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THE CONTENT OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S ORIGINAL STORIES

by

Danae Elaine Dana

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family and Child Development

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## INTRODUCTION

The early years of childhood are characterized by new ideas; experimentation; the building of relationships; fears, both real and imagined; and play, through which the child tries to assemble these experiences into a meaningful whole. The early years are an exciting, complex and vibrant time of learning while the child grows in his understanding of himself and the world around him.

Fraiberg describes the years of early childhood as "the magic years." She explains:

By "magic" I do not mean that the child lives in an enchanted world where all the deepest longings are satisfied. It is only in the minds of adults that childhood is a paradise, a time of innocence and serene joy. The memory of a Golden Age is a delusion for, ironically, none of us remembers this time at all. At best we carry with us a few dusty memories, a handful of blurred and distorted pictures which often cannot even tell us why they should be remembered. This first period of childhood, roughly the first five years of life, is submerged like a buried city, and when we come back to these times with our children we are strangers and we cannot easily find our way. (Fraiberg, 1959, p. ix) . . . we come as foreigners who have forgotten the landscape and no longer speak the native tongue. (Fraiberg, 1959, p. 120)

She continues by saying that the quality of the small child's world is viewed with "primitive mental faculties, a world . . . which is still in large part disordered and incoherent, a world which the child explains to himself by means of magic thought" (Fraiberg, 1959, p. 120-21).

During this period children's concepts develop rapidly because of their curiosity about the world in which they live. It is

estimated that before entering school the child has acquired several hundred concepts, including such concepts as roundness, animal, food and love (Hurlock, 1956, p. 490). Because of their limited knowledge and experience, however, many of these concepts are incomplete and inaccurate.

Two of the most important factors influencing the development of concepts are the opportunities for learning and the types of experiences a child encounters (Hurlock, 1956, p. 494). One of the purposes of a child development laboratory or nursery school in a university such as Utah State University is to provide preschool children with a rich environment containing many varied types of experiences.

Besides the rich environment provided for free play with manipulative toys, blocks, housekeeping equipment, and various art media in the Utah State University nursery schools, there are also many planned experiences provided for the children. Examples of planned experiences include flannelboard stories; sensory materials such as wheat, salt or sawdust to feel, touch and taste; food experiences such as making cookies or pizza; fingerpainting, with fingerpaint or perhaps pudding; collages; painting with a brush or painting with a potato or empty spool; excursions to such places as a chicken hatchery, fire station or bakery; outside visitors, such as a native dancer from Hawaii, or a magician; and science experiences to demonstrate simple concepts of the world around us.

If opportunities for learning and the types of experience a child encounters do influence concept development, then these experiences and the opportunity to learn about social relationships with

peers and adults give children a rich background upon which to build more complex concepts of themselves and their world.

It has long been accepted that children make new learning meaningful through play (Wann, 1962). This fact is demonstrated repeatedly in the nursery school situation as children try out what it feels like to be someone else through role play. Both girls and boys incorporate information learned about mothers and families by wearing dress-up clothes and playing house. The situations they portray reflect their expanding concepts and feelings of the family situation.

Another way in which children react to new information or concepts is to incorporate it into non-overt play, through the stories they tell. It is felt by the author that children's original stories are evidence of their ideas, thoughts and feelings of themselves and the world around them; of their confusions or misconceptions; of their imagination; and of their "magic years!" The problem to be investigated in this thesis is the influence of a nursery school experience and sex of the child on stories children tell.

#### Statement of the Problem

This study is an exploratory investigation of the influence of experience in nursery school, and sex of the child, upon the content of original stories told by preschool children.

Objectives of the study are (1) to describe the content of preschool children's stories as an example of the process of concept formation and (2) to investigate the influence of experience in the Child Development Laboratory and sex of the child on the content of the stories children tell.



## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Concept Formation and the Influence of Experience

Vinacke (1951) feels that even though numerous investigations have been done on concept formation, it is still poorly understood. One reason for poor understanding is that methods of investigation have been restricted in scope, lending themselves better to showing the results of concept formation rather than revealing its nature. He suggests a broader basis for understanding.

Fowler (1965, p. 82) finds that even with the "explosion of interest" in the past few years concerned with cognitive development, studies tend to fall into two widely prevalent viewpoints. One viewpoint tends to characterize and the other simply to measure intellectual processes. In neither framework is there much attempt to explain or control the course of development over time.

The mass of research completed on children's thinking, according to Russell (1953, p. 139), has concentrated on "what" children understand. Only a few studies have investigated "how" children develop concepts.

Smoke (1935, p. 274) felt that there was "vast confusion" in his time concerning the meaning of a concept. In 1951, Vinacke (1951, p. 2) felt that "none of the current definitions of a concept or concept formation were entirely satisfactory." In fact, he refused to even cite any of the current definitions. By 1957 he gave a definition of concept as:

Cognitive organizing systems which serve to bring pertinent features of past experience to bear upon a present stimulus-object . . . They are selective systems: which, in conjunction with attitudes, operate in the control of response. They represent the organization of experience and determine the meaning of objects . . . They develop during the learning process, becoming more complex, and, in general, more differentiated and efficient in age. (Vinacke, 1957, p. 233)

Concepts may be further defined by describing their common characteristics. Vinacke (1951, p. 2) further states that concepts are not direct sensory data. They depend on previous experience. They are responses which "tie together, or link or combine discrete sensory experiences." Such ties or links are symbolic in nature. "Concepts are learned . . . they are intellectual tools that man uses in organizing his environment and attacking his problems" (Sigel, 1964, p. 209). Smoke (1935) points out that an important characteristic of a concept is its differential quality, or what distinguishes it as a class from other classes or groups.

Hurlock (1956, p. 489) states that the symbolic aspect of concepts depends on properties of absent situations and objects as well as present ones at the time of response.

Other characteristics, according to Hurlock (1956) are: Concepts are cumulative. They are sometimes resistant to change. They are individualized. Concept development follows a pattern which depends on intelligence and opportunities for learning. Concepts frequently have an emotional weighting, which to a large extent determines a particular response a person makes toward an object, situation or other person. Hurlock continues by saying that concepts may relate to objects, people, qualities or relationships. They may be definite or indefinite. They are not always conscious; nor are they always

verbalized. Concepts are complex and are continuously changing with experience and with the accumulation of new knowledge.

Concepts are important because:

. . . they determine what the child knows, what he believes, and to a large extent, what he does. Furthermore, the accuracy or inaccuracy of his concepts affects his understanding. The more concepts a child has, the better developed they are, and the more accurate they are, the greater his understanding will be. (Hurlock, 1956, p. 490)

Vernon (1965, p. 177) stresses the difficulty adults have in realizing that children do not perceive the world in the same way as do adults. Children are quick to notice things, but the things they perceive and how they perceive them, are different from adult perceptions.

Russell (1956, p. 117) has indicated that concepts are built up from percepts, images and memories. They differ from adult concepts not in kind but in degree to which symbolization, generalization and discrimination are in evidence.

Darrow (1964, p. 247) had described the child's concepts as "his world of thought." Concepts make up his "own brand of ideas, feelings, and impressions; his own set of understandings and views." She points out that children arrive at concepts in different ways, as their experiences are different.

There are several different explanations for the formation of children's concepts. Russell (1956) has pointed out that concepts develop from simple to complex, from concrete to abstract, from undifferentiated to differentiated, from discrete or organized, and from egocentric to more social as new meanings become associated with old. He further states that most studies agree upon the symbolic and

the generalized nature of concepts. They differ in their stress on phases.

Piaget (1962) refers to the preschool age child as being in the preconceptual level of concept development. Their thoughts need not be logical or in natural sequence. The process of thinking is one of transduction which "remains half-way between practical reasoning . . . and truly logical reasoning. . . . Transduction is thus the result of an incomplete equilibrium between distorting assimilation and partial accomodation" (Piaget, 1962, p. 237).

Curti (1940) has suggested that concepts grow gradually, but four stages may be distinguished: presymbolic; preverbal symbolic; implicit general ideas; and explicit generalization.

Reichard, Schneider and Rapaport (1944, p. 160) have suggested there are three levels of development: the concretistic level where classification is made on the basis of non-essential incidental features of the object; a functional level, where classification is on the basis of value; and a conceptual level where more abstract properties are used. The concretistic level is more typical of children up to five or six years old.

Welch's (1940, p. 361) study concerning the hierarchy of concepts has shown that the ability to conceptualize in children develops from simple to more complex levels. The pre-abstract period leads gradually to the ability to understand first hierarchy concepts, such as "men" and "women" are all "people." By the middle of the fourth year, second hierarchy concepts can be understood such as "potatoes" are "vegetables," "apples" are "fruit," and both "vegetables" and "fruit" are "food."

Vinacke (1951) states that the general conclusion of research is that children's concepts seem to change as they grow older, but it takes place gradually rather than in stages.

Piaget (1963) has identified five types of reactions by children given in response to questions. The first response is the "answer at random" which is characterized by an answer of whatever first comes into the child's head. The next response is "romancing," or inventing an answer in which he does not really believe, or in which he believes merely by force of saying it. A third response is "suggested conviction" where the child replies merely to satisfy the examiner without attempting to think for himself. "Liberated conviction" is the fourth response, in which the child replies after reflection, "drawing the answer from the stores of his own mind, without suggestion, although the question is new to him." It is the result of reasoning by means of original material. The fifth method, "spontaneous conviction," takes place when the answer is already formulated or capable of being formulated (Piaget, 1963, p. 10, 11).

Vinacke (1951) has stated that only two main methods or approaches have been used to investigate children's concepts. The first is the interview-questionnaire method, called the clinical method and developed by Piaget. The second method is the performance method where the child's behavior is observed. He suggests that the methodology needs to be extended and elaborated.

Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) have used an approach which might be applied to the study of children's concepts. They have studied 137 preschool children and asked them to tell original stories. The children's concepts of themselves and the world around them were

illustrated in the stories they told.

The child's experiences seem to have an effect on his concept development. Brownell and Hendrickson (1950, p. 114) have pointed out that varied experiences will help in concept learning in the primary grades; and Vernon's (1965) approach to the development of perception in children, although maturational, clearly recognizes the role of experience.

Ojemann and Pritchett have suggested that "one cannot ignore the nature of a child's experiences" (1965, p. 192). They feel that learning potential and the predicted course of development of a person must be interpreted in terms of the quality of the experiences he has encountered. Furthermore, whether children develop according to stages may depend on their experiences. A wide variety of experiences must be investigated to determine the child's ability to generalize.

McCullough states that, "Clearly, a concept is based on experience, and the more direct these are, the better" (1959-60, p. 102).

Darrow (1964, p. 249) is of the opinion that "experience itself seems to count as the greatest single factor in conceptual learning. . ."

Hurlock (1956, p. 494) states that several factors influence concept development. Among these conditions are condition of the sense organs, intelligence, sex and personality of the child, the opportunities for learning, and the type of experience. The factor of opportunity for learning, or experience, is described as being even more important than intelligence.

Because age and experience go hand in hand, the older child will have different and more complete concepts than the younger child. Furthermore, concepts often change as a result of experience, especially concepts of self and of others.

In fact, concepts continue to develop and change as long as a person lives and has new experiences. (Hurlock, 1956, p. 494)

Wann and others (1962) have found that concepts are subject to continuous change as new experiences provide new insights for understanding. "Concepts must be considered to be growing and changing ideas dependent on the amount and nature of experience" (Wann, 1962, p. 13).

Vinacke (1951, p. 27), in his summary of studies on concept formation, has suggested that an important finding concerning concept development is that "concept scores" determined in different ways have a low correlation with intelligence test scores but a high correlation with training and experience. The finding, he feels, warrents much further research.

Swift (1964) has summarized the research concerned with early group experience. She has concluded that studies which have attempted to evaluate the effects of attendance in nursery school upon intellectual, social, and physical development have generally proved inconclusive because they have failed to relate the anticipated changes to the specific variables expected to bring about the changes. However, she does find that the effects of special programs, as for the culturally deprived, have positive effects. It is difficult in middle-class backgrounds to determine exactly what experiences provided in nursery school are also valued and provided at home, whereas lower-class children are generally deprived of the opportunity for rich experiences at home. One reason for the more consistent findings in regard to special programs is the possibility of comparing two groups of children whose life experiences are extremely similar,

except for the amount of time spent in the nursery school situation. Therefore, the effects on culturally deprived children are more easily determined.

Gray and Klaus (1965) have reported on their intervention project to discover whether it is possible, with specially planned techniques, to offset the progressive retardation in cognitive development that characterizes the culturally deprived child. The subjects of the study are 60 Negro children in the upper South, plus 27 children as a control group. Complete results of the project have not yet been compiled. However, the preschool screening tests given the children upon their entrance to first grade have shown that the experimental children did conspicuously better than the control group, and tend to approximate the nondeprived children in the school. Gray's study seems to demonstrate that specially planned programs for culturally deprived children do affect their cognitive development.

Silberstein and others (1966) have defined the purposes of Project Head Start. The Project Head Start program was formulated in 1965, with its basic theory that a positive exposure to a formal educational setting prior to entrance into school would provide some "compensatory education" benefits which might lead to "relief of disability" during the school years (Silberstein, 1966, p. 347). Although formal research data was not published at the time of publication, they felt that promising gains have been made, and state that the convictions of the educational staff were enthusiastic and positive. The authors caution, however, that Head Start must be evaluated only in terms of specific programs.

Deutsch (1963) has pointed out the importance of variety on the



child's learning, and the detrimental effects of lack of variety. He terms this concept "stimulus deprivation," which affects both the operations of cognition and the actual content of the child's knowledge. Disadvantaged children have a very restricted range of experience, which might well be a crucial factor in poor performance on intelligence tests.

Hunt has suggested preschool experience as an antidote for the effects of cultural deprivation. He feels that experience is the "programmer of the human brain-computer" (Hunt, 1966, p. 61); and that an opportunity to see and hear a variety of things appears to be more important than instinctual needs and impulses. He also presents the idea of intrinsic motivation, which is inherent in information processing and action (Hunt, 1965, 1966).

Deutsch (1966) has emphasized the importance of a preschool training program as a solution to the problem of poor adjustment to school by lower class children. Such a program would do part of the job traditionally assigned to the home and enrich the developmental areas of the school learning situation, both in the cognitive and attitudinal areas. The child should be an active participant in the learning process, as he gains general information and becomes acquainted with objects which are familiar to the middle-class child.

Feldmann (1966) has described a preschool enrichment program for disadvantaged children which makes use of increased training for teachers and more participation for parents. The program stressed language, concept formation, and perceptual discrimination. Since the program just recently began, no specific statistical evidence is yet available. However, teachers have observed that the children are

more verbal, are able to listen and respond to verbal directions, and have greatly increased attention spans. Increase of interest and enthusiasm toward school-oriented activities have been found. The author feels that there are positive signs of an orientation toward learning that could only result in increased school achievement.

Jensen (1962) has found that a large majority of children who seem to be mentally retarded or slow learners in school may be hampered by the failure of their environment to provide the needed experiences. He feels that it is reasonable to believe that many children of impoverished culture can benefit from spending a part of each day in a verbally stimulating environment, such as a nursery school, with a portion of the time planned for specific learning experiences. He feels, as does Deutsch (1966), that the child must be an active participant in these experiences.

Gordon (1965) states that although existing compensatory educational programs vary widely, they commonly have the goals of remediation, to fill in social, cultural, or academic gaps in the child's education; and prevention, to try to forestall either initial or continuing failure in school and in later life. He notes that much of the work in the education of the disadvantaged has been directed at the preschool level, where there is "no question that children who grow up under different life conditions are likely to show different developmental patterns" (Gordon, 1965, p. 647). Children from less privileged homes enter school with different skills and competencies than do these children from privileged homes, and "it is argued that the disadvantaged child needs special remedial or enrichment experiences" (Gordon, 1965, p. 648).

Siller (1957) has studied the relationship of socio-economic status to conceptual ability using 99 high status and 82 low status white sixth-grade children. He found that high status children did better than low status children on all tests of conceptual ability, particularly those involving verbal material. He also found that high status children chose more definitions of an abstract type than did the low status children.

In an analysis of verbal behavior in young Negro children, John (1963) has found that the middle-class children possess a larger vocabulary than the lower-class children. Middle-class children also possess a higher nonverbal IQ. They perform at a high level, tasks requiring precise and somewhat abstract language. The acquisition of more abstract language seems to be influenced by the living conditions of the lower-class child. John feels that a systematic examination of the lives of preschool children to determine their relationship to performance on language and conceptual tasks may be a way to help these children and improve educational methods.

McCarthy (1949, p. 559) has stated that it would be interesting to conduct more extensive research designed to reveal the effects of specific environmental experiences.

#### Masculinity and Femininity

Goodenough (1957), in a study of preschool children between the ages of two and four years, investigated the influence of parents on variations between the interests of boys and girls. She found that girls were more interested in persons than were boys, and that boys define their sex roles more sharply than do girls.

Erikson (1951) in a study of sex differences in play configurations of pre-adolescents has found that the outstanding variables for boys in the use of play space are height and downfall, motion and its channelization or arrest, and connection with the outdoors. Boys used more wild animals and preferred toys that moved or represented motion. Girls used play space in construction of static interiors which were open, simply enclosed, or blocked and intruded upon, usually by cute puppies or boys. There were a few serious accidents, but no murders or gun play. The constructions usually involved quiet scenes of everyday life within home or school.

Greenacre (1953), in her psychoanalytic practice, has noticed that girls are more concerned with people and personal relations, whereas boys are more concerned with things and casual relations.

Deutsch (1944) has pointed out the marked contrast between the male's active, objective approach to life, and the female's passive, intuitive, or subjective approach. She believes the tendency to passivity to be inherent in the females' biology and anatomy, and to be intensified by environmental forces.

Strong (1954) has concluded that men prefer things and women prefer people, in his study of Vocational Interest Tests of adults.

Tyler (1955) has used a form of the Strong Vocational Interest Blank to determine how likes and dislikes originate during childhood years. The subjects used were 104 boys and 106 girls ten years of age. She has found that patterned interests develop through the acquisition of dislikes by those whose general attitude is favorable toward everything, and not through the emergence of both likes and dislikes on neutral ground. Sex differences are well established by

age 10 and are shown through organization of likes and dislikes, as well as in attitudes toward specific things.

Davis (1932) has studied the child's use of questions and indicates that upper socio-economic children use questioning in the same manner as does the adult. The study involved 3,650 questions asked by 73 children between the ages of 3 through 11. She found that boys asked more questions involving casual explanation, and that girls asked more questions on social relationships than boys. She also points out that interests of boys and girls as indicated by their questions seemed to be very similar, although differences increased with age, particularly for boys.

Walters, Pearce, and Dahms (1957) have studied the affectional and aggressive behavior in 40 one-minute observations of 69 males and 55 females in a nursery-kindergarten school. They have found, in regard to sex differences, that two-, three-, and four-year-old boys indicated significantly more affectional contacts with boys than did the girls. At two, girls initiated significantly more affectional contacts with girls than did boys. There was a tendency for boys to choose boys or adults, rather than girls as affectional contacts. Boys were also more likely to choose boys rather than adults as recipients of aggressive initiations.

Hattwick (1937) has stated that it seems probable there are sex differences in behavior. In her study of 283 boys and 296 girls of nursery school age, she has found that boys show greater extroversion, and girls tend to be more introverted. Boys show aggressive approaches to other children, negativism toward adults, marked physical activity, and overt, non-social behavior problems. Girls show withdrawing,

introverted tendencies such as avoiding play with other children, giving in too easily, crying easily, avoidance of risk, and jealousy. Girls also tend to boss others; whereas boys manage others in more direct physical ways.

Levin and Sears (1956) state that children should have developed identification with the same-sexed parent by the age of five. They have found that boys who were highly identified, and who had distinctive cues provided for masculine aggression by usually being punished by their fathers, showed the highest frequency of fantasy aggression.

Sears (1951) has studied the influence of sex, age, sibling status, and father's absence on doll play aggression in young children. She has found that there are clear sex differences in frequency, direction, and kind of aggression typically depicted in doll play by children three, four, and five years of age. Boys depict much active, rough aggression; whereas girls do not show nearly so much fighting or violence. Girls are more likely to operate through words by scolding and non-physical punishments. Boys direct a large amount of aggression toward the father doll, and have the baby and girl dolls playing little part in the family's aggressions. Girls fuss over and scold the baby and girl doll, yet do not make the father doll the object of much aggression. Sears concludes that sex differences are present at age three and are even more pronounced at age five.

Pintler, Phillips, and Sears (1946) used 80 preschool aged children, including 40 boys and 40 girls, to compare performances during projective doll play. In regard to sex differences, it was found that girls engaged in greater amounts of stereotyped thematic play than boys, and boys significantly exceeded girls in amount of

nonhuman thematic play and number of theme changes.

Kagan and Moss (1960) have studied 27 male and 27 female middle-class adults to determine whether the acquisition of passive and dependent response patterns begins in early childhood. They have found that passive and dependent behaviors are fairly stable for females, but not males; and that these response patterns do seem to originate in early childhood.

Brown (1956) has discussed sex-role preference in young children and found that sex-role patterns exist in young children. Boys identify with models, activities, and goals that are socially defined as masculine, and girls identify with the socially accepted feminine models, activities, and goals. Brown has also found that boys show a greater preference for the masculine role than girls show for the feminine role. In regard to the It Scale For Children which was used in this study, 85 per cent of the boys, but only 45 per cent of the girls, gave the It figure a name consistent with their own sex.

A second study concerned with the analysis of the projected preferences of boys and girls for masculine and feminine roles has been completed by Brown (1957). Using 613 children, 303 boys and 310 girls, between the ages of  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and  $11\frac{1}{2}$ , he found that girls in all age groups are more variable than boys in their sex-role preference; and that boys show a much stronger preference for the masculine role than girls show for the feminine role. Further findings show that kindergarten girls show equal preference for masculine and feminine roles, and girls from the first grade through the fourth grade show a stronger preference for the masculine role. It is not until the fifth grade that girls show a dominant preference for the feminine role.

His present findings are consistent with the 1956 study.

Hartup and Zook (1960) have used Brown's (1956, 1957) technique of the It Score For Children with three-, four-, and five-year-old children. Their findings imply that early childhood is an important period in sex role development, and that the developmental process is less complicated for the male than for the female.



## METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Setting

The Child Development Laboratories at Utah State University have been in operation since the 1930's. At the present time there are two rooms in the Family Life Building which house the four nursery school groups that meet Monday through Thursday of each week. The two rooms are designated as the East Laboratory and the West Laboratory, and each has a morning nursery school and an afternoon group of children.

Each of the four nursery school groups has a total of 20 children, with a head teacher and three or four student teachers who supervise the children and plan for the various activities.

The children who participate in the nursery schools spend a considerable amount of time in free play during the approximately two and one-half hours they are there each day. They are free to explore; to feel; to touch and taste; to paint; to use manipulative toys such as puzzles; to play with the large blocks or on the climbing dome; to role play in the housekeeping corner or a miniature store; or to participate in more quiet activities such as reading a book or hearing a story.

Planned experiences are also a part of the child's day at nursery school. Flannelboard stories, various art activities, excursions, outside visitors, science experiences, and food experiences are examples of such planned activities.

### Procedures

Pitcher and Prelinger (1963) have presented an approach for the collection of children's original stories in their study of 137 preschool children in New Haven, Connecticut. The actual approach used in the present study was similar but developed by the researcher to fit the particular needs of the study.

A prerequisite to the collection of children's stories was the building of a friendly, warm relationship between the researcher and the children. For some children the relationship did not seem to have to be as well developed, for they would tell a story even on the first approach. For the majority of children, however, the building of a friendly relationship seemed essential to their eventual verbal responses. The rapport became evident when, toward the middle of the time allotted for the study, it was unnecessary to approach many of the children. They would approach the researcher and ask if they could tell a story.

At the beginning of the study, it was thought that a sufficient number of stories could be collected by asking for stories only after a planned activity had been experienced, such as an excursion or a science experience. It was found that this procedure was less feasible than a plan involving the collection of stories at any time a child seemed willing to cooperate.

Children frequently reach a stopping point in their play as they finish one activity and begin to search for another. This interlude may result in a child's wandering rather aimlessly for a few moments. Such an interlude was an excellent time to approach a child to tell a

story. A child seemed much more receptive to the idea of telling a story if he was relatively uninvolved in a play situation.

Because of the author's morning classes, the study was conducted using only the afternoon laboratories at Utah State University. Out of a total of 40 children in the laboratories, 31 children were used, 15 boys and 16 girls. Fifteen of these children were new to the situation in that they had entered the nursery school at the beginning of the quarter the data was collected. All the children who were new to the nursery school were used. The remaining 16 children had attended the nursery school from one to three quarters previous to the collection of data. There was no attempt to make a random selection of experienced children. Those who seemed available and willing to tell a story were approached. Once approached, further stories were collected when possible.

Two different nursery school groups were used. Out of 20 children in the East Laboratory, under the direction of Mrs. Kristine Smith, a total of 13 children were used. Six children had previous experience in the nursery school and seven were new to the situation. In the West Laboratory, directed by Mrs. Valera Holman, there were a total of 18 out of 20 children used; ten with previous experience and eight new children.

Stories were gathered for the period of one school quarter, beginning January 12, 1966, and ending March 9, 1966. Approximately four hours each week were spent in each of the two nursery school groups. All stories were collected by the researcher to insure a uniform approach. All stories were written by hand as the children told them, either in the laboratory or on the playground. The circumstances,

pertinent facts and comments prior to the telling of each story were also recorded. The stories, in full, are found in the Appendix.

The actual approach to an individual child was carried out as far as possible in a uniform manner. With paper and pen in hand, the researcher would approach a child and ask, "Have you ever made up a story in your head?" Quite often, especially in the first few weeks of this study, the child would answer, "No." When this happened, the researcher would encourage him by saying, "Would you think about a story so that when I come back tomorrow perhaps you can tell it to me then?" In almost every instance the child would answer, "Yes," either verbally or by nodding his head.

Only original stories were used. Familiar stories were not used. At times a child would start to tell a familiar story such as "The Three Little Pigs." The researcher would then comment, "I have heard that story before. Could you think of a story I have never heard before? One that you made up all by yourself? What could your story be about?"

At the mention of an original subject by a child, the researcher's comment was, "That is a very good thing to tell a story about. What happened to the cat (or dog, or house, or whatever subject the child mentioned)?" Attempts were made to try to keep the story going as long as possible thereafter, by encouraging smiles and facial expressions, verbal expressions of enthusiasm, and questions such as, "What happened next?" "Then what happened?" "Did anything else happen?" At no time were suggestions made as to how the story should proceed.

It was felt at times that the reason a child said he could not tell a story was because he did not understand exactly what was

wanted. After further attempts to explain fully to the child what was wanted and he still did not understand, an example of another child's story would be told to him. Some children gained no further insight from the example. Others would exclaim, "Oh! Now I have one!" and proceed with their own stories. In no case was their own story a duplicate of the one told to them as an example.

A procedure not included in the original method of approach which developed as the study progressed, was the use of drawing pictures along with telling the stories. When one of the children, Seari, age 4-5, was asked if she ever made up stories in her head, she answered, "Once I made up something and told my Mommy. It was a long time ago. Could I draw you a picture?" She was given a piece of paper and a pen, and she alternately drew, looked up and stated what she had drawn. Drawing the picture seemed to be an excellent stimulus for Seari and it was reasoned that it could be beneficial to other children. From this point on an extra amount of paper and an extra pen (red) were carried by the researcher for those children who asked to draw a picture, and for use as a suggestion to children who seemed to need the added stimulus.

#### Treatment of Stories

The first procedure was to categorize each of the stories into what seemed to be major patterns or clusters of ideas mentioned in the stories. Main categories as indicated by the stories were: interest in people, use of animals, mention of fires or fire engines, direct reference of self, use of ghosts and goblins, stories based on fairy tales, and evidence of the nursery school situation. Many

stories were included in more than one pattern. The stories were then studied in terms of general picture found therein.

Two factors were considered as possible influences on the content of the children's stories. These factors were sex of the child and the amount of time he had been in the nursery school.

As previously mentioned the children were divided into two groups: children new to the nursery school situation and children with previous nursery school experience. Most of these children had been in the nursery school for three to six months. This division of experienced and new children led naturally to a comparison of stories collected from each group. In order to accomplish this comparison, the stories, grouped into patterns or clusters, were studied in terms of how many of each type were told by new children in the nursery school and how many were told by children with previous experience. Throughout the remainder of this study, the abbreviated term "new" will refer to children new to the nursery school situation, and "experienced" to children who have encountered previous experience in the Child Development Laboratory.

The stories told by boys were compared to the girls' stories, to determine if there were differences or similarities in the content, which might be attributed to different interests between the sexes at this age.

#### Problems

Some problems were encountered in the methods and procedures of this study. They did not, however, seem to have a major effect upon the study.

One problem encountered was the difficulty a few children had in realizing exactly what was wanted by the researcher. It was difficult in some cases to define what was meant by a story that was "made up." As previously mentioned, sometimes an example would have to be given for complete understanding, and this was not always a solution to the problem.

There were a few instances when the procedure of writing the stories by hand as they were told became a problem. As many as five or six stories were told so fast and excitedly that they were very difficult to record. Two stories told by one child, Neil, were entirely unrecorded because of the swiftness with which they were told. His last story was written down in shorthand by one of the student teachers in the West Laboratory in order to insure its accurate recording.

A problem rather infrequently encountered was that children sometimes were so involved in personal play situations that they felt they were too busy to tell a story. On the last day of nursery school a circus was planned in the West Laboratory. Neil began spontaneously to tell a visitor a story. When the researcher approached him to complete his story, he said, "I just have too many things to do. Can't I go play?" Naturally, he was allowed to return to his play.

## FINDINGS

In this study, 31 children from the Child Development Laboratories at Utah State University were invited to tell a story. They were given full freedom to select and tell any kind of story they wished to choose. Their stories have been examined and appear to suggest the following findings.

### Patterns and Content of Stories

1. Children's stories tend to be categorized into clusters of ideas or topics (see Figures 1 and 2). The most frequently encountered categories included: Interest in persons, which was the most prevalent topic with 17 children telling 39 stories concerned with people. The use of animals was the second topic, with 16 children telling 25 stories which mentioned animals. The third most prevalent pattern was reference to home and family, with 11 children telling 21 stories which dealt with this subject. The fourth most frequent pattern was reference to nursery school and its activities and equipment, with 12 children telling 18 stories. The fifth pattern was concerned with death, with 9 children telling 13 stories about this topic.

There were two areas in which there was a difference in the number of boys and girls mentioning a subject (see Figure 3). These areas were evidence of nursery school, 8 boys and 4 girls; and mention of home or family, 3 boys and 8 girls.



### Environment

2. Children reflect their environment in their stories. All of the five most frequently encountered topics deal with things and events with which they are familiar in their daily living.

### Dealing With Problems

3. Children use stories to help them look at problems and concerns with which they must deal. Their stories dealt with such topics as fears of death, fires, ghosts, and the problems of aloneness.

### Influence of Nursery School

4. Participation in the Child Development Laboratory program appears to be an influential factor on the stories children tell. All of the patterns or topics of stories appear to be about evenly distributed among the children with previous experience in the laboratory and those who had only recently entered the program (see Figures 4 and 5).

Of the 17 children who mentioned people, 7 experienced children told 14 stories and 10 new children told 25 stories. Of the 16 children who used animals in their stories, 8 experienced children told 13 stories and 8 new children told 12 stories. Six experienced children told 8 stories concerning the home and family; and 5 new children told 13 stories about this topic. Of the 18 stories told about nursery school only 3 were told by experienced and 15 were told by new. Three experienced children used this topic as compared to 9 new children. The subject of death was used by 7 experienced children

and 2 new children. Of the 13 stories, 10 were told by experienced children and 3 were told by new.

An exception to the even distribution of topics was the topic of nursery school and its activities. Twelve children told 18 stories about experiences or equipment with which they had become familiar in the laboratory. Of the 12 children who included such material in their stories, only 3 were experienced children and 9 were new. Of the 18 stories only 3 were experienced children and 15 were told by children who were new.

A second exception to this generality was the stories which deal with death. Nine children told stories about death. Of these, 7 were experienced children, and 2 were new in the laboratory. The 9 children told 13 stories about death. Of these 10 were told by experienced children and 3 by new.

#### Interest in Persons

5. This group of preschool children did not differ in their interest of persons. Nine girls, as compared to 8 boys, told stories about persons (see Figure 3). There seemed to be no difference between the boys and the girls in their interests in people, as expressed by the content of their stories. This is in contrast to the finding of Goodenough (1957) who reported that girls are more interested in persons, and males tend to define their sex roles more sharply.

#### Active and Quiet Stories

6. Girls demonstrated a tendency to mention quiet scenes more frequently than did boys. However, almost as many girls as boys mentioned the outdoors or wild animals.

Beginnings and Endings

7. Children tend to visualize a story as beginning with "Once upon a time," as indicated by 8 children who began 19 stories in this way; and as ending with "That's all," or "That's the end." Fourteen children ended 25 stories in this way. The stories beginning "Once upon a time" were told by 4 experienced children and 4 new to the lab. Of the 19 stories 8 were told by experienced children and 11 by new. The 14 children ending stories with "That's all," or "That's the end," were evenly divided into 7 experienced and 7 new children. The 7 experienced children told 13 stories and 12 were told by new children.

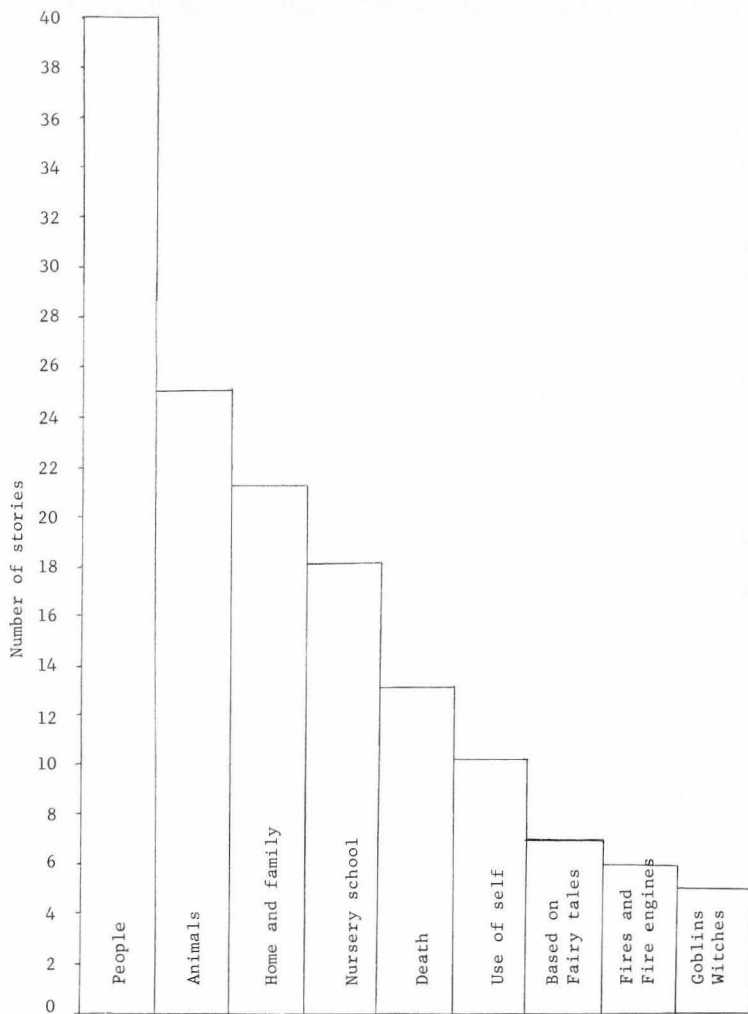


Figure 1. Content of children's stories by total number of stories told.

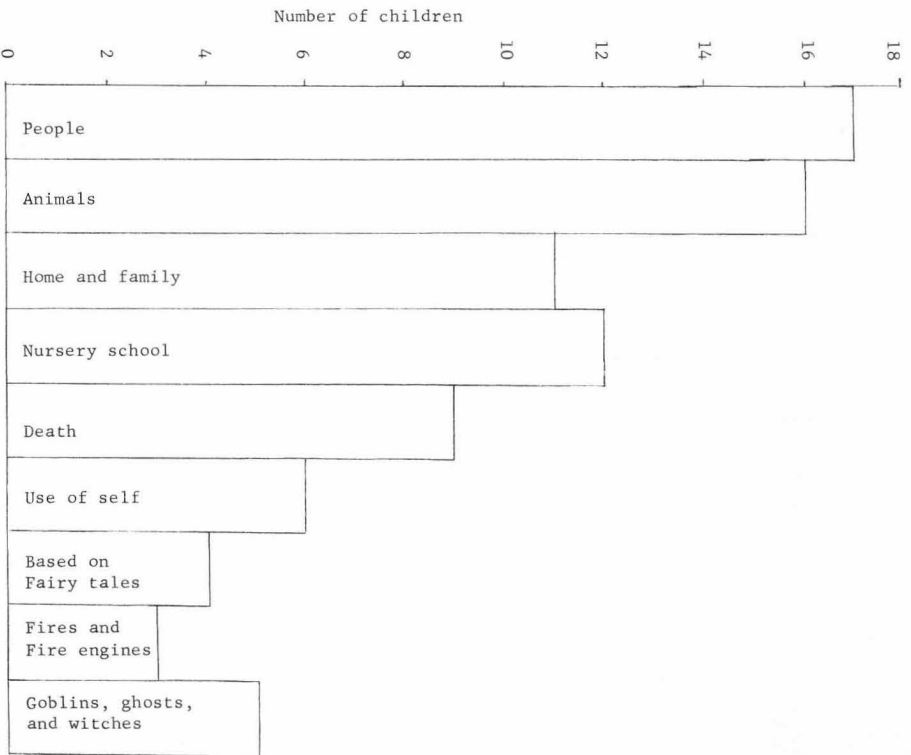


Figure 2. Content of children's stories by total number of children in the nursery school.

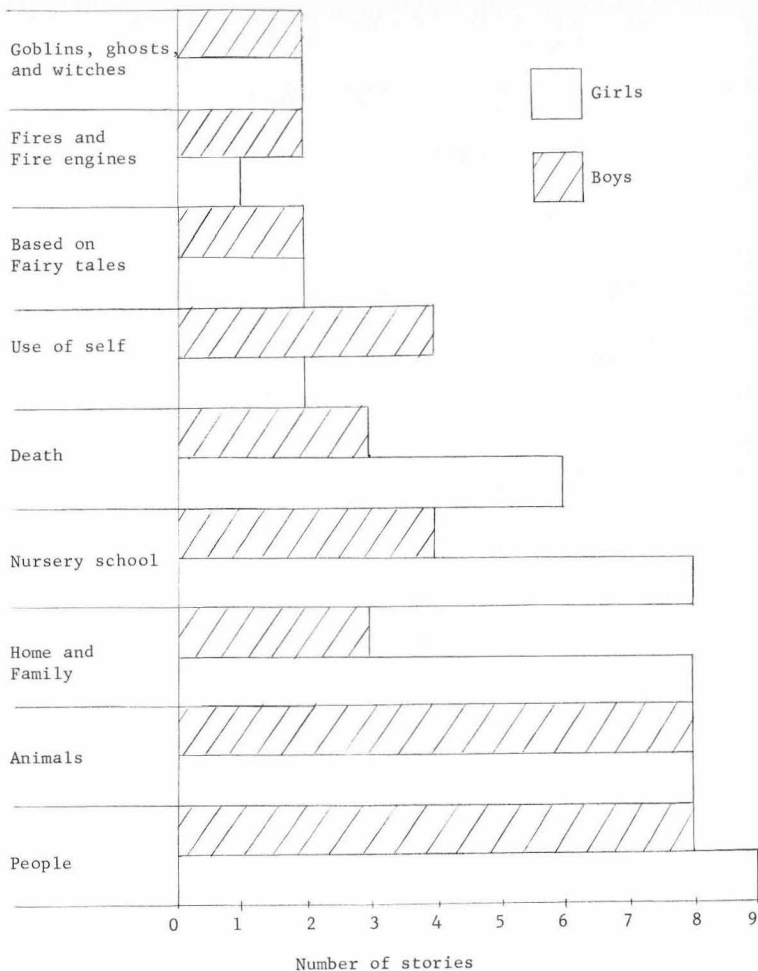


Figure 3. Content of stories by girls and boys in nursery school.

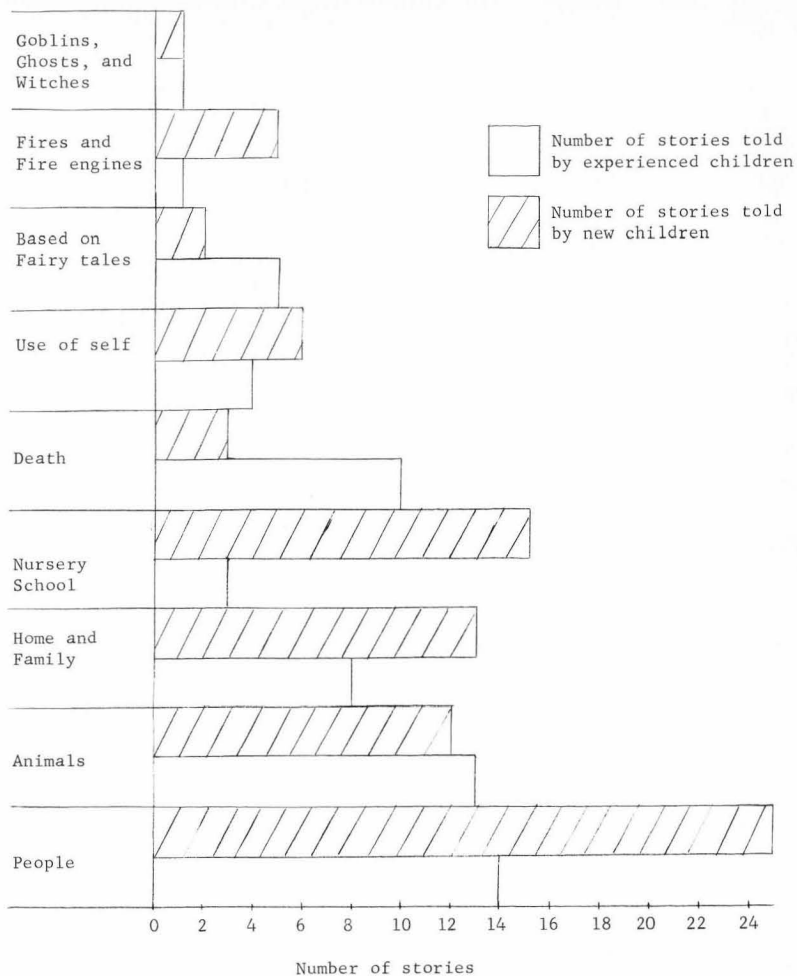


Figure 4. Content of children's stories by number of stories told by experienced and new children in the nursery school.

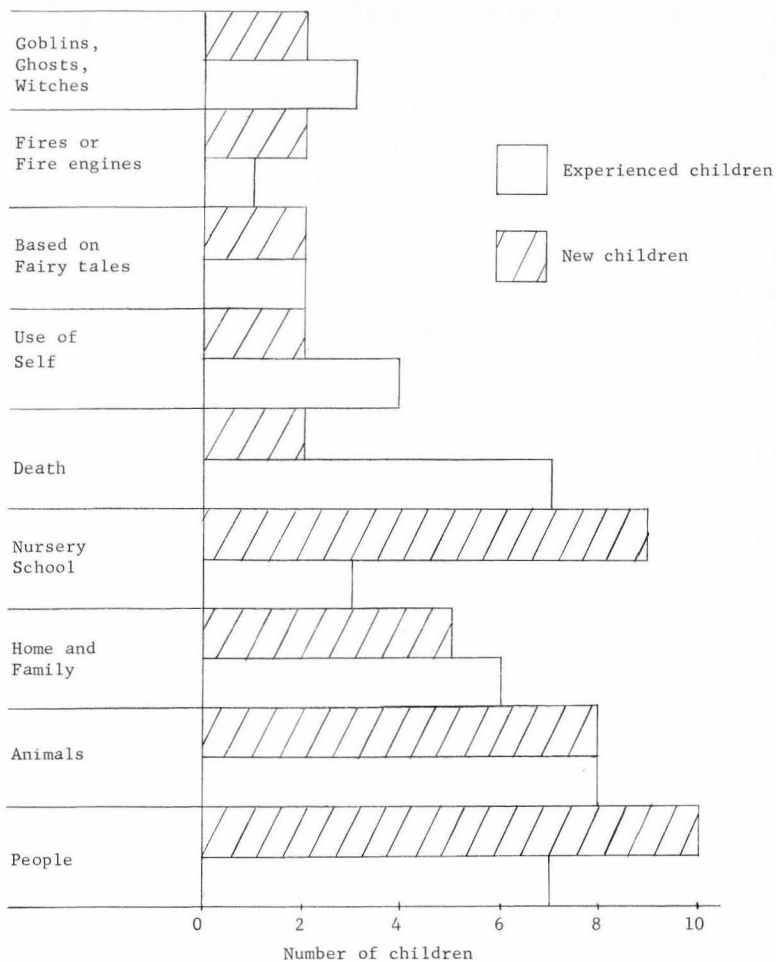


Figure 5. Content of children's stories by experienced and new children in the nursery school.



## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study of children's original stories involved 31 children from the Child Development Laboratories of Utah State University. The small number of children used has made it impossible for broad generalizations to be made concerning all children. There were, however, several findings, that seem to be pertinent to this particular study and for these particular children, although it must be emphasized that they represent only themselves. Clarification of the meaning of these findings, as interpreted by the author, will be discussed in this section. Included also in the following discussion are topics considered to be of interest even though they are not actually described in the findings. All stories mentioned in part or fully can be found in the Appendix.

### Patterns and Content of Stories

The first points to be discussed will include the first and second findings which indicate that children's stories tend to be categorized into clusters of ideas or topics, and that these topics reflect the child's environment. Even though the stories were original, they fell naturally into several major patterns. In other words, these children generally were interested in, or concerned about, many of the same subjects.

The major patterns found were interest in persons, the use of animals, reference to home and family, reference to the Child

Development Laboratories, and concern with death.

### People

Mentioned under the pattern of interest in persons were such people as mothers, and fathers, grandmothers, babies, and brothers and sisters, firemen, the milkman, farmers, and various children with specific names. Many of these persons mentioned were nameless, such as "the three little kids," "the little boy," and "someone."

People have played a large part in the child's life. Adults have great influence over the child's actions and growing concepts. Children are also an influence on each other. People may be warm and helpful, or at times demanding and confusing. It seems natural that people should be mentioned in a great many of the children's stories.

The persons used were not always the main characters in the stories. At times, persons were only briefly mentioned along with animals and objects.

### Animals

The second major pattern included reference to such animals as rabbits, dogs and cats, fish, lions, a duck, a camel, a reindeer, whales, polar bears, wolves and pigs, a horse, foxes, a porcupine, penguins, and a dragon. While some children just mentioned one or two animals as their stories progressed, others used an animal as the main figure in their stories.

An obvious point is that animals are a part of the child's environment. Some animals he has touched, and with others he has played. Others he has seen only in books, or on television. Some

of them may exist in his mind as animals to be feared, such as the lions or the bears, and therefore, must be dealt with in his stories. Amie exemplified this in one of her stories when she said, "The lion should have got killed, huh?"

#### Home and Family

The third major pattern used by children was reference to the home and family. Before entering nursery school, the child's contact with those outside his immediate family and neighborhood is relatively brief. The child's parents have been the major force in his life. From them he has learned his attitudes, ideas and concepts and feelings about himself and the world around him. His home and his family are the most important and familiar subjects he knows. He is capable, although subject to misconceptions, of talking about these topics with fairly accurate knowledge.

It seems that children have ambivalent feelings about their homes and families. Their differing attitudes are revealed in their stories. Family scenes are described. Some are pleasant; some are not. Some began pleasantly enough, but the picture becomes disrupted, quite often by the appearance of a mean animal upon the scene or by someone getting killed.

Kay's stories followed an individual pattern of the use of babies. Her imagined family situation was interrupted by a lion who ate everyone up but the baby. In another story, a wolf comes and the baby hides under the table until he leaves.

Lynn Marie told a story about a small house where a family lived. When asked what happened to them she answered, "A cowboy came and

killed them. They were all dead and couldn't come back alive."

Carl's story told of a boy who went fishing all day. His fish get stolen, and when he goes home his rabbit mother tells him to catch a rabbit. So he kills his mother. He then takes her to his grandpa, and it turns out not to be his grandpa, but his mother.

Not all the stories were unpleasant, however. Bruce told the story of a boy and his mother who go to visit their grandma at Easter and take her "An Easter bow with some candies in it." Zane's story was about himself. He scratched himself and his mother put a band-aid on it and put him to bed. He saw his mother as someone to help him when he needed it.

All of Gabrielle's stories dealt with her home and her family. Actually, her stories consisted of short, choppy sentences telling what her Mommy, or Daddy, could do. She also enjoyed telling what her Mommy and Daddy could not do. For example, she would say, "Mommy can do something better than my Daddy, and he doesn't work," then emphasized it by saying, "And he doesn't either! Mommy can't work, but Daddy can't either."

#### Nursery school

The fourth pattern included the uses of the nursery school's activities and equipment, in the children's stories. Children entering nursery school have had relatively little experience outside their homes. They are just beginning to broaden their contacts to more than just neighborhood children and family members. It would be supposed that the new experiences of playing with 19 other children, reacting to them and building relationships with them, as well as

with the unfamiliar student teachers in the nursery school, would be a challenging, sometimes rewarding, and sometimes frightening experience for the young child. Again, it is a natural reaction to talk about this new world he is encountering.

Talking about the experience should help the child make it more meaningful.

### Death

The fifth most frequent pattern found in children's stories was concerned with death. One of the characteristics of preschool children is that they have many concerns. Included among these is a concern for that undefined and unclear term, death. "What is death, anyway?" a child could ask himself. "If it is just going to sleep, couldn't it happen to me tonight?" and, "If Daddy just went to sleep, why is Mommy so unhappy?" Death is such a vague term to a child. Probably the main thing a child realizes is that death causes a deep sorrow for those around him. "If Daddy is in Heaven with God where it is beautiful and everyone is happy, why is everyone here so unhappy?"

The author recalls a picture in a book which made a lasting impression on her as a child. The picture shows a small child holding a telephone to her ear. The caption reads, "Hello, God? Could I please speak to my Daddy?" This type of misconception is prevalent with children. Because of their concern with death, children talk about it; and talking about it should help them gain a more firm grasp of the concept.

Sharlyn told the story of a kitten that was run over while its mommy and daddy were gone. It seems fairly certain that Sharlyn had

seen a dead kitten in the road, and it had bothered her. So, she had expressed it in her story.

Most references to death were in the form of killing. Deborah kills ghosts in her story. In Lynn Marie's story a cowboy kills a whole family. Nicolay had the farmer shoot the wolf because he was bothering the pigs. Only two children allow the person or object killed to come alive again.

#### Other patterns

Other patterns indicated by children's stories but found much less frequently were (1) the use of the child's own name or a pronoun indicating self; with six children, four experienced, and two new, telling ten stories about this topic. Four stories were told by the experienced children and six stories were told by the two new children. (2) Stories obviously based on fairy tales, with four children telling seven stories based in this way. Two experienced children told five stories, and two new children told two stories based on fairy tales. (3) Three children based six stories on fires or fire engines, with one experienced child telling one story, and two new children telling five stories. (4) The final category included goblins, ghosts, a witch, a snowman, and a "Tattlepuss," with five children, three experienced and two new, telling one story each.

#### Influence of child's sex

The two areas in which differences were found in the number of boys and girls who told stories about a certain topic were mention of nursery school and home and family. No reason seems apparent to

explain why more boys than girls talked about nursery school. It does seem possible that one reason for more girls telling stories about home and family is the early orientation, received by girls in our culture, towards being mothers and homemakers.

#### Dealing With Problems

The fact that children's stories reflect their environment through clusters of ideas, is closely related to the third finding that stories are used as a means for looking at problems and concerns, with which they must deal.

The preschool years are a time for fears and anxieties over real and imagined problems. They are concerned about death, as evidenced by its being the fourth most frequently encountered topic, as well as ghosts, fires, and being alone. They are anxious about themselves and about new babies in the family. What would happen if there was a fire at home? Is there going to be enough love to go around with a new baby in the house? They are not always sure there will be. How can they know? Their experience is limited and their world is viewed with "primitive mental faculties" (Fraiberg, 1959, p. 120-121). The use of "magic thought" can be very helpful in such situations. Fraiberg (1959, p. 23) distinguishes between the use of neurotic imagination and healthy imagination:

. . . The child who employs his imagination and the people of his imagination to solve his problems is a child who is working for his own mental health. He can maintain his human ties and his good contact with reality while he maintains his imaginary world. Moreover, it can be demonstrated that the child's contact with the real world is strengthened by his periodic excursions into fantasy. It becomes easier to tolerate the frustrations of the real world and to accede to the demands of reality if one can

restore himself at intervals in a world where the deepest wishes can achieve imaginary gratification. (Fraiberg, 1959, p. 23)

Some examples of children in this study who used stories as a means to look at their problems are given below.

Michael told a total of four stories. All but one of these told of his fear of being alone. His stories would begin: "Once upon a time there was a little Eskimo all alone . . ." or "Once upon a time there was a circus all alone . . ." Each time he said "all alone" he would stretch the l's emphasizing the word. Michael also showed a theme of destruction in his stories. Again, three out of four stories displayed his concern, when they mentioned missiles, bombs, and the chopping down of a brand new circus top. The fourth story emphasized that the Eskimo went "farr away."

Craig told four stories, all of which were concerned with fires or fire engines. In his first story, "every house in the whole world was on fire." He stresses the point that no one knows what to do: that even when two fire engines came, they did not get there in time; and once a fire engine came and there was not even a fire. He seems fearful of fires perhaps because others are, because he feels panic would reign, or because even firemen are not dependable.

Both Kay and Seari deal with their feelings about new babies at home through stories. Kay told three stories, each concerned with babies. Seari mentions babies in each of her three stories. Both Kay and Seari drew pictures in connection with their concern over babies.



### Influence of Nursery School

The fourth finding of this study, that participation in the Child Development Laboratory programs does appear to be an influential factor on the stories children tell, is one of the most important of the findings. The environment of the nursery school is planned for the most rich and varied experiences possible. From this background, children are free to glean knowledge and experience.

The first exception in the finding that most of the patterns or topics of the stories were evenly divided among the experienced children in the laboratory and those just entering the program, was the pattern concerned with nursery school. It is felt that one of the major reasons for the fact that more new children told more stories related to the laboratory was that nursery school was still a new, exciting, vibrant experience for these children. They were looking for ways in which they could integrate the experiences into themselves.

The laboratory experience for a child is fun. There are so many things to do, to see, to build. There are many objects which can be easily incorporated into a story. Several children, in the process of telling their stories, would very obviously look around the room and include in their stories the objects and happenings they saw. Some examples are cited below.

As the author approached Craig, one of the new children, he was sitting atop a large crane. A train was nearby. As he began his story, he slowly looked around the room: "Once upon a time a crane came and saw a truck, no, a train. An um, something happened . . ."

About a month later, Craig was getting ready to go outside when the author approached and asked if he would tell a story. He agreed. A student teacher asked him to hurry outside, and it was explained that he was going to tell a story. His story began, "A little boy went outside . . ."

On a third occasion, Craig again looked around the room as he began his story. "Once there was a mirror in a house and someone came to it. And there was a fountain in the house. And there was some people in it, and there was a truck in the house . . ."

As the author entered the laboratory one day during the first part of the study, she was greeted at the door by Diane, also a new child, who said, "Come and see what's in here!" The object of excitement was a rabbit in a cage. The children had been feeding it lettuce. The story Diane told that day was concerned with a rabbit and a house with lettuce in it.

Amie told a rather involved story using a block and a board while she watched several children playing with blocks. She had ended her story when a student teacher entered the room carrying a tray full of juice glasses. Amie said, "Oh, oh! We forgot something! Then a glass poured on both of them. . ."

Jon had quietly said, "No," when approached to tell a story, until an outside visitor, a telephone man, came to visit the laboratory. The visitor left real telephones with which the children could play. Many children used them with obvious enjoyment, including Jon. Several days later Jon was asked if he would like to draw a picture and then tell about it. After a few minutes hesitation, Jon drew a picture of a telephone, then told a story about it.

It can be seen from the examples above that the children did use their surroundings at the nursery school to incorporate into their stories the experiences they were having which were interesting and exciting to them.

The second exception to the finding that most of the patterns or topics of the stories were evenly divided among the experienced children and the new was the pattern concerned with death. It may be pointed out that it is felt that the reason for increased stories concerning death by children who were experienced in the laboratory situation is not a negative factor related to the nursery school. Rather, it is felt that the opposite is true. The children in the laboratories have come to know that nursery school is a good place to be. It can safely be a place where the teachers can be trusted and confidence is placed in them. A child would not tell a story of this kind to someone he did not trust.

#### Interest in Persons

This group of children did not differ in their interest in persons, which is in contrast to the findings by Goodenough (1957). It seems that both boys and girls in the present study have a high interest in people, as evidenced by the 39 stories told. Since people are as great an influence in boys' lives as they are in girls' the boys seem to be equally interested in persons. There seemed to be no differences in the content of boys' and girls' stories. Their stories mainly reflect situations which occur in daily life with which they are familiar. Interest is shown through situations that reflect comfort, such as Bruce's story of a little boy visiting his grandma, and at other times

through stories reflecting discomfort or concern with people, as a new baby in the family.

#### Quiet and Active Stories

More girls told quiet stories than did boys. This is in agreement with Erickson's finding (1951) using preadolescents that more girls than boys built quiet scenes in play configurations. This finding seems to agree with the way in which we generally think of boys and girls. Girls are supposed to be quiet young ladies. It is expected that boys will be more active.

A second point dealing with the present findings as compared with Erickson is that almost as many girls as boys used motion, the outdoors, and wild animals in their stories. Erickson had found that fewer girls incorporated such variables. The age difference between Erickson's subjects and the preschool children could suggest a reason for the difference, particularly concerning wild animals. The children in this study seem to be interested in animals.

#### Beginnings and Endings

As indicated by the last finding, children tend to visualize a story as a complete entity beginning with, "Once upon a time . . ." and ending with "That's all" or "That's the end." The children who began and ended their stories in this manner were evenly divided into experienced and new children in the nursery schools.

It did not seem to matter to these children whether the story was complete reality or complete fantasy, their stories were still detached from themselves by virtue of the fact that the stories took place "Once upon a time."

Carl kills his rabbit mother when she asks him to catch a rabbit. When he takes the rabbit to his grandfather, however, he discovers it is not his grandpa, but his mother. Carl was one of only two children who seemed to decide his deed had been rather severe, even in a make-believe story, and tried to correct the situation by having his mother not dead at all.

Michael destroys houses and whales with his missiles and bombs. Nancy's Snow White pulled this "red thing behind her and the mean old tree didn't get her." Nicolay punches dangerous dragons to save a woman who is yelling for help; shoots two wolves who are eating pigs at the movie; has Bat Man and Robin hit another big, bad wolf on the head because he is bothering the four little pigs as they go to the store; and has a "beautiful princess" say, "No!" when "Jack and the Beanstalk" asks her to marry him.

By ending their stories with "That's all" or "That's the end" completes the detachment began by "Once upon a time . . ." The story is over; and after all, it was just a story, was it not?

#### Other Topics

##### Individual patterns

It has been demonstrated that children exhibit individual patterns in their stories. Examples of these patterns have been described previously, such as Michael's themes of aloneness and destruction; Craig's concern with fires; and Kay's and Seari's anxieties connected with new babies. Other examples of individual patterns include: Gabrielle's five stories about the "three little kids" who are always going someplace, and Nicolay's four stories

which are all based on fairy tales or other stories he has heard.

It is the author's opinion that individual patterns arise for much the same reason general patterns arise. These are the topics of concern and of interest for preschool children. It is natural that immediate experiences and problems would be expressed more than once in any individual child's stories.

#### Humor

Humor in children's stories appears to be useful for much the same reasons as "Once upon a time . . ." By laughing or making a funny joke, the child may feel he is covering up his mischievous and uncomfortable thoughts concerning a situation. His laughter may be used to convince the listener that it is, after all, just a joke, and not true. He may even stop to say, "This is a funny story!"

Hilary calls a fox "Bugs Bunny" in order to belittle him in her story. Amie uses humor to hide her mischievous thoughts of slapping a boy with a board and pouring juice on him. Carl laughs when he kills his rabbit mother; then brings her back to life again.

#### Children's Drawings

Children's drawing of pictures to correspond with their stories seemed to contribute strength to this study. The reason for this assumption is that several children appeared unable or unwilling to express themselves verbally before the use of pictures was introduced. Seari, the child who first asked if she could draw the researcher a picture, was one of these children.

Three other children, Zane, Jon, and Deborah, did not express themselves until they were asked if they would like to draw a picture and then tell about it. Zane had been approached numerous times

before he drew a picture of himself and then told his story. Jon would only smile and quietly shake his head, "No," when asked if he could tell a story, until he was asked if he would like to draw a picture first and then tell about it. Deborah would not even speak to the researcher on two different occasions when she was asked to tell a story. On the fourth approach to Deborah she was asked if she could draw a picture and then tell about it. As she drew her picture she had twinkling eyes and a smile on her face.

Three children, Amie, Gabrielle, and Seari, actually appeared to be more interested in drawing the pictures than in telling the stories. Telling the stories was the necessity coupled to the enjoyment of drawing the pictures. Amie would finish telling her story and exclaim, "Now can I draw my picture?"

Gabrielle and Diane, after having told several stories related to their drawings, refused to tell stories for the last drawings they made. Gabrielle refused twice to relate her drawings to a story.

It was felt that there were several reasons for the successful contribution of the children's drawings. First, drawing pictures is a more familiar medium than that of telling original stories. Drawing is more concrete and maybe easier for the child to understand than to tell a story he has made up in his head. The second reason was that drawing pictures provided an additional motivation toward the telling of stories. For children with less verbal experience or knowledge, drawing provided a nonverbal means of expression. If the picture was drawn first, it gave the child time to think about the story he was going to tell. The final reason for the successful contribution of children's drawings was that a fuller understanding

of the child's story was gained with the use of both story and picture.

#### Flannelboard story

A student teacher in the West Laboratory made available to the children some miscellaneous flannelboard figures for use during free play. One of the new children, Nancy, told the researcher an original story using these miscellaneous figures. This flannelboard story was the second story she had contributed to the study. Her first story was a slightly revised version of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." She had preceded the story with the question, "What shall I tell you?" She was encouraged to tell a story she had made up.

Nancy was approached as she was playing with the flannelboard figures. She was asked if she could tell a story using the figures. She immediately answered, "Yes!" and excitedly began her story. She proceeded at such a rapid pace, that it was very difficult to record her story. As she told it, she moved the figures on the flannelboard in the manner suggested by her story.

The story Nancy told was her own creation, rather than a revised version of a familiar story. The excitement and enjoyment of her experience was shown by her rapid pace, her radiant smile and sparkling eyes, and her concentrated attention on the project. There was a marked difference in her attitude toward the first story and the second. It seemed obvious that the intrinsic reward she received from the creativity of her flannelboard story made it a more meaningful experience.

#### Type of response

The stories collected in this study have been evaluated in terms



of Piaget's (1963) five types of reactions given by children in response to questions, as described in the Review of Literature. It was found that the children in the present study reacted to the request to tell a story in the manner of "liberated conviction," in which they replied after thought, using the "stores" of their own minds, and without suggestion.

#### Refusals

It is the opinion of the author that refusal or inability on the part of some of the children to tell a story was dependent upon the individual child, not upon the effect of the nursery school. The many children who did tell stories seemed to gain a great deal of satisfaction from the activity. Happy expressions, smiles, and frequent requests asking if they could tell a story, or draw a picture, were evidence of the enjoyment they received.

It is felt that these children were reacting to concepts -- ideas, misconceptions, feelings of themselves and those around them, and new information and experiences received in nursery school, not only through their play, but also through the stories they told.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

This study was an exploratory study to discover the influence of experience in nursery school and sex of the child upon the content of original stories told by preschool children. A second objective included a description of the content of the stories as an example of the process of concept formation.

To accomplish these two main objectives, this study utilized 31 preschool children from Utah State University Child Development Laboratories. Of these 31 children, 15 were new to the nursery school situation, and 16 had had previous experience in the laboratory. A total of 15 boys and 16 girls were used.

Two separate nursery school groups were used in the study. In the East Laboratory a total of 13 children were used. Six children had previous experience in the laboratory, and 7 were new to the situation. In the West Laboratory a total of 18 children were used; 10 with previous experience, and 8 new children.

The 31 children used in the study were asked to tell a story they had made up in their heads. No suggestions as to what the story should be about nor how the story should proceed were given, as the importance of the story was its originality. The stories were written down by the researcher as they were given in the laboratories.

Stories were categorized into what seemed to be major patterns or clusters of ideas mentioned in the stories. A general picture of

the thoughts, ideas, concepts, and misconceptions and imagination was gained through this procedure.

The second procedure was to use the division of children, those new to nursery school and children with previous experience, as a comparison within the patterns or clusters of stories.

A third procedure used was the comparison of content of stories as told by boys and girls to discover whether or not there were differences.

On the basis of the above three procedures, seven major findings were discussed. (1) Children's stories tend to be categorized into clusters of ideas or topics. The most frequently encountered categories include: interest in persons, use of animals, reference to home and family, reference to nursery school, and concern with death. (2) Children reflect their environment in their stories. (3) Children use stories to help them look at problems and concerns with which they must deal. (4) Participation in the Child Development Laboratory program appears to be an influential factor on the stories children tell. Topics of stories appear to be about evenly distributed among the new and experienced children, except for the topics of nursery school and death. (5) Both boys and girls seem to have an interest in persons. (6) More girls than boys tell quiet stories; and as many girls as boys use action, outdoors, and wild animals in their stories. (7) Children tend to visualize a story beginning with "Once upon a time . . ." and ending with "That's all," or "That's the end."

### Conclusions

The conclusions of this study are

1. Participation in Child Development Laboratories appears to be an influential factor on children's stories.

2. Children use stories as a means to help them look at problems and concerns with which they must deal.

3. Children reflect their environment in their stories as evidenced by the frequently encountered patterns or clusters of interest in persons, animals, home and family, nursery school, and death.

4. Length of experience in the Child Development Laboratories appears to have an influence on the stories children tell.

5. Sex of the child seems to have an influence on the number of boys and girls telling stories concerned with nursery school, home and family, and stories which tend to be quiet.

6. The use of drawing pictures has the effect of an added stimulus on the stories children tell.

These conclusions must be considered tentative on the basis that only a small number of children participated in the study. The conclusions may be valid as far as the present study and particular children are concerned. However, experimentation, the use of control groups, and more children will need to be studied before definite conclusions may be made.

### Suggestions for Further Study

One suggestion for further study would be a research project

based on the use of flannelboard figures for collecting preschool children's stories. The suggestion is based on an example of a child's use of flannelboard figures to tell an original story, which seemed to be an exciting experience for her.

The flannelboard figures might be built around the patterns or clusters of ideas used by children as found in the present study, such as: the home and family, animals, death, ghosts, and fire engines or community helpers. With several figures made into meaningful groups, and without suggestions or criticism from the researcher, the child would then be free to select and use the flannelboard figures about which he wished to tell his story.

A second suggestion for future study would be the use of children's drawings to investigate their feelings and concepts of themselves and the world around them. The procedure could be much the same as the one used in the present study. A child from the Child Development Laboratories would be asked if he would like to draw a picture and tell about it. The resultant pictures and stories would likely be similar to the ones received in the present study. Comparisons could be made.

A study similar to the present one in approach to the child, could be done on the preschool child's ideas of what he would do if he were God. A comparable approach to the present study could be used. A prerequisite feeling of friendship and rapport, and then the question, "What would you do if you were God?", would serve as a stimulating introduction. It is the opinion of the author that the concepts, ideas and feelings of the child in general, as well as concepts concerning God, would be shown through such a study.

A final suggestion for future study is the use of the beginning "Once upon a time . . ." to determine the child's ideas on moral development. Two stories could be used, one concerning a good child and the other concerning a bad child. The preschool children in the study would be asked to finish each story in any manner they wished. Predetermined questions could be considered, such as: Is the child reflecting his own values or his parents'? Is it possible to determine how he perceives himself? Where are his values of good and bad found?

Studies such as these presented above could bring greater insight into the child's underlying concepts, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and the imaginative and creative powers of his "magic years."

## CHILDREN PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY

Experienced Children

## East Laboratory

Boys: Robert 3-5\* (1)\*\*  
 Carl 3-11 (1)  
 Nicolay 4-10 (1)  
 Bruce 4-9 (1)

Girls: Lynn Marie 4-8 (3)  
 Hilary 4-5 (1)

## West Laboratory

Boys: Neil 4-0 (2)  
 Matthew 4-0 (1)  
 Douglas 4-0 (1)  
 Scott 4-5 (2)

Girls: Nancy 3-5 (1)  
 Laura Dawn 4-0 (2)  
 Emily Kay 4-0 (3)  
 Amie 4-8 (1)  
 Cecily 4-2 (1)  
 Sharlyn 3-10 (1)

New Children

## East Laboratory

Boys: Raymond 4-4  
 Robie 4-5

Girls: Ann 3-10  
 Judy 4-11  
 Seari 4-5  
 Gabrielle 3-3  
 Deborah 4-9

## West Laboratory

Boys: Zane 4-5  
 Michael 4-5  
 Craig 4-9  
 Kevin 4-7  
 Jon 4-6

Girls: Allissa 4-10  
 Nancy 4-0  
 Diane 4-5

\* Age in years and months

\*\* Indicates the number of quarters of previous attendance

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## APPENDIX

The Appendix is a compilation of the children's stories and the circumstances as recorded by the researcher.

AMIE 4-8

Tuesday, February 15, 1966

Amie came up while Zane and Gabrielle were telling me their stories outside. There was snow on the ground. She said, "I want to do that."

"A snowman. Well, he fell down and somebody shot him. And when the sun came up he woke up and said, 'Hello.' And there was not anyone to say hello of. And someone came and no one thought he was up. And he went along and everybody saw him and he woke up again. And then he laid back down and went to sleep." (This was all done with much smiles and laughter.) When she finished, she drew the snowman, upsidedown. I asked her if he was upsidedown. She said, "No, he's sleeping. And he smiled in his sleep."

Thursday, February 17, 1966

I was sitting on a chair watching the children dress to go outside. Amie finished and came over. She said, "I was going to tell you another one today." I asked her what her story was about.

"Once there was a little cat and he went to his home and his mother wasn't there. So he was walking and walking until he found his mother. And then he went home and he found a little mouse. And there was two little mice. And it was seven o'clock. And that's all."

"Now can I draw my cat? . . . First his head . . . his eyes . . . his mouth . . . his ears." (Then she drew a body, two legs and feet. I said, "What else?") "Fur." (She put in the fur. "Anything else?") "No."

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

Amie came up to watch Nancy tell me her flannelboard story. I asked her if she would like to tell me a story; and she said she wanted to draw me a picture. I gave her a piece of paper and a pen and she began to draw while I finished with Nancy. We were sitting on the rug where there were several children doing the actions to the record, "My Playful Scarf." She alternately drew her picture and watched the children. At one point she said, "Have you heard the story about the dog?" I answered, "No." Several minutes later she

said, "My dog is almost finished. It's going to be happy." A few minutes later I asked, "Are you through now?" She replied, "No, I have to draw more legs." She finished her picture and said:

"Now. The dog ran away and he found a lion. And then the lion chased him and he chased all day and then the horse came and he played. And then the dog got killed. And the horse got killed. Then the lion got killed. The lion should have got killed, huh?

"Another dog came by him. Then a little ball came and he ran after it. And you know what was inside of it? A bug was inside of it. An ant. An ant bug. And then a soldier came. Then a little boy came. His name was Donnie. And then a board came and slapped on him. Then a block came and slapped on the boy." (It sounded like she said, "slopped" and I said, "Slapped like hit?") "Slapped like hit. And that was all." (At this point one of the student teachers, Brenda, came through the door carrying a tray of juice.) "Oh, Oh! We forgot something! Then a glass poured on both of them. (Poured on who?) The dog and the boy." (She giggled and ran to the table for juice.)

As Amie told the last paragraph of this story, she was looking around the room. There were several children playing across the room with blocks and boards. She seemed to gain her inspiration for this last part from their play, as she would look at them, pause, and then, grinning, use the board and block as part of her story. Her reference to the glass was very obvious. She seemed to have a secret joke as she told me this story, especially the last part. She giggled and laughed and beamed.

BRUCE 4-9

Wednesday, March 9, 1966

Today was the last day of nursery school and Bruce left early to go get an ice cream cone with his mother. When nursery school was over they came back to pick up his extra clothing. I approached Bruce and asked him if he remembered that once I had asked him to tell me a story, and that perhaps while his mother went inside to get his extra clothes he and I could go over by the boat and he could tell me a story now. He said, "Yes!" and raced over to the boat, climbed the ladder, and jumped inside. I asked, "What will your story be about?"

"Grandma. Just a story I made up. A mother and a boy went to see their grandma. Then she said she forgot that the grandma lived somewhere else. They decided to move where the grandma lived. And they went to visit her grandma and she was gone shopping to the store, and she was gone to get some meat; and she finally came back and they visited her for a while. This was close to Easter and they gave her an Easter bow with some candies in it. And then we went home and moved the stuff. And they looked for a new home. And when they picked it, the little boy moved his stuff in. And that's the whole story."

CARL 3-11

Wednesday, February 23, 1966

It was cold and Carl wanted to wait in the nurse's room for his ride to pick him up after nursery school. He had a paper duck puppet on his hand and I began to talk to him. He was telling me about his puppet:

"He has some paste on his back 'cause' I put his eyes back there so he could see in back of him. I know he can fly; because he has that." (He points to wings.) "He looks very sad right now." ("Why?") "Because we made him that way!"

I kept trying to get him to tell me a story. He finally said, "I could tell you a kitten with a ball -- because I can see it right there." (He points to the bulletin board which has a dog, three goldfish, and a kitten pushing a ball. I asked what happened to the cat." "Nothing." (To the ball?) "Roll it."

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

I was talking to Carrie and Ann as they were playing with the rabbit on the rug. Carl was listening to a story near by and he wandered over a couple of times. He asked, "Are you gettin' a story?" I said, "Would you like to tell me one?" He said, "You mean like about that duck? I gotta think one up." (See February 23, 1966). He thought a few minutes and began this story:

"Once there was a boy named Johnny and he went fishin' one day. And he fell in the river; and he had river boots so he walked and tried to catch fish, and he didn't catch any. And so he dropped his fishin' pole and he fished with his fish. So he didn't catch his fish. And a big fish came, each time swimming back and forth, and he didn't catch any fish. And so he caught a whole bunch of fish in a box. And so he laid the fish down and somebody stole it and so he went home without his fish. So his rabbit moma told him to catch a rabbit. So he said, 'Okay,' and he killed his own mother. And so he takes her to his grandpa and it wasn't his grandpa, it was his mother." (Laughs.)

At this point he interrupted himself to say, "Hey! Why does that make red? (My pen) Because the pen's red?" "Yes." "Oh! I getcha!"

I believe that the basis for Carl's story may have come from Bernadine Cook's The Little Fish That Got Away, which was one of the books in the bookcase of the nursery school at this time. I feel this way because after he had finished his story, he tried to tell me another story about a rabbit by using a book and looking at each page as he told the story. This second story did not seem original so I did not record it. Upon investigation I found the book by Bernadine Cook, and it seemed fairly similar to the first part of Carl's story. The conclusion of his story was, of course, original.

CRAIG 4-9

Wednesday, January 12, 1966

This story took place when the children were gathering on the rug for a visitor from Hawaii. Since this was the second time I had approached him, Craig seemed quite eager to tell me a story after he finally figured out that I wanted one he had made up himself.

"I have a little story. Once a house was on fire. This is not true. Once a house was on fire. Ah, someone saw it and they ran to it and it was the fireman. They ran across the street. The people in the house didn't know what to do so they ran across the street. And every house in the whole world was on fire."

Monday, January 24, 1966

On this occasion Craig asked me if I needed him to tell me another story. I said, "Yes." He was sitting on the large crane and as he began he looked all over the room. There was a small train nearby.

"Once upon a time a crane came and saw a truck. No, a train. And um, something happened. A house got on fire. In California. And two fire engines came. They didn't get there in time and there was a car on fire. And that's the end."

Monday, February 28, 1966

Susan, a student teacher, was trying to get everyone to go outside to wait for their rides to go home. Craig was ready to go, so I approached him and asked him to tell me a story. He said, "Okay." Susan came up and said, "Come on, Craig." I asked if it was all right for him to tell me a story instead. She said, "Fine," and went outside. He began his story:

"A little boy went outside and then a fireman came down the street in his firetruck and the little boy ran where the firetruck was going. Then it stopped. He, (who?), the fireman, went back fast to the hospital, and then something happened. The fireman went to the fire department. And that's all."

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

I saw the children as they were coming back from an excursion to see a film in another building on campus. One of the student teachers, Susan, told me later that Craig had said after I had walked past, "Isn't she going to ask us what we saw?" She answered, "No, I guess not." He said, "But she always asks us things!" A short time later as I entered the nursery school, he looked up from his sitting position on a large truck and said, "Do you want me to tell you a story?" We went over to the table and as he began to tell the story, he looked around the room at the mirror reflecting us, the drinking fountain, a child going by on a truck.



"Once there was a mirror in a house and someone came to it. And there was a fountain in the house. And um . . . something happened. A fire engine came and there wasn't even a fire . . . (He laughs) We saw you coming to the nursery school, didn't we? . . . And that's all."

DEBORAH 4-9

Tuesday, January 18, 1966

I approached Debbie on each of the last two days and received no response at all. She said each time that she would think about a story to tell me.

Wednesday, January 26, 1966

I talked to Debbie a long time today. She told me many things, and kept saying, "You know what?" However, she still wouldn't tell me a story.

Monday, January 31, 1966

Today Debbie wouldn't even talk to me. She just shook her head "No."

Monday, February 21, 1966

For the first time Debbie has acted like she wanted to tell me a story. She was smiling and had twinkling eyes, but she hesitated. So I asked if she could draw me a picture and then tell me about it. She did, with a big grin on her face and her tongue sticking out the whole time.

"A ghost. Got lost. He pushed a button and got lost. He died. And another ghost came. And he pushed another one and he went down in the floor. Got dead. And that's all."

DIANE 4-5

Monday, January 17, 1966

Diane greeted me at the door as I entered the nursery school, and said, "Come see what's in here." She took me to the rug where there was a rabbit in a cage. When I asked her to tell me a story she first wanted to tell me one about "The Three Little Pigs." Then the "Bad Wolf." But she said, "That's not a very good one." I said, "What else?" And she said:

"One about the little girl and the little boy. Oh, they went over to this wolf's house. He didn't know them. So they went to this other house and there was lettuce in it. They thought they could eat it, but the rabbit had been sucking on it. And that's the end of the story."

Thursday, January 20, 1966

When approached about another story, Diane said she could tell me a story about "The rabbit. A different rabbit. I'll tell you later." However, we ran out of time.

Tuesday, February 1, 1966

The children had just returned from an excursion to the Forestry Building where they had seen the natural life exhibits, including birds, small animals, a large polar bear, and a rabbit, etc.

Diane was playing with the "House that Jack Built." As she did so she said, "Play like . . ." She was halfway through before I realized she was actually telling me a story. The recorded story below was, therefore, in her telling, quite a bit more elaborate.

"Play like the little woman wanted her cat in, but she didn't want any bears. (Drops cat block in slot.) But the door wasn't locked. She wants these in too. (Drops other blocks in also.) Now, where is the old woman? (Looks in window.) I can't see her. Oh, there she is. I see her."

When talking, she said they had seen a bear and had "petted" it so hard it almost fell over on them. She said they also saw a rabbit which had been "shoot." ("You mean it wasn't alive?") "No, it had been shoot."

"The little rabbit went over to Tommy's house. And he got all the bananas down. And then the little boy was getting ready for Primary and his mother said, 'Who stole all my bananas?' And the little boy went outside and pulled the banana off the rabbit's tail. (She laughs.) This is a funny story. And the rabbit went to the doctor's and he put a band-aid on his tail. Then the little boy went out and pulled the band-aid off. And that's all."

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

I was leaning against the window sill talking to Laura Dawn trying to explain to her what I wanted her to do, when Diane came up and said she wanted to draw me a picture. I said, "Fine. Laura Dawn can listen so she will know what to do." Diane started to draw and then said, "I just want to write. I don't want to tell you anything." She drew four crooked lines, and then left.

GABRIELLE 3-3

Wednesday, January 19, 1966

The second time I approached Gabrielle to tell me a story she said:

"My mommy cooks for me. And she loves me. And she likes me. And she hurts me sometimes."

After further requests she continued: "We have a dog. We have a mommy and daddy. We have Zane. We have nursery school. My story is about my favorite mommy in the world."

She refused to continue and ran off to play.

Thursday, January 27, 1966

"My mommy has to cook. Just one talk. That's just one story. Mommy has to iron. My mommy has to sew. And I have to cook and iron and sew."

She then wanted to draw me a picture. I gave her a paper and a pen. She drew a small circle with two smaller circles inside, each one for Daddy, Mommy, Zane, and herself. A very crooked circle around these was the house, she said; a very small squiggly line for food. When I asked her to tell me a story about it she said, "This is my mommy, and daddy, and Zane and me." By this time all the children were gathered on the rug by us for juice.

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

Gabrielle came right up to me when I entered the nursery school and asked if I would like her to tell me a story. Then she took one of my pens and began to draw as she told me this story:

"My mommy cooks. She writes my name. She writes a song and she does lots of things. My momma lets me draw a picture with one of these." (She showed me the pen.)

Tuesday, February 15, 1966

I was outside as mothers were beginning to arrive after nursery school was over. Zane and Gabrielle came up to me, and Gabrielle said, "I want to do that." (Meaning to draw a picture and tell me a story.) We went to the window sill, and I gave her a pen and a piece of paper, and she began to draw her scribbly line as she said:

"My daddy could write my names. Mommy can do something better than my daddy and he doesn't work. And he doesn't either. Mommy can't work, but daddy can't either. My teacher can't work." (At this point she pulled a ribbon I was using for a bookmark out of my book.) "Can I have this?" I told her I needed it. She continued her story as she drew. "I have bobby pins to put in my hair, and ribbons. And my teacher said I could wear it." (She again pulled the ribbon out of my book. I smiled and took it back.) She kept going on: "Today my mommy can't write my name."

Monday, February 21, 1966

Gabrielle spotted me across the nursery school playground and came over and said, "I want to do that." I gave her a pen and paper, and she began to draw and talk:

"That's my big muscle. My mommy's here and she can't cook anything 'cause she's sick and she can't go to church. And she can't have a necklace. She doesn't have one." (As she says this last statement, she picks up a necklace off another girl's neck.)

Her mother had said earlier that she was watching from the booth as the nursery school children were making candy (life savers) and straw necklaces. Gabrielle didn't want to string hers. She just wanted to eat candy. One of the student teachers tried to convince her to string it, but she said she wanted to take it home. The teacher said, "But you can't hold them all!" Gabrielle said, "Yes, I can," and proceeded to pick them up in her hands and put them in her mouth. "I can hold them in my mouth," she said. She did, however, make a necklace later.

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

Today Gabrielle came up and said, "I want to do that again." I gave her my red pen and a piece of paper. She drew her picture, and I said, "Now, can you tell me about it?" "I don't want to tell you about it. I just want to do this!" was her answer. I was unable to get her to tell me a story.

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

While I was talking to Cecily and Laura Dawn, Gabrielle came up to the window sill and asked to draw a picture. I told her thank you, but I needed to get stories from Cecily and Laura Dawn. She persisted so I gave her a piece of paper and a pen. While she was drawing her picture ( a few squiggly lines) she said, "You didn't want anything? Did you want to go home? To eat your supper?" She finished her little picture but wouldn't tell me anything about it, so I let her take it home.

HILARY 4-5

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

Hilary came up and listened while Judy told her story of the "three little kids and the cold house." When the story was over, she said, "I know a story." I said, "Do you? Could you tell it to me?" She answered, "Yes."

"Once there was this little girl and she had a mumma. And the mumma had a baby, and the baby had a sister, and the sister gave the baby a bottle. And then the mumma was making a pie; and then a fox knocked at the door and said, 'Open up in the name of the law or else I'll call you Bugs Bunny!'" (She said this in a loud voice, and then she laughed.) ("Then what happened?") "That's all."

JON 4-6

Monday, January 31, 1966

Jon just nodded his head, "No," that he had never made up stories in his head. But he nodded his head, "Yes," that he would think about it for me.

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

Jon said he still couldn't think of anything, but he would think about it.

Monday, February 14, 1966

Jon and Michael were doing puzzles at a small table. Michael was doing one of a polar bear, and Jon was doing one of a sailboat. Michael told me a story about a sailboat. I asked Jon if he could tell me a story too. He shook his head, "Yes," and began:

"There was this boy. He was going on a submarine. Then he got a solk . . . " At this point I made the mistake of saying, "A what?" He repeated it a couple of times. When I couldn't understand, he refused to continue. I asked if he were mad. He shook his head, "Yes." I'm sure he was. Later he said he would tell me one another time.

Monday, February 28, 1966

I approached Jon again today. He just shook his head, "No," when I asked him to tell me a story. He did, however, come up to me when I entered the room and listened to Sharlyn's story.

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

As Kay was drawing me a picture, Jon came up and I asked him to come and listen. He sat down two chairs away. When she had finished, I tried again to get him to tell me a story. He shyly shook his head, "No." I asked if it would be easier if he drew me a picture first, then told me a story. He said no again, but I put my pen and a piece of paper in front of him anyway. Then I turned my attention to another child for a few minutes. When I looked back, he had drawn a picture. I said, "Jon! What is that?"

"A telephone." ("What happened to it?") "We ring and no one answered it. And nobody was home." ("What else?") "Well, a telephone." ("Did anything else happen?") "Well, a little boy go to bed and he didn't go to bed. He sit up and stayed up all night. And that's all of it."

Previously, on Monday, February 28, an outside visitor came. He was a telephone man. He showed some slides and left several real telephones set up for the children to play with. Many of the children

seemed fascinated by them and spent a considerable amount of time playing with them. Jon was one of these children who seemed so intrigued by them.

JUDY 4-11

Tuesday, January 18, 1966

After several minutes of trying to explain to Judy that I did not want her to tell me a story she had heard from a book, that I wanted her to make it up in her head, and she still did not seem to understand what I wanted, I told her Diane's story about the rabbit and the lettuce. When I was finished she said, "Oh, now I have one."

"Once upon a time there were three little kids. They said, 'Let's go to town,' and the mother said, 'Okay. While you're there you can buy some candy.' When we come home we'll say, 'What else would you like, Mother?' 'I would like some groceries.' 'We'll buy them if you'll give us a nickel!' They thought they could do it, but they didn't have any money."

Wednesday, January 19, 1966

This particular story seems to be a variation of "Little Red Riding Hood." She offered to tell me this:

"Once upon a time there were three little kids. They were going for a walk in the woods. Mother said, 'Watch out for the foxes!' And then they says, 'We'll run to grandma's house before the wolf gets there, and then we'll go to town to buy some pears and apples and things and some clothes and some toys. And then we will not go through the woods for the wolves will eat us. And then give us a cookie 'cause we'll go to grandma's house.'"

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

I asked Judy if she would like to tell me another story and she immediately said, "Yes."

"Once upon a time there were these two little girls. They wanted to go to school but they weren't big enough. And they said, 'It's not very long before Valentine's.' And when their birthday came they were happy. And that's the end."

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

Judy seemed to be wandering rather aimlessly around the room. I stopped her and said, "That looks like a Valentine dress." It was red and white. She said, "Yes, but the sleeves hurt. Only I wouldn't dare tell my mommy." I asked, "Why not?" She replied, "Because she wouldn't let me wear it to nursery school any more."

I said, "It's been a long time since you've told me a story. Could you tell me one today?" She answered, "You'll have to tell me one while I think about one." So I told her Kay's story about the bottle that broke. She said, "Okay, now I have one. Only it's a little one."

"Once upon a time there were three little kids. They lived in a house where it was nice and cold. And they couldn't get it warm 'cause they didn't have a fire. But they had a nice warm bed. And all they would do is go outside and play. They would work and play and they had to do what their mother said. And that's all."

KAY 4-0

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

As the children came in from outside play to change from their snow clothes, I was sitting at the table. When Kay had finished undressing, I asked her to come and talk to me at the table. She said, "Okay!" but on her way to the table she stopped at the blackboard and said she wanted to draw a picture. I said, "Fine, then you can tell me about it." She began to draw her picture. I said, "What is it?"

(a) "A bottle." ("What happened to it?") "It broke."  
("How come?") "A little baby pushed it and it fell. They got another bottle of milk. That's all."

We sat at the table and continued to talk. I asked if she knew another story. She said, "Yes." I said, "What about?"

(b) "A lion. And I can tell you about that if I can make one."  
(She began to draw.) "That kind of looks like one. But it needs eyes and a face. A mouth. A nose. An ear, and an ear." (She drew each one as she said it.) ("What happened to it?")

"This lion ate everyone up. And not the baby. It was too fast. ("Who?") "The baby. He got killed by a wolf." ("Who?") "The lion. and the wolf got killed by a witch. And that's all."

An interesting sidelight to this story was that the record of "Peter and the Wolf" was playing on the record player. There is no way, of course, to tell if it had any influence on her story.

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

As Craig was finishing his story, Kay came up and said, "I want to draw for you." I gave her some paper and a pen, and she began to draw. I asked her about her picture:

"A baby wet that. Then a wolf came. The baby hid under the table. The wolf went home. The baby came out. That's all of it."

KEVIN 4-7

Wednesday, January 12, 1966

When I asked Kevin for a story, he told me this one:

"Smoky was up in the canyon and animals were running from Smoky. There was smoke coming from his eyes. Death in his eyes. Ran up the tree. Man came along. Looked."

Then he told me his Mom reads this story. "I only tell my mommy and daddy my secret stories, not my teachers. Well, I'll tell you one." He leaned close to my ear. "Nuts!"

Wednesday, January 19, 1966

I approached Kevin again for a story he had made up in his head. He said:

(a) "All I know about is nursery school. Well . . . A bunny was a money was a bunny. He went outside to play and his skin fell off!"

I continued to ask for a story, and with his head bobbing from side to side and a silly grin, he began:

(b) "Three little goblins sitting on a ditchbank and one said to the other one, 'Let me tell you a story.' Then the story begins. Three little goblins sitting on a ditchbank. 'Let me tell you a story.'"

We were then interrupted for juice. On both of these occasions, Kevin tried to act silly about my request.

LAURA DAWN 4-0

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

As I was talking to Laura Dawn beside a window sill on the playground, Diane came up and wanted to draw me a picture. I said, "Fine. Laura Dawn can listen so she will know what to do." Diane drew a picture but would not tell me anything about it. So I told Laura Dawn Jon's story about the telephone. When I was finished, she said, "Okay. Give me a paper." She began to draw. After a few minutes I asked her about her picture:

(a) "Those are mountains. And um . . . these are lots of mountains. Someone chopped them down. And there were some more mountains built . . . some new mountains. And each mountain got chopped down."



(b) She drew a second picture and said, "That's a cage. It was being chopped down. So bad guys could catch people. I just ran away too fast though. I might."

LYNN MARIE 4-8

Monday, February 28, 1966

Lynn Marie was standing by the door looking very sad. I went up to her and asked her what was the matter. She said Scott had hit her. We went inside and she began to take off her winter clothes while we talked. I asked her for a story, and she first said, "A funny face song." It turned out to be "If You Chance To Meet A Frown," which is a Primary song. We continued to talk, and she finally told me this story:

"A small house. It had a bath and a sink, and just a little sink in the kitchen and a little table. And a little brother and a little sister and a little baby and a mother and a daddy. And that's all." ("What happened to them?") "A cowboy came and killed them. They were all dead and couldn't come back alive."

She seemed to enjoy doing this and said to a passing child, "We're making up stories!" Later she said to Hilary, "Why don't you tell her a story?"

MICHAEL 4-5

Thursday, January 20, 1966

Michael was sitting at a table doing an airplane puzzle. Mrs. Holman, the head teacher in the West Laboratory, told me his name. I told him why I wanted to talk to him and asked him if he had ever made up stories in his head. He said, "Yes." I asked what he could tell me about. This conversation followed:

"The airplane like this, but not this kind. The army one. The army airplane has bombs in it and then they're going to come out. They're really different. Different kinds of planes. What would happen if you sat on an airplane wing when it was going? (I explained.) But if you hang on tight you won't."

I asked again for a story.

"Once upon a time, there was an airplane. It dropped many bombs on houses. The plane was too high. They thought the houses were a target. And the planes were really, really fast. And if you hold on really tight you wouldn't fall off. There was a crane. Makes a machine go. The crane was awful ridiculous, and then the crane was awfully storried. And that's the end."

Monday, February 14, 1966

Michael and Jon were standing at a small table doing puzzles. Michael was doing one of a polar bear and Jon was doing one of a sailboat. I asked Michael if he could tell me another story today. He replied:

"It's about a sailboat. There was an old sailboat alllll alone and in there was money. Lots. It sank. A whale ate it up. A submarine came. Somebody was in there and it had missiles in it and they shot them at the whales. And that's the end."

Thursday, February 17, 1966

I was leaning against the window sill outside listening to Nicolay's story. Toward the end Michael came up and listened. When I looked at him, he said, "Hi!" I asked him if he would like to tell me another story and he said, "Yes."

"Once upon a time there was a little Eskimo alllll alone. Came a little polar bear. Didn't make a sound. He didn't get hurt." ("Who didn't?") "The Eskimo. And he walked in his house and he didn't make a sound. And then he walked back out again and went farrrrrr away."

I asked him what made him think of an Eskimo story and he said, "I don't know. My head is filled with stories!"

Monday, February 28, 1966

I approached Michael as he was playing outside and asked him to tell me another story. He said, "All right. You know what it's about? A circus!"

"Once upon a time there was a circus alllll alone. Just a little circus monkey, and here came a farmer and he just chopped off the top. And here came all the people of the circus and took him back to the barn 'cause they didn't want him to come back and chop off the brand new top again. It was too big to fit on. Just smashed the circus in the ground."

NANCY 4-0

Monday, January 24, 1966

After several tries to make Nancy understand what I wanted, I finally told her Diane's first story, about the rabbit and the lettuce. She still seemed unable or unwilling to tell me a story.

Monday, January 31, 1966

She said she still could not think of one.

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

She still could not think of one. She said she would think about it.

Thursday, February 17, 1966

Nancy was wandering rather aimlessly around the playground. I approached her and said since she wasn't doing anything perhaps she could tell me a story. She said, "Okay." We started for the window sill and she said, "What shall I tell you?" I suggested that she tell me one she had made up. She said, "I could tell you about the three little seven doors." As the story progressed, I realized it was her version of "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." But it was rather different and it sounded like she said "doors" rather than "dwarfs."

"Well, once upon a time there were three little seven dwarfs. Snow White went out at a cottage. She was in the cottage and she found some chairs that were scraggy, some beds that were scraggy, and some scraggy bowls. And she went to sleep in the scraggy bed. And the three little men came back. When Snow White was going at the cottage, this mean old tree came. And she pulled this red thing behind her and the tree didn't get her. And then she went home."

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

As I entered the room, one of the student teachers informed me that Nancy was playing with the flannelboard figures and telling herself stories. I went over to her and asked if she could tell me a story using the figures. She said, "Yes!" and excitedly began telling her story. The figures she was using were random figures rather than a specific group from a certain story. As she talked, she used each figure that she named and moved it over to her working space and up or down as she indicated. The milk truck she speaks of is actually a moving-van truck.

"One morning a boy was trying to catch a fish. And the duck came swimming in the water, and the boy came and tried to catch the duck, and the duck didn't let him. And so he went back up there. (Moved the boy back up on the flannelboard.) The boy got his ball and played with it. The milkman came. They, ("Who?") the duck and the fish, both hopped into the milk. They were so happy they brushed their teeth. (Moves over toothbrush.) They hopped out of the milkman's car. And the milkman went up to the top (of the flannelboard). And the reindeer wanted some milk. He got in the truck and drank until there was no more milk. The camel wanted some milk and he hopped into the truck and said, 'Oh, no! I can't see any more in there!' And the mother was in the house and the clock said nine after ten. The house moved right down here and the clock went into the house. (She puts the clock behind the house.) The buggy came along and goes on the clock. (Here the buggy fell off the flannelboard.) But it fell down and went back and so did the house. The truck came down. (Moves them all down.) The fish and the duck

came down. And the ball fell in the water. And the duck said, 'Oh, no! My wings!' So the ball went back up. (Moves the ball up.) And the sleigh went away because it wanted to. And that's the end."

It was clearly evident that Nancy thoroughly enjoyed telling this story. She seemed to concentrate very hard, and she told it very, very fast.

NEIL 4-0

Thursday, February 3, 1966

The nursery school had been on an excursion this day to see the snow sculptures on the quad. One of the snow sculptures was a scene with three penguins.

When I arrived at the nursery school one of the student teachers, Brenda, told me to listen to Neil because he was telling her a story about the penguins while he was climbing on the dome. He had told her that the other penguins wanted him to dome down. They were mad because he had knocked the ladder down and they couldn't get up. He could jump down and go to his room, but they couldn't get up because the ladder was down.

I went over with her to the dome where Neil was still playing by himself. She asked him a question about the penguins to get him started again, and he said, "They can't get up here 'cause I locked the door. I'm going to swing down 'cause I'm the baby penguin. And this time I'm going to mind them. (He now jumps down.) This is my downstairs. You know what? This penguin can get on snow 'cause it's snowin' in our house." ("How come he can get on snow?") "'Cause he likes it!" (Neil then began to run around inside the circle of the dome, each time jumping over the path of sunlight through the window as it makes a pattern.) He said, "I'm jumping this pond. Now I'm on the sidewalk. (He continued to walk and jump the path of sunlight.) I'm not a boy, I'm a penguin."

When Neil started to leave the climbing dome, I asked him if he would tell me a story. He said, "Sure." He immediately began to sing me a story he had made up in his head about a little tiny donkey. He went so fast, never missing a beat as he went along, that I was unable to catch what he was saying. His speech is rather hard to understand, and since he doesn't seem to have to think very much about what he is saying, it is almost impossible to keep up with him. (This is when the use of a tape recorder is definitely necessary.) I asked him to sing it to me again, which he did. This one was also about a donkey and similar, but not exactly like the other song, as far as I could tell. I was also unable to record this song. I finally asked Brenda, one of the student teachers, to help me decipher what he was saying and she took his next story down in shorthand. This one was also sung to his own little tune and all of the words fit the tune. There is no hesitation or embarrassment; he just sings right out.

"I know another one about a mouse. (He starts singing now.) There was a funny mouse in the woods at one time and he didn't want to see the tattlepuss; and he didn't want to see the tattlepuss. And he traced that little mouse. He run to his house, (when reading it back to him, he said, 'Yes, his mouse hole.')

and couldn't get in there. He was too big. He was too big."

NICOLAY 4-10

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

Nicolay came up and listened to the story that Judy was telling me. He said, "I want to tell you a story." I said, "Okay, in just a few minutes." He left, then came back and told me this story:

"Once upon a time there was a little boy named Nikki. Nikki went flying to save somebody. And then somebody was calling me for help. 'Help! Help! Help!' (This was said in a loud voice.) So I hurry and fly through the air. I'm heading for a dragon. And then I punch it and punch him and punch him, and said, 'Take that and that and that.' And the woman said, 'Thank you little boy.' (Here he uses a very high imitative voice.) And I said, 'Take that and that and that.' And that's all."

As he began to tell this story, he did so in a very slow deliberate voice. When he came to the "Help, Help," he made his voice louder as though he were really calling for help. When he came to the woman's quote, as indicated, he used a very high pitched voice, supposedly meant to be feminine.

Thursday, February 17, 1966

While Nancy was telling me her story about the "three little seven doors," Nikki came up and listened. I asked him if he would like to tell me another story, and he said, "Yes." And he began in his slow, deliberate voice. At the point he mentioned his brother in the story, Matthew had just run over and was trying to jump up and sit on the ledge of the window where we were.

"Once upon a time there was an old man named Georgi. He was looking for his dog and then he sent a letter to his mother. And then the brother was coming to find his doggy. And the old man said, (This was said in a very high pitched voice,) 'He is in very good trouble.' And then he said, (in a high pitched voice again,) 'Help! Help!' And then he just went right back to home and sleep. And then tomorrow he find his doggy."

Monday, February 21, 1966

Nikki came up to me outside and said he wanted to tell me another story. Today was his birthday. Again he told his story in the same slow, deliberate way.

"Once upon a time there were three big pigs and they went to the movie and then they eat dinner first. And then they eat popcorn and go to the movie. And then there was a big wolf. And he's going to eat the pigs. And the farmer gets his gun and then he starts shooting. And he looks everywhere. And finally at the movies. There are two wolves eating pigs. And he said, 'Stop or I'll shoot.' And then he shoots. And then he took the two wolves to jail."

Monday, February 28, 1966

This is the story Nikki told me today. We went into the West Laboratory to talk to his brother, Matthew. Nikki kept saying he wanted to tell me the story about Kim and Tim.

(a) "Kim is the man who fixes the houses. And Tim is the man who fixed the gate. Once upon a time there was Kim and Tim and they fix houses, schools, and a baby school. And then they just go to bed and they take daddy to school and that's the end."

I was talking to Bruce when Nikki came up and indicated he wanted to tell me another story. We were sitting on the rug.

(b) "Once upon a time there were four little pigs and they go to the store and buy some food. The little pig said, 'Can I come with you, Momma?' And his mother said, 'No, there's a big, bad wolf there.' The little pig said, 'Please, I won't run.' And then there was a big wolf. And then . . ." (At this point everyone was at the rug for an activity, and were already doing the fingerplay, "Five Little Monkeys." Nicolay very quickly said, "That's the end. I'll finish later." (When I approached him later, the following was the ending to his story. He was again interrupted by a little girl who wanted him to come and push her in the wagon. He gave me the ending very fast and hurried off.)

". . . and then Bat Man and Robin just gets wood and hit him on the head. And then they hit once more and that's the end."

Thursday, March 3, 1966

As I was sitting on the rug listening to Bobby's story of the porcupine, Nicolay brought his train he had made of milk cartons and cardboard over and listened to the story. When Bobby had finished, he said he had a story to tell me. He told it in his usual slow, deliberate voice.

"Once upon a time there were Jack and the Beanstalk. And then he want to get married and then he asked an old man. And then he asked an old man, (high voice) 'please can I have a girl? I want to get married.' And then he walked in the woods. And then he saw a beautiful princess. He want to marry her. And then Jack the Beanstalk asked her and she said, 'No!' And then that was the end of the story."

RAYMOND 4-4

Wednesday, January 26, 1966

Raymond just kept saying that all he knew was "Jingle Bells." He couldn't tell me an original one.

Monday, January 31, 1966

Raymond said he did not remember my asking him to tell me a story; and no, he did not know one now.

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

He recited Humpty Dumpty and Jingle Bells, but was unable to tell me an original story. He said, "I don't know it."

Monday, March 7, 1966

The following was not an actual story, but as Raymond played with the large airplane his play was so imaginative I wrote it down. I was unable to get him to sit down and tell me a story. Each time he said the word, "invisible," he would leave off the first syllable "in" and substitute a "b" for the "v" so that it sounded like "bisible."

"This is an invisible airplane. We get bombs and shoot 'em when people come in. I gotta get that bomb and blow it up. I'm gonna blow my bombs. Let's blow those people up. (He nods his head at Gabrielle and Rob.) I'm invisible too. Can't blow me up. This is invisible land. (He jumps off the airplane and runs to the jungle gym and climbs up.) My invisible land! My invisible land! (He climbs down, gets a pair of high heels left by Gabrielle, runs over to the play refrigerator, then back to the jungle gym and climbs up again.) I invisibilized her shoes!" ("You invisibilized her shoes?") "Yes! In the refrigerator!"

ROBERT (Bobby) 3-5

Thursday, March 3, 1966

Bobby was combing his hair straight up in the air. When I asked him about it, he said it was a "porcupine." I asked him if he could make up a story in his head and tell me about it. He said, "Yes. It's a porcupine story. You do it that way." (He made motions in the air.) I asked if he would like to draw it, and he said, "Yes." While he drew I tried to get him to tell me a story about it.

"Me make an airplane. Airplanes do that." (Pointed to lines crossing in his picture.) ("What happened to the porcupine?") "He move his head. The little porcupine, he fell down and he get dead." ("Then what happened?") "They came and a cowboy came and

the porcupine got dead." ("Then what?") "The cowboy drew a porcupine." ("Anything else?") "Uh huh." ("Yes.") "And the cowboy came and the porcupine got dead and he took him to the doctor." ("Is that all?") "Yes."

Evidently Bobby couldn't understand just what I was trying to do. It was very difficult to get this story from him. Also, he was hard to understand, as his speech was more in the form of baby talk.

ROBIE 4-5

Monday, January 17, 1966

The fireman hats were out for the first time today. They are brand new and have a device which magnifies the child's voice as he talks. Robie had one on his head for quite some time when I approached him to tell me a story. I asked what his story could be about.

"A little dog. He got burned up in the fire. The fireman came. The fireman watered the fire. He, ("Who?") the dog, went to the hospital." ("What else happened?") "Nothing." ("Is that the end?") "Yes."

Wednesday, January 26, 1966

I approached Robie again on this day to tell me another story. He said he did not want to, but he would if I came back another day.

SHARLYN 3-10

Monday, February 28, 1966

This was the first time I approached Sharlyn. She seemed quite eager to tell me a story. Jon listened, and Douglas came up toward the end of her story. There were several cat pictures on the wall; but it seems more likely that her story originated from an experience at home or in her neighborhood.

"A little kitty cat. Once upon a time there was a little, little kitty cat. He was a mother kitty cat and the mother kitty cat had some baby kitty cats . . . Mommy and Daddy cat were gone one time and the little kitty cat stayed home all by himself. He went out in the road and got runned over. And the Mommy and Daddy came home and saw the kitty cat and they started to cry. The policeman came and the fire engine went "0000o00hh." And the fire engine took him to the hospital. And that's all the story."

After her story, she drew me a picture. She began a cat, then said, "No, first a snowman," and drew the first circle around and around. Then his head complete with hair, eyes, nose, and mouth,



saying each thing as she drew. Then she said, "I'll draw and you guess what it is. It has two orange feet and two things and it splashes and it's white." ("A duck?") "Yes!" (Last Wednesday they made duck puppets.)

SEARI 4-5

Thursday, January 27, 1966

I asked Seari if she ever made up stories in her head. She said, "Once I made up something and told my Mommy. It was a long time ago. Could I draw you a picture?" I gave her a pen and some paper. She drew jagged shapes, looked up and said, "Clouds." (She drew several more.) "This is the daddy. This is the mommy. This is the baby. The girl. The boy." ("Could you tell me a story about them?") "They didn't do anything. They just stayed with the mommy and the daddy. Just fixed their supper."

Monday, January 31, 1966

As Seari did four puzzles in a row, she kept saying she was thinking of a story to tell me. When I asked what it was about she said, "I haven't come to it yet." After about 30 minutes, I finally walked away. She then came over and climbed on my lap and said she would draw me a story. As she drew mainly squiggly lines, she said:

"This is the rope and somebody's holding it. And this is the rock, tied. These are the clouds. Big whale, water. The big whale is blowing the water out of his head. Hand. Clouds. Big head on the cloud. Water. Long rope. Somebody's holding it. Baby water. Sister water. Brother water. Mother water. And Daddy water. (Many giggles.) Nothing happened."

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

I approached Seari sitting at a table just before it was time to go home and asked her if she would like to tell me another story. She reached for the piece of paper and pen I gave her and began to draw. I asked her what her picture was:

"It's a horse. Ran away from Russell." ("Who is Russell?") "Russell lives by our house, but he still has his horse. (She continued to draw for a few moments.) Now what else does it need?" ("I don't know. What?") "I'll draw a baby one. That's the mother. (She points to her first drawing.) Now it's time to go home. What else does it need? (She jumps up and down on her chair and waves her hands.) Feet. And ears. Big ears!" (She continues to draw, and I ask, "What happened after the horse ran away?") "Got killed." ("That all?") "Yes." (She begins to draw another picture. "What's that?") "My baby. (As she draws each, she says:) Eyes. Nose. Mouth. That's how my baby looks. He grows and grows and grows." ("Do you have a baby at home?") "Yes. Hands. Don't forget the hands! Long, long, hands!"

ZANE 4-5

I approached Zane on the very first day I began collecting stories, and approached him on the average of every other day since that time. Each time he said he was thinking about a story; but when I asked what it would be about, he would say, "I don't know." Each time I approached him, his eyes seemed about twice as large as normal and he would just stare at me. Once I asked him if it made him nervous for me to ask him to tell me a story, and he looked at me with his big eyes and said, "Yes!" It was evident that it did. A couple of days after that I related another child's story to him to see if that would help. He still said he did not know what he could tell me a story about.

Thursday, February 3, 1966

I talked to Zane again today. We talked about Hercules and I tried to get him to tell me a story about him. He would not, but he said he would think about it some more.

Tuesday, February 15, 1966

I was outside as mothers were beginning to arrive to take the children home. Zane and Gabrielle came up to me and Gabrielle said, "I want to do that, " meaning draw me a picture and tell me a story. I told her she could and asked Zane if he would come and listen. We went over to the window sill and she drew me her picture and told me her story. When she was through I asked Zane if he would do the same thing for me. He began to draw what looked like a boy. I asked him to tell me about it. He said as he continued to draw:

"It's gonna be me. I scratched myself. I'm gonna put a band-aid on it. I'm making a momma and she's gonna put a band-aid on it. She put me to bed and then (he laughs) Kay came along. She looked at me like an owl. She peeked in my pocket and she saw my purse and you know what? My diamond was in it." (As he said this, he pulled out a small purse from his pocket and showed it to me.)

Previous to this time, Zane's mother had asked me what I was talking to him about. She had seen me from the observation booth. After I had explained what I was trying to do, she said she would talk to him to try to find out why he wouldn't talk to me. Today she said that she had talked to him, but had received no specific reply. I wonder how much this reflected on his willingness to tell me his story. I had the impression at the time he told it, that Gabrielle's story had helped him to realize what it was I wanted from him; and he had seemed quite excited as he drew his picture and told me about it. It was told with smiles and laughter.

The following children did not tell stories during the period of time allotted for the research.

ALLISSA 4-10

Thursday, January 20, 1966

When I asked Allissa if she could tell me a story, she kept nodding her head that she could. She offered to tell me "Little Bo Peep." I told her Diane's first story, but she was still unable to produce an original one.

Wednesday, January 26, 1966

Allissa was dressed in a nurse's apron with a needle in her hand. I asked her again, and she said she still had not thought of one. Finally she said, "I want to go play now." She acts as though she is afraid of me.

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

She said, "Yeah. I know 'Little Red Riding Hood'." She seemed friendlier today.

ANN 3-10

Wednesday, February 23, 1966

I found out today that Ann was frightened very badly by the couple renting her family's basement apartment. She has also been sick and has spent several months in hospitals. Evidently these experiences have been an emotional strain which has resulted in her refusal to talk. She rarely even speaks to her mother. The only person she will talk to right now is one of the student teachers, Sharon. I asked Sharon to help try to get Ann to tell a story. Ann filled a page and a half with scribbles, saying only the things recorded below. The musical instruments had been used in her nursery school the week before. Ann had not participated at that time, but she evidently remembered them.

(After many scribbles.) "Me draw a house. Me draw two houses." (More scribbles. "What's that?") She pointed to the ceiling light. "That." (See sees the rhythm instruments and goes to them excitedly. Sharon tells her to draw a picture.) "Me draw drum. Me draw two drums. Shaker." (More scribbles. "What's that?" She goes to the shelf and points to a book. "What is it?") "It's a book!" (Drew much more.) "Be be, choo choo."

CECILY 4-2

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

Cecily came up to the window sill while I was talking to Laura Dawn and Diane. She listened to Jon's story of the telephone that I told Laura Dawn to help her understand what I wanted. When it was over, she said, "I want to draw a telephone." I gave her a pen and a piece of paper and she drew for approximately twenty minutes. She refused to tell me a story about her picture. Her attitude was one of defiance. She had my pen, was determined to keep on using it, and yet would not tell me what I needed to know. I recorded the following fragments of conversation. There were many pauses in between while she slowly continued to draw.

She looked over at Laura Dawn's picture and said, "That's a funny telephone . . . I cut the candy." ("What are you drawing?") "A sprinkler." ("That's a good thing.") "It's not a sprinkler I'm going to make . . ." ("You will need to hurry. Your mommy will be coming.") "My daddy comes. I'm not going to hurry . . . I cut a piece of little candy . . . Hey! You got blue and red on it . . . I'm going to write to the bottom!"

DOUGLAS 4-0

Tuesday, March 8, 1966

During the time that Jon had been drawing his telephone and then telling me the story, Doug has used the paper and pen I had given him to print his name and then draw a face. When I had finished with Jon I tried to get him to tell me a story about his picture, but he wouldn't. He would just shake his head "No" and grin and squirm in his seat.

I have previously approached Douglas very informally as I was talking to other children and tried to get him to tell me a story. I did this perhaps two times prior to today but received the same response: a grin and then he would walk away.

NANCY 3-5

Wednesday, March 2, 1966

While I was talking to Kay, Nancy came to listen. I asked her if she would like to tell me a story too, and she said, "No," and ran off to play with the telephone. I tried again later, and she still said, "No."

Thursday, March 3, 1966

I walked in today and Nancy ran up to me and said, "Now I have a story!" She took my hand and we sat on the rug. Her story was so fragmented, it was hard to follow; but she was excited to tell it to me.

"Once, that's a pencil . . . These shoes I had on . . . These shoes are buckled . . . That pen has to have some ink. And a bottle will get some milk in it . . . Those men's go . . . and they go with my grandma, and that's all."

MATTHEW 4-0

Monday, February 28, 1966

I approached Matthew earlier in the day and asked him to tell me a story, and he just giggled and walked away. Outside I told Nicolay, his brother, I wished Matthew would tell me a story, and suggested we go talk to him. We went in and Nicolay said, "Why don't you tell her a story?" Nicolay then went to play with the telephone on the table which was part of the outside visitor for the day. He had shown posters and slides on the telephone. Matthew began:

"The man just came and then he showed us the telephone. And then he just take the telephone out of the box. And then he just show us a boy. And the other man came. And two mans came. The other man turn on that movie. And then . . ."

He did not finish his story, as his ride came to take him home. This was not an original story, but a description of what had happened that day.

SCOTT 4-5

Wednesday, February 2, 1966

Scott first told me a story about Braer Rabbit and Braer Fox. His voice and expressions were excellent. It was delightful to listen to, but not original. He then told me another story he said really happened:

"Well, once a friend, Michael, he doesn't live by me anymore. He lives in Providence. One day he said, 'I'm going up that hill. Are you going?' And boy! He said naughty words. And then I decided to go up there with him so I followed him."

This next one seemed to originate from quiet Saturdays watching TV, as he explained to me that all he did was watch TV.

"One day it was quiet around the country, and nobody was coming out to play." ("What happened?") "Nothing happened!"