COMMUNICATION AND SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

Edited by
Cynthia Berryman-Fink,
Deborah Ballard-Reisch, and
Lisa H. Newman

Volume 1

COMMUNICATION AND SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

This page intentionally left blank

COMMUNICATION AND SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

Edited by
CYNTHIA BERRYMAN-FINK,
DEBORAH BALLARD-REISCH, AND
LISA H. NEWMAN

Publisher's Note
The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

Disclaimer
The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

COMMUNICATION AND SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

edited by
Cynthia Berryman-Fink,
Deborah Ballard-Reisch,
and
Lisa H. Newman

To our sons, Andrew, Gregory, Stefan, and Rhys,
with hope that your futures will include a society that
values diversity, respects androgyny, and applauds flexibility.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

Section III: Manifestations of Socialization

PREFACE

Socialization can be defined as "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, p. 130). Through both systematic and random experiences, individuals learn to behave in ways that encourage predictability and the continuity of group life. Socialization is not a simple sculpting of human personality and behavior, however. As Wentworth (1980) indicates, socialization is not a mere mechanistic passing-on or transfer of discrete packages of information between the social system and the individual. The individual plays a role in the accepting, internalizing, and limiting of ideas provided by external socializing agents. There is a continuous interplay between external forces and one's cognitive organizing of experiences—a type of dialectical tension between the individual and society which comprises the socialization process.

Therefore, as Staton (1990) argues, socialization is not a static process but rather one that occurs continually throughout life, and individuals are often socialized into different segments of society simultaneously. Berger and Luckmann (1966) distinguish between two types of socialization: primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization is "the first socialization an individual undergoes in childhood" through which s/he becomes a member of society (p. 130). Staton (1990) concludes that primary socialization is complete when an individual becomes a functioning member of society. Secondary socialization, according to Berger and Luckmann (1966), involves "any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of society" (p. 130). They further argue that there are cognitive, affective, and normative components of socialization.

One of the most fundamental and pervasive aspects of socialization is the teaching and learning of sex-role behavior.

Bate and Taylor (1988) make a good point when they say that "biological sex and the psychological and sociocultural features called gender easily become confounded when scholars employ sex and gender as undefined, overlapping terms" (p. 2). We agree that it may be clearer and conceptually more valid to use the term "sex" to denote biological features that distinguish men from women, and to use the term "gender" to refer to the learned and socially evaluated behaviors and attitudes people associate with the words: men and women, girls and boys, and feminine and masculine. Yet, "sex" continues to be the most used and recognizable term in the literature and will be used throughout this manuscript.

While much socialization occurs in childhood, sex-role socialization continues over the entire life span. The sex-role socialization that an individual receives in childhood cannot be a fully adequate preparation for an entire lifetime. Through secondary socialization we continue to learn what is deemed appropriate for men and women at certain stages of life, in various adult contexts, and in relation to societal events and changes. That is not a linear process, as there may be conflicts rather than a continuity between earlier socialization in childhood and later socialization as an adult.

The literature on sex-role socialization has burgeoned during the last twenty years. Sex-role socialization has been analyzed from many angles and within many academic disciplines, including sociology, psychology, anthropology, women's studies, and communication. The two main perspectives represented in this book are the sociological and communication perspectives. The sociological viewpoint is marked by its concern for the aggregate rather than the individual—describing what is characteristic in the way of behavior and thought for members of a society or for a specific social category within that society (Wilson & Boudreau, 1986). The communication perspective examines the dynamics of everyday human interaction and interprets findings by using language and relational conventions that are drawn from the general human communities they are attempting to understand or explain (Carter & Spitzack, 1989).

The sex-role socialization process is inextricably linked to the communication process. It is through verbal and nonverbal communication that we construct our self-identity which includes our gender orientation. Sex roles are enacted, manifested, and altered by communication itself. Both explicit and implicit messages received from known role models like parents, teachers, and peers and outside influences from television, print media, and other forms of public communications serve to model and reinforce behavior which is viewed as being appropriate or inappropriate for our sex.

While the approach to studying sex-role socialization may vary by perspective and methodology, and conclusions have been interpreted in diverse ways, the results of experimental, descriptive, and observational studies have been very similar. One would expect that a book on sex-role socialization published in the 1990's would show a significant shift in attitudes and behaviors away from stereotypical and traditional roles. The research in this volume demonstrates that the socialization of males and females continues to reinforce male dominance despite women's advancement toward equal status in society. Indeed, current research shows that sex-role expectations continue to be strong and pervasive throughout the life cycle. Although we found more evidence of traditional roles than we anticipated, several chapters in this book serve as positive indicators of the potential for gender flexibility and the resulting behavioral competence by women in various communication contexts. Confirmation for the capacity for successful gender-role flexibility is illustrated in the link between androgyny and high self-esteem, the use of meta-complementary strategies to accomplish female sex roles in masculine organizations, the emergence of women's voices, and the effective use of collaboration strategies.

The beginning of sex-role socialization may no longer be the moment at which sex is ascertained during the birth of a child. The advent and improvement of ultra-sonography during the last twenty-five years and the widespread use of amniocentesis testing for mothers over thirty-five have led many "parents-to-be" to prepare for the delivery of the baby with the knowledge of what biological sex the child will be. Names can be

selected, clothing and toys can be bought, rooms can be decorated, and mentally the parents prepare to communicate with their future boy or girl infant. The implications are that the life-cycle process of communicating sex-role identity may begin before birth and continue until we breathe our last breath.

The impetus for this book grew out of our professional interests and our observations of our sons. We, as mothers of boys, had become aware of the profound impact external sources have on their sex-role socialization. Despite our attempts to resist sex-typed behavior and to model flexibility, we were acutely aware of the prevalence of traditional sex-role behaviors in our sons as well as in their female friends. We began to question the current state of sex-role socialization in society.

An edited volume such as this one cannot encompass all aspects of a topic. The essays in this book collectively seek to illuminate the role of communication and sex-role socialization throughout the life cycle. Section I addresses some important issues and behaviors that have an impact on the beginnings of the socialization process. Section II covers socialization in the contexts of relationships, the workplace, and the political arena. Manifestations of socialization through communication strategies and skills and through discourse are examined in Section III. Finally, Section IV addresses ways to alter socialization through instructional practices in higher education. Clearly, the key mechanism for changing negative gender stereotypes is education. Positive educational practices need to begin at the earliest stages of the life cycle, setting expectations for behavior that will continue throughout life.

References

Bate, B., & Taylor, A. (1988). *Women communicating: Studies of women's talk*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Berger, P.L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. New York: Anchor Books.

Carter, K., & Spitzack, C. (1989). *Doing research on women's communication: Perspectives on theory and method*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Staton, A.Q. (1990). *Communication and student socialization*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Wentworth, W.M. (1980). *Context and understanding: An inquiry into socialization theory*. New York: Elsevier North Holland.

Wilson, M., & Boudreau, F.A. (1986). The sociological perspective. In F.A. Boudreau, R.S. Sennott, & M. Wilson, *Sex roles and social patterns*. New York: Praeger.

This page intentionally left blank

SECTION I
THE BEGINNINGS OF
SEX-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

This page intentionally left blank

INTRODUCTION

The attribution of sex appropriate behaviors, personality characteristics, emotional responses, and attitudes is called sex-typing (Nielson, 1990). At the moment of birth, infants are sex-typed and communicated with as male or female beings. While there appear to be few consistent physiological or behavioral differences between boys and girls during their early months, the babies wrapped in the proverbial blue blankets are falsely described as being bigger, stronger, and more active than those wrapped in pink (Walum, 1977).

In the 1990's, pink and blue blanket sex-typed identifiers have given way to pink and blue custom-tailored disposable diapers. Indeed, few gender neutral diapers exist. The expansion of retail choices seems to have allowed for more opportunity to identify the sexes differently.

Laws (1979), in her analysis of toy-preference studies, found that one of the major functions of sex-role socialization is to create differences. Early toy preferences prepare the way for restrictions on how and where children play and what demeanors are appropriate for boys and girls. Girls are exposed to more restrictions than boys; they are expected to stay cleaner, quieter, safer, and more peaceful. Girls are not expected to be especially athletic or competitive.

Subsequent communication messages received by boys and girls clearly highlight their differences, shape their identity, and, in turn, affect how they communicate with other children and with adults. "By age five or six, the average child has achieved strong identification with her or his own sex. They think of themselves as members of their own sex, behave in sex-typical ways, want to be like members of their own sex, and feel emotionally committed to this point of view" (Romer, 1981, p. 24).

        Section I contains three essays that look at the beginnings
of sex-role socialization in messages communicated in children's
books, in children's activity patterns, and children's identifica-
tion of preferred body styles. In the first essay, Cooper analyzes
sexism in children's literature from 1980 to 1990. This content
analysis shows that women continue to be portrayed as the
weaker sex. The implicit messages of recent award-winning
children's books communicate that women lack importance
because they do not appear as often, are portrayed in
stereotypical occupational roles, and use expressive rather than
task-oriented role behavior. The enactment of sex-role
socialization can be seen in the second essay, by Lundgren and
Cassedy, on girls' and boys' activity patterns. This paper
compares and contrasts two large field observation studies of
activity choices made by girls and boys in leisure settings and
discusses the impact of the accompanying parent/adult sex
composition. The authors conclude that girls continue to
participate in more passive and expressive pursuits including
those focused on physical appearance and artistic activities. Boys
uphold traditional sex-role stereotypes by selecting activities that
involve competition and risk-taking. The last essay of this section
by Beinstein Miller, Plant, and Hanke reinforces previous
research on children's attitudes toward body types. It attempts to
verify the age at which boys and girls begin to demonstrate
preferences for different body types and examines the
characteristics children assign to them. The results show that
girls' and boys' preferences are formed early and mirror the
standards of adult society.
        Wilson and Boudreau (1986) explain that "the process of
training young people to be suitable members of society ensures
that, in the manner of a self-fulfilling prophecy, we do, in fact,
internalize the society's standards and become what we 'should'
be" (p. 13). The research presented in this section shows that
perceptions of what we "should be" remain traditional. The
recognition that all people possess both a feminine and a
masculine component has yet to become a part of our
socialization. We continue to reinforce the dominant stereotypes.
Lipman-Blumen (1984) explains that adults raised under the
social conditions of a "previous era" will gear their roles

according to the prescriptions of that era. The result is *cultural lag,* a disparity between the expectations created by past socialization processes and the existence of an ever-changing society. Consequently, change in traditional sex-role behaviors seems overdue.

References

Laws, J.L. (1979). *The second x: Sex role and social role.* New York: Elsevier North Holland.

Lipman-Blumen, J. (1984). *Gender roles and power.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.

Nielson, J.M. (1990). *Sex and gender in society: Perspectives on stratification.* 2nd ed. Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press.

Romer, N. (1981). *The sex-role cycle: Socialization from infancy to old age.* Old Westbury, N.Y.: The Feminist Press and McGraw-Hill.

Walum, L.R. (1977). *The dynamics of sex and gender: A sociological perspective.* Chicago: Rand McNally.

Wilson, M., & Boudreau, F.A. (1986). The sociological perspective. In F.A. Boudreau, R.S. Sennott, & M. Wilson, *Sex roles and social patterns.* New York: Praeger.

This page intentionally left blank

WOMEN AND POWER IN THE CALDECOTT AND NEWBERY WINNERS, 1980–1990

Pamela Cooper

Northwestern University

Introduction

Researchers in children's literature agree that literature has a profound influence on children's language development, cognitive development, personality development, social development, and moral development (see research reviewed in Norton, 1991).

What children read affects them. Repeated exposure to stereotypical images can have detrimental effects on self-esteem and perceptions children have of their own and others' abilities, and can influence a variety of cognitive processes, such as comprehension, recall, and inferences drawn from the material. (See research reviewed in Cooper, 1992; Peterson and Lach, 1990; Stewart et al., 1990.)

The research reported in this essay analyzes the degree of sexism (as related to power) in the Caldecott and Newbery Medal winners, 1980–1990.

Previous Research on Sexism in Children's Literature

One of the first major studies examining sexism and children's literature was conducted by Weitzman and her

associates in 1972. These researchers examined how sex roles were treated by the winners of both the Caldecott and Newbery medals. The Caldecott Medal is given by the Children's Service Committee of the American Library Association for the most distinguished picture book of the year. The Newbery Medal is sponsored by the American Library Association for the best book for school-age children. The 18 Caldecott winners and runners-up from 1967 to 1972 were analyzed in Weitzman's study. The researchers found that the ratio of pictured males to pictured females was 11:1. When females were illustrated, their traditional sex-role characterizations were reinforced: girls are passive, boys active; girls follow and serve others, boys lead and rescue others. Adult men and women in these books were also sex stereotyped: women were presented as wives and mothers; men in a variety of occupations. Newbery winners didn't fare much better. The ratio of male-to-female main characters was 3:1.

In an update of the Weitzman et al. study, Kolbe and LaVoie (1981) analyzed Caldecott winners from 1972 to 1979. Although the ratio of male-to-female pictures had improved drastically (1.8:1), the role portrayal of males and females had not. Female roles continued to be stereotypically portrayed. Cooper's (1989) research of Caldecott and Newbery winners from 1980 to 1987 showed similar results to the Weitzman et al. and Kolbe and LaVoie studies, as did her research of the images of parents and stepparents in children's literature (1987, 1991).

Two other recent studies of Caldecott Medal winners suggest similar patterns. Heinz (1987) examined the occupations of characters in Caldecott Medal winners from 1971 to 1984. Males were shown in three times as many occupations as females. Almost half of the females shown in an occupation were depicted in a homemaker role. Dougherty and Engel (1987) analyzed Caldecott winners and honor books from 1981 to 1985 and found that although numerical disparities had decreased considerably, stereotyped sex-role images had not. Peterson and Lach (1990) examined 136 books from the *Horn Book*'s book list for the years of 1967, 1977, and 1987. While the prevalence of stereotypes had decreased, the decreases in quantity and in kind were not statistically meaningful.

In a random sampling of 1,380 school library books for grades K-6, female athletes frequently fell victim to sex-role stereotyping (Weiller & Higgs, 1990). Boys were shown participating in a majority of individual sports, and girls predominated only in traditionally feminine activities, such as dance. In team sports, 34 of 38 baseball players were male, as were 7 of 8 basketball players.

Power

Power can be viewed in a variety of ways. In this chapter, two types of power are examined in the winning Caldecott and Newbery books. The first type of power is numerical. Numbers communicate importance or power. Thus the Caldecott and Newbery books were analyzed numerically:

1. How many books primarily concern females? Concern males?

2. How many books are written/illustrated by females? By males?

The second type of power concerns the view of females presented in the Caldecott and Newbery winners:

1. Are females depicted working in occupations other than those traditionally associated with females?

2. What are the roles (stereotypical or nonstereotypical) of the main characters?

3. Are females portrayed as powerless in their communication (using hedges, apologies, polite forms, etc.)?

Methodology

Books Selected

The books chosen for examination were the 11 Caldecott Medal winners from 1980 to 1990 and 11 Newbery Award winners from 1980 to 1990. A list of these books is included in the Appendix. Caldecott and Newbery books were selected as a representative sample of children's literature because they are highly regarded for their artistry and content by parents, children's librarians, scholars of children's literature, and school systems. As a result, these books have a large mass distribution and are recognized as a major influence in children's literature.

If books are inculcators of sex-role models, it seems appropriate to determine whether books written for children continue to show sex-role stereotypes, given the recent awareness of publishers and the feminist movement (Peterson & Lach, 1990). The Caldecott and Newbery winners have been determined to be representative of children's literature. Thus an examination of these books should provide a general overview of the degree of sexism in children's literature.

Research Questions

1. Are there male and female numerical disparities in Caldecott winners?

2. Are there male and female numerical disparities in Newbery winners?

3. What are the occupational roles of males and females portrayed in the Caldecott winners?

4. What are the occupational roles of males and females portrayed in the Newbery winners?

5. What language is used by males and females in the Caldecott winners?

6. What language is used by males and females in the Newbery winners?

7. What are the roles (stereotypical and nonstereotypical) of the main characters in the Caldecott winners?

8. What are the roles (stereotypical and nonstereotypical) of the main characters in the Newbery winners?

The Caldecott and Newbery winners are analyzed separately because each award is given for different criteria. The Caldecott is given for the illustrations and is generally considered a book for younger children (preschool through third grade). The Newbery Award is presented for literary excellence and is generally considered a book for older readers (fourth grade through twelfth grade). Thus the books are judged by different criteria and are for different age levels.

Procedure

Each book was examined to determine the number of male and females present (both human and animal). Animals can be designated as male or female by clothing and by the pronouns used to refer to them. In addition, the use of the character in the title, sex of the main character, sex of the author, sex of the illustrator, and number of males and females in each book were analyzed. Also, occupational roles, language used, and the roles of the main characters were analyzed on the following dimensions: expressive/instrumental and stereotyped/non-stereotyped. An expressive role was one that portrayed concern for the well-being of another, affection, warmth, and dependency. An instrumental role portrayed the character as task-oriented, somewhat competitive, and appropriately aggressive. A role was rated as stereotyped if it portrayed the

traditional, culturally defined sex-role expectations. Nonstereotyped roles were those that could be characterized as androgynous—males and females performed both instrumental and expressive roles.

Results

Caldecott Award Winners

Table 1 shows results for the Caldecott winners.

Table 1
Sex-Role Stereotyping in Caldecott Winners, 1980–1990

Ratio of male to female human pictures	2:1
Ratio of male to female nonhuman pictures	1.68:1
Ratio of male to female names in titles	5:1
Number of books in which no female characters are present	1
Number of books in which the story concerns a female	0
Traditional sex-role portrayal and characterization (expressive female; instrumental male)	10
Presence of working female outside the home	0

Numerical Findings

In general, if these results are compared with those of the studies cited earlier in this chapter, numerical findings are consistent. Females continue to "hold their own" in terms of how often they are pictured. Most books, however, concern males, not females. No book centers exclusively on a female character's story. Although a female is one of the main characters in *Jumanji*, the story is about the game, not the people playing it. *Lon Po Po* is primarily the story of the wolf, not of the three girls seeking to

escape him. Of the 20 stories in *Fables*, 16 concern males; four concern females.

Occupational Roles

No female is shown working outside the home. No male is shown working inside the home. Females are mothers, ballet dancers, shoppers, princesses, and wives. Males are knights, janitors, sailors, farmers, warriors, vaudeville stars, waiters, hunters, and airplane pilots.

Language

The Caldecott Medal winners contain interesting uses of language. Although there are few conversations between males and females, some statements about language can be made. For example, in *Shadow*, the 1983 Caldecott winner, the author uses the generic "he": "That's why a person keeps an eye on his shadow when he wakes up, and takes care not to step on it when he gets up. It could prick him or bite him."

The following use of language is from "The Crocodile in the Bedroom" (*Fables*, 1981, p. 2):

> Mrs. Crocodile was proud of her garden.
> "Look at the hollyhocks and the marigolds," she said.
> "Smell the roses and the lilies of the valley."
> "Great heavens," cried the Crocodile. "The flowers and the leaves in this garden are growing in a terrible tangle! They are all scattered! They are messy and entwined!"

This is an interesting conversation. It may be that Mr. Crocodile successfully decreased Mrs. Crocodile's self-esteem!

Role Portrayal

Men are instrumental; women expressive. In *Shadow* (1983), a book of African culture, the men go to war and the women take care of the children. In *The Glorious Flight* (1984), men fly airplanes, women are pictured standing aloof, holding the hands of their children while watching the men fly the

planes. Knights fight dragons; women marry their heroes (*St. George and the Dragon*, 1985). A young boy goes on an adventure to the North Pole, while his sister stays home (*The Polar Express*, 1986). Only one male, Peter (*Jumanji*, 1982) is shown as somewhat dependent on a female. His sister Judy decides what they will do when their parents go out for the evening. She convinces Peter to play the game Jumanji and also continue when wild animals appear. She "saves" Peter by forcing him to finish the game. Only females are pictured comforting the boy after he loses the bell (*The Polar Express*, 1986).

Only one male is depicted being expressive. The father in *Owl Moon* (1988) takes his child owling—not to capture an owl, but simply to spend special time with his child. The child, interestingly, is bundled up in winter clothing with a scarf over the face so there is no way to know if the child is male or female.

When women are shown as strong, instrumental characters, they become weak when a male "comes on the scene." For example, Una (*St. George and the Dragon*, 19) "sets out alone from the safety of the castle walls to look for a champion who would face the terrible dragon." Yet, as soon as she finds St. George, she is pictured resting, waiting while he fights the dragon and saves the kingdom. It is no surprise when she then marries him.

Perhaps the most admirable female is Lon Po Po, who indeed does outsmart the Wolf after her mother leaves her in charge of her two younger sisters. It is somewhat disconcerting that the mother leaves such a young child in charge. One wonders if there must be a negative image of one female character in order for there to be a situation wherein another female can "shine."

Newbery Winners

The results of the Newbery Award winners are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Sex-role Stereotyping in Newbery Winners, 1980–1990

Ratio of male to female names in titles	5:2
Ratio of male to female main characters	2:3
Number of books in which no female is a main character	4
Ratio of male to female characters	2:1
Sex role portrayal/Traditional portrayal	9
Presence of working women outside the home	2

Numerical Disparities

The results indicate that females are numerically underrepresented, portrayed in stereotypical ways, and are powerless in their language.

Occupational Roles

Occupations are stereotyped. For the most part, females have less powerful occupations than males. Women are caterers, maids, shop owners, authors, waitresses, musicians, school librarians, and nurses. Males are robbers, kings, janitors, truck drivers, school principals, authors, businessmen, fishermen, and president of the United States.

Women who are married do not work outside the home. Louise's mother (*Jacob Have I Loved*) quits her school teaching job after she marries. Millie (*Dicey's Song*) works in the store after her husband dies (and she's not making a very good living at it!). Aerin (*The Hero and the Crown*) saves the City when no male can and, yet, after she marries Tor, her "not quite mortal part"—the part that made her a warrior, slept so she "might love her country and her husband" (p. 246). (Interesting also that it is a "magical," nonmortal part that enables her to slay dragons, ward off evil, and save the City!) Leigh's mother in *Dear Mr. Henshaw* goes to work in the catering business after her divorce. Leigh is

upset with his mother's working because he no longer gets good
meals!

Caroline (*Jacob Have I Loved*) continues to perform
musically after she is married, but since everyone has sacrificed
to make sure Caroline can pursue her music, she is portrayed as
selfish, self-centered, and ungrateful, and it is difficult to see her
as a positive role model.

Wife seems to be the major role model for women and
marriage changes women. Once independent, powerful women
are changed. For example, Dicey (*Dicey's Song*) asks Millie, her
boss, what Gram (her grandmother) was like when she was a
girl:

> "I guess we called her pert," she said, with a smile moving her thick
> features. "She had quite a tongue, did Ab, and she'd as soon bite
> your head off as smile at you. She kept things hopping, wherever
> she was. Some people didn't, but I liked her. I guess she used to
> make us laugh sometimes, the things she'd say, the things she'd do.
> Then after she married John, it wasn't the same. Well"—she shook
> her face to bring her attention back—"I guess it never is. I guess she
> was kept busy on the farm, and her children, and things the way
> John wanted them. But I can remember . . ." (pp. 99–100).

Although Sarah (*Sarah Plain and Tall*) is portrayed as
somewhat of an individual, she still acts as her soon-to-be
husband expects and does not argue. For example, when Sarah
drives the horse (Jack) and wagon to town:

> "Remember Jack," said Papa. "A strong hand."
> "Yes, Jacob."
> "Best to be home before dark," said Papa. "Driving a wagon is hard
> if there's no full moon."
> "Yes, Jacob."

Strong-willed Louise (*Jacob Have I Loved*) enters college and
majors in pre-med. She is summoned by her advisor (a male) to
discuss her future in medicine:

> "I suppose you are considering medicine."
> "Yes, sir. That's why I'm pre-med."
> "I see." He puffed and sucked a bit. "You're serious about this? I
> would think a good-looking woman like you—"

"Yes, sir, I'm sure."

"Have you thought about nursing?"

"No, sir. I want to be a doctor."

When he saw how determined I was, he stopped fooling with his pipe. He wished it were different, he said, but with all the returning veterans, the chances of a girl, "even a bright girl like you," getting into medical school were practically nonexistent. He urged me to switch to nursing at the end of the semester.

A sea nettle hitting me in the face couldn't have stung worse. For a few days I was desolate, but then I decided that if you can't catch crabs where you are, you move your pots. I transferred to the University of Kentucky and into the nursing school, which had a good course in midwifery. I would become a nurse-midwife, spend a few years in the mountains where doctors were scarce, and then use my experience to persuade the government to send me to medical school on a public health scholarship (pp. 238–239).

However, Louise gets married instead. More importantly, the author of this book, Katherine Patterson, in no way indicates that the incident is anything but acceptable.

Language

Women's talk is portrayed as frivolous, stupid, and powerless:

Mom has some of her women friends over. They sit around drinking coffee or herb tea and talking about their problems which are mostly men, money, kids and landlords (*Dear Mr. Henshaw*, p. 65).

Mina started laughing instead of saying anything. "That's what I like about you, Dicey. With everybody else, they want to talk about boys, or clothes, having babies. You know?" Dicey didn't know. "But with you—"

"I don't know anything about boys, or clothes, or having babies," Dicey pointed out.

"But if you did you wouldn't talk about them the same way. I bet," Mina said (*Dicey's Song*, pp. 154–155).

"I hear you've come from Boston," she said—as if they'd talked of anything else for the past two weeks! "Tell me," she said, "is it true about . . . ." And all at once there were bursts of chatter; the ladies, at least, at ease (*Gathering of Days*, p. 76).

"Don't mind her, Captain. She don't catch on too good."

"Too well." At least I could demonstrate proper grammar.
"Too well."

"Too well. Too well," repeated the Captain chirpily, lifting his hand to his ear. "Hark? Do I hear the mating call of a feathered friend of the marshland?" (*Jacob Have I Loved*, p. 88).

Role Portrayal

Women in these books are shown in stereotypical roles. They are shown as powerless. One cause of their powerlessness is their need for male approval. For example, the young girl in *A Gathering of Days* writes in her diary:

> Later Father praised me direct, saying that I was a pride and a comfort, and added directly after *that*, "There's many a full grown woman here would not do as well." I shall not forget his words and am resolved that for all my days I shall assay such tasks and virtues as may sustain his comfort and increase his pride (p. 8).

Even when strong female characters are presented, they have a fatal feminine flaw. Louise (*Jacob Have I Loved*) works the crab boats with her father and helps support her family, yet indulges in romantic fantasies as a way to escape a life she dislikes. Dicey (*Dicey's Song*) who has kept her brothers and sisters together after their father dies and mother disappears feels inferior to her brother:

> Dicey might just write something as good as James, she thought, the ideas tumbling around in her head. Then she corrected herself: almost as good as James. James was just too smart for her to keep up with (p. 46).

In addition, her strong personality makes her unpopular. Her friend, Millie, tells Dicey she is "pretty strong meat" and:

> "What does that mean?"
> "You know perfectly well what it means, Dicey Tillerman."
> Dicey guessed she did. And she guessed she liked that. "So are you," she pointed out.
> "Yeah, but I've got charisma," Mina argued. "And I'm a clown. I'm much easier to take" (p. 154).

Males are, for the most part, extremely instrumental. The father in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* cannot really understand her. He does make her a dune from a haystack since she is so lonely for the sea. But when his children ask, "What has Sarah gone to do?" when she leaves, he can only answer, "Sarah is Sarah. She does things her way, you know."

Call (*Jacob Have I Loved*) is completely unable to grasp the meaning of poetry. Louise shares a poem she has written about a young man who has gone to war and the girl he left behind:

[The poem] had all the elements—romance, sadness, an allusion to the war, and faithful love. I fancied myself the perfect lyricist—romantic, yet knowledgeable. I tried it out on Call in the boat one day.
"What's that supposed to mean?"
"The girl's boyfriend is away at war."
"Then why are the gulls crying? Why should they care?"
"They don't really care. In poems you can't say plain out what you mean."
"Why not?"
"Then it's not poetry anymore."
"You mean a poem's supposed to lie?"
"It's not lying."
"Go on. Ain't neither gull on this Bay up there boohooing cause some sailor's gone to war. If that ain't a plain out lie, I don't know what is."
"It's a different way of talking. Makes it prettier."
"It ain't pretty to lie, Wheeze" (p. 79).

Leigh's mother (*Dear Mr. Henshaw*) explains what Leigh's father really means when, after Leigh's dog, Bandit, is lost, his father sends him $20 with a note, "Buy an ice cream cone":

I was so mad I couldn't say anything. Mom read the napkin and said, "Your father doesn't mean you should actually buy an ice cream cone."
"Then why did he write it?" I asked.
"That's just his way of trying to say he really is sorry about Bandit. He's just not very good at expressing feelings." Mom looked sad and said, "Some men aren't, you know" (p. 86).

Louise's father (*Jacob Have I Loved*) is portrayed as an extremely hard-working, but insensitive male:

> That mark on the bridge of my nose is a chicken pox scar. It was more noticeable when I was thirteen than it is now. Once my father referred to me teasingly as "Old Scarface" and looked perfectly bewildered when I burst into tears (p. 20).

Leigh's mother describes his father's love of adventure:

> I said, "If a trucker's life is so hard, how come Dad is in love with his truck?"
> Mom said, "It's not really his truck he is in love with. He loves the feel of power when he is sitting high in his cab controlling a mighty machine. He loves the excitement of never knowing where his next trip will take him. He loves the mountains and the desert sunrises and the sight of orange trees heavy with oranges and the smell of fresh-mown alfalfa (*Dear Mr. Henshaw*, p. 63).

Three winners, *Lincoln*, *Joyful Noise*, and *A Visit*, need to be discussed separately since one is a biography, one is a collection of poems, and one is in picture book format. Suffice it to say that the photos in *Lincoln* are primarily of males and very little mention is made of the women in Lincoln's life or their influence. The poems in *Joyful Noise* are mostly concerned with male insects. "The Digger Wasp" is told by the female wasp, whose children will never see her because she dies after laying her eggs. "Honeybees" is told from the male worker and Queen's viewpoint. She's happy to be a bee; he is not. "The Moth's Serenade" is told by the male moth who is lovesick for the female porch light and when he "embraces" her, he dies. Of the eight authors named in "Book Lice," only one is female. In *A Visit*, it is a little boy who goes on the adventure and the females are portrayed as maids who wait upon him.

Conclusion

The present data demonstrate that children's literature remains sexist.

One might suggest that sexist portrayals of males and females continue because most authors are male. Such is not the case. Of the Caldecott Award books, six were authored by males, four were authored by females, and one was by a male and a female. In terms of illustrators, three books were illustrated by females, seven by males, and one by both. In terms of Newbery Award Books—three were authored by males; eight by females.

One of the major socializing forces, particularly for young children, is books. Through books, children become aware of and understand different roles people play. If stereotyped roles are primary roles shown, males and females will fail to realize that people, regardless of their gender, can achieve a wide range of roles. The Association of Women Psychologists (1970) in its position statement on sexism succinctly states the implications of sexism:

> Psychological oppression in the form of sex role socialization clearly conveys to girls from the earliest ages that their nature is to be submissive, servile, and repressed, and their role is to be servant, admirer, sex object and martyr. . . . The psychological consequences of goal depression in young women . . . are all too common. In addition, both men and women have come to realize the effect on men of this type of sex role stereotyping, the crippling pressure to compete, to achieve, to produce, to stifle emotion, sensitivity and gentleness, all taking their toll in psychic and physical traumas.

Sexism has been shown to affect all areas of life. Stewart et al. (1990) discuss the effects of sexism in interpersonal relationships, education, self-concept, occupational choice, and moving up the hierarchy in an organization. These authors suggest that sexism has a negative effect for women in all the above-mentioned areas.

Certainly changing the sex-role portrayal of women in children's literature will not solve all these problems. However, children decide very early in life what roles are appropriate to males and females. When nonsexist literature is used with children, some change toward nonsexist attitudes does occur (Cooper 1987, 1989). Because literature is one of the earliest socializing agents to which children are exposed, it would seem important to make this agent as nonsexist as possible.

The results of the present study indicate that sexism is "alive and well" in children's literature. Numerical increases in female characters are not enough. Nontraditional role portrayal and language use for both males and females must be shown. Only then will children begin to see viable alternatives to their traditional sex role.

References

Association of Women Psychologists. (September 1970). Statements, resolutions and motions. Miami: American Psychological Association Convention.

Belenky, M.F., Clinchy, B.M., Goldberger, N.R., & Tarule, J.M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing:The development of self, voice, and mind.* New York: Basic Books.

Borisoff, D., & Merrill, L. (1985). *The power to communicate: Gender differences as barriers.* Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press.

Cooper, P. (1987). The communication of sex role stereotypes: The image of stepparents in children's literature. In L.P. Stewart & S. Ting-Toomey (eds.). *Communication, gender and sex roles in diverse interaction contexts.* Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Cooper, P. (1989). Children's literature: The extent of sexism. In C. Lont & S. Friedley (eds.). *Beyond boundaries: Sex and gender identity in education.* Fairfax, Va.: George Mason University Press.

Cooper, P. (October 1991). The image of stepmothers in children's literature, 1980–1991. Paper presented at the Organization for Communication, Language and Gender. Milwaukee, Wis.

Cooper, P. (1992). *Speech communication for the classroom teacher.* Scottsdale, Ariz.: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Dougherty, W., & Engel, R. (1987). An 80's look for sex equality in Caldecott Winners and Honor Books. *The Reading Teacher, 40,* 394–398.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Heinz, K. (1987). An examination of sex and occupational role presentations of female characters in children's picture books. *Women's Studies in Communication, 11*, 67–78.

Kolbe, R., & LaVoie, J. (1981). Sex-role stereotyping in preschool children's picture books. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 44*, 369–374.

Norton, D. (1991). *Through the eyes of a child*. New York: Macmillan.

Peterson, S., & Lach, M.A. (1990). Gender stereotypes in children's books: Their prevalence and influence on cognitive and affective development. *Gender and Education, 2*, 185–197.

Rush, R., & Allen, D. (1989). *Communication at the crossroads: The gender gap connection*. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Schaef, A. (1981). *Women's reality*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Stewart, L.P., Stewart, A.D., Friedley, S.A., & Cooper, P.J. (1990). *Communication between the sexes: Differences and sex-role stereotypes*. Scottsdale, Ariz.: Gorsuch Scarisbrick.

Valentine, C., & Hoar, N. (1988). *Women and communicative power*. Annandale, Va.: Speech Communication Association.

Weiller, K., & Higgs, C. (1990). *Learning '90*, 18.

Weitzman, L., Eiffler, D., Hokada, E., & Ross, C. (1972). Sex role socialization in picture books for preschool children. *American Journal of Sociology, 77*, 1125–1150.

Caldecott Medal Winners

1980   *Ox-Cart Man*, Cooney (Viking)

1981   *Fables*, Lobel (Harper)

1982   *Jumanji*, Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin)

1983   *Shadow*, Brown (Scribner)

1984   *The Glorious Flight*, Provensen (Viking)

1985   *Saint George and the Dragon*, Hyman (Little, Brown)

1986   *The Polar Express*, Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin)

1987   *Hey, Al*, Egielski (Farrar)

1988   *Owl Moon*, Schoenherr (Philomel)

1989   *Song and Dance Man*, Gammell (Knopf)

1990   *Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story from China*, Young (Philomel)

Newbery Medal Winners

1980   *A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal, 1830–32*, Blos (Scribner)

1981   *Jacob Have I Loved*, Paterson (Crowell)

1982   *A Visit to William Blake's Inn: Poems for Innocent and Experienced Travelers*, Willard (HBJ)

1983   *Dicey's Song*, Voigt (Atheneum)

1984   *Dear Mr. Henshaw*, Cleary (Morrow)

1985   *The Hero and the Crown*, McKinley (Greenwillow)

1986   *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, MacLachlan (Harper)

1987   *The Whipping Boy*, Sid Fleischman (Greenwillow)

1988   *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, Freedman (Clarion)

1989   *Joyful Noise: Poems for Two Voices*, Paul Fleischman (Harper)

1990   *Number the Stars*, Lois Lowry (Houghton Mifflin)

This page intentionally left blank

GIRLS' AND BOYS' ACTIVITY PATTERNS IN FAMILY LEISURE SETTINGS*

David C. Lundgren
Amy Cassedy

University of Cincinnati

We are living, many commentators note, in a period of dramatic change in women's and men's roles in virtually every sector of the society. Recent decades have witnessed major changes in the sex composition of the labor force, in family size and structure, in marital roles, and in many social attitudes regarding gender-related issues (see, for example, overviews by Kramer, 1991; Lindsey, 1990; Nielsen, 1990; Sussman and Steinmetz, 1987). One significant set of questions for the social researcher concerns the impact of these trends upon child-rearing patterns. How does the changing society in which adults exist affect the ways in which contemporary parents bring up their girls and boys?

We have approached this topic through observational research in two "natural" public settings, namely, a children's toy fair and an amusement park. These are leisure settings attended by large numbers of families with young children, and they provide ample opportunity for unobtrusive observation of a variety of child and parental behaviors.

Given a range of events and opportunities available in these complex social environments, our starting question is: "In what activities do girls and boys tend to participate?" Do we find, for this late 1980's sample, that boys and girls (or, more

---

precisely, family groupings with various combinations of boys and girls) tend to engage in similar or different activities in family leisure situations? If differences are found, what values and meanings appear to distinguish patterns for the two sexes? Do obtained trends correspond to or depart from traditional sex-role standards? How much influence do parents and children, respectively, appear to exert on the direction of children's play?

We often assume that parents treat girls and boys in very distinct ways, deliberately or unwittingly fostering a different system of values, attitudes, and life goals on the part of the two sexes. The assumption, however, requires careful examination. In their benchmark review of the socialization and developmental literature, Maccoby and Jacklin (1974, p. 348) conclude: "Our survey of data has revealed a remarkable degree of uniformity in the socialization of the two sexes." Among other findings, these authors conclude that there are few or no differences in parental treatment of boys and girls in such areas as amount of total parent-child interaction, amount of verbal interaction, parental warmth, parental restrictiveness vs. independence-granting, reinforcement for dependency, and reactions to children's aggression. More recent reviewers (e.g., Block, 1983; Ruble, 1988; Shepherd-Look, 1982) suggest that definitive conclusions in these areas may be premature, but that the common presupposition of parents' differentiated socialization of girls and boys is in need of thorough empirical scrutiny.

Research on more concrete phenomena such as children's preferences for toys or specific play activities is typically more suggestive of sex differences. Connor and Serbin (1977), for example, found that 3- and 4-year-old girls preferred toys and activities such as doll play, telephoning, and coloring with crayons, while boys of the same age opted for tinker toys, building blocks, and toy airplanes. Fathers and sons engage in more rough-and-tumble play than do mothers and daughters (Jacklin et al. 1984; MacDonald & Parke, 1986). Peretti and Sydney (1984) found that children's toy preferences were significantly related to those of their parents, which in turn showed clear patterns of sex-typing. In a recent review Carter (1987b) concludes that parents provide different toys for girls

and boys, encourage play with same-sex peers, and reward behavior congruent with stereotypic sex roles. Huston (1983) and Ruble (1988) reach similar conclusions, both noting that fathers are more likely to reinforce sex-appropriate activities by their children than are mothers. In her analysis of gender communication, Arliss (1991, p. 133ff.) points specifically to the subtle messages about gender transmitted from parents to children via toy and activity preferences.

At the same time, a number of methodological reviews (e.g., Kreppner & Lerner, 1989; Linn, 1986; Weitz, 1977) point out that the bulk of the relevant socialization and gender differences in literature is based upon experimental laboratory studies where the behaviors of both parents and children may be atypical and that field studies are likely to provide more valid tests of the question of differential socialization. These reviewers emphasize the importance of supplementing experimental and survey approaches with observational research conducted in naturally occurring situations.

Despite well-known limitations, field observation also has compelling advantages. Persons are not operating with the awareness of being observed by a researcher, nor are findings dependent upon self-reports or parental assessments. The data reported in the present study are relatively concrete and behavioral—they report what real parents do with their children in the real world—and they provide a basis for comparison and potential replication across settings. The two studies reported in this chapter were conducted in or near a midwestern city with a metropolitan area population of approximately 1.5 million.

Study 1: The Children's Toy Fair

A first observational study was conducted at a weekend event, here labelled "The Children's Toy Fair," which was held in a downtown convention center in mid-summer of 1987. The primary purpose was to gather initial data regarding the extent to which girls and boys participate in similar or different play activities in this situation. A second research question was

whether gender of parents shows patterns similar to those obtained for girls and boys.

Method

Setting

The Children's Toy Fair, advertised as "combining products and services and featuring fun for kids and information for parents," was sponsored by various commercial and family service organizations. The fair took up the approximately 80 x 100-yard main exhibition hall of the convention center. The center portion of this large hall contained 132 information booths. The rectangular outer perimeter, where data-gathering took place, contained a series of different play or activity areas. These included sports activities, art activities, miniature "car" driving, playground games, food booths, a theater stage, and areas for play with a variety of toys. The spatial layout was such that parents and children who circulated along the main aisles came into potential contact with all of the available play areas. Observations were made of the frequency of boys and girls participating in the various play area sections.

Participants

The toy fair was held on a Friday evening, a Saturday, and a Sunday. Data were collected during a seven-hour period from late morning to early evening on Saturday and for four hours on Sunday afternoon. To assess characteristics of the audience for the toy fair, the observer (the first author) on several occasions took a "census" of family groupings (operationally, groups of one or more adults with one or more children) passing a given location in the aisle, recording sex of adults and children, and estimating the ages of children (primarily on the basis of physical size). Of 661 family groupings, 34% involved a mother-father pair, 36% a solo mother, 17% a solo father, and 13% some other adult combination (most commonly two women with one or more children). (Note: We presume that most adult-child groupings in the current settings involve family units, and the

terms "mother" and "father" will be used throughout to designate female and male adults accompanying children. We recognize, and the reader should note, that this terminology involves misapplication of these labels in some cases, e.g., for single or divorced parents with an adult companion.) A separate count of 1,072 children passing a given location on several occasions during the weekend revealed that the proportions of girls (50.4%) and boys (49.6%) in attendance were virtually identical. One-child family groups were most common (53%), followed by parent(s) with two children (36%). The children tended to be quite young. The modal estimated ages were three years (20%) and four years (21%), with 70% of the observed children falling in an estimated age range from 3 to 7. A tally of racial composition found 91% white families, 9% black families. The audience was estimated by the observer on the basis of appearance to be predominantly middle and upper middle class.

Procedure

The research observer recorded the frequencies of girls and boys participating in (or standing in line waiting to participate in) activities in the various play areas. All play areas and activities were included, with the exception of a toy area designed for the youngest children (where gender identification posed more problems and typically only one or two children were playing with a given toy). The observer moved to each play area in turn, counting and recording in a notebook the number of girls and boys present for each activity. The recording process was done as unobtrusively as possible, and rarely did anyone appear to note his presence or activity. A complete cycle covering all of the play areas along the conventional hall walls typically took 30 to 40 minutes. Five such cycles were completed on Saturday and five on Sunday.

Results and Discussion

The activities observed are listed in the left-hand column of Table 1, grouped in terms of the researchers' classifications under several subheadings. The table reports the total number of children observed at each site and the breakdown, in terms of percentages, of girls and boys participating or waiting to participate in each activity.

The "appearance" category includes several activities that involved the alteration and/or enhancement of one's physical appearance, i.e., having one's face and arms decoratively painted, trying on cowboy/cowgirl clothes, having one's photo taken while in costume. Compared to the above-mentioned baseline of approximately 50% boys and 50% girls at the toy fair, it will be noted that girls were disproportionately involved in all of the appearance-related activities. Combining results for the appearance category as a whole, a comparison of the proportion of girls participating (61.00%) with the baseline proportion of 50.45% girls at the toy fair indicates a difference significant by a two-tailed test at the .001 level ($z = 4.31$).

The second category in Table 1 is artistic activities. These involved children's production of creative products through drawing, sculpting, or crafts. In one location, children could draw pictures on paper with a felt pen or add to a large mural hung on the wall. A table for "sculpting" with modeling dough or clay was provided. "Nature art" involved art activities with nature materials (e.g., those using tracing paper and crayons to trace the patterns of tree stumps or granulated stone). Finally, two tables involved mechanical drawing toys (e.g., those in which children could use an apparatus to create colored geometric designs). An overall comparison reveals that the proportion of girls (61.00%) involved in art activities exceeded their baseline proportion at the toy fair (50.45%) by a significant margin ($z = 3.40, p < .001$). The sharpest difference was apparent in the more traditional drawing activities, while girl-boy disparities dropped markedly for art activities involving "out-of-doors" materials (52.2% girls) or mechanical toys (44.4% girls).

Table 1
Percentages of Girls and Boys Participating in
Various Activities at the Children's Toy Fair

Activity	Total n	% Girls	% Boys
Appearance			
Face/body painting	94	67.0%	33.0%
Try on western outfits	69	66.7%	33.3%
Photo taken in western outfit	45	60.0%	40.0%
Total	208	65.4%*	34.6%
Artistic activities, creative expression			
Art (felt pens; mural)	107	66.4%	33.6%
Modeling dough	79	64.6%	35.4%
Nature art	46	52.2%	47.8%
Mechanical drawing sets	27	44.4%	55.6%
Total	259	61.0%*	39.0%
Noncompetitive physical activities			
Sandbox play	81	63.0%	37.0%
Playground games	87	47.1%	52.9%
Ride rocking horse	127	46.5%	53.5%
Drive miniature cars	143	37.1%	62.9%
Toy trains	73	27.4%	72.6%
Construction toy	65	23.1%	76.9%
Total	576	41.5%*	58.5%
Competitive activities			
Frisbee throwing (at target)	63	42.9%	57.1%
Soccer ball kicking (at goal)	120	41.7%	58.3%
Football throwing (at target)	128	32.0%	68.0%
Basketball shooting	10	23.5%	76.5%
Baseball throwing (speed test)	100	23.0%	77.0%
Golf putting	59	22.0%	78.0%
Basketball (free play)	54	11.1%	88.9%
Total	626	29.4%*	70.6%

Note: The relative proportions of girls and boys in various activities are best viewed in comparison with baseline percentages of 50.4% girls and 49.6% boys observed at the Toy Fair.

*The proportion of girls (or, conversely, the proportion of boys) in this category differs from the baseline at the .001 level.

The remaining two categories involve a broad distinction between competitive and noncompetitive activities. These could as well be labelled "athletic" vs. "miscellaneous physical play" activities. The cluster labelled "competitive activities" is not simply sports-related, but involves activities requiring physical skills in which direct feedback is provided in terms of "success" and "failure" and in which social comparison of one's own performance with a clear-cut standard and/or with the performance of others present is immediately available. Baseball throwing, for example, involved a radar gun which timed the velocity of one's toss at a target, immediately reporting the speed in m.p.h. on a neon sign facing the audience. (Children had some difficulty getting to play because of the number of fathers eager to participate.) One's performance in these activities was generally watched by an audience of waiting children and parents.

The more heterogeneous category of noncompetitive activities typically involved large-muscle physical activity or the physical manipulation of toys (e.g., sandbox play, riding rocking horses). This assortment of play activities is grouped together because, in comparison with the "competitive" cluster, they tended to lack clear standards for assessment, components of success and failure, and explicit bases for social comparison.

As indicated in Table 1, among noncompetitive activities, sandbox play, most popular with younger children, was dominated by girls, while group playground activities and rocking-horse riding were closely balanced by gender. Boys were considerably more prone to drive miniature cars, play with toy trains, and build things with construction sets (all of which would be classifiable as masculine sex-typed activities). A comparison for the category as a whole indicates that girls were underrepresented in this overall set of physical play activities (41.5% vs. 58.5% for boys), a trend which differs significantly from the approximately 50-50 baseline proportions ($z = 3.87, p <$ .001). It should be noted, however, that considerable variation occurred within this category. It would appear that the more masculine sex-typed the activity, the higher the percentage of boys involved.

Finally, boys tended to dominate participation in all of the sports-related, "competitive" activities. This trend was least strong for the Frisbee and soccer games, which are perhaps less culturally stereotyped as "masculine" than are football, baseball, and basketball. Interestingly, the golf putting green, which one might judge to be the most unfamiliar of the various sports to young children, drew far more boys than girls. For the "competitive" category as a whole, girls (29.4%) were strikingly underrepresented in comparison with their presence in the audience as a whole ($z = 10.09, p < .001$).

The overall results, of course, are highly congruent with research on prevailing sex-role stereotypes and standards that attach greater social desirability to girls and women being physically attractive, expressive, and artistic, while boys and men are expected to be more physically active and competitive (cf. Carter, 1987a; Spence et al., 1985). One straightforward interpretation is that the young girls and boys in the present sample have incorporated those cultural standards and consequently select and spend more time at those play activities that assist them in becoming "little women" and "little men."

This possible interpretation is complicated, however, by the fact that it is parent-child groups who are approaching these various pursuits and, together or individually, making decisions about children's involvement. The pervasive pattern of boy-girl differences, in other words, may be influenced strongly by parental expectations and encouragement of different play activities for their boys and girls.

Only indirect data are available from the toy fair setting to examine this possibility. On the second day of data collection, the observer spent a portion of time recording frequencies of female and male adults at various play areas, as well as adults and children in audiences for stage performances and at "free-sample" ice cream and orange juice booths. Having already seen strong differences in activity patterns for girls and boys, the question arises of whether comparable differences are evident for parents, and of how the pattern for parents is related to the pattern for children.

Table 2 reports the total number of parents at each of ten locations during the time periods observed (either participating

Table 2
Comparison of Presence of Mothers and Fathers with Relative
Participation by Boys and Girls

Activity	n Parents	% Mothers	Rank Order	n Children	% Girls	Rank Order
Watch folk dancers	84	70.2%	1	52	78.8%	1
Art (pens, mural)	47	68.1%	2	107	66.4%	2
Get ice cream	202	66.8%	3	189	52.1%	4
Watch fashion show	51	66.7%	4	45	64.4%	3
Watch gymnastics	70	65.7%	5	40	45.0%	7
Get orange juice	154	65.6%	6	161	46.0%	6
Drive mini cars	85	58.8%	7	143	37.1%	9
Toy trains	24	58.3%	8	73	27.4%	11
Playground games	15	53.3%	9	87	47.1%	5
Sports activities	130	50.8%	10	626	29.4%	10
Watch yo-yo demonstration	39	46.2%	11	40	40.0%	8
Construction toy	11	45.5%	12	65	23.1%	12

Note: Rank-order correlation (rho) between proportion of mothers (vs. fathers) present and proportion of girls (vs. boys) participating = .85.

or watching their children), as well as the percentage of mothers (vs. fathers) among those parents. The 10 activities are ordered in the table in terms of the proportion of mothers (i.e., adult females) present, proceeding from the highest to the lowest proportions. Thus 70.2% of the folk dance audience was made up of mothers (i.e., adult females), while only 45.5% of the parents seated at the tables for construction toys were mothers. The right-hand half of the table shows the parallel pattern for children—i.e., the total numbers of children observed, the percentages of girls present, and the rank order of each activity in terms of proportions of girls.

Quite strong parental differences are apparent. Mothers were more likely to be with their children at the folk dance exhibition and fashion show, at the art center, or getting ice cream. Fathers (who were less numerous at the toy fair) were found relatively more often with the construction toys, watching the yo-yo exhibition, and accompanying their children to sports activities or playground games. The important point to note is that the pattern of involvement for children directly parallels that for parents. The rank-order correlation (rho) between the proportion of mothers present and the proportion of girls present across the 10 locations is +.85. Where mothers go, we find more girls; lots of fathers, lots of boys.

Unfortunately, direct data are not available from this study for various combinations of parent-child pairs (e.g., do mothers bring their boys to the basketball hoop, their girls to the fashion show?). However, a second study, conducted in a major midwestern amusement park, does offer more direct information on this question, as well as examining boy-girl activity patterns in a quite different natural setting.

Study 2: The Amusement Park

Study 2, also conducted in summer 1987, extended our research concerns to a new setting. Data were gathered at a large amusement park in the midwest area in which the research was based. Again, we were interested primarily with the differential involvement of children in play or leisure activities as a function

of gender. However, on the basis of results at the toy fair, the question of parental gender became more salient. In effect, do mothers and fathers treat their girls and boys similarly or differently, and how important, respectively, are gender of parent(s) and gender of child(ren) in accounting for family activity patterns?

Method

Setting

The amusement park, located midway between two large cities in a midwestern state, is divided into a number of different areas. One of these (here termed "Kiddieland") caters specifically to families with young children, and consequently our observations were based there. Kiddieland offers 10 rides designed for young children. A sample of these was selected to examine participation as a function of gender of children and of parents.

Considering amusement park rides from the standpoint of the rider, probably the most salient dimension for distinguishing rides is that of "scariness." Some rides are likely to be regarded as "scary, exciting, and thrilling"; others as "relaxing, gentle, easy" (though pleasing and fun in their own right). The scary rides involve high speed, a felt lack of control, and an experience of risk or danger. The safe rides are much slower, gentler, relaxing, and less likely to arouse apprehension or excitement.

In the present context, two of Kiddieland's 10 rides were judged to fall clearly at the scary (or high action) end of the continuum—the roller-coaster and the giant slide—while two others were judged to best represent the mild pole—the train and the merry-go-round. In discussion below, the former will be referred to as "high-action rides," the latter as "mild rides."

The roller coaster is clearly the most exciting of the rides in Kiddieland. Each train consists of 10 cars that can seat two people apiece. A ride lasts for about two minutes and involves two steep climbs, followed by a rapid, twisting downhill run. The giant slide also involves high speed. Customers walk up steps to a platform approximately 50 feet above ground level,

slip into burlap sacks (one or two persons per sack) and, when a bell rings, slide down one of the 15 lanes. The two-tiered slope is pitched at approximately 50 degrees, resulting in a rapid downward descent.

The merry-go-round, in contrast, is a very mild ride which is far less likely to induce fear. Seats, both stationary and moving, are mounted on models of cartoon-based animals, and parents frequently accompany younger riders. The train was judged as the mildest of the 10 Kiddieland rides. A family of four can sit in a single car, one seat facing forward and one backward. The train travels at an estimated 4–5 m.p.h., with a single trip through a grassy area taking about three minutes.

Participants

To provide a baseline for assessing activity patterns, the research observer, as in Study 1, took a "census" of family groupings on several occasions, recording gender of adults and gender and estimated ages of children. These descriptive results found 52.60% "mothers" and 47.40% "fathers" among the adults in family groupings in Kiddieland. Children were nearly equally divided by gender, 51.20% girls and 48.80% boys. The ages of children on the four rides were also estimated, and these varied systematically with the nature of the rides. The median estimated ages for the high-action roller coaster and giant slide were 10 and 7, respectively, while the comparable medians for the milder merry-go-round and train rides were both in the 4–5-year age range. These age differences complicate comparisons by gender, and the reader should keep in mind that children on the high-action rides were older than those on the mild rides.

Procedure

Data were collected by the second author during a series of five visits to the amusement park during mid-summer 1987. For each of the four rides, the observer stationed herself at the optimal available location for identifying parent-child groupings on the ride and recorded frequencies in a notebook. In contrast with the toy fair data, total composition of the specific parent-child or family groupings on a ride was recorded (i.e., sex of

adults and of children), thus allowing for direct examination of patterns for various types of family units. Total observation time was varied for each ride depending upon the "traffic flow" of participants: 1 hour and 10 minutes for the roller coaster, 2 hours and 48 minutes for the giant slide, 2 hours for the merry-go-round, and 2 hours and 37 minutes for the train.

Results and Discussion

The combinations of parents and children observed on the two mild and two high-action rides are reported in Table 3. The row labels denote the parent(s) on the ride (with one or more children), and the column labels indicate the child(ren) accompanied by those parents. Individual cells, then, show the frequency of a given parent-child combination. For example, on the merry-go-round, there are 73 instances of a mother accompanying one or more girls and 26 cases where a mother was with both a boy and a girl.

Considering the results first for parents, mother-father trends are exactly opposite in direction for the mild vs. high-action rides. That is, mothers were more likely than fathers to accompany their children on the mild rides (55.9% vs. 33.2% for the merry-go-round; 30.1% vs. 20.1% for the train). Conversely, fathers were more likely than mothers to be with their children— both boys and girls—on the high-action rides (41.3% vs. 21.9% for the giant slide; 44.4% vs. 31.0% for the roller coaster).

Though less strong or consistent, similar trends occurred for children. Girls were more likely than boys to ride the merry-go-round (47.1% vs. 30.7%) and the train (42.5% vs. 35.6%). Boys were more likely than girls to ride the giant slide (52.4% vs. 43.1%), particularly by themselves. However, the roller coaster, the most popular ride in Kiddieland, was equally sought out by boys and girls (48.1% and 47.6%).

Combining results within the mild ride and the high-action ride categories, we find that 262 mothers and 186 fathers rode the mild rides, while 136 mothers and 217 fathers rode the high-action rides. A chi-square test reveals a strong, significant relationship between gender of parent and "intensity" of rides on which parents accompany their children ($X^2 = 29.45$, $df = 1$, p

Table 3
**Composition of Parent-Child Groupings on "Mild" and
"High-Action" Rides at the Amusement Park**

		Child(ren) on ride			
		Boy +			
Parent(s)	Girl(s)	Girl	Boy(s)	Total	
on ride	*n*	*n*	*n*	*n*	%
		The Merry-Go-Round (Mild)			
None—children only	10	0	16	26	10.9%
Mother	73	26	34	133	55.9%
Father	29	27	23	79	33.2%
Total	112	53	73	238	100.0%
%	47.1%	22.3%	30.7%	100.0%	
		The Train (Mild)			
None—children only	15	20	11	46	21.0%
Mother	31	9	26	66	30.1%
Mother & Father	28	10	25	63	28.8%
Father	19	9	16	44	20.1%
Total	93	48	78	219	100.0%
%	42.5%	21.9%	35.6%	100.0%	
		The Giant Slide (High Action)			
None—children only	26	2	63	91	31.6%
Mother	37	2	24	63	21.9%
Mother & Father	6	3	6	15	5.2%
Father	55	6	58	119	41.3%
Total	124	13	151	288	100.0%
%	43.1%	4.5%	52.4%	100.0%	
		The Roller Coaster (High Action)			
None—children only	21	8	17	46	24.6%
Mother	28	—	30	58	31.0%
Father	40	—	43	83	44.4%
Total	89	8	90	187	100.0%
%	47.6%	4.3%	48.1%	100.0%	