Gender Differences in American Children's Oral Narratives

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Abstract
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Gender Differences in American Children's Oral Narratives

A Graduate Research Paper
Submitted to the
Division of Early Childhood Education
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In Partial Fulfillment
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Masters of Arts in Education
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By
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April, 2006
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Titled: Gender Differences in American Children’s Oral Narratives

has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree of Masters of Arts in Education.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER I: Introduction** ................................................................. 1
- Statement of the Problem .............................................................. 2
- Research Question ........................................................................ 3
- Definition of Terms ...................................................................... 3

**CHAPTER II: Literature review** ..................................................... 5
- Theories of Gender Development .................................................... 5
  - *Historical overview* ................................................................. 5
  - *Psychoanalytical theory* .......................................................... 6
  - *Social learning theory* ............................................................. 7
  - *Cognitive theory* ..................................................................... 8
  - *The Social Construction of Gender* ......................................... 9
- Research Related to Gender Differences .......................................... 12
  - *Aggression in Children’s Oral Narratives* ............................... 13
  - *Social Characteristics and Aggression in Children’s Oral Narratives* 15
  - *Story Structure of Children’s Oral Narratives* ......................... 20
  - *Children’s Written Narratives* ............................................... 21
- Summary ....................................................................................... 26
CHAPTER I

Introduction

In the United States the study of gender differences is well established. However, in Russia research on gender differences is a new area of study that has been rapidly growing over the past decade. One of the reasons for this is that during the past 15 years Russia has been facing major changes, which have changed various aspects of its system, its system of education in particular. The Russian system of education is changing from teacher-directed to child-centered (child-oriented). This fact encourages researchers and educators to reevaluate existing teaching approaches and adjust instruction to meet students' individual needs. More and more Russian educators are viewing gender differences as one of the aspects that should be taken into consideration when developing new instruction. This growing interest results in a desire to learn more about gender differences.

Currently two characteristic features describe the field of gender studies in Russia. The first relates to the fact that the major knowledge about different aspects of gender differences is borrowed from the research conducted in other countries where this field of study is more developed. The United States is considered to be one of the main countries in which the various aspects of gender differences have been investigated and has provided the world with a number of gender related research (Ярская-Смирнова, 2001). The second characteristic feature is that not only does Russia lack knowledge and research on gender differences in general; in particular, it lacks research related to gender differences among children. Russian educators’ increasing interest in children’s
development and learning has created a need for better understanding of gender differences.

Being an exchange student at the University of Northern Iowa gives me a valuable opportunity to review research literature and conduct a study on gender differences, which can be helpful to both educators in both Russia and America. I also see my study as a preparation and a possible first step to carrying out cross-cultural gender research that would examine gender differences between Russian and American children.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this research paper is gender differences in children’s oral narratives because narratives can provide valuable information about various aspects of children’s development. Children’s narratives have been used as a common assessment tool (Libby & Aries, 1989; Wang & Leichtman, 2000) to learn more about gender differences because this method gives researchers a broad picture of particular characteristics of children’s development. Knowledge of existing gender differences allows educators to consider differentiated instruction and interaction among boys and girls in ways that can possibly benefit their development. However, there is limited research that looks at gender differences in children’s language literacy skills. This research limitation encouraged me to conduct a study that would foster a clearer understanding of gender differences in children’s oral language skills, as well as some specific differences in the nature of children’s narratives.
Research Question

The research question that is studied in this paper is the following: What are gender differences in selected aspects of American children's oral narratives? The following aspects are included in this investigation: a) characters, b) emotional tone, c) structure, d) content, and e) language.

The organization of this paper will follow the following pattern: introduction, methodology, literature review, results, discussion, and summary. The present chapter will be concluded by the definitions of the important terms that will be covered in the paper.

Definition of Terms

*Sex:* a certain number of biological characteristics that serve as a precondition for prescribing an individual a certain sex (Темкина & Здравомыслова, 2001).

*Gender:* “the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category” (West and Zimmerman, 1991, p.14).

*Gender identity:* “a person’s concept of him-or herself as male or female” (Golombok & Fivuish, 1994).

*Gender role/sex role:* “behaviors and attitudes that are considered to be appropriate for males and females in a particular culture” (Golombok & Fivuish, 1994).

*Gender stereotype:* “set of beliefs about what it means to be female of male” (Golombok & Fivuish, 1994).
**Social construction of gender theory:** approach, in which an individual is considered to be an active participant in building (constructing) his/her gender roles and relationships and not simply an object of learning and interiorization of social experiences (West and Zimmerman, 1991).

**Literacy:** according to Literacy Standards of Language Arts, literacy is “the capacity to accomplish a wide range of reading, writing, speaking, and other language tasks associated with everyday life” (as cited in Combs, 2006, p.4).

**Narrative:** a story or account of events (usually, but not necessarily, in chronological order) told by a teller. (http://teenwriting.about.com/library/glossary/bldef-narrative.htm).
CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Gender differences have been found in relationship to different aspects of children's development (e.g., social, emotional, intellectual, etc.). Knowledge of existing differences enables educators to individualize their teaching for boys and girls in order to benefit their development. The purpose of this chapter is to present theories of gender development and review previous studies in order to learn more about the cultural and gender differences that have been found in children's narratives. This chapter will start with an overview of three prominent existing theories of gender development and will give a description of the theory that guided the present study. The second part of the chapter will introduce the reader to previously conducted studies of gender differences in children's narratives. Major themes (characteristics) found within the studies will be described.

Theories of Gender Development

*Historical overview*

Different theoretical approaches provide explanation regarding the process of a person's adoption of sex roles. In this part of the chapter I will provide a brief overview of the following theories of gender development: psychoanalytical theory, theory of social learning, cognitive theory of gender development and the theory of social construction of gender.
Psychoanalytical Theory

According to Freud (1856/1939), founder of the psychoanalytical approach, sex differentiation is influenced mostly by a person’s biological sex. In this approach instincts play a leading role in the process of children’s perception and formation of their personality, influencing both children’s thoughts and actions. Freud strongly believed that biology (biological characteristics) is very important in the process of children’s formation of their personality and that children go through five psychosexual stages in their personality development, which are oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital stages. Freud suggested that during the first stages both boys and girls identify with their mother; however, around age four they start to identify with the same-sex parent. This stage (which Freud called Oedipus complex) is especially difficult for boys because they have to break their former identification with their mothers and develop and/or build a stronger one with their fathers.

Psychoanalysts highlight the idea that children’s experiences at home are strongly defined by their biological sex. A child’s sex leads to certain parental behaviors, which result in special features, common to his/her sex. Psychoanalysts believe that these features are formed by preschool age, and become stronger throughout a person’s life (Konn, 1988). Thus, socialization is not an important factor in gender (personality) development. Freud emphasized the idea that male and female characteristics are extremely opposite from each other. Typical male features were identified as being active, aggressive, determined, competitive, and creative, while typical female features were described as passivity and dependence, conformity, lack of logical reasoning, and a high
level of emotional behavior. Freud suggested that a person can only develop an appropriate personality if he/she acquires the described characteristics. Thus, psychoanalytical theory is based on the idea of biological determinism and does not take into consideration the important role of socialization in the process of children’s personality development.

Social Learning Theory

A behavioral theoretical approach, social learning (Bandura, 1969; Bussey & Bandura, 1999), is based on the belief that human behavior is strongly connected to positive and negative stimuli provided by the environment. The main principle of social learning about gender is the differentiation of sex-roles based on children’s observation, as well as the rewards and punishments they experience resulting from different types of behavior. Bandura suggests that a person’s behavior is the result of how parents train the child at the age in which they are unable to differentiate between sex models of behavior. Parents start the process of children’s social learning about gender when children are very young. By choosing certain kinds of clothes and toys they try to express the child’s gender both to the child and to other people. Starting from the moment of birth parents behave with boys and girls differently (Коломинский & Мелгас, 1985). For example, during the first months of the child’s life mothers spend more time in physical contact with boys, and more time talking to girls. However, after the first six months, this situation changes and mothers start to have more physical contacts with girls, rather than boys. Parents may believe that their changes in behavior will encourage boys to become more independent.
Bandura (1969) states that most of the time parents praise the child if he/she behaves according to his/her gender; however, in situations in which the child behaves atypically for the gender parents may show their dissatisfaction. Such experiences are the sources of children's social learning and are identified as operant conditioning (Bandura 1969; Bussey & Bandura, 1999). Bussey and Bandura (1999) point out that parents are not the only ones to influence children's gender development.

Peer relationships are also considered to be an important source of social learning because in peer groups children also get rewarded and punished for gender-appropriate and gender inappropriate behaviors. Peer groups also provide opportunities for observational learning and modeling of sex-roles. Bandura (1969) also refers to "substitution learning", in which children experience social learning by observing and then copying the rewarded behaviors of other children. In summary, the theory of social learning is not consonant with the theory that gender identification is biologically determined. Instead, the theory of social learning highlights the importance of the social environment and social norms (behaviors) in the process of children's gender development.

_Cognitive Theory_

The cognitive approach to gender development suggests that children identify their sex-role through their actively constructed experiences (Kohlberg, 1966). Kohlberg (1966) suggested that children's gender development is strongly related to their cognitive development. According to this theory, conditioning, rewards, and identification start to affect the development of the child's gender only after the child comes to understand the
existence of two genders and begins to develop his or her gender identity. Thompson (1975) describes three stages of children's cognitive sex-role identification. During the first stage, the child becomes aware that there are two different sexes. Children start to identify themselves as one of the sexes in the second stage. Finally, based on their identification choice, they begin to behave according to the determined sex. An important role in this process is given to gender (sex-roles) stereotypes and children's cognitive ability to analyze and use this information in the formation of their gender identity.

In summary, cognitive theory looks at the process of gender development from the child's perspective and highlights the idea that the child takes an active and creative part in sex-role identification. However, this theoretical approach does not take into account the impact of social factors on children's development of their gender. Within the following section a theoretical orientation that identifies the significance of social factors in children's development of gender is presented.

The Social Construction of Gender

The present research project is based on the theoretical approach called "The Social Construction of Gender" (Goffman 1997; Lorber & Farrell, 1991; West and Zimmerman, 1991). Followers of this theory reject the idea that sex roles are biologically determined and suggest that sex roles (as well as relationships between genders) are socially constructed throughout life (Клещина, 1998). Consequently, when applying this approach, it is important to define the two terms, sex and gender. Sex can be identified as a certain number of biological characteristics that serve as a precondition for prescribing an individual a certain sex (Темкина & Здравомыслова, 2001). Gender is identified as
the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category” (West and Zimmerman, 1991, p.14). In addition, Темкина and Зздравомыслова (2001) point out that gender is not constructed once and forever; it keeps enriching (and sometimes changing) throughout the process of social communication.

Berger and Lukeman (as cited in Темкина & Зздравомыслова, 2001) point out the main difference between the social construction of gender and gender socialization (as well as social learning); in social construction theory an individual is considered to be an active participant in building (constructing) his/her gender roles and relationships and not simply an object of learning and interiorization of social experiences. For this reason, social constructionists of gender West and Zimmerman (1991) suggest the term “doing gender,” meaning to create “differences between girls and boys and women and men, differences that are not natural, essential, or biological” (p. 24). The idea of “doing gender” goes together with Goffman’s (1997) theory of gender display. Goffman suggests that that gender display is the main tool of gender construction on the level of face-to-face interaction. Gender display is seen as a variety of demonstrations and correlation of masculinity and femininity in the process of interaction. Goffman states that gender display is not biologically determined because it differs throughout different countries and ethnicities.

Клещина (1998) discusses different factors that influence the process of an individual’s social construction of gender: parents, peers, mass media, etc. Parental influence is the primary factor, since it is the first social institution the child experiences.
From the moment of birth, parents behave differently with baby girls or baby boys. The study by Condry & Condry (1976) shows differences in people's perception of babies according to their sex. In this study the same baby of nine months was shown to half of the participants as a girl and to the other half as a boy. When the child was introduced as a boy, he was characterized as happier and more active and fearless than when introduced as a girl. Thus, the subjects' behavior suggests that there are certain stereotypes of behaviors that are considered to be appropriate for girls and boys.

Клецина (1998) points out that starting from very early childhood, children form feminine or masculine characteristics common for each gender. Parents influence this process a great deal by trying to make boys stubborn, active, determined, etc. On the other hand, parents of girls instill passivity, obedience, dependence, and tractability. This tendency is apparent in the types of toys that parents prefer for their children (e.g. dolls and dishes for girls, in contrast to guns and soldiers for boys).

Another factor that impacts children's construction of gender is the influence of sisters, brothers, or peers. The child tries to achieve acceptance, not only by parents, but by siblings and peers via behaviors in accordance to sex-role standards. Попова (2001) states that girls prefer to play with same sex partners by the age of 27 months, while boys start to show such interest a year later. She notes that very frequently children's choices of toys impact their relationships with peers. If a child picks up a toy that is gender appropriate, he/she is more likely to be accepted in a peer group than a child that prefers to play with the toys of other gender. Thus, even at early age children start to take an active part in the process of gender socialization. The study conducted by Martin and
Fabes (2001) intended to find out how four-five year olds play-partner choices change over time and whether they influence their behavior. The findings indicated that both boys and girls preferred to play with peers of the same sex and these choices were stable over time. Moreover such experiences directly impacted their behavior making it more sex differentiated. Lippa (2002) agrees that children actively participate in constructing their play activities and play-peer groups. According to Koh (1988) peer groups are an important social factor of gender development. Through involvement in these groups children experience opportunities to practice gender stereotypes (behaviors) that have been learned at home and try to adjust them to social situations.

Mass media is another source that impacts children’s construction of gender because children learn a lot about sex-role behavior from various TV shows, movies, newspapers, and magazines. According to Kleczina (1998) in most TV shows male and female characters are presented as very stereotypical. For example, men are usually shown as active, strong, determined, while women are attractive, dependent, thoughtful, and so forth. Such examples influence the process of children’s learning about stereotypes and construction of gender. Overall, the theory of social construction of gender not only recognizes the individual’s active role in the process of gender identification, but also emphasizes the idea that this process is strongly influenced by social context (environment).

**Research Related to Gender Differences**

The present research studies gender differences through examination of children’s oral and written narratives. Children narratives and play fantasies offer a wonderful
opportunity to study gender differences at the early stages of children's development. According to Wang & Leitchman (2000) they contain a multitude of information about different aspects of children's development, such as cognitive, social, and emotional. Narratives are influenced by culture and can be used in studying cross-cultural differences in children's literacy development, as well as language socialization. The following section of the review will take a closer look at previous studies that examined gender and cultural differences in children's narratives. It will start with an overview of the findings about aggression, social characteristics, and aggression and story structure in children's oral stories. The next section will discuss patterns that have been found in children's written narratives. The review will conclude with a general overview of the findings.

Aggression in Children's Oral Narratives

The most frequently occurring difference in girls' and boys' oral narratives lies within the expression of aggression. Libby and Aries (1989) conducted a causal-comparative study that examined gender differences in preschool children's narratives. The sample consisted of 22 girls and 20 boys, who were 3 to 5 years old. The children attended five preschools, and most of them were Caucasian coming from middle-class to upper-middle-class families. Girls were expected to use more caretaking characters in their stories, while boys were expected to involve more characters with aggressive behaviors. The authors were also interested in how children dealt with fears and conflict situations in their narratives. Both boys and girls were expected to reflect upon and overcome their fears in their narratives. Every child interacted individually with the
experimenter who gave six story starters in an identified order and asked each child to continue (finish) the story. According to $t$ tests the results of the study indicated that girls included significantly more caretaking and friendly characters in their stories ($F(21, 19) = 4.24, p<.01$), while boys used significantly more aggressive and controlling characters ($F(19, 21) = 14.82, p<.01$). Both sexes tried to reflect and deal with their fears in their narratives.

Cultural and gender differences in children’s expression of aggression in oral narratives were found in the cross-cultural study conducted by Farver, Welles-Nystrom, Frosch, Wimbarti, & Hoppe-Graff (1997). The researchers used random sampling when recruiting 120 children and their mothers to represent the United States, Sweden, Germany, and Indonesia (30 children from each culture). The American children came from White community preschools situated in the suburbs of a large city. The children from Germany were recruited from three preschools in a university town in the central part of Germany. The Indonesian children were taken from a preschool in the university district of a large city. The Swedish children came from several preschool in the suburbs of a large city. Every child was asked to tell two stories using two different sets of toys. Mothers completed the modified Block Child Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) (Rickel & Biasatti, 1982, as cited in Farver et al. 1997) questionnaire on a 7-point Likert scale that reflected nurturance and restrictiveness. In addition, teachers had to complete a 5-point Likert scale rating scale that reflected 16 characteristics of the children’s interaction with peers (e.g.: use of verbal and physical aggression), children’s classroom behavior, and general school performance. The results computed using MANOVA statistical
procedures showed significant cultural and gender differences in the children’s narratives. American children expressed significantly more aggression in their narratives \((F(3, 112) = 3.51, p<.01)\). Furthermore, boys in every culture expressed more aggression than girls. The authors suggested that in their narratives children from all four countries expressed an understanding of aggression in the way it was reflected in their culture. Indonesian children expressed less aggression than children from the other three countries \((F(3, 112) = 8.95, p<.000)\).

The studies described in this section were more focused on aggression as an isolated characteristic. Gender patterns regarding aggression in relationship to its connection with other social characteristics were examined in the studies that will be more thoroughly described in the following section.

**Social Characteristics and Aggression in Children’s Oral Narratives**

Social characteristics in relationship to aggression and gender in children’s narratives constitute another body of literature. Several studies used story starters that usually reflected a social conflict as a data collection tool. Through children’s narratives researchers wanted to learn more about the differences in boys’ and girls’ understanding and demonstration of social characteristics.

A quantitative causal-comparative study conducted by Wang and Leichtman (2000) looked at cultural differences in American and Chinese children’s cognitive and socioemotional characteristics through their narratives. The sample was randomly assigned and consisted of 26 Chinese and 24 American children (all were 6 years old) who came from middle or upper-middle class families. Chinese children attended a
kindergarten in Beijing that is connected to the university; American children attended three kindergartens in Boston area. Every child interacted individually with the interviewer twice, with a one week interval between the interviews. Both times children were asked to finish 11 given story starters about emotional situations and then tell about 7 memories in response to the stories. Content analyses of the children's stories and memories (performed by 2-way ANOVA) showed that Chinese children were significantly more concerned about social engagement, moral code, and concern with authority, but less concerned on autonomous orientation (p<.001) than their American counterparts. Their stories were also significantly more expressive, emotional, and detailed. In terms of gender differences, in both cultures, girls were found to be more concerned with moral code than boys (p <.01).

Klitzing, Kelsay, Emde, Robinson, & Schmitz (2000) examined gender differences in content themes and narrative performance of children's play narratives to determine common patterns and identify their connection with children's behavior. The sample consisted of 652 same-sex twins (mostly European Americans) and was drawn from the MacArthur Longitudinal Twin Study. The data were gathered when children were 5 years old using MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB) (Bretheton, Oppenheim, & Prentiss, 1990, as cited in Klitzing et al., 2000), which consisted of 15 appropriate story starters. Parents were asked to complete a Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) when children were 5 and 7 years old. Teachers completed the Teacher's Report Form (TRF) when children were 7 years old. The parents' and teachers' information was used to identify children's behavior problems. Results indicated that boys told significantly more
aggressive stories; however, factor analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between aggression expressed in narratives and behavior problems only with girls and not with boys (p<.01).

Peterson and Briggs (2001) focused on studying gender differences in children’s expression of emotions, their use of evaluative devices, and how they change with age. The sample was randomly selected and consisted of 60 children, mostly from middle-class (20 children of 3, 5, and 8 years old), from three Canadian local daycare centers and a primary school. Both parents and children agreed to participate in the study. Each child interacted individually with the same interviewer during two sessions within an interval of 1-2 weeks. Initially children were asked to describe a personal experience when they were happy, mad, or surprised. They were asked to tell a fantasy narrative during the second session. Study findings showed that five-year-old boys used significantly more evaluative devices (which depicts narrator’s understanding, reaction, and attitude towards the event) when talking about anger than girls. Results from an analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated that eight-year-old children used significantly more evaluative devices per narrative than children at other age groups (F(2, 54) = 9.11, p < .001), thus suggesting that the amount and quality of evaluative devices in children’s stories increases with age.

Gender differences in children’s attitude towards warrior narratives were the focus of the study carried out by Jordan and Cowan (1995). The researchers mostly looked at how boys tried to reflect their masculinity through such narratives. The study was conducted in a school in the suburb of an Australian country town in New South
Wales. The researcher observed children from the same classroom once or twice a week during the “free activity time.” The researchers’ interpretation of the data suggested that boys were more attracted to warrior narratives than girls because it helps the boys to feel and live their masculinity. However, when little boys realize that warrior narratives and games are not very approved in life, they adopt responsibility and rationality as characteristics depicting masculinity in social reality. The research highlighted the finding that girls’ narrative fantasies, and games based on them, were usually more acceptable in the classroom than those of boys. Jordan and Cowan concluded that since girls’ narratives and play fantasies are not so “repressed by the school” (p. 727), this fact reduces girls’ needs to deal with “social contract” in order to find other ways to express their femininity.

Hencke and Raya (1993) conducted a study that focused on looking at gender differences in children’s aggression, as well as gender differences in children’s understanding of nice and mean social interactions. The participants of the study were 100 three-year-old children from middle-class families in the Boston and Denver areas. During sessions with experimenters children were asked to complete the Peer Nice and Mean story sequence (Fisher, Hencke, & Hand, 1991, as cited in Hencke & Raya, 1993), where they were presented with different stories about mean and nice children’s social interactions. After listening to each of the stories the researchers asked children to respond to the questions about the story to access their understanding of social interactions. The results of the study, calculated by chi-square analysis, showed the following pattern: both boys and girls enjoyed telling stories that involved aggression.
The authors interpreted this finding to suggest that aggression is a "developmental norm for three-year-old" (p.8). However, boys were more frequently found to prefer mean stories over nice stories, and girls turned out to express social rejection of aggression earlier than boys ($\chi^2(N=100) = 4.02, p<.05$).

Tarullo (1994) examined gender differences in children's narratives in order to learn about boys' and girls' social and emotional development. The 52 participants of this longitudinal case study were randomly selected from a public and a private school in two different socioeconomic neighborhoods in order to see the influence of different environments on children's understanding of their gender. The data analyzed in the article was taken from the examples of children's narratives from age 5 to 7 (kindergarten through second grade). Annually children were asked to tell two types of narratives: autobiographical story and a fantasy story. The extreme case sampling method was used by the researchers to choose narratives to be analyzed. Examining extreme cases would more likely identify similarities and differences in boys' and girls' narratives. Study results showed that boys' stories contained more violence than did girls'. In addition, boys' conflicts were more frequently solved through the use of physical power. The author discussed this finding by suggesting that boys lack social skills necessary for conflict avoidance. On the other hand, girls used more dialogue, conflict avoidance, and perspective taking when solving conflicts in their stories. Regarding story outcomes, both sexes tried to reach a happy ending; however, girls had more endings in which most of the characters were satisfied.
Overall, previous research findings on social characteristics and aggression indicated that girls are more concerned with moral code and tend to express social rejection of aggression more often than boys. Boys' oral narratives were found to be more violent with physical power used frequently to solve conflicts, while girls preferred to avoid conflicts in their stories or solve them using dialogue, compromise, and perspective taking.

*Story Structure of Children's Oral Narratives*

Gender differences in structure and content of children's autobiographical narratives were studied by Buckner and Fivush (1998). The subjects of their research were 22 white eight-year-old children (11 boys and 11 girls) from middle class families, selected from the Emory Child Database. Children responded to the Children's Self-View Questionnaire (CSVQ) (Eder, 1990, as cited in Buckner & Fivush, 1998) which included the following nine self dimensions: achievement, aggression, alienation, harm avoidance, social closeness, social potency, stress reaction, traditionalism, and well being. Children were then asked to share autobiographical narratives (memories). The results of *t*-tests, based on data collected from CSVQ indicated that girls scored significantly higher than boys on the dimension of Harm Avoidance (*t*(20) = -2.16, *p* = 0.04). A series of structure and content analyses of variance showed that the girls' narratives were longer and more coherent (*F*(1, 20) = 4.69, *p* = 0.08). Researchers examined structural and content differences through the use of ANOVA; girls' narratives were significantly more socially oriented (*r*(20) = 4.78, *p* = 0.04).
Reviews of the studies that examined children’s oral narratives led to the conclusion that most of the research focused primarily on the content of children’s narratives. More studies should be done to learn more about patterns in structure of boys’ and girls’ stories.

Children’s Written Narratives

Previously described research presented findings regarding children’s oral narratives. However, issues of gender differences have also been found in children’s written narratives. This section of the chapter will discuss research findings regarding gender characteristics of children’s written stories (fantasies). In the qualitative study carried out by Clark (1995) the main focus was learning more about how popular culture influences boys’ and girls’ understanding of gender through the analysis of their written and oral narratives. The subjects of the study were 46 children (ages 6 and 7) from Grosse Ile School in Quebec, Canada. Qualitative analysis of children’s written and oral stories showed that girls were more concerned about personal responsibility and relationships; their stories were also characterized by little use of violence and aggression. In contrast, boys preferred using aggressive characters (superheroes) who were involved in different kinds of battles or power competitions (e.g.: good guy versus bad guy). Girls’ narratives were also found to contain fewer fictional elements and characters in their fantasies giving preference to characters similar to their family members or friends. The authors interpreted their findings to suggest that the influence of popular culture has a more significant effect on boys, rather than girls, because boys’ stories (both written and
oral) reflected a greater number of features common to the content of video games and popular television shows.

A similar issue regarding the impact of media on children’s writing was given a closer look in the qualitative case study by Anderson (2003). Anderson was interested in exploring the reason for violence frequently expressed in boys’ writing. The participant was Anderson’s fifth-grade student named Jason from Dondero Elementary School in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Jason was chosen as a subject of the study because every time he was asked to write about something, he would write a story with a violent content. However, in real life Jason was not characterized as a violent or aggressive child.

Previous to analyzing Jason’s writing, the researcher conducted a classroom survey in order to learn more about the role of media in children’s life. The sample was not large and consisted of 10 girls and 8 boys from his classroom. According to the survey, boys spend more time watching TV (boys = 75%, girls = 40%) and playing video games (boys = 37.5%, girls = 10%) than girls. Jason was one of the children who spent a lot of time watching TV and playing video games. This information helped the researcher to understand why certain patterns occurred in the structure and content of Jason’s writings. As an example he compared the child’s story named “The Adventure” to his favorite TV show Digimon and found many similar patterns regarding characters, events, and storyline. Similar to the TV show Jason’s characters were children with special powers who had to escape from an evil villain and fight different monsters by using super powers and weapons. For Jason the media has a significant impact on the depiction of violence in boys’ writing.
Peirce and Edwards (1988) also investigated the topic of violence in children’s written narratives, but through the perspective of how children use conflict resolution strategies in their stories. This study used a large sample of 266 students (primarily 11 to 13 years old) from Birmingham and Cullman, Alabama, and Leona, Tennessee. The number of boys and girls was equal with most of the children being white. Study participants were asked to write a story about anything they wanted. They were told that their stories would not be graded and would remain confidential. The findings were analyzed using $\chi^2$-test and showed the following patterns. Most of boys’ stories were science fiction, while girls wrote more stories that combined elements of various genres ($\chi^2 = 6.24$, $df = 1$, $p<.01$). Regarding gender differences in conflicts and conflict resolutions, girls preferred to avoid conflicts or write about internal conflicts. In terms of conflict resolutions boys were found to use more violent resolutions (such as murder) ($\chi^2 = 18.08$, $df = 10$, $p<.05$), than girls, who tended to have conflicts in their stories that got solved on their own.

A cross-cultural perspective on gender differences in children’s writing topics was taken in the research carried out by Harvey, Ollila, Baxter, & Guo (1997). Participants were 736 Canadian children (Grade 1, 4 and 7) from a mixed urban and rural school district on Vancouver Island and 560 Chinese children (Grade 1, 4 and 7) from the school district near the university in Shanghai. Children at every grade level were given the same 25 minute task - to write a story that would include such events as children touching the magic stone and turning into an animal that goes on an adventure. The researchers were interested in gender and grade differences in children’s choice of animals. The
results of the study for both Chinese and Canadian children were similar. Calculations of chi-square were used as tests of significance and showed that Chinese boys at every grade level selected more animals that were wild, dangerous, and strong (such as eagle, elephant, dog), while girls chose more animals that were weak, safe, and tame (such as cat, rabbit, bird) (p<.05). Boys and girls in Canada followed this same pattern. Boys chose more wild and aggressive animals, than girls (p<.05). The authors of the study concluded that both genders tended to choose animals with the characteristics similar to social stereotypes related to being a male and female.

A longitudinal qualitative case study by Kamler (1993) examined development of two children’s writing from kindergarten up to Grade 2 in order to find out more about the process of children’s social construction of gender. The children came from a rural community in New South Wales, Australia, and at the beginning of the study Peter was 5.5 and Zoe was 4.10. Kamler selected 10 of the most typical texts written by each child during the period of kindergarten through Grade 2. Analysis of the children’s written narratives showed a number of gender patterns in their stories. Both children liked to write about their personal experiences. Although, Peter’s stories had more action and various events than Zoe’s narratives, her narratives included more detailed descriptions. Kamler explained this finding by the fact than men are socially considered to be more active than women. Zoe chose to write about calmer activities (e.g., brushing, sleeping), while Peter tended to choose more energetic activities such as playing, taking, and destroying. He also expressed more aggression in his stories. A very interesting finding was made regarding the children’s use of verbs indicating possession of objects such as
"get" and "give." Zoe used the verb "gave" in her stories (e.g., Mom gave me some pretty ribbons), while Peter tended to use "got" (e.g., I got a football from mum and dad). Kamler interpreted this finding to support the social stereotype that men "act upon the world", and women "are recipients of other people’s actions." Thus, the study’s findings support the belief that the process of children’s construction of gender starts at early age and is strongly influenced by various social and gender stereotypes.

Gender differences in boys’ and girls’ writing were the focus of the qualitative study conducted by Fleming (1995). For eight months the researcher observed 21 primarily white children (11 girls and 10 boys) from middle and upper-middle class. Fleming collected a variety of data during the period of study (e.g., observations, journals, poems). For example, children were asked to write their own story about Frog and Toad (based on the stories about Frog and Toad by Arnold Lobel). The main pattern identified within their written stories was that boys wrote more about characters’ adventures that were not connected to everyday life, while the girls’ stories reflected everyday experiences and relationships among characters. When children were given an opportunity to choose their own topic to write about, girls still tended to write more about their domestic experiences, and the boys continued to write about conflicts. Another finding was that girls’ characters were more likely to use cooperation and compromise to solve the conflicts, while boys’ stories most of the time consisted of winners and losers. The findings also suggested differences in children’s interpretation of what an interesting story was. For example, boys did not enjoy girls’ stories because the content of these stories was very different from what boys like to write about. The author of the article
also made an interesting observation of the teacher's response to children's stories. The teacher expressed more positive reaction to boys' types of stories, rather than the girls'. When discussing children's writing she frequently pointed out that stories presenting conflict (which were more typical for boys) are more interesting and exciting than stories "without problems." This fact shows that "male model" narratives were more accepted in that classroom than female, which could (and probably would) encourage girls to start using the more appreciated model of writing; however, it may not reflect what they really prefer to write about. This study supports the theory of social construction of gender, which highlights the idea that social context, environment, and experiences significantly influence the process of children's gender identification.

Summary

The purpose of the present chapter was to review the literature on the topic of gender theories and gender differences in children's narratives. Comparison of the gender patterns that occurred within children's oral and written narratives identified significant gender differences in social, emotional, structural, and contextual aspects of children's stories. The major gender patterns can be identified as follows: a) boys tend to express more aggression and violence both in their written and oral narratives, while girls show more concern with appropriate behavior; b) girls often try to avoid conflicts or solve them using cooperation and compromise; c) boys describe more adventuresome events and use characters similar to the ones from TV shows and video games; girls prefer describing their everyday experiences and use characters similar to their friends and family; d) in terms of structure girls' narratives are suggested to be more detailed, logical, and
consistent than boys'. Several studies found similar patterns in gender differences across cultures, even though the extent of some characteristics differed between children from different countries (Farver et al., 1997; Wang & Leichtman, 2000).

The present study examined gender differences in children's oral and written narratives as a reflection of differences in their literacy development in the course of the social construction of gender approach. The review of the literature pointed out the lack of research in this aspect. The social construction of gender theoretical approach provides a framework to view and explain possible gender and cultural differences in children’s narratives. Knowledge of this aspect will allow educators to think about possibilities for potential changes or extensions in literacy materials and instruction in order for instruction to be beneficial for both genders.
CHAPTER III

Methodology

The present study was conducted to learn more about gender differences in American children’s oral narratives.

Subjects

The participants of the study were 14 children (7 boys and 7 girls) who were enrolled in kindergarten or first-grade classrooms and were between ages 6 – 6.5. The children were recruited from a university laboratory school and public elementary school in the Midwest. Letters describing the study were sent home to parents in order to obtain permission allowing each child to participate in the study. Seven participants of each gender were randomly selected from the children, whose parents agreed on their participation in the study. The children were predominately Caucasian from middle class families. They were not receiving any speech or language therapy or special education services.

Instruments

The study was implemented through two individual interviews with each child. The researcher provided two literacy tasks during each interview. Four oral story starters were used as the data collection instruments. These story starters were chosen from two previously conducted research studies (Libby & Aries, 1989; Wang & Leichtman, 2000). Most of the story starters presented to children dealt with some conflict that children may
come across in their everyday life. Table 1 presents the story starters in the order they were administered to the subjects.

**Table 1. Story Starters**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oral Narratives</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oral Narratives</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surprise Knock:</strong> One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.</td>
<td><strong>Lost in the store:</strong> One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A Quarrel:</strong> One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.</td>
<td><strong>Grandma’s Birthday:</strong> One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Research design and procedures*

This study was designed to learn more about gender differences in American children’s oral narratives. This was a qualitative study of data obtained through two interviews with each participant. On two successive days every child spent approximately 20-30 minutes individually interacting with the researcher in the arranged corner of the
room or a separate classroom in order to avoid distractions. The investigator introduced herself before starting the interviewing procedure and asked the subject if he/she would like to make up some stories. Then children were introduced to the activity. During the oral task children were presented with two oral story starters (one after another) and were asked to finish them by telling “what happened next.” On Day 2 the procedure remained the same as on Day 1, except that story starters were different. With the parents’ permissions children’s stories were audio recorded.

Data analysis

All children’s narratives were transcribed and coded by the main investigator according to categories that were developed. These categories were developed to reflect the following major areas of the narratives: characters, emotional tone, story structure, content, language, and features as a storyteller. In addition, each area contained several subcategories, which were given the definitions described in the following table.

Table 2. Coding categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategories</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative character</td>
<td>“An unfriendly, threatening, dangerous, frightening, or harmful person, animal or imaginary character” (ex: monster) (Libby &amp; Aries, 1989, p. 297).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Character Type</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral character</td>
<td>A character is identified by a broad term (ex: family) or no specific characteristics are given to describe the character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human character</td>
<td>A character that is a human being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal</td>
<td>A character that is an animal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imaginary character</td>
<td>A supernatural figure with generally no gender identification (ex: monster, fairy).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A character could possess more than one category. For example, it could be “positive, imaginary” character, such as “a friendly monster.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional Tone</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Threatening</td>
<td>The story conveys a mood in which characters might be in danger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive</td>
<td>Characters are involved in “aggressive or malicious activity with intent to harm, destroy, eliminate, or overpower” (Libby &amp; Aries, 1989, p. 297).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>A story has a very positive mood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exciting</td>
<td>A story has more than one climax.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>A story has a peaceful mood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing mood</td>
<td>The mood of the story changes with the storyline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive outcome</td>
<td>The problem(s) is solved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative outcome</td>
<td>The problem(s) is not solved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning-middle-end</th>
<th>Given the beginning of the story, the child presents the problem, an attempt to solve the problem, and gives a resolution to it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Problem              | a) For SS # 1 & 4 the child introduced the problem.  
b) For SS # 2 & 3 the child introduced another problem besides the one in the story starter itself. |
| Resolution           | The problem in the story was resolved. |

### Content

#### Link to reality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imaginary</th>
<th>A story describes an imaginary (supernatural) situation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imaginary &amp; real</td>
<td>A story has a shift from real to imaginary or vice versa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real</td>
<td>A story describes the situation that can happen in real life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stayed with the topic</th>
<th>A story reflects the plot of the story starter without introducing another problem.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expanded the topic</td>
<td>A story reflects the topic (plot) of the story starter but it also includes a shift of the given topic to a different</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>A character (or characters) &quot;resolves the problem mastering danger, conflict, or problematic situation by using aggressive activity&quot; (ex: fighting, killing) (Libby &amp; Aries, 1989, p. 298).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>Characters avoid solving the conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help of an external figure</td>
<td>The conflict gets resolved by an external figure, who is outside the conflict (ex: teacher, another child).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict solved by participants</td>
<td>The conflict gets resolved by the participants of the conflict situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No conflict</td>
<td>The conflict is ignored by the characters and it fades away.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dialogue</td>
<td>A conversation between two or more characters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partial dialogue</td>
<td>Only one character uses direct speech to talk to the character with no direct speech response from the other character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dialogue</td>
<td>No direct speech is used in the story.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The presence or absence of each category was noted for each of the described categories. A score of 1 was given if the category was present, 0 if the category was absent. Scores were summed then across the four stories told by a subject.

In addition to the described categories, I was also interested in looking at the length of the narratives and kinds of sentences that children used in their stories. To identify the story length, I counted the number of words in each narrative. In order to identify types of sentences used, I focused on the following kinds: simple sentences, complex sentences, and compound sentences. I used a textbook “Analyzing English Grammar” (Combs, 2006) to help me identify each sentence type. The definitions of terms are presented below.

*Simple sentence*: a sentence that has one identified clause, which includes subject, verb, and predicate (Klammer, Schulz, & Volpe, 2004).
Complex sentence: a sentence that has “at least two clauses: one independent and one more dependent” (Klammer et. al, 2004, p.283).

Compound sentence: a sentence that has “two or more simple sentences joined by a coordinating conjunctions” (Klammer et. al, 2004, p.283). If the child connected all the sentences in the story with “and” or “but”, those sentences were considered simple sentences.

The number of each sentence type was counted for each narrative. Then the scores were summed up across all the narratives.

Due to the qualitative nature of the study and sufficiently small sample, the technique that was found to be most appropriate and was used to analyze data was qualitative analysis of the findings based on the frequencies of the categories’ occurrences. For categories in which differences in frequencies across gender appeared to be large enough, chi-square test was used to establish statistical significance.
CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to look at gender differences in American children's oral narratives. This chapter focuses on the results of the research and addresses the research question that guided the present study. The research question was stated as follows: What are gender differences in selected aspects of American children's oral narratives, including a) characters, b) emotional tone, c) structure, d) content, and e) language.

Results will be discussed in terms of the major categories and subcategories of the children's oral narratives (see Table 2, p.9 for definitions of all story categories) and will be presented in the following order. First, I will share findings that were shown to be significant within each category. Second, I will talk about possible trends that were found during the process of data analysis. It is important to mention that this study was an exploratory study with a limited sample size. In this case, there is a possibility that if the sample size were larger, the described tendencies could have been found to be significant. This suggests that it is important to consider trends found in discussing this study's findings. Finally, not significant findings will be shared with the reader.

Characters

A chi-square test was used to test relationships regarding "characters" between genders across all the story starters. The test results showed that no particular patterns were found.
No significant gender differences were found for the category of “characters.” However, an interesting finding was noticed in the subcategory of “positive characters.” A character was considered to be “positive” only when a child’s story provided clear description or explanation that allowed the researcher to conclude that a character was “a friendly, helpful person, animal or imaginary character” (Libby & Aries, 1989, p. 297). Across all of the story starters, only boys clearly identified characters as positive (males = 4, females = 0). Over half of the boys introduced positive characters such as a: “friendly monster”; “good fairy”; “he [the wolf] was going to help them to go to their house because he was really good”. When coding the data, these examples were considered to have enough information in order for the described character to be put under the “positive characters” subcategory. Girls’ stories, however, included only “negative” such as “monster”, “mean boy”, and/or “neutral” characters such as “family”, “children”, “kid”, “dog”, etc.

No significant gender differences were found for the remaining subcategories of “characters” – human, animal, and imaginary. Both males and females created these types of characters.

Emotional tone

This category focused on the different types of mood presented in children’s narratives, as well as on the positive and negative outcomes of the stories. The following types of mood were examined during data analysis: “threatening”, “aggressive”, “happy”, “exciting”, “calm”, and “changing mood.” Due to the sufficient differences in frequency occurrence for two subcategories (“threatening emotional tone”, and “aggressive
emotional tone”), a chi-square test was used in order to determine whether those differences in study findings were significant. Significant gender differences occurred in both of these subcategories.

According to the definition presented in Chapter II, “threatening emotional tone” refers to a story in which the characters might be in danger. Males told significantly more stories with a threatening emotional tone (males = 22, females = 10, $\chi^2(1)=4.5$, $p<.05$), putting their characters in situations in which they had to face potential danger. For example, it was common for males to describe situations in which their characters got lost and could not find their way out. In addition, the boys’ narratives often required characters to deal with various imaginary threatening characters such as ghosts, vampires, and monsters. One example of a threatening tone within the narrative was the following:

A monster came. Then they all hid. And the monster followed them. They ran away from their house. They ran to the forest. Then they sank into the water. The monster found them. He brought them to the house. He ate everybody (transcript # 5.1).

This use of mood added more tension to the plots of the boys’ narratives.

Girls’ stories, on the other hand, lacked tension because they provided a solution to the problem right away, which prevented their stories from presenting an atmosphere of potential danger and a feeling of an unknown outcome. For example, one of the girls created the following story: “A ghost came in. And then it ran away because they put on
costumes and scared him because they knew that the ghost was someone else – a Scoobydoo!"

However, in terms of aggressive emotional tone, girls told significantly more stories that depicted this type of mood (males = 3, females = 11, $\chi^2(1)=4.6$, $p<.05$). In these narratives the girls involved their characters in the use of aggressive actions such as fighting, pushing, pulling, throwing, and yelling (e.g., "they pulled and pulled and pulled and pulled", "girls were fighting").

Boys exhibited a tendency to tell more narratives including "changing mood" (males = 13, females = 6) than girls. Emotional tone changed throughout the boys’ stories. For example, one story started with a threatening atmosphere in which the characters were in danger and/or dealing with certain conflict, such as looking for their mother in the store and getting locked there. Then it changed to a calm mood with the children waiting for the parent or playing with the toys. Finally, it transitioned into a happy ending when the children found their mother. The girls’ stories usually exhibited a single dominating emotional tone that consisted throughout the whole story.

No significant gender differences were identified in other emotional tone subcategories or in terms of the outcomes of children’s narratives. Scores across all four story starters showed that both boys and girls preferred to end their stories by presenting a positive outcome that resulted in the solution of the problem.
Structure

Three aspects of story structure were analyzed. First, traditional story sequence such as “beginning-middle-end” was identified. Second, stories were examined for the introduction of a problem and the provision of a resolution for the problem. Finally, sentences were analyzed for types, such as “simple,” “compound”, and “complex.”

Trends, although not significant, were found in the types of sentences used by boys and girls in their stories. Girls told longer stories than boys (M (males) = 49.35, M (females) = 61.55). Girls tended to use more simple sentences. However, the finding showed that both boys and girls were very similar in their use of complex and compound sentences (M (males) = 21, M (females) = 22). These finding may be explained by the fact that the girls told longer stories than the boys (M (males) = 49.35, M (females) = 61.55).

No significant gender differences were found in other subcategories of the structure of children’s narratives. Both genders presented stories that included beginning, middle, and end, with the problem being solved. For story starters #1 (about a knock on the door) and #4 (about grandma’s birthday), no problem was introduced in the story starter and the children had the freedom of introducing a problem. Both females and males introduced a conflict with equal frequency (males = 10, females = 9). The most common problem for the story starter # 1 was having a certain character (ex: monster, vampire, a poor man) come in the family’s house in order to ask for food or to try to steal something from the house. Only half of children of each gender introduced a problem for the story starter #4, which was about parents taking their child to grandma’s house. Some
examples of identified problems were characters getting lost on their way to the house; grandma not being at home when they arrived; a missing birthday cake, or forgetting grandma’s present.

Story starters #2 and #3 presented a certain problem. Story starter #2 talked about children fighting for a toy, and #3 described children getting lost in the store. In this case the focus of the analysis was determined by whether the children introduced another problem or whether they only talked about the one given on the story starter itself. Most of the children preferred to stay with the given conflict and only five children came up with an additional one (males = 3; females = 2). For example, in one of the narratives based on story starter #2 the character (a child) found himself on the magic island where he had to protect himself from spiders and snakes.

In providing resolutions to problem(s) presented in the stories, both genders scored very similarly (males = 22, females = 23). Typically girls and boys end their stories by resolving conflicts. Depending on the plot of the story starter, the characters usually fed a stranger or defended themselves from some mean character who intended to harm them (for the story starter #1); became friends and shared a toy (for the story starter #2); found their mother (for the story starter #3); and had fun at the birthday party at grandma’s house (for the story starter #4).

Content

When analyzing children’s narratives in terms of the content, the focus was on the following three categories: “link to reality”, “topic”, and “conflict resolution strategies.”
There was a trend, although not significant, for boys to tell more stories that dealt with imaginary situations (males = 4, females = 1), as well as situations that incorporated both real and imaginary events (males = 7, females = 4). Boys typically incorporated imaginary situations to their stories by having characters find themselves in secret mansions or imaginary islands, or deal with supernatural creatures such as monsters, vampires, or fairies. Girls, on the other hand, told more stories about real events experienced in everyday life (males = 17, females = 23). The situations described in their narratives could be characterized as being closer to reality, and they included fewer imaginary situations. For example, girls described typical birthday parties with presents and cake (for story starter #4), or included ways that the children dealt with being lost in the store and trying to find their mother, such as asking for help, looking for a parent (for story starter #3).

Another interesting finding related to the conflict resolution strategies presented in the stories. Boys' narratives contained “the help of an external figure” strategy more often than girls' narratives. For example, in the story starter #2 about children who were fighting for a toy, the boys tended to have a teacher or another child solve the problem by taking the toy away or telling the characters that they should share. In girls' narratives conflicts were more likely to be solved by the participants (for example, the characters talked and decided to take turns or share the toy). Even though a chi-square test did not show these results to be significant, boys used this strategy twice as often as girls (males = 10, females = 5).
No significant gender differences or potential trends were found in any of the other content categories. Both males and females preferred to stay within the topics presented by the story starter with boys using topic expansions a little more frequently (males = 7, females = 3). Such strategies as “avoidance”, “help of inner figure”, and “no conflict presented” were equally used by both genders in relationship to conflict resolution. Girls incorporated “aggression” slightly more often than boys (males = 4, females = 7) by having their characters use aggressive behaviors (such as pushing, yelling, and pulling) in order to solve the problem. This finding corresponds to the previously discussed tendency of girls’ to create an aggressive mood in their stories more often than boys.

Language

Within this category “dialogue”, “partial dialogue”, or “no dialogue” was coded to examine children’s stories, as well as whether the children used “story language” or “traditional story endings” in their narratives. No significant gender differences were found for any of these subcategories. Neither boys nor girls tended to use dialogue in their stories (“no dialogue”: males = 27, females = 24). Only one girl incorporated a dialogue in her narrative regarding story starter #2, describing two girls yelling at each other: “You did it! No, you did it! No, you did it! No, you do it!” Very few children used partial dialogue (males = 1, females = 3) with only one character speaking and no response from the other character (for example: “They said: “Grandma, where is the cake?”). In terms of story language, some children used traditional story endings such as “the end” or “they lived happily ever after” (males = 3, females = 3).
Features as a storyteller

No significant gender differences were found in the two subcategories titled "clarity" and "expression" that were analyzed. Both boys and girls performed equally in terms of providing details in their stories (males = 26, females = 22) and using expression during storytelling (males = 20, females = 23).
CHAPTER V

Discussion

The results of this study, for the most part, reflect previous research concerning gender differences in children's oral narratives. However, the present research has also identified certain gender differences that have not been reported in other studies. The present chapter will focus on discussing the recommendations for possible future research in this area.

Conclusions

Although, no significant gender differences were found in terms of what characters children preferred to use in their stories, there was one trend that I found to be interesting. When interpreting the results, I noticed that boys tended to use more positive characters, while most of the girls' characters could be identified as neutral. This trend was not presented in previous research; thus, the described results could just be a function of a particular sample in this study. However, several studies about gender differences in children's written narratives (Fleming, 1995; Anderson, 2003; Kamler, 1993) suggested that boys' narratives were found to be more focused on adventures and contained more problems and conflict situations. Fleming (1995) stated that boys "favor confrontational dramas with winners and losers" (p.592). I believe that the described idea of confrontation "requires" characters in the boys' stories to be identified as negative or positive in order for the reader (or listener) to understand who the "winner" is and who the "loser" is, which was a trend observed in this study.
Two significant findings were differences in two aspects of the emotional tone of children’s narratives. The first finding indicated that boys told more stories that reflected a threatening mood and included situations in which characters might have been in danger. Taking into consideration that males’ stories are usually more adventurous and courageous than females’ (Fleming, 1995), it would appear that the present finding was rather expected. Boys included more events in their stories and there were more frequencies of topic expansions, whereas girls preferred to stay within the topic.

The second significant finding in terms of emotional tone of children’s stories that was especially interesting related to the use of aggressive mood in the narratives. Girls’ stories exhibited significantly more frequencies of aggressive mood than the boys’. However, it is important to mention that most of these occurrences happened in terms of the story starter # 2, which talked about two children in the kindergarten who were fighting for a toy. Perhaps the results were influenced by the story starter itself. Even though the story starter itself set some kind of unfriendly atmosphere between the characters, children were given an opportunity to come up with the solution to the problem. The mood in most females’ stories was aggressive with characters continuing to fight and being unwilling to share the toy. Girls’ endings typically resulted in time out, breakage of the toy, or the toy being taken away by the teacher. Boys’ stories, on the other hand, reflected mood changing from more intense to less intense and more calm, which was usually achieved with the help of an external figure (for example, a teacher or another child).
The finding about girls’ stories being more aggressive than boys’ contradicts that of previous research findings, which showed males’ narratives to be more aggressive (Libby & Aries, 1989; Wang & Leichtman, 2000; Farver et. al., 1997; Anderson 2003, etc.). However, I suggest that males perform aggressive behavior more often not because boys are naturally more aggressive than girls, but rather because in our society aggressive behavior is considered to be more stereotypical (as well as more appropriate) for boys and not for girls. The social construction of gender theory states that a person’s gender keeps enriching (and sometimes changing) throughout the process of social communication and each individual is actively “doing” (constructing) his/her gender according to the norms of the society (Lorber, 1991; West and Zimmerman, 1991). Young children are still going through the process of gender identification and, even though by the age of 5 most children have basic knowledge about what types of behaviors are appropriate for their gender, it does not mean that they always act accordingly to their understanding of gender roles. Tarullo (1994) suggests that “the boy who acts or talks aggressively, or who tells stories about characters who do, is not typical of his gender” (p.183); however, most of the time boys try to “fall into” this gender stereotype. In this case, it may be appropriate to suggest that girls are not less aggressive than boys; however, under the influence of the social environment females face the need to suppress it in order to “suit” social norms.

Another interesting trend occurred regarding conflict resolution strategies that were used in children’s narratives. Boys were shown to use the strategy named “help of an external figure” twice as often as girls. However, these results were mostly reflected in
the narratives that dealt with possible everyday conflicts (such as fighting for a toy, or getting lost at the store). Characters in boys' stories tended to rely on help of other people in order to find solutions to certain problems. For example, in the narratives about kindergarten children who were fighting for a toy, boys' characters used help of the teacher or other children who told them what should be done in that situation. Клешина (1998) suggests that even though stereotypically males are considered to be more independent than females, during early childhood years this type of “appropriate” gender behavior may still be not completely internalized by children. On the other hand, with the changes in the society, perhaps women are becoming more and more independent. Girls (as well as boys) may observe this trend at home, watching their parent(s), and then reflect the observed model of behavior in their life, especially taking into consideration the degree of parental influence on children's gender identification.

In relationship to the content of the children's narratives I was interested to see that boys tended to tell more stories with imaginary content, while girls told more stories about events that can happen in real life. These results support findings from other studies (Fleming, 1995; Kamler, 1993), in which girls typically preferred to describe events that are close to everyday life, while boys preferred to tell about adventures of different heroes. The difference in the amount of imaginary and real situations in children's narratives can also be looked at from the perspective of the influence of mass media. It is well-documented that many children spend a lot of time watching TV and playing video games, which center on different imaginary adventures. Anderson (2003) found that boys' narrative writing was influenced by various TV shows and video games. In his
study boys were found to spend more time interacting with these means of mass media. Media then may be one of the important factors that foster boys’ use of more imaginary situations in their oral narratives.

Gender differences in structure of children’s narratives were another aspect that I was particularly interested to learn about. Unfortunately, this study did not show any particular differences. Both boys and girls used beginning-middle-end structure in their stories and presented the resolution even if the stories were not very long. Also, no differences were found regarding the types of sentences that children preferred to use. The only difference, though not significant, was found in terms of simple sentences; it showed that girls used more simple sentences than boys. However, this may be influenced by the fact that, on average, girls’ narratives tended to be longer than the ones told by boys. Golombock and Fivush (1994) suggest that even though there might be some “statistically significant effect of gender on verbal abilities”, usually it does not seem to be an important factor in practice (p.174). This idea can support the fact that the present study did not show gender differences in children’s language abilities.

The present study investigated gender differences in children’s oral language skills, as well as some specific differences in the nature of children’s narratives. The study did not show significant gender differences in the area of children’s literacy development and oral language skills; rather, it indicated some trends in terms of its content and structure that were described above. Lack of significant findings could have been caused by the characteristics of particular sample, as well as by the categories that were chosen as a focus. However, I believe that this study provided some interesting
findings about other aspects of children’s narratives that may differ from previous research, but can be explained from the perspective of the theory of social construction of gender. Findings from this study may encourage educators to look at the nature of gender differences from a different perspective.

Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to this study that should be taken into consideration.

1. The sample of the study was limited and consisted of only 14 children that were representing two schools in Midwest. This fact should be considered when generalizing the results of the study because the described participants may be not representative of the whole population.

2. There is a possibility that content of children’s narratives was influenced by the story starters.

3. The results of the study were coded by only one coder, which could have resulted in possible minor inaccuracy in data analyzing or in examiner bias. On the other hand, the coder was the same person who conducted interviews and it allowed her to obtain helpful and detailed information about children’s stories in order to prevent misunderstanding. This information was used during the process of data analyzing and coding.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the present study, there are several recommendations that can be taken into consideration when carrying out further research on the topic of gender differences in children’s narratives.
1. Since the study did not show significant gender differences in children's literacy and language development based on their narratives, I would suggest focusing a future research on children's narratives by examining more detailed literacy categories. Using children's written narratives might be helpful because they will provide more data and information, and should allow a researcher to identify a greater variety of categories for deeper analysis.

2. Another suggestion relates to the instrument employed to collect data. The present study used narratives that were encouraged by certain story starters. Given a story starter, subjects were given an idea of what the story might be about. I believe that providing students an opportunity to choose the topic to tell or write about will give a better and more vivid understanding of gender differences in their narratives.

3. Based on the findings of the present study about possible gender differences in terms of emotional tone and the link of the narratives' content to reality, I suggest a need for future research in these categories. It would be interesting to study these characteristics within a larger sample of children. It would also be interesting to look for possible connections between the described categories and the influence of mass media.

4. I would recommend conducting a similar study with children from a different country. I believe it would be valuable to learn more not only about gender differences in children's narratives, but also about cultural differences in this aspect as well.
CHAPTER VI

Summary

I conducted this study in order to learn more about gender differences in American children’s narratives. Knowing that United States has a well developed field of gender studies, I thought it would be a valuable chance for me to get a better understanding of this problem through analyzing existing literature and carrying out my own research.

The present study focused on gender differences in the following areas of American children’s narratives: characters, emotional tone, structure, content, and language. Overall, the results reflected findings similar to the previous research, however, it also revealed some interesting tendencies.

Significant gender differences were found only in two subcategories in the area of emotional tone of children’s narratives. Analysis indicated that boys tended to tell more stories that reflected a threatening atmosphere, while girls told more stories that involved an aggressive mood.

Among other findings of this study, which were not found significant, were boys’ tendencies to tell more imaginary stories and girls’ tendencies to tell more stories with stronger links to reality. In terms of structure, girls’ narratives were found to be longer and included more simple sentences.

Given the limited amount of gender research in terms of children’s literacy development, I hoped that the present study would have provided more information on
this aspect. Even though the results did not show significant gender differences, I believe that future research of both oral and written narratives should be conducted to gain better knowledge in this area.

Overall, I see this study as a successful first step to learning more about gender differences in American children's oral narratives. I hope the information gained through this research will be useful to educators both in Russia and United States. I believe that my experience with this study will help me to analyze some of the existing limitations of the study and improve possible future research, which I would like to conduct with samples of both Russian and American children. I continue to believe that gender differences across cultures is an important area of educational research.
References


**Non-English References**


Appendix A

Transcripts of children’s stories
Subject #1

1. One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door. The knock on the door was an old man. And the old man was very hungry, but he did not have any food. And the people let him have some of the food. Then he had some soup and bread and went back. He thanked them and was not hungry any more.

1.2. One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other. They both found a toy that they liked and they played together with both of the toys and did not fight again.

1.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. The mom finally noticed that her kids were lost. She called for them. She called for them, but the kids could not hear her. She kept calling them but they would not come. Finally she found them. They were by toy, the toy robots aisle. She found them.

1.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. They finally got to grandma’s house and grandma baked them some pie. When the kids have finished, they started to play. And they noticed that grandma had a new toy that was a toy robot and had a remote control. They played with it until it was time to go.

Subject #2

2. One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door. The knock was somebody else, who was a visitor for the dinner. And his name was Charlie Brown. He came in and had dinner with the family. Then they all went to play outside.

2.2. One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other. And the teacher came and put them in time out. Then they shared their feelings. Then they shared the toy when they were out of time out. They were playing together and did not fight.
*(Boys were fighting for a train)*.

2.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. And they looked everywhere, but bumped into a stranger that happened to be their mother. She was happy to find her kids and they all went home. The end.
2.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. When they went inside the party was already going. But where was Grandma? She was upstairs, getting ready, then she came down and they gave her presents. The party was fun and they had a tasty cake. Then everyone went home. The end.

Subjects #3

3.1. One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door. They ran to the door and opened it up. A vampire was standing there and his evil dog. They walked into the house and stole their food. The end.

3.2. One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other. The teacher said to stop fighting and then she took the toy away and threw it away. *(A boy and a girl were fighting for a truck. They became friends after that).*

3.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. When they could not find their mom, they ran to a toy aisle, took a toy, and found their mom and put it in the basket (well, they sneaked it in the basket). And then they ran home and played with it all day. Their mom did not know that they stole it.

3.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. They did not like the cake. They then ran to the car, stole their mom’s keys and drove. And then they got in a car crash. *(They were ok).*

Subject #4

4.1. One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door. A ghost came, a vampire came, a monster came. They were trying to eat their food and then they ate it, and then they ran away.

4.2. One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other. They broke the toy. It hit something and then they saw the newer toy. *(It was a truck. Boys and girls were fighting. They became friends because other kid helped them).*

4.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. The store got closed and the mom went out. They
were still there. And they were stuck with the toys and they could play with them all night.
*(The mother cam back and found them. That’s it.

4.4. **One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.** They got stuck on the road. Somebody pulled out and gave them gas. And then they got to the grandma’s house. They had a party. They liked the party.

**Subject #5**

5.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** A monster came. Then they all hide and the monster followed them. They ran away from their house. They ran to the forest. Then they sank into the water. The monster found them. He brought then in his house. He ate everybody.

5.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.** Then they got in trouble. They got to go in time out. The teacher sent them there.
*(Boys were fighting for the elephant. They became friends because they talked and played with each other.

5.3. **One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom.** They got lost and they found a house. They went into a house and it was a scared mansion. Then they found a fairy (a good fairy). And the fairy took them back to their house.
*(Their mom was in the house. The end).

5.4. **One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.** They got lost. And they walked around. And they got scared. The guy found them. And he brought the kids to his house. Then the grandma was not there. Grandma was in Idaho. Then a monster came. It was a white monster. It was huge. They ran away.
*(They told grandma Happy Birthday and gave her a present—a little Santa Claus. They had a party and fun).

**Subjects #6**

6.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** A monster came. And then it attacked the house. And then it was a friendly monster so he gave pizza to them. And then the monster left. And there was another knock on the door. And it was a Yo-Yo. Somebody gave them a Yo-Yo. And then their mom came in. That’s who gave them a Yo-Yo. The next thing was to give a pizza. And then the American Flag came, and then everybody celebrated. The end.
*(Thanksgiving).

6.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.** So the teacher took it away. And then at the end of the day she gave it back. And then it was not the end of the day. They had 24 hour class. And then they had so much fun that the teacher gave the children the toy and they shared. *(Boys were fighting for an action figure. A superhero).*

6.3. **One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom.** Then they followed a truck and a noise came. There was a wolf that tried to eat them, but he wasn’t really going to eat them. He was going to help them to go to their house because he was really good. When they got there they kept him at the back yard, so that mom never knew about him. And then they came back home for some soup and hot chocolate.

6.4. **One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.** They got lost in the basement, and it was so dark that they could not find a flashlight or a TV. They just had to stay there for 1 hour or 2. Then when it was time to leave, it was morning. It was time to leave. Then they found something, then opened it, and it was the curtains. They finally found their way back down. *(They had a party. They gave grandma a ring. And it was they lived happily ever after).*

**Subject #7**

7.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** And they opened it and it was a person – the policeman. He was looking for drugs. And he found a drug in the restroom. And then left to the police office. And then the police was driving back home. And it saw a fox on the way. And it crashed into a house (the police car). And then the policeman got out, got the fox and took it with him. It took him to the hospital. It was all better and then the police officer let it go to its home. And the fox was running and it got hurt again by the police. And then the police took it to the hospital again. And then it felt much better and it went back home and was safe. And then it was sleeping that night and someone took him. And then the fox bit him in a hand and ran away.

7.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.** The teacher came and said: “You guys have to share.” And they shared and then they were friends. And then they had more friends and more friends. And they were best friends. And then one day a boy came and he was hurting them. And one kid ran away (escaped). Then he tripped over into the river. And then he found an island. And the he saw spiders and crabs. And then a snake attacked him and he grabbed the snake and threw him in the water. *(He stayed on the island forever).*
7.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. They were running and looking for the parents. They could not find the parents and they took arrested and they went outside. Suddenly somebody grabbed their hand and they ran. It was a guy in a mask. He took them home with him. He took off the mask and it was their parent. Their mother.
*(They were scared at first).

7.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. And they brought her presents. And the boy gave her a dress. And the girl gave her a purse. And then grandma did not like what the boy gave her and she liked what the girl gave her.
*(They had fun. They were playing something (hide-and-seek). Then they went home).

Subject #8

8.1. One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door. And the monster was behind it. And then the monster tried to eat them, but they ran out of the door. And they ran over the monster and then they throwed him away there. And then there were tomatoes, and hamburgers, and lettuce, and mustard, and ketchup, and hot sauce. And then it all fell into the monster’s mouth. And then the people threw bottles at him and he died.

8.2. One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other. They pulled and pulled and pulled and pulled. And then the toy broke. And then they said: “You did it! No, you did it! No, you did it! No, you did it!” And then they both ran to their teacher. And then they tried to tell on each other. The end.
*(Girls were fighting for a stuffed animal (a bunny). They became friends, but most of the time they fight).

8.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. And then they looked and looked and looked. And they called: “Mom, mom, mom!” And they got a toy and than they stole it and went back. And then they looked on the top of the ceiling. And then they went down and there was their mom. They found her by themselves. And they were happy.

8.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. And then they went in Grandma’s house and they said: “Grandma, where is the cake?” And then they were searching and searching, and searching. It’s a hiding cake! And they tried to search under the couch and outside. And they found the cake in the mud. It was pretend mud. You could eat the mud because it’s candy. And then they ate the house because the house was made of chocolate. And then they went back
home. And then they saw a gingerbread man that was running across the room. They gave Grandma some sculpture. They ate the gingerbread man. It was running around in their tummy. The end.

Subject #9

9.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** A ghost came in. And then it ran away because they put on costumes and scared him because the ghost was someone else – a Scoobydoo.

*Then they had dinner. They had fun.*

9.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn't want to share with each other.** Girls were fighting for a dolly. Then they became friends by themselves. They shared.

9.3. **One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn't take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn't find their Mom.** They found their mother. They were lost for 3 minutes.

*(They saw the secret door. They opened it and their mother was there. She entered it. Then they all went home).*

9.4. **One day, it was Grandma's birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma's house.** They gave her a present – a pink phone. Then they made a cake (strawberry). Then they watched TV. They watched “Strawberry Shortcake.” Then they were playing game – Mario. They were all winners. And then they all became into the game. The girl turned into a princess. The guy turned into superhero. He saved her. She was on the top.

*(Then he will have to talk to the princess. He brought her into her door. Then all the people ran out of the game).*

Subject #10

10.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** It was a big monster, trying to take over dinner. And then the family ran away from their house. They ran to the forest and wanted to hide from the monster. Then the monster ran after them. He could not find them. Then he wanted to eat them but they already ran back in the house and locked the door. The end.

10.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn't want to share with each other.** They kept on fighting for a toy. Suddenly the teacher came to the room to ring the bell to go to group. And then the teacher stopped the fighting and took the toy away to solve the problem.

*(A boy and a girl were fighting for a block. They both needed one more for their tower).*
10.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. They looked all over the store for her, but then they ran back to the car. The car was near the store. Then they stood by the door to wait for their mom. It took them a long time, but they found her.

10.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. Then they forgot to get a present. Then they turned around to go to their place. And they looked for camera. Then they came back and it was Grandma’s birthday. They had very much fun. It was time to open all birthday presents. And their present was last.

Subject #11

11.1. One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door. The mom went to the house. The dad went into the house. And then the dog was sleeping in the house. And then the boy was mean. He took the money. He broke the window. And then he went to house and then he came home to get more money. And then the dad was crying. And the mom and the dog was sleeping. The sister was scared. And then the dog went outside. And the bad boy he killed the dog. And then he kills a puppy. Then the bad boy was happy to get the money the dog to kill. And then the dad cried that mom that he wants more money to buy a puppy for the dog and toys. And then my dad was crying and my sister was crying, too. The he killed a boy and a girl (the baby). And the sister was crying for the baby. Then the dog was having a fun.
*(Ended happy. Then the bad boy went to the home to give the money back. He was happy. Then he says: “Sorry.” He left).*

11.2. One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other. He fight because he did not share. And you need to share for the boys to be happy. Then he played with somebody. He again had friend and had fun. The kids were playing with somebody. Somebody pushed him. He began to cry. He gave a toy back to share.
*(Boys were fighting for a car).*

11.3. One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom. They were sad. They missed their mom. They were looking for her. Then the mom was mad for the kids because they got lost, looking at the toys for too long. She was looking for them. Then at the house the dog was scared of her because the mom was mad for the kids. Then the mom was at the store and then they was good with the mom. And now she is happy.

11.4. One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house. They had fun at the party. And then the dog was there too, funny.
And then the boy and a girl were laughing for the dog. And then we have fun to eat cake. And then we go to swim and buy some movie at the store and watch movie and have fun. *(They gave her a big cake. They gave a puppy for the kid. And then the dog was happy).

Subject #12

12.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** Someone came in it was the man. The man wanted to eat, and they gave him food. And he went in the house. Then they were watching TV and he went to the bathroom. *(He did something bad there. He was writing on the wall. Then he came out of the bathroom and someone went in the bathroom and saw it. The mom saw that he wrote on the walls. They took him outside and he never came back."

12.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.** They kept on fighting. And then the teacher saw them. And then she said they had to share the toy. And they did not. And then the teacher saw them again. And then they were in time out. *(A girl and a boy were fighting for a doll)."

12.3. **One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom.** Then they started to cry and someone found them crying. It was someone that works there, and she took them to find their mom. She was watching for them in the store. *(By going back home)."

12.4. **One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.** They played and they made a mess. And they got in a big trouble. And then they took them back in the house and they never did that again. They gave Grandma a present. It was a little blanket. It was warm.

Subject #13

13.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** There was a person that wanted to come in. And they had dinner to eat. And then the kids said: “Who are you?” because they did not know. And then the kids got scared and they ran upstairs. Then the person that came in back up and the kids went downstairs. And they did not see their parents there. The parents tried to find the man that went inside. They found him on the woods and put him to jail. They finally came home.

13.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.** The teacher came and told them that you have to share or you take turns. But the kids would not listen. So they kept on fighting. And then the
kids found another toy. And the other one got the toy they fighting about. And then the kid saw the other kid playing with it. And then they started fighting again. *(Boys were fighting for a toy truck. Then they shared).

13.3. **One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom.** Then they ran to the front desk and they called the name of the parent, but they would not come because they left home. But one day they came back to the store and then they called one more time. And then they finally found their mom and dad. They were looking for their parents for two days.

13.4. **One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.** Than the kid went inside the house and grandma surprised them and they gave grandma a big hug. And then they had party for grandma. And they gave her a present. The present was some cloth. And then they went back home. And another day grandma came to visit them.

**Subject #14**

14.1. **One day a family was eating dinner. Suddenly they heard a knock on the door.** A person came in and they did not know this person. It was a kind man who was hungry and cold. The family gave him food and let him in. Then they let him stay for the night and sleep on the couch. The next day the man went back to the forest because he lived there. The end.

14.2. **One day, in the kindergarten, two friends were fighting over a toy. They didn’t want to share with each other.** The kids were fighting for a toy and they did not want to share. But then another kid came and told them that they have to share. And then they decided that they can take turns. They took turns. And then they found another toy that they could play with. It was a doll. They did not fight for it because there were tow dolls. *(Girls. A bunny).*

14.3. **One day, brother and sister went to the store with their mother. There were so many toys in the store! The children couldn’t take their eyes off them. Then they got lost and couldn’t find their Mom.** They were looking for their mom, but they could not find her. Then they went to the door and looked for her, but she was not at the door. They got very scary because they got lost. Then they heard that their mom was calling them. They ran to the toys and she was there. And they were happy. The end.

14.4. **One day, it was Grandma’s birthday. Mom and Dad took their child to Grandma’s house.** They had a party and a cake. They liked the cake. Then they went to play outside and then they had more cake. Then their Grandma got presents and opened them. She got a new dress. And then they all had fun. And then they went home.