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# An Examination of Fourth-Grade Teachers' Trade Book Selection

Kristin M. Norman  
*Cedarville University*

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Kristin M. Norman

Cedarville University

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## Abstract

Children's trade books are a pervasive force in elementary school classrooms. Teachers utilize these trade books for various instructional purposes. Research studies revealed that teachers' selection of children's trade books is a complex process involving many factors. This study examined the factors that influenced three fourth-grade public school teachers' selection of trade books for classroom instruction. Each teacher met one of these criteria: five years or less of teaching experience, six to 15 years of experience, and 16 years or more of experience.

Interviews were conducted with each teacher to determine the trade books they selected for teaching purposes and the processes they implemented to make their selections. The qualitative interviews were first coded for analysis individually and then compared in a cross-case analysis. Analysis revealed five themes that influenced the teachers' selection of trade books: (a) criteria teachers use to select trade books, (b) administration and curriculum demands, (c) reading class structure, (d) support in trade book selection, and (e) funding. These results confirmed previous research findings of the multifaceted nature of teachers' trade book selection.

## An Examination of Fourth-Grade Teachers' Trade Book Selection

### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Every year thousands of new children's books are published and added to shelves where millions of books already sit. From the myriad of trade books available, teachers determine which books are worthy of classroom instruction. As daunting as the task is, forces outside of teachers' control gently guide or strongly direct their trade book selection. Educational standards, Common Core, and curriculum play roles in outlining lessons plans while administrators, parents, and students may further influence approaches and materials for instruction. Literature itself dictates trade books that are worth reading through collections of classics, award winners, and the latest "must reads". With ever evolving book options, educators confront the endeavor of trade book selection throughout their teaching careers. The purpose of this document is to present research that investigated the factors that influence fourth-grade teachers' trade book selection for classroom instruction.

#### **Problem**

Trade books are published books that are intended for the general public; they do not include textbooks or reference books. In this study, the term trade book is specifically applied to children's picture and chapter books. Trade books are used in classrooms for various instructional purposes and in multiple subject areas. My research study sought to discover the factors that influence fourth-grade teachers' selection of trade books for their classroom instruction. Through interviews, I found what trade books elementary educators chose for teaching purposes and the processes they employed to make their selections. I anticipated that internal and external factors influenced teachers in selecting trade books for instruction. I looked to identify if teachers with various degrees of teaching experience approached selecting trade

books for classroom instruction differently. I aimed to compare fourth-grade teachers' preferred processes for trade book selection in conjunction with the number of years they have taught. A review of the literature revealed some trends, influences, and processes already known about students' choices and teachers' selection in children's books.

### **Purpose**

According to previous research studies, selecting children's literature is a complex process with many factors. Teachers select trade books for various instructional purposes and subject areas in their classrooms. In their trade book selection processes teachers consider various aspects of texts. Teachers' personal preferences and biases further influence their trade book choices. When selecting trade books, previous research indicated that teachers must be conscious of genre, gender differences, and multicultural representation while considering children's preferences, interests, and needs in each of these areas. Tools such as evaluation rubrics and children's book lists are available to assist teachers in their selection process. The purpose of this study is to determine the nature and aspects of fourth-grade teachers' trade book selection for their classroom instruction. This study included qualitative interviews for data collection and analysis in order to describe and understand the outcome.

### **Research Question**

The driving question of this study was "What are factors that influence teachers' selection of trade books for classroom instruction?" During qualitative interviews, each fourth-grade teacher was asked the same set of interview questions (see Appendix B) aimed at answering this study's central question. Interview questions asked teachers questions such as: (a) "What specific books do you use in classroom instruction?" (b) "What subjects do you use those books in?" (c) "What are the instructional purposes of the book(s)?" (d) "What was your process



in selecting these books?" (e) "What factors influence your decisions in choosing (or not choosing) specific books?" (f) "What, if anything, do you do now that you did not do in prior years for selecting books?" and (g) "What, if anything, could improve how you select books for teaching instruction?" Additionally, interview questions asked teachers to describe their teaching experience and demography. During data analysis, I looked for answers to questions like, "What patterns emerged across the teacher interviews in trade book selection processes, factors, and purposes?" and "What similarities and differences exist in trade book selection processes between teachers with differing amounts of teaching experience?"

### **Educational Significance**

The significance of this study is based on the use of children's literature for classroom instruction. Textbooks are no longer the sole tool for instruction in classrooms. Trade books are certainly prevalent in reading instruction for practices such as read alouds and whole group and small group studies. Small groups are an instructional strategy in which teachers meet with a fraction of the students in a class in a range of subjects and instructional purposes. In this study, small groups refer specifically to the subject of reading in which the classroom teacher meets with small groups of students to discuss various trade books. The teachers in this study also referred to small groups as small reading groups or books clubs.

Other subject areas, such as science and history, are also becoming more frequently supplemented with children's literature. Studies have already examined aspects of teachers' trade book selection in the past few decades, but the context of today's world may have caused change in teachers' approaches and decisions. New technologies (e.g. electronic books, internet searches), educational policies (e.g. Common Core), a growing literature base, and social and cultural change have influenced present-day teachers' selection of trade books in yet unknown

ways. Teacher training, teacher age, and levels of teaching experience all influence educational approaches. The multifaceted process of trade book selection may evolve with the ever-changing world, teacher workforce, and student population. This study attempted to discover the nature of present-day trade book selections made by fourth-grade teachers with various levels of teaching experience.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Children's Book Lists and Awards**

The children's literature present in American schools is found in various places with various purposes. School libraries are a natural place for students and teachers to discover children's books and it is not uncommon to find classroom libraries in today's schools. From these locations (and even other locations outside of schools), teachers select trade books for instruction and students select trade books for assignments and pleasure reading. However, the sheer volume of available children's literature can overwhelm teachers and students alike.

Children's book lists and awards are common starting points for those involved in the selection of quality literature. Each year awards and lists of notable literature are generated by review boards comprised of writers, academics, teachers, and/or students. Criteria for acclaimed children's books differ from list to list, but generally the selection criteria focuses on providing children with literary and artistic experiences through books (Saracho & Spodek, 2010).

Children's books with awards or on distinguished literature lists can serve as a starting point in trade book selection for teachers and students alike. Teacher researcher Gray (2009) initially selected trade books for her classroom based on the Newbery Medal (for children's literature), the Caldecott Medal (for picture books), the Coretta Scott King award (for African American

authors/illustrators of children's literature), and the Black Books Galore's Guide to Great African-American Children's Books.

Johnson and Small (2008), examined award winners on the Children's Choices and Teachers' Choices booklists from 1995-2005 in their study comparing teacher selected and children selected nonfiction trade books. Both of these award lists are compiled annually with children's books selected by children and teachers respectively. Trade books chosen by children on the Children's Choices booklist: (a) can be used for reading instruction, (b) can be related to curriculum, or (c) can engage students (Johnson & Small, 2008). The Teachers' Choices booklist identify trade books that: (a) may not be detected or completely grasped by children without adult initiation; (b) demonstrate high caliber writing, content, and artistic appearance; and (c) can enhance instruction (Johnson & Small, 2008). Broemmel and Rearden (2006) specifically studied The Teachers' Choices booklist (from 1989-2004) in their research to determine if the trade books on the list were truly high quality for science instruction. Broemmel and Rearden acknowledged that the Teachers' Choices booklist is valuable for finding exceptional trade books for classrooms. The collective preferences of teachers have the capacity to impact the trade books available in classrooms nationwide (Broemmel & Rearden, 2006).

The study conducted by Bang-Jensen (2010) implemented The Dorothy Canfield Fisher (DCF) program, Vermont's children's choice award, which is an example of a state created literature list for fourth-through eighth-graders. According to Bang-Jensen, the goal of DCF, and the general goal of comparable state lists, is to produce lists of present-day, quality children's literature to inspire and involve children in reading. Similar to the creation of other children's book lists, the DCF list of 30 books is selected by a small group of children's literature experts that meet over the course of a year (Bang-Jensen, 2010). The nominated children's books

correspond to more extensive criteria than readability levels and text characteristics, which is common in many reading programs (Bang-Jensen, 2010). Public and school libraries throughout the state purchase the most recent children's books and then teachers and librarians encourage students to read the selected DCF books (Bang-Jensen, 2010). Bang-Jensen noted that students were familiar with the DCF committee and the trade book list they created. In fact, students often named the DCF list as a motivating aspect of trade book selections (Bang-Jensen, 2010).

### **Trends in Children's Literature**

Just as children's book lists and awards change over time, trends in the field of children's literature evolve with the growth of published books. Transformations in children's literature may reflect changes in society, culture, or education. Over the past few decades, trends in children's literature have concentrated on genres, audience, and population representation. These literary trends can influence the trade book choices of teachers and students.

#### **Genre.**

Nonfiction trade books are a rapidly growing genre that provide extensive factual material within a greater context and present the most current information in a clearly organized fashion (Johnson & Small, 2008). Johnson and Small (2008) examined and compared the Children's Choices award winners and Teachers' Choices award winners from 1995-2005 to discover children's and teachers' nonfiction trade book choices. As a result, Johnson and Small learned that both teachers and children listed animal science books in their top five categories. Teachers had a higher preference for history-based books than children, but both listed history in their top five (Johnson & Small, 2008). The largest gap in preferences was for historical biographies; 29% of teachers' book selections were historical biographies, but only 5% of

students' book choices were historical biographies (Johnson & Small, 2008). Additionally, Johnson and Small noted that children chose math based books (8%) more than teachers (3%).

Mohr (2006) observed that over the years different readers have displayed preferences for certain genres. In conducting interviews with first-graders, part of Mohr's goal was to determine their picture book preferences. Through analysis, Mohr found the first-graders demonstrated an immense preference for the nonfiction, informational books displayed in nine featured texts. Of the 190 first-graders Mohr interviewed, 159 (84%) selected nonfiction books and 46% of those children chose the same nonfiction book, which featured animals. Mohr suggests that the preferential selection of informational books by first-grade boys and girls may indicate that the information age has grasped even the youngest readers.

Similarly, Chapman, Filipenko, McTavish, and Shapiro (2007) interviewed 40 first-grade students (20 boys and 20 girls) and had them participate in two book selection tasks to investigate their genre preferences. For both book tasks, Chapman et al. (2007) presented each child with a set of books, allowed them to examine and explore the texts, and then asked which book(s) they would like to read at home or school. For the Open Task, Chapman et al. showed the children four storybooks and four information books. Chapman et al. told the children they could select as many books as they desired (a maximum of eight). For the closed task, Chapman et al. showed the children four pairs of books, each pair containing a storybook and an information book. The first-graders had to choose either the storybook or the information book from each pair as their preference (Chapman et al., 2007).

On the whole, the data collected by Chapman et al. (2007) indicated that boys had a preference for storybooks as their reading choice. The boys chose fewer books and fewer information books than the girls did (Chapman et al., 2007). The data revealed girls' preferences

differed for each task: on the open task girls selected similar amounts of stories and information books, but on the closed task girls strongly selected storybooks (Chapman et al., 2007).

Therefore Chapman et al. suggest that the type of book selection task affected the outcome, which made the children's preferences seem stronger on the closed task. Children gave many reasons of why they selected specific books, but they never mentioned genre as one of their criteria (Chapman et al., 2007).

### **Audience.**

The study conducted by Chapman et al. (2007) also contained an element about literature viewed through gender perceptions. Informational texts have been stressed as valuable for all children, but especially in motivating boys to read (Chapman et al., 2007). Chapman et al. explained that the primary points of view on this topic are held by essentialists and anti-essentialists. Essentialists believe boys' interest in reading informational texts and girls' interest in storybooks is determined biologically (Chapman et al., 2007). Alternatively, anti-essentialists maintain that the genre preferences of boys and girls are not biological, but rather socially created within specific social and cultural contexts (Chapman et al., 2007).

In the open and closed book selection tasks, Chapman et al. (2007) also asked the first-graders to choose what book(s) they would pick themselves, for a girl, and for a boy. The books the first-graders chose for themselves did not reflect gender stereotypes; both boys and girls preferred storybooks although girls chose more information books than the boys (Chapman et al., 2007). When selecting books for other boys and girls the first-graders perceptions did reflect gender stereotypical ideas (Chapman et al., 2007). Chapman et al. found that the girls thought boys would prefer information books and girls would prefer stories. Likewise the boys selected information books for boys and stories for girls (Chapman et al., 2007). Chapman et al. noticed a

discrepancy between boys' personal preferences (stories) and their perception of what other boys would like to read (information books). Chapman et al. attributed this to a socially created understanding instead of personal reading preferences. There was not as strong a discrepancy for girls' book selections for self and others (Chapman et al., 2007).

From their findings, Chapman et al. (2007) concluded that the data challenges the notions that boys like information books and girls like storybooks. When selecting children's literature Chapman et al. suggest that children's interests instead of gender should be used as a deciding factor. In addition Chapman et al. suggest that children should be encouraged to read a variety of different genres instead of staying with their top preference. Further, Chapman et al. encourage adults to be conscious of gender stereotyping to prevent limiting girls and boys to literary experiences based on their gender. Chapman et al. recommend that even early readers can learn to think critically about reading and their reading preferences to confront gender stereotyping and to recognize the benefits of both information and narrative books.

In contrast to the findings of Chapman et al. (2007), Mohr (2006) found that both boys and girls had a preference for informational books over narrative books. Mohr's research also explored gender differences in book selection through interviews with first-graders. The majority of both boys and girls favored nonfiction selections; 96% of boys and 69% of girls selected informational books. Mohr viewed this finding as an indication of some gender equity.

McGeown (2015) studied sex differences in children's reading choices and motivation and examined the degree that gender identity defined the differences. McGeown discovered reading skill did not indicate sex differences, but children's motivation and choices in reading exhibited differences. Feminine traits related more closely to motivation to read than masculine traits. Feminine traits also indicated a likelihood to read feminine-oriented and neutral books

(McGeown, 2015). On the other hand, masculine traits were significantly associated with reading masculine-oriented books, but not feminine-oriented or neutral books (McGeown, 2015).

### **Population Representation.**

According to Saracho and Spodek (2010) children's literature provides a means to introduce students to cultural values through the representation of diversity in a multicultural society in texts. Tschida, Ryan, and Ticknor (2014) expressed that children's literature must act as both "mirrors" and "windows". Tschida et al. (2014) explained that a text acts as a mirror when readers can see themselves in its pages such as their cultures, experiences, and characteristics. Unfortunately, many readers cannot find reflections of themselves in children's literature (Tschida et al., 2014). Tschida et al. also described books as windows that allow readers to have vicarious experiences of other cultures and identities, which enable readers to move beyond an ethnocentric worldview. Windows connect readers to the multicultural world in a way that they can meet people who are unlike them with dissimilar worldviews (Tschida et al., 2014). Teachers must perceive who is and who is not reflected in children's books as well as who is being learned about in a new way (Tschida et al., 2014). Tschida et al. explained that a critical inspection of perspective in texts is essential in content areas like social studies where historical events and people may be presented from only one perspective or even from a mythic perspective. In such instances, diverse children's literature disrupts the single narrative by adding greater critical reflection (Tschida et al., 2014).

Wollman-Bonilla (1998) noticed that many teachers flounder in selecting trade books for classroom instruction that present nonmainstream views and experiences. This lack is partly due to the inability to perceive the perspective of a book when it is our own because it seems natural (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). For instance, trade books that are labeled "multicultural" represent any



culture that does not reflect the normative Eurocentric perspective (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Whether noticeable or not, all children's literature manifests a sociocultural perspective (Crisp et al., 2016; Jipson & Paley, 1991; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Studies on teachers' trade book selection reveal that teachers do not tend to select children's literature with a strong presence of women, racial and ethnic groups other than those of European heritage, or the socioeconomically marginalized (Crisp et al., 2016; Jipson & Paley, 1991; Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Jipson and Paley (1991) explained that teachers are unconscious of their biases in text selection and not aware of the perspectives and values that books convey, which may attribute to the lack of multicultural texts in classroom instruction.

### **Children's Trade Book Choice**

In addition to the trends visible in children's literature, researchers have also sought to discover what impacts students' and teachers' decisions in selecting trade books for educational purposes. Student selected books, children's choice, or self-selected reading implies that the students choose their own reading materials (Sherretz & Norton-Meier, 2014). Self-selected reading has supported the development of students' engagement, motivation, and proficiency in reading (Sherretz & Norton-Meier, 2014). This research study did not attempt to study children's trade book choice. However, the literature review considers children's book choice because the trade book selections that students make may influence teachers' trade book selection.

Through interviewing upper elementary school students, Bang-Jensen (2010) recognized that the conversations about DCF list books often referred back to the students as readers including their genre preferences and the power of personal book choice. Bang-Jensen explained that emergent trade book selection strategies are developing in students that have an awareness of their book related interests. These strategies and the power of choice help to develop reader

identities and relationships with trade books (Bang-Jensen, 2010). Bang-Jensen summarized that teachers and librarians must be conscious of selecting trade books that match the needs of readers as it engages readers and helps students to develop strategies to select trade books independently.

Greenlee, Monson, and Taylor (1996) studied children's reactions to independent reading and their views on the quality of series books and recommended books. Greenlee et al. interviewed 11- and 12-year-olds (16 boys and 16 girls) to obtain the necessary data. In the second half of the interview, the students compared their two chosen books (one series book and one recommended book, Greenlee et al., 1996). Greenlee et al. asked the students five questions related to the selected books: (a) which book they liked better, (b) which book their friends would prefer, (c) which book would be better for a teacher to read aloud, (d) which book they would recommend for a reading class group to study, and (e) which author they thought was the better writer. Over half of the students named their recommended book instead of their series book in response to each of these questions (Greenlee et al., 1996). Students rarely mentioned literary reasons when giving reasons for their preference of the series or recommended book. The most frequent response given for selecting a recommended book was due to a suggestion from another person. Greenlee et al. suggest that series books may be popular amongst students because the characters and events are enjoyable and that the books are easy to select. Like Bang-Jensen (2010), Greenlee et al. propose that children need assistance in locating quality literature that interests them and engages them in reading.

Mohr (2006) also emphasized student choice in reading. Mohr indicated that student reading improves as students spend greater amounts of time reading independently. Students are more likely to be motivated, independent readers when they read self-selected books (Mohr,

2006). According to Mohr, inspiring motivated, capable readers who read extensively and who cultivate lifelong reading practices is the ultimate aim. Mohr conducted interviews with first-grade students to investigate their picture book preferences, selection processes, and choice rationales. Additionally, the interview format facilitated the exploration of motivation, gender differences, genre preferences, and text difficulty within the realm of student choice and their selection processes (Mohr, 2006). Mohr gave each student the same set of nine picture books. Next, first-graders were given sufficient time to examine each picture book before selecting which book they would like to take home as theirs to keep. Student interviews were conducted after the picture book selection occurred.

The data Mohr (2006) gathered revealed that 57% of the first-graders selected picture books based on the topic and skimmed content. Visible text features were noted by 30% of the students as significant in picture book choice. Approximately 17% of the first-graders professed they did not know or could not express their picture book selection processes (Mohr, 2006). Students were able to identify their picture book preferences, but not necessarily their selection strategies. Students able to describe their selection processes named topic, content, and/or illustrations as influential components (Mohr, 2006). Despite some lack of expression in selection strategies, none of the children described picture book selection as difficult. They took their time deciding on picture books, but they perceived the process as simple. Readability levels did not influence first-graders picture book choice. Students chose picture books regardless if they deemed their choice as difficult to read.

Mohr (2006) noted that students hardly mentioned teachers during the interviews even though they were just outside of their classrooms. Students rarely named teachers as a person who could help select books, who would like to read a specific book, or who could help them

read a book. Only 2% of the first-graders mentioned getting assistance from their teacher as a way to read their book of choice (Mohr, 2006). Mohr expressed surprise at these findings and suggested the need for new research on the role of teachers in students' selection of trade books for reading.

Edmunds and Bauserman (2006) interviewed fourth-grade students with various reading abilities to determine factors that influence reading motivation. The most prevalent factors that made students excited about reading narrative and informational texts were personal interests, reading to gain knowledge, trade book characteristics, and choice. In discussing narrative and expository books they were reading or recently read, the large majority of fourth-graders referred to books they had selected themselves as opposed to texts assigned by the teacher. Edmunds and Bauserman perceived that the fourth-graders were motivated to read when they had the opportunity to select which texts they would like to read. When discussing how students became exposed to trade books, they named teachers, family members, and friends as sources. In conclusion of their study, Edmunds and Bauserman recommended five approaches for teachers to increase children's desire to read: involvement of others, personal interests, trade book availability, book characteristics, and self-selection of books.

Farris, Werderich, Nelson, and Fuhler (2009) examined the reading preferences and motivations of fifth-grade boys. Farris et al. (2009) provided a collection of literature for the fifth-grade boys in this study. The collection of trade books consisted of fiction and nonfiction based on teacher recommendations, award-winning children's literature booklists, and children's literature experts (Farris et al., 2009). Farris et al. and the classroom teachers also chose trade books with features of visual interests (i.e., pictures, sidebars, etc.) and potential "entry point books" to support struggling readers. Due to school and funding restrictions, comics, non-

educational magazines, and periodicals were not included in the literature collection presented to the students (Farris et al., 2009). Farris et al. collected data through coding email exchanges between female teacher education candidates and the fifth-grade boys about the trade books they were reading. Additionally, Farris et al. interviewed the boys about their reading preferences.

Farris et al. (2009) observed five elements in how fifth-grade boys selected trade books. First, fifth-grade boys chose trade books based on appearance, such as book covers, print layout, and interesting text features. Struggling readers were especially likely to select trade books with larger fonts, margins, and white space (Farris et al., 2009). Second, the boys selected trade books that were written by a favorite author or in a series. Third, the fifth-grade boys demonstrated that they appreciated pursuing a character through numerous situations and/or over the years/multiple trade books. Fourth, the boys selected informational books and fact books with short passages and photographs or drawings. Finally, Farris et al. discovered that stronger boy readers were more influenced by read-alouds conducted by classrooms teachers than struggling readers. The stronger readers were more likely to select trade books with the same author or topic as the read-aloud. Conversely, struggling boy readers depended almost solely on read-aloud books; they did not prefer to select trade books independently if not required. Overall, the findings of Farris et al. indicate it is significant for teachers to assist boys in finding “entry point books” that meet their personal preferences.

In another study with fifth-graders, Pachtman and Wilson (2006) surveyed the students about what classroom practices most influenced their reading habits and attitudes. The top rated influence on student reading habits was “Having a lot of books in the class library”, which 86% of students gave a rating of “very important” (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). Many students noted that having more trade books to choose from made it easier for them to find books they liked.

“Choosing your own books” tied for the second highest rating with 23% of students rating the items as “very important” (Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). The fifth-graders described trade book choice as “very important” because they were able to read books they enjoyed. Pachtman and Wilson explained that choice was significant for students because it aided in their pursuit of their interests. Pachtman and Wilson concluded that their study demonstrated that students have established thoughts about reading. Students who are given the opportunity to pursue their preferences in reading read more because they enjoy it. Pachtman and Wilson revealed that teachers have the opportunity to make the most of their students’ preferences or disregard their students’ choices.

As mentioned previously, McGeown (2015) studied a specific aspect of children’s book selections: sex differences in reading choices. In order to best increase children’s engagement in reading, McGeown argued it is necessary to recognize the types of trade books children are interested in reading so schools can make those books available. As a portion of McGeown’s study, elementary school students, ages eight to eleven, completed a questionnaire with colored images of trade book covers. With each trade book cover students were asked: “How likely are you to read this book?” (McGeown, 2015). Consistent with McGeown’s predictions, sex differences were discovered in children’s reading choices. Feminine traits, instead of masculine traits, demonstrated a greater likelihood of reading female-orientated and neutral books. Conversely, masculine traits demonstrated a greater likelihood of reading male-oriented, but not female-oriented or neutral books (McGeown, 2015). Overall, McGeown’s results indicated that girls are more inclined to read male-oriented books (depending on how much the girls identify with masculine traits) than boys are to read female-orientated books. Further, McGeown’s results suggest the consideration of the various types of trade books available in schools. Since the data

displays that boys are less likely to cross gender boundaries, they will especially benefit from trade books aimed at males (McGeown, 2015).

In regards to population representation, Gray (2009) spent half of her study discovering what criteria African American students utilized to select African American literature. Forty-one fifth-grade students in Gray's two writing block classes participated in this study through contributing their writing assignments such as journals. After coding and analyzing the data, Gray found three recurring student selection criteria: connection with the main character, trade book genre, and book cover appeal. Gray noted that the commonality between these three selection criteria was realism. The students wanted to see their lives, families, experiences, and interests reflected in the literature they read. In African American book selections, the fifth-grade students desired connection with characters, realistic plots, and realistic illustrations (Gray, 2009).

### **Teachers' Trade Book Selection**

Despite the surface-level simplicity, teachers' trade book selection process is even more multifaceted than the strategies applied by children. While selecting trade books for classroom instruction teachers must consider a text's: instructional purposes, content, readability, developmental appropriateness, characters, and features. When selecting trade books teachers must be conscious of the current trends in literature within the context of their students' preferences, interests, and needs.

With the ever growing collection of children's books, it is easy to assume that all teachers use trade books in their instruction to some extent. Altieri (1997) conducted a study in a small, rural location in the Mid-South. The interviews revealed that the "traditionalist" teachers relied heavily upon the basal reader (reading textbook) and only one teacher used other literature for

reading instruction. Similarly, Altieri discovered that a couple teachers used trade books in other subject areas, but only as a supplement to textbooks. Most of the teachers interviewed by Altieri clarified that they only used children's literature during "story time", which they saved for extra time when available. Altieri described that the teachers were aware of the absence of literature in instruction, but due to a lack of knowledge they failed to integrate it into the curriculum. The teachers' lack of knowledge and experience was only a portion of the issue. Altieri discovered that these rural teachers had very little access to children's literature in their classrooms, school, and public library. Despite the growing number of published books for children, these teachers in a rural school lacked knowledge and access to trade books that could play a significant role in their classroom instruction.

Jipson and Paley (1991) examined the attention and controversy around trade book selection regarding the social and ideological messages upheld in works of literature. Jipson and Paley sought to determine if elementary teachers chose trade books with predominantly white, Euro-American, male authors and subjects instead of trade books with women, people of color, diverse ethnic backgrounds, and various social classes. Further, Jipson and Paley queried if elementary teachers would be analytical when identifying reasons for their selection of a specific children's books in their classroom instruction. Jipson and Paley developed a questionnaire and sent it to fifty-five female public school teachers in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and Oregon in urban, suburban, and rural settings. The kindergarten through seventh-grade teachers had a range of one to forty years of teaching experience. On the questionnaire, each teacher was asked to name the titles, authors, and main characters of three children's books they had used in their classrooms during the past school year and to name their reasons for selecting each book for classroom instruction (Jipson & Paley, 1991). Jipson and Paley did not give specific stipulations



about the three trade books the teachers listed in order to reflect personal preferences and beliefs about employing children's books.

The collected questionnaires displayed that teachers selected a total of 155 distinct trade books with 104 different authors (Jipson & Paley, 1991). Of the 104 chosen authors, 55% were male and male authors made up 59% of the 155 teacher selected trade books. Moreover, 95% of the listed authors were of Euro-American heritage and only a total of 5 authors were ethnic minorities (Jipson & Paley, 1991). In relation to the main characters, 123 of the trade books had main characters with identifiable genders. Jipson and Paley determined that 65% of those main characters were males. The diversity of the characters was fairly limited as only 8 of the teacher selected trade books included main characters from North American minority cultures (Jipson & Paley, 1991).

Jipson and Paley (1991) found that many of the 170 reasons teachers gave for selecting trade books could be summarized in three central categories. The main reasons teachers selected trade books were: the suitability of the book within the broader instructional context, personal preference for the book (i.e. story author, illustrations, or award-winning status), and the acknowledgement of gender, race, and ethnicity as significant components when selecting books (Jipson & Paley, 1991). Analysis of the teachers' descriptions revealed that teachers' trade book selection was a complex process with multiple interacting factors such as specific curricular needs, the quality of the texts, and consideration of the students in their classrooms (Jipson & Paley, 1991).

Jipson and Paley (1991) drew two major conclusions from the findings of their study. First, the data supports the idea of a gender and racial bias in teachers' trade book selection even if it could be unconscious. Jipson and Paley suggest that teacher awareness in trade book choice

could be supported by on-going professional development programs. Jipson and Paley's second conclusion addressed the larger scope of teachers' trade book selection process in future research. Jipson and Paley suggest in-depth studies that investigate the factors of trade book selection as a whole rather than in isolation in hopes to discover the moving parts of selecting children's books, the extent of teachers' critical reasoning, and which factors most strongly influence teachers' trade book choices.

Wollman-Bonilla (1998) studied what trade books teachers deem as inappropriate for use in their classrooms and why they did not select those books. Teacher researcher Wollman-Bonilla used undergraduate preservice teachers and graduate teachers in her Language Arts for Elementary Teachers course as the participants in her study. The majority of the students were white females from working-class and middle-class backgrounds (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Wollman-Bonilla opened each class by reading a children's book aloud to her students followed by a time designated to student response. Wollman-Bonilla decided to study her students' responses when she noticed a greater frequency of negative reactions to the texts she read aloud. Wollman-Bonilla documented oral and written objections and discussions that followed each read aloud for six consecutive semesters.

Wollman-Bonilla's (1998) analysis of the students' responses revealed patterns that formed criteria for preservice and in-service teachers' text rejection. The reasons the teachers deemed texts as inappropriate for children fell into three main categories: (a) the text might frighten or corrupt children through the introduction of things they do not or should not know about, (b) the text does not represent prevailing social values or myths, and (c) the text categorizes racism or sexism as a social problem (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Some of the teachers' comments assumed that it is better to avoid some realities presented in texts than to

study and discuss these realities that children might already be familiar with and wonder about on their own (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). This reasoning implies that schools should be kept separate from the realities of society (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Unlike Jipson and Paley (1991), the research of Wollman-Bonilla suggests that teachers are aware of their criteria for text rejection as discovered through class discussions. Therefore Wollman-Bonilla submitted that consciousness-raising is not sufficient to encourage teachers to select children's literature that represents non-mainstream perspectives. Thus it is necessary to understand how teachers' thought processes and beliefs change over time.

Wollman-Bonilla (1998) suggested that it may be beneficial to present to teachers how children actually respond to the texts they reject in order to demonstrate that the rejection criteria may not be valid. Teachers must also be encouraged to facilitate discussions about trade books instead of moving on to other instruction after read-alouds (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). All the teachers in Wollman-Bonilla's study expressed a desire to do what was in the best interest of the children even though that meant something different for each teacher. Wollman-Bonilla found that the claims made by teachers always assumed an understanding and certainty of what was best for children. None of the teachers gave evidence or data to support their claims (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998). Wollman-Bonilla concluded that teachers are assuming too much; in order to know how trade books actually affect children research needs to be conducted before claims can be made.

Crisp et al. (2016) explained that the world as depicted in children's literature is predominantly male, Caucasian, English-speaking, upper middle class, heterosexual, and nondisabled. Crisp et al. recognized an overall increase in awareness and availability of diverse children's books, but little research existed about the availability of diverse trade books in

classroom libraries. The study conducted by Crisp et al. sought to gather data on how educators have responded to the lack of diverse children's literature, specifically in early childhood classroom libraries. Crisp et al. catalogued the trade books in 11 early childhood classroom libraries that served low-income, racially diverse students. The majority of the classroom teachers self-identified as African American females. The mean numbers of trade books per classroom was 79.1, but the range was between 18 to 200 books (Crisp et al., 2016). Less than 50 trade books were displayed in each library at a time with little book rotation throughout the school year.

After coding the data for all 1,169 trade books, Crisp et al. (2016) ascertained that only 67 books (5.7%) depicted at least one main character as belonging to a parallel culture (North American minority). Only 32 trade books (2.7%) related to any socioeconomic status and another 32 books depicted a leading character with dis/abilities, chronic illnesses, or developmental difference (Crisp et al., 2016). Of the 1,169 classroom trade books, 1,065 books (91.1%) were written only in the English language (Crisp et al., 2016). Concerning genre 280 trade books (24%) were fantasy, 175 (15%) were contemporary realistic fiction, 78 (6.7%) were poetry/rhyming, 65 (5.6%) were folklore, 18 (1.5%) were historical fiction, and zero (0%) were science fiction (Crisp et al., 2016). Nonfiction/informational texts made up 51.5% of the trade books in the classroom libraries (Crisp et al., 2016). Overall, the early childhood classroom libraries did not represent the increased diversity awareness among educators. In conclusion, Crisp et al. recommended that teachers assess and diversify their classroom libraries by examining who and what is and is not represented in the trade books they already possess. As suggested at the beginning of this literature review, Crisp et al. recommended searching for trade

book awards that recognize diverse books, authors, and illustrators in order to begin the diversification process.

As previously described, Gray (2009) discovered that fifth-grade students preferred realistic children's literature. In the second half of Gray's study, she surveyed seven third- to fifth-grade teachers in order to compare students' and teachers' selection criteria for African American literature. The participating teachers represented a good cross section of the specific school (Gray, 2009). Of the seven teachers, five were female and two were male. Four teachers were African American and three teachers were Caucasian. The teachers had a range of 4 to 29 years of teaching experience. Gray's teacher survey included questions about the types of texts available in the classroom and a question related to ranking specific selection criteria. After Gray collected the surveys, she went to each of the seven classrooms to validate the information the teachers provided. Gray documented each trade book displayed in the classroom and the books in the classroom libraries. Finally, Gray compared the trade books listed on the surveys with the detailed book inventories.

After analysis, Gray (2009) determined that the most important selection criterion for teachers was memorable characters, followed by character ethnicity and realistic settings. The teachers' criteria matched well with the fifth-grade students' selection criteria that focused on realism. However, only 9% of the trade books that teachers actually read to their students had African American authors or main characters and only one of those books was realistic fiction (Gray, 2009). Additionally, biographies, folk tales, and nonfiction books were listed most often as African American books available in the classrooms. Gray indicated that most teachers discussed their implementation of a Black History Month unit, which also tended to focus on biographies. Many examples of African American literature were made available during Black

History Month, but at the conclusion of the unit the books were put away. Only 10% of the trade books available to students in the classroom were classified as African American literature (Gray, 2009).

Further analysis by Gray (2009) indicated that African American teachers were no more likely to include African American literature in their libraries or read-alouds than Caucasian teachers. Overall, students and teachers seemed to value the same selection criteria, but the trade books actually selected by the teachers and made available to the students did not meet the criteria or sufficiently represent African American literature (Gray, 2009). In considering this discrepancy, Gray indicated that availability and awareness of African American literature contribute to the gap between teachers' selection criteria and the trade books in their classrooms. Gray concluded that African American books are available, but teachers must actively seek, read, and include them in their classrooms and instruction year round.

As detailed earlier in the Children's Choice section of this literature review, McGeown (2015) found sex differences in children's reading selections. McGeown's study reported that girls are more likely to read male-oriented books than for boys to read female-oriented books. Thus McGeown suggested that it may be especially important for boys to have access to trade books that they are typically interested in reading (male-oriented). Even though McGeown's study suggested that boys and girls do not prefer gender-neutral books, those books offer the best compromise. Therefore, McGeown indicated that gender-neutral books may be most appropriate for teachers to use during whole class reading instruction. Teachers may even consider implementing same-sex literacy group activities in which gender-specific texts can better engage both boys and girls in reading (McGeown, 2015).

As described previously, Farris et al. (2009) studied fifth-grade boys' reading preferences and motivations through the provision of a collection of literature, email exchanges, and interviews. Farris et al. commented that motivating boys to read tends to be difficult even though teachers seek to find trade books that fit boys' reading preferences. Farris et al. further submitted that this difficulty may be that the majority of K-12 teachers are female and thus those female teachers relate better to female readers and "chick lit". Farris et al. necessitated that teachers acknowledge boys' reading preferences and interests in their classrooms and to identify what texts they have available that will engage boys in reading.

As formerly stated, Broemmel and Rearden (2006) studied The Teachers' Choices booklist in their research to determine if the trade books teachers' selected for science instruction were truly high quality. It is necessary, especially in science, for content to be accurate and appropriate (Broemmel & Rearden, 2006). For this reason, Broemmel and Rearden conducted an extensive investigation of the Teachers' Choices booklist in order to reveal the quality of science picture books on the list since its creation. A total of 99 science related books were cataloged on the 1989-2004 booklists. Of those 99 trade books, Broemmel and Rearden were able to collect and analyze 74 books in relation to content, visual features, and genre. Utilizing the National Science Education Standards (NSES) as a measure, Broemmel and Rearden read each science book, analyzed them for accuracy, checked them for developmentally appropriate content, and categorized each book according to its NSES content area(s). Further, Broemmel and Rearden checked each science book for engaging visual features such as graphs, tables, illustrations, and differentiated text. Finally Broemmel and Rearden sorted the science books into one of five science trade book genres (storybooks, nonnarrative information books, narrative information

books, dual-purpose books, and poetry books) with the information genres being the majority of the listed books.

Broemmel's and Rearden's (2006) examination of the Teachers' Choices books uncovered that teachers are selecting quality science related children's literature. The booklist analysis by Broemmel and Rearden revealed no inaccuracies in science content in any of the trade books. A few science books were considered inappropriate for their intended grade levels, but the science content was accurate and the visual features were engaging so they surely could be used at higher grade levels (Broemmel & Rearden, 2006). Overall, the science books included on the Teachers' Choices booklist are of high literary quality and contain accurate and appropriate science content as indicated by the analysis of Broemmel and Rearden. Broemmel and Rearden acknowledge that this booklist is not an exhaustive list of high-quality science trade books, but it provides teachers with an ample and easy to access resource for finding quality science literature. Further, Broemmel and Rearden suggest that the literature on the booklist could additionally be used for cross-curricular instruction as well as for presenting, reviewing, and enhancing science education.

Atkinson, Matusevich, and Huber (2009) aspired to determine the quality of science trade books through creating a rubric-based evaluation process grounded in numerous expert sources. First, Atkinson et al. assessed its effectiveness through testing it themselves and then through a pilot test with preservice teachers. Atkinson et al. recognized that even with an increase of nonfiction trade books, teachers rarely received ample training in selecting science trade books for their classrooms. Even with training or an assessment tool, an evaluator's lack of comprehensive content knowledge in texts makes the evaluation of a science trade book risky without the use of a valid process (Atkinson et al., 2009). Science trade books in school or public



libraries are frequently out of date and limited in scope, which is a further concern during inexperienced evaluations (Atkinson et al., 2009).

Aware of these risks, Atkinson et al. (2009) designed an evaluation tool based on a previously created mathematics and literacy rubric, the National Science Education Standards (NSES), criteria listed by the National Science Teachers Association, and other expert sources for evaluating trade books. The resulting evaluation tool assessed both literacy and science and included: rubric questions, an evaluation scale, and sections of reviewer's notes to identify information and aspects that affected their ratings (Atkinson et al., 2009). With the finalized rubric, Atkinson et al. tested it in a review of 28 nonfiction trade books listed as additional readings in their fifth-grade textbook. Atkinson et al. were confident in the validity and reliability of their evaluation tool when it aligned with other respected nonfiction trade book lists.

Next, Atkinson et al. (2009) conducted a pilot test of their evaluation tool with preservice teachers. Preservice teachers enrolled in a content area literacy course were required to assemble an annotated bibliography of at least 10 recommended trade books for their chosen content area (Atkinson et al., 2009). Sixteen students chose to evaluate science and math trade books and they all used the rubric created by Atkinson et al. to evaluate and select books. Comments made by the 16 students indicated that the evaluation process was extremely useful in offering guidelines for specific content areas, aiding in deliberate analysis, including literacy and content area aspects, and imparting a tool for future use (Atkinson et al., 2009). Atkinson et al. concluded that their rubric provided a useful and valid process for investigating and making decisions about potential science trade books for classroom instruction.

Donovan and Smolkin (2001) addressed factors that influence teachers' selection of science trade books as part of classroom instruction. During a "Reading and Writing Science

Text” workshop, Donovan and Smolkin presented ten elementary school teachers (first- through fifth-grades) two large sets of science books for enhancing particular topics in science curriculum. All the teachers were female, had more than five years of teaching experience, and already included trade books in their science instruction to some capacity (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001). Donovan and Smolkin asked the teachers to select science trade books from each set that they would use to support their science instruction and to provide reasons for their selections. One set of science trade books contained 23 different texts on the topic of Life Cycles and the other set included 15 texts on Properties of Matter. Donovan and Smolkin included a range of texts in each set in regards to readability levels, text features, complexity, and genres. Four sources were considered in trade book selection: texts from classroom observations, texts listed in a literature in science guide, early reader informational books, and texts written by well-known informational trade book authors (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001). In two equal sized groups, the teachers spent about 30 minutes per science trade book set given the task: “Choose books from the set that will enhance your science instruction on that topic” (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001).

According to the data collected and analyzed by Donovan and Smolkin (2001), no discernable grade-level patterns emerged in the selections of Life Cycle or Properties of Matter books. Teachers across grade levels selected both simple and complex texts in regards to readability, text features, and informational concepts (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001). Teachers’ comments about important aspects of their selections established five patterns: attention to content, awareness of visual features, consideration of readability, concern for developmental/grade-level appropriateness, and the inclusion of enjoyable science trade books (Donovan & Smolkin, 2001). The most frequently stated reason for selection was the

information in the trade books. However, Donovan and Smolkin were slightly surprised that teachers failed to mention genre in science trade books. Donovan and Smolkin were concerned by the lack of genre discussion because it may be that the teachers were doing little with their students to bring awareness to differences in text type. In summary of their research Donovan and Smolkin indicated that teachers concentrate on the facts while selecting science trade books, but are uncomfortable with the actual endeavor of trade book selection.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The comprehensive study that I conducted answered the question, “What are factors that influence teachers’ selection of trade books for classroom instruction?”

#### **Participants**

After obtaining approval from Cedarville University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) on January 31, 2017, I searched for fourth-grade public school teachers to participate in my investigation. Originally, the design was for each participant to fit one of these criteria: first year teacher, teacher with four to seven years of experience, or teacher with ten or more years of experience. The three participants were selected through a sample of convenience. Teachers were selected through whether they fit the criteria I had set out and then by whoever responded “yes” first. All three participants were from suburban school districts in the Midwest; all within a reasonable driving distance from my residence. As public school teachers, each participant was over 18 years of age and certified to teach in their states. Consent was obtained from participants before each interview was conducted (see Appendix A). All three fourth-grade teachers were female and Caucasian.

While searching for teacher participants an unforeseen complication arose. I had to change the criteria for teachers during my search for participants. Initially, I looked for a first

year teacher, a teacher with four to seven years of experience, and a teacher with ten or more years of experience. Over the course of two months I contacted over 100 fourth-grade teachers in addition to some principals. Fourteen school districts and forty-four elementary/intermediate schools in the Midwest were represented by the teaching professionals that I sent emails to. After a month of searching, I found and interviewed a teacher with four to seven years of experience and a teacher with ten or more years of experience. Still in search of a first year teacher, I emailed career service offices at nine universities and colleges to see if they had any alumni that fit my criteria. After exhausting all potential leads and coming to a dead end, I looked to alter the criteria for my participants. With my research advisor's approval, I altered the criteria for each participant to: five years or less of teaching experience, six to 15 years of experience, and 16 years or more of experience. The teachers I had already interviewed fit the 'five years or less of teaching experience' and '16 years or more of teaching experience' criteria. I was able to contact and obtain an interview with a teacher who had already responded yes, but now fit into the new category of 'six to 15 years of experience'.

The teacher with five years or less of teaching experience, Emma Potter (all names are pseudonyms), was in her fourth year of teaching and had been teaching fourth-grade for three years. Mrs. Potter teaches reading and math to her homeroom students and teaches multiple sections of writing, but does not teach social studies or science. At the time of the interview Mrs. Potter was in her mid-20s. Mrs. Potter has a bachelor's degree in Special Education with endorsements in learning disabilities and emotional impairments. Her degree also enabled her to obtain her K-5 elementary certification. Mrs. Potter's school was comprised of 424 students with 9% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Of the total student body, 79% were white, 9% black, 4% Hispanic, 5% Asian, and 3% two or more races.

The teacher with six to 15 years of teaching experience, Julie Banks, was in her 15<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and had been teaching fourth-grade for four years. Mrs. Banks teaches social studies and science to her homeroom students. She also teaches her homeroom students and another fourth-grade class reading, but she does not teach math. At the time of the interview Mrs. Banks was in her mid-30s. Mrs. Banks has a bachelor's degree in Foundations of Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction Elementary. The school where Mrs. Banks teaches has 709 children in the student body with 8% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches. Out of the entire student population, 76% were white, 7.5% black, 2.5% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 4.5% two or more races, and 0.5% American Indian.

The teacher with 16 years or more of teaching experience, Mary Hudson, was in her 34<sup>th</sup> year of teaching and had been teaching fourth-grade for 12 years. Mrs. Hudson mentioned teaching social studies, science, reading, and writing. She did not mention math so I cannot state with certainty whether or not she is responsible for teaching math instruction in her self-contained classroom. At the time of the interview Mrs. Hudson was in her mid-50s. Mrs. Hudson has a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. There were 705 students in Mrs. Hudson's school with only 1% of students eligible for free or reduced price lunches. The student body was 77% white, 10% black, 5% Hispanic, 4% Asian, and 4% two or more races.

I did not know any of the interviewees prior to contacting them about participation in my research study. However, when first contacting the teachers I noticed in Mrs. Hudson's teacher biography that she had graduated from my undergraduate alma mater. I mentioned this in the first email that I sent to her and the primary reason she agreed to participate was because we had attended the same college. This connection prompted Mrs. Hudson's willingness to be a

participant in the study. Outside of securing an interview with Mrs. Hudson and quickly building rapport, I do not believe that our connection influenced the outcome of the interview. I met with each teacher at their respective schools and in their respective classrooms. I interviewed Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Hudson in their classrooms after school and I interviewed Mrs. Banks in her classroom during her lunch hour. For the interviews, I sat with each teacher at reading tables that they each had in the back or off to the side of their classrooms. Each interview lasted 35 to 45 minutes.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrumentation of this research was in the form of qualitative interviews (see Appendix B). The format was primarily a standardized open-ended interview, but a guide approach was implemented later on in the interview at the researcher's discretion. Interview questions were crafted based on the overall research question of this study and the review of the literature. The interview contained questions that asked the teachers about (a) offering personal demographic information, (b) describing their teaching experience, (c) listing trade books used in their classrooms, (d) identifying the instructional purposes of trade books used, (e) describing their processes for selecting trade books, (f) labeling factors that influence their trade book selections, and (g) relating their likes and dislikes about trade book selection. During the interviews, each teacher was asked various follow-up questions for the sake of clarity or further details. Due to differences in curriculums and the structures of instruction follow-up questions were unscripted and varied for each teacher. Only one interview was conducted per subject.

### **Procedure**

After I submitted my research project proposal to the IRB and received approval, I first contacted potential participants by email to inquire of their interest in participating in an

interview-based research study. The three teachers who first agreed and completed the informed consent form (see Appendix A) participated in the study in February or March 2017. I met with each interviewee in person at each teacher's respective school at an agreed upon date and time. Mrs. Hudson was interviewed first on Wednesday, February 15<sup>th</sup> at 3:30pm. The interview with Mrs. Potter took place on Friday, March 3<sup>rd</sup> at 3:30pm. Finally, Mrs. Banks was interviewed on Wednesday, March 22<sup>nd</sup> at noon. After introductions at each interview, I conducted the interview by asking the questions listed in the "Interview Questions" document found in Appendix B. First, I asked the standard questions followed by any necessary, unscripted follow-up questions. I then listened to and audio recorded the subjects' responses. The participants listened to my questions and responded with their personal experiences, feelings, and opinions.

#### **Chapter 4: Results and Analysis**

The research question addressed in this study sought to determine the factors that influence teachers' selection of trade books for classroom instruction. The teacher interviews revealed numerous factors that influenced trade book selection which were both similar and different among the teachers. Although teachers specifically named and recognized some factors that influenced trade book selection, there were many factors that were clearly present, but not directly acknowledged by the teachers.

#### **Data Analysis**

Within two hours of the completion of the interviews, I answered six brief post-interview reflection questions. In the weeks that followed, I analyzed the recorded interviews with qualitative methods. First I listened to the recordings and transcribed each interview in separate Word documents in less than a week after each interview. After transcription, I read through each interview once without making any written observations. I then used the memoing

technique by making observations in the margins of the documents. Next, I created codes based on themes and areas of significance in the interviews and marked the margins of the interviews with word abbreviations as the codes. I asked another researcher to code sections of the data to add credibility to the analysis. The codes of our parallel sections were similar. We both made codes in regards to administration, curriculum, trade book availability, funding, trade book topic/theme/genre, small groups, the purpose of trade books, and the process of trade book selection. Finally I analyzed each interview individually by looking for what was unique to each teacher and then I compared the three interviews in a cross-case analysis by looking for patterns across all three teachers. While analyzing the teacher interviews individually and collectively, I made a list of the factors that each teacher named (whether explicitly or implicitly) that influenced their trade book selection. I created a trade book selection factor chart to organize the data and visualize unique and common factors.

It should be noted that although the teachers were asked the same set of interview questions, I was unable to extrapolate data merely question by question. The teachers frequently discussed trade book selection factors in response to multiple questions of the interview. For example, when asked “What classroom subjects do you use those books in?” the response may have been writing, but the teacher may also explain the purpose of the trade books in writing without being prompted, which also partly answers the seventh question, “What are the instructional purposes of the book(s)?” The teacher may once again reference the trade books used in writing without being prompted when answering “What was your process in selecting each of these books?” Due to the interwoven nature of the teachers’ responses to the interview questions, I was not able to effectively analyze the data question by question. Rather, I looked at



themes and areas of significance throughout each interview as a whole instead of through independent questions.

### **Data Results**

Data analysis and a cross-case analysis revealed that trade book selection is multifaceted and is influenced by many factors. Five central themes related to influences on teachers' trade book selection for their classroom instruction emerged: (a) criteria teachers use to select trade books, (b) administration and curriculum demands, (c) reading class structure, (d) support in trade book selection, and (e) funding. These five themes appeared in the interviews of Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Banks, and Mrs. Hudson in similar and different fashions.

#### **Theme 1: Criteria teachers use to select trade books.**

During the interviews each teacher was asked, "What factors influence your decisions in choosing (or not choosing) specific books?" In response to this question, each teacher only named three to five factors that influence their trade book selections. However, after analyzing the data it became clear that influential factors were actually discussed throughout the entirety of the interviews and numbered closer to 20. By carefully going through each interview, I located all of the factors that influenced each teacher's trade book selection and compiled the data in Table C1 in Appendix C. The factors that all three teachers recognized as clearly influential were: reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic.

The five factors that all the teachers named as influential for trade book selection was the first theme that emerged: criteria teachers use to select trade books. Regardless of curriculum, students, administration, experience level, personality, and demographics every teacher discussed the significance of reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic on their selection of trade books. Reading level is the level that a student is able to independently

read a text without difficulty. This criterion was heavily discussed by all three teachers throughout the interviews. The book rooms in all three schools, where teachers can select trade books for small reading groups, are all even arranged by reading level. Mrs. Potter, the newest teacher, stated, "In general, in terms of the book club books I choose-I would say obviously books that are at their level". From her use of the word "obviously" it is apparent that Mrs. Potter assumed reading level is an essential part of trade book selection. Mrs. Potter did choose mentor texts that were at a higher reading level, but the small group texts she selected were at the students' reading levels.

Mrs. Banks, the teacher with 15 years of teaching experience, actually places her students in small reading groups based on their reading levels: "When they're meeting in their small groups it's kind of based on their reading level." Choosing a trade book that is at just the right level for a student is so important to Mrs. Banks that she will purchase trade books with her own money if the correct level book is not available. Mrs. Banks explained:

Usually if there's a group that's a true level and there's not that many books, I'll go on Scholastic and pick something out that I know that they'll like. Cause I feel bad making them read a different level, something too easy or too hard, because we have the books. Like I'd rather have them have something appropriate in their hands.

For each reading unit in Mrs. Banks' class, the students read two trade books in their small groups. The first small group book of each unit is usually selected solely by the teacher. The second small group book of each unit is selected from a few options presented to the students based on their reading levels by the teacher. Mrs. Banks described, "For the reading groups I assign the first book like 'Hey! You're all a level U. Here's your book'...but then for

the second book in that same genre I'll put out like three level U's [books]." In both scenarios, reading level is a strong selection factor.

Mrs. Hudson, the teacher with the most teaching experience, explained that mentor texts reach all the students regardless of their individual reading levels. She said, "Every genre [unit] has the mentor texts so that even if the children cannot access the material because their reading level isn't as high as these books." On the other hand, small group texts are geared toward students' personal reading levels: "The other ones [small group books] are in sets of six and available to different levels would probably be the right way to say it". Each unit always has four trade books for small group choices, which come in sets of six. Mrs. Hudson is able to obtain other trade book options for lower reading levels from the school book room if needed. Mrs. Hudson explained that her school's curriculum is designed around teaching fourth-grade reading at a fourth-grade reading level and then scaffolding students to that level as needed. She explained:

We are teaching everybody at a fourth-grade level because if they can't access the fourth-grade curriculum because their reading level isn't fourth-grade, we're doing them a disservice so the understanding was everybody's receiving fourth-grade instruction and we're going to change our scaffolding. If you need more help to get at this, I'll give you that help, but I'm not going to change what I'm giving you.

Even though reading level is a predominant factor in trade book selection, it is not without its challenges. Mrs. Potter disliked placing students in small groups based on reading level because students notice and negative stigma are formed. She expressed:

I don't like having to group kids by level...let's say four kids that are reading lower than the rest of my kids. So that idea of grouping kids and those four are always being in the

same group. You know that kind of produces this awareness like “we’re all four together every single time and we’re reading this book and they get to read that book” and you know kind of that negative awareness.

However, she also felt that she had to keep the lower level students in a group because they just are not able to read at a higher level yet.

Mrs. Potter also felt pressure from her school district about reading level and groups of students. Mrs. Potter stated:

We here in our district they really pump into us this idea of not-we’re technically not supposed to group by level and so we don’t-like I will intermingle kids. But at the same time then do I have this student who can read this book come down to this book so that this lower group is mixed?...It’s almost like not servicing these kids, but then not servicing these kids. So it’s kind of this double standard. So I hate choosing books for different levels.

The district strongly discourages teachers from grouping students by reading levels, but Mrs. Potter struggled to find the balance between reading levels and grouping students.

Mrs. Banks also faced challenges with reading levels in her classroom. She expressed: I feel...that a lot of the quality books are written above the reading level of some of our kids like I have-the reading level they should be at right now is a Q, R, S somewhere in that range and I have kids in my class who are reading at a level M. So it makes it really hard for us to find books that are going to push those kids the same way that our upper kids are gonna get pushed. So sometimes the level is the challenging factor.

Mrs. Banks wanted all of her students to have access to quality trade books, but she felt that the lower level books in her school did not match the quality of the higher level books.

In addition to reading level, student interest plays a large part in what trade books teachers select for instruction. Mrs. Potter explained, "We pick based on what we like and what our kids are interested in and different levels and all those kinds of things". She noted that the fourth-grade students already had exposure to many trade books from previous grades and their home lives:

A lot of times by the time they get to us they've seen...they're introduced to a lot of texts outside of school too. Family life is pretty stable and so a lot of times, "Oh I didn't read this at school, but I read it at home with my dad" or you know those kind of things so then all those factors play in.

Due to the number of trade books read in previous grades and at home Mrs. Potter especially looked for books that students had not read before when she considered student interest: "Within those books [books in their reading levels] I really try and choose books that obviously kids haven't read so that's another big piece". She considered students interest, enjoyment, and excitement when selecting trade books: "I think that's a big thing is new books to kinda keep kids excited and fresh about them".

Mrs. Banks also named student interest as a factor for trade book selection, but found it to be more a prominent factor in some units over others. For example, her nonfiction small group books were based more on interest than reading level because within the amount of nonfiction book choices there was already a wider range of reading levels represented. Mrs. Banks experienced positive effects of selecting trade books that students were interested in. She related:

We're reading *Number the Stars* [by: Lois Lowry] right now and I have three boys who cannot sit still to save their souls in reading class. They all latched on to *Number the*

*Stars.* They went to the library themselves, got copies of the books and are like ten chapters ahead of me. They just cannot put the book down.

Even students who struggled with focus in reading class latched on to high interest trade books, which increased their reading enjoyment and attention. Mrs. Banks had even learned to let student interest guide her selection for mentor texts. She illustrated:

I've gotten away from some of the books that I used to always read aloud and now I've kind of changed that up as students give me their feedback. Like "Oh this book was so good!" or "Could we read another one by this author?" and taking into account more student recommendations.

Mrs. Hudson had come to realize that some genres, specifically fantasy, had higher student interest: "The fantasy genre is very, very popular with this age children". However, students had also shown interest in other genres too: "I've been delighted with their interest in their biographies". For biographies the students were able to select what person they wanted to read about out of a set that Mrs. Hudson had in the classroom. Students were also able to select a trade book outside of what Mrs. Hudson had available if they wanted:

And then I allowed them if there was somebody they were interested in that I didn't have, our school library also has some of these so then I sent them up to the library to see if they did. So two of my children did pick a book beyond what I had.

Following reading level and student interests, teachers also considered comprehension as a criterion in their selection of trade books. Comprehension relates to the students' abilities to understand the selected texts. Mrs. Potter discussed that one of the main purposes of her class book clubs was novel-based comprehension, "we'll read sections each week and do comprehension questions each week that then we come back and discuss as small groups". After

listing the trade books used in her book clubs, Mrs. Potter noted, “And I mean just thinking about all these texts; they’re good comprehension”. Mrs. Banks was intentional about increasing her students understanding at the beginning of the school year through transitioning from a below fourth-grade level mentor text to a fourth-grade mentor text. She explained, “They’re [the books] lower level so I introduce them-I always start the year with reading one of those...So we started easy and worked our way harder.”

Mrs. Hudson discussed the influence of comprehension most frequently out of the three teachers. The reading curriculum at Mrs. Hudson’s school is designed around Common Core State Standards, which focuses on trade books instead of anthologies specifically for the sake of comprehension. Mrs. Hudson explained, “As we were examining the Common Core State Standards in the heart of the standard was a deeper level of comprehension than we felt a typical anthology provided”. She further explained, “What I teach as far as comprehension skills are the same things as soon as they know how to read they’re being taught”. Essentially, the comprehension skills taught in fourth-grade are the same comprehension skills in all prior grade levels. Since the skills do not change from grade to grade, Mrs. Hudson’s school made a different change: “So what we have to do is change the complexity of the text, not the comprehension strategy”. Comprehension is one of the primary purposes of each reading unit studied in her classroom. Students first engage with comprehension skills through Mrs. Hudson’s example before trying it independently: “all the specific comprehension skills I talk about, language studies are from the mentor text”.

The three interviewed teachers also select trade books based on their topics. Mrs. Potter looked for and selected trade books based on topics or genres that students previously enjoyed reading:

You know there's books on a wide variety of topics so if I feel like my kids are really into history...then let's look at what I do have that's similar to or has a similar theme or you know along those lines.

For writing class, Mrs. Potter picked mentor texts that fit the topic they are currently studying:

So like right now we're working on informational writing so I'll grab a group of informational books from the library that are on different topics-a wide variety of topics so that I can kind of get all kids engaged with what they're interested in, but they're higher level texts. So that they can kind of see a good picture of what informational writing should be or should look like.

Mrs. Banks also discussed that the topic of a trade book had to be appropriate for fourth-graders:

The topic being appropriate is important. Like one of the books that we were looking at for historical fiction is-what's it called-*Jackie and Me* [by: Dan Gutman] I think. And it's about Jackie Robinson playing baseball and we started reading it and there were inappropriate words, but it was the time period. So like the author was writing historically accurate, but we specifically chose, even though every boy in the class would have loved to read a book about Jackie Robinson, we specifically chose not that book.

Beyond appropriate topics, the reading curriculum that Mrs. Banks used includes topics studied in other class subjects. For example, science and social studies related trade books are based on topics covered by Wisconsin fourth-grade curriculum such as weather and the American Revolution.

Mrs. Hudson's curriculum also included other school subjects. Science trade books were chosen specifically for their topics: "The reason that it [book] was chosen was because it was a



topic that we covered in science” and “The *I Survived* [book series] helped to deal with some of the science topics we were talking about like weather and environments”. The curriculum in Mrs. Hudson’s school intentionally picked trade books for teaching topics: “And then for these—for the books, for biography and for folktale and for natural disasters, they were picked because of their topics.”

Finally, book themes also influenced what trade books all three teachers selected for instruction. Similar to a book’s topic, Mrs. Potter also selected trade books that have similar themes to what students had shown an interest in. Additionally, Mrs. Potter found that themes can lead to greater discussion: “The kids had some really good discussions about the meaning and some common themes so we did that one [book].” Mrs. Banks stated that the genre and theme of selected trade books were purposeful for the curriculum and discussion. She further stated that the theme can be significant for teaching personal lessons:

I’ve gone with books that have been recommended to me that fit a theme that I want my kids in my classroom to feel is important like starting the year with [*Jake Drake*] *Bully Buster* [by: Andrew Clements] really just sends the message that we’re not going to do that in this room. And we’re not going to have bullies and we’re not going to treat people that way and you know I-that’s just the tone that I want to set.

Mrs. Hudson also selected trade books based on themes that influenced the classroom environment:

And then the first unit was—the name of the unit was empathy. We use it at the beginning of the year because of the team building aspect, the community building of a new school year. And it’s all realistic fiction also so we can talk about both [theme and

genre]. The—what you're hoping to see in a community and what you can expect out of realistic fiction.

As described above, the first theme related to the five criteria (reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic) that all three teachers named as factors for their trade book selection had clear and intentional influence for each teacher. The remaining four themes discovered through data analysis of the interviews are: administration and curriculum demands, reading class structure, support in trade book selection, and funding. These four themes were discussed by all three teachers, but had varying levels of influence on their trade book selection. Additionally, these factors may or may not have been as clearly recognized as influential by the teachers.

### **Theme 2: Administration and curriculum demands.**

The trade book selection of all three teachers was influenced by mandates that existed in their schools and districts. Most of the mandates can be labeled as administration and/or curriculum demands. Before trade book selection could even take place, the teachers had to abide by the directive established by the administration and/or curriculum. Mrs. Potter first implemented the *Treasures* curriculum by MacMillan-McGraw-Hill for English Language Arts: "Our only requirement for ELA is *Treasures*" before she selected trade books for her optional book clubs. Mrs. Banks used mentor texts based on the requirements of the Lucy Calkins curriculum: "With all the other read alouds it's here's what Lucy Calkins books said you have to read so that's what we're gonna read." She also selected trade books for small groups based on the genre units dictated by the Lucy Calkins curriculum. Mrs. Hudson stated, "We have to use the [unit book] bins" as given to them by the administration to exactly follow their new curriculum before any additional trade books were selected for struggling readers. The level of

structure and choice in trade book selection varies from school to school based on both the curriculum and the administration. This theme was not necessarily stated explicitly by all, but it first and foremost set the stage of trade book selection. Trade book selection begins based on parameters set up by the administration and the curriculum.

Mrs. Potter's school used MacMillan-McGraw-Hill *Treasures* for their reading curriculum. This reading curriculum is designed around strategies, themes, and vocabulary. The curriculum is textbook/anthology based with supplemental short texts called "strategy readers" based on specific themes and strategies. Trade books were not used in any capacity in the reading curriculum. However, as an optional intervention most teachers incorporated discussion based book clubs into their instruction. There was no set curriculum for the book clubs. Mrs. Potter explained:

The fourth-grade does book clubs where we'll choose a typical novel-I would call it-more so than like a strategy text...So those are very novel based where we'll read sections each week and do comprehension questions each week that then we come back and discuss as small groups so those books are truly chosen by us as teachers.

Mrs. Potter described the book clubs' purpose as:

And I mean just thinking about all these texts they're good comprehension, but really it's the focus of discussion I would say is my big [purpose]...Especially because of in this curriculum we don't really get that from them like we try to when they're doing these [curriculum strategy books], but it's so strategy based that a lot of times we lose the discussion. So that's kind of why we pull in the book club piece.

Essentially, the purpose of the book clubs was to balance out the strategy heavy textbook curriculum with deeper discussions through trade books.

When selecting trade books for book clubs, Mrs. Potter said, “book clubs are totally open, totally flexible” for her to freely choose. There were not any restrictions or requirements for books clubs from the administration or curriculum. Mrs. Potter even explained that her principal gave the teachers complete freedom in selecting trade books for book clubs and was supportive of teachers’ selections: “You know if my principal walked in she wouldn’t say ‘why are you reading *Tuck Everlasting* [by: Natalie Babbitt] like it’s great you’re reading *Tuck Everlasting*.’ So I do definitely have flexibility in all of that.”

Mrs. Potter also incorporated trade books into writing instruction in the form of mentor texts. She noted, “I’ll use different books for writing to more or so use as mentor texts. Of looking how other writers are writing different types or forms of writing.” The trade books she used as mentor texts in writing were her choice and were not dictated by the curriculum. Overall, Mrs. Potter had freedom and flexibility in selecting trade books for book clubs and writing, but her reading class content was mandated and structured by the curriculum and administration. Mrs. Potter was the only teacher who mentioned using a curriculum textbook for reading instruction. Strategy instruction in her school was heavily mandated without freedoms. However, book clubs were not mandated and the teachers had complete freedom within them.

Mrs. Banks taught reading with Lucy Calkins Units of Study for Teaching Reading (Grade 4). Each fourth-grade unit in the curriculum was a different genre: realistic fiction, nonfiction, historical fiction, and nonfiction. The curriculum supplied the teachers with genre-based mentor texts, which Mrs. Banks responded rather favorably to recommended texts:

So for the read alouds I’ve gone with books that have been recommended to me that fit a theme that I want my kids in my classroom to feel is important...with all the other read alouds it’s here’s what Lucy Calkins books said you have to read so that’s what we’re

gonna read which is fine because all of her books that she picks I have loved. It's not been my first time reading any of them so it's not that they're unfamiliar to me which is nice.

The small groups books were not supplied by the Lucy Calkins curriculum, but the selected trade books had to match the current genre being studied as designated by the curriculum. Mrs. Banks had less choice in mentor texts than in small group texts. The curriculum was more specific in mentor text requirements, but was more open in small group book choices.

Mrs. Banks was one of two fourth-grade teachers who served as model classrooms for reading. Part of her responsibility as model classroom was to meet weekly with the school's reading specialist: "We are the model classrooms for the school this year so we work with the reading specialist once a week as well and then we present stuff to the staff on like the good things that we're doing classroom." Overall, even with mandates given by the curriculum and administration Mrs. Banks felt fairly free and unrestricted with her trade book selection. She noted:

I mean we asked for the money to buy the historical fiction books and were told "Yes" so that was good. It's not really limited-like we share books between schools if there's not a book that we have enough of here we can email some of the other elementary schools and they'll send their books over. I don't feel like there's a lot of restrictions, which is nice.

Out of the three teachers, Mrs. Hudson had the most curriculum and administration mandates to follow. Mrs. Hudson was teaching a brand new curriculum that was created by her school district. Over the course of two years a district committee, including both administrators and teachers, met regularly to construct a new district-wide reading curriculum. The committee was originally formed in order to address Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in reading.

Mrs. Hudson explained that the district had been using an anthology based curriculum, but through the examination of CCSS the committee decided that the anthology did not fit the standards. The purpose and process of trade book selection was changed due to CCSS. Mrs. Hudson elaborated,

The process started as we moved from a more localized selection to Common Core State Standards. And as we were examining the Common Core State Standards in the heart of the standard was a deeper level of comprehension than we felt a typical anthology provided.

Mrs. Hudson further explained that the level of depth in an anthology was insufficient to teach complexity of texts:

Because anthologies are briefer you do not have the same kind of depth of characters, you don't get to watch a character evolve to the same degree. You can't teach the complexity of text that you—because what I teach as far as comprehension skills are the same things as soon as they know how to read they're being taught...so what we have to do is change the complexity of the text, not the comprehension strategy. And when we're going through this thinking we said then an anthology won't work. So if an anthology doesn't work, how are we going to get to that complexity of text? So a committee was formed.

This approach to reading curriculum and trade book selection was unique among the three teachers. Instead of teaching reading skills and grade-level texts independently of one another, reading skills were taught solely through grade level texts (authentic literature). The committee created the new curriculum under the direction of the "chief learner" (director of curriculum and instruction) through the method of backwards design. The first year of curriculum formation, the committee worked solely on the design:

First, we're going to decide what it is we want to accomplish...and the whole first year they just worked on the design: what the units were going to be, what they hoped the— what skills they were gonna address, what strategies, how are we gonna get at these.

The second year, the committee focused on trade book selection. "Then the second year they looked at what books would help us to accomplish that." Due to the time, money, and commitment to the newly designed curriculum, Mrs. Hudson's school district was strictly enforcing the implementation of the new reading curriculum: "At the end of last year everybody was required to relinquish their anthologies because they were concerned that if we still had them in our classrooms [they would be used]." Last school year a couple classrooms in the school district were used to pilot the curriculum for the duration of the school year. This school year was the first year that all classrooms in the district implemented the new curriculum.

Similar to the curriculum format of Mrs. Banks' school, the new curriculum Mrs. Hudson used was in genre based units with mentor and small group texts. The genre units were: realistic fiction with an empathy theme, fantasy, biographies, traditional literature (includes fractured fairy tales, myths, and tall tales), and nonfiction (science based). Fourth-grade did not study all possible genres, but the curriculum was designed so that every genre would be studied over the course of all elementary grade levels. The mentor and small group texts for each genre unit were selected by the committee and given to the teachers in unit bins. A representative from each grade level in the district was on the committee that created the curriculum and selected trade books, but the individual teachers in the school did not select their own trade books for reading instruction. There was no individual teacher choice in trade book selection.

Trade book selection within this district was the most controlled by the administration and had the greatest continuity across the school district. Unlike Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Banks,

Mrs. Hudson will teach the same set of mentor and small group texts each school year. Not only did Mrs. Hudson have to use the new curriculum with the selected trade books, but she had to strictly adhere to it because she was a model classroom. She described:

Because this is the first year that we've rolled it out to the whole school, there are two model classroom teachers chosen to implement the program to fidelity... And I'm one of those teachers this year. Therefore, I've felt very little freedom. Just in the fact that I wanted to teach it exactly the way that they were hoping it would be implemented so that when people come in and see my classroom and because they do—they come in and watch me teach or they videotape me teaching. So I would say that I have the least amount of freedom out of anybody else you would interview.

Mrs. Hudson also recognized that the new curriculum did not leave flexibility for teachers to include their own interests and passions. She expressed:

Right now we have no poetry [in the fourth-grade units]. I've been thinking about that. I thought well, when am I going to teach them poetry, when are we going to enjoy poetry. Some of the other things that I've given up is more reading fluency types of things. We always did more readers' theatre... I miss that. Now, having said that nobody's saying that I can't teach poetry, but because I'm doing this and I'm trying to learn it and teach it well there isn't any extra time. I imagine there will be [in future years].

Despite lack of teacher control or choice in trade book selection Mrs. Hudson would not change the new curriculum. "At this point, I wouldn't change anything. I was so happy with the first two units and I've been delighted with their interest in their biographies... So my guess is that I'm going to feel that way all year." Overall, Mrs. Hudson had the least freedom and flexibility in



trade book selection for reading instruction, but she was content with the mandates given by the curriculum and administration.

**Theme 3: Reading class structure.**

Within and beyond the curriculum and administration mandates, each teacher had a clear reading class structure. There were common threads woven throughout the reading class structure of all three teachers, but there were also unique aspects to each teacher's manner of instruction. It is first worth noting that trade books were clearly most heavily incorporated into reading class, although every teacher named at least one other subject where they used trade books in instruction. Teachers also named writing, social studies, and science as subjects that they also used trade books in. In addition to reading class, as discussed earlier, Mrs. Potter incorporated trade books into writing instruction. The texts she selected for writing were primarily higher level mentor texts. She selected trade books for writing as examples based on the type of writing students were currently learning about and writing themselves.

Mrs. Banks used trade books in the most subject areas: "I use them [books] all day long. I use them in reading. I use them in writing. I use them in...social studies". She was the only teacher to name using trade books in all the subjects that she taught throughout the school day. Like Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Banks used trade books as mentor texts in writing: "for writing we base a lot of our mini-lessons off of picture books". Social studies and science trade books were used alongside of the nonfiction reading unit through cross-curricular integration. In social studies "our topics in fourth-grade in Wisconsin are Native Americans of Wisconsin and then influential Wisconsinites". For each of these topics students selected and read trade books about Native Americans and Wisconsinites and then completed a corresponding research project on the historical figures. Mrs. Banks explained, "For our nonfiction unit everybody was reading

nonfiction-it was also at the exact same time that we were doing our influential Wisconsinites so they were learning about their person, doing their research in reading time". Similarly in science, Mrs. Banks' students were in groups that selected trade books based on different types of weather/natural disasters such as hurricanes, tsunamis, volcanoes, etc. and then created a project based on their topic. Mrs. Banks elaborated,

The second [part of the nonfiction unit] was for a weather nonfiction research project to tie in the science aspect as well. Everybody had a weather book and we had a giant rolling cart...of weather resources and one group did volcanoes and one group did hurricanes and one group did tsunamis. So we split it up that way and then they all present it to each other.

Just like Mrs. Banks, Mrs. Hudson's curriculum also integrated science into reading. The fourth-grade science topic of weather was integrated into the nonfiction genre unit of reading: "The *I Survived* [book series] helped to deal with some of the science topics we were talking about like weather and environments." Mrs. Hudson's writing units also corresponded to the reading genre units. Students learned and practiced writing different genres based on what genre was being studied in reading: "Every single unit they also—in realistic fiction they wrote a realistic fiction, in fantasy they wrote fantasy...They also have to write whatever we're doing." Interestingly, Mrs. Hudson mentioned the intent to study social studies in reading, but without success. When the committee organized the reading units and selected trade books they attempted to integrate social studies, but were unsuccessful. Reasons for the lack of success were not stated by Mrs. Hudson. She did say:

When we determined what books we were going to use in reading we counted in...what we studied in science. So although we might be using it in the reading block the reason

that it was chosen was because it was a topic that we covered in science. And we were not able to do that with social studies.

Interestingly, at most two of the three teachers also taught math. Mrs. Potter definitely taught math, Mrs. Banks definitely did not teach math, and Mrs. Hudson did not mention math. However, none of the teachers mentioned math as a subject for using trade books nor as a subject to do a cross curricular study with reading. Mrs. Potter said, "We don't really use anything in math other than curriculum textbooks or workbooks." Even Mrs. Banks, who did not teach math, said "There's another teacher who teaches two sections of math. So he does not use reading aloud books or any books like this [trade book] in math class, but I use them all day long."

As far as the incorporation of trade books in reading class, all three teachers used trade books as mentor texts and in small reading groups. A mentor text is a trade book, whether chapter book or picture book, that the teacher reads aloud to the students for an instructional purpose(s). Most of the teachers' references to mentor texts were for areas related to English Language Arts (ELA), such as reading and writing, but some mentor texts were also cross curricular. The primary use of mentor texts seemed to be in conjunction with mini-lessons and modeling that related to the purpose of instruction for a particular unit. Mrs. Potter detailed using mentor texts primarily in teaching writing, "I'll use different books for writing to more or so use as mentor texts...of looking how other writers are writing different types or forms of writing." As described earlier, Mrs. Banks received mentor texts for each reading unit from the Lucy Calkins curriculum used at her school. She used about three to four mentor texts per reading unit with a mix of chapter and picture books. A mentor text in Mrs. Banks' classroom was a trade book of the same genre as the small group books. In each unit students had to find ways that their small group books related to the mentor text(s), "They're going to have to figure out how to

connect the two.” Mrs. Hudson’s mentor texts were given to her in the district’s new reading curriculum unit bins. Each unit bin had approximately four to six mentor texts in it. Most of the mentor texts were picture books, but some of the mentor texts were chapter books. Mrs. Hudson explained that the mentor texts were designed to be accessible for all students regardless of their reading levels:

Every genre has the mentor texts so that even if the children cannot access the material because their reading level isn’t as high as these books they can—we can all access what I’m teaching—the skills I’m teaching through the mentor text.

Mrs. Hudson taught new reading skills through the mentor texts and then her students practiced the skills: “All the specific comprehension skills I talk about, language studies are from the mentor text.” In essence, all three teachers used mentor texts to introduce or firmly establish topics, themes, skills, and/or concepts.

In addition to mentor texts in reading instruction, each teacher had their class/classes divided into at least two reading groups. The groups met with their teachers at least once per week for discussion. The trade books used in the reading groups and the selection of those books were the books discussed most frequently and with the most depth by all three teachers in the interviews. Despite the commonality of reading groups as the segment of instruction that most heavily utilized trade books, there were many differences in the setup, delivery, and operation in each of the three classrooms. The most notable differences were in the purpose of the reading groups, the process of trade book selection, the types of trade books used, the number of trade books, and the number of groups/students per group.

Mrs. Potter called the small reading groups in her classroom “book clubs”. She had a total of two book clubs in her classroom at any given time and throughout the year each book

club studied approximately five trade books (ten trade books total for both book clubs). Mrs. Potter used the fewest trade books for reading groups during the school year compared to the other two teachers, mainly because she only had two reading groups in her class. This school year she decreased the number of book clubs from four to two because it was more manageable for her. She noticed that fewer groups and books led to more conversations between students outside of book club time. The main purposes of Mrs. Potter's book clubs were comprehension and discussion. As explained earlier, book clubs were not mandated by the curriculum or administration, but existed to balance out the strategy heavy reading curriculum. Mrs. Potter even went as far as calling book clubs an "intervention":

Technically we don't have to do book clubs. It's something that we've built in. Our only requirement for ELA is Treasures [curriculum textbook]. We really have no requirements in terms of book clubs. We use it-we phrase it as an intervention just because we can and we have chunks of our time, which we do have to have in our schedule that we call "PIE", which is Personalized Individualized Education so it's basically intervention time and we use a block of our PIE time for book clubs because we feel like by fourth-grade going into fifth-grade they should be able to sit and have a conversation about what they're reading and they really haven't had that so that's an intervention that we use.

Curriculum, strategies, and literary elements were not part of book clubs at Mrs. Potter's school. Book clubs were solely for discussion and comprehension. Cross-curricular instruction was not really a part of book clubs unless the teacher happened to select a trade book that related to other subjects in the curriculum. Perhaps a third purpose of Mrs. Potter's book clubs, outside of discussion and comprehension was to promote students' love of reading. She expressed: "I think

just seeing the joy of reading and reading for enjoyment rather than this is so much reading to learn and I like giving kids the space to read for enjoyment. That's not so structured."

Mrs. Potter's trade book selection process took about one month. As soon as her students start a new trade book in their book clubs she began her book selection process for the next book club trade books. She explained:

I usually start...for example, like my groups will finish their books next week and I started reading a new book three weeks ago, so about a month I would say is my turn around. Usually once my groups start-I almost start reading a new book on my own to start preparing is kind of my gauge, but unless it's a book that I've already read.

This was the longest book selection process out of the three teachers. Mrs. Potter explained that her trade book selection process started with the support of the school's reading specialist:

So a lot of times I will reach out to her [the reading specialist] and say you know, "Are there any new books on the horizon that you've put into the library?" especially just because a lot of our kids have read so many books by the time they get to us. So if there's a new book that she puts in there I usually try and pull that. And I read it first.

Outside of new trade books that the reading specialist recommended, Mrs. Potter acknowledged that she was more likely to select trade books that she used in the past and had already done the work behind:

This sounds awful, but once I do the work behind the book too like last year I introduced a couple new books, this year I've introduced a couple new books so me doing the reading and developing questions and all of that then you know I want to use it again...you know I put that effort in last year so looking at that as well, which is selfish, but I only have so much time in a day.

Mrs. Potter's book selection process was also affected by trade book availability in her school district:

Availability I think is a big one, which goes back to money. I think there's a lot of good books out there and a lot of times we just don't have it in the budget so I think availability is probably the big key and just keeping things fresh in there you know with kids' reading book club books every year since first-grade.

Alongside of the trade books that were available, Mrs. Potter admitted that her own awareness of what trade books were available and what students had already read also influenced her book selection: "I would say availability and just awareness of what's out there and what's possible versus what kids have already seen and read and are sick of." Mrs. Potter went as far as saying that her lack of awareness of available trade books was a limitation for book selection:

I think for me, personally, there's a lot of good stuff out there that I'm not aware of...And again that might be my own doing. I'm sure there's a website out there that I could join some subscription and you know and get all that information, but I would say that's probably my biggest weakness in just not being aware of what's new and what's happening.

Mrs. Potter selected two trade books at a time, one for each book club. The two trade books in book clubs were typically one she had used in the past and one that was new: "Usually I'll pick one [book] that I've already done and if I'm introducing a new one then I'm personally only reading one at home." Since her book selection process was so lengthy, by only selecting one new trade book per unit she saved herself time. When new book clubs started, the students were able to give their preference for which book they would like to read:

I usually, if I have two books that I've chosen, I kinda introduce the texts and I let them vote on their number one and their number two choice so that they have some buy in in that way and then I look at that and I look at if there's one text that might be a little bit more challenging than the other, I'll kind of look at where they are as readers and play that in. And that will obviously usually trump their vote, but to kind of let them have that freedom a little bit.

While choosing trade books for book clubs, Mrs. Potter considered many different criteria. As discussed earlier, all three teachers including Mrs. Potter considered reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic while selecting books. Mrs. Potter noted,

In general, in terms of the book club books I choose very-I would say obviously books that are at their level, which is a relatively select group of books, but within those books I really try and choose books that obviously kids haven't read so that's another big piece...so I'll have to kind of pinpoint what books they haven't read and then I try and choose very like character forward texts that can go a little bit deeper with conversations. As stated here, Mrs. Potter also looked for texts with strong characters that could also elicit in-depth student discussions. Mrs. Potter had also selected trade books based on the similarity to students in the classroom so students could see themselves and others who are different from them in the text. As an example, she described a trade book she selected,

It has a student in it and it's her story of being nonverbal and kind of her journey to communicating in a school setting and we have a student in here that is nonverbal 100%. So I really try and connect it to where kids can kind of picture themselves in it, but also be able to it to something or someone that they know or are learning about. So that one is really applicable to them.



Despite the length of the process and the many criteria, Mrs. Potter found joy in selecting trade books for her students to read in book clubs:

I like selecting books that I know my kids are going to get excited about. That's probably like my joy in it. Like when kids come in and they're unpacking and they like can't wait to talk to their neighbor about what they read last night. Like that's where I find the joy. So I get really excited to find exciting books that I know that if I get excited about sitting down and reading a chapter book that's made for a fourth-grader like they should get excited about it.

Mrs. Banks was less consistent with her terminology for groups of students reading a selected trade book together. She referred to the groups as "small reading groups", "small groups", and "reading groups". Mrs. Banks taught two reading classes: her own homeroom class and another fourth-grade teacher's class who taught math to Mrs. Banks' homeroom. Since Mrs. Banks taught reading to two classes she had the most reading groups and selected the most trade books out of all three of the interviewed teachers. Within each class, Mrs. Banks organized her eight reading groups homogenously based on reading level. Two groups in each class were reading lower level books and one group in one of the classes was reading "low, low, low" level books. The remaining three small groups read trade books at a fourth-grade reading level. As mentioned previously, Mrs. Banks taught four genre based reading units during the school year. For every unit, each small group read two texts, which totaled to 16 trade books per unit and 64 trade books per school year. However due to the structure of her reading groups, Mrs. Banks selected more than just 64 trade books. As described earlier, during a given genre unit, the first small group book was selected by Mrs. Banks. The second small group book of each unit the students in a group chose a trade book from a few options presented to them by Mrs. Banks. The

students gave reasons, explanations, and justifications for their group book choice. In describing how students selected the second small group book, Mrs. Banks said,

We usually talk about why and we always do the preview like “What’s making you choose this book?” and “Why might somebody else not want to choose this book?” and then they kind of talk about it...They had to justify their choices.

Mrs. Banks was the only teacher of the three to use two trade books per small group per reading unit. She balanced the two trade books with one being the teacher’s choice and the other being the students’ choice.

The overarching purpose of Mrs. Banks’ small reading groups was for students to interact with various genres at their reading level with their peers and to relate the mentor text(s) to their small group text(s). Within each genre unit there were additional purposes for study. The purposes of the first books in the realistic fiction unit were to transition into the year with a below fourth-grade level book and at fourth-grade level books, convey themes about acceptance, kindness, and anti-bullying, study multiple character perspectives, and compare points of view. Mrs. Banks described,

Realistic fiction was our first unit...they’re lower level so I always start the year with reading one of those [*Jake Drake* books] because they teach really good lessons about acceptance and kindness and not being the bully and everybody’s different and that’s okay kind of thing.

The second books in the realistic fiction unit focused on character development and symbolism: “So the characters really grew and changed and symbolism and repeated things in the text and what they might mean on a deeper level...and then each of the groups had a book where the character was really well developed”. In the historical fiction unit, additional purposes were to

study trade books set in different time periods and for students to find commonalities/themes across books and time periods.

For the first nonfiction unit, the purposes for the first small group book were related to social studies. The students read trade books on influential Wisconsinites, researched their famous people, and did a presentation on what they discovered. Mrs. Banks described:

And then for our nonfiction unit everybody was reading nonfiction. It was also at the exact same time that we were doing our influential Wisconsinites [unit in social studies].

So they were learning about their person, doing their research in reading time.

The purposes of the second nonfiction small group texts tied into a science unit on weather. “The second was for a weather nonfiction research project to tie in the science aspect as well.”

Finally, the second nonfiction unit integrated social studies again, but with a focus on the American Revolution:

Our nonfiction text is based on the American Revolution so it's going to tie in the historical part [as related to the historical fiction unit] that they already know. And now instead of doing a weather report, a science project, we're gonna do a social studies.

We're going to tie in the time period.

Through examining the purposes of Mrs. Banks' mentor and small group texts, it is clear that she incorporated cross-circular integration with the greatest intentionality and through the most subjects out of all three teachers.

Mrs. Banks selected small group books with another fourth-grade teacher who taught two sections of reading. She was the only teacher out of the three interviewed who made small group book selection choices with a fellow teacher. As mentioned previously, Mrs. Banks and the other fourth-grade teacher were model classrooms for reading in their school so the reading specialist

sometimes participated in their trade book selection process. For the first small group books of a unit, the trade book selection process took about one hour. Selecting the second small group trade books of a unit took about an hour and a half. Mrs. Banks attributed the increase of time to selecting multiple trade book options for each small group the second time:

I would say at the start of each unit it's a solid hour and then at the midway point as they finish their books and are ready to transition to the second book of the unit I would say that's another...I don't know...sometimes even longer than an hour because you have to give them multiple copies so they can-multiple choices...so I guess I would say an hour and a half.

Since Mrs. Banks taught two reading sections, gave the students options for their second small group books, and provided many options for the cross-curricular studies she was unable to give an exact number of trade books that she selected per school year. She roughly estimated that she selected 100 trade books during the school year:

So I have eight groups well there's 32 because four times eight is 32. Plus social studies is...that's 50 influential Wisconsinites...Oh geez. I don't know. Plus let's say eight read alouds...And then all the weather books. Well I guess that would count as their small group books. So let's say 32, 40...100...It's a lot of books for me to keep up with.

Mrs. Banks considered many different criteria while choosing those 100 trade books for small reading groups. As previously discussed, all three teachers including Mrs. Banks considered reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic while selecting trade books:

When they're meeting in their small groups it's kind of based on their reading level...In nonfiction it was based more on their interests like they could choose earthquakes if they were interested in earthquakes cause we had books at a variety of levels for each topic.

In addition to those common criteria, Mrs. Banks selected trade books based on genre as dictated by the curriculum and the instructional purposes such as literary elements and cross-curricular study. Similar to Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Banks' book selection was also influenced by availability:

It's also kind of based on what books are available. Like if you're a level T and we don't have any T books that are appealing to you or that you haven't already read well then we're going to have to improvise and see what else we can find.

Mrs. Banks was more likely to select a trade book that was related to a book previously read by the students whether it was a sequel, by the same author, and/or had overlapping characters. For an example Mrs. Banks described,

The group reading this book [*The Mighty Miss Malone* by: Christopher Paul Curtis] just read *Bud, Not Buddy* [by: Christopher Paul Curtis] as well. And this [*Jip: His Story* by: Katherine Paterson] is by the same author as *Bridge to Terabithia* [by: Katherine Paterson]. And that group just finished *Bridge to Terabithia*. So I'm trying to keep it a little bit parallel.

Two factors that were completely unique to Mrs. Banks were the authors and trade book covers. She considered the author of a trade book as a big factor in her selection. She even described purposefully selecting trade books with unappealing covers:

Sometimes I like to pull out books that have really terrible covers...and the kids are like "This book looks lame" and I'm like "It does look lame. Let's read it." "What do you

mean?! You said it was lame!” And I’m like “No, I said it looks lame.” And so we kinda disprove the-you know “Don’t judge a book by its [cover]”.

In a similar fashion, Mrs. Banks selected trade books that made students read beyond their favorite books and/or genres: “I try in reading groups to kind of push kids out of their comfort zones...So I kind of try to push kids that I know are kind of reluctant into different genres too.”

Even though Mrs. Banks selected so many trade books during the school year, she found the process enjoyable: “I think it’s really fun-for me personally to read new books.” She had even been surprised to find new types of books that she liked: “It’s sometimes fun for me because I surprise myself like I would never pick-historical fiction...but I have fallen in love with two of these new books.” Mrs. Banks also found that selecting trade books was a good way to get to know her students more personally: “I think it’s fun getting to know the kids’ personalities too because if you don’t know the kids’ personalities you can’t pick a book they’re going to like.” On the contrary, there were some aspects of selecting trade books that Mrs. Banks disliked. As expressed earlier, Mrs. Banks struggled to find quality literature at all reading levels, especially for the lower reading levels. The teachers involved in the trade book selection process and the amount of students affected by book selection made book selection difficult. Mrs. Banks explained, “It’s a lot of pressure. Like well I like this book, but what if so and so doesn’t...even the other teacher and I, Rachel across the hall, she and I have different tastes.”

Due to administration and curriculum demands, Mrs. Hudson did not select the trade books for her small groups as described previously. Each genre unit bin given to Mrs. Hudson contained four different small group texts in sets of six. Since there were only six trade books in each book set, the number of students per the four small groups was predetermined. Throughout all five genre units, there were a total of 20 distinct small group texts. All the small group texts

were based on fourth-grade reading levels, but trade book options were available for teachers to select from if a different reading level was needed. Even though Mrs. Hudson did not truly select trade books, she was able to make book selections if she felt that students' needs were not met by the trade books in the unit bins. For every unit, each child chose (with the teacher's help) what small group book to select. Out of the three teachers interviewed, this was the only classroom where students were given more than two trade book options every time a new small reading group started. In discussing that the students selected what small group they were in for each unit, Mrs. Hudson said,

And I even allow the children because it's [the] beginning of the year you teach the children how to choose a just right book. You teach them about what does and what does not make a good fitting book. And then you let them, you know, live—practice that.

The purposes of the small group texts in Mrs. Hudson's classroom, like Mrs. Banks', started with genre, reading at a fourth-grade level, and interacting with texts with peers and the teacher. For each genre in Mrs. Hudson's class the students had to do a writing piece in the style of the genre that they studied. Also like Mrs. Banks' classroom, each genre unit contained its own specific purposes. Realistic fiction was the first genre unit of the year. This unit had an empathy theme to start the school year to help build a school and classroom community:

We use it at the beginning of the year because of the team building aspect, the community building of a new school year. And it's all realistic fiction also so we can talk about both...what you're hoping to see in a community and what you can expect out of realistic fiction.

This first unit also introduced students to reading class and small group procedures and expectations:

Then they also learn, during the first unit, we're working a lot on procedures. So we can talk about how do we expect a small group to go, how do you write about what you read, how do you organize your thinking in your learning logs. This is all done through this unit.

The second unit of the school year was fantasy. The purposes of the fantasy unit were simply to build comprehension and learn the elements of the fantasy genre. Mrs. Hudson elaborated,

The purpose for reading fantasy was to build fiction comprehension-just to build comprehension. The study of the genre when you know what to expect, to be able to identify traits of a genre so that when you're reading that genre you can better understand and know what to expect and predict. In that we're also building vocabulary, all kinds of things that you're building with this genre...and then even just discussing the different types of fantasies, some are low fantasies with very little fantastic elements and then some of course are very full of fantasy.

Biographies were the third genre studied. Once again, a primary purpose in this unit was to study the characteristics of the genre. One way in which Mrs. Hudson did this was through reading biographies and fictionalized biographies: "So there are two for each biography-one is a fictionalized biography, one is a biography. So that the children can compare the information you get from both types of biographies." In addition to comparing types of biographies, the students self-selected a biography to read, research, and write a paper about: "The focus is research and they are each writing about the person they're reading about so we do quite a lot of note taking, it's the first time they've ever taken notes, it's the first time they've ever outlined."



The fourth genre unit was traditional literature, which included fractured fairy tales, myths, and tall tales. Once again, the purpose was for students to learn about the genre elements and to compare the various subgenres. Fluency was also practiced in this unit through a tall tale readers' theater. The fifth and final unit of the school year was science based. At the time of the interview, Mrs. Hudson had not received the new bin of trade books for that unit so she was not entirely sure of the purposes of the unit. However, she did know that the unit related to science, specifically to weather. Within the science unit the genres of historical fiction and nonfiction appeared to be represented. The first trade books the students read were in a series called *I Survived*:

Well, it's something you had to survive so it could have been Pearl Harbor, or it could have been a hurricane...which is usually war or natural disaster...it's fictionalized because it's a child surviving these situations so I would call it historical fiction...They will also be reading nonfiction pieces that are also natural disasters as well.

Since Mrs. Hudson did not select the trade books for her small groups, but was rather given them by the district in bins, she did not truly have a book selection process. However, she was still responsible for meeting with each small group to discuss the texts. Through all five genre-based units, the small groups met with Mrs. Hudson about two times per week: "We try to meet twice a week. Once formally with a prompt they had to write to and/or a few prompts. And then once is more of a check in." At the time of the interview, Mrs. Hudson largely knew what trade books she would be using in future units, but had not yet read them all. Due to this school's curriculum, this was the only case where a trade book was selected before the teacher read it. However, Mrs. Hudson did read each trade book before using it for classroom instruction. As described earlier, the district committee designated one full year to the trade book selection

process for the new curriculum. The committee selected trade books for many grade levels, but within each grade level the same set of trade books was used. For the five reading units in the fourth-grade classrooms in the two elementary schools in the district, the committee chose approximately 45 trade books as mentor texts and small group texts. It should be noted that this number did not include the trade books that students self-selected from sets (such as *I Survived* and *Who Was?*) during the biography and nonfiction units.

As with the other two teachers, Mrs. Hudson and her school district considered different criteria when selecting trade books. As discussed at length previously, reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic were considered by all three teachers in trade book selection. Mrs. Hudson stated,

And they are at either a fourth-grade level, if you're talking DRAs [Developmental Reading Assessment levels], if you're talking beginning fourth-grade up to fifth-grade, so they're in their range. And then for these—for the books, for biography and for folktale and for natural disasters, they were picked because of their topics.

Beyond these criteria, Common Core was a driving force for the creation of this new curriculum and the trade book selection process. Assessments of students' reading ability and levels also influenced trade book selection: "We do look at data from statewide testing...and from screeners like we use the STAR for a screener...to help us make decisions and that kind of information also led us to some of the decisions about book selections." Mrs. Hudson further explained that for some of the genre units trade books were selected based on quality literature: "The books were selected for the fantasy and the realistic fiction because they're excellent books; they're award winners, they have rich characters, they're just very good literature." Selection availability affected Mrs. Hudson's school district in a slightly different way than the other two teachers. All

of the trade books for the curriculum were purchased as new, but it was more difficult to find options for trade book sets for the biography and nonfiction units. She described, “And then for these—for the books, for biography and for folktale and for natural disasters, they were picked because of their topics. So we were a little more narrowed in our ability—what was available to select.”

Despite having little choice in the book selection process, Mrs. Hudson largely liked the trade books selected by the committee.

The books that were selected are excellent books and I know I said that before, but that is what I like because an excellent book almost teaches itself. And the committee chose excellent books especially for empathy and fantasy. So I like that. I like-what else I like is the variety of books the children are reading throughout the year.

As mentioned before, Mrs. Hudson disliked the lack of flexibility for including other genres, such as poetry. However, despite the lack of poetry Mrs. Hudson was still supportive of the trade books selected: “But it’s minor in compare to-what I really think they did a good job of picking these books.”

Through comparing the three interviews, I observed for all three teachers that the overall concept of small reading groups was that students read trade books in small groups and met with the teacher to discuss the text. On the other hand the purposes and processes of the small reading groups were more widely different. The purposes of the small reading groups were influenced by curriculum, administration, reading skills, genre, and cross-curricular studies. The trade book selection process varied in length, criteria, teacher choice, and the people involved. Despite the differences in execution, Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Banks, and Mrs. Hudson ultimately had positive opinions and feelings about selecting trade books for their small reading groups.

**Theme 4: Support in trade book selection.**

Following the theme of reading class structure in which I discovered that all three teachers used mentor texts and small reading group texts, the fourth theme in trade book selection was support. Within this theme, the three teachers all experienced support through access to a book room, teacher collaboration within their grade level, and support from librarians and/or reading specialists. The teachers obtained trade books from various locations for whole class instruction, but when selecting trade books that came in sets for small groups all three had access to a school book room. The book rooms are a space designated for storing trade books that can be borrowed by any teacher in the school. Trade books are at least grouped as sets, but otherwise may be arranged in various ways.

Mrs. Potter described her school's book room as arranged by Lexile (reading level) and that new trade books were labeled as such: "We have like a small portion [of books] on each floor. There are leveled books by Lexile...and those are all of like the novel books that teachers can pull whenever they're needed." However, Mrs. Potter noted that although the book room was full, it had a lot of old and outdated trade books and replacing old books with new books takes time. Mrs. Banks' school has a shared book room for all grade levels as well:

So we have a book room downstairs. That it is for everyone, but the books in it are mostly geared to third through fifth so we can pull books and they kind of come in a set like a bag...of six copies so that we have enough. And those are the ones that we tend to use for small group work.

Like Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Banks also described reading level as an organization factor. Unlike the other teachers, Mrs. Banks had access to a shared fourth-grade book room located in a closet in her classroom. This book room was arranged by both reading level and subject areas: "We have

this huge other room in here, which is also full of books. This is the reading, that's the social studies, this is science—you know kind of set up...so it's for the whole grade." Mrs. Hudson only mentioned her school's book room as a place where trade books of alternative reading levels could be found if the trade books in the unit bins were not a good fit for students. She described:

Then I also had another group that I got from our—we have a book room—that has books in sets of six. So that if these levels were too high, which they were that I got a set that was more at a second-grade level...so I don't have to keep those in the classroom. Every year might be different. I might not need the set.

In addition to book rooms in their schools, all three teachers mentioned teacher collaboration as a source of support in trade book selection. At some point during the book selection process or in the use of trade books during classroom instruction, each of the three teachers experienced teacher collaboration within their grade level. Mrs. Potter benefitted from the placement of a trade book labeled 'teacher copy' in every available trade book set. Within the pages of the teacher copies, teachers had written notes and questions for discussion, which led to a common language and greater teacher collaboration. Mrs. Potter explained:

Every time one of us reads a book we slap a teacher copy sticker on it so that then if you know Cindy, my teammate, goes to read the same book after my class reads it she has the questions that I asked and then it's just kind of creating this common language and again team work.

Mrs. Banks had a partner reading teacher with whom she selected trade books with for each unit. The two teachers met twice per unit to select trade books for small groups and also selected books to purchase together. Mrs. Hudson explained that in the new curriculum the entire grade level used the same trade books, for small groups and mentor texts, at the same time in each unit.

She noted that this commonality led to greater communication and collaboration amongst the fourth-grade teachers:

When we get together we're all teaching the same book, we just never had that many books to be able to do that...that I love because when we have grade level meetings, we say 'how did this go with you', 'what are they having trouble with' and really it's that part I really like and that's different. This is the first we've had enough books for us all to be doing the same books.

The final support in trade book selection evident in all three schools is through librarians and reading specialists. The interviewed teachers all named at least one supportive authority on reading or trade books who aided them with book selection. Out of all three teachers, Mrs. Potter mentioned using the librarian and reading specialist most frequently for finding new trade book recommendations. She stated:

I think a lot of times I forget what a great resource my librarian is and my reading specialist and being able to think ahead-and really I have to think ahead a month or two out and say "Okay in a couple months I'm gonna need a new book so I better ask if there's something new".

She also felt comfortable with making suggestions for purchasing new trade books and alterations for the book room to the reading specialist:

Our reading specialist is great in the sense of-you know for example I went to her and said "We need to get *Night Divided* in there" and she "Of course"...there's a lot of support in that way too as long as we have it in the budget.

As discussed in the teacher collaboration section, Mrs. Potter and the other teachers had access to a teacher copy in each trade book set. Mrs. Potter actually approached the reading specialist about this in order to make a positive change.

As discussed previously, as the model classroom Mrs. Banks regularly met with the reading specialist who sometimes participated in her trade book selection process. Mrs. Banks also mentioned how helpful the librarians were at finding trade books for teachers: "The librarians are always super willing to pull books and we borrow from classrooms, between grade levels...I mean it's pretty free, which is nice." On the other hand, Mrs. Banks experienced insufficient support from literacy experts temporarily hired by her school:

A couple years ago we had a group of literacy specialists in the district kind of set aside a whole bunch of books for each teacher at each grade level and say like, "These are your fourth-grade mentor texts. These are your fifth-grade mentor texts". But then they never told us how to use them...So we got this big stack of books and I don't know if they're great, we never got the time to explore them so I guess if people like donate books or set aside books just make sure that teachers know how to use them maybe other districts might have more training on that.

In this instance, Mrs. Banks saw the need for additional support due to the special circumstances of receiving supplementary trade books, but without learning their potential purposes and functions in the classroom. Mrs. Hudson mentioned the school librarian as a support in trade book selection. She was able to send her students to the library in search of trade books for additional options outside of her classroom collection:

And then I allowed them if there was somebody [for the biography unit] they were interested in that I didn't have, our school library also has some of these so then I sent

them up to the library to see if they did. So two of my children did pick a book beyond what I had.

**Theme 5: Funding.**

The fifth and final theme related to influences on teachers' trade book selection for their classroom instruction was financial. Monetary influences on trade book selection were present in each of the three teacher interviews. The more money given or invested provided teachers with greater trade book selection and availability. Each teacher described at least some reliance on administration or the school district as the source of money for trade books. Mrs. Potter frequently discussed the influence of money on the amount and quality of trade books in her school. As described in the support section above, Mrs. Potter was able to make trade book suggestions to her reading specialist, which the school will purchase if there is room in the budget. Mrs. Potter described money as a factor that holds book selection back specifically in availability of new trade books. When she discussed the slow replacement of outdated trade books in the school book room, it was due to the expense: "Availability I think is a big one, which goes back to money. I think there's a lot of good books out there and a lot of times we just don't have it in the budget to purchase 20 copies."

Mrs. Banks described instances of monetary support for buying trade books from the administration. The administration gave additional money in order to support the teachers' trade book availability for a new unit in the required reading curriculum. There was clear support and follow through by the administrators for the curriculum and the teachers in their implementation of the curriculum. Mrs. Banks described:

The other person who teaches reading with me she and I just got \$1000 worth of historical fiction books because the new Lucy Calkins unit is brand new and the title of



the book is historical fiction book clubs and we had no books to run historical fiction book clubs. So we just placed the order last week and we're super excited to get those books.

Mrs. Banks was the only teacher who also described seeking out money for trade books on her own. She wrote grants in order to obtain the funds to purchase new sets of trade books for at least a couple units: "We wrote a grant a couple years ago and got like a hundred-ish books about influential Wisconsinites and they're all from the same series so that each student can have a book when they do their presentation for that." Mrs. Banks explained that when she was given money for trade books by the school or through a grant she had to prove how they will be used and that they are being used:

We have to prove that they're going to be used and by a certain number of students. So like when we wrote the grant for the Native American books we had to prove that they would be sturdy enough to used multiple years and we had to explain how they would be used by all students each year and we kind of had to justify like the cost of buying a hundred books...so we have to justify that they're gonna be used and how they're going to be used and then a lot of times the reading specialists or the principals...will come in and check on us.

Finally, Mrs. Banks was the only teacher to disclose that she will buy trade books for her classroom and students with her own money: "I actually don't even mind when I spend my own money on books for my classroom if they're books that I know that the kids will like."

Mrs. Hudson felt an abundance of financial support from the district because the town funded the creation of the new curriculum and the purchase of new trade books for every unit's book bin. She explained:

We had to make sure that we had sets of books because if you're going to be able to meet together with children to discuss the books so that they can learn from each other, you need to have more than one copy. So this was a huge investment on the part of [the town (name removed for privacy)].

Mrs. Hudson described that the district bought trade books for the new curriculum in bulk through sites such as Scholastic Warehouse and Amazon or whatever was cheapest:

Scholastic's Warehouse has been an excellent resource for books. When they do a warehouse sale you can get books at a fraction of the cost. Then the other books are selected through online publishers where it might be Amazon, it might be-it depends on whatever site is providing the least expensive price. So we basically just do a search and whoever gave us the best price would be where we would purchase the books.

All three teachers relied on receiving funds in order to obtain the majority of the trade books that they selected for their classroom instruction. The schools' abilities to spend money on trade books affected the teachers' abilities to select books based on availability. Money clearly played a prominent role in all three teachers' trade book selection for classroom instruction, but the manifestation was different in all three cases.

Overall, the five themes: (a) criteria teachers use to select trade books, (b) administration and curriculum demands, (c) reading class structure, (d) support in trade book selection, and (e) funding provided insight into the research question about the factors that influence teachers' trade book selection for their classroom instruction. Even though the themes were consistent across all three teachers, the specific criteria, processes, structure and so forth were different for each school and teacher. Through each theme it is apparent that teachers' trade book selection is multifaceted and influenced by many factors.

### **Chapter 5: Discussion**

Trade books are a prevalent presence in elementary school classrooms. Their presence is influenced by the administration, curriculum, teachers, and students that require them. Teachers, as the heads of instruction in individual classrooms, make selections on which trade books are in their classrooms and why they are there. This study sought to discover, “What are factors that influence teachers’ selection of trade books for classroom instruction?” Through interviews with three fourth-grade teachers with differing levels of teaching experience, I was able to determine that the factors that influence teachers’ trade book selection are numerous. With the creation of Table C1 and uncovering five key themes: (a) criteria teachers use to select trade books, (b) administration and curriculum demands, (c) reading class structure, (d) support in trade book selection, and (e) funding, I was able to form ideas and conclusions about the collected and analyzed data. The discoveries I made about teachers’ trade book selection mirrored a conclusion made by Jipson & Paley (1991) that teachers’ trade book selection is a complex process with multiple interacting factors.

#### **Selection Factors in the Literature and Interviews**

##### **Teaching experience.**

One of the defining elements of my study was the varying levels of teaching experience held by each teacher. Mrs. Potter had the least amount of overall teaching experience at only four years and the least amount of experience in teaching fourth-grade at only three years. Mrs. Banks had the second most teaching experience at 15 years. She had slightly more experience teaching fourth-grade than Mrs. Potter with four years. Mrs. Hudson had the most overall teaching experience with 34 years and the most fourth-grade teaching experience at 12 years. The differences due to teaching experience were not striking. After analysis, I found some differences

between Mrs. Potter, the teacher with the least experience, and Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson, the teachers with greater experience. First, Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson were model classrooms in their schools for reading. Not only did those two teachers have many years of experience, but they were both considered to be a teaching standard in the realm of reading. It is possible that Mrs. Potter could have also been a model classroom and that she simply failed to mention it during the course of the interview, but it is unlikely that a teacher with little experience would serve as a model classroom.

Secondly, Mrs. Potter seemed to express less self-confidence in her trade book selection abilities. Unlike the other two teachers who named outside forces, when I asked Mrs. Potter about boundaries and limitations in her trade book selection, her initial response connected to her perceived personal weaknesses: "I would say that's probably my biggest weakness in just not being aware of what's new and what's happening." Upon asking a follow-up question about outside forces as boundaries or limitations, Mrs. Potter was able to move away from expressions of weaknesses. It is possible that greater experience and practice in book selection brings a greater level of confidence and knowledge of trade books.

Finally, as heavily discussed earlier, all three teachers were supported by at least one literary expert staff member. The teachers with the most experience mentioned occasional support from librarians and reading specialists, but Mrs. Potter named her reading specialist as one of the first steps of her trade book selection process. It could be that Mrs. Potter had a better relationship with her reading specialist than the other two teachers and so she naturally talked more frequently with that staff member, but it is probably more of a direct reflection of her "weakness". Mrs. Potter stated, "We have a reading specialist in our building...so a lot of times I will reach out to her and say you know 'Are there any new books on the horizon?'" In spite of

Mrs. Potter's relatively few years of teaching experience and her "weakness", she found a support to help improve her trade book selection process and abilities.

### **Educational backgrounds.**

In addition to differences in teaching experience, the teachers' educational backgrounds may offer insight into how trade book selection occurs. All three teachers were certified to teach at least in the state that they were currently teaching in. Mrs. Potter was the only teacher with a Bachelor's degree in special education. She was also the only teacher without a Master's, but she had recently started taking classes toward her Master's degree. Mrs. Banks had a Bachelor's degree in Foundations of Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction Elementary. Mrs. Hudson had a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction. It is interesting that the two more experienced teachers both had Master's degrees in the same field of study. Perhaps that contributes to why they were both model classrooms for reading. It is also possible that Master's degrees in Curriculum and Instruction better equipped Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson to teach their schools' curriculums. Mrs. Banks' background in curriculum may have influenced her implementation of the Lucy Calkins curriculum and her ability to select trade books. Similarly, Mrs. Hudson's background in curriculum may have given her a better understanding of and flexibility toward the new curriculum created by her school district. It is not likely that Mrs. Potter is better equipped to select trade books through her degree in Special Education, but it may influence what trade books she selects. She did include a couple texts in the small group selections with characters with disabilities (*Out of My Mind* by: Sharon Draper and *Loser* by: Jerry Spinelli), which may have been influenced by her educational background as well as the students in her class with disabilities. None of the teachers mentioned their educational background as influential in their

trade book selection, but it seems possible that their specific areas of study may affect their selection of trade books as well as their instruction.

**Trade book selection factors.**

The five criteria for trade book selection common among all three teachers were reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and topic. As shown in Table C1, there were many more than five factors that influenced teachers' trade book selection. The five factors, as discussed previously, were specifically named and addressed at some length by all three teachers. Many of the remaining 30 factors were discussed to some degree in Chapter 4 such as administration, funding, and genre. It should be noted that Table C1 only marks factors that a teacher discussed as being directly influential on their trade book selection. For example, curriculum is marked for Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson, but not for Mrs. Potter. Mrs. Banks named the Lucy Calkins curriculum as influencing the trade books she selected and Mrs. Hudson named the district created curriculum as influencing the trade books she used in her instruction. On the other hand, Mrs. Potter did not state that the curriculum (or lack thereof) influenced her trade book selection. It could be argued that Mrs. Potter was in fact influenced by her school's reading curriculum in her trade book selection, but according to the parameters of Table C1 it is not marked. Therefore in Table C1, if a factor is not marked for a teacher, then the teacher did not discuss it during the interview or it was mentioned, but it did not specifically influence trade book selection.

Overall, Table C1 displays the true multifaceted nature of teachers' trade book selection. It is interesting to note that Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Hudson both named 17 factors and Mrs. Banks named 21 factors. Despite differences in teaching experience, educational background, administration, and curriculum the number of influential factors on trade book selection were

relatively similar. In the case of Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Hudson, the number of factors was exactly the same. I find this similarity especially interesting because these two teachers had the least and most amounts of teaching experience and the most and least flexibility in trade book selection. The degrees of flexibility in trade book selection that Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Hudson experienced were related to the administration and curriculum mandates. Mrs. Potter's administration gave her complete control over trade book selection for small groups. Conversely, Mrs. Hudson's administration gave her a curriculum to follow very strictly with little flexibility. Mrs. Banks experienced a more balanced blend of flexibility and mandates. Perhaps a more balanced approach led to a greater amount of trade book selection factors where complete flexibility or complete mandates led to fewer trade book selection factors as seen in Table C1.

Jipson & Paley (1991) discovered the multifaceted nature of teachers' selection of trade books as well. These researchers were able to separate their teachers' responses into three categories of reasons why teachers selected trade books: a) text fit into context of instruction, b) teachers' personal preferences, and c) the significance of race, ethnicity, and gender (Jipson & Paley, 1991). The three teachers in my study somewhat reflected the responses in Jipson & Paley's (1991) study. The curriculums used by Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Potter certainly considered fitting texts into the larger context of instruction namely through cross-curricular units. All three teachers described personal enjoyment as either a factor or a byproduct of trade book selection. Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Banks specifically stated that they used their personal preferences as a factor to select trade books. Mrs. Potter explained that her personal interests were a factor in her trade book selection process, "We pick based on what we like and what are kids are interested in and different levels and all those kinds of things". Mrs. Banks described enjoying the trade book

selection process itself as well as having enjoyment in finding new trade books that she liked in genres that she typically did not prefer:

It's sometimes fun for me because I surprise myself like I would never pick-historical fiction is not my-like I don't-but I have fallen in love with two of these new books. Like I'm all about *The Mighty Miss Malone*. I love it now.

Unlike the teachers in Jipson & Paley's (1991) study, the teachers in my study did not mention race, ethnicity, or gender as a factor in their trade book selection process. In fact, they did not mention those things at all. This does not imply that the trade books selected by the three teachers did not include characters of various races, ethnicities, or genders, but it does appear that they did not consider these to be significant factors in selecting trade books for instruction. Overall, the teachers in Jipson & Paley's (1991) study selected trade books based on complex and interacting factors related to the curricular context, students in the classroom, and quality of the texts. Through examination of the results, it is evident that the three teachers I interviewed also selected trade books based on similar complex and interacting factors.

#### **Children's book lists, awards, and rubrics.**

Mentioned briefly by a couple teachers, but discussed more frequently in the reviewed literature were the use of children's book lists, awards, and rubrics as factors for trade book selection. Mrs. Hudson explained that her district's curriculum committee partly selected trade books based on excellence and award winners. Both Saracho & Spodek (2010) and Gray (2009) stated that they used the Newbery and Caldecott Medals as a trade book selection factor. Further Gray (2009) used the Coretta Scott King Award and Black Books Galore's Guide to Great African-American Children's Books in order to select multicultural books. Out of the 28 trade books that Mrs. Hudson named and showed me, only four of them had awards from Newbery,



Caldecott, and/or Coretta Scott King (see Table D3 in Appendix D). Even though Mrs. Hudson was the only teacher to name awards as a factor in trade book selection, the other two teachers also selected some award winning texts whether intentionally or not. Three of the nine trade books that Mrs. Potter named received any number of those three awards (see Table D1 in Appendix D). Mrs. Banks named or showed me at least 76 trade books (see Table D2 in Appendix D); 12 of those books received the awards named by Saracho & Spodek (2010) and Gray (2009). There were many other trade books in all the classrooms that won additional, less prestigious awards and recognition at state levels or as choice awards. Award winning trade books were present in all three classrooms regardless if awards were considered as a trade book selection factor.

Mrs. Potter mentioned that she did not have a resource (outside of staff members) to find trade books for instruction. She even stated that resources must exist, but she simply does not know what they were: "I'm sure there's a website out there that I could join some subscription and you know and get all that information." As established by Broemmel & Rearden (2006) and Atkinson et al. (2009), there are children's book lists and rubrics for teachers to utilize as resources in their trade book selection process. None of the teachers in my study mentioned using such resources although it seems that Mrs. Potter would have been willing to and even wanted to implement one in her selection process. It seems that Mrs. Potter did not know how to access such a resource. The two other teachers may not have felt a need for children's book lists or rubrics because of their level of experience or the design of their curriculums. Perhaps administrations or producers of such resources need to make children's book lists and rubrics more accessible to teachers especially teachers with less experience.

**Genre.**

Genre was a substantial trade book selection factor for both Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson. Their schools' curriculums divided reading units into genres and included at least one cross curricular study. Both Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson incorporated science trade books (specifically weather related) and biographies. In a similar manner, the reviewed literature recommended using multiple genres of trade books in multiple school subjects. When examining science texts that teachers selected for instruction, Donovan & Smolkin (2001) discovered that teachers' science book selection factors were related to content, visual features, readability, appropriateness, student interest, and incorporation into instruction. Most of these factors were discussed by the teachers that I interviewed as well in relation to science based trade books and other genres of texts. Visual features were the only factor observed by Donovan & Smolkin (2001) that I did not find among the fourth-grade teachers that I interviewed.

Johnson & Small (2008) encouraged teachers to include nonfiction trade books as a genre into their instruction to provide students with greater context, personalization, organization, and up to date information. Johnson & Small (2008) found that both teachers and students in Kindergarten to sixth-grade tended to select nonfiction books on animal science, but that math based books were slightly more popular with students (8% of students verses 3% of teachers) and historical biographies were much more popularly chosen by teachers (29% of teachers to 5% of students). Despite their popularity, nonfiction animal science texts did not appear to be present in the fourth-grade teachers' trade book selections. However, the science topics covered in their curriculums were weather and not animal related.

Teachers low selection rate of math based books (3%) in the study by Johnson & Small (2008) was reflected in my study as well. As discussed previously, none of the teachers that I

interviewed incorporated math based books into any of their classroom instruction. The biography genre was heavily present in Mrs. Banks' and Mrs. Hudson's classrooms in accordance to teachers' higher selection rate of historical biographies in Johnson & Small's (2008) study. Once again, in Mrs. Banks' classroom this reflects the cross-curricular integration purposes. Fourth-grade studies influential Wisconsinites in social studies, so influential Wisconsinite biographies were read during reading class. One of Mrs. Hudson's genre units was biographies, which included nonfiction and fictionalized biographies. However, Mrs. Hudson was pleasantly surprised to find that the students really enjoyed the biography unit. Even though Johnson & Small (2008) displayed that student did not strongly select historical biographies, in both Mrs. Banks' and Mrs. Hudson's classrooms the students were able to self-select what biographies they wanted to read, which may have increased interest in a perhaps lower interest genre.

#### **Student interest and choice.**

Student interest and choice as a trade book selection factor also played a role in my study and many other research studies. Bang-Jensen (2010) discussed the importance of teachers finding trade books that meet individual students' reading needs and even went as far as saying that it is crucial for teachers to incorporate students' choices to cultivate engaged readers. Pachtman & Wilson (2006) stated that teachers have the opportunity to take advantage of students' preferences. As one of the five factors that all three teachers named as influential for trade book selection, student interest clearly held significance for the teachers who participated in my study. Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Banks, and Mrs. Hudson selected trade books that they believed students would be interested in reading and made note of trade books and genres which students enjoyed reading in class.

The consideration of students' interests in the literature review was often accompanied by student choice. The students in Edmunds and Bauserman's (2006) study indicated that they were excited about narrative and expository texts when they were related to their personal interests and they were able to choose the texts themselves. The study conducted by Pachtman & Wilson (2006) found that students have concrete opinions about reading. Students experienced increased motivation to read and reading independence when they were able to select narrative and expository texts based on their own interests and preferences (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Mohr, 2006; Pachtman & Wilson, 2006). Students need to know how to select their own trade books and when they are able to do so they are able to foster a deeper relationship with trade books and create personal reader identities (Bang-Jensen, 2010).

All three teachers that I interviewed included some aspect of student choice in their reading instruction, but with differing levels of choice. For each new book club, students in Mrs. Potter's class were able to rank the two trade books based on their preferences. However, this is not a true example of student choice because Mrs. Potter ultimately determined if the students could be in their first choice book club mostly based on their reading levels. The second small group books in Mrs. Banks' classes were also selected by student choice. Mrs. Banks provided the students with some options, but then the students had to come to a collective agreement based on justifications. Mrs. Banks' students also had the option to choose trade books for the influential Wisconsinites unit and the weather unit from a set of topic related options. Mrs. Hudson's class was able to choose their small group book out of four choices for each reading unit. Unlike Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Hudson let the students' choices stand without her involvement. Similarly to Mrs. Banks' students, Mrs. Hudson's class was able to choose *Who Was?* books for biographies and *I Survived* books for nonfiction.

Unlike Mrs. Potter who ultimately chose trade books for students based on their reading levels and Mrs. Banks who grouped students by reading levels, Mohr (2006) found that many students in her study assessed trade books they had selected as challenging to read, but chose them anyways. It appears that these students were willing to reading more difficult trade books when they were self-selected and high interest even if their reading level was not perfectly matched. Perhaps Mrs. Potter and Mrs. Banks would still have success in reading groups with slightly more difficult trade books that are high interest which students self-select more freely.

**Omissions: Gender and multiculturalism.**

Compared to the literature review, the most noticeable omissions by the teachers during the interviews were gender and multiculturalism. The literature review was rich with the inclusion of trade book selection based on gender, race, and ethnicity. McGeown's (2015) study about sex differences in children's reading choices and motivation led to suggestions about including trade books in classrooms to increase reading motivation based on gender. The teacher participants in my study did not appear to consider the influence of gender on their trade book selection or in students' reading motivation. However, none of the teachers mentioned difficulty in motivating students to read. They may not have found it necessary to search for reading motivation strategies based on gender. As suggested by McGeown (2015), grouping students by gender for small reading groups may prove to be beneficial for teachers as an additional strategy to increase reading motivation if needed or to differentiate reading instruction.

Contrary to McGeown's (2015) stance on gender's influence, Chapman et al. (2007) suggested that gender may not be beneficial for consideration during trade book selection after all. Gender stereotyping may limit the scope of what students will attempt and desire to read (Chapman et al., 2007). Instead of making trade book selections based on gender, Chapman et al.

(2007) encouraged teachers to make selections based on students' interests and to encourage students to read a wide variety of genres. Unlike studies in the literature review like McGeown's (2015) and Chapman et al.'s (2007), gender was not mentioned as a selection factor (nor even mentioned at all) by any of the teachers. However, as already made clear, all three interviewed teachers selected trade books based on students' interests. Genre was a strong factor for Mrs. Banks and Mrs. Hudson in their selection. Mrs. Banks encouraged her students to select their independent reading books based on the current genre unit: "We try to encourage kids to read that genre as we're in that unit. So like right now every student has a historical fiction book in their hands so that they can apply the things that we're talking about." Mrs. Hudson even noted that studying various genres enabled students to explore trade books outside of their typical preferences,

I like is the variety of books the children are reading throughout the year. Because if they are stuck in fantasy they probably wouldn't read a biography and they're all enjoying the biographies so to be able to branch out uh is an experience other genres.

Overall, McGeown (2015), Chapman et al. (2007), and the three teachers that I interviewed all sought to engage students in reading whether based on gender, interests, or genres.

Similarly to the discussion on gender, a multicultural aspect of trade book selection was prominent in the literature review, but was not truly discussed by the teachers that I interviewed. Crisp et al. (2016) and Tschida et al. (2014) called teachers to include trade books in their classrooms that depict the multicultural nature of the world instead of presenting a world that is male, White, upper middle class, nondisabled, and English-speaking. Books may be the only places where students encounter people different from themselves (Tschida et al., 2014). Wollman-Bonilla (1998) went as far as saying that teachers lack the courage to select texts that

present non-mainstream experiences and viewpoints. According to Tschida et al. (2014), the inclusion of multicultural perspectives is especially necessary in areas such as social studies to provide multiple viewpoints on well-known historical events and figures for a more complete understanding.

Although none of the teachers that I interviewed specifically mentioned multicultural perspectives in trade book selection, Mrs. Hudson's unit on biographies did include fictionalized and nonfiction biographies, which could influence students' perceptions of historical people and events through making comparisons. Crisp et al. (2016) encouraged teachers to examine their classroom libraries to ensure that various types of people were represented in the available trade books. Although it was outside of the scope of this study, each of the three teachers did mention at least one trade book that included a non-White main character and/or won a Coretta Scott King Award for a mentor text or small group text (examples include *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters* by: John Steptoe and *Bud, Not Buddy* by: Christopher Paul Curtis). Mrs. Banks discussed the inclusion of reading texts about Native Americans for a nonfiction, cross-curricular unit for social studies. All three teachers also used at least one text that included a main character with a disability (examples include *Out of My Mind* by: Sharon M. Draper and *The Thing About Georgie* by: Lisa Graff). Mrs. Potter did discuss that she included *Out of My Mind* by: Sharon M. Draper as a small group text because she had a student in her class who was nonverbal like the main character in the novel:

I can tell you why I'm reading it...it has a student in it and it's her story of being nonverbal and kind of her journey to communicating in a school setting and we have a student in here that is nonverbal one hundred percent...So I really try and connect it to

where kids can kind of picture themselves in it, but also be able to...something or someone that they know or are learning about. So that one is really applicable to them. Overall, each teacher included some multicultural aspects into their trade book selections, but perhaps not to the level of intentionality that was discussed in the literature review studies. Crisp et al. (2016), Tschida et al. (2014), and Wollman-Bonilla (1998) want teachers to intentionally broaden the perspectives of their students through providing trade books that reflect the multicultural makeup of the world. In the cases of the teachers involved in my study, they did not appear to make a conscious attempt to include multicultural literature.

#### **Effect of administration and curriculum mandates.**

Gender and multicultural perspectives did not appear to strongly influence the teachers' trade book selections, but administration and curriculum mandates certainly did. As one of the five main themes discovered in my study, administration and curriculum mandates were evident as influential factors on all three teachers' selection of trade books. The textbook curriculum was the only requirement for reading in Mrs. Potter's school. Book clubs were used to balance out the strategy heavy textbook curriculum. Mrs. Potter called book clubs an "intervention" and a part of Personalized Individualized Education (PIE). The curriculum and the design behind the structure of reading instruction left me with many questions: Why was reading grade level texts an intervention and considered going above and beyond?, Shouldn't students read grade level texts in school?, Why were reading strategies taught outside of authentic literature?, and Why were reading strategies not applied when reading book club trade books?. It seems that there were gaps left by the reading curriculum that book clubs were meant to fill in. With gaps noticed by both the administration and the teachers, it seems peculiar that they did not change the curriculum or make book clubs a more structured and fixed part of the curriculum.



The lack of restrictions for book clubs provided teachers with a lot of freedom, but at least in Mrs. Potter's case the lack of guidelines seemed to be somewhat overwhelming as displayed through her perception of her "weakness" in knowing what trade books to select. However, having help from the reading specialist and librarian provided a narrower field of choice as did the availability of trade books in the book room. Even though there were not any restrictions on book clubs, the district strongly discouraged grouping students by reading levels: "We here in our district they really pump into us this idea of...not-we're technically not supposed to group by [reading] level." This was not technically an administration mandate, but it certainly was an area of pressure from the administration.

Out of the three teachers, Mrs. Potter's book clubs provided the most flexibility. Since the book clubs were not a mandated part of the curriculum and she was truly free to select whatever trade books she wanted, the overall purposes of her book clubs tended to be broader. This also made the individual book purposes not as multidimensional as the other two teachers. Due to this, it appears that the other two teachers selected trade books with greater intentionality, perhaps most notably in cross-curricular integration. Overall, Mrs. Potter seemed to appreciate the balance of structure provided by the reading curriculum textbook with the flexibility provided by the book clubs. At the previous school she taught at, Mrs. Potter relayed that the book clubs were the reading curriculum and she essentially had to make it herself while incorporating reading strategies:

We didn't have a reading curriculum and so book clubs were the reading curriculum. And that was exhausting...I was reading two or three chapters a night of multiple books and really we were creating our own curriculum and it was awful. So coming here...I can teach strategies because I'm not necessarily always choosing the texts...That's why I

think I've enjoyed choosing texts with book clubs because I'm not choosing book club books and texts to teach strategies.

It seems that Mrs. Potter appreciated and desired a balance between choice and administration and curriculum demands.

Mrs. Banks' reading curriculum and trade book selection was more structured by the administration and curriculum than Mrs. Potter's. As discussed at length earlier, Mrs. Banks' reading curriculum was genre based, which was divided into four genre units over the school year. The four genres studied were realistic fiction, nonfiction, historical fiction, and nonfiction. I found it interesting that Mrs. Banks' curriculum included the genre of nonfiction twice. There are many types of reading genres, but this curriculum only included three distinct genres throughout the course of the fourth-grade school year. However, it did appear that both nonfiction genre studies were also cross-curricular. The nonfiction units seemed to pair with science (weather) and social studies (influential Wisconsinites and the American Revolution). It is possible that the purposes of these two units were only partly dedicated to the genre and the other main purpose was integration of a second subject area.

Within each of the four units, Mrs. Banks had freedom to self-select trade books for small groups as long as they were in the matching genre. She was more obligated to use the mentor texts as designated by the Lucy Calkins reading curriculum through the request of the administration. At one point, Mrs. Banks received additional mentor texts from literacy specialists hired by the administration, but without proper instruction on what the purposes of the texts were or how to use them. Atkinson et al. (2009) remarked that this is not an uncommon experience for teachers especially with nonfiction texts. Trade books are increasingly available to teachers, but teachers do not receive sufficient training on how to best select the trade books

(Atkinson et al., 2009). Overall, Mrs. Banks had a balance of structure, support, and choice in her reading instruction.

Mrs. Hudson experienced the greatest amount of administration and curriculum mandates because she was a model classroom that had to strictly adhere to the new, district created reading curriculum. Out of the three reading curriculums implemented by the three teachers, Mrs. Hudson's curriculum was the most intentional since her district planned every aspect of it. By creating a curriculum themselves, a different level of book selection was attained than by selecting a curriculum or selecting a textbook to use. Mrs. Hudson was the only teacher to mention the function and influence of a director of curriculum and instruction on trade book selection and the reading curriculum. Under the guidance of the director of curriculum and instruction, the committee changed the trade book selection process and purposes to best fit Common Core. Genre, strategies, trade books, and student choice were all aspects that the committee planned for when designing the curriculum. However, since every aspect of the curriculum was created with great intentionality, the committee wanted the teachers to implement it exactly as planned, which left little room for teacher choice and flexibility. The administration did not yet trust the teachers to implement the new curriculum independently. This administration was the most controlling over the teachers' trade book selection while the new curriculum was implemented for the first time.

Despite the lack of teacher control or choice in trade book selection Mrs. Hudson shared that she would not change the new curriculum. Even though she did not select any of the trade books, she had faith that the committee selected good trade books with good instructional purposes. She was confident that the unit purposes were good even before having read all of the trade books. Mrs. Hudson did express feelings of loss in regards to teaching aspects of reading

that she enjoyed, but that the new curriculum did not include (such as poetry). She assumed that over time there would be greater flexibility for the teachers in the implementation of the curriculum. She anticipated that she would have to use the exact trade books designated by the committee for the first few years of the curriculum. Mrs. Hudson imagined that at that point she would be able to evaluate what trade books she wants to keep and what trade books she wants to replace based on the purposes of each unit. She was hopeful that there would be greater teacher choice over time. Mrs. Hudson freely admitted that her acceptance of the new curriculum may be a reflection of her personality:

Even though I was thinking I was not going to like these selections I have liked them. So my guess is that I'm going to feel that way all year, but I tend to be "Pollyanna-ish" by nature so I tend to just really like whatever it is that I know I have to do.

Mrs. Hudson was also the only teacher to explicitly state that she loved her school and that she planned to stay there until she retires. Since she has been teaching the longest and is most likely the closest to retirement it is probably less of a stretch for her to make that statement. Her love for her school may also influence her acceptance of the curriculum.

It appears that Mrs. Hudson remained open to trying new teaching strategies, which is not always the case with teachers who have many years of experience like Altieri (1997) discovered with teachers who called themselves "traditionalists". These "traditionalist" teachers taught reading from an anthology and heavily emphasized reading skills (Altieri, 1997). The teachers in Altieri's (1997) study were highly textbook oriented and dependent with little integration of trade books into instruction. The administration in Mrs. Hudson's school district took a very strong stance against the previously used anthologies by requiring all teachers to physically turn in their anthologies. At first, it may appear that the administration was controlling and distrustful

of the teachers, but if Altieri's (1997) study remains true it would be difficult for traditionalist teachers not to rely on their anthologies. Mrs. Hudson's administrators did allow every teacher to keep some anthologies in case they wanted to use them for small groups.

We were allowed to keep five. Because obviously if you only have five you can't do any classroom anything. They said "There might be a case where you need a small group from a story from which you are familiar".

### **Processes and structures.**

Beyond the mandates of the administration and curriculum, each teacher had her own process for trade book selection and structure for her reading class. Perhaps relating to her limited teaching experience, Mrs. Potter spent one month on her trade book selection process, which was the longest of the three teachers. The length of Mrs. Potter's selection process could possibly be due to her own admission of "not knowing what's out there". This limitation or "weakness" that Mrs. Potter named may have caused her to spend additional time getting familiar with trade book options and relying on the support of others such as the reading specialist. Mrs. Potter was the only teacher to specifically discuss reusing trade books multiple years in order to save time in her selection process:

Once I do the work behind the book...I'm gonna do that again this year because you know I put that effort in last year so looking at that as well, which is selfish, but I only have so much time in a day.

However, Mrs. Potter was looking to improve her ability to select trade books through pushing the edges of her comfort zone by looking for new trade books to read and include in instruction. Mrs. Potter was also the only teacher to bring direct change to teachers' trade book selection processes in her school. She shared her positive experience of writing in trade books with the

reading specialist, which the reading specialist applied to the school's book rooms by creating teacher trade book copies. Mrs. Potter tried something new and was unafraid to share what was beneficial to her for the good of others.

The structure of Mrs. Potter's book clubs was partially based on the purpose of reading for enjoyment: "I think just seeing the joy of reading and reading for enjoyment rather than this is so much reading to learn and I like giving kids the space to read for enjoyment that's not so structured." Despite the purpose of student enjoyment, out of the three classrooms Mrs. Potter's students had the least amount of trade book choice for small reading groups. Mrs. Potter gave the students options and the opportunity to rank the two trade book choices based on personal preference, but ultimately Mrs. Potter decided what trade book each student would read. It seems that student choice was not truly a part of book clubs. It does not seem that book clubs were truly teaching and encouraging students to read for pleasure. As demonstrated in the literature review, Sherretz & Norton-Meier (2014) determined that self-selected reading supports students' engagement, motivation, and proficiency in reading. A lack of student choice does not motivate students in reading or empower students to take ownership as readers.

Mrs. Banks' trade book selection process incorporated an element designed specifically for student choice. She selected the first trade book for small reading groups, but built in extra time in her book selection process to select multiple trade books as second book options for her small groups to select from. Mrs. Banks was the only teacher who made a clear distinction between a teacher-led aspect of reading groups and a student-led aspect of reading groups. In her book selection process, Mrs. Banks felt pressure in selecting trade books that her team teacher and all her students liked, which she found difficult because of differences in trade book preferences. In addition to the pressure of preferences, Mrs. Banks felt pressure in time as well.

She did not feel that she had sufficient time to truly read and evaluate trade books before purchasing and implementing them. These pressures could partially reflect the number of students, reading groups, and trade books she selected. Since Mrs. Banks taught reading to two fourth-grade classes, she had the most reading groups and selected the most trade books which would make reading and evaluation more difficult before using in instruction.

The structure of Mrs. Banks' reading groups clearly demonstrates that she had her students grouped homogeneously based on reading levels. Out of her eight reading groups, four groups were reading lower level books and one group was reading "low, low, low" books. This grouping gives the appearance that she had the most below-level readers out of the three teachers. However, Mrs. Banks was the only teacher to explicitly group her students by specific reading levels. The interviews did not reveal the number of students in each classroom reading at, above, and below a fourth-grade reading level. It is possible that Mrs. Banks did have the most students reading below a fourth-grade reading level, but it is not known. Mrs. Banks also gave the most noticeable support to students reading below a fourth-grade level. She started the school year with a mentor text below grade level and then read a mentor text at a fourth-grade level. It appears that Mrs. Banks intentionally transitioned the students from third-grade and summer vacation to fourth-grade through her trade book selection.

Although Mrs. Hudson did not take part in the trade book selection process for the district's new curriculum she was convinced that the committee selected "excellent books". At one point, Mrs. Hudson described the "excellent books" selected for fantasy and realistic fiction as "award winners, they have rich characters, they're just very good literature". Beyond award winners and having rich characters it is not clear what an "excellent book" or "very good literature" is. The interview did not reveal what specific trade book characteristics the committee

searched for in their book selection process or if those criteria were communicated to the teachers. Mrs. Hudson clearly had a positive perception of the selected trade books, but it may have been from her teaching experience, her background in curriculum and instruction, or her personality instead of from deliberate intentions of the committee.

Mrs. Hudson was intentional about developing students' love of reading through the structure of her reading class. The curriculum design enabled the students to self-select what small group text they would read in each genre unit. Mrs. Hudson noted that the genre studies helped students experience trade books that they would not normally select for themselves. This format could help students develop as readers through the discovery of new trade books and genres that they like. Beyond the genre units, Mrs. Hudson explained that the purpose of reading and trade book selection was sometimes just for pleasure and enjoyment:

The free choice still is, even though not dictated by me, it has to be guarded by me. I'm still their guardian. Because if they don't have that time to just choose a book and read for enjoyment then we are in danger of taking the fun out of it for them.

Mrs. Hudson was the only teacher to explicitly state that a purpose of reading was sometimes only for pleasure so she tried to incorporate that into her classroom instruction too. She believed that independent reading was significant for her students to keep their love of reading alive:

Within this model of teaching the children are required to and I am required to give them time to read something other than what is in their bins for small group. And I say that as an important part just because if it feels too dictated you can lose a little bit of the love of reading. That you don't want them to lose.



**Influence of funding.**

Each teacher discussed funding in a different way. Mrs. Potter's responses to multiple interview questions kept coming back to money as something that held her trade book selection back. She did not mention how much or if any money was budgeted for new trade books each year. Nor did she mention who was in control of the trade book budget whether it was the principal, reading specialist, school board, or another party. Mrs. Potter clearly did not feel any control over funding. She could not see a way around the money issue, such as writing a grant or holding a fundraiser. Mrs. Potter did have access to a school book room, but she was not pleased with the amount of old and outdated trade books present. It seems that even though there were trade book options available, the age of books were unacceptable for her selection process. Mrs. Banks encountered insufficient trade book availability in her book selection process as well, but she approached it rather differently. When she needed more trade books for a specific topic she wrote a grant to obtain the necessary books. Mrs. Banks was also able to obtain additional funds from her administration for a required new reading unit on historical fiction. While waiting for the purchased trade books to arrive, Mrs. Banks went through all the classroom libraries to find historical fiction trade books. She saw an immediate need and filled the need with what was currently available. Mrs. Hudson experienced the most freedom in the realm of funding. Her district was completely funded by the community to create a new reading curriculum with new sets of trade books for every grade level.

**Limitations**

Over the course of my research study, several limitations may or may not have influenced the results. The small number of participants is a limitation of this study. Only three teachers from one grade level were interviewed. Additionally the participants were selected as a sample

of convenience instead of through random sampling. All three teachers were white females. None of the teachers were from the same school or district, but they were all in the same state and general area in the Midwest. Similar future studies with a greater number of participants could offer more and different insights into teachers' trade book selection for their classroom instruction.

The three interviews happened over the course of a two month period so it is possible that the teachers' answers could have changed if they had been interviewed earlier or later. Since only one interview was conducted in the middle of the school year, another limitation is that changes related to teacher trade book selection were not seen over time. I did not conduct follow-up interviews to see if there were any changes within one school year. Even with the same set of interview questions, follow-up questions were different for each teacher as was rapport and interpersonal communication. As an untrained and inexperienced interviewer, I became more confident with interviewing over time. I learned how to ask follow-up questions better and what information I needed. Another limitation is that the interviews only accounted for the teachers' perspectives on trade book selection and not that of the administrations or students. Finally, I did not present the written study to each of the teachers to serve as a member check to ensure that I accurately represented their perspectives.

### **Significance of Results**

The results of this research revealed the multifaceted nature of teachers' trade book selection for their classroom instruction. The teachers' selection processes and the structure of their reading classes were surrounded by parameters established by outside sources such as administration and curriculum mandates and funding. While selecting trade books all three fourth-grade teachers emphasized reading level, comprehension, student interest, theme, and

topic as significant factors in their searches. Support from literary specialists and sources guided the teachers as they made decisions about trade books for instruction. Levels of teaching experience and education backgrounds further influenced the nature of teachers' book selection and their confidence in their abilities to select trade books.

### **Suggestions for Further Study**

In future studies of a similar nature, a variety of possibilities related to trade book selection could be pursued. First, this research study could be conducted on a larger scale. The study could remain the same, but more than three fourth-grade teachers could be interviewed. In interviewing more teachers, more variance in teaching experience could be sought after. The parameters of this study could be broadened to include teachers of different and/or multiple grade levels or by widening the geographical locations of the teachers participants. Secondly, I was able to collect additional data about the specific trade books that the teachers selected for their classroom instruction (see Tables D1, D2, and D3 in Appendix D). It was outside of the scope of this research to analyze the specific details of the trade books, but it would be beneficial to compare the books that teachers selected. Trade books could be analyzed based on age, gender, and ethnicity of the author, publication date, awards, genre, teaching context/purpose, book format, age, gender, and ethnicity of main characters, and so forth. Finally, this study could be extended to include the perspectives of administrators, reading specialists, librarians, and students. Interview questions for administrators could include asking what their visions for trade book selection and implementation in classroom instruction is and how they view their involvement in book selection. Reading specialists and librarians may offer insights as to how teachers could improve their trade book selection, what resources teachers could use as support, and how to best approach fellow staff members for support. Student interviews could include

questions about opinions/feelings towards the trade books their teachers selected and how they view their involvement in book selection for classroom instruction.

### **Biblical Perspective**

God created the earth and everything in it (Genesis 1-2). God made man in His own image and gave humanity authority over creation as stewards (Genesis 1:26-31). Tragically, the fall of man (Genesis 3) made it impossible for humanity to follow the stewardship mandate as God intended. As Christians, we have been saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) and redeemed through Christ. Therefore we should seek to engage in God's original purposes for creation through reconciliation. As members of the "ministry of reconciliation" the church needs to be involved in reconciling both people and everything affected by sin back to God. In regards to book selection, many trade books are not written by Christians and therefore reflect the fallen state of the world. Christian teachers need to decide how to incorporate the ministry of reconciliation into their selection of trade books. This may mean choosing trade books that hold principles honoring to the Lord and not selecting certain trade books that contradict God's Word. Since a perfect book (outside of Scripture) does not exist the selected trade books may also need to be reconciled in large group or small group discussions in which the fallen aspects are acknowledged and redemptive aspects are examined. In Philippians 4:8, Paul encouraged the church of Philippi to think about what is good; he said, "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" (English Standard Version). In the same way, whatever trade books are selected need to encourage thoughts that are good and not sinful.

Perhaps the most often quoted verse for teachers is found in James 3:1, “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness” (English Standard Version). Teachers are influential in shaping minds and hearts. If teachers are deceitful, lacking, or not truthful, James explains that they will be judged for the negative influence they had on others. Even though this verse refers to teachers of Scripture, school teachers can also apply this principle. Christian teachers need to be mindful of the practices and materials that they implement in their classrooms as well as their words and actions with students. This extends to the books that Christian teachers select; trade books need to honor the Lord and strengthen the minds and hearts of students. Therefore, Christian teachers have an additional factor that influences trade book selection for their classroom instruction: the Word of God.

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**List of Children's Books**

Babbitt, N. (1975). Tuck everlasting. New York: Square Fish.

Clements, A. (2001). Jake Drake, bully buster. New York: Aladdin Paperbacks.

Curtis, C. P. (1999). Bud, not Buddy. New York: Yearling.

Curtis, C. P. (2012). The mighty Miss Malone. New York: Yearling.

Draper, S. (2010). Out of my mind. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Graff, L. (2006). The thing about Georgie. New York: Harper Trophy.

Gutman, D. (1999). Jackie and me. New York: Avon Books, Inc.

Lowry, L. (1989). Number the stars. New York: Sandpiper.

Nielsen, J. A. (2015). A night divided. New York: Scholastic Press.

Spinelli, J. (2002). Loser. New York: Harper Trophy.

Step toe, J. (1987). Mufaro's beautiful daughters. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

**Appendix A****Consent Form**

I agree to take part in a research study titled “Case Studies of Fourth-Grade Teachers’ Selection of Books for their Classrooms”, which is being conducted by Kristin Norman, School of Education, Cedarville University, (████) █████-████, under the direction of Dr. Ruth Sylvester, School of Education, Cedarville University, (████) █████-████. My participation is voluntary; I can refuse to participate or stop taking part at any time without giving any reason, and without penalty. I can ask to have information related to me, returned to me, removed from the research records, or destroyed.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of the study is to determine the factors that influence fourth-grade teachers’ selection of trade books for their classroom instruction. The nature of the teachers’ selection of books include:

- a.) the processes for selecting books in their classroom instruction
- b.) the various uses of the selected books in classroom instruction
- c.) the comparison of books and selection processes of teachers with differing degrees of teaching experience

**PROCEDURES:**

If I volunteer to take part in this study, I will be asked to do the following things:

- 1.) email with the researcher to coordinate a time for an interview
- 2.) meet with the researcher in person at my school or in a public place (e.g. library, coffee shop) for an interview OR meet with the researcher through a video-based communication tool (e.g. Skype) for an interview

3.) participate in an interview with the researcher

The interview will last for approximately one hour. The researcher will audio record my responses to each question.

**DISCOMFORTS OR STRESSES:**

The discomforts or stresses that may be faced during this research are minimal. It is not uncommon for participants to feel uncomfortable or nervous about participating in an interview for graduate level research. Additionally, during and/or after the interview, the participant may reflect on their past book selection choices/experiences, which will likely evoke feelings and opinions on the subject. It is also possible that the participant may think differently about future book selections.

**RISKS:**

No risks are expected.

**BENEFITS:**

The benefits that I may expect from participating is a time of reflection on my book selection process in a way that I will be able to name what I already do well and what I believe I can do better in the future.

**CONFIDENTIAL:**

The results of this participation will be confidential. The only people who will know that I am a research participant are members of the research team. Only members of the research team will have access to the audio recorded interview. The audio recording will be deleted upon the researcher's graduation from the Masters of Education program. No individually-identifiable information about me, or provided by me during the research, will be shared with others, except if required by law.

Internet communications are insecure and there is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to the technology itself. However once the communications are received by the researcher, standard confidentiality procedures will be employed.

**FURTHER QUESTIONS:**

The researcher will answer any further questions about the research, now or during the course of the project, and can be reached by telephone at: (■■■■)■■■■-■■■■.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form. Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher.

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

**IRB OVERSIGHT PARAGRAPH:**

Additional questions or problems regarding your rights as a research participant should be addressed to Dr. Dennis Sullivan, Chair, Institutional Review Board, Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH 45314; Telephone (937)766-7573. Email Address:

[IRB@cedarville.edu](mailto:IRB@cedarville.edu)

**Appendix B****Interview Questions**

Thank you for meeting with me today. Our interview is about your book selection in your fourth-grade classroom. This interview is being audio recorded. The first few questions of our interview are about your teaching experience.

- 1.) How many years have you been teaching?
- 2.) How many years have you been teaching fourth-grade?

Now that I know a little bit about you as a teacher, the next part of our interview is about the books (not including textbooks) that you use in classroom instruction.

- 3.) Generally, what types of books do you select for classroom instruction?
- 4.) What classroom subjects do you use those books in?
- 5.) What locations do you obtain your selected books from?

Now I'd like to ask about specific books you select for your lessons. We'll start with the books that you're currently using, then we'll talk about the books you used earlier this school year, and then we'll discuss the books that you plan to use later on in this school year.

- 6.) What book(s), if any, are you currently using in classroom instruction?
- 7.) What are the instructional purposes of the book(s)?
- 8.) What other books have you used or plan to use in classroom instruction this school year?
- 9.) What were or what will be the instructional purposes of those book(s)?
- 10.) Per school year, approximately how many books do you select for instruction?

So you've named these books (name the books) and how you've used them (or will use them) in your classroom. Before we move on to how you selected these books, are there any other books you use or how you use books that you want to add?

- 11.) What was your process in selecting each of these books?
- 12.) Approximately how long does your book selecting process take?
- 13.) What factors influence your decisions in choosing (or not choosing) specific books?
- 14.) What freedoms do you have while selecting books for teaching purposes?
- 15.) What boundaries or limitations do you face while selecting books for teaching purposes?
- 16.) What requirements, if any, must you meet for selecting books for classroom instruction?

Your descriptions of your book selecting experiences are very helpful. Now, I'd like to ask about your opinions and feelings toward selecting books for teaching purposes.

- 17.) What do you like about selecting books for classroom instruction?
- 18.) What do you dislike about selecting books for classroom instruction?
- 19.) What, if anything, do you do now that you didn't do in prior years for selecting books?
- 20.) What, if anything, could improve how you select books for teaching instruction?

Your perspectives on book selection as a fourth-grade teacher are valuable. Before we conclude the interview with some background questions, is there anything else that you want to add to what you've said about your opinions and feelings on book selection for teaching purposes?

- 21.) What teaching degrees and certifications do you currently hold?
- 22.) What is your age?
- 23.) What is your race and ethnicity?

That concludes our interview. Thank you for meeting with me today for this interview. Your experiences and perspectives will be a great asset for my research project. It was a pleasure working with you.

## Appendix C

Table C1

Trade Book Selection Factors as Named by Teachers

Factors	Mrs. Potter	Mrs. Banks	Mrs. Hudson
Administration		X	X
Appropriate Topic/Language		X	
Authors		X	
Availability/Funding	X	X	
Award Winners			X
Awareness of Books Available	X		
Book Covers		X	
Characters	X	X	
Comprehension	X	X	X
Common Core			X
Commonalities Among Books		X	
Connection to Students	X		
Cross-Curricular		X	X
Curriculum		X	X
Discussion Potential	X		
Ethics/Morals	X		
"Excellent" Literature			X
Genre		X	X
Librarian/Reading Specialist	X		
Literary Elements		X	
Mentor Text vs. Small Group Text	X	X	X
New to Students	X		
Personal Interest	X		
Pushing Student Comfort Zones		X	
Reading Level	X	X	X
Reading Strategies			X
Recommendations	X	X	
Student Feedback		X	
Student Interest	X	X	X
Testing scores			X
Theme	X	X	X
Time period		X	
Topic	X	X	X
Variety			X
Writing Objective(s)	X		X
Total	17	21	17



**Appendix D**

Table D1

Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Potter

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
Bud, Not Buddy	Christopher Paul Curtis	1999	Historical Fiction	10 year old boy	African American	Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King Award for Author
Tuck Everlasting	Natalie Babbitt	1975	Fantasy	10 year old girl	White	
A Night Divided	Jennifer A. Nielsen	2015	Historical Fiction	12 year old girl	White, German	
Out of My Mind	Sharon M. Draper	2010	Realistic Fiction	11 year old girl	Unclear, cerebral palsy	
The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe	C.S. Lewis	1950	Fantasy	4 young children	White, English	
Loser	Jerry Spinelli	2002	Realistic Fiction	School aged boy	Unclear	
The Witch of Blackbird Pond	Elizabeth George Speare	1958	Historical Fiction	16 year old girl	White	Newbery Medal
Maniac McGee	Jerry Spinelli	1990	Realistic Fiction	11 year old boy	White	Newbery Medal

Table D2

Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Banks Page 1

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
Number the Stars	Lois Lowry	1989	Historical Fiction	10 year old girl	White, German	Newbery Medal
Meet Kirsten	Janet Beeler Shaw	1986	Historical Fiction	10 year old girl	White	
Snow Treasures	Marie McSwigan	1942	Historical Fiction	Young boy	White, Norweigen	
The Mighty Miss Malone	Christopher Paul Curtis	2012	Historical Fiction	12 year old girl	African American	
Bud, Not Buddy	Christopher Paul Curtis	1999	Historical Fiction	10 year old boy	African American	Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King Award for Author
Jip: His Story	Katherine Paterson	1996	Historical Fiction	12 year old boy	Bi-racial-African American/White	
Sing Down the Moon	Scott O'Dell	1970	Historical Fiction	14 year old girl	Navaho	Newbery Honor
Mummies in the Morning-Magic Tree House Series	Mary Pope Osborne	1993	Historical Fiction	Young boy and girl	White	
Jake Drake Bully Buster	Andrew Clements	2001	Realistic Fiction	10 year old boy	White	
Jake Drake Class Clown	Andrew Clements	2002	Realistic Fiction	10 year old boy	White	
The Tiger Rising	Kate DiCamillo	2001	Realistic Fiction	12 year old boy	White	National Book Award Finalist
Weather books	Various		Science	Various	Various	
Influential Wisconsinite books	Various		Biography	Various	Various	
The Thing About Georgie	Lisa Graff	2007	Realistic Fiction	4th grade boy	White, little person	
Everything Weather	Kathy Furgang	2012	Nonfiction	Various	Various	
Toothpaste Millionaire	Jean Merrill	1972	Historical Fiction	6th grade boy	African American	

Table D2

Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Banks Page 2

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
Horrible Harry in Room 2B	Suzy Kline	1988	Realistic Fiction	2nd grade boys	White	
Horrible Harry Bugs the Three Bears	Suzy Kline	2008	Realistic Fiction	2nd grade boys	White	
Ruby Bridges	Madeline Donaldson	2009	Nonfiction	1st grade girl	African American	
The Chalk Box Kid	Clyde Robert Bulla	1987	Realistic Fiction	9 year old boy	White	
The Chocolate Touch	Patrick Skene Catling	1952	Fantasy	Young boy	White	
Who Was John F. Kennedy	Yona Zeldis McDonough	2004	Biography	Former president	White	
Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days!	Stephen Manes	1982	Realistic Fiction	Young boy	White	
The Magic Finger	Roald Dahl	1966	Fantasy	8 year old girl	White	
Maroo of the Winter Caves	Ann Turnbull	1984	Historical Fiction	Young girl	White, Ice Age	
Henry and Mudge in Puddle Trouble	Cynthia Rylant	1987	Realistic Fiction	Young boy	White	
The Mystery of Dinosaur Bones: Cam Jansen	David A. Adler	1984	Realistic Fiction	Young girl and boy	White	
Jake Drake Know It All	Andrew Clements	2001	Realistic Fiction	10 year old boy	White	
Who Was Ben Franklin	Dennis Brindell Fradin	2002	Biography	Historical figure	White	
The Mouse and the Motorcycle	Beverly Cleary	1965	Fantasy	Young boy	White	
Tornado	Betsy Byers	1996	Realistic Fiction	Man's perspective as a boy	White	
The Lemonade War	Jacqueline Davies	2007	Realistic Fiction	4th grade boy and girl	White	

Table D2

Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Banks Page 3

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
Chocolate Fever	Robert Kimmel Smith	1972	Fantasy	Young boy	White	
Stone Fox	John Reynolds Gardiner	1980	Historical Fiction	10 year old boy	White	
The Backward Bird Dog	Bill Wallace	1997	Fantasy	Dog	N/A	
The Hit Away Kid	Matt Christopher	1988	Realistic Fiction	Young boy	White	
The Twits	Roald Dahl	1980	Fantasy	Adults and animals	White	
Howliday Inn	James Howe	1982	Fantasy	Animals	N/A	
Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World	Mildred Pitts Walter	1948	Realistic Fiction	10 year old boy	African American	Coretta Scott King Award for Author
I Survived books	Lauren Tarshis	2010-2017	Historical Fiction	11 year old boys	White	
Swindle	Gordon Korman	2008	Realistic Fiction	11 year olds	Mostly white	
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	Judy Blume	1972	Realistic Fiction	Fourth grade boy	White	
Bunnicula	James Howe	1979	Fantasy	Animals	N/A	
Little House in the Big Woods	Laura Ingalls Wilder	1932	Historical Fiction	Young girl	White	
Mr. Popper's Penguins	Richard Atwater	1938	Animal	Adults and animals	White	Newbery Honor
Punished!	David Lubar	2006	Fantasy	Young boys	White	
Beetles, Lightly Toasted	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	1987	Realistic Fiction	5th grade boy	White	
Strider	Beverly Cleary	1991	Realistic Fiction	14 year old boy	White	
The Dog Days of Charlotte Hayes	Marlane Kennedy	2009	Realistic Fiction	Young girl	Unclear	
The Story of Ruby Bridges	Robert Coles	1995	Biography	1st grade girl	African American	
Double Fudge	Judy Blume	2002	Realistic Fiction	12 year old boy	White	
Dear Mr. Henshaw	Beverly Cleary	1983	Realistic Fiction	6th grade boy	White	Newbery Medal

Table D2

Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Banks Page 4

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
The Big Wave	Pearl S. Buck	1948	Historical Fiction	Young boy	Japanese	
Because of Winn Dixie	Kate DiCamillo	2000	Realistic Fiction	10 year old girl	White	Newbery Honor
How to Eat Fried Worms	Thomas Rockwell	1973	Realistic Fiction	5th grade boy	White	
Gooseberry Park	Cynthia Rylant	1995	Fantasy	Animals	N/A	
The Black Stallion	Walter Farley	1941	Animal	Young boy	White	
The War With Grandpa	Robert Kimmel Smith	1984	Realistic Fiction	5th grade boy	White	
The School Mouse	Dick King-Smith	1994	Fantasy	Animals	N/A	
The Midnight Fox	Betsy Byers	1968	Realistic Fiction	Young boy	White	
Henry and the Paper Route	Beverly Cleary	1957	Realistic Fiction	5th grade boy	White	
Trouble River	Betsy Byers	1969	Historical Fiction	Young boy	White	
Bridge to Terabithia	Katherine Paterson	1977	Realistic Fiction	5th grade boy and girl	White	Newbery Medal
Mick Harte Was Here	Barbara Park	1995	Realistic Fiction	Middle school boy and girl	White	
Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry	Mildred E. Taylor	1976	Historical Fiction	9 year old girl	African American	Newbery Medal, Coretta Scott King Award for Author Honor
The Tale of Despereaux	Kate DiCamillo	2003	Fantasy	Young girls and animals	White	Newbery Medal
The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe	C.S. Lewis	1950	Fantasy	Young boys and girls	White, British	
Shiloh	Phyllis Reynolds Naylor	1991	Historical Fiction	11 year old boy	White	Newbery Medal
Holes	Louis Sachar	1998	Realistic Fiction	14 year old boy	White	Newbery Medal
Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets	J.K. Rowling	1998	Fantasy	12 year old boy	White, British	

Table D2

Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Banks Page 5

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
Running Out of Time	Margaret Peterson Haddix	1995	Historical Fiction	13 year old girl	White	
The BFG	Roald Dahl	1982	Fantasy	8 year old girl	White, British	
Henry and Beezus	Beverly Cleary	1952	Realistic Fiction	Young boy and girl	White	
Tough to Tackle	Matt Christopher	1971	Realistic Fiction	Young boy	White	
Love That Dog	Sharon Creech	2001	Realistic Fiction	Young boy	Unclear	

Table D3

## Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Hudson Page 1

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
I Survived Series	Lauren Tarshis	2010-2017	Historical Fiction	11 year old boys	White	
Natural Disaster books	Various authors		Nonfiction	Unclear	Unclear	
Who Was? Series	Various authors	2002-2017	Biography	Various-typically adults	Various	
Rosen Classroom books	Various authors		Biography	Various-typically adults	Various	
The One and Only Ivan	K.A. Applegate	2012	Fantasy	N/A-animals	N/A-animals	Newbery Medal
The Lightning Thief-Percy Jackson Series	Rick Riordan	2005	Fantasy	12 year old boy	White	
The Capture-The Guardians of Ga'Hoole Series	Kathryn Lasky	2003	Fantasy	N/A-animals	N/A-animals	
The City of Ember #1	Jeanne DuPrau	2003	Fantasy	12 year old boy and girl	Unclear	
The Stranger	Chris Van Allsburg	1986	Fantasy	Adults	White	
Harvey Potter's Balloon Farm	Mark Buehner	1994	Fantasy	Adult	White	
The Magic House	Robyn Eversole	1992	Fantasy	Young girl	Unclear	
Wonder	R.J. Palacio	2012	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	5th grade boy	White-facial deformity	
Rules	Cynthia Lord	2006	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	12 year old girl	White	Newbery Honor
Because of Mr. Terupt	Rob Boyea	2010	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	5th grade students-4 girls, 3 boys	Unclear	
Out of My Mind	Sharon M. Draper	2010	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	11 year old girl	Unclear, cerebral palsy	
The Hundred Dresses	Eleanor Estes	1944	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	Young girl	Polish	Newbery Honor
Train to Somewhere	Eve Bunting	1996	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	Young girl	White	
Fish in a Tree	Lynda Mullaly Hunt	2015	Realistic Fiction-Empathy	6th grade girl	Unclear	
The Brixen Witch	Stacy DeKeyser	2012	Traditional Literature	Young boy	White	

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Trade Books Selected by Mrs. Hudson Page 2

<b>Title</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year Published</b>	<b>Genre</b>	<b>Main Character</b>	<b>Ethnicity-Main Character</b>	<b>Awards</b>
A Tale Dark and Grimm	Adam Gidwitz	2010	Traditional Literature	Young boy and girl	White	
Rump	Liesl Shurtliff	2013	Traditional Literature	12 year old boy	White	
Breadcrumbs	Anne Ursu	2011	Traditional Literature	11 year old boy and girl	Girl adopted from India, Boy unclear	
Ra Creates the World	Carol Pugliano-Martin	2011	Traditional Literature	Adults	Egyptian	
Isis and Osiris	Carol Pugliano-Martin	2011	Traditional Literature	Adults	Egyptian	
The Death and Rebirth of Osiris	Carol Pugliano-Martin	2011	Traditional Literature	Adults	Egyptian	
Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters	John Steptoe	1987	Traditional Literature	Teenage girl	Zimbabwe	Caldcott Honor, Coretta Scott King Award for Illustrator
Tall Tale Readers' Theatre	Various authors		Traditional Literature	Unclear	Unclear	