

The Science behind Here and Now, City and Country

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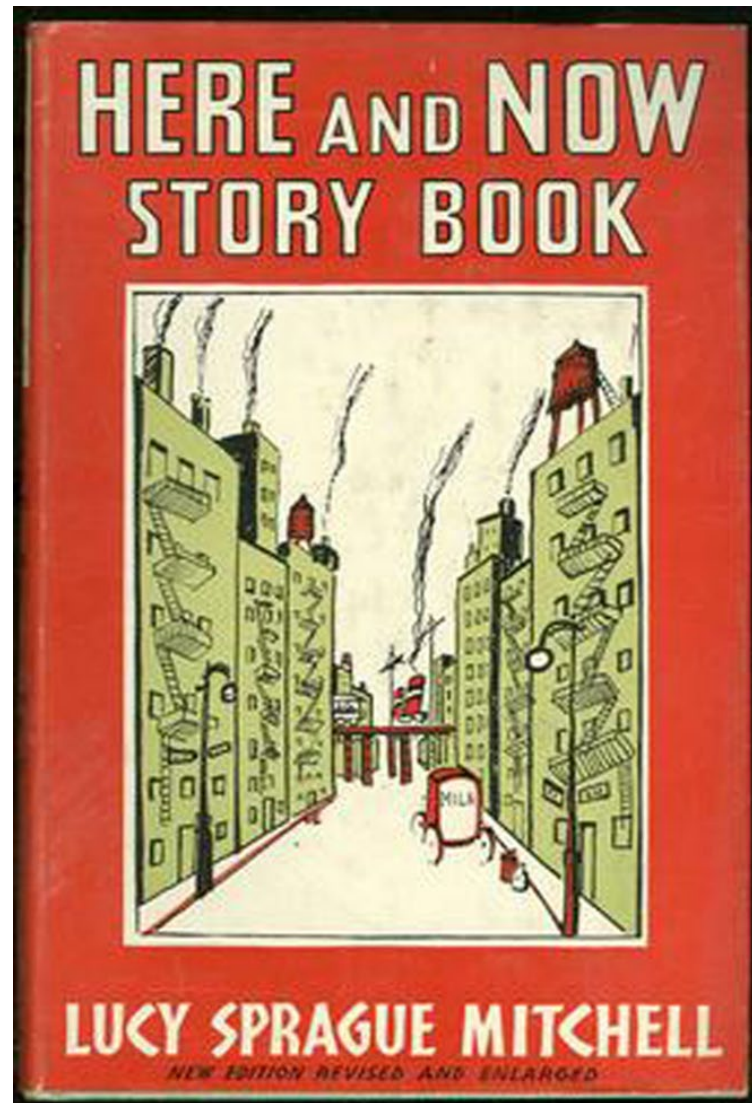


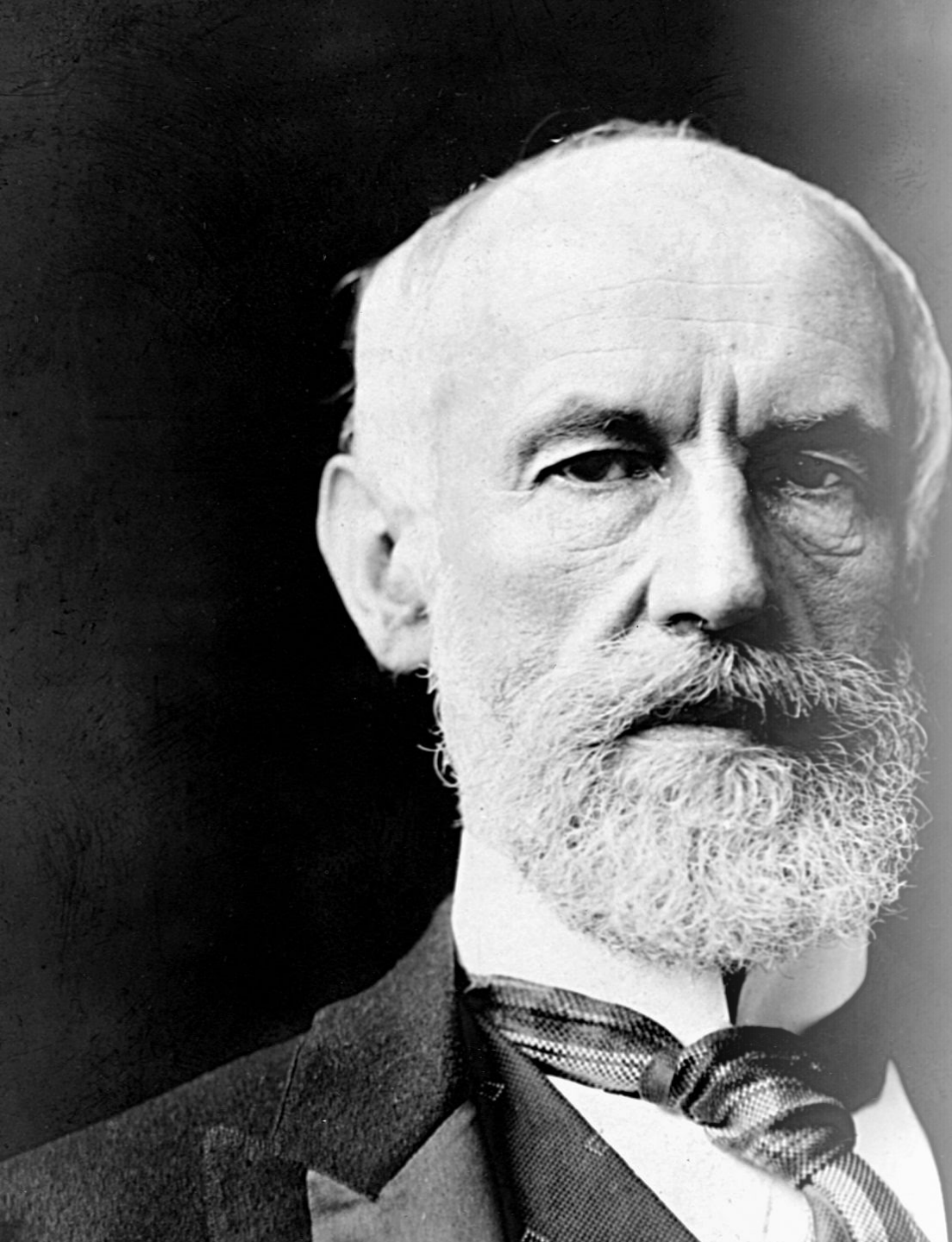
ChLA 2022

Here and Now

The idea that young children react to their immediate surroundings. In modern terminology, child-directed talk should be context embedded.

- In 1921, Lucy Sprague Mitchell published her *Here and Now Story Book*.
- It was based in part on stories actually told by children in the nursery of Bureau of Educational Experiments in NYC (founded in 1916).
- The book includes an introduction by Lucy Sprague Mitchell explaining the cognitive science of the time that went into the book's making.





G. Stanley Hall

- The self-proclaimed founder of child study was G. Stanley Hall.
- Hall proposed 'genetic psychology,' meaning that children grow into their genetically inherited culture.
- As children grow, they mirror the genetic 'evolution' of cultures towards their 'race.' They do so by themselves in we let them – through play.

- Lucy Sprague Mitchell did not believe in genetic psychology; she thought the environment shapes the individual, not genetics.

- She was originally very interested in Hall's science of child study and adopted some of his premises early on.



maturation levels, not chronological age

Hall: chronological age is not an ‘index of ripeness for school’ (1893:22)

Mitchell: ‘Maturity levels, as distinguished from age levels, became the important thing to understand about children’ (1953:275).

Hall, G[ranville] Stanley. 1893. *The Contents of Children's Minds on Entering School*. New York and Chicago: E. L. Kellogg.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. 1953. *Two Lives: The story of Wesley Clair Mitchell and myself*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

motoric interpretation of the environment

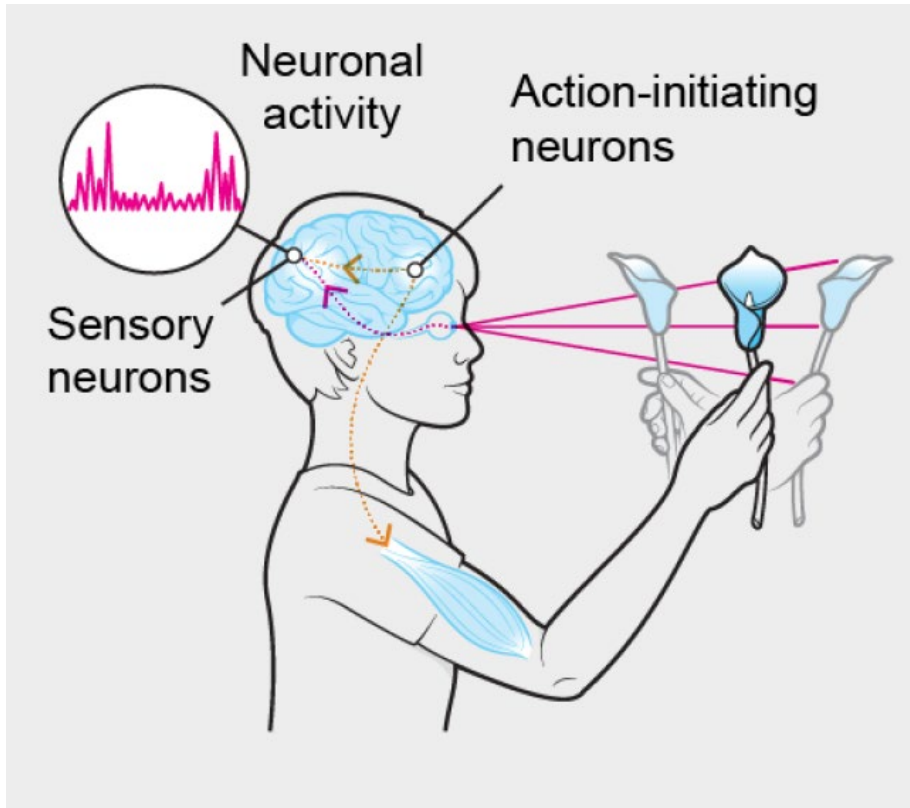
Michael Vincent O'Shea: 'any allusion to a steam engine would not fail to set his arms and legs and lungs in motion after the pattern of the engine, as he thought' (1906:8)

Mitchell: 'a three-year-old can scarcely think "engine" without showing the pull of his muscles and the puff-puffing of exertion' (*Here and Now*:6).

O'Shea, Michael Vincent. 1906. *Dynamic factors in education*. New York: Macmillan, 1906.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. 1921. *Here and Now story book: Two- to seven-year-olds: Experimental stories written for the children of the City and Country School (formerly the Play School) and the Nursery School of the Bureau of Educational Experiments*. New York: Dutton.

Inside-Out Framework



A current article in *Scientific American* confirms it: We need to act motorically on things we experience to understand them. For example: ‘We learn that sticks that look bent in water are not broken by moving them’ (June 2022: 40).

Buszák, György. 2022. Construcing the world from inside out. *Scientific American* 326.6 (June): 36-43

motoric interpretation of the environment

Michael Vincent O'Shea: 'Every one is now familiar with the fine saying that the child thinks with his muscles' (1906:14)

Mitchell: The young child cannot 'observe an object without making some movement towards it. He takes in through his senses; and he interprets through his muscles' (*Here and Now*:6).

O'Shea, Michael Vincent. 1906. *Dynamic factors in education*. New York: Macmillan, 1906.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. 1921. *Here and Now story book: Two- to seven-year-olds: Experimental stories written for the children of the City and Country School (formerly the Play School) and the Nursery School of the Bureau of Educational Experiments*. New York: Dutton.

City and Country

The idea that young children need a healthy and natural environment to engage their perceptions and motoric explorations.

excursions to the countryside

Hall: 'As our methods of teaching grow natural we realize that city life is unnatural, and that those who grow up without knowing the country are defrauded of that without which childhood can never be complete or normal' (1893:28)

...

'A few days in the country at this age has raised the level of many a city child's intelligence more than a term or two of school-training could do without it'

Hall, G[ranville] Stanley. 1893. *The Contents of Children's Minds on Entering School*. New York and Chicago: E. L. Kellogg.



The Bureau of Educational Experiment's Play School (Caroline Pratt) became the City & Country School with the purchase of a farm for summer camp in NY.



Children on the farm at Hopewell Junction (a station of the Central New England Railway)

A popular and well-cited publication of Hall's was about a 'sand pile.'

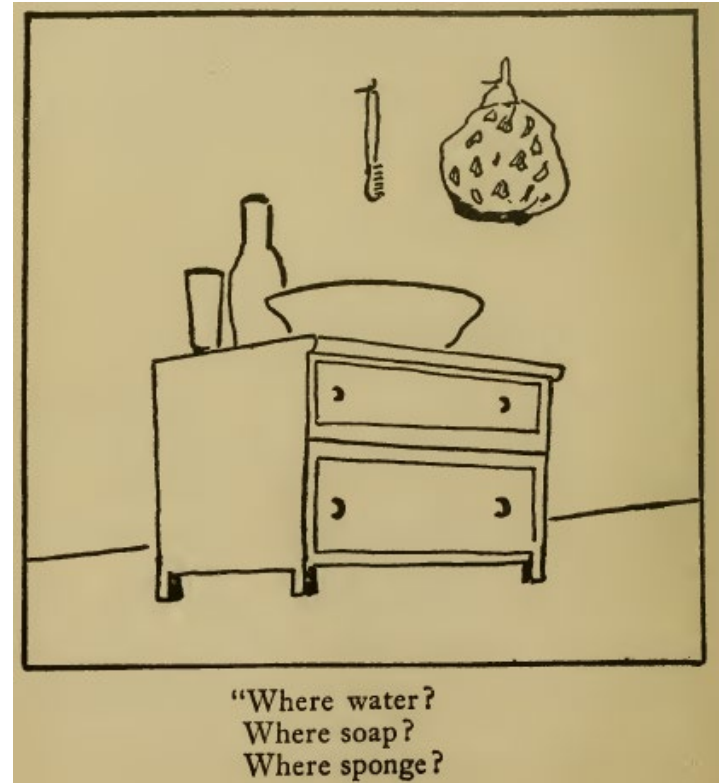
Hall described how in free play, children transformed a sand pile into a simulated village, with houses, livestock, and people. Gradually, they developed agriculture, bartering, a financial system... essentially a 19th-century SimCity. Adults intervened when the kids developed a system of fines and a jail. – 'it was feared that an undesirable degree of knowledge of criminality and intemperance would be fostered' (Hall 1897:9).

Hall, G[ranville] Stanley. 1897. *The Story of a Sand-pile*.
New York and Chicago: E. L. Kellogg.



THE SAND PILE.

- *Here and Now Stories*
- A new genre of children's literature.
- Created from children's own stories and field tested in the Bureau of Educational Experiments' own nursery.



'Marni Gets Dressed in the Morning'

(Here and Now story accompanying physical activity, p. 86)

And then Marni would say, "Hair." And mother would get the brush and comb and brush Marni's hair. And all the time she was brushing she would say:

“Brush it so

And brush it slow.

Brush it here

And brush in there.

Brush it so

And brush it slow.

And brush it here

And brush it there

And brush it all over your dear little head.”

learning proceeds from what is familiar

Hall: ‘All now agree that the mind can learn only what is related to other things learned before, and that we must start from the knowledge that the children really have and develop this as gems’ (1893:2)

Mitchell: ‘The first activities which a child knows are of course those of his own body movements... . Everything is in terms of himself.’ (*Here and Now*: 8).

Hall, G[ranville] Stanley. 1893. *The Contents of Children’s Minds on Entering School*. New York and Chicago: E. L. Kellogg.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. 1921. *Here and Now story book: Two- to seven-year-olds: Experimental stories written for the children of the City and Country School (formely the Play School) and the Nursery School of the Bureau of Educational Experiments*. New York: Dutton.

‘How the Engine Learned the Knowing Song’

(Here and Now story for children understanding the world in terms of themselves, pp. 155-65)

Once there was a new engine. He had a great big boiler; he had a smoke stack; he had a bell; he had a whistle; he had a sand-dome; he had a headlight; he had four big driving wheels; he had a cab. But he was very sad, was this engine, for he didn't know how to use any of his parts. All around him on the tracks were other engines, puffing or whistling or ringing their bells and squirting steam. One big engine moved his wheels slowly, softly muttering to himself, "I'm going, I'm going, I'm going." Now the new engine knew this was the end of the Knowing Song of Engines. He wanted desperately to sing it.

fascination with naming and listing things

Hall: ‘To name an object is a passion with them, for it is to put their own mark upon it, to appropriate it.’ (1893:32)

Mitchell: ‘As a child acquires a few words he adds the pleasure of naming, – an extension of the pleasure of recognition.’ (*Here and Now*: 11).

Hall, G[ranville] Stanley. 1893. *The Contents of Children’s Minds on Entering School*. New York and Chicago: E. L. Kellogg.

Mitchell, Lucy Sprague. 1921. *Here and Now story book: Two- to seven-year-olds: Experimental stories written for the children of the City and Country School (formely the Play School) and the Nursery School of the Bureau of Educational Experiments*. New York: Dutton.



Goodnight bears
Goodnight chairs
Goodnight kittens
And goodnight mittens
Goodnight little house
And goodnight mouse



My email: rthiede@uncc.edu

A PDF copy of this PowerPoint
is available at

pages.charlotte.edu/ralf-thiede