

# The Inquirer

Late Experimental Edition



## Who Makes the Decisions about a Baby's First Experiences?



## Students Finding Out How Society Deals with Children

During the next weeks, students from the Exploring Childhood Program will be interviewing people in their community, contacting agencies, collecting sample records and documents, finding out about children's books, TV programs, health care, and legal status. This flurry of activity is all part of an effort to become informed about the ways Americans provide for, influence, and respond to children.

As preparation for the projects, which will be done individually or in small teams, students will spend time selecting topics of interest and learning guidelines for information-gathering. In an effort to help them plan their projects, this edition of the *Inquirer* is featuring the following articles:



### Guidelines For Project Making

Seven guidelines to help students carry out their projects focus on these questions:

- How do you decide what questions to ask? .....2
- What methods can you use to find out? .....3
- How do you plan for it? .....4
- What do you do when problems arise? .5
- How do you organize the information you've collected?.....5
- What's the next step? ..... 6.7

### Some Possible Project Topics

Four general areas of inquiry are described, along with specific topics and methods.

- Play and Entertainment .....8
  - The Physical Environment .....10
  - Culture and Tradition .....11
  - Community Resources.....12
- These are suggestions only, and students are urged to explore other topics of concern to them.

## Society Influences Behavior

People and institutions communicate values, beliefs, and expectations to children. They set examples, express approval and disapproval, prevent or encourage certain kinds of behavior, give instructions, and offer choices. By the time children are three or four years old, they have already felt the effects of many such influences, and have begun to reflect some of the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the society in which they live.

Try the following activity. Bring a collection of cereal boxes to class to examine (or survey the shelves of a nearby store). How much influence do the producers of breakfast foods have on the eating (and thinking) habits of young children? What messages do cereal boxes convey about how our society values food? basketball stars? possessions? children's preferences? Answers to questions like these can be helpful in understanding the scope and character of a child's world.

# Guidelines for Project Making

The following guidelines outline the process for carrying out a successful project from beginning to end. Before you begin your own project, spend some time in class talking through the issues raised here and doing the practice exercises. For help in avoiding difficulties, return to these guidelines as you carry out the project.

## Guideline 1. Don't Overlook the Crucial First Step!

### Question Making

It is easy to get so involved with finding answers that the important first step in any research project is overlooked—that of deciding what exactly it is that you want to find out. You may be tempted to plunge headfirst into some large topic and to gather up as much information as you have time for in a three- or four-week period. But when the time comes to draw conclusions and tell others what you have found, you won't know where to begin.

Try this approach. Start by choosing a general area of interest. Break that down into specific smaller topics. Pick one of these to pursue, then write down as many specific questions about that limited topic as you can. Finally, choose just one or two of those questions to investigate.



★ Leon decided to do his project on children's books. There were several topics he could have explored—what kinds of pictures children like, who chooses books for children, which ones are most popular—but he decided to find out what makes a children's book "good." Other students asked him what he meant—good by whose definition? Was he planning to ask the children themselves, or their parents, or the people who published children's books? Besides, someone wondered, weren't different books "good" for different children, and at different ages? The teacher asked Leon exactly what he meant by "good," so he made a list of ingredients that he thought a book for children should have. Other students listed different ingredients. Tom said that some parents at his fieldsite felt that too many children were filling up on fantasies. Leon said he agreed, that children's books should help children understand the real world.

The teacher suggested that it might be interesting to find out just what other people felt about the value of "fantasy" vs. "real world" in books for preschool children. Leon said that he would like to ask parents and children whether they preferred fantasy or real-life books, but he thought that would be too much for one person to handle. Then Tom said he was interested in the issue, and so Tom and Leon decided to do the project together.

This incident suggests several points

### Question-making Exercise

Here is a collage of publicity and information about breakfast cereals for children. How many separate research questions can you make, based on the general information given here? Which questions would make good research projects? What questions would you rule out? Why?

to keep in mind when choosing a project question:

1. Draw on some experience or issue that has caught your interest during the year.
2. Seek advice about your topic from the rest of the class.
3. Narrow the focus by breaking your general topic or question into smaller questions. Choose just one of these to investigate.
4. Understand who benefits from exploring the question. Are you mainly satisfying a personal curiosity, or trying to answer a particular need of children, parents, or the community at large? (Leon hoped that what he learned could help him in working with children.) Knowing this will help you decide which questions to ask and how to follow up on what you find out.



#### CREDITS

Developed by: Judith P. Salzman.  
 Editor: Anne Glickman.  
 Designer: Rox Gerstein.  
 Director, EXPLORING CHILDHOOD  
 Program: Marilyn Clayton Felt.  
 Curriculum Coordinator: Ruth N. MacDonald.  
 Family and Society Module Head:  
 Susan Christie Thomas.

## Guideline 2. Choose a Method that Fits You and the Topic Data Gathering

The methods you use should be determined by the kind of question you choose to investigate, by the number of people working together, and by the skills and techniques you already have or want to learn. Before choosing a method, think about which technique you feel comfortable using. Is it an appropriate way to find out what you want to know?

Following is a list of various data-gathering methods. Some may be familiar to you already. If so, tell the class about any experience you have had using them (polling for a political candidate, for instance, or clipping news items for a social studies class). What advice would you give others using these methods?

**Observing:** Build on your experience of doing observations at your field site. You might want to think about adding photography, sketches, or even filming to your repertoire of recording techniques.

For observations outside your field site, you may need to make special arrangements. You will want to make a preliminary visit, to familiarize yourself with the place, meet the people, and plan how to avoid disturbing normal conditions. You should plan to observe several times, because one observation is never enough to be sure that your impressions are clear and accurate.

Willmetta, who is thinking of a career in children's health, wanted to observe how the personnel at a community health center talked and worked with parents and child patients. Her project question was, "Do the procedures seem to meet the concerns of parents?" She visited the clinic first to get support for observing in the waiting room and to familiarize herself with the personnel and their roles before she began. After spending two afternoons both observing and making herself useful to staff and parents by playing with waiting children, she was invited by several parents to extend her observing to the examining room itself. The staff agreed she could do this.

**Interviewing:** The first step in planning an interview is to think about what you are seeking. Then jot down some notes and questions to carry with you. Be sure to set up appointments ahead of time. When you contact people, explain the general subject and reason for the interview. If you use a tape recorder, take written notes as well. The notes will help remind you later what to listen for particularly when you replay the tapes.

Practice by role playing an interview with a friend or family member. This will help you feel at ease.



Tom and Leon decided that the best way to find out how parents felt about fantasy or reality books for their children was to interview them. They role played a practice session in class which went like this:

L.: "Mr. Williams, our child development class at the high school is doing some research projects in the community, and I am investigating parents' opinions about children's books. Can you tell me what kinds of stories you prefer your preschool children read?"

T.: "Well, I really don't have that much to say about it. I mean, my kids mostly pick out their own books."

L.: "Do you approve of their choices?"

T.: "I don't really care one way or the other, as long as they don't get any bad ideas from what they read."

L.: "What do you mean when you say 'bad ideas'?"

T.: "Well, you know, ideas that would spoil them, make them think it was all right to act nasty to adults or just fool around all the time and still get a lot of treats and stuff like that."

L.: "Do you think fairy tales and fantasy books would have that sort of bad effect on children?"

T.: "I don't know—I mean, it would depend on the book. I don't do much of the reading to my kids, so I really couldn't say."

At this point in their practice interview, they got stuck. Someone in the class said that maybe it would help if Leon had brought along an example of a fantasy story to show to the parents. That way, he could give parents something to look at and think about, and would have a sort of "ice breaker" to help keep the conversation on target.

Tom and Leon liked this idea and decided that the technique of actually showing something in the interview would be especially important with the children they planned to interview, since children so easily drift off the subject or say anything that comes into their minds.

Notice that Leon didn't plunge into his project question. He introduced the subject generally, and gave "Mr. Williams" a chance to think about it before getting specific. The practice session also showed Tom and Leon how important it is to let the interviewee know exactly what you mean.

Another point: if you plan to compare different people's answers, after you have finished interviewing, be sure to ask everyone the same question.

**Inventory making:** An inventory is a list or count of the number and kinds of items or details one is looking for. Tom and Leon might "take stock" of how many fantasies and how many real-life books each preschooler's family owned.

Elisa has chosen to examine children's TV. Her question is, "What kind of heroes do Saturday morning cartoons offer children?" She has set aside three mornings to watch programs. On the first she plans to list all the major characters in the cartoons, and to describe what they are like and what they do. On the second, she plans to check her inventory, trying to make it as accurate and complete as possible. On the third, she plans to observe her two nephews and to ask them what they think about the characters. Her partner, Peggy, plans to do the same thing with two children for whom she babysits.



**Collecting:** Collections can be made on tape (the sounds in a child's world), on film (the places a child visits on a Saturday or Sunday), in three dimensions (children's games, clothes, or snack foods), on paper (advertisements, news clippings, advice to parents, brochures, regulations for daycare). Consider yourself on a treasure hunt: inside any publication, behind any door, something may be waiting to contribute to your project.

**Polling:** A poll is a way of finding out how many people approve or disapprove of a particular idea. A poll contains only a few questions, which can be answered "agree," "disagree," and "no opinion," and is given to as many relevant people as possible. Polls should be tallied carefully and percentages worked out. An accurate record of exactly how many people responded should be kept.

★ After writing up a plan of what they would do, Tom and Leon met with a small group of classmates to go over plans and advise each other. They explained that they were planning to interview several parents and children and also to send out questionnaires to a larger group of parents. The other three students convinced them they were taking on too much, so the boys decided to give up the questionnaire. Cheryl and Janet, who were planning to poll parents in two fieldsites, offered to add the statement Tom and Leon were most curious about to their poll, and to supply the boys with the results.



**Consulting:** Often a great deal can be learned about an area of interest by talking to a particular person. Time spent observing or talking to such a person can contribute greatly to a project. If you choose to contact a special consultant as part of your project, consider arranging for that person to talk with your class, or to attend a parents' meeting. This is a way for you to share what you learn with others.

★ Jerome wanted to know how children are adopted. His project question was, "What process do people in this community have to go through in order to be able to adopt a child?" He made an appointment with a social worker at a community agency. Out of their talk grew an opportunity to interview two sets of adopting parents as well and the possibility of a part-time job working for the agency during the summer. Since other students were also interested in the subject, Jerome set up a time when the social worker and one of the parents could talk to his class.

**Letterwriting:** To acquire some kinds of information, it may be necessary to write formal letters. Government agencies, elected officials, manufacturers (customer service department), private groups (such as Action for Children's Television, the Children's Lobby, Ralph Nader's state-based Public Interest Research Groups) can be written to for information. Write early! One letter may not be enough, so allow time for a follow-up letter. It may take a while before you get a response, but you can prompt quick replies by requesting information by a particular date. It is wise to request information from several sources, since answers cannot be counted on from all.

Informal letters, perhaps to relatives or friends no longer living in the area, can also help a project.

You may need some assistance in getting addresses and/or using the proper form for formal letters. A teacher, parent, friend, or a special consultant (if you have one) can help with such needs.

**Using Questionnaires:** Although similar to interviews in the kinds of information it yields, a questionnaire should be more precise and controlled. Since questionnaires are responded to in writing, you will not be able to probe into the reasons for people's answers as you can in a casual spoken interview. But if you plan your questionnaire carefully, the answers should be easier to add up and compare than interview answers. Also, questionnaires enable you to reach more people in less time. Be careful not to suggest in the question what you think the answer should be. Try out your questionnaire on classmates or some "sample" adults before you duplicate the final version.

Here is a questionnaire Tom and Leon could have used.

## Data-gathering Exercise

In small groups, select a question from those the class decided were good project topics about breakfast cereals. Choose which research methods you think would be best, and then practice using one of them. For instance, you might:

- plan and practice an interview
- brainstorm sources of collectables and decide how the collections will be made
- decide whom to write and draft a letter
- prepare a questionnaire

Present what you work out to the rest of the class.

## Guideline 3. Make a Plan Using the Planning Form

Shown here is a planning form, designed to help you think through the actual mechanics of your project—why, with whom, and how you plan to work on your project. Before filling it out, look at the form Tom and Leon filled out by themselves, then revised after talking over their plans with other students.

## Planning Form Exercise

Fill out your own planning form, and meet in small groups to review each other's plans and to advise each other on possible improvements you could make.

### Questionnaire

If given a choice, would you prefer to buy your child a fantasy story or a story about real-life people in real-life situations?

Fantasy      Real-life      No Preference

Explain.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements:

Strongly Agree      Agree      No Opinion      Disagree      Strongly Disagree

Stories should help children understand human feelings better.

Most stories for children should be about real people.

Stories about imaginary creatures and events help children's imagination grow.

Stories should expose children to other cultures.

Stories should help children understand their own world better.

Stories should show experiences like violence, grief, and happiness honestly.

It's all right for stories to frighten children.

### Planning Form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

1. Project Question (be specific) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Your Plan of Action \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

(For teams) Who does what \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Preparation

Equipment and Materials Needed \_\_\_\_\_

Permission Needed \_\_\_\_\_

People Who Can Help \_\_\_\_\_

Teachers \_\_\_\_\_

Business People \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Meetings, Appointments to Set Up \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Calls to Make \_\_\_\_\_

Trial Run \_\_\_\_\_

4. Your guess about what you will find out (hypothesis) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

5. How you could use the information \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## Guideline 4. Adapt for Problems

### Time and Trouble

No matter how carefully one plans, problems arise once a project has been started. The two most basic problems are:

- You run out of time faster than you anticipated.
- You hit a snag, and the only way out is to change your research question or method in some way.

For example, you might discover that:

Your question was too broad after all, or the methods of collecting data demanded more time than you planned.

A person you counted on interviewing is unavailable.

Your initial data opens many avenues to explore, and you're torn about what to do next.

These common dragons can be dealt with by being willing to adapt.

### Time and Trouble Exercise

*Problem 1)* What advice do you offer a girl who planned to observe all the Sunday school programs for preschoolers in her community, but scheduling problems left her with only enough time to visit three out of five programs?

*Problem 2)* Leon and Tom found that their interviews with children just weren't answering their question. The children didn't show any clear preferences. They liked nearly everything or changed their minds almost by whim. Brainstorm advice about how they could adapt their project.

*Problem 3)* Brainstorm ideas to help anyone in your class who has run into a problem.

## Guideline 5. Sort it Out

### Organization of Data

About two weeks before your project ends, you will have to stop collecting data and look at what you've got. You may be surrounded by photographs and notes, or notes and inventories, or half a dozen cassette tapes, or forty envelopes filled with questionnaires. What are you going to do with them?

Some methods—like polling, inventory, or questionnaire—produce information that is quite easy to summarize or tally. Other methods, like observing and interviewing, may involve considerable sorting, coding, and interpreting.

**Inventory, Questionnaire, Polling:** If carefully planned out, these methods can gather very specific information about "which" or "how much." Results

### Planning Form

Name(s) Leon Johnson & Thomas Garrity Date March 30, 1972

1. Project Question (be specific) How do parents and children feel about fantasy in real-life books? stories for preschool children?

2. Your Plan of Action Get 2-3 books in each category (ask librarian for help) read them to kids and ask which they like best and why. Interview some parents & send questionnaire to others. Add questions to Cheryl and Janet's poll and tally answers. Show books to parents via interview. (decide how many to parents & kids)

(For teams) Who does what Leon read to kids. Tom interview parents. Both do interviews, write questionnaire. Compare results, draw conclusions. Report to class.

### 3. Preparation

Equipment and Materials Needed Tape recorder and cassette, sample books, notebooks, pencils, questionnaire (with machine) envelopes, stamps

Permission Needed Mr. Sullivan's ok to borrow recorder. Parents' and kids' consent to be interviewed.

People Who Can Help librarian

Teachers Mr. Sullivan, Mrs. Fernandez

Business People \_\_\_\_\_

Other Cheryl and Janet (poll)

Meetings, Appointments to Set Up Arrange interviews with parents ahead of time. Plan after fieldwork time with kids. Consult with librarian first week of project.

Phone Calls to Make parents

Trial Run Role play interview, practice reading stories.

4. Your guess about what you will find out (hypothesis) That parents prefer facts to fantasy, but kids like scary, imaginative stories.

5. How you could use the information better idea of what to read to kids and how to choose books.

can be tallied on a blank form. If the responses of different groups are to be compared, the tally of total responses to each question can be broken down into the responses for each group. For example, students' opinions could be compared to parents' opinions or boys' to girls'.

**Observing:** If your observing has been very focused, and you have kept track of very specific events or behavior, you may be able to tally or summarize them easily. If you had a more general purpose, you may need to look over many notes to see what you have seen over a period of time.

**Interviewing:** If you want to compare interviewee's responses to various questions, it is helpful to briefly summarize what each person said about each question and then compare answers.

At the end of three weeks, Leon and Tom had a deskful of data. Fifty poll questions had been returned and tallied by Cheryl and Janet. The boys also had twelve taped interviews, each one lasting fifteen or twenty minutes. They figured it would take them about five hours to listen to the tapes and work out a coding system, and another three hours to go over their results and plan how to present it to the class. They spent two evenings and two afternoons organizing their data.



## Guideline 6. Share What You Have Learned

### Conclusions and New Questions

After gathering and sorting your data, what does it mean? Based on the information you have, you can draw some conclusions. Don't expect to make large generalizations, but do expect to have some significant new information. For instance, you may have a clearer view about the way agencies or clinics in your community operate, or about what a number of parents think, or about the nature of particular programs for children. Don't "jump" to conclusions; stay close to the facts.

What interesting new questions emerge? Write down your conclusions and questions on a follow-up form and then share what you have learned with the class.

**Class discussion:** How might Leon and Tom present their project to the class? What would you like to ask them about their data?

#### Tom's and Leon's Coding Form

	Parent	Child
Name	Orlando Buchanan	Claudia Buchanan
Age		4-1/2
Strongest preference	books with photos of real things, people	Curious George "I wish I had a monkey." "He has fun."
Strongest dislike	frightening books	No response.
Who chooses books	parent mainly (also grandmother)	parent and teacher
Important comments about sample fantasy	silly book bad-tempered child, need to bring broom	monster looks like Calvin Anderson I'd like to be king of the monsters, too.
Book:	Sendak <u>Wild Things</u>	<u>Wild Things</u>
Important comments about sample real life		My birthday I didn't have a party. What if she doesn't get the letter? Keats <u>Letter to Beny</u>
Book:	Didn't do	
Any important information not coded	Parent strongly disliked "Max" in <u>Where the Wild Things Are</u> .	Child enjoyed "Max" - giggled a lot, wasn't afraid of the monsters. Painted a monster later at the school. She liked both books.

Here is part of the Follow-up Form Leon and Tom wrote after they finished examining their data.

- (To be a...)
- Conclusions from our/my pro...
1. Most parents in the two fields... about real-life people in real-life...
  2. Parents didn't mind fantasy...
  3. Children liked books in which... home safe and sound, like Max does...
  4. Children weren't interested in "p... to brush their teeth carefully...
  5. Children usually had books that... books they heard about from friends...
  6. Children picked books more... more than their kids did.
  7. The biggest difference we found... books, but about "good" vs...
- Say more about your experience...

### FOLLOW-UP FORM

(To be answered after the project is completed)

Conclusions from our/my project

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

Say more about your experience doing this project:

- I was pleased that . . .
- I was bothered by . . .
- I was proud when I . . .
- I noticed that . . .
- I was disappointed that . . .
- I learned that . . .
- I was afraid of . . .
- I remembered when I . . .

What new questions do you have as a result of your study?

How might you look for information about these new questions?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### FOLLOW-UP FORM

(To be answered after the project is completed)

Project

*Parents prefer books for their children that have stories*

*life situations.*

*books (except in four cases), unless they frightened children.*

*characters were bad and had lots of wild adventures, but still "got*

*is in Where the Wild Things Are. Some books were pure fantasy, & some weren't*

*preachy" books that said things like, "the dentist tells children*

*after meals."*

*their parents picked out for them, but sometimes they picked*

*friends, read in school, heard on a record.*

*for the story than for pictures. Parents seem to go for pictures*

*and between children and parents wasn't about fantasy*

*or "bad" children in the stories.*

*once doing this main*

## New Questions Exercise

**Small group:** Brainstorm new questions Leon and Tom might have as a result of their project, and fill out that section of their follow-up form. Or, if a class member has completed a project and has conclusions to offer, the class could brainstorm new questions from those conclusions.

## Guideline 7 Put Your Results to Use

### Doing Something About It

Your project need not stop here. Give some thought to putting your conclusions to work. In some cases, "action" will simply mean telling the class what you have learned. Becoming better informed about your subject can be rewarding to the whole group. "Action" could also mean writing a letter to the newspaper. Other project findings may offer the possibility of taking part in a town meeting discussion, working for greater environmental safety or improved health facilities, preparing a list of health resources to be distributed to parents, or doing volunteer work. Whatever the form, your action will be a way of making a contribution—to your class, to your community, and to children.

Here is a list of possible activities you might do. After you have considered the project ideas offered in this booklet, and others your class has discussed or started, brainstorm additions to this list.

- Design a "product" for children: TV show, toy, food, storybook, etc.
- Invite neighborhood families to class to discuss what day care or health facilities or cultural programs they would like to have, and to brainstorm ways of setting them up.
- Prepare and distribute information to help people know how they can use resources they do have.
- Write a "letter to the editor" or to an appropriate public official.
- Plan an activity for children and parents at your fieldsite, Sunday school, or neighborhood center.
- Do some additional reading or exploration.
- Seek a job or volunteer position working in an agency or institution.

### Doing Something Exercise

Look at the conclusions Leon and Tom made after they finished their research. In class, brainstorm activities that might come out of their conclusions. In your opinion, which one of these actions would be the most useful and important?

# Some Possible Project Topics

The topics and areas suggested here are *only suggestions*. You may decide to work in some other area that reflects a particular concern you have about the way society affects children growing up. Or you may choose to pursue one of the suggested topics in an altogether different direction. Use the ideas that follow as much or as little as you need.

The general areas have been grouped in four categories:

**Play and Entertainment** (suggestions: Children's TV, Toys)

**The Physical Environment** (suggestions: Sounds in a Child's World, Play Spaces)

**Culture and Traditions** (suggestions: Ways of Growing Up, A Family History)

**Community Resources** (suggestions: Keeping Children Healthy, Varieties of Child Care Facilities)

In each area several questions and at least one method are suggested to help get you going. Do not try to tackle all of these in one project. (More methods are included in the guideline examples.) Using the guidelines, you could choose a question that interests you and methods that seem to work best for that question and you. Or you could use the questions and methods to help think up your own. Be sure you don't bite off too much. If you plan a large project, do it as a member of a team.

# Play and Entertainment Children's Television

Some questions:

How many hours a week do young children spend watching television?

What programs do they watch?

Who decides what they watch?

What do children like best on TV?

What does children's TV show children?

How do they react to what they watch?

What assumptions do children make about what they see? About the "realness" of TV?

What values do different programs convey?

Some methods:

a) Observe and interview five or six young children; spend several hours watching television with each. Take notes on what they say, when they are bored, interested, scared, confused, amused, etc. Ask them which are their favorite programs and characters and why. Are the programs "real"? Would they like to be able to do some of the things that television people do? Why is it that people on television can fly, disappear, etc., when they can't? Do they think they will be able to do these things when they grow up?

b) Distribute a questionnaire to parents. Explain why you are doing your project. Do they regulate their children's TV viewing in any way? Why? What programs do they consider good/bad? Would they like to see more programs of a particular type? Do they think their children are affected positively/negatively by TV viewing? Are they glad that TV exists? Why?

c) Consult people involved in children's television programming in your area. Write Action for Children's Television, 46 Austin St., Newton, Mass.; or Mister Rogers, Family Communications, Inc., 4802 Fifth Ave., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15213; or a television network. What are their aims for children's television? What changes have they seen over the years? What plans do they have? Where do they stand on advertising to children? If you live near a station that produces a program for children, try to get permission to watch a taping session of one of these programs, and interview producer and performers. What are their views on children's TV and on the value of their own contributions to it?







Alison Wampler

## Play and Entertainment

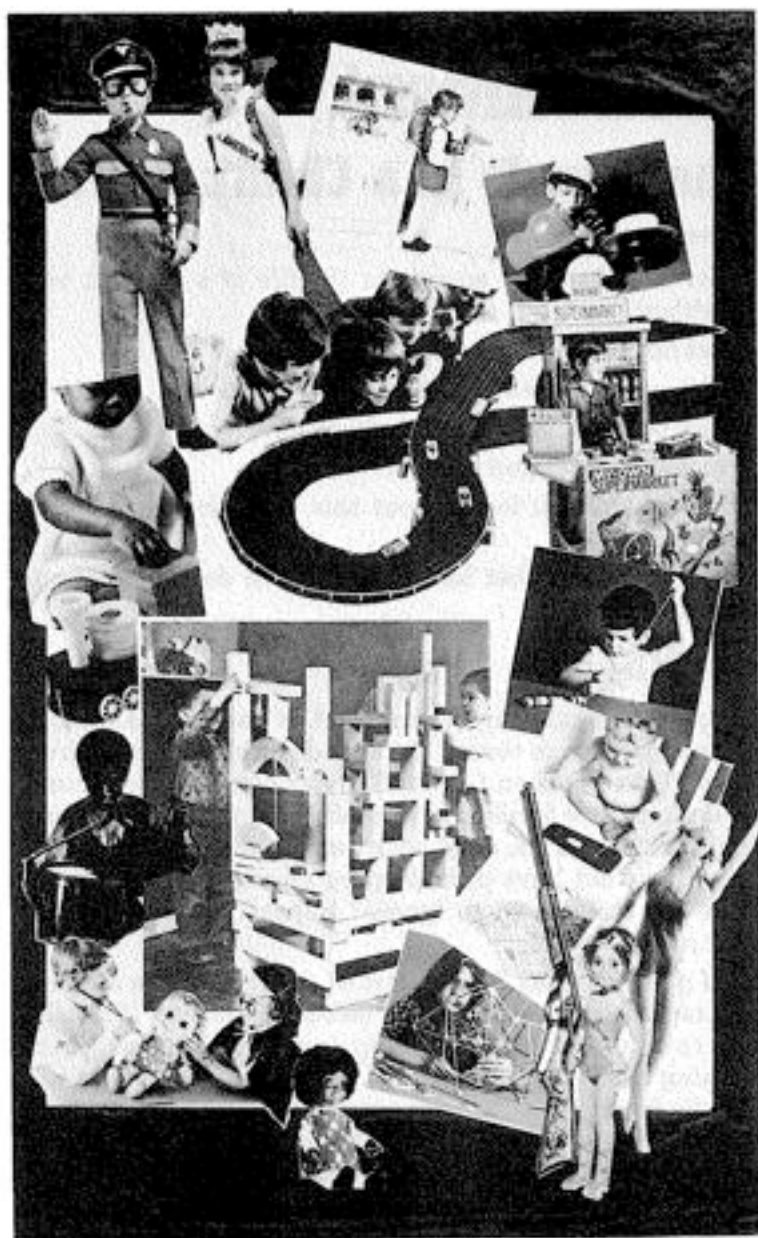
### Children's Literature

#### Some questions:

- What do young children like to read?
- What books do adults favor for children in this age group?
- Where do young children get the books they read, and who chooses them?
- What are some of the ingredients of a good storybook for young children?
- Who reads to children? How much? Why?
- Have books for young children changed in the last thirty years?
- In the last fifty years?
- Do children's books support stereotypes?
- What models for behavior do books offer children?
- What values do some popular children's books offer children?

#### Some methods:

- a) See examples in the guidelines.
- b) Make a book for young children. List the reactions you expect they will have to it. Read it to children at your field-site (one to three at a time). Have a partner observe and note how they respond, what questions they ask, etc. What similarities are there in the children's responses? What differences? If your book has a message, do the children understand it? What messages do you find in other books available at your site?
- c) Talk to children's librarians and field-site teachers. How do they choose books for children? Which books are most popular? How do they account for the popularity? What changes have they seen in children's books? What changes would they like to see?



Alison Wampler

## Children's Toys

#### Some questions:

- What kinds of toys do young children like best? Why?
- What kinds of toys do adults prefer to buy for children?
- Are children's preferences in toys different from their parents'?
- What are some of the functions of children's toys which should be taken into account when making or buying a toy?
- What do particular toys teach about cooperation? competition? sex roles? careers?
- What influences parents' (or children's or others') selection of toys?
- How have toys changed over the years?
- How are toys promoted?

#### Some methods:

- a) Ask five or six parents what toy or piece of play equipment they have bought recently for their children. How was it selected? Was it the child's own choice, or the parents'? What kinds of toys does the parent like to see his or her child using? Are there any types of toys that are discouraged in this family? Compare toy catalogs like Creative Playthings with several pages from catalogs like Sears. What notions of what a child is and should become are conveyed therein? Offer a page from each to parents and ask them to select a toy and give their reasons. What was the parents' favorite toy as a child? Why?
- b) Go to one or more toy stores to observe children. List what attracts them, what they do and say, how they interact with adults. Interview some of them. What toys do they like? Why? What would they do with them? Inventory and code the toys that interest children. Are they simple, elaborate, expensive, cuddly, mechanical, safe, meant for solo or group play?

# The Physical Environment

## The Sounds in a Child's World

### Some questions:

What are the daily sounds in the life of a child in your neighborhood?

What do these sounds mean to a child?

Which ones are pleasing? disturbing?

Which ones get most careful attention?

Which ones get screened out?

What do children learn about this world from what they hear?

What responses that had to be learned do they make to sounds?

### Some methods:

a) Spend several hours with a child. If possible, take along a tape recorder to record the sounds in his or her environment. Take notes on the child's responses to every sound. Which ones are familiar to the child? Raise interest? Cause irritation? Does the child notice any kinds of noises which you might not have picked up by yourself? What sounds does the child seem to ignore? Repeat the observations with another child.

b) If possible, play back a part of the tape to the children and record their comments on noises and voices. If not, listen to the tape yourself (skipping over sections where nothing much was happening). Would you be able to tell, just by listening to the tape, where the child lives and with whom? How noisy is the child's world? Of what kinds of noises do you think there are too many? Too few? What do the children seem to have learned about the noises in their world? Present a portion of the tape to your class as part of your report and give them a chance to talk about it.

## Play Spaces

### Some questions:

Where do the children in your neighborhood play? on good days? on bad weather days? Who decides? How do they get there?

Are there special play areas for children in your neighborhood? What kinds of indoor/outdoor play spaces do children of preschool age seem to prefer?

What kinds of play are encouraged in different play environments? by the amount of space? how they are set up? what they contain? with whom they are shared?

How much supervision do children have in such play? How safe is the area?

What messages might children pick up from a physical environment about being neat, careful or daring, sociable or quiet?

### Some methods:

a) Observe a single child playing in several different settings over the course of a week or two. Use a camera if possible to record play at home (inside or out), at school, at a playground, at a friend's house.

b) Spend one afternoon in each of a variety of public play areas in your area (playgrounds, pools, fields), and any other place where small children play. (sometimes, one child's backyard serves as the neighborhood "playground.") Bring a camera along to record what you see. By interview, phone, or letter, consult a town official for information on exactly what recreational facilities are available to children in your area. Inventory what is available for children's play and record your observations of what use the children make of the area.



*News Item: "Scientists have found that babies are sensitive and responsive to certain sounds even before they are born. The sound of the mother's heartbeat, both before birth and for a long time afterward, seems to have a comforting effect on a baby. This startling early sensitivity to sound highlights the importance of what a child hears in forming an awareness of his or her environment."*



# Culture and Tradition

## Ways of Growing Up

### Some questions:

Are there any special traditions that different religious, racial, or ethnic groups in your community follow in bringing up children?

What efforts are made in schools and other places to help children retain such traditions?

How do families cope when their traditions (values, beliefs, and desired behaviors) do not conform to those expressed in schools and stores, on television, etc.?

What traditions, history, and holidays are presented to children in programs designed for them? How?

### Some methods:

a) Interview your classmates. What holidays are observed? How are family meals conducted? What differences do they feel between their family's values and traditions and the community's? Do they think they will carry on the traditions with which they grew up? In what ways? If the members of your class all have similar life-styles, you may also want to interview some families, preferably people you know well, whose traditions and life-styles are quite different.

b) Read several books and articles about growing up as a member of a subculture in America. Prepare a questionnaire and look for answers in each book.

## A Family History

### Some questions:

How has the experience of growing up changed within a family over three generations?

Where, when, or why have great changes in child-rearing and family behavior occurred?

How do members of the family feel about these changes?

What was growing up like for your own parents and grandparents? size of family? family roles? children's responsibilities and pastimes? punishments? treats?

What patterns or events in their early lives stand out clearly as having had an important effect on their growing up?

What do people from each generation treasure about their own childhood?

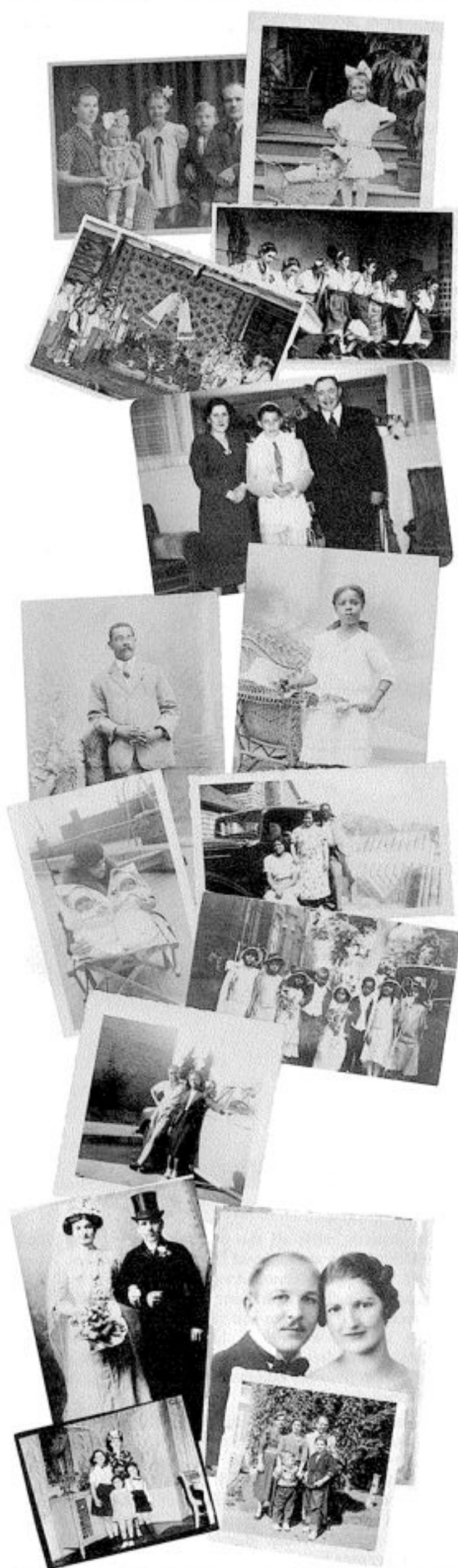
What do people from each generation regret?

Are these the same or different?

### Some methods:

a) Using an actual family, make a family album or scrapbook that shows the growing up experiences of three generations. Include photographs, sketches, written notes, copies of documents, written advice on child-rearing for the appropriate period, styles of clothes and toys for children, information about early schooling—in short, any items that fill out a general picture of childhood for each generation.

b) Find a family in which members of three (or more) generations are available for interviewing. Spend some time with a member of each generation separately. Prepare a questionnaire for all participants to fill out, regarding memories of how they were brought up, important early experiences, and what changes in raising children they have made, or would make, as parents. Then meet with all of them together to read one another's responses to the questionnaires and, if possible, tape the discussion among them of ideas contained in the questionnaires.



# Community Resources

## Keeping Children Healthy

**Some questions:**

- What medical or dental facilities for children exist in your area?
- Who may use them?
- What services do they provide?
- How can people find out about them?
- How do people in your area feel about the quality of the care given to their children?
- Would they like to see other kinds of services established which are not currently available?
- What do staff members of these facilities have to say about the work they do?
- Are the families using the health facilities available to them?
- How does the government (local or national) contribute to children's health?
- What are some of the problems parents face? medical personnel face?

80 HEALTH/Community Care

	NATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH PLANNING ORGANIZATION	FRANKLIN COMMUNITY SERVICES OFFICE	WALKER COMMUNITY HEALTH PLAN	MISSION HILL JARVIS HILL MARKHAM PLANNING COMMUNITY
HOUSING	M-F 9-5 T-S 9-5	M-F 7:30 pm W 2:30 Call for app'l. Evening hrs	M-F 9-5	M-F 9-5
SERVICES	All at South Service	Family Services	Members of plan only Outside this plan of jurisdiction	Members of plan only Outside this plan of jurisdiction
LANGUAGES		Full or part-time Open to all	Some home health care mostly 60% WKA	
OUTREACH PROGRAMS				
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
FAMILY PLANNING/ GYN	Part of Family Planning Project. On part-time basis. All hours of work covered.	Full, part-time & contract on part-time basis. Transfer into specialty clinic for women. All hours of work covered.	Part-time only. Full medical program 110 clinics.	Part-time only. Full medical program 110 clinics.
PRE-NATAL PROGRAM	Refer to Labour Health Center, Doncaster Health Center or Boston City	Refer to	Yes. Counseling at home. State or affiliated hospitals.	Yes. Counseling at home. State or affiliated hospitals.
PREGNANCY COUNSELING	Yes	Refer to	Yes	Yes
MENTAL HEALTH	Refer to program in Falls	Specialized services for women in Falls	Yes	Yes
PEDIATRICS	M-F 1:30-5:30 pm A, J, 10-4:30 pm week on	No	Yes	Yes
ELDERLY	Go thru Adult Welfare	Med attention given for all who are unable to work, clearly with family or community.	Go thru Special Med. Unit, generally programs for young 60-70's. 100-100.	Go thru Special Med. Unit, generally programs for young 60-70's. 100-100.
SYSTEMS FOR HOSPITAL REFERRALS	Follow City form. Ask		Refer physician or refer to affiliated hospital.	Refer physician or refer to affiliated hospital.

Boston Women's Collective

**Some methods:**

- Visit your community's public medical facilities and talk with staff members. Collect any brochures or other written information explaining health care facilities. What do staff members see as the strengths and weaknesses of the community's health programs for children? What advice would they give to parents, schools, day care centers, concerning the use of these facilities?
- By letter, phone, and interviews with consultants (contact state health agencies, political representatives' staffs, the mayor's office, etc.) survey what Federal or local programs are funded. Which are available to people in your area? List several of these, and poll parents to find out whether their children have benefited from any that are available and/or whether they would like to have any programs not presently available.

# Child Care Facilities

**Some questions:**

- What kinds of schools and day care programs does your community have for young children?
- What do these various programs offer?
- Who uses them?
- How much do they cost?
- Who is eligible to use them?
- How do their programs differ?
- What equipment, space, personnel do they provide?
- What ideas do they have about how children should be raised?
- How do working parents feel about the child care they use?
- Are these programs adequate for community needs?

### NURSERY

#### Nursery Schools & Kindergartens—(Cont'd)

**Apex Community Play Group**  
180 Montcalm, Cam ..... 347-9355

**Alberta's Day Care Center**  
For Working Mothers-Age 3-5 1/2 Yrs  
8AM-5PM Hot Lunches Served  
1777 Montcalm, Cam ..... 492-3071

**Alfonso Baker School** (167th St)  
Artisan Children Ctr ..... 328-9034

**Artisan Children Ctr**  
1150 Montcalm, Art ..... 646-9307

**Artisan Nursery School And Kindergartens**  
4650 Avenue W ..... 923-0360

**Art Linking's Theme World**  
2310 Parkway St ..... 471-6877

**ASSOC DAY CARE SERVICES OF METROTON**  
A School Fund Agency See Results  
Jamaica Plain-Children Community Center-Southside Day Care Center  
Patricia M. Hester  
1875 Ave. B  
Aurora, Ont. L3R 9K1

### SEE GREEN PAGES—FOR

**CHILDREN'S CENTER IN LEXINGTON**  
Day Care 2 To 4 Year-Old Room  
1550 Montcalm, Lex ..... 863

**Children's Cooperative Nursery School**  
165 Avenue New ..... 327

**Children's World Day Care Center**  
5700 Avenue Dor ..... 330

**Church of Our Redeemer**  
2710 Montcalm, Lex ..... 47

**Christ Lutheran Church Nursery School**  
5700 Avenue Dor ..... 288

**Christ Lutheran Church Day Care Center**  
2710 Montcalm, Lex ..... 47

**COMMONWEALTH AVE DAY SCHOOL**  
Academic Pre-School Ages 4-5  
4750 Commonwealth St  
Commonwealth Child Center  
1150 Montcalm, Art ..... 646-9307

**Forest Glen Day School** 1180 Forest Glen ..... 325

**Forest Glen Nursery School of Belmont Inc**  
490 Commonwealth St ..... 48

**FLYNT'S DAY NURSERY SCHOOL**  
PRE-SCHOOL TRAINING-TRANSPORT AT ALL HALF DAY SESSIONS-WE LUNCH 5 MONTHS TO 4 YEARS  
590 Park Dor ..... 280-3

**FUN-FUN-ALL DAY NURSERY**  
Boscawen - West Aurora - Hole Park  
Hot Lunches-Full or Half Day-Track Educational Activities - Qualified Teachers  
136 Grange Rd ..... 325-3

### THE POLITICS OF CHILD CARE

The number of children with mothers in the labor force has increased sharply during the last decade. Nearly 10 million children under 18 years old had mothers working or looking for work as of March 1979. Projections for 1985 indicate that 6.6 million will be 20 to 44, with children under age 5, will be 2 million.

**THE BRIGGARTON SCHOOL**  
100, Brington, Cambridge  
A COMMUNITY ORIENTED EDUCATIONAL DAY CARE CENTER  
ALL DAY - HALF DAY  
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS  
NATIONALLY BALANCED HOT LUNCHES  
GRADUATE TEACHERS-SUPERIOR EQUIP.  
OPEN YEAR ROUND  
Member of National Association for the Education of Young Children  
214 Waverley ..... 566-7690

**Some methods:**

- If possible, visit all the programs for young children operating in the area served by your high school. At each school, divide your time between an interview with a staff member and a classroom observation. Ask the staff person to describe the program and the children who come to the center. In what ways does this program offer something unique for children? for parents? Does it seek to answer needs of individual children and/or community needs? How much does it cost?
- Distribute questionnaires and/or interview families with children up to seven years old in your neighborhood. How do they feel about the different kinds of programs available for their children? In their opinion, what is the best kind of child care for children of this age? How large or small should it be? How many hours a day should children attend? What should children do while there? Should parents be involved in the programs in any way?