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A STUDY OF FOUR LIBRARY PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED PERSONS. PART II APPENDICES A. BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESCHOOL PROJECT, QUEENS BOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATION HEAD START.

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This document contains observations by library staff and interviews with members of the communities served about the Brooklyn Public Library preschool Project and the Queens Borough Public Library Operation Head Start. These two projects offer storybook and picture-book programs for preschool disadvantaged children and programs for their parents. (CC)

A STUDY OF FOUR LIBRARY PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED PERSONS



**CONDUCTED BY
BANK STREET COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

The University of the State of New York
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Division of Library Development

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**A STUDY OF FOUR LIBRARY PROGRAMS
FOR DISADVANTAGED PERSONS**

For the

**DIVISION OF LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT
The New York State Library
State Education Department
University of the State of New York**

Conducted by

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P A R T II

APPENDICES A

**BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESCHOOL PROJECT
QUEENS BOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATION HEAD START**

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July 1967

Appendices contain the original material gathered by the Field Staff through observations and interviews.

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PRESCHOOL PROJECT

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BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESCHOOL PROJECT

Observations of Aides'

Story Reading Programs

A Community Boys' Club

Neighborhood of run-down two-story houses and some four- or five-story apartment buildings. The building is fairly new, institutional, next door to an elementary school. The day-care rooms are on the second floor.

When I enter all of the children, 15, are seated on carpet squares in a corner of a small room. The room is equipped with a doll corner, two tables, cubbies, and a library corner which consists of an extremely well-stocked book shelf propped upon a table. The books on this shelf, some with rumpied covers still on, include Curious George, Dr. Suess books, This is New York, and others. On the walls of the room are some samples of the children's art work. Most are carefully boarded with scalloped construction paper.

There are two classes here and two teachers, so the ages of the children range from late 3 to late 5. One child is Puerto Rican. The rest, and the teachers, are Negro. The library aide sits on a chair facing the children; one teacher is behind her, and one is to her side. In such a small room, the children have little to focus on except the activity at hand. The group of children is, in a sense, circumscribed by the arrangement of the room.

The aide has played one or two singing and finger games and is reading in such a way that, although the pace is brisk, the children have some opportunity to participate, (anticipating the story, making animal or nature sounds, etc.) When the aide teaches a new finger game, some of the children participate with

her although it is the first time they have heard it. Most of the children enter into the game, some sort of surreptitiously, keeping their hands in their laps but moving the fingers.

The teachers play the finger game too. They do not interfere with the less inhibited children who shout out comments or make sounds along with the aide while she reads. During the browsing period the aide and the teacher pass books out to the children, whom they allow to choose what they prefer. As the aide comments aloud, everyone seems to know what to do with the books (put them in their laps, turn the pages). The teachers give some minor directions but generally, during this time, settle down to read to or to be read to by small groups or individual children. The aide, too, reads to one boy who she thinks has missed a close look at the book.

During the browsing period the children are allowed to be by themselves with the aide's collection of books. The mood of the room is comfortable, with fluidity. There is truly a concentration on books - this is the pervading feeling. Some children talk to themselves as they turn pages and examine pictures. Many of the younger children remain in a cluster around their teacher, who is reading very dramatically, with sounds and participation by the children. One girl stretches out on the floor where she reads to herself.

By about 11:05 some of the children are restless and, although they settle down, the aide collects the books soon after. The classes redivide and, as the teacher of the younger

group leaves, and says, "Thank you for coming", her children make a great show of saying good-bye.

A Child Care Center

The classroom is a bright windowed room in a child care center in a fairly new housing project, in a neighborhood of run-down houses, near a main street dominated by an elevated train. The rectangular room has a huge doll corner, a science shelf, and a book shelf with several bright books on it. The book shelf is not in a prominent place - it is squeezed behind a small table under the windows. Except for two teacher-decorated bulletin boards, the walls of the room are bare. (Some drawings by the children are on the walls of the narrow hall outside the room.)

There are 18 5-year-olds, mostly Negro with a few Puerto Rican children. The two teachers are Negro women who are perhaps in their thirties. These teachers do not interfere at all with the program, as there are no behavior problems. One of the teachers dozes; other looks tired but plays the finger games with the children. When awake, the first teacher is more inhibited.

When I arrive with the aide, the children, just up from their nap, are seated on the floor facing the block corner. The teachers are seated to one side and behind the children. This arrangement provides a well-lighted, comfortably large enclosure where the children are in a position to focus attention on the aide.

The aide begins by leading the children in singing BINGO. At a child's request, they sing the last chorus twice. Then the aide reads a story, briskly, with vivid sound effects. There is some response from the children as they identify noises. Otherwise they sit cross-legged, absolutely quiet, with no response at the end of the book. From time to time some children look around curiously at the observer, who sits behind them. The children are intent but expressionless during the second story, My Special Particular Cat, which seems to me to depend very much on the sound of the many words; the pictures and story are not particularly vivid. The aide involves the children in a finger game and then reads another cat story, again briskly. Some of the children seem to be tired. There is some conversation among the children at a quizzical ending (the book is Minou), but the aide does not stimulate or quench discussion. Finally there is an active rhythmic finger game, in which all of the children happily participate and even enjoy repeating, and one last story.

During the browsing time the teacher hands out the books haphazardly. The children take these and put them on their laps, turn pages, and, with no interference from any adult, many read aloud and talk to each other. The teachers remain detached; a few children stand near the aide, who reads with them. When one boy creates some disturbance, she tells him to take a book and calls him over near her to sit and read by himself. No one asks the teachers for help.

One child holds a book in front of him the way the aide does when reading. It occurs to me that perhaps he is trying to figure out how the aide can read the book without looking at it. (The aide either memorizes or paraphrases the stories, rather than literally reading them. This allows her to hold the book up to the children so that they can see the pictures clearly.)

In this program the aide's position as reader of stories and leader of songs and finger-games seems to be completely secure. Neither the children nor the teachers challenge her at all, and she is able to carry out her program as she wishes. There is not very much evidence that the stories are relevant to the children's lives, and the brisk pace of reading did not allow for discussions (though the aide welcomed the children's participation in making sounds). During most of the stories, there seems to be a reader and an audience; but during the songs and games they all together happily participate, and the rapport between the aide and the children becomes apparent.

H Place Church Head Start

H_____ Place appears to be a central downtown square with businesses on the main street and, just down from there, some run-down two or three story brick houses. The children meet upstairs in a large old church, where there is a medium-sized, very cluttered room with high windows on one side overlooking the stained glass windows and shadowy darkness of the church, and, on the other side, high windows looking down to the

street. The room itself is packed with all kinds of furniture and materials, including a piano, a work desk, about five tables, a minimal block corner - the cabinets of which are piled high with animals and trucks, a whole long cabinet of art supplies, a rack of rich costumes, a small doll corner, a number of science exhibits, and a cabinet of table toys and a small collection of books.

In this room are 14 children ranging in age from young 4 to 6 years of age. The children are Negro or Puerto Rican, with the exception of two Columbian children who are just learning English. There are several sets of siblings, which is why the age range is so wide.

There are also many adults with the children, partly to compensate for the absence of the regular parent-aide. The head teacher and director of the program is a late-middle-aged woman who is extremely imaginative and concerned about the children in her charge. On the particular day I visited, she was also feeling pressured by the absence of her aide and by an impending meeting which might decide whether her program could continue. This teacher appears to be so enlightened and so fair to the children that she cannot get the parents to go along with her.

Also in the room are some mothers; the one who stays longest is warm but not aware of the needs of the children, so she is also sharp to command obedience. When I enter during the work period, there is a young man doing wood work with three or four boys. There are also high school students who

are in and out of the room all morning. The library aide is also there, as she has come early to meet me. This aide is a woman in her 50's, who has been reading to children for the last two years.

To begin the program, the aide sits on a chair against one wall, and as the children finish their snacks, they sit down facing her. Three books are displayed on a small table next to the aide. Although the teacher feels that an unlighted room is more soothing, the aide has the lights on again. When the teacher joins the children, she, too, sits beside them on the floor. Two children and the parent-aide sit on chairs at a nearby table.

When a child who has finished his snack early picks up a book displayed on the table, the aide takes it from him and says that it's for display, he may see it later. She begins with a single alphabet book and the children join in, identifying pictures. When all the children are seated, the aide reads The Dead Bird, a story which the teacher has requested as several children have had deaths in their families of late. The aide "reads" solemnly, telling the story while showing the pictures (which are not captioned on the same page). The style of the aide is detached. She doesn't smile easily. Her rendering of the stories is verbally elaborate and her expression seems to be somewhat inhibited.

Most of the children are very intent. The two or three children sitting in the chairs are the most restless. When one boy, who is young and is just learning English, speaks aloud

without listening to the aide read (he echoes one word).

The aide speaks his name twice (and finally I call him over to sit by me and to quiet down). When a child reaches up to point to a picture, the aide just touches her to go away, as if she is an annoyance. The aide seems to consider the books and her telling of the stories to be of prime importance. There is little participation by the children, except in the finger games. Likewise, there is little evidence of the relevance of the stories to the children's lives, except the one book which was chosen to be relevant.

During the browsing period, the aide says, close your eyes for a big surprise, and she passes out the books fairly randomly. She does seem to have in mind that some books are especially for boys (e.g. cowboys). There are not enough books to go around (though so few children!). When one child cries, the aide says that she can't carry all those books, then she gives the children long explanations and tries to make the two children without books feel special by reading to them alone. (Later, in conversation with me, the aide says that she can never carry more than twelve books, and she rationalizes that it is good for the children to learn to share; and she writes in her log book the names of the children without books, so that they may be the first ones to receive the next time.)

There is not complete concentration on books during the browsing time. The three adults in the room each have children gathered around them, but there are one or two without adult

attention who disrupt the others. I hear the teacher say firmly, excitedly, "Don't do that to a book." With the teacher out of the room everything more or less falls apart, though each of the adults is still reading with a few children. The aide tells a disruptive boy, "These children want to read but you may do whatever you want."

When one teacher returns, she and the aide decide that the children have had enough. The aide collects the books, leaves a few on a subject about which the teacher has requested books. The aide is not a very commanding woman. One child calls to her, "Bye, Library." The aide laughs, and another child picks up the refrain. The aide reminds them of her name by responding to someone who calls it out properly. As she leaves, she turns and calls back to the children, "You were very good today." Her manner is perfunctory.

A Neighborhood Day Care Center

This day care center is in an old brick building, built especially to house it, with crumbling mother and baby lions guarding the low stairs. It is near an overhead highway in a neighborhood of a few small houses, warehouses, and docks. It is on the edge of the old six-story dark brick apartment project which it serves. On the corner nearest the center (on a shopping street) is a store-front branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.

There are 22 young five and late 4-year-olds in a large, well equipped, rectangular room. Most of the pictures

on the wall are constructions of shapes or cut-outs on murals, not free form drawings. The children come in from the yard adjacent to the room, wash their hands, and there is a great production of sitting down and facing the window in the block corner at the end of the room. From her chair facing the room, the aide helps to organize the children who are spread out in informally arranged tiers. With so many children, it is difficult for some to see the aide.

The group of children is predominantly Negro; three are white. The three teachers are Negro, two of them being in their thirties and one much older. While one teacher sets the table, one sits in a chair behind the children and the third sits to one side. The aide is young to middle-aged.

The aide begins with a hello song, which the children enthusiastically sing. Then she reads, with apparently forced enthusiasm, in a high voice (I think, her natural voice.) The first story, Who Goes in My Garden?, is about animals in a garden. It employs intricate language to describe, for instance, the eruption of bean sprouts. The children look a bit bewildered and the pace is too brisk really to ask questions, though one or two outspoken girls who sit near the front make some comments, which the aide accepts. The theme of the day is gardening, as the children have planted a garden in their yard. During the second book, which the children have heard before, one child smiles and actively

responds, and the others seem to be interested and attentive. Most attention is given to the last book, The Carrot Seed. Then the aide plays a gardening game, with the children and teachers on their knees, gardening on the floor. All appear to be involved.

At the beginning of the reading, most of the children are distracted when a teacher comes to take their record player; the aide and the teacher call them back by intoning their names. When one boy, who generally has trouble concentrating, begins to take off his shoe, the teacher leans over and pokes him; when he stands in the middle of the story circle to put his shoe back on, the teacher pulls him back to her, where she helps him. This teacher continues silently to remind children who are silently restless. She also pulls back a child who loudly complains that she cannot see.

At the beginning of the browsing period, several boys call out, "I want Curious George." The children are told to close their eyes while the teacher and the aide pass out books at random. One child immediately takes her book to the teacher to read to her. Others sit with books on their laps on the floor, talk to each other and themselves, and turn pages. Soon, though, there are clusters of children around the teachers and the aides, and several children approach me too. At a given time, there are one or two children contentedly reading to themselves or each other; one girl reads to herself in the mirror, playing teacher. The children are not very independent,

as they want to be read to or read to the adults. (Most of the children are only 4½ plus) Many of them continue to concentrate on the books, while some play among themselves or with objects.

When one aide leaves, the children, who were lining up to go to the tables, are briefly reseated. They throw kisses and, unsolicited, one child calls out, "Thank you for the story."

Brick Church Day Care Center

This church is in a remote neighborhood of two-three story houses, vacant lots, warehouses, and trucks, close to the East River docks. The program takes place in the large cool basement of a brick church next door to an elementary school. It is a small program, publicized by the minister (white, Episcopalian), to which mothers bring young children for one hour each week, just for the reading. Today there are only four children, who sit in small chairs facing the aide, who sits on a long low table in front of an altar by a concrete wall, in a far corner of a room filled with folding chairs and small pews. The mothers sit in back of the immediate area (behind the rows of small pews behind the children) and talk together audibly.

The participants are three white boys, two of them healthy aggressive almost 5-year olds, and a 4-year-old Negro girl who has not been there before and who stays just a short time. The library aide is a white, early-middle-aged housewife who has been conducting this program for a long time. She has

told me that there are usually six to eight children, and that the parents of some of the children have cars to take their families the considerable distance to the nearest public library. The white boys are, by the way, all related to each other.

The mood of this program is extremely intimate with a close participation by the children. One of the boys even teaches a little finger game to the other three children. The aide reads a few books. During any interval, the boys have many things to tell the aide-- what they have been doing, seeing, etc. At one point, all of the children are distracted by a big horsefly.

During the browsing time the boys take books to the aide, to their mothers, or read alone.

In the middle of the program, the mother of the little girl comes in and comments that her daughter, who is in the first grade, is at the head of her class, although she, the mother, never paid much attention to her and the only preschool experience the child had had been the library hour once a week. Commenting that she intends to send this younger daughter who is inclined to be fresh, to the weekly readings, the mother takes the little girl and leaves.

T___ Children's Center

This day care center is in a housing project of tall buildings fairly wide apart. It is in a large, long, well-

equipped room with windows at one end which has a door onto a play yard. There are complex block structures left standing all around the block corner; a profusion of children's art covers one wall, and on another wall is a children's mural of houses, planes, and people. Between the block corner and doll area is a standing shelf of cellophane-covered children's books.

The class consists of 13 5 - and almost 6 - year-olds, of whom one or two are white or Puerto Rican and the rest are Negro. There are two young teachers, one white and one Negro. The children, who leave their work period projects to gather around the aide, sit on the floor in the middle of the room. They sit cross-legged or on their knees in a small group around the library aide, who sits on a chair with her back to the doll corner and has some books displayed on a small table beside her.

When the aide enters, many children come around her and take books from her bag on the floor. A few start reading, until soon all the children have come around. Although two boys are fighting without interference, the aide begins to read and sing a song-- at which the two boys pay attention. The aide sings the song about the fox and shows pictures in a book that illustrate it. Most of the children follow along, singing out loudly at "Town-O."

This aide, a young woman who has been working for about six months, is extremely informal and close to the

kids. She even argues with a little girl about which book she should read next. She reads, rather than memorizes, the stories, and she interrupts a story in order to explain a phrase or so that the children may comment in general. When the aide asks, "Do you see this?" the children respond readily. She accepts appropriate comments in the course of her reading. At one point, the children seem strongly to prefer one book over another, and the aide yields to their choice. The children identify the animals in the pictures, and the aide corrects them. At another point, there is counting involved in a story, and the children all count together; then the aide counts with them to one hundred, with the full participation of the children.

One boy continually interrupts the aide and distracts the other children who answer his jibes. The aide interrupts a song to ask this child to turn around and sit down. The children occasionally respond to their interests in one another or the atmosphere (a block structure, a huge fly). One child continues to act up, despite the attention of the aide and the other children, who try to reprimand him. After the aide has interrupted her program to lead the children in counting, it takes them a while to settle down; they all hit each other and eventually settle into a comfortable calm, as the aide softly calls for attention and gets up bodily to arrange the children. After the aide resumes reading, bedlam still continues among a few boys, at which point the teachers intervene by ejecting one boy, fighting with another one and

then standing him against a wall. At this point the aide decides to distribute books, according to the choice of the children.

At the beginning of the period the teachers were busy cleaning the room. The head teacher is out of the room most of the time, though at one point she walks by the group and reprimands a child who is talking, inattentive to the reading. By the middle of the program, one teacher has sat behind the children and another comes in to sit on the other side, where she surreptitiously eats a carrot; this teacher also occasionally quiets some children. At the beginning of the fighting (after counting), the teachers hardly help at all. During the browsing time, the youngest teacher can't control the majority of boys, who are acting up. When the head teacher returns, however, she reprimands the boys successfully.

And then most of the children sit with books on the floor, while the aide reads Wild Things to two girls. But the group around the aide grows as she finishes Wild Things, and then she leads them in a loud, confident singing of Billy Boy, for which the aide has accompanying illustrations.

The tone of the aide seems to me to be slightly petulant or whiny. Although, I believe, it is very valuable for the children to be able to participate in the program, the informality of this aide has obviously caused some serious problems of discipline and control. These were undoubtedly

amplified by the neglect and inattention of the teachers, and by the inability of the assistant teacher to control the most active boys. It is possible that these children were showing off for the benefit of this observer; the aide mentioned that they generally have a long attention span, so that she can read as many as six stories.

Apartment Project Day Care Center

This Day Care Center is in standard rooms on the first floor of a building in an apartment project which includes some old lower brick buildings and some newer very high ones. There is construction going on all around, so there are also vacant lots, a few half-destroyed houses, etc. This neighborhood has the air of a suburb, as the streets are wide, the spaces open. Most of the housing around the area is in projects.

In the well-equipped room there is a library corner with two small standing shelves of well-worn books. Children's paintings are all along the one wall which has a large bulletin board (there are windows on two walls and doors along a third). It is a bright, beautiful room. On the top of some shelves there are examples of wood-work, some of it very intricate, and many clay sculptures, made by the children.

There are 12 children, all but one Negro, with one teacher, a quiet Negro woman in her thirties. The aide is a young white woman with a very soft voice and manner. She sits with her back to the wall of the block area and the children

are cross-legged on the floor in front of her. The teacher is on a chair behind the group.

The aide begins with a kind of speech-- "This is library time--", and then she sings a song which involves the children in making responses. When the children turn toward a scream in the hall, their teacher silently quiets them and they turn directly back to the story which the aide part-reads (it is not memorized) and part-sings. The children and the teacher are very attentive. At one point, when the aide mentions food, a child chimes in with what he eats and the teacher goes, "Shhhhh." The reading is melodic and smooth with some hand-gestures. The book is Bread and Jam and the aide tries to involve the children to chime in with rhyming words at the end of various chants. The aide looks slightly wide-eyed and dumbfounded, just like the little bear, Frances, in the book. At one point, she gently touches the shoulder of a girl in front who is squirming.

When the book is finished, the aide starts a discussion, "What do you like to eat best of all?" and ends with, "Do you like flies?" From this she leads into a singing and illustrations of I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly. Many of the children sing the words and all join the chorus. This aide apparently likes to sing. She is relaxed with the children, who comment at the end of a book and ask questions about a picture (which the aide seems unable to answer). The aide then asks who would like to tell the story of Hector Protector and a boy stands and tells it as the aide turns the pages of the book.

He gives a good telling of the rhyme and a vivid description of the pictures. Then the aide leads the whole group, standing, in an acting out and speaking of the rhyme.

When the children sit down and get comfortable, the aide takes a book of nursery stories turned to The Gingerbread Man, which story the children seem to know and to identify from the pictures, and some anticipate some parts of it. The aide sometimes slows down the rhymes so that the children will supply some of the words (which they sometimes do). At the end of the story the children want to know about the picture on the opposite page, and the aide evades them by explaining that it is from another story, which someone can look at later. Then she leads the children in a stretch from which they go to the table, where their teacher tells them they must be quiet in order to get books, which the aide hands out at random.

The teacher, who has on occasion quietly reprimanded a child and watched to keep order, but who has not intruded, sits to look at a book with a girl who is evidently one of the brightest in the class, who has been the most outspoken, in an obnoxious way, and who at one point asked the aide to point out and identify particular words which she had just read. The children settle down with books, turn pages, talk, tell stories to themselves, and trade books. They tend to concentrate on the books though there is some small disorder, and some children are unhappy that they cannot find an adult to read to. (Here I become involved in reading with two little girls.) After a

while, the teacher asks one child to collect the books.

The children go back to a circle formed against the wall with high windows and the aide sings a song with them, an African chant where the children repeat the phrases after her. The children are relaxed and happy and chorus good-bye to the aide, but they cut up a bit as soon as there is no adult directly watching them.

St. - Head Start

This program takes place within the grounds of a Catholic school and rectory which are surrounded by a high wall and take up a whole block in an older neighborhood of brick or brownstone houses and apartment buildings on wide streets. There is a new high-rise public apartment project just across the street from this complex of very old brick buildings.

Because many children are absent with chicken-pox, there are only eight 4½-year-olds, seven Negro and one Puerto Rican. There are two teachers, a young Negro assistant and an older Negro woman, the mother of six children. There is also a parent-aide who often functions as the head teacher and is a wonderful, warm, funny, intelligent, dynamic woman. The head teacher, whom I met after the program, is a young woman who did not stay with the children during the story hour because she had to clean out the bird cages. The library aide is a white woman in her late twenties.

When I arrive, the aide is already seated on a chair in the yard. The children sit in a semicircle, on little chairs. There is some distraction as two people set up a table outside, behind the group. The children face a brick corner, but they all are well out into the playground. The wind blows some books over. One boy on the end alternatively watches the adults setting up the table, the observer, and the book. The other children are pretty attentive.

The aide is very informal, involving the children in responses to an alphabet animal book. There is a very high level of verbalization as the children supply rhyming animal names after only seeing the tail of an animal and hearing a rhyming word. One child compares an ostrich to a giraffe. Often the children echo the aide rather than originally responding; I don't believe that they can yet know all the answers, though one child or another comes up with surprising knowledge. One boy identified a unicorn, another child said kangaroo after hearing only a description and a rhyming word. When a child cannot identify an animal, he can make up a rhyming word. (I have a beautiful feeling about these children who are attentive, involved, and even dramatic in making responses.) There is some rocking in the chairs.

The aide reads three books in a row with no relief. These are all animal-zoo books. The aide reads softly with a midwestern twang, and she seems to be almost too quiet. At one point she reprimands a child, "Do you want to sit up?"

The teacher-aide then comes over to whisper something to this little girl. During the program this teacher-aide has been interested and supportive. When the children talked excitedly all at once, the teacher-aide said "Shhhhh," in an unannoyed fashion. When the little boy identified the unicorn and I looked amazed, the teacher-aide indicated to me, "He's smart." This teacher seemed to know the children very well.

During the browsing time, the children choose the books and seem to know what they want. They take their books back to the chairs. The teacher-aide arranges one chair on either side of her, explains that she can only read to one child at a time but soon has four children on chairs around her, until two run off to play on the play equipment nearby. Then the teacher-aide gets up to explain to them that it is time to read, and she says to me, "See what happens when one teacher leaves?" (the assistant is out of the yard at this point). The aide has one child on her lap, with whom she reads during this whole time.

The teacher aide, who has a very expressive face, reads very dramatically. The children read to each other, to themselves, listen to the teacher-aide, or read with the library aide. When two more children wander off to explore the new table (they have put their books away), the teacher-aide calls the children to her, takes one on her lap, and continues to read with the children, but they are too inattentive and soon she suggests, "Let's cut it." The children put the books away and carry their chairs to the room; then they play outside.

The Park Day Care Center

This children's center is in an old brick housing project in a small-town neighborhood, a very quiet area with a few warehouses, rows of two-story houses attached or detached with verdant backyards, and a mixed population. The children's center, on the first floor of an apartment building, is a rectangular room with many windows on two sides and a door opening into a yard. It is a very well-equipped room which includes a standing book shelf at one end of the large kitchen-doll corner which divides off a quarter of the room. On the walls are many displays by the teachers, most of the displays being carefully labeled. There is one bulletin board with just one or two pictures by the children; there is also evidence of styrofoam-kind of wood-work and some clay ashtrays.

The group consists of 20 5-year-olds, predominantly Negro and a few white and Puerto Rican. The teachers are both Negro, one of them in her forties with a West Indian accent, the other one younger. The head teacher is very structured; in discussion she demands certain answers and won't accept any others (I enter while the children are having a snack followed by a discussion). When the library aide arrives, the teacher asks the little ones, "You know how yourselves, go over and sit in front of the group. Some get carpet squares." The assistant teacher goes over to arrange them bodily in a front line, middle line, and back line. The children even give each other directions. The aide too helps to arrange the

children, and she talks banteringly with some. She has her back to the windows, sits on a small chair in the block corner. Her books are on a shelf beside her. The aide is in her early forties, a white woman with a very husky loud voice, which she uses to emphasize sounds and words. She says good morning and starts a song which the children are then able to sing without her. She asks if they can guess what the story is about, and they can. She allows responses from the children and seems to be relaxed.

The teacher, after walking back and forth, sits on a chair behind the children, first shaking down a squirming chair. The children are attentive to the aide, but the teacher is obtrusive and even interrupts. The teacher hisses, "Listen, listen," when the children keep guessing something in the story, and the aide acquiesces by putting her finger over her mouth. The other teacher comes in to sit by the children, writes in a notebook, and sometimes pays attention to the story in spite of herself. The head teacher is loudly cutting construction paper for a while. When the children have a chance to guess again, they go crazy with guessing, shouting out their responses, and when they get a bit out of hand, the teacher quiets them. At one point, the teacher makes a girl sit back who is on her knees in the back of the group, where she caresses with her fingers the back of the neck of a young boy who is not at all annoyed. Interrupted by the teacher, she still resumes her activity. There is some squirming among

these children, who are interested in each other as well as the story on which they primarily concentrate.

The aide asks, "What is an inch?" The children think it's an insect. Then she leads them to understand what it is. The teacher reprimands the children, who are only sitting comfortably (but not "correctly"). The more the children respond, the more restless they are, but they are also eager and bright. The aide reads slowly and has not memorized all of the story. The children clap spontaneously at the end of each story they like. They are actually oblivious to the teachers' petty interruptions. The aide has brought along an inch worm to go with the story she reads-- it is a long rubber snake with a tape measure sewed onto it. She has the children measure parts of each other and they are enthusiastic about this as they know already how to count. The aide is promising the children that they will have another chance to participate and spontaneously. Out of nowhere, a girl says, "I want to go back to the library." Another says, "My father forgot to take my library books back." Then the aide reads another story. The books seem well suited to the intelligence of these children, who know how to count and can learn how to measure.

During the browsing, the children clamor for books. They have some choice in getting books from the aide. The teacher busily reseats the children, who sit in a fairly tight group with books on their laps. The assistant helps one child to measure another and the aide reads with a few children.

Some are quick to exchange books for others, several roam around and apparently move right into work period if they so choose. Soon only a few stay with books on the floor. The browsing period is finished within five minutes.

Neighborhood Church

This is an imposing church, which used to be a synagogue, in a neighborhood of small shingle houses with backyards and shady streets. The community is Negro and Puerto Rican, and when I arrive there is a sound truck on the street advertising Medicaid in Spanish. One goes up some front steps into the lobby of the church, then down a completely dark extremely smelly staircase to the basement, a large room with the following people and furnishings: by the door, a Negro woman sitting on a chair by a sewing machine; in the middle of the room, a group of 28 children, all Negro except 2 Puerto Ricans, sitting on benches or on the floor; the aide, reading to the group from a chair; a long table by the wall (high table); 2 Negro men and some machinery for sawing pipes, along the far wall, which is not really far from the children. These men make a great deal of noise, and the library aide has already read several stories before I arrive (and before the noise started), so the aide decides to move the children upstairs to the "sanctuary".

Everyone moves upstairs in an orderly fashion, with the larger children leading the smaller (toddlers) and even

carrying them up some stairs which they cannot manage. Upstairs the children fill three rows of pews where they sit fairly close together. The aide sits in front of them, the teacher behind them, the student aide, a 10-year-old girl, sits on top of the organ to one side, and the other library aide and I sit also to one side, on pews.

The aide who came late leads an acting out of the story, which the other aide had just read, Caps for Sale. She has a shy 5-year-old boy stand next to her while she tells the story, allowing him and the other children to repeat some lines after her, while she puts caps (which she has brought from home) on his head, then on the heads of some other children, who play the part of monkeys. There is a very nice spirit, as the children are enthusiastic and willing to speak in this play. After this some children come around the aide, who decides to read another book, reverses her decision, and passes out books for browsing instead.

Hebrew Preschool

Three-year-olds, in a bright large room, well-equipped. Children's art on walls. Many plants along windows, leading to yard. 11 children, mostly Puerto Rican. Two teachers, one Puerto Rican, one Negro.

Aide, young, reads I like To Be Me with children identifying pictures. Children respond very well, are a bit distracted by observer. They sit spread out in a row with a few

behind and a teacher on a chair at either end. They are along the wall facing the whole room. The teachers are extremely attentive.

These children love to say words and make noises. No one interrupts them. Aide just goes, "Shhhh." After only two books, aide passes out books for browsing. One boy opens his and immediately says, "Mira, mira." Most of the children sit with their books on their laps on the floor. Some trade books with aide and each other. Some read with teacher. One boy reads upside down. No one seems to notice him.

Union Head Start

This is a large well-kept church in a beautiful neighborhood of old brownstones and apartment buildings. The children are in a complex of three rooms which are connected by sliding doors and surround a large meeting hall. The room is well-equipped. There is children's art, arranged on large pieces of construction paper or displayed alone, and everything in the room is labelled in large letters. There are several scruffy books piled on a shelf with puzzles and games in the center room.

I have made a mistake about the time and when I come the aide has already done a program for two classes of 3-year-olds. Now there are two classes of 28 4-year-olds at three tables in the complex of rooms. All of the children are Negro, as is the one teacher-aide present. There is also a Negro nurse. The library aide is a white woman in her thirties. She asks the

children to sit on the floor, which they do, crowded around the aide, who sits on a chair facing them; they have their backs to the large hall to which a door is open. The teacher-aide sits to one side of the doorway and sometimes quiets the children but is generally relaxed.

The aide asks the children if they will sing a hello song and an outspoken loud little girl starts singing and clapping, "Hello everybody yes indeed." The aide reads Cricter and the children respond very well, know most of the letters, and identify the pictures. Despite the close quarters and some squirming, the children are attentive and responsive. The aide reads loudly, interestingly, and is also relaxed. She leads a short transitional discussion between parts of the program.

During the browsing time the children expect to choose books, as they usually do this, but on this day the aide and the teacher (whom she asks to help) pass out the books and tell the children they may trade if they aren't satisfied. One little girl is spelling out words to herself. After a while, the books are collected.

Everyone was proud of these children, who acted so well under difficult circumstances. Half of them had never even met the library aide before, though they probably had one of their own. They were really amazingly attentive and interested, with no coercion on the part of an adult involved.

Storefront Church.

This is another grass roots organization. The children meet in a store-front church which, behind white painted windows, has one large long room, not very wide, with a linoleum floor, folding chairs, no equipment but a well-stocked (with library books) book shelf near the small kitchen in the back.

There are 23 children, all Negro except one Puerto Rican. Their ages are from about three to six. There are 12 adults in the room, mostly Negro women or girls (high school), and one Puerto Rican adolescent boy. When I enter the children are on chairs in clusters around adults and are all seated in the narrowest part of the room, near the piano, with the largest children on a semicircle of chairs, the adults around the outside and all around the room, and the little ones on the floor in the center. The library aide sits on a chair in front of the children, a second library aide, when she comes in (because last week there were 50 children and all of the adults were in a teachers' meeting), sits on a chair beside the first aide or on the piano bench.

With the exception of a crying boy whose gum was taken away, and whom his teacher is trying to comfort in a nice way, the children are quiet and fairly attentive. They participate actively, even joyfully, in several songs and finger games which the first aide leads because the second aide, whose program this usually is, hasn't arrived yet. The first aide then

begins to read a book, loudly, commanding attention with her voice; then the other aide arrives. There is the distraction of a gate being pulled closed loudly outside, to protect the open doorway. But the seated adults are generally quiet and even listen to the story. The adults occasionally reprimand a child for not participating. There is sometimes a lot of noise from the street as the door is open.

Songs. One aide plays the piano, which is only tuned in the bass part. On the second round of a song the children sing audibly. The aide applauds the children and they clap. This aide, a woman in her forties, suggests the eensy-weensy spider, and the children start right off, then do it a second time, almost by themselves. There is the rumbling of trucks passing outside.

The second aide introduces the first one and herself (again). She takes out Where the Wild Things Are. She asks the children their names and they go around, most of them speaking up quite openly. Then the aide reads this book she has taken out; she turns pages too quickly and speaks too sharply. (She later told me that she hurried because she felt that the children were distracted.) Some children are intent and some are distracted. All of a sudden there is a lot of noise from the street and from adults sitting near the front door. A crying child is being brought to class by his mother, and this finally distracts the children, who have been pretty attentive despite the obstacles. (They are interested and sym-

pathetic for the plight of their fellow) The aide asks the children to make faces like wild things, a few respond, then she moves into a song. More children arrive.

The first aide sings a song with gestures while the second aide plays the piano, and the children join in with the gestures and sing along the second time. They are really pretty responsive, though the aide tries and fails to inspire a few children who haven't made bunny ears with their fingers. A baby on her mother's lap cries loudly, but the children still sing.

During the browsing, the children are anxious for books but stay seated. The books are randomly distributed, though I hear the aide ask two sisters if they would like to share a book since they both would like it. There is squirming and conversation, but most of the children have books on their laps and turn the pages. A few adults read with children. Many adults and children yawn (morning fatigue?). There is a lot of noise but there are no behavior problems and the children stay more or less seated. Another crying child is brought in. All of the children have books but don't necessarily concentrate on them. The older children seem interested and at home during this time; they trade books and point out things to each other. The teacher is very gentle with a crying boy whose mother leaves him, cajoles him (the mother takes too long to leave). The aide collects the books and the children play with each other, with a little fighting and a

little hugging. (When I first entered this room several children came up and affectionately hugged me.)

It is interesting to observe how strong the children's powers of concentration are, given the conditions under which they are listening. This seems to support the theory that disadvantaged children tend to be better able to work than middle-class children when there is a lot of noise around them.

Memorial Head Start

This is a red brick church on the corner of a block of two-story brownstones and shingle houses. In the basement, divided by a high cupboard and book cases into two sections, are two afternoon classes. There is hardly any wall space for pictures in this small room. It is sparsely equipped but a standing book shelf has some books; and when the aide first comes a child recognizes and points out to her a book on the shelf which had come from the library the week before.

There are 11 3-year-olds, all Negro. Two teachers, one Negro and one an elderly to middle aged woman of mixed blood, leave the children with the library aide. It turns out that the aide who used to come to read to these children had requested that the teachers not be with the children as they caused some distraction. The teachers wait in the kitchen, a closet-like room just over the counter from where the children are sitting. The director of this program, who is also around and in the kitchen is a Negro woman in her forties

who is now working on her Master's Degree. It may be because of her that the feeling of this program is relaxed, and it seems to be run for the benefit of the children. The aide is a white woman in her forties who is calm and relaxed, as are the children.

The children have brought chairs into a line across from which the aide sits on a low table. They all sing a song and then the aide reads animal books, as the children went to the zoo the week before. There is much participation by the children, to whom the zoo experience is very close. A boy gets up to point to a picture, the aide accepts this, two boys follow, then the aide says, "Let's sit down," and all sit down. One boy keeps falling off his chair and playing with it, and there is no teacher around to stop him.

After the first story, the children run to the table to point out which book they want next. The aide says, "Which book do you want next?" Then the aide says, "There will be no more until you sit down," so they sit down.

The aide reads Where the Wild Things Are and one girl keeps asking, "Where the monster come from?" The teacher quiets her and the aide finally gives a perfunctory answer. The aide tells the story. The children become distracted by a parent and child walking in; then they are again attentive.

Browsing takes place at the tables. The aide hands out books at random. There is not quite enough room for all the books to be spread out on the tables, so that some children lay the books flat and one girl, at least, holds the book

upright, one or two have them closed. They turn the pages and talk. The aide reads with a boy at one table and the teacher is at another. One very bright girl hits another's book, and the teacher says firmly, "Don't do that with books, dear." One boy runs a car over a closed book. Some children go on their own to the aide's bag to get new books.

H - Place Church Head Start

Observation of Parents' Meeting

The teacher introduces the aide, to demonstrate to parents what the librarian does with children and books, so that head start does not stop after three hours, but goes into the homes. The books represented are on three major concerns of children: death, color, who am I, what do I look like, how do I identify myself; terror at being deserted (aide omits the last). The teacher implores the mothers to bother the librarians to be more sensitive, to get more books about Negroes, etc. She says, "You be kids now, try to see with the eyes and ears of your children."

The aide stands at the end of a long table in a room a little larger than the table and chairs. Most of the parents, seated around the table, are fairly attentive, though a few are eating and even talking to each other. There is the noise of the children of these parents who are playing in the next room, under the supervision of one parent. The aide notes the pleasure of meeting both the children and the parents. She is

vaguely officious, and she passes out literature about the library. Then she tells the story and shows the pictures, as she did to the children, of the Little Bird. Then she explains that after this story she just stays quiet, that this morning she led from this story--birds live in trees, what else lives in trees, squirrels--into a happy story about a squirrel, Miss Suzy.

Then she reads the story about a Negro girl, Mary Jo. She reads in the tone of a children's librarian--dramatic, sing-song, and a bit detached. Some of the parents smile and I all of a sudden have the feeling that all of these parents really do want something better for their children. The parents seem to enjoy this story. The aide explains the variety of books she reads to the children and mentions that there is a browsing time when the children climb on her lap--she relates to the parents the pleasure of this experience and seems to challenge them to share it. She passes out copies of the books to the parents.

Then the supervisor speaks, inviting the parents to go to their local library. She explains the desire of the program to serve as a bridge between the librarian and the family, through the child. She gives a brief talk on the role of the librarian and is kind and enthusiastic.

There follows a business meeting of the parents. They decide to have a graduation exercise because they, the parents, think that it's beautiful to see the children dressed up, in

ceremony. This group consists of 16 adults in all, after the library staff have left. They are mothers: a few young spirited Negro women, some older (thirties) more sedate women and two quiet Spanish-speaking mothers. There are also two family workers and a social worker. There is much ceremony in this meeting, including a birthday cake for the chairman, for whom the mothers stand up and sing.

The presentation of the librarian to these mothers was pretty formal and perhaps this was necessary. It almost seemed to be an interruption into the general mood and rapport which the parents had established among themselves. The stories themselves seemed to have some impact, perhaps because they were especially chosen by the teacher to say something to these parents. (The teacher, by the way, generally has some difficulties of communication with these parents, considering the "crazy" way in which she chooses to "educate" their children, by paying attention to their emotional needs.)

It seems too bad that the parents were not introduced to their local library, rather than to the main branch, when they went on a trip. With one or two exceptions, and active as these mothers are in meeting with one another (a fine achievement, really), I did not have the impression that they were using the library for the benefit of their children. This entire program bears further checking, because it is so interesting (because of the nature of the teacher) and because it does involve mothers who are brought together because of their

interest in their children (whether this interest is "enlightened" or not). (If these "disadvantaged" parents don't use the library, then who will?)

Observation of Aides' Training Session

The project supervisor shows the film, Madeline. "What can you say about using this film?"

Comments: "It's a learning technique." "It's an enrichment, a dessert." "Using films with children is a question we have to think about. Why and how we use them."

Shows film The Red Balloon. Discussion of use of the story book, The Red Balloon, with the film. "Is film too long for young children?" Supervisor then asks, "Could we use this film with parents of preschool children for instance, at parents' meetings?" One aide says she is going to use film and book this way, to interest parents in content and excitement of children's books.

Supervisor stands in front of the aides, talks as a leader, trainer. The discussion is a springboard for thinking about films and books. There is some discussion of whether children understand the meaning of "Paris". Supervisor gives short talk about the development of children, that we cannot bring them an adult framework and knowledge.

Later there are some announcements and then supervisor talks about a new program. "I am experimenting with a grassroots program. I want you to go in to try to read to as many

children as will listen. (She speaks of 100 in a large garage.) I want you to go there and after you have had the experience, we'll brainstorm about what to do in a completely unstructured program." She described what they might expect. Children are all in a large garage with some adults, one qualified teacher, some students. Children range from six months to five years. Thirty children are in cribs. Children are allowed to do what they are inclined to do with some gym equipment, go for walks, eat.

Aides appeared somewhat upset about this program. They discussed the inequities between programs, difference in preschool staffs, equipment, facilities, etc. Supervisor said that as a group of aides they could not do anything to protest lack of support for centers which need it, however, as citizens, they should write to the appropriate government officials.

BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY PRESCHOOL PROJECT

Interviews

Interview with Preschool Teacher

While the children are taking a nap, I come back to the center to speak with the head teacher in the staff room. I have the impression that the library aide is an accepted institution; she has come to the center for two years, and this teacher has only been there a year. The teacher uses the aide as a resource, suggesting to her the topics which are of interest to her children and which relate to their program. She comments that the aide had a greater variety (than the teacher) of books about a particular subject.

In terms of the integration of the aide's program to the life of the children, the teacher notes that children's physical treatment of the books has improved (with some coaching by the adults). Sometimes themes and characters from the books appear in the children's play, and they seem to have an amazing memory of some of the stories.

Although there is a library just a few steps away, the class has not visited there for several reasons (bad weather, lack of competent teachers with whom to divide the large group, etc.). The aide noted that she hadn't tried to take these younger children to the library, but she didn't have any reason for this decision and might try to take them soon. The teacher, too, seemed willing to have a trip soon. The teacher mentioned that some children go to the library with their mothers or siblings, and sometimes they talk about these visits. Also,

the teachers have taken books out of the library (though this teacher has no card of her own) to bring to the classroom, and occasionally they have even allowed children to take these books home. When the children see library books on the shelf in their classroom, they recognize them by the presence of cards in inside pockets, and apparently they have commented about this.

Interview with Preschool Aide

I also had a conversation with the aide, who noted that she had seen the attitude of the children in this center change with relation to books. She says that despite the problems of visibility and distraction in such a large group, the attention span of the children has increased even beyond the expectations of their teachers. She says that all of the children respond to at least some part of the program, as they have become interested in the books and the stories carefully told.

I have found the atmosphere of the program here, as in the other places I have visited so far, refreshingly relaxed. With a minimum of interference by the teachers, the aide is able to get down to the business of playing finger games and reading stories, and almost all of the children are interested and attentive, even when they are not actively participating. During the browsing period, they are left free to read by themselves, with a teacher, or with each other, and the majority take advantage of this opportunity. They seem to understand the nature of books - to read them, tell themselves stories, identify objects, look at the pictures. Apparently, at least at this center, there has been a directed movement toward this understanding, as the children used to tear the pages of books or in other ways abuse them. (Today I saw a little girl step on a book in a kind of defiance of authority.) But I did not sense a too-great respect for the books as objects, as if they were more important than people. The emphasis was rather on the activity which the books

could inspire.

As I have indicated, with a library so close, it seems too bad that the teachers or aide have not insured that the children be exposed to it. If they were once taken there, they might be in a position to urge their parents to take out books. The branch librarian, whom I met, did seem to me to be a cold young lady, and perhaps this has been a deterrent to visiting.

Interview with Project Aide

I talk at length with this aide, who used to live in the immediate neighborhood of this church. Her manner is open and forthright. She seemed to feel that, to speak frankly, she could be replaced. She had no idea how the library was effecting its stated objectives--to bring children and parents to the library--because of inadequate feedback. She did mention the following advantages or disadvantages of the program:

1) Negro children were becoming more familiar with an initially strange, white adult.

2) Her presence was a "treat" for the children; she was a "gift" and she would be happy if her coming and bringing books were to create for the children an association of books with a pleasant feeling.

3) The "good" teachers might just as well introduce the children to books but they would have the disadvantage (as against the aide) of inadequate familiarity with the content, variety, and meaning in various circumstances of books--unless she put in a great deal of time.

4) It is possible that the teacher uses the aide as an excuse for not reading herself. But the "bad" teachers might not read at all, which means that the aide is better than no one at all.

5) Many teachers--not the best--are too involved with their children to make the reading of books to them a positive

experience. This aide, for instance, finds that she has no trouble with some boys whom the teachers blame for any trouble; but the aide sees that she provides for that child at least one good experience with an "official" adult during the week.

Interview with Supervisor of Program

In a long interview the supervisor began by expressing her disappointment that she is losing several aides and she will be under-staffed. This means that she will not only not be able to fill scheduled programs, but she cannot expand to fill the needs of at least six grassroots programs that have sought her services. The limitations on her activities seem to be placed by the administration of the Brooklyn Public Library, as well as by the lack of funds: 1) She cannot cut back on established programs without the consent of her supervisors; 2) The Brooklyn Public Library Personnel Department will not hire library aides until they can undergo the intensive four-week group training which is required of them, and which is not scheduled until November; 3) Due to these two conditions imposed by the library administration, she cannot send any aides into new programs in grassroots groups--the most disadvantaged of all.

The supervisor talked around these topics before coming to the central points (which I have extrapolated rather than paraphrased). These problems involve some subtlety. For example, picture an established day care center where an aide has been coming for one or two years and is almost an adjunct of the program there; perhaps both teachers and directors depend on her contributions. Probably this aide's activities have been a noticeable influence on the life and growth of children, who find pleasure in stories, incorporate them in play, are more attentive, etc. The aide may also be seen to have relieved the

teacher of a certain responsibility. How does the supervisor explain to this staff that she is eliminating this program in order to concentrate on even more disadvantaged children? These children are disadvantaged ("though at least they've made the effort to come to a proper school"-- I imagine an insensitive administrator might say) and have clearly profited from their experience with the library aide.

It is important to note here that the grassroots programs have arisen to meet a need, because there are not enough places for children in the day care centers and Head Start programs. I visited a program in Cooper Park Day Care Center where the director said that she had a waiting list of 57 children for enrollment. This supervisor seems to be the only library institutional person who is aware of or interested in some of these grassroots programs. They have no social worker, no community worker, and probably neither Youth in Action nor any other anti-poverty or other government agency knows about them. Certainly the library should not be put in this position as the only ministering agency to a group of children. However, at the moment, it is; and this complicated their position in relation to the demands of the library and its own objectives and the responsibility for helping disadvantaged children.

She said that she teaches her aides "techniques" of storytelling, including holding the book to one side and reading it, but that she thinks they should do what is comfortable for them. Evidently, these are well codified techniques, as she

also mentioned that she encouraged an aide to reply to a child's burning question or let him speak if he was about to burst, although one of the children's librarians downtown would never allow this. She hadn't thought about the example the aide sets in memorizing a book and presenting it without looking at it.

Interview with Mothers in Program

As the meeting breaks up, I am able to speak with three of the parents. One of them had only been to the library when the parents went as a group to get cards from the main branch, last winter. She said that her oldest son goes, and the others go from school. Another mother said that she hadn't been to the library since she lived in that neighborhood, that her children didn't go, but that they had books at home. The third woman was coming to this group for the first time, as her children had just entered the school. She hadn't been to the library in the two years she lived in this neighborhood, wasn't sure where one was (about three blocks away, across a large intersection, in a different neighborhood, actually), but she used to go to the library for herself, to get something to read. She said, "That book really got to me, about the dead bird. My friend passed away last night, died in bed, left five children." She asked me, "Where is the nearest library? I'd like to go there, get some books for the children. They don't have any at home. They play with toys, I'd like them to learn something." She understands that they just look at the pictures and tells me that they tell themselves stories.

Interview with Parents

I spoke for a while with some parents who were around. One mother, a young Negro woman who had children aged 3, 4, and 5, spoke quietly and at length, mentioning incidents of her children, so that I got some small picture of their life. These children have books at home, and their mother says that she lets them read anything- medical books, encyclopedia, comic books, etc. She said that one book seemed to be helping her boy to read, and she went to the 4-year-old room and brought back a torn Golden book called The Dragon in the Wagon, which had pictures and rhyming words; she said that for some reason her son got tired of this book and threw it away, but she suggested that he give it to his teacher instead. Sometimes one of her children will "read" to the other two. The oldest girl, aged 5, often makes up songs and stories- mother will be washing dishes in the kitchen and say, tell me a story, and this child will sing a song about mother washing dishes in the kitchen and other things that she has seen that day. The children are very fond of animals and they often go to the Prospect Park Zoo. When I left, this mother was reading to a small group of children in the 5-year-old class. It is difficult to describe her as "disadvantaged." (This is a Youth in Action all day - 9 to 3 - head start program so the mothers are usually not working.) She does read herself, for her own pleasure.

Another young mother was also sitting by us and occasionally spoke about her child. She says that she does go to the library, that the silent atmosphere doesn't bother her because

"libraries are always supposed to be quiet."

The first mother thought that it was good for the aide to come in as the teacher might not have time to prepare a program. She noted that the children are always very quiet for the aide because she interests them in the stories.

Interview with Aide

The teacher of the 5-year-olds in this program is an old-fashioned moralist who seeks to teach the children proper manners and decorum and apparently (from the aide's description) does not know very much about their world. I suggested to the aide the possibility of concentrating on training teachers as storytellers rather than bringing in the specialist aides. She thought it unlikely that a teacher such as the one just described could love children's books the way the aides do. She mentioned that in training she had been told to bring pleasure to the children through books, and to do this one must feel for himself the pleasure that they provide. One teacher she knows went to the library and took out the Holy Bible and a book of 19th century English poetry!

Interview with Library Staff Parents

I met with Mrs. W. and three parents from a cooperative preschool who are seeking an extension of the library readings in their program. These parents hire a teacher to come twice a week for about twelve 3-to 4-year-olds. This summer their group will be combined for a library program with a community center group. All will meet in the garden of the branch library. They met to arrange this.

One mother spoke to me at length while project supervisor was on the phone. She thinks that the library program is very important for children whose parents may not have time to read to them at home or to teach them colors, numbers, etc. Evidently, the teacher reads to and teaches the children, but this mother feels that the storyteller is particularly important.

Later - the parents agree that the storyteller was really good with the children. Once before there was a storyteller who some children just did not like. They said, "She wants you to be still." But the new aide knew what to do with the children, if they didn't pay attention he would ask them if they wanted to hear a story, or he would sing a song. He was the best that we have had so far being with the children. Maybe it is his being a man, they could talk to him. Guess he was just a born teacher. I guess it's the way he expresses himself. One day R. said, "I'm tired, I'm tired," and Mr. M. heard him and said, "You tired?" and R. said, "I'm tired of that book." Mr. M. said, "What do you want to do now? Play a game?" and R. and the children

all said, "yes, play a game, play a game," so Mr. M. stopped at the next page of the book and they played a game.

This mother also spoke about her children with what seemed to be a very enlightened attitude. She mentioned how important it is to accept what a child sees in the pictures of a story and not impose adult ideas. (Let me note that this woman, Negro and in her thirties, spoke lucidly but with "poor" grammar, of which she was unself-conscious.)

She also pointed out how a mother cannot always be attentive to her child's needs, which is why she thinks that a pre-school experience is so important. (I heard this same argument from the white middle-class aide whom I spoke with yesterday.) Her point was confirmed even as she brought her 3½-year-old son to this meeting, where he squirmed on her lap until I suggested that he get a book (after all, we were in the library), and when he brought the book over to show her she had to send him away as she was involved in talking.

These mothers are planning to put signs up around their housing project in order to advertise the summer library readings. Project supervisor wonders if this might not bring too many children and the mothers said no and, seriously, not condemningly, explained that many parents work and others think that their children have had enough of school during the year and so they just don't pay attention to this particular need of the children to hear stories.

These women, especially the spokesman, take the li-

brary program, the preschool, and the learning of children very seriously. They sound rather middle-class in world view though they appear to be relatively uneducated (and therefore perhaps a bit inclined to trust their children's education to the best of experts - of whom, however, they are not uncritical).

Interview with Library Aide

I think of it primarily as entertainment. The most educational thing is to have children tell you the story during browsing, to help them verbalize. It's hard to tell what they get from it. They get to like books.

The way to get children to the library is to have more programs in the library. One aide brings 5-year-olds every two weeks to the library. How much do children associate aide with library? They seem to know where books come from. They do learn to enjoy books, more vocabulary, etc.

Teachers who pay attention to books pay attention to them. "If they didn't have this program they wouldn't go to the library unless they already do." Though I've had teachers say to me, "I can read them stories but you bring in new books that you know and I don't know and you read them differently."

One child had obviously been to the library, recognized a book that is not in most collections. But her mother was not affected by the librarian aide, she would have gone anyway.

In one place the teacher talks about the books after lunch. But then again she's a very good teacher.

Interviews with Children

Talked with two children at lunch. 1) Do you have books at your house? Yes. What are they about? About a rabbit and a train. Who reads them to you? Myself. . . . Do you ever go to the library? Yes. Who takes you? My mother. What do you do there, what is there? Books. What do you do with them? Take them home. 2) Do you have books at your house? Yes, one about Indians. They shoot the flowers. Then the cowboys, this many (three fingers) shoot the flowers. Does anyone read these to you? My father. Did you ever go to the library? No. What do they have there? Books. Yes, and you can take them home and keep them for a while. With my mother or father.

Interview with Aide

There is no statistical proof of its success. When you meet up with parents who have brought their children to the library, you don't know if the program is a prime mover because we are not in direct contact with parents. So we work through schools and children. In fact, they call me library before they know my name, and they think that I am a building. Whenever I can, I take classes to the library. Where contact with parents is good, I have no doubt that teachers encourage them to go to the library.

Now, at the end of term, I am giving out a blank so that parents can get cards for any child who can write his name.

There is a serious problem of communication and the children are too young to do anything about it. Perhaps the objective could be achieved by a few programs to be done in the public schools in the first grade as a follow up.

Teachers in many cases do not know how to tell stories. Unawareness of techniques, comfort of children, ability to keep order in an abstract sense rather than making situation as actionless as possible. Teachers don't always know books very well and need background of books, training in how to tell stories.

Interview with Head Teacher

I talked with the head teacher, a warm, relaxed woman. She says that they use books and read to the children every day, usually during transitional periods. She tends to have discussions with the children, especially to hold their interest and to teach number and color concepts. She noted that the library aide does not really have time for discussions, though she does teach some things (words, sounds). The children have a longer attention span when the aide reads because she is not part of the daily involvement. The children look forward to Fridays when the aide comes.

The teacher says that a minority of the parents read to their children. The children are allowed to take home books from the room's collection (overnight) and during the period of adjustment, when the child first comes, this is encouraged. The parents are urged to read to the children at home.

The teacher has no estimate of how many of the parents go to the library.

The teacher concludes, "Treatment of books is learned through browsing. The aide leaves many books for the week for the children to browse through."

Interviews with Children

I stayed for lunch and talked with several children at my table. The children in this class seem to be very alert and several are extremely bright, responsive, and thoughtful.

The little girl who made the comment about the library said that her mother reads to her. Another little girl said that her sister goes to the library, has taken her once, but she herself cannot take out books because she has no card. She does have two books at home; one about a gingerbread man (this was the second time I've heard a child say this was a book he owned) and one about "something else."

A boy indicated to me that he has been to the library and has a book about "flies" at his house. He tried to explain the story but it was unclear to me.

Another girl said that there are only "parent's books" at her house, but last week her aunt took her to the "cannibal" (carnival) and next Tuesday she is going to the library. I could not tell if this is true.

Interview with Parent

Talked with a parent who was sewing graduation dress.

Said her daughter looks forward to Tuesday to see librarian. Quotes aide who says that her child has best memory for stories. Parent is very pleased. I ask if she ever reads to her daughter. She is a little embarrassed, says they have little books at home but she really looks forward to the youth of the library aide.

Interview with Preschool Teacher

I talked with the teacher, Negro male, thirties, who said that libraries have a very bad image. They seem to be stuffy, formal, uncomfortable. This may not be the case, but then people need to be brought into the library itself, through music and exhibits. About bringing in the parents: Head Start teachers don't ever see many of the parents; the children come to school with brothers or sisters, and the parents who do come around, who are the most interested, are not so important to reach anyway. (The field worker questioned this.)

Interview with Child

Read Curious George with a 5-year-old. I asked, "Can monkeys telephone?" "No." "Can you?" "Yes. My mother says I can call her to work." "What would you say?" "Come home." "Then what would she do?" "Turn on the TV." "Does she ever read to you?" Seems to indicate no. "Do you have books at your house?" "No. Comic books. Mickey Mouse." He goes back and forth through this book, talking softly about pictures, alone or with my encouragement. When aide collects books he says, "I have to give this back now."

Interview with Minister

Before leaving this center, I had an opportunity to speak with the minister who fosters it. He is an intelligent man who has been in this neighborhood for 18 years. His language reflects the tradition of his vocation: he speaks of self-help, discipline, etc. He is apparently appalled by the wanton destruction and disregard for property which is characteristic of his neighborhood. I ask him about the library services and he says that the branch library burned down a few years before, leaving only the summer bookmobile as a direct service to his community. He did not believe that many people could get to the nearest library, which is in P_____. He said that there was a very active community center nearby (P_____), and that there might be some pressure to rebuild the old library.

Interview with Teachers

I spoke for a few minutes with Mrs. J., who I had thought was the head teacher. She said that most of the children probably don't go to the library, that they haven't gone as a group, but that obviously a few children have their own libraries at home. She said that she thinks it is very good for the children to meet another adult, the librarian, once a week, so that one can see if they are relating to adults in general or just to their teachers.

I also spoke with the head teacher, who said, in response to my question, that she usually sits in on this program. In the mornings, when the children first come to school, there is a quiet time during which they can take books and read individually, or perhaps with a teacher. The classroom is very small with a small book corner, and the aide left four or five books with the teacher.

Interview with Preschool Director

I had an opportunity to talk briefly with the director of the center. She doesn't think that the children go to the library, which is too far away. The 4 - and 5- year-olds have gone as a group, however. The director does not think that many children have books in their homes. There is a small collection of books in the center, but lending them is not a big deal; they must be taken out by an adult and sometimes a teacher takes some out for a child, if she thinks they will help him.

Interview with Aide

I also talked at length with the library aide, who speaks interestingly on several topics during the hours I am with her (for lunch, etc.). 1) The director at this center used to create problems for the aide by her demands for strict punctuality. The aide invited her to visit a few programs, and the director came to see the excitement of the children and to loosen up just a bit. Because of restrictions on time, and because she does not think it is so important for these children, the aide has cut short the browsing period.

2) The aide went to great length to avoid a negative conclusion to the library trip with the children. She had taken the 4-and 5-year-olds on a chartered bus to the library, where the older ones got library cards and took out two books each, over which they were very excited, often choosing books which the aide had once read to them. They were supposed to return to the library in three weeks, at which time their books were due, but the center could not hire a bus as it was out of funds. Finding out that overdue notices would be sent to the parents of these children, the aide was very upset that they might be down on the library forever. The library would not change its policy, so the aide collected the 80 books from the children and personally returned them to the branch!

3) She told me that she had been forced to leave a Head Start program where she had read, because it is in a public school, from which category the project has withdrawn all programs.

She was disconcerted about this for several reasons. In the first place, the teacher, a former library aide, had a class of emotionally disturbed children and claimed that she could not possibly have the time to prepare an adequate reading program. The readings by this aide had evidently been a charm to the children in the past. The teacher did not feel that she could go to the library all of the time to get a selection of books, or that she could keep up with the new books. Part of the reasoning in discontinuing this program in general (and no exceptions were made for this particular case) was that schools have their own library. But this aide reported the teacher's observation that, as the first and second graders were still reading picture books, there were not enough books for the younger children either.

She was very enthusiastic about the work that she had been doing, though she is perhaps having to leave the program in a few weeks, because her husband may be taking a job in another town. She reported that several people were leaving the program for different reasons, and she feared that the project would be very short of staff until the next training program in November.

Interview with Preschool Director

I came early to this center and there was some problem with the director, an elderly Jewish lady who couldn't understand why she was not notified that I was coming. After calling to check with the project supervisor, this director came over to sit with me and tell me all about the program at her center; she talked for so long that she even kept the aide, who arrived in the middle of the interview, a little late. She mentioned that the children take trips to the library with their teachers, and that they all know about the library this way, but probably only a small percentage go back with their parents.

The director spent a lot of time telling me about a special program which she initiated about three years ago at a parents' meeting. This concerns a lending library, set up at the day care center, which has a collection of children's books to be taken home for two weeks. The parents arranged a raffle, collected trading stamps to get prizes, and raised about \$200 to buy library books. There are now about 40 good books. The office gives some structure to the library by keeping the books in shape, reminding the parents of overdues, and encouraging the parents to read the book every day to the children, for they will profit from this familiarity with its contents, even if the adults are inclined to get bored by it. There is a parent-librarian who distributes the books from a cart in the lobby once a week; and on this day the young children and their school-age siblings crowd around to choose books.

QUEENSBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY OPERATION HEAD START

Observations of Story Telling
and Parent Programs

BRANCH I LIBRARY "A"

The neighborhood serviced by this branch is one of apartment buildings, especially one which is referred to as a housing project. This series of buildings covers several blocks, six stories high, and gives a look of neat uniformity. The branch library is built to blend in with the color and style of the apartments and of the small shopping center which services it. In this sense it may be considered a storefront branch.

The interior of the library, however, is similar to those of many other branches. It has one floor; the librarians' office is in the rear of the room; the space left is rectangular. Fluorescent lighting and fans make for a bright and pleasant atmosphere.

The children's section of the library is merely sectioned off by a tall book shelf, leaving the open side facing the front of the building. For the reading program, tall green screens are used to close off most of this space.

The rest of the library has five long tables with six comfortable chairs each for public use. Magazines and newspapers are centrally available, as is the rack of paperback books used for the parents' program. The books by Dr. Spock look the most used.

The set-up and process used for the children's program which I shall describe is similar to those in the other program. The aide (in this case a male) has cushions of different colors

on which the children sit when they come in. He sits on an adult-sized chair, and has a table next to him. On the table several books are displayed, standing up. He starts the program with what has been termed as a candle lighting ceremony, which announces "our trip to storyland". "And what do we have to do to get to storyland? We o-o-open our eyes (appropriate gestures), we o-o-open our ears (tugging at the ear lobes), and we zipper our mouth (zipping motion). And now we are set to begin." The aide then dramatically reads a book. He occasionally asks questions, usually of the rhetorical sort, or those demanding one answer or a short answer. Immediately after the story, the book is closed and several finger plays are done. Another book is read, more finger plays are played, another book, and the program ends, the candle is blown out, and the children leave.

This particular Monday was hot, even at 10:30 in the morning. Consequently, the only children who showed up for the story time were those brought in by their teachers from the nursery school across the street which services the apartments. These were all 4 -and 5 -year-olds; all except one were Negro. Just 15 children out of a usual 28 came to the reading program that morning, and no mothers came for the parents' program.

The aide had set out his materials very carefully, so that he was able to go from one thing to another -- perhaps a bit too swiftly. He read the books in the ultra-dramatic style so familiar to those who have seen children's programs on TV. The distance between the reader and the listeners was much like that between

the TV performer and his viewers.

The two teachers who had accompanied the children sat at the back of the space on chairs. They sharply reprimanded those who made noise, extra motions, or any disturbances. The aide and the teachers seemed to be mutually ignoring each other, for often the loudest reprimand came when the aide was in the midst of speaking; he let nothing stop his voice from continuing.

The aide asked the children questions which were meant to draw relationships between their own experience and what had taken place in the story. However, they were not used to stimulate any real discussion or thought on the part of the children. The only out-of-the-ordinary or interesting thing said by a child was in response to the question "And what do you like to play?" (meaning what games). Among answers of baseball, fingerplay games, and so on was the answer "I like to play poker." Laughter followed.

The aide verbally insisted on one child speaking at a time, but was not consistent in his answering pattern. To those who yelled the loudest or were most insistent about answering -- whether or not someone else was speaking-- he would say "That's good" or "That's nice", ignoring the patient ones with hands raised.

During the readings the children watched, answered questions with the eager preface "I know; I know", remarked to each other about the pictures, and clapped after each reading.

The candle, which had been burning all along, was hidden from most of the children by the way the aide was sitting. One of

the children towards the end suddenly said "Oh! Look at the candle!" The aide answered "I know; it's getting smaller", dismissing what could have been the beginning of a discussion.

The only discussion which really took place was between the teacher and the aide after the teacher unsuccessfully tried to prompt the children to tell the aide about their new pet. All they responded with was "parrot". So she gave up and told him of their parakeet with its 12 word vocabulary.

The children's program appeared to be quite contrived and formal, with such gimmicks as the candle, and the jingle bribing them to be still with a promise of something mysterious to follow. The reading voice of the aide was far removed from the kind of interest which children respond to. It seemed very unnatural.

The aide in charge of the parents' program had, in the meantime, set up to show a film about prejudice. I asked if there would be a discussion following. Although this aide had been with the program for three years, she did not know. She and another aide decided that discussion would follow if there was time, or it would be saved until the following week.

Branch Library "B" -- Out Agency
Park Program

This park (more correctly "playground") is situated in a quiet, pleasant neighborhood with one-family houses and tree-lined streets. The park is within walking distance from the library.

At 10:30 A.M., the two aides were the only ones in the park. The aides are both white, one a man. Children came in one by one at about 10:45, and went straight to the large yellow beach umbrella under which the aides were sitting. The female aide began the program at 11:00 with six children; at the end there were fourteen children -- ranging in age from very young three-year-olds to six-year-olds. All the children were white. Most of them came with parents; some mothers sat on the benches either just within ear and eye shot, or right next to the aide's bench.

The atmosphere was informal, and gave the appearance of being less structured than indoor programs. The same opening ceremony was used, however, and the aides' voices (which had been very natural and interesting when in conversation with me) took on the same stage quality which was noticeable at Queensborough.

The transitions from story to finger play to story were all so swift that there was no time for the children to register any reactions or have any discussions. During the reading of the stories, the faces of the children were primarily blank. Unsolicited comments from the children were ignored. At one point, a boy identified a picture as that of a bird. Other children identified the picture more correctly, but the aide never took up what that particular boy had said -- to find out why he saw it as a bird, why it is different, etc. I considered a valuable chance to have been lost for clarifying concepts, and identifying images.

From my viewpoint, the aides both seemed to be putting on a performance for a group, rather than establishing a relationship with it or with individual children. After one aide had read two stories and done some finger plays inbetween, the other aide read two more stories with some finger plays. I found the material to be particularly attractive (i.e. a wonderfully illustrated book of There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed A Fly was half sung and half chanted by the aide), but the presentations, despite good methods, did not convince me that the aides shared in the enjoyment of the books or were trying to communicate any real enjoyment or involvement in the stories.

During the children's program, the other aide casually spoke to whichever mother or mothers happened to be nearby, or just stayed in the background. There was no parent program going on. Several of the mothers were reading The New York Times.

Branch Library "C"

This branch is an actual store-front on a main street in a depressed-looking area. The furniture and interior of the branch library is similar to those of the other branches. However, I noticed the successful use of a book display table (with slanted surfaces) in the children's corner.

Before the beginning of the program, children were looking through the books displayed, and talking to the aide. At its start, there were nine children listening to the stories; by the end there were 14 children between the ages of 2½ -

to 4 -years-old. All were Negro. The aide used the same opening procedure as in the other branches.

During one of the finger plays a child interrupted to ask an unrelated question about the fan. The aide stopped until the child had satisfied his curiosity, then she went on. No disturbance had taken place; in fact most of the children were extremely attentive to what was going on.

One boy wandered from his cushion to a bench and back with no reprimand and without distracting any child's attention for any length of time. Even those in the back of the group were very engrossed and actively involved in finger plays and in listening.

While one aide took care of the actual program, the other one made sure each child had a cushion and a place on the floor as he came in. Both aides knew the names of the children.

During a slide movie of Mike Mulligan some of the children chimed in with the simultaneous reading of the text.

The aide asked many questions throughout the story time. All were well answered.

Later I discovered that the aide had taught school before she got married. This could possibly account for her lack of anxiety whenever the children squirmed or showed any restlessness; there was no pressure exerted on her part to keep filling in spaces of time.

The parent program was going on simultaneously in the front part of the library.

Branch Library "D"

This branch is located in a converted store front on the main street in the middle of town. Its interior is much like the other interiors of branches. The angled table for book display is there, but is only being used as a space divider.

For the children's program (1:00 PM) the ceremony with the candle lighting took place. Eight and later nine children attended. They were all Negro, from three to four and a half years old.

The children seemed familiar with the book Green Eyes. After, when the children tried to start discussion about the cat, the aide said softly "Shhh -- I think Green Eyes went to sleep. Let's not wake him." She referred to a longhaired stuffed toy cat on the book table next to her as she spoke.

Unlike most of the other aides, this one used more time to tell the children what the story was going to be about, and motivated them to connect in some way their own experiences with what was to take place in the book. Consequently, she did not use the finger plays for transition as did most of the other aides.

When she read What's That Noise the children were entranced. The aide's voice was changing with each character's words.

The program ended with Harold and the Purple Crayon in an animated color film. Towards the end of it a boy cried: "I want to see the monster again." The monster had appeared in the very beginning of the film.

During the program, when late-comers came in, there was no welcome extended or help given to them to get a cushion and find a place on the floor. At other branches, another aide was always available to take care of this.

Branch Library "D"
A Parent Program

While the other field woman observed the storyhour, I sat in on the parent group led by a male aide. The physical setup was comfortable - the six mothers and aide sat around a table in the front of the library while the children were in a screened off area in the rear. The aide presented pamphlets around which the discussion would center and which could be taken home. Unfortunately, none were taken from the library. The aide used the guidelines and asked the prescribed questions but answers were not discussed. The hour was more of a recitation or lecture than a discussion. The mothers seemed bored and had every reason to be. (I was!) Much of his time was spent on personal anecdotes from his own family life which were not relevant to the topic or the participating mothers. Although he was married, the aide appeared to be much younger than the mothers, most of whom seemed to be in their late twenties. This fact, together with his manner and the reaction of the mothers, led me to suspect that they may have

felt they were being "talked down to".

Branch Library "C"
A Parent Program

Upon entering this Branch, which is situated in a row of stores, it was immediately evident that something here was different. We were welcomed warmly by the staff, who proved to be dynamic individuals, genuinely interested in the community and dedicated to producing an effective program.

There were 18 children and 13 mothers attending this morning. While the other field woman observed the storyhour I sat in on the parent program discussion. The age of the mothers ranged from middle twenties to early fifties. The aide made excellent use of the guidelines during the discussion, presented pamphlets which were referred to during the hour and later taken home. In her questions and suggestions, the aide showed a realistic understanding of these people and their needs, as well as a genuine respect. As the discussion continued the community spirit in this group was almost tangible and the enthusiasm and participation of each mother truly remarkable. This discussion led to the establishment of a baby-sitting service with the help of a local Girl Scout troop. A previous discussion resulted in a series of scheduled summer outings for children who are bused to schools outside the neighborhood.

Branch Library "E"
Out-Agency: Church School

Before leaving for the out-agency with the aides, I had an opportunity to observe a storyhour just beginning in the library. The aide was expecting a prekindergarten class from a public school and had placed a book on each cushion so the children could browse as soon as they came in. This procedure did away with the usual confusion of getting the children seated and reasonably quiet, for they immediately sought a seat and a book. The aide began with the candle ceremony and "journey into storyland" and then reviewed the days of the week. The atmosphere seemed free and conducive to attention and response. The children did not hesitate to question, answer or comment on their own. A movie, "Make Way for Ducklings" was then shown to the group.

By this time the aides were ready to leave for the church school which is about a mile from the branch. The storyhour takes place in what passes for a library in the church school. The building is very old and the facilities are not adequate. The room was spacious enough however, to permit a circle-dance type song.

Then seven children, aged 2-to-5-years-old, arrived at 10:45 and all but the 2-year-old browsed until 11 o'clock. They were familiar with the books and appeared to enjoy the 15 minutes spent this way. The area seemed to be lower middle class with a mainly Negro population, reflected in the group: 6 Negro children and 1 white. While the children were browsing, an excerpt from "The Nutcracker Suite" was played but the children

seemed oblivious to this. Three unrelated stories (no theme), separated by finger-plays and songs, were presented to the children. The procedure of the aides was one I had not seen before: one presented the stories, the other, the songs and finger-plays. This presentation also differed from the one at the branch in that there was no real interaction with the children, although these children have been coming all year and some for two years. They were very docile, quiet and had no questions or comments. Both aides appeared comfortable in their positions and interested in the children but no reactions or participation were encouraged in the children.

The whole experience for the child seemed rather passive to me. One of the reasons for this may lie with the children themselves and the fact that they have not had any school experience, as had the group back at the branch.

Branch Library "F"
Out-Agency: "F" Houses

Despite heavy rain there were nine children, aged 3-6- years-old, at this program. The program took place in a large basement room used as a children's library, stocked and staffed by a church community center. It was a bright and cheerful room with colorful chairs, tables and bookcases and decorated with art work done by the children. The emphasis was definitely on books. They were all over and in great numbers.

While waiting for the aide to begin, the children were told to sit quietly on their pillows, which they did. They were surrounded by books but none were offered for browsing. The standard procedure was followed: elaborate candle ceremony, songs, finger plays and three stories - Whistle for Willie, Whose Little Bird Am I? and The Little Red Hen - a wish was made, the candle was blown out and the children left.

The children were very attentive, seemed comfortable with the aide and identified many of the animals in the stories. Yet they were not encouraged to question or comment. In fact, most questions and comments were ignored. When the aide introduced The Little Red Hen a 5-year-old girl, the most verbal in the group, said, "No! It's a chicken." This was ignored by the aide who immediately began the story. A little boy very quietly suggested that the aide move the other two books not being used at the moment because "They is too close to the fire and might burn". I spoke to the children before the program began but the only response came from the 5-year-old girl. The others would say nothing about the rain or the stories. The only information given was their names. On the whole, they were much less verbal than children I spoke to at other branches.

When the children left I noticed that they took no books with them. I questioned the aide about this and was told that all the books in the room belong to the church community center and none were supplied by the public library.

If the children want books they must return when the regular staff is there. Cooperation between these two agencies might be beneficial.

Branch Library "G"

"G" Branch is situated in a middle class neighborhood. The building is large and offers ample space for the storyhour and parent program. The children are separated from the rest of the library by gaily decorated screens. The mothers gathered around a cluster of tables and couches at the other end of the room.

Three children were present for this program; two were 4 -years-old, the other was 5. . The aide said that eight to fifteen children usually attend but the rain must have kept them home. As each child arrived he was given a brightly colored paper bell with his name on it to wear around his neck.

The aide began with the candle ceremony, the program followed the standard procedure of story - song - finger play and a warm relationship with the children was immediately evident. The aide discussed the subject of each story with the children and provided ample opportunity for participation. However, two of the children were first-timers and were dominated by a 5-year-old girl who has been coming all year. At the conclusion of the storyhour the aide helped the children select books to bring home.

There were only two mothers at the parent program this

afternoon and unfortunately, they were answering a questionnaire on this year's programs. However, the physical set-up plus coffee and cookies seemed conducive to a good discussion.

Branch Library "H"

Branch "H" was built only six years ago and has excellent facilities. It is well stocked with books purchased with city, state and federal funds. It is conveniently located in one of the larger and more publicized poverty pockets of Queens.

I arrived early and was given a complete tour by the children's librarian, who is a Negro. She urges the aides to memorize each story so they can constantly watch the children. When I asked about the general level of verbalization she said, "Oh, all our children speak very well." The group I later observed showed little evidence of this. Unfortunately, I got a very definite impression that the staff "was putting on a good show" for the visitor. The entire staff knew all about me so I gathered that they had been forewarned.

An aide, not usually scheduled for this hour, presented this program. The only deviation from standard procedure is that the aide reads one story and then an activity story. The aide appeared very comfortable in her relationship with the 16 children present. Most of the children selected books to take home. I spoke to a few children who recognized Caps for Sale but could not tell me the story.

The parent program, a film on prejudice, was held in the front of the library. What could have been a good discussion situation was stifled by the artificial classroom type set-up. The mothers sat in rows and the aide stood before them like the traditional teacher. The discussion was dominated by three women and all comments were directed at the aide rather than the group.

Branch Library "I"

The neighborhood serviced by branch "I" varied both ethnically and economically. Many foreign speaking people, Negroes and Puerto Ricans live in the area but the library is used for the most part by middle class whites. The library itself, unlike most branches, is not one store-front type structure, but two.

The program I observed was attended by 5 children, all 4 - and 5 -years-old and white. It took place in a screened off section of the children's library, very comfortable and adequate for its purposes. There were no books provided for browsing. The aide followed the standard procedure and also showed a film strip, "I Know an Old Lady". The atmosphere was relaxed and the aide initially appeared comfortable in his position but I later doubted this because of his continued lack of interaction with the children. One child was very verbal and responsive, so all questions were directed at and answered by her. The others did not participate at all.

Branch Library "J"

Branch Library "J" is located in a middle class neighborhood that is slowly assimilating lower socioeconomic groups. The library is very small with barely enough space for the storyhour and nothing nearly adequate for the parent program.

Three children were present for the program. The aide began with the rules of storyland: "We open our eyes, listen with our ears, don't talk and (a new one) don't touch our neighbor." The standard procedure, including the candle ceremony was followed. The theme was transportation and the aide read Little Black, A Pony, The Little Train, and Big Red Bus. Even the songs sung by the children were related to the theme. The first story was much too long for the attention span of these children and they began to get restless. When a little boy got up to look out the window the aide said very sternly, "Adam, will you get back here!" Her manner throughout the storyhour was very stern and cold.

A very interesting film "Children Without" was shown to the two mothers present for the parent program. They conversed throughout paying no attention to the film. There was no discussion of the film.

The parent program is held in a very small room that serves as kitchen and storage room. The maximum capacity is four people.

QUEENSBOROUGH PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTERVIEWS

Interview with Parents

I later interviewed three mothers about the program. They had all heard of it through friends, each said that "sometimes the discussions are good" but that they come primarily so that the children can come to the storyhour. In other words, the discussion seems to be just something to put up with. They each take three or four books home for the children each week but do not usually take any for themselves. One mother had made use of the library before the program began; the others had not.

(In comparison to others, this parent program is drastically deficient. Techniques of leading a discussion or principles of group dynamics might be added to the training program to enable the aides to better implement or supplement the guidelines and hence, maybe help remedy a situation such as this.)

Interview with AidePark Program

Prior to the children's program, and for a while afterwards, I was able to have an extensive and very free discussion with the aides. From them I learned that the aides canvas neighborhoods of their choice for an out-agency program. They also may choose the site of the program. In this case the two aides chose a middle class area because they liked the looks of it, and admitted that they would not want to go into the park in the Negro area (which is quite a distance from the Branch Library). They further admitted that most of the children to whom they read are not culturally deprived, and that the parents who come to the parent programs do not need the kinds of discussions which are scheduled (e.g.: one of the programs was to be on landlords, but every parent who attended was a home owner in his own right.). Both aides seemed not to know the actual goals of the program.

They seemed interested in the problems of cultural deprivation, but they did not envision themselves to be in any capacity to be meeting these problems -- especially in the Branch Library "B". Many of the children and mothers they were working with already used the library.

Although the aides were quite on their own in the running of this out agency, they exhibited lack of creativity and resourcefulness. Operation Head Start provided them with the large yellow umbrella last year, but they had no idea what it was to be used for.

Consequently it stayed in a closet. This year they realized that the umbrella was to attract people when a mother told one of the aides that she knew about the program only after satisfying her curiosity about the yellow umbrella in the park (which the aides were using as protection from the sun.)

Other instances deal more with the program. The aides seem to know the names of very few children -- although most of them are regulars. In the past they have had as many as 28 or 30 children come to the story time, but never considered that splitting the group might be a better way of handling the large numbers than having one aide be a disciplinarian.

I asked the aides if they ever pick up from things the children indicate interest in, and from there tell a story made up on the spot -- integrating various elements supplied by the children. One of the aides said "Good idea! I never thought of that." But several moments his enthusiasm seemed to decline when he added: "But you know, you have to be secure with the children." Previous to discussing this they had told me that they do tell stories, but that they are memorized carefully from the books.

Interview with Branch & Project StaffBranch Library "C"

We spent a very rewarding hour having lunch with the staff. Their congenial relationship as a team, genuine interest and willingness to go beyond minimum requirements was quite edifying. Two of the aides (one is certified in N-3) are preparing their own program to send to Albany. This branch makes conscientious use of an efficient follow-up system. Their programs are filled. It is my opinion that Branch "C" would be an ideal branch for observation during the training period.

Interview - Four Mothers
Branch Library "C"

I spoke to four mothers after the discussion. All come regularly and were very enthusiastic about both aspects of the OHS program. They all take books home for the children and usually include something for themselves, even if it is only a magazine. They had only one suggestion for improvement - to hold the program more frequently than once a week.

Interview & Aides Meeting
Branch Library "A"

From speaking with the branch head librarian and the various aides I learned that seven aides are headquartered at this branch since their original branch became an out-agency (due to problems of building facilities). The group seemed to be very friendly and congenial; there is not any frantic activity or disorganization apparent.

After the children had left the library, the aides got together to have their meeting on the content of future programs --i.e. what books were to be read. They seemed to feel that it was necessary to build the selection of books around a theme. The one chosen was "friends", and every book dealing with friends with which they were familiar was brought up and quickly evaluated by phrases which probably were recalled from their training program.

The project director, who dropped in before the children's program to take pictures, sat in on the aide's discussion with me. In a conversation apart from the meeting, she said that one of the goals of the program is to get books into the children's hands, especially after the program so that the children can bring some home. She indicated that it was sometimes difficult to get this idea across to the aides (perhaps because they envision themselves more as story tellers than as librarians.) She mentioned this because there had been no handling of books by the children either before or after the

story time.

Another interesting thing which she told me about concerns the training of the aides. She explained how they use tape recorders occasionally to help the aides improve the quality of their voices and the style of their story telling.

Interviews with Children
Branch Library "E"

I spoke to most of the children after the program, questioned them about the books just read and followed the sample interview but could not get much of a response (a one word answer if an answer was given at all) from any of them. At the other branches these questions usually elicit much response from the children. Gift books were given to the children but there were no books available for the mothers to borrow.

Interviews with Mothers
Branch Library "E"

The first woman I spoke to after the program was a grandmother who has been bringing her grandchildren for two years. She learned about the program from posters in the local shops and was encouraged by a friend to bring the children. She is pleased with the program because she feels "It has made them ready for school and helps them get along with other children". She thinks that posters should be put back in the stores but had no suggestions for other services the library could render. Her family does not make use of the library because it is too far from their home.

The second mother I spoke to also had two children in the program. She has been coming only a few weeks and is sorry that she did not hear about the program sooner. (She heard about it from a neighbor.) One of her children will enter Project Head Start in July. She occasionally makes use of the library for books to read to the children.

Interview with Aides
Branch Library "E"

On the way back to the library I commented that it is too bad that there are no books available for the mothers to borrow. The aides' only response was, "Yes, it's too bad". Apparently this situation will not be changed. The aides are pleased with the way the program is running but question the present training procedure. (Both had the formal two-week session in Jamaica.) One was very disturbed about possibly being assigned to the bookmobile because it lacks bathroom facilities. Both suggested a salary increment for experienced aides.

Interview with Parents
Branch Library "F"

While waiting for the children, the mothers have coffee together out in the hall - an excellent opportunity for a parent program. I spoke to three mothers who come regularly. Two said they do not have books at home for the children and all three said they do not use the library at all. They all wished the program were longer but seemed more interested in the "coffee klatch" time it provides. I discovered that these children come to programs three times a week and the 5- year-olds have been coming for two years. This information really surprised me, for the children showed no evidence of this much exposure to the program.

Interviews
Branch Library "G"

I spoke to one mother, a Negro, who said she had never used the library before. She had heard about the program from a friend and this was her first visit.

The head librarian said he is very pleased with the program but feels it is not reaching enough target area people. He believes the library is misplaced for this purpose and more effort should be concentrated on the out-agency programs.

Interviews with Parents
Branch Library "H"

The first mother I spoke to said she has been coming since October. She had not used the library before but learned of the program through a sign in the library window. She is pleased with both aspects of the program and takes books home regularly for her children.

The second mother has been coming for two years. She heard about the program while at the library to get books for herself. Her only suggestion was for a program for children from 6 to 10-years-old.

Interviews with Parents
Branch Library "I"

The parent program was conducted in another room. Only two mothers were present; one was Italian and spoke only broken English. The two shared common problems and experiences while filling out a questionnaire on this year's programs. They seemed to have a very comfortable relationship with the aide. I spoke to both of them later and discovered that they have been coming all year, made frequent use of the library before they heard about the program, and both have books at home for the children. The Italian-speaking woman said that the parent program has been very helpful in learning American ways and language. Both seemed sincerely delighted with the program and sorry that it would be discontinued for the summer.

Interviews
Branch Library "I"

The aides feel "the program has great potential but is not reaching the right people". They believe very strongly that OHS should not go into Project Head Start classes but rather concentrate on children with no pre-school experience.

The aides were also of the opinion that a competent staff of canvassers would greatly increase the effectiveness of the program in reaching target area people. They felt that aides do not have the time to do an adequate job so canvassing is very haphazard and limited to markets, laundries and other nearby shops.

Interview with Aides
Branch Library "J"

While speaking with the aides I found that they have a real aversion to the parent program. They get no response from the women and regard the program as a waste of time. They resent the obligation to conduct parent programs because it was not a duty of the job they were hired for but sprung upon them later. They also feel unqualified to run discussions and prefer to work with children because "It is so satisfying".

Interview with Branch Librarian

Before, during, and after my observation of the children's program, the head branch librarian spoke with me. She was very dynamic and talkative; as were the others in the branch, she was very excited about the program. She showed me the attendance and record books of the aides, the set-up of the schedules, the books used in the aide training programs, the OHS children's books supplied for the program.

The librarian complained about the title "Operation Head Start" as a negative factor of the program. She contended that it made many parents think of it as an antipoverty program. Consequently some people stayed away from it through pride. She thought that the program should be promoted as a library reading program only.

The librarian also suggested an interesting rationale for OHS going into already existing group situations such as Project Head Start or nursery school groups. This would be bringing books into homes where the parent may be working or otherwise unable to bring the children to the story time.

At one point when the librarian was speaking to me, an aide was returning from canvassing for more children in the neighborhood. They showed me how they signed up the children and then that day sent out post cards saying that the child was enrolled in the OHS story time, with the hour and day filled in. This followup is considered very important to them, but she said that the usual process in other branches is to send

out the cards three weeks later.

I was introduced to a male aide who had been with them for two months. He had spent most of his time there canvassing. This was the only place that placed any emphasis on continual canvassing as well as follow-up.

(Note: A visit to the central branch later in the day brought out an attitude about the project operation in this branch. It was not looked upon with favor by the project director because "they dispense with the candle-lighting ceremony. They consider it dangerous. And they seem to be trying to be independent in their approach.")