

CHILDREN'S ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND REALITY
AND FANTASY IN CONTEMPORARY
STORY SITUATIONS

By

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

This research was concerned with the relationship of age and sex to the ability of children under six to understand reality and fantasy in children's contemporary story situations. There is an inclination for most parents or teachers to present their children with imaginative and fantasy stories which are a delight to both the listener and the reader. Many parents and teachers are eager to present these exciting stories and they may overlook the basic problem of a young child's inability to interpret and distinguish between reality and fantasy in contemporary story situations.

The limited research concerning children's ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy in children's literature has not been explored in the 1970's. This study is concerned with children's ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy in relation to age and sex in a period which may be different from the periods studied earlier by other researchers.

Need for the Study

No longer can parents and teachers rely on earlier research. The children's experiences with fantasy literature need to be studied in the 1970's to provide parents and teachers with guidelines concerning the extent of fantasy literature to be introduced into children's

literary experiences.

Since fantasy literature is so delightful to young children, it may be helpful for parents and teachers to understand children's ability to cope with fantasy and to make literature an enjoyable experience.

Children should be helped to become aware that fantasy literature is not true. If children believe that fantasy literature is true, they may have confused ideas and concepts and some unfounded fears.

Earlier research by Baruch (4) and Abu Nasr (1) indicated that preschool children, between the ages of three and six, were able to differentiate between specific kinds of fantasy and reality in literature. Both of these studies, however, were conducted before modern technology had made an impact on children. This technological impact may indicate that children have changed in their ability to distinguish between fantasy and reality at these early ages.

Further study to determine the ages at which children in the 1970's are able to distinguish between fantasy and reality in their literature is needed.

Basic Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, this investigator assumes that:

- (a) Young children have difficulty in distinguishing between fantasy and reality in literature (Baruch, 4).
- (b) Children need many experiences with real situations before they can understand fantasy (Abu Nasr, 1).
- (c) Children at various ages perceive fantasy situations differently (Abu Nasr, 1).

- (d) Classifications of real and fantasy situations are helpful in determining children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality in their literature (Abu Nasr, 1).
- (e) The classification of real-vicarious is considered a type of fantasy.

Classifications

In her study to determine children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality in literature, Baruch (4) used stories in which the characters were familiar and unfamiliar. Abu Nasr (1) interpreted these familiar and unfamiliar items and expanded them. In the present investigation Abu Nasr's classifications were accepted with modifications to make the story classifications relevant to the current literature and experiences of young children in the 1970's. The specific changes that were made in the terminology included the addition of television to the real-vicarious and fantasy-vicarious classifications and the substitution of the term vicarious for the term unfamiliar. The term vicarious was selected to illustrate the many experiences that children of the 1970's acquire through the mass media. These classifications, as modified in this investigation reported herein, will be used to evaluate children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality situations in stories. The modified classifications are as follows:

Real-Familiar. Characters in the stories that were labelled as real-familiar were those real characters in real life situations in which it can be assumed that the child had direct contact in everyday living experiences.

Fantasy-Familiar. In this type of story the characters are the same real familiar characters with which the child had direct contact in everyday experience, but these same familiar characters were projected into fantasy situations.

Real-Vicarious. The characters in this type of story were real characters in real life situations with which it was assumed that the child had not had direct contact in real life situations, but that he may have had contact with those real characters through books, stories and television.

Fantasy-Vicarious. In this type of story the characters are the same real-vicarious characters in which it was assumed that the child had not had direct contact in real life situations, but may have had contact with these characters in books, stories, and television. These vicarious characters were projected into fantasy situations.

Purpose

The major purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of age and sex to the ability of children under six to understand reality and fantasy in story situations.

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were examined:

1. There is no significant difference between younger boys' and older boys' ability to understand reality and fantasy in stories in the following classifications:

- a. real-familiar

- b. real-vicarious
 - c. fantasy-familiar
 - d. fantasy-vicarious
2. There is no significant difference between younger girls' and older girls' ability to understand reality and fantasy in stories in the following classifications:
- a. real-familiar
 - b. real-vicarious
 - c. fantasy-familiar
 - d. fantasy-vicarious
3. There is no significant difference between younger girls' and younger boys' ability to understand reality and fantasy in stories in the following classifications:
- a. real-familiar
 - b. real-vicarious
 - c. fantasy-familiar
 - d. fantasy-vicarious
4. There is no significant difference between older girls' and older boys' ability to understand reality and fantasy in stories in the following classifications:
- a. real-familiar
 - b. real-vicarious
 - c. fantasy-familiar
 - d. fantasy-vicarious

CHAPTER II

RELATED LITERATURE

The Importance of Good Literature for Children

Many facets of education contribute to a child's total self. Literature is one educational area of importance to children in their mental and emotional growth and their development of identity. Arbuthnot (2) believes that literature provides children with an avenue to broaden their scope of knowledge and gives an insight to social behavior. Literature also helps the child to express happiness and to appreciate beauty in the world around him. She adds that literature provides "heroism, fantasy, and down-to-earth realism" (p. 16).

Literature is helpful in satisfying the many needs that children have throughout their lives. Arbuthnot (2) realizes that,

Struggling to satisfy his needs, the child is forever seeking to maintain the precarious balance between personal happiness and social approval and that is no easy task. Books can help him directly or indirectly. (p. 3)

Arbuthnot further explains that children need the reassurance that they are people, that they have a place in life, and "that they are loved, needed and capable of doing things on their own" (p. 11). The needs that books can satisfy have been summarized by Arbuthnot to include: (1) the need for security, (2) the need to belong, (3) the need to love and be loved, (4) the need to achieve or do something worthy of respect, (5) the need for change, and (6) the need for aesthetic satisfaction.

Once a child is exposed to good literature he may be lost in a world of excitement, wonder, and adventure. Literature can take a child many places and help him to experience events which he may never be able to encounter in any other way during his lifetime.

Many authors have agreed that the first six years of a child's life are vital and formative years. During these years, all facets of a child's experiences make an impression upon his physical growth as well as emotional, social, and intellectual growth. Exposure to good literature during these formative years may begin to establish patterns that will affect his future life.

A child's first literary contact should be based upon experiences which the child has encountered in his real life. In order to identify with story characters, the child's first stories should be based on familiar events with which the child has come in contact. The characters should be realistic, and the character action should parallel the experiences of the children (Baruch, 4 and Abu Nasr, 1). Literature helps children verbalize situations that they have experienced. They may have had questions about a personal event, but have had no words with which to articulate the situation.

Literature can also be a problem-solving agent for children. A child's problems can be very real and important. Before a child can be happy or attentive, these problems must be solved. Merely changing the behavior of the child may not be the answer. Jersild (8) suggests that first "it is better to help the child gain self-insight and to consider the consequences of his actions" (p. 446). These unmet needs, which stem from unsolved problems, may eventually be the cause of misbehavior (Dinkmeyer, as cited by Schultheis, 12).

Tozier (Schultheis, 12) observed that "one of the fundamental needs of every child who has a problem, is to know that he is not alone; to find that there are others who have similar problems" (p. 1). One of the best ways for a child to gain insight into himself and to have a better understanding of himself and others is through literature. A child can do this by "identifying with the storybook characters; an experience through which he shares the feelings of other human beings, feelings about their predicaments, their relationships, their joys, their sorrow" (p. 2).

Good literature for children can help them see themselves through character interaction and to see children and adults of whom they can be proud. This helps to build healthy self-concepts. Davis (5) relates "that the child's self-image is created in the early or formative years, and that it is partly through books that this image is formed" (p. 37). Abu Nasr (1) expressed that "the child is more interested in a world that he knows, a world of reality which lies close about him than he is in a completely ambiguous world about which he has no knowledge" (p. 7).

Fantasy Literature for Children

From the research related to the importance of literature for children, it has been established that children's first literary experiences should evolve from the realistic world that they have encountered. Abu Nasr (1) confirms that,

The value of using realistic content with the child is to teach the child a sense of the right relationship of himself to the world and to persons and things in the world around him. This means that he must first be nourished on the realistic and then gradually be introduced to fantasy. (p. 8)

After children have been exposed to realistic literature, they may be ready for other types of literary experiences. Exposure to fantasy literature can be a successful step in the continuation of a child's earlier experiences with reality oriented literature. Abu Nasr (1) confirms that "when a child has had time to explore the world of reality, then he will be ready to begin adventuring into the realm of fantasy" (p. 8).

One major area of literature which tends to be overlooked and slighted by educators is fantasy literature. Webster says that "fantasy is a product of imagination" (Drury, 6, p. 113). According to Georgiou (7),

Fantasy is that portion of literature which brings the magical and the irrational into the world of actuality. Fantasy is the product of imagination that comes meaningfully alive to the reader even though it may deal with intangibles and abstractions. (p. 242)

Many studies indicate that children, when asked to select a favorite story, do not select from fantasy literature (Allen, 3). This is not hard to understand when the world of reality is constantly surrounding a young child. A child in our society is often unable to develop his creativity and imagination to its fullest extent. Fantasy literature can provide an avenue to help children develop a good sense of imagination and creativity, which is instrumental in their development.

According to Allen (3), "It is the imagination which renews the world to us daily" (p. 513). The wonders of life should be "perceived by the spirit, and unless each person lives by those wonders, he lives, in an ultimately aimless world" (p. 513). Allen (3) relates that the mind's knowledge can only be learned through the mind, but that

spiritual knowledge can only be acquired through an active and attentive spirit. Without this attention "we are less than our whole selves" (Allen, 3, p. 513).

Allen (3) perceives the introduction of fantasy literature as a "media for awakening the spirit of man to the sense of wonder inherent in him while realistic fiction is earthbound, confining the child to the here-and-now world of time and place" (p. 513). Through fantasy literature the "mind is opened to imagination" and a child can move away from his "earthboundness" and enter a new and exciting world (Allen, 3, p. 513). As a result of this broadening process, the child can become more uniquely himself and is able to envision himself as a true individual.

Spitze (13) conducted an experiment to determine the ability of middle and lower class children to fantasize. He found that after exposure to fantasy literature, the children were able to fantasize and create to a greater degree. These results illustrate the value of focusing on the child as an individual with unique processes of expression instead of an end product. Spitze (13) also illustrated that "individuality and uniqueness of every child are of more value than teaching him to conform to obsolete rules and behavioral norms" (p. 283). Realization of one's potential and one's uniqueness can be absorbed through fantasy literature.

Literature for Children of the 1970's

Children in the decade of the 70's are living in a "rapidly changing world in which tomorrow is fast upon us" (Tway, 14, p. 387). Tway (14) recognizes that "tomorrow's children will need highly developed

critical skills to cope with a fast changing world, where they must make judgements about things unknown today" (p. 387). Teachers and parents cannot prepare children for life by "promoting facts or enjoyment, important though these may be," but by teaching them to "learn critically, to be resourceful, to be able to fantasize or imagine the future" (Tway, 14, p. 387). Charlotte Huck (as cited by Tway, 14, p. 387) has said, "The ability to fantasize is the ability to survive."

How certain can we be about the boundaries between fantasy and reality? With the continual advancements in modern technology, these boundaries are constantly changing. Several decades ago, stories concerning the four-minute mile, voyages to the moon, or porpoises trained to carry messages across the ocean were truly fantastic. Now they are in the realm of actuality.

Fantasy is far closer to the real world than many of us would like to admit. Drury (6) describes this closeness "extending as a tantalizing fringe of the probable many, many leagues out, blending at least imperceptibly into the impossible" (p. 115). Georgiou (7) confirms that fantasy's "roots run deep into the reality of the everyday world" (p. 242), ". . . even in the most imaginative works of fantasy, the story is anchored by the most precise details born of real life" (p. 243).

Fantasy appears everywhere in a child's mind. In reference to children, Georgiou (7) states that "fantasy deals with a wide assortment of events, things, and people against a background that has its own order" (p. 242). Drury (6) believes that in every movement of the child, there are fantasy possibilities. Even swinging to and fro in a swing can make the world rock and change from its normal perspective.

Colors, sounds and sensations are all fantasy surprises for children.

Children in the 1970's have had more opportunities to experience fantasy due to the great boon of mass media in the last three decades. Radio, movies, and television have brought fantasy experiences into the lives of many children.

A study conducted by Schramm, Lyle, and Parker (as cited by Paul, 11) attempted to emphasize the impact of television to satisfy fantasy hunger needs in young children which used to be satisfied through the use of fantasy literature. They found that

. . . fantasy behavior depicted in the non-commercial parts of the programs can drain off some of the discontent the child accumulates through his difficulties in the socialization process. The fantasy behavior of the television programs may also provide him with constructive insights and analogies that may help him to view himself in a different light. A program may even suggest alternatives for dealing with some of his problems. (p. 305)

Many critics feel that television viewing and/or fantasy literature in general can be detrimental to the development of a young child (Kirkton, 9, and Macnab, as cited by McCracken, 10). Violence in television programs or literature is one basic criticism of introducing children to fantasy. Paul (11) conducted a study to measure the effect of violence on children television viewers. The results of this study seem to suggest "that fantasy participation in violence may be an alternate behavior to actual participation" (p. 304).

A study was conducted in New Castle, Pennsylvania, to obtain impressions of children when exposed to "so-called" violent stories. In a first grade class, the story of the "Three Little Pigs" was read. The researcher noted facial expressions and afterward asked questions to see if the children had any fears or stress from the impact of the stories.

Similar situations were set for second and third grade classes. The researcher found no expressions of fear or stress; no children expressed any fear and many verbalized joy in the conquering of the foe. "No child was worried about the violence. It was only a make-believe story" (McCracken, 10, p. 423).

Implications From Literature

The review of literature for this study has indicated that the benefits of good literature for children are numerous. Literature provides children with the ability to see past themselves and to broaden their scope of knowledge. They may learn social behaviors and become acquainted with other parts of the world (Arbuthnot, 2). Books satisfy the needs for security, love, belongingness, achievement, change, and aesthetic satisfaction (Arbuthnot, 2).

There is a need, in the 1970's, to evaluate children's ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy in literature. Abu Nasr (1) has confirmed that children need experience with reality in order to be able to fantasize. Children should first be offered reality situations in literature and progress to fantasy situations in literature. Paul (11) concludes that, "If parents remain entirely aloof in their own world, relinquishing the world of television fantasy to a child, they deprive him of touch stones with reality against which to view his fantasy" (p. 305).

Presentation of fantasy literature helps children to become creative, imaginative, and it frees them to perceive the future. Children in the decade of the 70's are living in a fast paced society in which they will strive to keep abreast of the many changes that will take

place. The ability to free oneself from the "here-and-now world" and to imagine the future is a very important attribute in a young child's struggle to face the changes of the future (Allen, 3, p. 513). This important ability, to fantasize, can be attained through exposure to appropriate fantasy literature. In order to benefit from this exposure, children must first be able to differentiate fantasy from reality in story situations.

CHAPTER III

PROCEDURE

Development of the Story Situation Questionnaire

Development of Stories

Story Situations were developed to reflect the differences between reality and fantasy in reference to the classifications of real-familiar, real-vicarious, fantasy-familiar, and fantasy-vicarious (Chapter I). These story situations were paired to contrast a real and a fantasy element in familiar and vicarious situations (Appendix A).

Eleven stories were used to evaluate children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality in stories which were recorded on cards to comprise the Story Situations (Appendix A). Each story fell into one of the story classifications and was paired with a component fantasy story. One story was a neutral story which could be placed into several classifications (Appendix A).

Specialists' Evaluation of the Story Situations

The Story Situations were referred to a panel of five specialists in Early Childhood Education, each of whom had a Master's degree and experience in teaching young children, for their reactions concerning the stories' appropriate classifications; their relation to young children's experiences; and the wording and sentence structure in reference

to young children's ability to comprehend verbal situations. The five specialists in Early Childhood Education agreed on the stories' classification. One specialist recognized and indicated that the neutral story could be classified as real-familiar or real-vicarious, however, in her final judgment, the story was assigned to the real-familiar classification. Thus, all five judges were in agreement.

Preliminary Testing of the Story Situations

The agreement among the specialists in Early Childhood Education of the Story Situations was accepted as an indication of the validity of the story classifications. The Story Situations were further tested on a sample of six children from a day care program whose ages ranged from two to five years. The purpose of this testing was to insure clarity, appropriateness, and the ability of the Story Situations to differentiate between the desired classifications of real-familiar, real-vicarious, fantasy-familiar, and fantasy-vicarious with young children. The Story Situations were found to be confusing to these children. The confusion was the inability of the children to remember the action of the story. The question "Could he do that?" did not provide a basis for the child to remember the story action so he could differentiate between the fantasy and reality elements in the stories. To correct the confusion, the vocabulary of the stories was extended and simplified and the ending question "Could he do that?" was revised to restate the action of the story, i.e., "Could Mike swim to the top again?" The stories were then committed to memory, so the examiner could have direct eye contact with the subjects. The revised Story Situations were compiled to form the Story Situation Questionnaire (Appendix C), which was then administered

to five children and was found appropriate to determine children's ability to differentiate between fantasy and reality in story situations.

The following are the stories as presented in the Story Situation Questionnaire:

I am going to tell you a story about Jim. Jim goes to nursery school in the morning. One morning Jim climbed up on the jungle gym and he said, "Look how high I am." Could Jim climb on the jungle gym and say that? (Real-familiar).

I am going to tell you a story about Sue. Sue likes to climb on the jungle gym at her nursery school. One morning Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym. Could Sue fly up to the top of the jungle gym? (Fantasy-familiar).

Bob and Jerry had just eaten dinner. Now they had some dishes on the table that were dirty and the dishes needed to be washed. Jerry decided to call the dishwasher. "Here dishwasher. Come and get the dirty dishes." The dishwasher rolled in all by itself and took the dirty dishes and washed them. Could the dishwasher roll in by itself and wash the dishes? (Fantasy-familiar).

I am going to tell you a story about Mother. Mother carried all the dirty dishes to the dishwasher in the kitchen. She opened the dishwasher, put the dishes in, shut the dishwasher, and then pushed the button to start the dishwasher. Swish, swish. The dishwasher washed all the dishes. Could the dishwasher wash the dishes when Mother pushed the button? (Real-familiar).

Mike is a deep sea diver. Mike likes to swim down to the bottom of the sea. Before Mike goes down into the water, he puts on a tank of air so he will be able to breathe under the water. Mike can see many fishes and plants under the water. When Mike is finished looking at the fishes and plants, he swims up to the top again. Could Mike swim down to the bottom of the sea with a tank of air to breathe and then swim to the top again? (Real-vicarious).

Here is another story about Mike the deep sea diver. One morning Mike went down under the water to the bottom of the ocean. Mike was very hungry. Mike decided to catch a fish. While he was under the water, Mike took out his fishing pole and caught a fish. Then Mike cooked the fish under the water and he ate it under the water. Umm. It was good. Could Mike catch a fish and cook it and eat it under the water? (Fantasy-vicarious).

Now I'm going to tell you a story about Father. Father needed to go to work one morning. When it was time to go, Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and into the street. Then Father's car said, "Come on Father. It's time to go to work."

Varoom! The car drove Father to work. Could the car back itself out of the driveway and into the street and call Father to come and get in? (Fantasy-familiar).

Mary and her mother needed to go to the store. Mother said, "Let's get in the car and drive to the store." Mary and Mother got into the car and shut the doors. Mother took her key and started the car. Varoom! Away they drove to the store. Could Mary and Mother get in the car and start it with the key and drive to the store? (Real-familiar).

I am going to tell you a story about John the astronaut. John's rocket ship was going to the moon. John was safe inside. Up, up, up he went to the moon in his rocket ship. Could John go to the moon in his rocket ship? (Real-vicarious).

I am going to tell you another story about John the astronaut. John was getting his things ready to take a trip to the moon. Lastly, John put on his wings and then he flew to the moon. Could John put on wings and fly to the moon? (Fantasy-vicarious).

Selection of Subjects

The Story Situation Questionnaire was administered to the children enrolled in the Oklahoma State University Child Development Laboratories. There were eighty-one children; forty boys and forty-one girls. The children in this study were grouped according to younger preschoolers (3.0 years to 4.4 years) and older preschoolers (4.5 years to 5.6 years). Table I presents the sample of children by age and sex.

TABLE I
SUBJECTS ACCORDING TO AGE AND SEX

Ages	Boys	Girls
Younger Preschoolers (3.0 - 4.4)	23	20
Older Preschoolers (4.5 - 5.6)	17	21

Administration of the Story Situation
Questionnaire

The Story Situation Questionnaire was administered to each of the eighty-one children enrolled at the Oklahoma State University Child Development Laboratories. Each story was told to the child and the child responded with a "yes" or "no" answer to the question "Could the events of the story happen?" (Appendix D). Half of the eighty-one children were randomly chosen to hear and respond to the stories in the sequence from one to ten, and the other half of the children heard and responded to the stories in the sequence from ten to one. The examiner felt that this process would eliminate any patterns that may develop from the stories being told in a given sequence.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine age and sex as they are related to the ability of children under six to differentiate between fantasy and reality in story situations. The data were analyzed by Chi Square.

Examination of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 (a). There is no significant difference between younger boys' and older boys' ability to understand real-familiar story situations.

Table II reveals that there is no significant difference between younger and older boys' ability to understand story situations classified as real-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

Hypothesis 1 (b). There is no significant difference between younger boys' and older boys' ability to understand real-vicarious story situations.

Table III reveals that there is no significant difference between younger and older boys' ability to understand story situations classified as real-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE II

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
BOYS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 1 Jim climbed up on the jungle gym	.72	N.S.
Story 4 Mother carried all the dishes to the kitchen and put them into the dishwasher and then she pushed the button to make it start	.72	N.S.
Story 8 Mary and Mother got into the car and drove to the store	1.67	N.S.

TABLE III

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
BOYS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 5 Mike the deep sea diver puts on a tank of air so he can breathe under the water	1.25	N.S.
Story 9 John the astronaut went up, up, up to the moon in his rocket ship	.52	N.S.

Hypothesis 1 (c). There is no significant difference between younger boys' and older boys' ability to understand fantasy-familiar story situations.

Table IV reveals that there is no significant difference between younger and older boys' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE IV

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
BOYS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 2 Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym	.37	N.S.
Story 3 Jerry called the dish- washer and it took the dishes and washed them	.89	N.S.
Story 7 Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and drove Father to work	.89	N.S.

Hypothesis 1 (d). There is no significant difference between younger boys' and older boys' ability to understand fantasy-vicarious story situations.

Table V reveals that there is no significant difference between younger and older boys' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE V

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
BOYS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 6 Mike cooked the fish and ate the fish under the water	.37	N.S.
Story 10 John the astronaut put on his wings and flew to the moon	.26	N.S.

Hypothesis 2 (a). There is no significant difference between younger girls' and older girls' ability to understand real-familiar story situations.

Table VI reveals a significant difference between younger and older

girls' ability to understand a real-familiar story situation. Older girls were significantly more able to understand reality in the real-familiar story (.02) than were the younger girls. No significant difference existed in the other story situations. On the basis of these findings the hypothesis is held tenable because of the lack of sufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis.

TABLE VI
CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND OLDER GIRLS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 1 Jim climbed up on the jungle gym	2.10	N.S.
Story 4 Mother carried all the dishes to the kitchen and put them into the dishwasher and then she pushed the button to make it start	5.51	.02
Story 8 Mary and Mother got into the car and drove to the store	.01	N.S.

Hypothesis 2 (b). There is no significant difference between younger girls' and older girls' ability to understand real-vicarious story situations.

Table VII reveals a significant difference between younger and older girls' ability to understand a real-vicarious story situation. Older girls were significantly more able to understand reality in the real-vicarious story (.01) than were the younger girls. No significant difference existed in the other story situations. On the basis of these findings the hypothesis is held tenable because of the lack of sufficient evidence to reject the hypothesis.

TABLE VII

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND OLDER GIRLS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 5 Mike the deep sea diver puts on a tank of air so he can breathe under the water	7.03	.01
Story 9 John the astronaut went up, up, up to the moon in his rocket ship	2.10	N.S.

Hypothesis 2 (c). There is no significant difference between younger girls' and older girls' ability to understand fantasy-familiar story situations.

Table VIII reveals that there is no significant difference between younger and older girls' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE VIII

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND OLDER GIRLS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 2 Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym	.40	N.S.
Story 3 Jerry called the dish- washer and it took the dishes and washed them	.00	N.S.
Story 7 Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and drove Father to work	.00	N.S.

Hypothesis 2 (d). There is no significant difference between younger girls' and older girls' ability to understand fantasy-vicarious story situations.

Table IX reveals that there is no significant difference between younger and older girls' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE IX

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND OLDER GIRLS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 6 Mike cooked the fish and ate the fish under the water	.48	N.S.
Story 10 John the astronaut put on his wings and flew to the moon	.58	N.S.

Hypothesis 3 (a). There is no significant difference between younger girls' and younger boys' ability to understand real-familiar story situations.

Table X reveals that there is no significant difference between

younger girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classified as real-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE X

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND YOUNGER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 1 Jim climbed up on the jungle gym	.02	N.S.
Story 4 Mother carried all the dishes to the kitchen and put them into the dishwasher and then she pushed the button to make it start	.04	N.S.
Story 8 Mary and Mother got in the car and drove to the store	1.29	N.S.

Hypothesis 3 (b). There is no significant difference between
younger girls' and younger boys' ability to understand real-vicarious
story situations.

Table XI reveals that there is no significant difference between
younger girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations

classified as real-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE XI
CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND YOUNGER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 5 Mike the deep sea diver puts on a tank of air so he can breathe under the water	.77	N.S.
Story 9 John the astronaut went up, up, up to the moon in his rocket ship	.00	N.S.

Hypothesis 3 (c). There is no significant difference between younger girls' and younger boys' ability to understand fantasy-familiar story situations.

Table XII reveals that there is no significant difference between younger girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE XII

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND YOUNGER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 2 Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym	.06	N.S.
Story 3 Jerry called the dish- washer and it took the dishes and washed them	.14	N.S.
Story 7 Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and drove Father to work	.14	N.S.

Hypothesis 3 (d). There is no significant difference between
younger girls' and younger boys' ability to understand fantasy-vicarious
story situations.

Table XIII reveals that there is no significant difference between
younger girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classi-
fied as fantasy-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis
is held tenable.

TABLE XIII

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN YOUNGER
GIRLS' AND YOUNGER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 6 Mike cooked the fish and ate the fish under the water	.62	N.S.
Story 10 John the astronaut put on his wings and flew to the moon	.14	N.S.

Hypothesis 4 (a). There is no significant difference between older girls' and older boys' ability to understand real-familiar story situations.

Table XIV reveals that there is no significant difference between older girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classified as real-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

Hypothesis 4 (b). There is no significant difference between older girls' and older boys' ability to understand real-vicarious story situations.

Table XV reveals that there is no significant difference between older girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classified as real-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE XIV

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLDER
GIRLS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 1 Jim climbed up on the jungle gym	.13	N.S.
Story 4 Mother carried all the dishes to the kitchen and put them into the dishwasher and then she pushed the button to make it start	2.63	N.S.
Story 8 Mary and Mother got in the car and drove to the store	.03	N.S.

TABLE XV

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLDER
GIRLS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
REAL-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Real-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 5 Mike the deep sea diver puts on a tank of air so he can breathe under the water	.00	N.S.
Story 9 John the astronaut went up, up, up to the moon in his rocket ship	.04	N.S.

Hypothesis 4 (c). There is no significant difference between older girls' and older boys' ability to understand fantasy-familiar story situations.

Table XVI reveals that there is no significant difference between older girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-familiar. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE XVI

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLDER
GIRLS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-FAMILIAR STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Familiar Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 2 Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym	.01	N.S.
Story 3 Jerry called the dish- washer and it took the dishes and washed them		N.A.
Story 7 Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and drove Father to work	.33	N.S.

Hypothesis 4 (d). There is no significant difference between older girls' and older boys' ability to understand fantasy-vicarious story situations.

Table XVII reveals that there is no significant difference between older girls' and boys' ability to understand story situations classified as fantasy-vicarious. On the basis of this finding this hypothesis is held tenable.

TABLE XVII

CHI SQUARE VALUES REFLECTING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OLDER
GIRLS' AND OLDER BOYS' ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND
FANTASY-VICARIOUS STORY SITUATIONS

Fantasy-Vicarious Story Situations	χ^2	Level of Significance
Story 6 Mike cooked the fish and ate the fish under the water	.33	N.S.
Story 10 John the astronaut put on his wings and flew to the moon		N.A.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship of age and sex to the ability of children under six to understand reality and fantasy in story situations. The hypotheses examined compared younger and older girls', younger and older boys', younger girls' and younger boys', and older girls' and older boys' ability to understand reality and fantasy in story situations.

Ten story situations were devised to represent the classifications of real-familiar, real-vicarious, fantasy-familiar, and fantasy-vicarious. These stories were subjected to a panel of specialists in Early Childhood Education to determine if the stories were appropriately classified.

Subjects

The subjects for this study were eighty-one preschoolers which consisted of forty boys and forty-one girls. These children were grouped according to younger preschoolers (3.0 years to 4.4 years) and older preschoolers (4.5 years to 5.6 years). The Story Situation Questionnaire was administered to all of the eighty-one children in the Fall semester, 1973, and the Spring semester, 1974. A Chi Square analysis was utilized to determine if age and sex were related to children's ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy in story situations.

Findings

From the results of the Chi Square analysis, age and sex did not make a significant difference in children's ability to understand reality and fantasy in story situations. The only significant differences found were that older girls were able to understand a real-familiar story (.02) and a real-vicarious story (.01) more often than younger girls (Tables VI and VII).

Recommendation for Further Research

This investigator makes the following recommendations:

1. This investigator suggests that the Story Situation Questionnaire be subjected to an item analysis to establish its validity.
2. A further recommendation is that the Story Situation Questionnaire be submitted to children in preschools and to children who have had no preschool experiences to determine if preschool experience provides an opportunity to help children differentiate between reality and fantasy in stories.

This investigator hopes that this research and the recommendations will help others to further study children's ability to differentiate between reality and fantasy in story situations.

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APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL STORY SITUATIONS

I am going to tell you a story about Jim. Jim goes to nursery school in the morning. One morning Jim climbed up on the jungle gym and he said, "Look how high I am." Could Jim do that? (Real-familiar). _____

I am going to tell you a story about Sue. Sue likes to climb on the jungle gym at her nursery school. One morning Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym. Could Sue do that? (Fantasy-familiar). _____

Bob and Jerry had just eaten dinner. Now they had some dishes on the table that were dirty and the dishes needed to be washed. Jerry decided to call the dishwasher. "Here dishwasher. Come and get the dirty dishes." The dishwasher rolled in and took the dirty dishes. Could the dishwasher do that? (Fantasy-familiar). _____

I am going to tell you a story about Mother. Mother carried all the dirty dishes to the dishwasher and put them inside. Then she pushed a button to start the dishwasher. Swish, swish. The dishwasher washed all the dishes. Could the dishwasher do that? (Real-familiar). _____

Mike is a deep sea diver. Mike likes to swim down to the bottom of the sea. Before Mike goes down into the water, he puts on a tank of air so he will be able to breathe under the water. Mike can see many fishes and plants under the water. When Mike is finished looking at the fishes and plants, he swims up to the top again. Could Mike do that? (Real-vicarious). _____

Here is another story about Mike the deep sea diver. One morning Mike went down under the water to the bottom of the ocean. Mike was very hungry. Mike decided to catch a fish. While he was under the water, Mike took out his fishing pole and caught a fish. Then Mike cooked it and ate it under the water. Umm. It was good. Could Mike do that? (Fantasy-vicarious). _____

Now I'm going to tell you a story about Father. Father needed to go to work one morning. When it was time to go, his car backed out of the driveway into the street and said, "Come on Father. I'll take you to work." Varoom! The car drove Father to work. Could the car do that? (Fantasy-familiar). _____

Mary and her mother needed to go to the store. Mother said, "Let's get in the car and drive to the store." Mary and Mother got into the car and shut the doors. Mother took her key and started the car. Varoom! Away they drove to the store. Could Mother and Mary do that? (Real-familiar). _____

I am going to tell you a story about John the astronaut. John's rocket ship was going to the moon. John was safe inside. Up, up, up he went to the moon. Could John do that? (Real-vicarious). _____

I am going to tell you another story about John the astronaut. John was getting his things ready to take a trip to the moon. Lastly, John put on his wings and then he flew to the moon. Could John do that? (Fantasy-vicarious). _____

NEUTRAL STORY

Alice and Susan went to see the elephant at the zoo. The elephant was very big and heavy. The elephant stomped his feet and raised his trunk high into the air. Could the elephant do that? (real-familiar or real-vicarious).

APPENDIX B

FINAL STORY SITUATIONS

1. I am going to tell you a story about Jim. Jim goes to nursery school in the morning. One morning Jim climbed up on the jungle gym and he said, "Look how high I am." Could Jim climb on the jungle gym and say that? (Real-familiar).
2. I am going to tell you a story about Sue. Sue likes to climb on the jungle gym at her nursery school. One morning Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym. Could Sue fly up to the top of the jungle gym? (Fantasy-familiar).
3. Bob and Jerry had just eaten dinner. Now they had some dishes on the table that were dirty and the dishes needed to be washed. Jerry decided to call the dishwasher. "Here dishwasher. Come and get the dirty dishes." The dishwasher rolled in all by itself and took the dirty dishes and washed them. Could the dishwasher roll in by itself and wash the dishes? (Fantasy-familiar).
4. I am going to tell you a story about Mother. Mother carried all the dirty dishes to the dishwasher in the kitchen. She opened the dishwasher, put the dishes in, shut the dishwasher, and then pushed the button to start the dishwasher. Swish, swish. The dishwasher washed all the dishes. Could the dishwasher wash the dishes when Mother pushed the button? (Real-familiar).
5. Mike is a deep sea diver. Mike likes to swim down to the bottom of the sea. Before Mike goes down into the water, he puts on a tank of air so he will be able to breathe under the water. Mike can see many fishes and plants under the water. When Mike is finished looking at the fishes and plants, he swims up to the top again. Could Mike swim down to the bottom of the sea with a tank of air to breathe and then swim up to the top again? (Real-vicarious).
6. Here is another story about Mike the deep sea diver. One morning Mike went down under the water to the bottom of the ocean. Mike was very hungry. Mike decided to catch a fish. While he was under the water, Mike took out his fishing pole and caught a fish. Then Mike cooked the fish under the water and he ate it under the water. Ummm. It was good. Could Mike catch a fish and cook it and eat it under the water? (Fantasy-vicarious).
7. Now I'm going to tell you a story about Father. Father needed to go to work one morning. When it was time to go, Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and into the street. Then Father's car said, "Come on Father, it's time to go to work." Varoom! The car drove Father to work. Could the car back itself out of the driveway and into the street and call Father to come and get in? (Fantasy-familiar).

8. Mary and her mother needed to go to the store. Mother said, "Let's get in the car and drive to the store." Mary and Mother got into the car and shut the doors. Mother took her key and started the car. Varoom! Away they drove to the store. Could Mary and Mother get in the car and start it with the key and drive to the store? (Real-familiar).
9. I am going to tell you a story about John the astronaut. John's rocket ship was going to the moon. John was safe inside. Up, up, up he went to the moon in his rocket ship. Could John go to the moon in his rocket ship? (Real-vicarious).
10. I am going to tell you another story about John the astronaut. John was getting his things ready to take a trip to the moon. Lastly, John put on his wings and then he flew to the moon. Could John put on wings and fly to the moon? (Fantasy-vicarious).

APPENDIX C

STORY SITUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

Age: _____

1. I am going to tell you a story about Jim. Jim goes to nursery school in the morning. One morning Jim climbed up on the jungle gym and he said, "Look how high I am." Could Jim climb on the jungle gym and say that? (Real-familiar). _____
2. I am going to tell you a story about Sue. Sue likes to climb on the jungle gym at her nursery school. One morning Sue was too tired to climb so she put on her wings and flew to the top of the jungle gym. Could Sue fly up to the top of the jungle gym? (Fantasy-familiar). _____
3. Bob and Jerry had just eaten dinner. Now they had some dishes on the table that were dirty and the dishes needed to be washed. Jerry decided to call the dishwasher. "Here dishwasher. Come and get the dirty dishes." The dishwasher rolled in all by itself and took the dirty dishes and washed them. Could the dishwasher roll in by itself and wash the dishes? (Fantasy-familiar). _____
4. I am going to tell you a story about Mother. Mother carried all the dirty dishes to the dishwasher in the kitchen. She opened the dishwasher, put the dishes in, shut the dishwasher, and then pushed the button to start the dishwasher. Swish, swish. The dishwasher washed all the dishes. Could the dishwasher wash the dishes when Mother pushed the button? (Real-familiar). _____
5. Mike is a deep sea diver. Mike likes to swim down to the bottom of the sea. Before Mike goes down into the water, he puts on a tank of air so he will be able to breathe under the water. Mike can see many fishes and plants under the water. When Mike is finished looking at the fishes and plants, he swims up to the top again. Could Mike swim down to the bottom of the sea with a tank of air to breathe and then swim to the top again? (Real-vicarious). _____
6. Here is another story about Mike the deep sea diver. One morning Mike went down under the water to the bottom of the ocean. Mike was very hungry. Mike decided to catch a fish. While he was under the water, Mike took out his fishing pole and caught a fish. Then Mike cooked the fish under the water and he ate it under the water. Umm. It was good. Could Mike catch a fish and cook it and eat it under the water? (Fantasy-vicarious). _____
7. Now I'm going to tell you a story about Father. Father needed to go to work one morning. When it was time to go, Father's car backed itself out of the driveway and into the street. Then Father's car said, "Come on Father. It's time to go to work." Varoom! The car drove Father to work. Could the car back itself out of the driveway and into the street and call Father to come and get in? (Fantasy-familiar). _____

8. Mary and her mother needed to go to the store. Mother said, "Let's get in the car and drive to the store." Mary and Mother got into the car and shut the doors. Mother took her key and started the car. Varoom! Away they drove to the store. Could Mary and Mother get in the car and start it with the key and drive to the store? (Real-familiar). _____
9. I am going to tell you a story about John the astronaut. John's rocket ship was going to the moon. John was safe inside. Up, up, up he went to the moon in his rocket ship. Could John go to the moon in his rocket ship? (Real-vicarious). _____
10. I am going to tell you another story about John the astronaut. John was getting his things ready to take a trip to the moon. Lastly, John put on his wings and then he flew to the moon. Could John put on wings and fly to the moon? (Fantasy-vicarious). _____

2

VITA

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