of this, children may have a tendency to try to seek approval from the adults in their lives, including the researcher, and chose answers that they feel the adult wants to hear (Zwiers & Morrisette, 1999). But it is ultimately necessary to understand the developmental level of the children that are interviewed. A rigid interview setting may be uncomfortable to young children because of this power differential. In a semi-structured interview format, varying developmental levels in children can be addressed, allowing the researcher to be able to establish rapport with the children, which in turn, allows the children to be more relaxed and willing to share their opinions.

In both the case of the pilot and the research schools, the researcher had to walk to and from the students' classrooms to pick them up for the interview and then return them afterwards to the classroom. The researcher utilized the time from classroom pick-up and walking to the interview site to have casual conversations with the students about what they liked about reading and any favorite books, as well anything else that happened to come up in the moment. By having these casual conversations before the interview, rapport was established with each child.

At the research schools, a digital recorder was used to capture the interviews. The researcher briefly mentioned that a recorder was going to be used and asked the children if they had any questions about it before it was turned on. Once the interview began, the digital recorder was started and moved out of the eye line of the students. At no time did the students make mention of feeling nervous about being taped, nor was the recorder mentioned once the interviews began. Each child appeared to be comfortable during the interview, and most seemed quite eager to share their feelings.

Procedures

Parental consent and student assent were obtained prior to the outset of the investigation. Individual students participate in the Open and Closed tasks with follow-up interviews in a single session that lasted approximately 15 minutes.

Scoring. For the purposes of data collection, there were four separate checklists/tally sheets, one each for the Open book task preferences, Open book task perceptions, Closed book task preferences, and Closed book task perceptions. There are a total of 20 books for each grade level (10 narrative and 10 expository), which constitutes the two sets. Each book selected for the two tasks received a checkmark, up to 10 for the Open tasks and 5 for the Closed tasks.

Materials

The books for the two tasks (listed in Appendix C) were chosen for several reasons. The first being that the topics are considered to be gender-neutral, with topics that would appeal to all young children such as animals, space/planets, American symbols/Presidents, and environmental issues. For this particular study, books that are considered gender-neutral have more generic topics and do not have an obvious male or

female main character. Second, the books were chosen because they have similar number and quality of visuals. Third, the books were similar in text difficulty and readability, taking into account the differences in reading ability between first and fourth graders.

Specific criteria for book selection were developed, taking into account readability analysis (Flesch, 1948; Fry, 2002) and gender-neutral topical interest for both the narrative and expository books. Specific criteria for book inclusion for both Chapman et al. (2007) and the current study can be found in the table below, as well as listed in the Appendix B. The school media specialist at Briley Springs Elementary School was given the list of potential books. The media specialist looked each of the books up on the District's library server to review the books and provide feedback as to the age-appropriateness of the selected books.

Table 3.3

Book Selection Criteria for Chapman et al. (2007) and Present Study

Chapman et al. (2007)	Present study
Selected topics researchers thought children would perceive as gender-neutral	Choose gender-neutral topics such as sea and/or land animals, space/planets, American symbols/Presidents
Avoid books that children would perceive as suited to one gender or another	Avoid book topics that are perceived as preferred by one gender, such as hockey, monsters, ballet, or princesses
Books are similar in number and quality of visuals	Choose books that have visual appeal such as photographs, engaging illustrations, and bright colors
Books are similar in text difficulty	Narrative and expository selections should contain similar amounts of print and similar font size per page
Books that would appeal to young children	Choose books that allow students to make a connection to the world, such as environmental issues and Presidents (including Obama)
	Stories or expository selections should not be found in the first and fourth grade reading basals
	No popular or traditional characters, nor have movies made from the story line
	Chapter books will not be selected for the first grade students
	Books chosen will not be on the Amazon.com Best Seller list for 4-8 and 9-12 year olds
	Books should not have a main character that is obviously male or female
	Books chosen will go through Flesch's readability analysis and/or Accelerated Reader database

Readability and readability analysis. Readability refers to “the sum total (including all the interactions) of all those elements within a given piece of printed material that affect the success a group of readers have with it. The success is the extent to which they understand it, read it at an optimal speed, and find it interesting” (Dale & Chall, 1949). For the purpose of this investigation, readability was determined in one of two ways. The first way readability was determined was through an Accelerated Reader online database where both narrative and expository books are leveled by grade level and month (ex: 1.3 is equivalent to first grade, third month). First grade books selected were in the range of 1.0-1.9 and fourth grade books selected were in the range of 4.0-4.9. The second way readability was determined was through the Flesch’s readability statistics that are included in Microsoft Word 2007.

Pilot Study

The pilot study was conducted to field test the Open and Closed book task procedures as well as the specific books selected for the study in order to determine whether the books chosen were age-appropriate and engaging to the children. The full report can be found in Appendix E. The study was conducted with 24 first and fourth grade students at the pilot school, representing all three reading achievement levels: above grade level, on grade level, and below grade level. Teacher judgment of reading ability levels was used to choose students to participate in the study. A letter introducing the study, as well as student participation permission slips, were sent home to parents.

As a result of the pilot study, there were just a few changes made which involved the materials used. However, no changes were made in terms of procedures. At the first grade level, there were two books that were changed as a result of the child interviews.

For both books, children mentioned the difficulty of the text, stating there were too many words. It was obvious that there was a lack of engagement with these two books. At the fourth grade level, only one book was changed. The topic was about the planets. It had an obvious female main character which appeared to disengage the boys in the study.

Chapter 4

Results

The results section is organized by research question. It begins with a description of the overall frequency and strength of individual first and fourth grade boys' and girls' preferences for narrative and expository text, as well as their rationales for their individual genre preferences. It continues with perceptions that primary and intermediate grade boys and girls have about genre preferences of their same-aged peers including their rationales for these perceptions. Finally, the section ends with the effect that reading achievement level has on first and fourth grade boys' and girls' preferences for narrative and expository text and perceptions they have about the genre preferences of their same-aged peers.

Individual Gender Preferences

The first research question addresses individual preferences for narrative or expository text. Question one is: Do first- and fourth-grade children **prefer** narrative or expository text, and does gender contribute to differences in their preferences? As in the Chapman et al. (2007) study, frequency is examined in two ways: frequency of book choices and frequency of individual children making those book choices.

Frequency of book choices. Table 4.1 presents the overall number of narrative and expository book choices first and fourth grade boys and girls made when choosing books for themselves. For the Open task, children could select as many books as they liked up to 10 books (5 narrative; 5 expository). In the Closed task, children were presented pairs of books (1 narrative and 1 expository on the same topic), and were asked

to select which of the two they preferred. Five sets (i.e., pairs of books) were included in the forced-choice task.

Table 4.1

Frequency of Books Children Chose for Themselves by Grade and by Gender.

Total Number of Books Chosen	Open Task				Closed Task			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
1 st grade								
Boys (n=21)	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
Girls (n=21)	57	73	52	47	27	78	39	66
4 th grade								
Boys (n=21)	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
Girls (n=21)	33	54	47	33	44	61	44	61

Note: Narr. = Narrative; Expos. = Expository

The results (Table 4.1) suggest that first grade boys chose expository text for themselves in both the Open and Closed book tasks. Taken together, boys chose 84 narrative texts and 151 expository texts. In the Closed book task, the preference for expository text was for boys 3 to 1 over narrative text. First grade girls were more balanced in genre selection (91 narrative texts; 113 expository texts). In the Open book task, the first grade girls chose narrative text for themselves by a slim margin over expository text. However, when forced to make a choice between narrative and expository text in the Closed book task, first grade girls chose expository titles.

A somewhat different pattern emerged regarding the genre choices of fourth grade boys (Table 4.1). For fourth grade boys, in both Open and Closed book tasks, expository text was the text more frequently chosen (87 narrative; 115 expository), but the margin

over narrative text was not as pronounced as the first grade children. Fourth grade girls made book selections that were quite similar to those made by the first grade girls (91 narrative; 94 expository). During the Open book task, narrative text was selected more often than expository text. However, when pressed during the Closed book task, expository text was selected more often than narrative text.

Frequency of children preferring books in each genre. To examine the data from another perspective, the frequency of children preferring one genre over another in each task was determined by identifying those children who selected more books of one genre over the other (Table 4.2). In the Open book task, children were allowed to choose any or all of the narrative and expository books available during the task. Because of this, there was a possibility that even numbers of narrative and expository books could be selected by children if children selected, for example, three narrative books and three expository books.

Table 4.2

Frequency of Children Preferring Expository or Narrative Book Choices for Themselves by Grade and by Gender

Number of Children	Open Task			Closed Task		
	Narr.	Even	Expos.	Narr.	Even	
1st grade Boys (n=21)	Expos.					
	5	3	13	3	0	18
1st grade Girls (n=21)	Expos.					
	11	2	8	7	0	14

Note: Narr. = Narrative; Even = Even choice; Expos. = Expository

Number of Children	Open Task			Closed Task		
	Narr.	Even	Expos.	Narr.	Even	Expos.
4th grade Boys (n=21)	7	2	12	7	0	14
4th grade Girls (n=21)	11	6	4	9	0	12

Note: Narr. = Narrative; Even = Even choice; Expos. = Expository

The results of the frequency of first grade boys and girls selecting narrative and expository text support the frequency of books selected data. In both the Open and Closed book tasks, more first grade boys selected expository titles than narrative titles, almost 3 to 1 in the Open task and 6 to 1 in the Closed book task. During the Open book task, more first grade girls chose narrative text over expository text. However, it was by a slim margin. During the Closed forced-choice book task, more first grade girls selected expository titles, by 2 to 1 margin over the narrative ones.

At the fourth grade level, boys preferred expository text in both the Open and Closed book tasks, with twice as many boys selecting expository text during the Closed task, and almost twice as many boys selecting expository text during the Open book task. Fourth grade girls, on the other hand, split their preferences with almost three times as many girls selecting narrative text during the Open book task, while just a few more girls selected expository text during the Closed book task.

Strength of Preference. Table 4.3 provides data regarding the strength of the participants' preferences for either narrative or expository text and collapses data from Open and Closed tasks. Strength is defined as the intensity of the children's preferences for one type of text over the other. During the Open and Closed book tasks, each child

interacted with and made decisions about 10 books for a total of 20 books. Half of the books were narrative and the other half were expository. Narrative text choices were added together across both book tasks. Expository text choices across the two book tasks were collapsed as well.

Given that the criterion for strength was somewhat vague in the Chapman et al. (2007) study, the following criteria were devised. The total number of books selected by each child was counted, and the mean and standard deviation were calculated. For the total number of books chosen, the mean was 9.74 and the standard deviation was 1.80. One standard deviation above the mean was considered to be moderate strength, while two standard deviations above the mean were considered to be strong strength. Level of strength was determined using the following criteria:

1. Moderate strength was the selection of 11 or 12 books in a genre.
2. Strong strength was the selection of 13 or more books in a genre.
3. All others were coded as “liked both equally.”

Table 4.3

Strength of Individual Children's Genre Preferences by Grade and by Gender.

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
1 st grade					
Boys (n=21)	0	2	10	7	2
Girls (n=21)	0	2	13	5	1
4 th grade					
Boys (n=21)	0	1	12	6	2
Girls (n=21)	0	1	17	2	1

At the first grade level, boys preferred either both genres or expository text.

There were two boys that had a moderate preference for narrative text. For first grade girls, more than half demonstrated equal preference for both narrative and expository text, while six demonstrated either a moderate or strong preference for expository text. There were two girls who demonstrated a moderate preference for narrative text.

The pattern of strength of preference among fourth grade boys and girls was similar to the first grade children. For fourth grade boys, eight boys either moderately or strongly preferred expository text, with more than half of the boys demonstrating a preference for both genres. There was just one boy who indicated a moderate preference for narrative text. The fourth grade girls showed their flexibility towards narrative and expository text with more than two thirds of the girls preferring both types of genres. Three girls either moderately or strongly preferred expository text, while one moderately preferred narrative text.

Summary of Findings

Question one asked, Do first- and fourth-grade children prefer narrative or expository text, and does gender contribute to differences in their preferences? Genre preference shows a definite relationship with gender. Overall, both first and fourth grade boys appear to prefer expository text when allowed to freely select between narrative and expository text (Open book choice) as well as when they are forced to make a decision between narrative and expository text (Closed book task). However, among fourth grade boys, the difference in narrative or expository choices was less pronounced. When considering the strength of their preference, most first and fourth grade boys either have a preference for expository text or an equal preference for both genres.

Both first and fourth grade girls appear to have similar genre preferences particularly when looking at the total number of books selected in each genre. Narrative is the preferred genre when allowed to freely choose between the narrative and expository text. However, expository text is preferred when girls are forced to make a decision between the two genres. When examining the strength of their genre preferences, once again both first and fourth grade girls showed an equal preference for both genres. In general, the genre selections among girls were more balanced than boys.

Rationale for Individual Genre Preferences

Research question two focuses on students' rationales for individual genre preferences and reads as follows: Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their own book preferences? Throughout the child interviews, when making book selections for themselves, students were asked

why particular books were selected. The researcher audio-taped the children during the book task interviews. Two analyses were conducted, first the total number and length of utterances was calculated and included all student comments during the interview. Second, comments related to rationales for book choices were themed and frequency for each theme was determined.

Rationales for Book Preferences

During the coding, some common themes began to emerge in the words of the children. Once the transcripts were initially coded, similar comments made by the children were grouped during the axial coding, a second, as well as a higher, level of coding introduced by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Charmaz (2006) defines axial coding as “Strauss and Corbin’s strategy for bringing data back together again in a coherent whole” (p. 60) because the “initial coding fractures data into separate pieces and distinct codes” (p. 60). Throughout the process of axial coding, ten distinct themes, or dominant ideas, emerged in the interviews.

A second reader read twenty-five percent of the total number of the interviews, including both first and fourth grade boys and girls at all three reading achievement levels. An inter-rater reliability of 96.5% for units of analysis (what constituted a comment) and agreement for theme categorization was 94%.

Table 4.4 provides definitions of each of the ten themes that emerged in the child interviews. Six themes were the same as the original study. However, there were two themes from the original study that did not emerge in this study. They were awards/merit and tactile quality. There were also four new themes in this study were not represented in the original study. They were the notion that books could teach/you could learn about the

topic, the genre of the books, the age-appropriateness of the books in the study, and general comments. Along with the themes' definitions, examples of quotes from both first and fourth grade children's interviews are included. Overall, fourth grade boys and girls made more comments than their first grade counterparts, however, in both grade levels, girls made more comments than the boys.

Table 4.4

Themes from Children's Rationales for Book Choices for Themselves

Theme	In Chapman et al. (2007)	Definition	1 st grade	4 th grade
Connections to text	Yes	Connections were made between text and child's personal life or to greater world	" <u>A Trip to the White House</u> because I've been to the White House before"	"I love earth because I have a turtle, dog, and two birds, and I, like, love them very much"
Gender	Yes	Comments represent notions about gender	n/a	n/a
Visual Appeal	Yes	Pictures or photographs on cover and/or inside the book appeal to the child and are engaging	"This one looks like it's fiction"	"This one because it's actually drawn. It's not actual pictures"
Topic/Content	Yes	The topic or content of the book is one that is of interest to the child and/or is age-appropriate for the grade level.	"I like to read about killer whales"	"It's like this tells you a lot about the White House and the history of the president"
Observations about text	Yes	Comments made about specific aspects of a book.	"One hundred shoes...that's, look, look how many shoes"	"That cover is just weird. It has a weird name"
Humor	Yes	Content in book contains humor either by words or through pictures	"Because they look funny"	"I think it looks like comedy"
Teach/Learn	No	Books can teach about/you can learn about a particular topic	"I think I'll learn about things"	"I wanna learn more about the earth because it's just so interesting the way, like, earth

				is”
Genre	No	Comments reflect the particular genre of the book	“Some books are like fun and playful and not learning”	“It’s supposed to be a story that resolves”
Age-appropriate	No	Books are seen by children as not appropriate for their age	n/a	“And this looks a lot more mature than this, kind of”
Content General	No	Comments are ambiguous, not fully thought out, or generalized/not specific	“I don’t know because I haven’t read them”	“It sounds interesting”

For each group, a mean and standard deviation was calculated for the number of comments in each theme. Means (with standard deviations in parentheses follow).

Looking at the first grade results, for first grade boys, the mean number of comments was 7.85 (7.49). For first grade girls, the mean number of comments was 9.62 (7.63). First grade girls averaged approximately two more comments per theme than the boys.

Looking at fourth grade results, the mean number of comments for boys was 11.15 (10.82). For girls, the mean number of comments was 14.62 (17.78). Fourth grade girls averaged approximately 3.5 more comments per theme than the boys. Overall, fourth grade children commented more per theme than the first grade children. Fourth grade boys averaged approximately 3.5 more comments per theme than their first grade counterparts. Fourth grade girls averaged approximately twice as many comments per theme as their first grade counterparts.

Table 4.5 provides the themes that emerged from coding with the frequency of comments by theme for each of the grade/gender groups. A description of each theme follows with examples of student comments.

Table 4.5

First and Fourth Grade Boys' and Girls' Reasons for Genre Preferences

Major Themes	1 st grade comments		4 th grade comments	
	Boys %	Girls %	Boys %	Girls %
Topic/Content Specific	27.4	37.2	21.4	19.5
General	6.6	5.0	0.0	0.0
Whales	5.7	12.4	6.9	4.7
Space	5.7	9.9	2.8	4.2
Environment	1.9	5.0	2.8	3.7
Bugs	3.8	3.3	6.9	3.2
American Symbols	2.8	1.6	2.1	3.7
Visual	17.0	14.9	29.7	31.1
Topic/Content General	27.4	22.3	11.0	12.6
Connections	7.5	14.0	9.0	8.9
Teach/Learn	4.7	6.6	9.7	7.9
Genre	5.7	2.5	9.7	7.9
Observations	4.7	2.5	6.9	8.9
Humor	2.8	3.3	2.8	3.2
Gender	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0
Total	100	100	100	100

Topic/Content Specific. The specific topic or content of the book being reviewed was one of the two top-rated themes that emerged as children spoke about their book choices for themselves. In other words, these themes reflected the content of the book being examined. While selecting books, one first grade boy said, “I’m interested about the solar system” while a first grade girl said, “I like this one because it’s earth.”

Fourth grade boys and girls also spoke about the topic or content. One girl said, “I pick them because I like book about, like, things in history and about animals and earth and stuff” while a boy said, “I actually just really enjoy reading about the planets.”

Visual Appeal. The visual appeal of the book, whether it was the photographs or illustrations or comments about the book’s cover, was one of the most common theme that emerged during the interviews. A first grade girl commented that she choose that particular book, “because I like the pictures” while a first grade boy mentioned, “they look interesting on the cover.” When talking about her particular book choice, a fourth grade girl said, “I like cute pictures” while a fourth grade boy replied, “I like the cover pretty much.” The size of the book and reading the blurb on the back cover of the book were comments made by both fourth grade boys and girls. One fourth grade boy mentioned that he reads “the summaries of these books on the back and I think they might be interesting, even if you read the summary.” A fourth grade girl said, “why they would like *Mysteries of the Spider Kane* is because maybe they would read the back of the book, then they might think it’s interesting and read the book and finish it because it was so interesting to them.”

Content General. General comments were ones that were ambiguous in nature, not fully thought out, or were unspecific. The word “interest” (including “interesting” and “interested”) appeared frequently indicating the importance of topic appeal for children in primary and intermediate grades. Other general comments included “because they like books” made by a first grade boy. Several of the first grade boys who were below-grade level readers commented that the books selected were “cool” or “awesome” but were unable to clarify their vague answers when asked. A fourth grade girl

commented that the book she chose “looked enjoyable” while a fourth grade boy was unable to verbalize why he selected a particular book by saying, “well, sort of, that’s another hard question.”

Connection to text. Frequently children made connections between the text and their own lives or the lives of others around them. During the interview, a first grade girl said, “I love to go in space, because when I get big I want to go in space and maybe be a spaceman” while a first grade boy, when asked why he chose a particular book, said, “I like to learn more about (whales) because I go to the Keys and I see 41 at a time.” Fourth grade boys and girls also made comments that connected their lives to events happening in the books. One girl commented that he chose a particular book because “I used to live in New York” while a boy, having previously read books by an author whose chapter book was included, said, “it’s written by Mary Pope Osborne, and she writes the *Magic Tree House* and those are very interesting books, so I want to see what this one’s about.”

Teach/Learn. The Teach/Learn theme is a new theme that emerged during this study that did not emerge in the original study. Children spoke of ways the books could be utilized to teach new concepts, or for themselves or others to learn more about specific topics. “They could help you learn more of spiders, whales, outer space, the environment, and all those other kind of things, and they could help you so you could be careful of things that are dangerous” was a comment made by a first grade girl. Some books were selected by a first grade boy because “you discover cool stuff.” One fourth grade boy said he chose a specific book because “I’ve been to the White House, but I haven’t actually been inside of it so I want to get as much information as I can about it.”

Genre. Another theme that emerged that was not reported in the original study was one where children made specific comments that related to the particular genre of the book selected. One first grade girl, when asked why she chose a book, she said, “Because they are like very real” while a first grade boy chose “this one because it’s not too fiction-y.” Fourth grade boys and girls also made comments that were directed at the particular genre with comments like “it’s supposed to be a story that resolves” mentioned by a boy, and a fourth grade girl commented, “I like books that are fiction also. I don’t just like books that are true.”

Observations about Text. In some cases children made specific observations about things occurring in the books that went beyond simple recognition of or response to the topic. While looking through a book, a first grade boy commented, “one hundred shoes...that’s, look, look how many shoes.” A first grade girl commented that she would like to read a particular book because “it’s about a dolphin.” When selecting a particular book, a fourth grade boy commented that he chose the book because “it’s like an encyclopedia of bugs” whereas a fourth grade girl noticed that “a polar bear on an ice cap, and I can tell it’s different than the other one because this one us more than just in the Arctic.”

Humor. The theme of humor, that the topic and/or illustrations were funny or humorous, was also detected. A first grade girl mentioned that “one of them are very funny, like different shoes” while a first grade boy said, “I like funny books.” A fourth grade boy chose a particular book “because I think it looks like comedy” whereas a fourth grade girl chose a certain book because “it’s kind of funny.”

Summary of Findings

Research question two focuses on students' rationales for individual genre preferences and reads as follows: Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their own book preferences? There were no differences of note in both the mean number of utterances and the length of utterances between the first grade boys and girls. However, there were differences between the fourth grade boys and girls. The boys averaged approximately two more utterances than the girls, but the girls' mean length of utterances was almost twice as long as the boys.

Overall, the girls at both grade levels provided more reasons for their book choices than boys. Fourth graders provided more reasons for their book choices than first graders. However, there were relatively few marked differences in the types of reasons provided among boys and girls. First grade girls make more comments about the topic than boys. At the first and fourth grade levels, the girls made more personal connections to the particular books chosen than the boys. While both fourth grade girls and boys spoke quite frequently about the visual appeal of the books, the girls made more mention of it than the boys. First grade boys and girls made more general topic comments than the fourth grade boys and girls.

Perceptions of Genre Preferences of Peers

The third question addresses the perceptions that first and fourth grade boys' and girls' hold about what the particular genre they feel that their same-age peers would choose to read, and what role gender plays in these perceptions. The question is as follows: What are first graders' and fourth graders' perceptions of what other first- and

fourth-grade boys and girls like to read, and does gender contribute to differences in their perceptions?

In both Open and Closed book tasks, first and fourth grade boys and girls were asked to select books that they believed their same-aged male and female peers would prefer to read. In the Open book task, the children were allowed to select up to 10 books for their same-aged peers. In the Closed book task, children were asked to select either the narrative or the expository book from the pair of books on each topic. Table 4.6 displays the frequency of narrative and expository texts selected for their same-aged peers, while Table 4.7 presents the number of children selecting narrative and expository text for their same-aged peers.

Table 4.6

Frequency of Children's Choices for Other Boys and Girls by Grade and by Gender.

Number of Books Chosen (105 books per category)	Open Task				Closed Task			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
1 st grade								
Boys (n=21)								
Girls (n=21)	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Choices for girls	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
	57	44	47	44	68	37	61	44
Choices for boys	22	63	32	47	31	74	37	68
4 th grade								
Boys (n=21)								
Girls (n=21)	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Choices for girls	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
	47	36	45	36	64	41	65	40
Choices for boys	29	39	32	46	52	53	54	51

At the first grade level, boys believed that first grade girls would prefer narrative texts in both tasks, with almost twice as many narrative books chosen during the Closed, forced-choice book task. When selecting books for their same-aged male peers, first grade boys selected almost three times as many expository texts during the Open, free-choice book task, and slightly more than twice as many expository texts during the Closed, forced-choice task.

For first grade girls, narrative texts for their female, same-aged peers was consistently selected during both Open and Closed book tasks, with just slightly more narrative titles chosen during the Open book task, but quite a bit more during the Closed book task. When selecting books for their male, same-aged peers, first grade girls selected more expository text during the Open book task, and selected twice as many expository texts than narrative texts during the Closed book task.

At the fourth grade level, boys believed both female same-aged peers would prefer to read narrative text over expository text in both the Open and Closed book tasks. When choosing books for their male, same-aged peers, the numbers of selected narrative and expository texts were closer together in both tasks. During the Closed book task, narrative and expository titles were selected almost evenly for other fourth grade boys.

Fourth grade girls believed that other girls their age would prefer to read narrative text in both the Open and Closed book tasks. When the girls were selecting books for other boys their age, they believed that the boys would prefer expository text during the Open book task, but were not as sure during the Closed, forced-choice book task as they selected almost equal numbers of both narrative and expository text for other fourth grade boys.

Table 4.7 presents the number of first and fourth grade boys and girls who made narrative and expository book selections for their same-aged peers during the Open and Closed book task.

Table 4.7

Frequency of Children Providing Perceptions of Other Boys' and Girls' Genre

Preferences by Grade and by Gender

Number of Children	Open Task				Closed Task			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
1 st grade								
Boys (n=21)								
Girls (n=21)								
	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
Choices for girls	12	8	8	9	15	6	10	11
Choices for boys	5	12	4	14	6	15	7	14
4 th grade								
Boys (n=21)								
Girls (n=21)								
	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
Choices for girls	12	6	11	5	13	8	16	5
Choices for boys	7	10	5	11	11	10	10	11

In each of the two book tasks, children were asked to make narrative and expository book selections, choosing books that they believed that their same-aged male and female peers would prefer to read. There were three possibilities of genre preferences that came as a result of the book selections. The first was a perceived preference for expository text. Second, there was a perceived preference for narrative text. Third, there would be an equal preference for both genres. This table represents

only the number of children who believed their same-aged male and female peers would have a preference for narrative or expository text on each of the two book tasks. If children believed their same-aged male and female peers would have no preference for one genre over the other by choosing equal numbers of narrative and expository text, they were not included in this particular table.

At the first grade level, when boys were making book selections for first grade girls, more boys believed that the girls would prefer to read narrative text during both the Open and Closed book tasks. During the Closed book task, more than twice as many boys believed first grade girls would prefer to read narrative text. When the boys were making book selections for first grade boys, they believed, 2 to 1, that the boys would prefer to read expository text in both the Open and Closed book tasks.

First grade girls were almost evenly split between narrative and expository titles when making book selections for first grade girls in both the Open and Closed book tasks. However, when making book selections for first grade boys, the girls were quite confident that the boys would prefer to read expository text in both the Open and Closed book tasks. During the Open book task, this belief translated into three times as many girls selecting expository text for boys, while twice as many girls selected expository text for boys during the Closed book task.

At the fourth grade level, when choosing between narrative and expository book titles for fourth grade girls, more fourth grade boys believed that their same-aged female peers would prefer narrative text in both the Open and Closed book tasks. When selecting books for boys their age, more fourth grade boys chose expository text for their

male peers during the Open book task. However, during the Closed book task, an almost equal number of boys selected both narrative and expository text for fourth grade boys.

More fourth grade girls believed their same-aged female peers would prefer to read narrative text during both the Open and Closed book tasks. During the Open book task, twice as many girls believed other girls would prefer to read narrative text. During the Closed book task, the ratio spread to 3 to 1 in favor of narrative text. When fourth grade girls were selecting books for other fourth grade boys, twice as many girls believed that other boys would prefer to read expository text during the Open book task.

However, when forced to choose between narrative and expository book titles during the Closed book task, an almost equal number of girls selected narrative text as selected expository text for other fourth grade boys.

Summary of Findings

The third question addresses the perceptions that first and fourth grade boys' and girls' hold about what the particular genre they feel that their same-age peers would choose to read, and what role gender plays in these perceptions. At both grade levels, both boys and girls predicted that boys would prefer expository text and girls would prefer narrative text. However, the difference seemed to diminish at the fourth grade level.

At the first grade level, both boys and girls overall chose more expository text for first grade boys and more narrative text for first grade girls during both the Open, free-choice, and Closed, forced-choice, book tasks. Boys were firm in their beliefs about the genre preferences of others, believing that boys prefer expository text and girls prefer

narrative text. Girls were more somewhat flexible in their beliefs about the genre preferences of their peers.

At the fourth grade level, beliefs that boys prefer expository text and girls prefer narrative text appeared during the Open book task. But when forced to choose between narrative and expository genres during the Closed book task, many boys and girls perceived that their same-aged peers would prefer both genres equally.

Rationale for Perceptions of Genre Preferences

Research question four investigates the reasons students provide for peer preferences for reading genre. It reads... Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their perceptions of other fourth grade boys' and girls' book preferences?

Comments made regarding peer preferences fell into many of the same themes as rationales provided for personal preferences. Comments were not made for two previous themes (genre and age-appropriateness). Gender did appear as a new theme, largely based on the nature of the question asked. However, overall, the first and fourth grade boys and girls made twice as many comments during the interviews when making book selections for other children than when making book selections for themselves. There were also definite gender differences in the number of comments. Both first and fourth grade girls made more comments during the book task interviews than the boys. In Table 4.8 are the ten themes that emerged in the interviews, along with the definition for each theme as well as a salient first and fourth grade quote. Table 4.9 lists the themes that emerged during the child interviews when they were talking about why specific books

were chosen for their same-aged peers, along with the numbers of quotes made by first and fourth grade children.

Table 4.8

Themes from Children's Rationales for Book Choices for Other Boys and Girls

Theme	In Chapman et al. (2007)	Definition	1 st grade	4 th grade
Connections to text	Yes	Connections were made between text and child's personal life or to greater world	"We did a project on the rainforest"	"Everyone's a politician since Obama became president"
Gender	Yes	Comments represent notions about gender	"Because girls and boys are opposites, so they must like the opposite kind of books"	"This just like different things, like sometimes boys and girls like the same thing, but mostly different"
Visual Appeal	Yes	Pictures or photographs on cover and/or inside the book appeal to the child and are engaging	"Because the pictures look funny"	"They just wanna look at the cover"
Topic/Content	Yes	The topic or content of the book is one that is of interest to the child and/or is age-appropriate for the grade level.	"Most of the boys in my class don't like bugs and other things, but I think they'll like killer whales"	"They just like cartoons and stuff like that"
Observations about text	Yes	Comments made about specific aspects of a book.	"They're going in, but it's like fiction because no one has ever, ever, ever, that is not	"That is a bunny and they probably think it's cute"

			the President or the President's helper, has been in the White House"	
Humor	Yes	Content in book contains humor either by words or through pictures	"Cause some are just really funny and make you laugh really hard"	"And they, usually boys, would probably like hysterical books"
Teach/Learn	No	Books can teach about/you can learn about a particular topic	"It's just that they're about learning"	"The boys in fourth grade might want to learn of things their teachers are teaching"
General	No	Comments are ambiguous, not fully thought out, or generalized/not specific	"I just have a funny feeling that he'd like to read this"	"I have no clue"
Age appropriate	No	Books are seen by children as not appropriate for their age	"This is...kind of a two year old book"	"Fourth grades would finish that is 30 seconds"
Genre	No	Comments reflect the particular genre of the book	"I really don't think fiction is that good for people because it kind of makes their brains all fiction"	"They would probably like to read more about something in New York City that's real, but it's fake and it's a mystery"

Table 4.9

First and Fourth Grade Boys' and Girls' Reasons for Book Choices for Other Boys and Girls

Major Themes	1 st grade comments		4 th grade comments	
	Boys %	Girls %	Boys %	Girls %
Gender	25.5	30.5	20.7	24.4
Topic/Content Specific	32.5	20.6	21.1	13.8
Whales	8.5	6.4	5.9	7.2
Space	8.5	1.3	3.0	1.1
Environment	4.5	3.9	2.1	1.7
Bugs	8.0	5.6	6.8	1.7
American Symbols	3.0	3.0	3.4	2.0
Visual	7.0	8.2	15.5	20.1
Topic/Content General	19.0	13.3	7.2	8.0
Connections	3.0	12.4	8.0	5.2
Teach/Learn	2.5	6.4	7.2	6.0
Humor	4.5	3.4	4.6	4.6
Observations	4.0	1.7	4.2	3.4
Genre	1.0	3.0	8.0	14.3
Age Appropriate	1.0	.04	3.0	.29
Total	100	100	100	100

For each grade/gender group, a mean and standard deviation was calculated for the number of reasons for book choices provided. Means (with standard deviations in parentheses) follow. At the first grade boys provided a mean number of 12.29 (14.00) reasons. For first grade girls, the mean number of comments was 16.64 (18.04). At fourth grade, the mean number of comments for boys was 16.79 (12.13). For girls, the mean number of comments was 24.93 (25.78). Fourth grade girls averaged approximately eight more comments per theme than the boys. Overall, fourth grade

children commented more per theme than the first grade children, and girls provided more comments than boys. Descriptions of each theme with examples follow.

Gender. When children were making specific comments during the interviews, the theme of gender was the number one theme that emerged when children were discussing why they chose particular books for other boys and girls their age. During the interviews, a typical comment made by first grade boys about why they chose particular books for other girls was “those are cute books for girls.” When choosing books for other girls, one girl said she picked the books “because since I’m a girl and I like to read these kind of books, so I think that’s why.” A fourth grade boy offered this opinion about other boys his age, “boys really don’t want to spend their time reading books, but if they end up reading a book, it has to be interesting.” One fourth grade girl offered this comment when asked why she chose particular books, “I think they’d prefer those because they, I don’t know, they just like different things, like sometimes boys are girls like the same thing, but mostly different.”

Topic/Content specific. The specific topic or content of the book was the second most common theme that emerged as children spoke about their book choices for others their own age. At both grade levels boys made more comments about the topic than girls. “It’s mostly about stuff they might not know about” was a comment made by a first grade boy, while a first grade girl said, “they like bugs and action.” During his interview, one fourth grade boy said, “spiders, animals, really, well, as far as my friends and I go, animals is something that we really like to learn about.” For one fourth grade girl, the books she chose for other boys, she thought they’d like them because “they like stuff like that.”

Visual appeal. The pictures, whether they were photographs or illustrations, were frequently cited during the interviews particularly for the fourth grade girls. Comments about the size of the book or reading the blurb on the back cover also were a part of the visual appeal of the books. A first grade boy said that other girls would like the books because “they look kind of funnish” while one particular first grade girl thought other girls her age would like her choices “because they look interesting.” A fourth grade boy said, “this looks like a pretty good novel, and actually I’ll have to take a look at it” while a comment made by a fourth grade girl was “They like planets cause of the colors and the texture.” Both fourth grade boys and girls also made many comments about how boys and girls would select books because of the size of the book, namely choosing chapter books. They also mentioned that others would read the blurb on the back cover.

Topic/Content general. For first grade boys and girls, most comments were around four common ideas: that others would probably like/read it, the word “interesting,” the words “cool” and “awesome” and being unable to verbalize their thoughts saying, “I don’t know.” Looking at things from another person’s perspective is a difficult concept for young children. In the case of the children in the study, both first grade and fourth grade children are typically still developmentally concrete thinkers.

Similar to when boys and girls were commenting about their own book choices, the word “interesting” came up repeatedly when children were attempting to give their reasons why their same-aged peers would like to read that particular book. The word “interesting” came up more often with fourth grade children in their attempts to delve into the minds of boys and girls their age.

“All of them would like to read, like some of them like to read one sort of book and others read another kind” was a general comment made by a first grade boy during his interview. “Hmm, I think they would like it” was suggested by a first grade girl when asked why she chose the books she selected for others children her age. “I don’t know. It’s hard to think about” was a comment made by a fourth grade boy when talking about a particular book choice. “I know my friend. She really likes this one” is what one fourth grade girl offered up in response to why she chose a particular book.

Connections to text. Many comments reflected connections between the topic or text and personal lives, particularly among the first grade girls. One of the first grade boys spoke about observing his classmates making book selections in the classroom saying, “they like those kind of books...because I see them reading that kind of book all the time.” One particular first grade girl commented that “we’re already doing earth things for the earth and to help it.” Fourth grade boys and girls also made personal connections to the text. One particular boy mentioned girls “like reading more....They don’t really like playing outside too much like boys who want to spend their time playing and watching TV and playing Wii and stuff like that.” One girl compared one of her book choices to *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* saying, “most boys like *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*. I know my brother would like that.”

Teach/Learn. Children spoke of ways the books could be utilized to teach new concepts, or for themselves or others to learn more about specific topics. A first grade boy mentioned “they’d learn more about the planets.” “They could learn more about things and animals and they could learn new things” was a comment made by a first grade girl when selecting books for others her age. Fourth grade boys and girls also

spoke about how their book selections could help teach or that you could learn from it. A comment made by one of the boys when selecting books for other boys was “like I said, it tells about the earth, and they’ll like to know things about what happened.” One girl said, “they would want to know more about space.”

Humor. The theme of humor, that the topic and/or illustrations were funny or humorous, emerged during the child interviews when they were selecting books for other boys and girls their age. One first grade boy mentioned that the books he chose for other boys would be enjoyed because “they’re going to be funny” while a girl selecting books for boys said, “I think they’ll like to read this funny one.” Fourth grade boys and girls also spoke about humor in either the illustrations or the story in general. One fourth grade boy summed up his feelings about why other boys would like to read a particular book he chose for them by saying, “this one cause they’ll laugh at it like crazy.” One girl said that a particular book would be chosen for boys because “this one seems to be like Captain Underpants, which they like” implying that boys like humorous books.

Observations about text. Children made specific observations about things occurring in the books. A first grade boy chose a particular book saying, “the worm one because they have a lot of funny shoes on them” while a first grade girl mentioned, “there is a butterfly in there.” One of the fourth grade boys said “cause the books, you see the cover. It gives you an idea when you read it. It gives you an idea that’s interesting...It might have some dangerous cool stuff.” One fourth grade girl, when commenting about the book she chose, she said, “you can tell, like, there’s going to be people and it’s just a lot of animals.”

Genre. Another theme that emerged that had not emerged in the original study was one where children made specific comments that related to the particular genre of the book selected. A comment made by a first grade boy was “they like these kind of books because, like, some kids like to learn about, like space and whales and the White House and animals.” “This one doesn’t really tell facts about it” was mentioned by a first grade girl when she was selecting books for others. Fourth grade boys and girls made more comments concerning genre than their first grade counterparts. One boy said, “most of the fourth grade boys I know love novels, and you can put a novel in front of their face and they’ll start reading it” while a girl thought boys “would probably like to read *ABCs of the Environment* because most boys don’t like to read tales.”

Age-Appropriate. The age-appropriateness of the text was the least common theme that first grade boys and fourth grade girls spoke of when talking about their own preferences, with just a few overall comments. One first grade boy, when talking about a specific book, he said that the book was “babyish.” “Because six year olds like the ones, the ones right for them” was the comment made by a first grade girl. When speaking about a particular book, a fourth grade boy said the book “looks like a three year old book, kind of” while a girl thought a particular book had “small words (and that) fourth grades would finish that in thirty seconds.”

Summary of Findings

Research question four investigates the reasons students provide for peer preferences for reading genre. It reads... Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their perceptions of other first and fourth grade boys’ and girls’ book preferences? Similar to those findings when

making personal book choices, there were both gender and grade level differences when children were selecting books for their same-aged peers. Overall, the girls at both grade levels made more comments about the books than the boys and fourth graders provided more reasons than first graders.

At the first grade level, both boys and girls spoke quite frequently about the gender of the children they were selecting books for, talking about how one gender would like a particular book better than the other or how one gender would not like particular books. Girls mentioned the gender of the children more often than the boys when making book selections. Girls also talked more frequently than the boys about connections to the books as well as how the books chosen for their same-aged peers could help teach/learn about the subject matter. Boys, however, spoke more frequently about one specific content area: space. Fourth grade girls spoke more frequently about the gender of the children and how it related to the particular book choices. Girls also spoke more frequently about the visual appeal of the books, the books' genre, general comments about topics, and on one particular content area: whales.

Individual Genre Preferences by Reading Achievement Level

Question 5 examines the impact of reading achievement level on students' genre preferences. It states: Does reading achievement level (above, at, or below grade level) affect children's book preferences for themselves? Thus, strength of preference is investigated in this question by reading achievement level using the same range used in question 1. The first and fourth grade children represent three reading achievement levels – above grade level, at grade level, and below grade level.

At the first grade level (Table 4.10), when looking at the results through the lens of reading level, there was no differences of any substance among the three levels for both the first grade boys and girls. Most first grade boys and girls demonstrated an equal preference for both genres. If there was a specific genre preference, it was expository text for both boys and girls. There were just a few children who demonstrated a preference for narrative text.

Table 4.10

First Grade Children's Genre Preferences by Gender, and by Reading Achievement Level

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
Gender & level	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
1 st grade					
Boys (n=21)					
Girls (n=21)					
Above	0	0	5	1	1
On	0	0	3	4	0
Below	0	1	4	2	0
Total Boys	0	1	12	7	1
Above	1	0	5	1	0
On	1	0	4	2	0
Below	0	0	5	2	0
Total Girls	3	0	14	5	0

Fourth grade boys and girls (Table 4.11) had similar findings to those for first grade with no major reading level differences. For fourth grade boys, the majority of them demonstrated an equal preference for both genres. If one genre was preferred over the other, it was expository text. For fourth grade girls, the overwhelming preference was for both narrative and expository genres.

Table 4.11

*Fourth Grade Children's Genre Preferences by Gender, and by Reading Achievement**Level*

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
Gender & level					
4th grade					
Boys (n=21)					
Girls (n=21)	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Above	0	1	3	2	1
On	0	2	5	0	0
Below	0	0	4	2	1
Total Boys	0	3	12	4	2
Girls (n=21)					
Above	0	0	6	1	0
On	0	1	6	0	0
Below	0	0	5	0	2
Total Girls	0	1	17	1	2

Perceptions of Genre Preferences of Peers by Reading Achievement Level

The last (sixth) research question is as follows..... Does reading achievement level (above, at, or below grade level) affect children's perceptions of what other boys and girls like to read? Besides making choices concerning their own genre preferences, the children were also asked to make decisions about the types of genre they believed their same-aged peers would like to read. The sixth research question looks at the perceptions that first and fourth grade boys and girls hold about their same-aged peers' genre preferences based on the reading achievement level of the children in the study.

Table 4.12

First Grade Boys' Book Choices for Other Children by Reading Achievement Level

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Boys (n=21)	0	3	8	5	5
Above	0	1	3	1	2
On	0	0	2	3	2
Below	0	2	3	1	1
Girls (n=21)	0	7	12	2	0
Above	0	3	4	0	0
On	0	1	6	0	0
Below	0	3	2	2	0

Table 4.13

First Grade Girls' Book Choices for Other Children by Reading Achievement Level

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Boys (n=21)	0	2	13	3	3
Above	0	1	4	1	1
On	0	1	3	1	2
Below	0	0	6	1	0
Girls (n=21)	1	5	12	2	1
Above	1	2	3	1	0
On	0	2	4	0	1
Below	0	1	5	1	0

Table 4.14

Fourth Grade Boys' Book Choices for Other Children by Reading Achievement Level

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Boys (n=21)	0	4	11	6	0
Above	0	0	6	1	0
On	0	1	4	2	1
Below	0	3	1	3	0
Girls (n=21)	0	4	14	1	2
Above	0	2	4	0	1
On	0	1	5	1	0
Below	0	1	5	0	1

Table 4.15

Fourth Grade Girls' Book Choices for Other Children by Reading Achievement Level

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Boys (n=21)	0	0	19	2	0
Above	0	0	7	0	0
On	0	0	5	2	0
Below	0	0	7	0	0
Girls (n=21)	1	2	18	0	0
Above	1	1	5	0	0
On	0	1	6	0	0
Below	0	0	7	0	0

Overall, perceptions about what boys and girls liked to read appeared to fall along stereotypical lines, regardless of reading achievement level, with the belief that boys liked to read expository text and girls liked to read narrative text. They believed that

boys would either prefer expository text or both genres equally, with a few who believed that boys would prefer narrative text. When selecting books for girls, the perception was that girls either preferred both genres equally or had a preference for narrative text.

When fourth grade boys were selecting books for boys, of those who were above- or on-grade level readers, most of them believed that boys would either equally prefer both genres or prefer expository text. The largest variance occurred with the boys who were below-grade level readers. About half believed that boys would moderately prefer narrative, while the other half believed that boys would moderately prefer expository.

For first grade boys and girls (Tables 4.13 and 4.14), reading achievement level does not appear to strongly affect their perceptions about what boys and girls prefer to read. When selecting books for boys, most first grade boys and girls believed their same-aged male peers would either prefer both genres equally or have a preference for expository text. When selecting books for girls, most first grade boys and girls believed their same-aged female peers would either prefer both genres equally or have a preference for narrative text.

Similarly, for fourth grade boys and girls (Tables 4.15 and 4.16), reading achievement level does not appear to strongly affect their perceptions about what other boys and girls prefer to read. Most boys believed that their same-aged male peers would either prefer both genres equally or have a preference for expository text, and that their same-aged female peers would either prefer both genres equally or have a preference for narrative text. Almost all of the fourth grade girls believed that their same-aged male and female peers would prefer both genres equally.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Overview

In the last decade since Duke's (2000) seminal study concerning the lack of expository text that exists in first grade classrooms in the United States, there has been an "awakening" as such, with researchers (Bryan et al. 2007; Hall, Sabey, & McClellan, 2005; Williams, Hall, Lauer, Stafford, DeSisto, & deCani, 2005) investigating the use of expository text in primary classrooms. As a result, more expository text has been added to reading basal textbooks (Moss, 2008; Moss & Newton, 2002; Pilonieta, 2006). Even with the addition of expository text in the reading basal textbook, content analysis of basal readers indicate the percentage of expository passages are still less than the 50-50 split of narrative and expository passages in reading textbooks that the 2009 National Assessment of Educational Progress (Moss, 2008) recommended. Approximately one third of reading textbook passages at the elementary level are expository. Moreover, a survey of 1,500 primary school teachers reported and two-thirds of texts used during guided reading were narrative (Ford & Opitz, 2008). Recognizing the benefits of including a variety of genres for those students, especially boys, who often do not seem to be interested in reading (Zambo & Brozo, 2009), it is important to continue to investigate children's text preferences.

The overall purpose of this qualitative study was to examine elementary students' preferences for and perceptions about narrative and expository text. This study was a systematic replication and extension of a study conducted at the University of British Columbia (Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish, & Shapiro, 2007) that examined boys' and

girls' genre preferences for self-selection and perceptions about the types of text other boys and girls of their same age might prefer to read.

Chapman et al. (2007) recommended that future research should replicate the study with older students to determine if age could be a factor in genre differences. Thus, both first and fourth grade students were participants in the present investigation. It was also suggested that future studies should replicate the study with children from various socioeconomic levels. Another suggestion was to include children from either urban or rural settings. Children in the current study attended two elementary schools that share a socioeconomically diverse neighborhood in a diverse, urban school district which is the fourth largest school system in the U.S. The two elementary schools reflect the diversity of the school system in terms of both their cultural and linguistic populations.

Another key difference with this investigation and the Chapman et al study is that it was conducted after expository text began appearing more in the curriculum. The school district in which the present investigation occurred adopted a basal reading series that included both narrative and expository genres in at least five years before this study. Our key findings are compared with those of the previous investigation where teachers of first graders in Canada were at initial stages of professional development in incorporating expository text in their classrooms. Thus, both first and fourth graders included here had been exposed to both genres more extensively than participants in the previous investigation.

Key Findings

Personal genre preferences. In the Chapman et al. (2007) study of first grade children, overall both boys and girls chose narrative text (81 books selected for boys, 98

books selected for girls) over expository text (57 boys, 55 girls). In both the Open and Closed book tasks, boys preferred narrative over expository text. Girls chose similar numbers of narrative and expository text during the Open free-choice book task, but clearly preferred narrative in Closed, forced-choice book task. There were similar numbers of boys and girls who either preferred to read either both genres or narrative text.

Our findings were quite different. Boys at both grade levels preferred expository text, although this preference was less pronounced at the fourth grade level. First grade boys selected 84 narrative texts and 151 expository texts. The split for fourth grade boys was 97 narrative and 115 expository. Girls at both grade levels had a more balanced set of preferences and made book choices from both genres (first grade 91 narrative, 113 expository; fourth grade 91 narrative, 94 expository). There were no marked differences in this pattern when looking at children of different reading achievement levels.

Examination of the strength of their genre preferences indicated the results of the present investigation were the opposite of Chapman et al. (2007). While the first graders in that study generally preferred narrative text, the pattern did not hold here. Here the majority of boys and girls liked both genres equally. When there was evidence of strong or moderate strength of preference, expository text was the choice. There are several possible explanations that could potentially explain the differences. The children in the current study attend schools in a school district that adopted a basal reading series in which approximately one third of the reading passages were expository in nature. In addition, the school district created a Reading/Language Arts pacing guide that all classroom teachers use to plan their reading instruction for the year. Children attending

school in the district systemically are being exposed to and taught to read using both narrative and expository passages. Moreover, state standards contain an information and media literacy strand, and so, students are being taught, and exposed to expository text.

Overall, in the past decade, children are being exposed to more expository text and as a result are becoming more drawn to this genre. As Pappas (1991a) predicted children actually prefer to read and interact with expository text, but increased exposure is necessary for this to occur. Pappas (1991a) argued that we need to re-examine our assumptions that young children like or prefer narrative text (p.126) because she found that young children have the capacity to handle the shift in strategies needed when interacting with expository text. With this increased exposure to expository text on topics during reading instruction, children are engaging in text that captures their interests. Interest in the book's topic was a key word that occurred in the language of children in the current study. Whether children were talking about their own interest or considering what their same-aged peers might like to learn about, the topic of the book was vital to their engagement. When a fourth grade boy was asked why he selected the Smithsonian White House book, he said, "well, because you know, everybody's like a politician since President Obama just got elected." A first grade girl expressed her thought about topic interest and engagement this way. "They (girls) only like interesting stuff like bees. They want to know what bees are and because of, bees. They like insects and want to know about them and Killer Whales, they like killer whales so they want to hear all about them."

Engagement theory (Guthrie & Anderson, 1991) recognizes the importance of student motivation, engagement in the learning process, and ultimately the impact on

student learning (Alexander & Fox, 2008) and reading attitudes (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). The findings of this investigation underscore the importance of topic interest in student text selection. In the case of the first grade girls, they had no problem selecting expository books, especially when the topic was engaging to them. As adults, we “engage” when we are interested in the work we do, movies we watch, music we listen to, activities we participate in, and the books we choose to read. Children are no different. Top themes for all of the children in the study, whether they were boys or girls, in first or fourth grade, were the topic and the visual appeal of the books. If children are reading about topics that interest them, engagement will occur, whether the books are narrative or expository. This occurred over and over in the study, where many children clearly demonstrated a preference for both genres. The visual appeal of the book also has a great deal to do with the level of engagement children will have in the books they selected or are selected for them. Visual appeal ranges from the photos or illustrations in the books to the size of the books. Colorful photos and illustrations allow them to see the real world, which help to draw them into the books and get them excited to learn about the topics.

Perceptions for genre preferences for others. While students in this study generally selected both genres or expository text for themselves, this pattern did not hold when boys and girls were choosing books for their same-aged male and female peers. More narrative titles were chosen for girls and more expository titles were chosen for boys. The researchers found no differences in genre preferences among children of different reading levels. Overall, all of the findings of Chapman et al. (2007) were confirmed. At both grade levels and among all reading levels, boys and girls predicted

that boys would prefer expository text and girls would prefer narrative text. However, at fourth grade level the intensity of the difference seemed to diminish. Perhaps, the fourth grade children, because they were a few years older than the first grade children, are beginning to be more flexible in their ideas of what other boys and girls their age prefer to read.

Social constructivism theory guided us in our understanding of gender differences of text preference (Abdel-Haqq, 1998; Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Brooks & Brooks, 1993). Gender is a social construction, and children are socialized into this paradigm. The book choices that children made, for themselves as well as for their same-aged male and female peer, reflected this construction of gender, and what it means to be male and female in our society. Stereotypic ideas and beliefs were an integral part of the books children chose and the reasons why they selected certain books for themselves and, especially, for their same-aged male and female peers.

Rationales for book selections. The first and fourth grade children responded enthusiastically toward the narrative and expository books in the study. Because the first and fourth grade children are still concrete thinkers, having books that they could physically interact with allowed the children to better answer the interview questions and made their responses more genuine. By their responses, it was clear that they had definite reasons behind their particular selections for themselves, such as, “Well, I really do like whales. I haven’t seen one before. But I do like whales, so I would read that one.” Throughout the interviews, it was obvious by their responses that they are observant of their peers and what their peers might like to read. One first grade boy commented, “Well, I picked those two for Max because I just have a funny feeling that

he'd like to read this book, and I've seen him check out killer whales once. He picked out a book similar to it and he was super interested." One first grade girl had noticed certain behaviors in her peers when she said, "Boys are more, like, naughty, and I think they'll like more funny books."

In general, girls at both grade levels provided more reasons for their book choices and fourth graders provided more reasons than first graders. At the first grade, girls made more comments related to the topic of the book and more personal connections to the book. Other than that, there were no striking gender differences at either grade level. The top three themes for both boys and girls were Topic/Content specific, Topic/Content general, and visual appeal. These findings are similar to the themes Chapman et al. (2007) identified (topic and visual were the top two themes). Their third theme, awards/merit, was not a theme found in this study as no child mentioned the possibility that their selected books could win awards.

Analysis of boys' and girls' comments about book selections resulted in identification of eight themes. All eight were present in comments for both boys and girls. Boys made more comments related to "observations" of the content or format of the books. Girls commented more frequently on the topic of the book than boys. Overall, when selecting books for themselves or for others, the themes observation, topic, merit/awards, and visual appeal were the top-rated themes.

Throughout the interviews, the size of the book came up consistently as a reason why certain books were selected to read. Many boys and girls mentioned that they, as well as others, like to read "thick" books, which means that many boys and girls are choosing to read more narrative chapter books.

There were some similarities in the themes of children's reasons for book selections for boys and girls. Topic/content specific and gender were the top two themes for both boys and girls. However, topic was the top-ranked theme for boys while gender was the top-ranked theme for girls. The girls were very aware of the types of books that boys and girls might choose for themselves more than the boys. When commenting about why certain books were selected, very frequently, the gender of the children was mentioned, along with the comment. Girls also made text-to-self or text-to-world connections when discussing their reasons for choosing books for others. The only theme that was the same as in the Chapman et al. (2007) study was the topic of the book. This was the same for both boys and girls. The topic of the book seems to be vital when selecting book for others. Both boys and girls as young as first grade already have socially constructed beliefs about gender and the types of books and topics that each gender would prefer to read.

Implications for Instruction and Assessment

Students need to be exposed to a plethora of ideas, concepts, and topics. The use of narrative genre teaches story structure, resolution, plot, character development, setting while the use of expository genre builds “vocabulary (and) knowledge...addresses children's interest and questions...is the preferred reading material for some children... is ubiquitous in society, (and)...is the key to success in later schooling” (Duke & Bennett-Armistead, 2003, p. 20-22). The findings of this study along with those of previous investigations (Bang-Jensen 2010; Chapman et al. 2007; Davila & Patrick 2010; Farris, Werderich, Nelson, & Fuhler, 2009; Pappas 1991a) suggest that teachers should no longer presume that traditional beliefs about gender and genre preferences continue to be

valid. Educators cannot automatically take for granted that girls are only interested in narrative text and conversely, that boys are only interested in expository text. Educators need to be mindful about the interests of their students as well as knowledgeable about the curriculum that is being taught, and to select books from both narrative and expository genres where children can make personal connections. One way classroom teachers can do this is by selecting books that represent “nontraditional characters engaged in non-stereotypical behaviors” (Frawley, 2005, p. 226). Some other ways are by making sure that both narrative and expository books are selected when preparing units of study and that both genres are utilized frequently during read alouds.

Findings reported here also reveal that primary grade children have gender-related perceptions about what boys and girls their age might like to read and that those perceptions largely persist (however to a lesser degree) in the intermediate grades. It may be as children’s horizons in content area knowledge arise, gender stereotypes diminish. Educators need to recognize their own unconscious stereotypic behaviors and continue to expose all students to a variety of text and teach strategies for mastering a variety of text structures. Teacher might also consider providing students with forums for critical book discussions (e.g., through literature circles) where they can discuss not only the content of the text, but also text genres and physical features (Schlick Noe, 2004).

In the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2009 report, basal reading textbook companies were recommended that the amount of expository text should be raised to fifty percent. Several researchers (Moss, 2008; Moss & Newton, 2002; Pilonieta, 2006) have reported increased amounts of expository text in basal reading

textbooks since Duke's (2000) seminal study that found that first grade students were exposed to expository text for approximately 3.6 minutes per day. However, the amount of expository text continues to make up approximately one third of the text in the basal textbooks. With changes in state standards, talk of national standards, and increased accountability based on high-stakes tests, it would be beneficial for classroom teachers to utilize more expository text during their reading instruction to prepare their students to be successful on the high-stakes tests that utilize at least fifty percent of expository text in their tests. However, for classroom teachers to do this, basal reading textbook companies need to step up and increase the amounts of expository text in the textbooks to at least fifty percent of the text that students will be reading. In the meantime, teachers should be mindful of including a variety of genres in both whole class and Guided Reading instruction (Opitz, 2008).

As stated in the motivation research, an engaged reader is intrinsically motivated to read and will read frequently (Tracey & Morrow, 2006). Children who read frequently become better readers (Stanovich, 1986), which in turn, is a powerful motivator to keep reading because reading is seen as an enjoyable task. Thus, it is imperative that teachers assist students in finding "the right book" particularly for recreational reading.

McKenna and Kear (1990) developed The Elementary Reading Attitude Survey to assess children's attitudes about reading at school and recreational reading. A sample of over 18,000 elementary grade children was used to norm the instrument. In this study, the researcher was able to meet individually with each child for approximately 15 minutes, using actual children's books that allowed children to concretely talk about

books because they were able to browse through the book and talk about what they saw in the books that attracted their attention. It is possible that a book choice task with both Open and Closed choice options (in a digital format) could be used for classroom teachers to assess student book preferences.

Implications for Research

Ascertaining children's book preferences appears to be gaining in popularity in recent years (Bang-Jensen, 2010; Davila & Patrick, 2010; Farris, Werderich, Nelson, & Fuhler, 2009). In Chapman et al. (2007), the researchers interviewed working-class Canadian first grade boys and girls living outside of a major metropolitan city. In the current study, an additional grade level has been added, as well as the fact that the children participating in the study live in a major metropolitan multicultural city in the Southeastern United States that is ethnically and linguistically diverse. Possibilities for future research could include conducting a follow-up study with the current students to see if several more years of reading instruction that include both narrative and expository text influences children's genre preferences. Replicating the current study with children from other ethnic backgrounds that were not represented or in suburban/rural settings are possibilities, as well as extending it by adding additional grade levels of the students. Given the well-documented drop in interest in reading in middle schools (Brozo, 2002; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002), research about book preferences in that age group is also worthy of exploration.

Opitz (2010) found that seventy-five percent of text used during Guided Reading instruction is narrative. Similar to the experimental study done by Duke, Martineau, Frank, and Bennett-Armistad (2005), it is imperative that additional studies be conducted

such as experimental studies that compare the increased and systematic use of expository text during Guided Reading instruction with Guided Reading instruction that uses current amounts of expository text.

The results of Duke's (2000) study led to significant changes in the basal reading textbooks with companies increasing the amount of expository text passages from approximately 18% of all text passages before the study to present day amounts of one fourth to one third of all text passages. However, Duke's (2000) study was conducted over a decade ago. With the increase of expository text passages in basal reading textbooks, it would be helpful to conduct further observational research to discover if the amount of time that young children get to interact with expository text has increased during the school day.

Limitations of Study

One limitation of this study is generalizability, or more accurately, transferability, due to the small sample size. There were 84 children representing two elementary schools located in close proximity to one another in a major, multicultural city. In qualitative studies, unlike in quantitative studies, one can only make a "working hypothesis" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316) because of the nature of approach to data collection.

The naturalist cannot specify the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can only provide the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316).

The findings of this study are suggestive of the genre preferences of first and fourth grade children. The current study replicated the Chapman et al. (2007) study with first grade children, and extended the study by including fourth grade children, a variable that was not examined by Chapman et al. (2007). Doing so enhances the generalizability of the study (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 67) – particularly in terms of student perceptions of the genre preferences of other boys and girls. It is possible that findings might be quite different in different school systems and in different periods of time. Additional research using other research methodologies and in additional contexts is warranted.

Another limitation is that, because the interviews are conducted individually with the children, there was a possibility of treatment diffusion (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 139) if the children who had already been interviewed talked with children yet to be interviewed about the book tasks and/or the books involved in the study.

Finally, some of the children involved in the study did not talk and share their thoughts as openly and freely as other children. These children were almost exclusively first grade students, namely those children considered to be below grade level readers had more difficulty expressing their thoughts. However, a few first grade girls who were considered to be above grade level readers gave limited responses, typically remaining silent when asked why particular books were selected. These children may have been nervous speaking with an unknown adult, despite the researcher's attempts to make the children feel at ease during the interview. There is a definite power differential between children and adults because of the dependent nature of childhood (Zwiers & Morrisette, 1999). "Children will often willingly and enthusiastically enter the interview situation.

But some children will respond in ways they think will please adults” (p. 33). There are strategies that a researcher/interviewer can use to illicit longer responses, such as providing a structure that allows children to use their own words, such as “appreciating, encouraging, paraphrasing, summarizing, empathizing, and clarifying” (Zwiers & Morrisette, 1999, p. 80) . Instead of overwhelming the child with question after question, the researcher may make a comment to “ask the child to elaborate, or simply acknowledging the child’s response” (Vasquez, 2000, p. 7). While these ideas were kept in mind during data collection, nonetheless, a few students were less than forthcoming with their reasons. Replication of this study with classroom teachers as data collectors might be interesting as they already have an established rapport with the children.

Conclusions

Even as early as first grade, both boys and girls are beginning to internalize messages about gender, whether they were positive or negative. Whether these messages are coming from within the home, within the school, or within their communities, young children are listening to what is being told to them about what it means to be male and female in our society (Church, 2005; Connell, 1998; Paechter, 2007). The resulting messages will come out in the genre of the books they choose to read and should read, as well as the genre of books they believe other boys and girls their age chose to read.

The quality of expository text has changed dramatically over the past decade. Gone are the incredibly dense encyclopedias with black and white pictures written at a level impossible for younger children to be able to understand (Bryan et al., 2007). In its place are companies, such as Time for Kids, producing expository text with colorful images and directed at and written for young children. Children are interacting with them

in school as many of these publishing companies have teamed up with basal textbook companies to produce them in reading, math, social studies, and science. These new expository texts have even made their way into the children's homes because they are being sold in bookstores as well.

The evidence in this investigation indicates that the landscape of children's book choices is changing. With an increased exposure to expository text, as well as the empowerment of girls in our society over the last few decades they are just as capable as boys are in areas of math and science, young girls are not viewing narrative text as their only realm. Expository text, with its real life images and information, is being viewed as exciting and a genre that both boys and girls are capable of both enjoying and learning from at the same time. It was mentioned during the book task interviews by first grade girls that they enjoyed looking at "real things". The girls showed a willingness to look past the stereotypical beliefs that girls prefer to read narrative text because, as one first grade girl put it, "They could help you learn more of spiders, whales, outer space, the environment, and all those kind of things, and they could help you so you could be careful of things that are dangerous."

The face of narrative text, particularly for boys, is changing as well. *The Harry Potter* "genre" of a mix of action, adventure, and fantasy that is occurring in many books, has been influential in children's engagement as it helps to fuel their desire to read. *The Diary of a Wimpy Kid* realistic fiction series has been influential as well in getting all children deeply engaged and excited about reading. Thus, more and more narrative texts are appearing in the marketplace which are sparking engagement of males.

From this study, the reality is that both boys and girls, first and fourth grade alike, enjoy both narrative and expository texts. Realizing that expository text still only makes up about a third of the total passages in elementary reading basal textbooks, it is imperative that teachers and administrators make a concerted effort to increase the amount of expository text being presented to children in the classroom. A vital way to do this is to begin by broadening our definition of literacy, and what it means to be literate in this post-modern world. Reading material should also include the alternative literacies, such as manuals, screenshots, reviews, blogs, websites, and MMORPGs that boys and girls are engaging in outside the classroom (Blair & Sanford, 2004; Sanford & Madill, 2007).

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Open and Closed Book Task Interview Questions

1. Which of these books would **you** like to read in school or at home if you had the opportunity to do so?
2. Why did you choose these books?
3. Which of these books would you think **a girl** your age would like to read?
4. Why did you choose these books?
5. Which of these books would you think **a boy** your age would like to read?
6. Why did you choose these books?

*For the Open task, the children may choose up to all 10 books. For the Closed task, the children will be forced to make a decision between the narrative and expository book per topic.

APPENDIX B

Criteria for Children's Books Chosen for Book Tasks

1. Avoid book topics that are perceived as preferred by one gender, such as hockey, monsters, ballet, or princesses
2. Choose gender-neutral topics such as sea and/or land animals, space/planets, American symbols/Presidents
3. Choose books that have visual appeal such as photographs, engaging illustrations, and bright colors
4. Choose books that allow children to make connections to the world, such as environmental issues and Presidents (including Obama)
5. Stories or expository selections should not be found in the 1st and 4th grade Houghton Mifflin (FL) Reading basal
6. Narrative and expository selections should contain similar amounts of print per page
7. Font size should be similar between narrative and expository selections
8. Books chosen for book tasks should be similar in their visual appeal/tactile quality
9. No books chosen will contain popular characters, such as Spider-Man, Sponge Bob or anything Disney, as well as traditional characters such as Little Red Riding Hood or the Three Little Pigs
10. Books should not have obvious male or female main characters
11. No chapter books for 1st graders
12. Books will not be on the Amazon.com Bestseller list for 4-8 year olds and 9-12 year olds.
13. Chapter books will not have movies made from them, like Holes, Hoot, or Because of Winn-Dixie
14. Books chosen will go through Flesch's readability analysis and/or Accelerated Reader database

APPENDIX C

Table A
Children's Books Used in Study

Narrative	Expository
1 st grade	1 st grade
<i>Shh! The Whale is Smiling</i> (Nobisso, 1992)	<i>Whales</i> (Lindeen, 2005)
<i>Baby Beluga</i> (Raffi, 1990)	<i>See More Readers: Killer Whales - Level 1</i> (Simon)
<i>Roaring Rockets</i> (Mitton and Parker, 1997)	<i>Planets</i> (Rustad, 2009)
<i>Doodle Dog in Space</i> (Seltzer, 2005)	<i>Planets Around the Sun</i> (Simon, 2002) <i>The Planets</i> (Rustad, 2009)
<i>One Hundred Shoes</i> (Ghigna, 2002)	<i>Are you a Spider?</i> (Allen & Humphries, 2000)
<i>I Like Bugs</i> (Brown, 1999)	<i>Bees!</i> (Time for Kids Editors, 2005)
<i>A Trip to the White House</i> (Shea, 2007)	<i>The Story of the White House</i> (Kennedy, 2009)
<i>A Picnic in October</i> (Bunting, 2004)	<i>The Statue of Liberty</i> (Douglas, 2003)
<i>Over in the Jungle</i> (Berkes, 2007)	<i>I Love Our Earth</i> (Martin and Sampson, 2006)
<i>The Desert is My Mother</i> (Mora, 2008)	<i>Arbor Day</i> (Bennett, 2003)
4 th grade	4 th grade
<i>The Snail and the Whale</i> (Donaldson and Scheffer, 2003)	<i>Beluga Whales</i> (Squire, 2007)
<i>A Garden of Whales</i> (Davis, 2002)	<i>Killer Whales: Animal Predators</i> (Markle, 2004)
<i>The Adventures of Commander Zack Proton and the Wrong Planet</i> (Anderson, 2007)	<i>Extreme Planets Q&A</i> (Smithsonian, 2008)
<i>Give Me Some Space</i> (Agnew, 2003)	<i>Planets!</i> (Editors of Time for Kids, 2005)
<i>The Mysteries of Spider Kane</i> (Osborne, 1993)	<i>Spiders!</i> (Time for Kids Editors, 2005)
<i>Insectlopedia</i> (Florian, 1998)	<i>Bugs and Bugscicles</i> (Hansen, 2010)
<i>The Mystery in New York City</i> (Marsh, 2003)	<i>The Statue of Liberty</i> (Braithwaite, 2003)
<i>A Big Cheese for the White House: The True Tale of a Tremendous Cheddar</i> (Fleming, 1999)	<i>White House Q&A</i> (Smithsonian, 2008)
<i>Looney Little</i> (Atson, 2007)	<i>The ABCs of the Environment</i> (Kalman, 2009)
<i>The Web at Dragonfly Pond</i> (Ellis and Maydak, 2006)	<i>Planet Earth</i> (Chancellor, 2006)

APPENDIX E

Pilot Study

Results

The results section is organized by research question. It begins with a description of the overall frequency and strength of individual boys' and girls' preferences for narrative and expository text, as well as their rationales for their individual genre preferences. It continues with perceptions that first and fourth grade boys and girls have about genre preferences of their same-aged peers including their rationale for these perceptions. Finally, the section ends with the effect that reading achievement level has on first and fourth grade boys' and girls' preferences for narrative and expository text and perceptions they have about the genre preferences of their same-aged peers.

Individual Gender Preferences

The first research question addresses individual preferences for narrative or expository text. Question one is: Do first- and fourth-grade children prefer narrative or expository text, and does gender contribute to differences in their preferences? As in the Chapman et al. (2007) study, frequency is examined in two ways: frequency of book choices and frequency of individual children making those book choices.

Frequency of book choices. Table 1 presents the overall number of narrative and expository book choices first and fourth grade boys and girls made when choosing books for themselves. For the Open task, children could select as many books as they liked up to 10 books (5 narrative; 5 expository). In the Closed task, children were presented pairs of books (1 narrative and 1 expository on the same topic), and were asked to select which of the two they preferred. Five sets (ie: pairs of books) were included in the forced-choice task.

Table 1
Frequency of Books Children Chose for Themselves by Grade and by Gender.

Total Number of Books Chosen	Open Task				Closed Task			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
1 st grade								
Boys (n=7)	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Girls (n=7)	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
(Max = 35)	15	25	9	22	9	23	21	9
4 th grade								
Boys (n=5)	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Girls (n=5)	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
(Max = 25)	9	11	13	5	11	14	13	12

Note: Narr. = Narrative; Expos. = Expository

The results of the pilot suggest that first grade boys overwhelmingly chose expository text for themselves in both the Open and Closed book tasks. In the Closed book task, the preference for expository text was for boys 2 to 1 over narrative text. In the Open book task, the first grade girls overwhelmingly chose expository text for themselves, but when forced to make a choice between narrative and expository titles of various topics in the Closed book task, overwhelmingly chose narrative text for themselves.

A different pattern emerged regarding the genre choices of fourth grade boys (Table 1). In both Open and Closed book tasks, expository text was the chosen text, but the margin over narrative text was not as pronounced as the first grade children.

For fourth grade girls, narrative was the text preference with narrative titles being chosen more than twice as often as expository titles. However, expository text was chosen evenly with narrative text in the Closed book task, especially when the expository text topic was animals.

Fourth grade girls chose slightly more narrative texts than first grade girls in the Open task, as well as slightly more expository texts in the Closed task. Fourth grade boys chose slightly more narrative texts than first grade boys in the Closed, forced-choice book task.

Frequency of children preferring books in each genre. To examine the data from another perspective, the frequency of children preferring one genre over another in each task was determined. Table 2 represents the frequency of individual children making their particular book choices during the two book tasks.

Table 2
Frequency of Children Preferring Expository or Narrative Book Choices for Themselves by Grade and by Gender

Number of Children	Open Task				Closed Task			
1 st grade								
Boys (n=7)	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Girls (n=7)	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
	0	5	1	6	2	5	6	0
4 th grade								
Boys (n=5)	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Girls (n=5)	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.
	2	2	4	1	2	3	2	3

Note: Narr. = Narrative; Expos. = Expository

At the first grade level, five boys chose expository text in the Open book task. In the Closed book task, more boys chose expository text over narrative text. Also, there were two first grade boys who demonstrated equal preferences for both narrative and expository text during the Open book task. Most of the first grade girls chose expository text during the Open book task, but chose narrative text during the Closed, forced-choice task. One first grade girl did not choose any of the books shown to her in the Closed book task.

At the fourth grade level, two boys preferred narrative text while two others preferred expository text in the Open book task. The fifth boy did not have a genre preference, choosing equal amounts of narrative and expository books. Fourth grade girls, however, demonstrated a preference for narrative text with four girls choosing narrative text as their preferred genre during the Open book task. One girl preferred expository text. During the Closed book task, an equal number of boys and girls showed a preference for expository text. Three boys chose expository text as their preferred genre, while the other two boys chose narrative text as their preferred genre. Fourth grade girls showed the same results as boys in the Closed task, with three girls choosing expository text and two girls choosing narrative text as their preferred genre.

Strength of Preference. Table 3 provides data regarding the strength of the first and fourth grade boys' and girls' preferences for either narrative or expository text and collapses data from open and closed tasks. Strength is the intensity of the children's preferences for one type of text over the other. During the Open and Closed book tasks, each child interacted with and made decisions about 10 books for a total of 20 books. Half of the books were narrative and the other half were expository. Narrative text choices were added together across both book tasks. Expository text choices across the two book tasks were collapsed as well.

Given that the criterion for strength was somewhat vague in the Chapman et al. (2007) study, we devised the following criteria. Level of strength was determined using the following criteria:

4. Moderate strength was the selection of 7 or 8 books in a genre and/or a difference of 4 or 5 books between the two genres.

5. Strong strength was the selection of 9 or more books in a genre and/or a difference of 6 or more books between two genres.
6. All other were coded as “liked both equally.”

Table 3

Individual Children’s Genre Preferences by Grade and by Gender.

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
1 st grade					
Boys (n=7)	0	0	2	2	3
Girls (n=7)	1	0	5	1	0
4 th grade					
Boys (n=5)	1	0	1	2	1
Girls (n=5)	0	1	4	0	0

Summary of findings

Question one asked, Do first- and fourth-grade children prefer narrative or expository text, and does gender contribute to differences in their preferences?

When examining the overall number of books chosen by first grade boys, expository books were selected with more frequency than narrative books. The preference for expository text by first grade boys holds up when looking at it through the number of first grade boys selecting expository text in both Open and Closed book tasks. Through further examination by looking at the strength of their genre preferences, the

choice of expository text by first grade boys continues to hold up because five of the seven boys either moderately or strongly preferred expository text while the other two preferred both genres equally.

First grade girls overwhelmingly selected expository books as their preferred genre during the Open, free-choice book task, but overwhelmingly chose narrative books during the Closed book task when they were forced to choose between a narrative and expository book on the same topic. This liking for both narrative and expository genres continues to hold up when examining the number of first grade girls selecting narrative and expository books during the Open and Closed book tasks. When looking at the strength of their genre preferences, the liking of both genres continues to hold up, with five of the seven girls demonstrating a liking for both genres.

When looking at the preferences of genre for fourth grade boys, each of the three tables corroborates the fact that there is no clear genre preference at this age level. The number of narrative and expository books selected overall is fairly similar, with almost equal amounts of fourth grade boys choosing narrative and expository book titles. When looking at strength of genre preference, there continues to be no dominant preference, although there appears to be a slight preference for expository text over narrative text.

Fourth grade girls' genre preferences appear to mirror those of first grade girls. In the Open task, more narrative texts are selected, but in the Closed, forced-choice task, almost equal numbers of both narrative and expository texts are selected. These results hold up when examining the number of fourth grade girls selecting narrative and expository books, with more girls selecting narrative text during the Open book task, but almost equal numbers of girls selecting narrative and expository books during the Closed

book task. When looking at strength of genre preference, almost all of the fourth grade girls showed a liking for both genres.

Rationale for Individual Genre Preferences

Research question two focuses on students' rationale for individual genre preferences and reads as follows: Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their own book preferences? Throughout the child interviews, when making book selections for themselves, students were asked why particular books were selected. The researcher recorded notes and salient quotes as the children provided their reasons. As the first and fourth grade interview transcripts were coded, some common themes began to emerge in the words of the children. Once the transcripts were coded, similar comments made by the children were grouped during the axial coding, and nine distinct themes emerged. In general, across all of the themes of comments made during the child interviews, boys commented more frequently overall than the girls.

Table 4 defines each of the nine themes that emerged in the child interviews. Five themes were the same as the original study. However, there were two themes from the original study that did not emerge in this study. There were also four new themes that emerged in this study that had not emerged in the original study. Along with the themes' definitions, examples of quotes from both first and fourth grade children's interviews are included. Table 5 ranks the themes from most popular to least popular, with the numbers of comments made by first and fourth grade boys and girls.

Table 4

Themes from Children's Rationales for Book Choices for Themselves

Theme	In original study	Definition	1 st grade	4 th grade
Gender	Yes	Comments represent notions about gender	No comments made	"Boys/we don't like to read. We want to get to the point."
Visual Appeal	Yes	Pictures or photographs on cover and/or inside the book appeal to the child and are engaging	"It looks like a cartoon."	"Looks like its outgoing and weirdish and I like that."
Topic/Content	Yes	The topic or content of the book is one that is of interest to the child and/or is age-appropriate for the grade level.	"They give you information."	"Facts, not fairy tales."
Observations about text	Yes	Comments made about specific aspects of a book.	"Number 2 has too many pages."	No comments made
Humor	Yes	Content in book contains humor either by words or through pictures	"Fantasy makes it funner."	"I like ridiculous things that really happened."
Teach/Learn	No	Books can teach about/you can learn about a particular topic	"They look really interesting, and maybe I could learn more about them."	"I love learning about space, animals. I like learning about new things I never knew about."
Genre	No	Comments reflect the particular genre of the book	No comments made	"I like reading nonfiction. I'm not too much into stories."
Age-appropriate	No	Books are seen by children as not	"Number 20 is babyish."	"They look like books I'd read,

		appropriate for their age		and the other ones look like books I'd read when I was younger."
General	No	Comments are ambiguous, not fully thought out, or generalized/not specific	"I like interesting books."	"I think they'd be really interesting."

Table 5

First and Fourth Grade Boys' and Girls' Reasons for Genre Preferences

Major Themes comments	# of 1 st grade comments		# of 4 th grade	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Visual Appeal	5	1	5	3
Topic/Content	5	2	4	4
Humor	1	1	4	0
Teach/Learn	0	1	1	2
Observations about Text	2	1	0	0
Age appropriate	1	0	0	1
General	0	0	1	0
Gender	0	0	1	0
Genre	0	0	1	0
Total	14	6	17	10

Visual Appeal. The pictures, whether they were photographs or illustrations, were the number one theme that emerged as children spoke about their book choices for themselves. For first grade boys, they made comments such as "I like real stories with real pictures." and "It looks like a cartoon." First grade girls commenting about the visual appeal of the books said that "They look fun." Fourth grade boys mentioned things such as "interesting pictures, more realistic" and "I'm not going to judge a book by

its cover.” Fourth grade girls made comments such as the “illustrations look nice” and that the book “looks like its outgoing and weirdish and I like that.”

Topic/Content. Topic/content was another theme with a similar amount of comments First grade boys mentioned that the books “tell you stuff” and “this one is super cool about planets.” First grade girls made comments such as “I like real stories with real pictures.” Comments such as “facts, not fairy tales” were made by fourth grade boys. Girls in fourth grade made comments such as “they are more poetic” and “I wanna see about animals. Are they funny or are they real?”

Humor. Humor was the third theme that emerged, with first grade boys making comments such as “some are pretty funny.” First grade girls made comments such as “fantasy makes it funner.” At the fourth grade level, only boys made comments about humor. Comments about humor included “I like ridiculous things that really happened.”

Teach/Learn. First grade girls as well as both fourth grade boys and girls spoke about the idea that the books could teach/you could learn about the topics. First grade girls said things such as “they look really interesting and maybe I could learn more about them.” Fourth grade boys made comments such as “I love learning about space, animals. I like learning about new things that I never knew about.” Fourth grade girls mentioned that “they sound interesting and could make me learn more.”

Observations about Text. The next most frequent theme was observations about text, although only first grade boys and girls made comments. First grade boys made comments such as “number 2 has too many words.” For first grade girls, comments included “they look interesting.”

Age-Appropriate. The age-appropriateness of the text was a theme that first grade boys and fourth grade girls spoke of when talking about their own preferences. A first grade boy made this comment about why he did not choose a particular book stating “number 20 is babyish.” The fourth grade girl who spoke about the age-appropriateness of the books made the comment “they look like books I’d read and the other ones look like books I’d read when I was younger.”

General. This theme emerged in the comments made by one fourth grade boys when asked why he chose particular books for himself. He made a very general comment about all of the books chosen, saying “I think they’d be really interesting.”

Gender. Another theme that emerged was one of comments made about gender. A fourth grade boy, when speaking about the book choices he made for himself said “we don’t like to read. We want to get to the point.”

Genre. The final theme that was mentioned was that of the specific genre of the book. One fourth grade boy spoke about genre saying “I like reading nonfiction. I’m not too much into stories.”

Summary of findings

Research question two focuses on students’ rationale for individual genre preferences and reads as follows: Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their own book preferences?

Overall, boys, both in first and fourth grade, tended to make more of the comments during the interviews. At the first grade level, boys made more than twice as many comments as the girls. At the fourth grade, boys made close to twice as many comments as the girls. However, there was one theme where only girls made comments.

This theme was about the idea that the books could teach you and/or that you could learn from them.

There were three dominant themes of students' rationales for genre preferences that were shared by both first and fourth grade boys and girls. The first theme dealt with the visual appeal of the books. The students spoke about the pictures and colors on the covers, as well as the quality of pictures/photographs in the books. The second common theme that students commented on was that of the topic or content of the book. The final common theme dealt with humor, that the pictures and/or the book in general were funny and how they enjoyed its humor.

Perceptions of Genre Preferences of Peers

The third question addresses the perceptions that first and fourth grade boys' and girls' hold about what the particular genre they feel that their same-age peers would choose to read, and what role gender plays in these perceptions. The question is as follows: What are first graders' and fourth graders' perceptions of what other first- and fourth-grade boys and girls like to read, and does gender contribute to differences in their perceptions?

In both Open and Closed book tasks, first and fourth grade boys and girls were asked to select books that they believed their same-aged male and female peers would prefer to read. In the Open book task, the children were allowed to select up to 10 books for their same-aged peers. In the Closed book task, children were asked to select either the narrative or the expository book from the pair of books on each topic. Table 6 displays the frequency of narrative and expository texts selected for their same-aged peers, while Table 7 presents the number of children selecting narrative and expository text for their same-aged peers.

At the first grade level (Table 6), boys believed that first grade girls would prefer narrative texts in both tasks, with a preference of more than 2 to 1 in the Closed, forced-choice book task. When selecting books for their same-aged male peers, first grade boys selected a few more narrative texts than expository texts during the Open, free-choice book task. However, during the Closed book task, boys overwhelmingly believed that their same-aged male peers would prefer to read expository text. For first grade girls, narrative texts for their female, same-aged peers was consistently selected during both Open and Closed book tasks. When selecting books for their male, same-aged peers, first grade girls overwhelmingly choose narrative text during the Open book task, but selected more expository texts during the Closed book task.

At the fourth grade level (Table 6), boys believed both their male and female same-aged peers would prefer to read narrative text over expository text in both the Open and Closed book tasks. When choosing books for their male, same-aged peers, the numbers of selected narrative and expository texts were closer together in both tasks. When boys were selecting texts for the female, same-aged peers, narrative text was clearly the text choice that they believed the girls would prefer to read during both Open and Closed book tasks. Fourth grade girls choose narrative text for their female, same-aged peers at the same level as their own personal text selections during the Open book task, but overwhelmingly believed that the girls would prefer to read narrative text in the Closed book task.

Table 6
Frequency of Children's Choices for Other Boys and Girls by Grade and by Gender.

Number of Books Chosen		Open Task				Closed Task			
		Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
1 st grade									
Boys (n=7)									
Girls (n=7)									
Choices for girls	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	
	20	14	20	15	19	10	22	13	
(Max = 35)									
Choices for boys	18	16	20	8	9	24	15	17	
(Max = 35)									
4 th grade									
Boys (n=5)									
Girls (n=5)									
Choices for girls	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	Narr.	Expos.	
	12	4	11	8	16	9	19	6	
(Max = 25)									
Choices for boys	11	8	10	11	15	10	13	12	
(Max = 25)									

Table 7 presents the number of first and fourth grade boys and girls who made narrative and expository book selections for their same-aged peers during the Open and Closed book task.

In each of the two book tasks, children were asked to make narrative and expository book selections, choosing books that they believed that their same-aged male and female peers would prefer to read. There were three possibilities of genre preferences that came as a result of the book selections. The first was a perceived

preference for expository text. Second, there was a perceived preference for narrative text. Third, there would be an equal preference for both genres. This table represents only the number of children that believed their same-aged male and female peers would have a preference for narrative or expository text on each of the two book tasks. If children believed their same-aged male and female peers would have no preference for one genre over the other by choosing equal numbers of narrative and expository text, they were not included in this particular table.

At the first grade level when making book selections for other first grade girls, three of the seven boys believed that other first grade girls would prefer narrative text during both Open and Closed book tasks. Two of the seven believed that their same-aged female peers would prefer to read expository text during the Open book task, while only one boy felt his same-aged female peer would prefer to read expository text. First grade girls were almost split evenly between narrative and expository text during the Open book task when they were free to select any or all of the ten possible books for their same-aged female peers. However, during the Closed book choice when they were forced to make decisions between narrative and expository book titles on similar topics, first grade girls overwhelmingly believed that other first grade girls would prefer to read the narrative titles.

When making book selections for other first grade boys, the boys were almost evenly split between narrative and expository text while making book selections for their same-aged male peers during the Open book task. However, first grade boys overwhelmingly choose expository text for other first grade boys during the Closed, forced-choice book task. First grade girls differed with the first grade boys in both Open

and Closed book tasks when selecting for their same-aged male peers. They overwhelmingly selected narrative text as the preferred text for other first grade boys during the Open book task, but were closely split between the two genres during the Closed, forced-choice book task.

At the fourth grade level when choosing between narrative and expository book titles for other fourth grade girls, most fourth grade boys believed that their same-aged female peers would prefer narrative text in both the Open and Closed book tasks. In the Open book task, fourth grade were almost split evenly between narrative and expository text. However, most girls believed that other fourth grade girls would prefer narrative text during the Closed, forced-choice book task.

When making book selections for other fourth grade boys, the boys were evenly split between narrative and expository text as the preferred genre during the Open, free-choice book task. During the Closed book task, most fourth grade boys believed that their same-aged male peers would prefer to read expository text. When it came to other fourth grade boys, most girls believed that their same-aged male peers would prefer to read narrative text in both the Open and Closed book tasks.

Table 7

Children's Book Choices for Other Boys and Girls by Grade and by Gender

Number of Children	Open Task				Closed Task			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
1 st grade Boys (n=7) Girls (n=7)								
Choices for girls	Narr. 3	Expos. 2	Narr. 3	Expos. 2	Narr. 3	Expos. 3	Narr. 6	Expos 1
Choices for boys	3	4	6	0	1	6	3	4
4 th grade Boys (n=5) Girls (n=5)								
Choices for girls	Narr. 5	Expos. 0	Narr. 2	Expos. 2	Narr. 4	Expos. 1	Narr. 4	Expos 1
Choices for boys	2	2	4	1	4	1	4	2

Summary of findings

The third question addresses the perceptions that first and fourth grade boys' and girls' hold about what the particular genre they feel that their same-age peers would choose to read, and what role gender plays in these perceptions.

When it comes to the total number of books selected by children for other boys and girls their age, it is apparent that both first grade boys believe that other first grade girls would prefer narrative text in both the Open, free choice task, and the Closed, forced choice task. First grade girls appear to share similar beliefs concerning other first grade girls by selecting more narrative books in both the Open and Closed book tasks.

However, when it came to other same-aged boys, gender does appear to play a role in their book decisions. First grade boys, through the number of books selected, believed that other first grade boys would overwhelmingly choose expository text during the Closed task. On the other hand, first grade girls were not as sure that their same-aged

male peers would choose one genre over the other. The first grade girls selected similar numbers of both narrative and expository books for other first grade boys.

When looking at it through the lens of numbers of children selecting books for other same-aged peers, the belief that first grade boys prefer narrative text is less apparent. In the Open book task, the numbers of boys and girls believed that other first grade boys would prefer narrative text was similar to those that believed that other first grade boys would prefer expository text. There were two children who are not represented on the chart because they believed that their same-aged male peers would have a liking for both narrative and expository text.

Rationale for Perceptions of Genre Preferences

Research question four investigates the reasons students provide for peer preferences for reading genre. It reads... Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their perceptions of other fourth grade boys' and girls' book preferences?

Comments made regarding peer preferences fell into many of the same themes as rationales provided for personal preferences. Comments were not made for two previous themes (genre and age-appropriateness). No new themes emerged. In Table 8 are the nine themes that emerged in the interviews, along with the definition for each theme as well as a salient first and fourth grade quote. Table 9 lists the seven themes that emerged during the child interviews when they were talking about why specific books were chosen for their same-aged peers, along with the numbers of quotes made by first and fourth grade children.

Table 8

Themes from Children's Rationales for Book Choices for Other Boys and Girls

Theme	In original study	Definition	1 st grade	4 th grade
Gender	Yes	Comments represent notions about gender	"Cause boys don't like girl stuff."	"Boys like predators, not like girls who like cute animals."
Visual Appeal	Yes	Pictures or photographs on cover and/or inside the book appeal to the child and are engaging	"The books have good pictures."	"Cool cover" "Longer books waste time."
Topic/Content	yes	The topic or content of the book is one that is of interest to the child and/or is age-appropriate for the grade level.	"Spiders are scary."	"Some of my friends like whales."
Observations about text	Yes	Comments made about specific aspects of a book.	Number 17 "is just a bunch of words."	"It will catch their attention."
Humor	Yes	Content in book contains humor either by words or through pictures	"Some are pretty funny."	"Everyone likes fictional tales that give you a laugh."
Teach/Learn	No	Books can teach about/you can learn about a particular topic	"They might like to learn new stuff."	"Because I think they might learn something new."
General	No	Comments are ambiguous, not fully thought out, or generalized/not specific	"I just know they'd like them."	"That's a hard question."

Table 9

First and Fourth Grade Boys' and Girls' Reasons for Book Choices for Other Boys and Girls

Major Themes	# of 1 st grade comments		# of 4 th grade comments	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Gender	9	12	15	30
Visual	5	3	9	0
Observations	2	0	2	2
Humor	2	0	2	1
Teach/Learn	0	2	1	1
Topic/Content	0	1	0	1
General	1	2	1	0
Total	19	20	30	35

Gender. Of the seven response types in which there were responses, most of them contained just a few responses. There was one category that captured almost all of the responses made by the children during the interviews. These were comments related to gender, typically explaining why a particular book was or was not chosen for boys or girls. Both first and fourth grade girls made gender-related comments at a rate of 2 to 1 over the boys. Gender comments from first grade boys ranged from “they’re boyish” and “cause boys don’t like girl stuff” to “girls hardly like things that teach them anything” and “they’re more girlish”. First grade girls’ gender comments ranged from “girls like things that are fun” and “girls really don’t like real stuff” to “they look girly. The boys would say these are for girls” and the books “have too many words for boys”. Fourth grade boys’ gender comments ranged from “boys like to read about cool creatures, funny characters, mysteries...” and “they’re more animated. They’re more like stories to them” to “they’re more of a girl-type book” and “They are books that girls would do; they’re kind of cute”. Fourth grade girls’ gender comments ranged from “Boys mostly like

nonfiction” and “Boys like predators, not like girls who like cute animals” to “most girls like calm things, not predators”, “many girls like the same things I like” and “girls are more calm and like cute things”. The idea that girls like cute things was common amongst first grade boys as well as both fourth grade boys and girls.

Visual Appeal. Besides comments about gender, there were comments made about the visual appeal of the books, observations about the text, the topic/content of the books, that the book could teach/you could learn about the topic, humor, the genre of the books, and the age-appropriateness of the books, as well as comments that were vague in nature.

First grade boys made comments included those about visual appeal with comments such as “the books have good pictures” and “they like the front cover”. Observations about text were another category of responses saying that the books chosen for others “look interesting”. First grade boys also commented about the humor, indicating that others would enjoy the books saying “some are pretty funny”. One of the first grade girls’ comments was in the category of visual appeal, saying “they look fun and they have boys in it”. The topic/content of the book was the second category in which first grade girls made comments, stating that “spiders are scary”. The concept that a chosen book could teach/you could learn about the topic was the third category saying that their same-aged peers “might like to learn new stuff”.

Both fourth grade boys and girls, during the interviews when sharing their thoughts about what their same-aged peers might like to read, made comments related to the visual appeal of the books chosen, the books’ humor, that the books could teach/you could learn about the topic and observations about the text, while fourth grade girls also

made comments related to the topic/content of the chosen books. Comments about the visual appeal of the books ranged from “the book looks nice....easy, simple book, not too much to read” and “they look short so we can get right to the point” made by boys to a comment about “low readers and high readers” made by one fourth grade girl. Overall, fourth grade boys made many more comments about the visual appeal of the books than the girls when choosing books for their same-aged peers.

Humor. Humor was another common theme that both fourth grade boys and girls spoke about with comments such as “everyone likes fictional tales that make you laugh” made by a boy to a comment about a specific title made by a girl saying it “looks funnier”. The third common theme among both boys and girls was that the chosen books could teach/you could learn about the topic. Boys made comments such as “because I think they might learn something new” while girls said “they should learn more about stars and planets”.

Observations about Text. Observations about the text was another common theme that both fourth grade boys and girls spoke about when selecting books for their same-aged peers. The boys thought the books they selected “will catch their attention” while girls talked about how “characters go on adventures” when speaking about the books. The topic/content of the books was the only category where fourth grade girls made comments whereas boys did not, saying “some of my friends like whales.”

Teach/Learn. The concept that books can provide an opportunity to teach about concepts and/or that a person can learn from books was another theme that emerged. This particular theme had just a few responses from two first grade girls and one fourth grade boy. The first grade children believed “they (others) might like to learn new stuff”

and “they (others) might like them and learn new stuff about these books.” The fourth grade boy echoed similar thoughts when talking about what books other same-aged children would prefer to read when he said “Because I think they might learn something new.”

Topic/Content. The topic of the book was a theme with several responses when children were talking about their own book choices, but there was just one response when speaking about what other same-aged peers would like to read. One first grade girl, when sharing her rationale for the books she chose for her same-aged peers, she said “spiders are scary.”

General. The final theme that emerged came through general comments that seemed to be more of an overall comment rather than related to something specific. When asked about his rationale for selecting books for his same-aged peers, a first grade boy said “I just know they’d like them.” One first grade girl, when talking about her selections for other same-aged peers said “I like interesting books.” When one first grade girl was asked to choose books for other first grade boys, she replied “that’s a real hard question.” The only fourth grade boy who made a general comment echoed what the first grade girl said. When asked to step into another child’s “shoes” for a moment and select books for others, he replied “that’s a hard question.”

Summary of findings

Research question four investigates the reasons students provide for peer preferences for reading genre. It reads... Are there gender-related differences in the reasons that first and fourth grade boys and girls give for their perceptions of other fourth grade boys’ and girls’ book preferences? There were two themes where gender differences could be seen.

Both first and fourth grade girls mentioned the gender of the children more often while selecting certain books. Visual appeal was the other theme. This time it was mentioned more often by fourth grade boys, with girls never mentioning it.

Individual Genre Preferences by Reading Achievement Level

Question 5 examines the impact of reading achievement level on students' genre preferences. It states, Does reading achievement level (above, at, or below grade level) affect children's book preferences for themselves or their perceptions of what other boys and girls like to read? Thus, strength of preference is investigated in this question by reading achievement level using the same range used in question 1.

The first and fourth grade children represent three reading achievement levels – above grade level, at grade level, and below grade level. These reading achievement levels are based on FAIR data as well as teacher judgment. The first and fourth grade boys and girls in the pilot represent three reading achievement levels: above-grade level, on-grade level, and below-grade level.

The criteria used to determine strength of preference by reading achievement level is the same as the criteria used to answer question 2 concerning the strength of individual children's genre preferences. Level of strength was determined using the following criteria:

1. Moderate strength was the selection of 7 or 8 book in a genre and/or a difference of 4 or 5 books between the two genres.
2. Strong strength was the selection of 9 or more books in a genre and/or a difference of 6 or more books between two genres.
3. All other were coded as "liked both equally."

At the first grade level (Table 10), when looking at the results through the lens of reading ability, boys from all three reading achievement levels showed a preference for expository text, with one above grade-level and one on grade-level boy liking both narrative and expository text equally. The two boys who were below grade-level strongly or moderately preferred expository text as their favored genre. One boy chose only expository titles in both the Open and Closed book tasks.

At all three achievement levels, first grade girls showed a tendency towards both narrative and expository text, with five of the seven girls selecting almost equal amounts of both narrative and expository text. One of the above grade-level girls demonstrated a moderate preference for expository text. At the other end of the reading achievement levels, there was one below grade-level girl who exclusively chose narrative titles during both the Open and Closed book tasks.

At the fourth grade level (Table 11), boys reading above grade-level appear to prefer expository text, with three of the four above grade-level boys either strongly or moderately preferring expository text. The fourth above grade-level boy demonstrated a strong preference for narrative text. The fourth grade boy who read on grade-level demonstrated a liking for both narrative and expository text.

All of the fourth grade girls at all three reading achievement levels (above, on, and below grade level) showed a liking for both narrative and expository text.

Table 10
First Grade Children's Genre Preferences by Gender, and by Reading Ability Level

Number of for Children Text	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally		Preferences Expository
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Gender & level					
1 st grade					
Boys (n=7)					
Girls (n=7)					
Above grade level boys	0	0	1	1	1
On grade level boys	0	0	1	0	1
Below grade level boys	0	0	0	1	1*
All boys	0	0	2	2	3
Above grade level girls	0	0	2	1	0
On grade level girls	0	0	2	0	0
Below grade level girls	1	0	1	0	0
All girls	1	0	5	1	0

Table 11
Fourth Grade Children's Genre Preferences by Gender, and by Reading Ability Level

Number of Children	Preferences for Narrative Text		Likes Both Equally	Preferences for Expository Text	
	Strong	Moderate		Moderate	Strong
Gender & Level					
4 th grade					
Boys (n=5)					
Girls (n=5)					
Above grade level boys	1	0	0	2	1
On grade level boys	0	0	1	0	0
Below grade level boys	0	0	0	0	0
All boys	1	0	1	2	1
Above grade level girls	0	0	2	0	0
On grade level girls	0	0	1	0	0
Below grade level girls	0	0	2	0	0
All girls	0	0	5	0	0

Summary of findings

Question 5 examines the impact of reading achievement level on students' genre preferences. It states, Does reading achievement level (above, at, or below grade level) affect children's book preferences for themselves or their perceptions of what other boys and girls like to read?

At the first grade level, boys at all three reading achievement levels demonstrated a preference for expository text or having an equal liking for both narrative and expository text. The first grade girls who were either above grade level or at grade level

in their reading ability had similar preferences as their male counterparts. The first grade girl who was a below grade level reader was the outlier, demonstrating a strong preference for narrative text by selecting only narrative text in both the Open and Closed book tasks.

At the fourth grade level, the boys were fairly evenly split in their genre preferences when looking at the strength of their preferences. However, more boys demonstrated a preference for expository text. The fourth grade girls, at all three reading ability levels, demonstrated a liking for both narrative and expository text.

Perceptions of Genre Preferences of Peers by Reading Achievement Level

The last (sixth) research question is as follows..... Does reading achievement level (above, at, or below grade level) affect children's perceptions of what other boys and girls like to read? Besides making choices concerning their own genre preferences, the children were also asked to make decisions about the types of genre they believed their same-aged peers would like to read. The sixth research question looks at the perceptions that first and fourth grade boys and girls hold about their same-aged peers' genre preferences based on the reading achievement level of the children in the study.

Overall, the majority of the seven first grade boys believed that other first grade boys would either moderately or strongly prefer to read expository text, while one believed that other first grade boys would moderately prefer narrative text. All of the boys reading at- or below-grade level believed that their same-aged male peers would prefer to read expository text, along with two of the three above-grade level boy readers. The third above-grade level reader believed that the other first grade boys would prefer to read narrative text.

When the first grade boys were choosing books for other first grade girls, there was no consensus about girls' genre preferences. There was almost equal representation across all five levels of genre preference strength amongst the three reading achievement levels of the seven first grade boys.

When first grade girls were making book choices for other first grade boys, almost equal numbers of girls felt their same-aged male peers would prefer to read either narrative or expository text. These similar genre perceptions were seen across all three reading achievement levels. When first grade girls were making book choices for other first grade girls, five of the seven girls believed that other first grade girls would prefer narrative text. This perception was seen across all three reading achievement levels. Of the final two girls, one on-grade level reader believed that other first grade girls would moderately prefer to read expository text, and one below-grade level reader believed that other girls would show no preference, enjoying both genres equally.

When it came to the genre preferences of other fourth grade boys, the majority of boys felt that their same-aged male peers would prefer to read narrative text while most of the girls believed that other fourth grade boys would enjoy both genres equally. These beliefs were seen across all of the reading achievement levels. The exceptions were that one above-grade level girl believed that other fourth grade boys would strongly prefer narrative text while one below-grade level girl believed that the boys would strongly prefer expository text.

Narrative text was the text that almost all of the fourth grade boys and girls believed that other girls would prefer to read. This perception about narrative text was seen across all three reading achievement levels. All of the fourth grade girls believed

that other fourth grade girls would prefer to read narrative text, along with four of the five fourth grade boys. One boy who read above-grade level believed that other fourth grade girls would moderately prefer to read expository text.

Summary of findings

The last (sixth) research question is as follows..... Does reading achievement level (above, at, or below grade level) affect children's perceptions of what other boys and girls like to read? First grade boys' beliefs across all three reading achievement levels that boys prefer to read expository text appear to be influenced by gender stereotypes about book preferences, but when selecting books for girls, they appeared unsure about their genre preferences. First grade girls across all three reading achievement levels believed that boys would prefer either narrative or expository text, but were more confident in their perceptions about what girls would like by selecting narrative text.

When fourth grade boys were selecting for boys, across all three reading ability levels, they believed that both boys and girls their age would prefer narrative text. Girls, on the other hand, believed that boys would prefer both genres equally, but agreed with the boys by believing that girls would prefer to read narrative text.