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IN CHILDREN'S STORY BOOKS

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Joan A. Bucy

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Abstract

This study assesses male and female sex-role stereotyping in children's story books. Ten Caldecott and 10 Golden Sower book selections from 1986 to 1995 are examined for the number of female and male lead characters; occupations, gender roles and personality traits of the main characters; the realism of character roles and storylines; and the contributions that the main characters made to society. The analysis indicates that there are fewer female than male characters in the story books, that lead characters are often shown in traditional occupations and gender roles, and that female lead characters are generally shown in exotic roles and storylines. However, both male and female lead characters are depicted with masculine and desirable personality traits. In addition, female lead characters contributed to society more than males. The results indicate that almost all of the books contain sexist and nonsexist elements, suggesting little change in children's story books since research published in the 1980s.

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Many researchers agree that gender role socialization begins at birth (Chodorow, 1989; Kuhn, Nash and Brucken, 1978). Infants are influenced by their parents and caretakers, teachers, peers, role models and the media. Children gradually learn the meaning of gender in our society, and adjust their behavior to fit into the definitions of masculine or feminine.

Children's story books are an important early source of sex-role learning (Arbuthnot, 1964; Davis, 1984; Kortenhaus and Demarest, 1993; Mischel, 1970), helping children develop values, attitudes, goals and purposes (Smith, Greenlaw and Scott, 1987). Yet research has also shown that although the number of male and female characters in children's story books is nearing equality (Peterson and Lach, 1990), there is still sexism in role portrayal and characterization (Kortenhaus et al., 1993).

Because books play an ever-increasing role in gender development (Day, 1988), it is important to identify story books with positive role models and those with negative role models so we can better select reading material for the youngest and most influential listeners and readers. We, as parents, educators and concerned adults, need to help young girls maintain a strong self-esteem and feel empowered to work for their goals, while also helping young boys and young girls see each other as beings that are more alike, than different.

The purpose of this study is to count and examine stereotypical and non

stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity in children's story books to determine if, and how, stereotypical meanings of gender, masculinity and femininity are constructed in children's books. Results will help parents and educators better select books, and, perhaps more importantly, bring to light the complicated perpetuation of gender stereotypes in children's story books.

Main sections of this proposal include: the meaning of gender, gender socialization, the history of gender stereotyping in children's books, books as an agent of gender socialization, and nonsexist books and gender socialization.

I will propose research questions and hypotheses to accompany a study proposal to examine 20 children's preschool and primary (K-3) story books published between 1986 and 1995 for the presence of sex-role stereotyping and non stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity.

Chapter 1 - Literature Review

Gender Stereotypes and Socialization

The meaning of gender in our culture

The idea of gender is a socially constructed system of meanings, values, and expectations that divides males and females into non overlapping categories (Bingham, 1996). This dichotomous nature of individual gender categories and identity dictates that one is either masculine or feminine. Those who divide gender by "pinks and blues" continually search for contrasting differences between males and females. They assume that girls and boys sharply divide as two separate and unitary types of beings. "But the social world is not that simple," states Thorne (1993). "There are many ways of being a boy or girl, some of them overlapping, some varying by context, some shifting along lines of race, ethnicity, class and age" (p. 158). These categories ignore other aspects of identity, and fail to acknowledge the qualities, activities and interests that males and females have in common (Bingham, 1996).

Children are socialized into existing gender arrangements, through influences such as stereotyped clothing, toys, names, games, attention, and so forth. Children also pick up the gender stereotypes that pervade books, songs, advertisements, television programs and movies. "If boys and girls are different," says Thorne, "they are not born but made that way" (1993, p.2).

Gender categories not only play a large role in determining each individual's destiny, but they also profoundly influence how we understand ourselves and how we behave and relate to others. Relationships between men and women

often center around two themes: males and females as opposites, and sometimes complimentary; and males as more valued in society than females.

Bipolarity: Masculine and Feminine as Opposites

At a very young age children often separate themselves into same sex groups to play, form friendships, and engage in social activities. This sex separation is reinforced by adults who assign them to sex-based learning groups or place boys and girls on opposite sides in playground games and classroom competitions (Thorne, 1993).

When Kuhn, Nash and Brucken (1978) studied sex role concepts of 2- and 3-year-olds they found that these children already possessed oppositional views about their abilities and those of the other sex. Girls believed negative things about the boys (they were mean, weak and that they fight), beliefs boys did not share, and boys believed negative things about the girls (they cry and are slow), beliefs girls did not share. While boys believed positive things about themselves (that they like to work and work hard), the girls did not believe these things. Girls likewise believed positive things about themselves (I can do it best), but boys, again, did not find positive attributes in the girls.

Oppositional views are also reinforced through cultural phrases and jokes that align males and females against each other ("the war between the sexes"), schools, clubs and associations that exclude certain genders from participation or membership, and legal rulings that favor one gender over the other (such as child custody decisions that favor mothers) (Bingham, 1996).

Thorne (1993) believes that much of this attitude is taught in school. Gender

was highlighted, both formally and informally, more during the course of each school day than any other social category (apart from age). Affirming the value of boys and girls in interacting together is a continual process for educators, she said. Staff need to consistently create opportunities for boys and girls to get to know one another as individuals and friends, positively reinforce co-operative cross-gender play, read students stories in which boys and girls interact as friends, and use exercises to raise students' awareness of gender stereotyping (Thorne, 1993).

An oppositional view creates antagonistic feelings toward the sex different than you. When boys and girls are presented as opposite kinds of beings, they later create intimate relationships which are based on mistrust and a sense of being strangers (Thorne, 1993).

Society often depicts males and females as opposite, but also complimentary; males are dominant, females are submissive; males are independent, females are dependent, men are sex machines, women are sex objects, men are successful (at all costs), women are caring (at all costs), (Bingham, 1996; Connelly Loeb, 1990).

Inequality: The Value of Being Male

Beginning at a young age, most males and females learn that power and privilege are not distributed equally in life (Grauerholz, 1994). Children are born into a world that prefers boys over girls (Renzetti and Curan as cited in Kourany, Sterba and Tong, 1992). Boys carry on the family name (assuming that a daughter will take her husband's name at marriage) and are easier and

cheaper to raise (Renzetti et al, 1992). The small minority of parents that prefer girls seem to value them for their traditionally feminine traits: they are supposedly neater, cuddlier, cuter and more obedient than boys (Renzetti et al., 1992).

Most cultures also provide males with a dominant and more socially esteemed position while providing females with a subordinate and inferior social position. In domestic situations men are regarded as the heads of families, even if their wives earn more than they do (Wood, 1997). In business and public affairs men are encouraged to compete and succeed -- a role which provides men with high prestige (Wood, 1997). In today's world where many women regard a career as an option, something they may or may not do, men see being employed and bringing in an income as one of the requirements of being a man (Wood, 1997).

While men are expected to be successful in their careers, women are expected to be successful in caring for others (Bingham, 1996; Wood, 1997). Society teaches women to accept the role of supporting, taking care of, and responding to others by encouraging women to care for families, keep a home, etc. These roles, which serve others, are roles which are devalued in America and which also provide women with low prestige (Wood, 1997).

Whether at work, school or home our culture views men as leaders (more often than women), and, as a result, gives men more opportunities to lead (than women) (Wood, 1997).

Masculine and feminine stereotypes in our society

The characteristics of competence, instrumentation and adventurous, --- highly desirable traits in our society --- are typically associated with masculinity (Deaux, 1976 as cited in Kortenhaus and Demarest, 1993; Broverman et al., 1972 and Kohlberg, 1966 as cited in Flerx, Fidler and Rogers, 1976). Cultural characteristics of masculinity also include: aggressiveness and uninvolvement in human relationships (Wood, 1994).

Less desirable traits -- being passive, nurturant, dependent and submissive -- are usually viewed as female traits (Dino, Barnett and Howard, 1984 and Spence and Helmreich, 1980 as cited in Kortenhaus et al., 1993; Broverman et al., 1972 and Kohlberg, 1966 as cited in Flerx et al., 1976). Cultural views of femininity include being incompetent (Wood, 1994).

Being identified as a specific gender causes our society to divide and label us. These categories not only affect our destiny, but also profoundly influence how we understand ourselves and how we behave and relate to others.

Gender Socialization

Formation of gender identity

Stereotypes can become reality when young children model the behaviors and attitudes they see and hear. Very young children, who are not yet certain of the roles they should play, look to the influences in their world for behaviors and attitudes which will form their being. Children form rules for what is sex appropriate through direct observation of parents, teachers and peers at school, and the media, and by reflecting on their own interpretation of what they have

observed and what they are told (Kohlberg, 1966). According to Wood (1997), "The intensity of focus on gender may explain why this is one of the first clear senses of self that children develop. Before they know their nationality, religion, or social status, most children develop gender constancy and see themselves as gendered beings" (p. 61).

Of the people who influence our gender identities, parents are especially prominent (Wood, 1997). It is believed that a child's identity begins to take shape at birth through his/her attachment to and identification with a nurturant caretaker, and the reinforcement and communication received from that person (Chodorow, 1989; Kuhn, et al., 1978; and Wood, 1997). Just the fact that boys and girls are primarily raised by women has crucial effects on gender roles. Girls start out as infants identifying with their mothers, and grow up defining themselves in relation to other people (as their mothers do). As boys grow, they repress their powerful ties to their mother and to womanhood and turn to their fathers for self-definition. As a result of this, human connections become more difficult for men than for women (Wood, 1997).

Social scientists agree that the sexes are much more alike than they are different, and that differences within each sex are far greater than differences between the sexes (Shapiro, 1990). Yet parents' beliefs about gender influence how they interact with sons and daughters, what expectations they communicate to each, and how they themselves serve as gender models for their children (Wood, 1997). Labeling an infant male or female does elicit sex-stereotypic responses from adults and children (Stern and Karraker, 1989). Knowing an infant's sex influences an adult's interpretation of an infant's

ambiguous behavior, perceptions of the infant's physical characteristics and beliefs about appropriate activities. One study (Rubin, Provenzano and Luria as cited in Wood, 1997) showed that within 24 hours of birth parents are already responding to their babies with gender stereotypes. Despite the fact that the babies were matched for size, weight and level of activity, parents described boys with words such as strong, hardy, big, active and alert, while describing girls as small, dainty, quiet and delicate.

Because children respond much more strongly than adults to gender labeling, they are apt to perceive gender-related stimuli in more extreme and inflexible terms than adults in order to maintain their self identity (Kuhn et al., 1978; Stern et al., 1989; Thompson, 1975).

Even before a child can express her or his own preferences, parents and other adults are reinforcing their definitions of gender identity and encouraging sex-typed play through the physical environment of these children (Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit and Cossette, 1990; Stern et al., 1989). Parents select different toys for female and male children; often choosing dolls, kitchen appliances and utensils, and children's furniture for girls, and tools and sports equipment for boys (Pomerleau et al., 1990). Parents also discourage a child's interest in toys and games that are associated with the other sex (Lytton and Romney, 1991). Fathers, in particular, are more insistent on gender-stereotyped activities and toys, especially for their sons (Lytton et al., 1991). Research has shown that although boys do tend to be somewhat more active than girls, boys and girls are similarly active, similarly rambunctious and similarly interested in model cars and model kitchens (until about the first grade) (Shapiro, 1990).

Different choices of play materials and activities, and the encouragement and reinforcement of playing with these specific kinds of toys will affect the children's choices of play later in life, researchers say (Fagot, 1985; Pomerleau, et al., 1990). When given a choice infants will be more likely to choose objects they are familiar with (and know what can be done with them) (Pomerleau et al., 1990).

Parents also prejudice the physical environment of their children by decorating their rooms and dressing them in certain colors. Although the designs in the rooms do not differ, girls' rooms more often contain yellow bedding, while boys' rooms more often contain blue bedding and curtains. Boys are more likely to be dressed in blue, red and white clothes than girls, who wear more pink and multicolored clothes (Pomerleau et al., 1990).

Children between two and six years of age use sex role stereotypes as rules for understanding and organizing their social environment (Stern et al., 1989). This is when it also becomes apparent that parents use different discipline techniques on their toddlers, depending if the child is a boy or a girl (Shapiro, 1990). If a girl bit her friend and took her toy, for example, the mother would explain why biting and taking toys were not allowed. If a boy did the same thing, his mother would be more likely to stop him and punish him without providing him with an explanation (Shapiro, 1990). This kind of discipline encourages girls to care about the problems and feelings of others (Shapiro, 1990).

Schools also play an important role in defining and dividing the sexes. The educational system teaches us how smart, competent and valuable we are

(Wood, 1997). Schools combine with other socializing agents to communicate what identities we are expected to assume and what personal, civic and vocational opportunities are open to us (Wood, 1997). In addition to teaching children about important people, history, science, literature, etc., education also contains a hidden curriculum which reinforces sexist conceptions of women and men (Wood, 1997). This curriculum consists of institutional organization, content, and teaching styles that reflect gender stereotypes and support gender inequalities by privileging white males and marginalizing and devaluing female and minority students (Wood, 1997).

The mere organization of schools provides students with the belief that men belong in positions of authority; superintendent and principal, while women belong in subordinate positions; teachers, aides, cafeteria workers and secretaries (Wood, 1997).

The books and material elementary school children are exposed to perpetuates gender stereotypes in several ways. First they represent males as the standard by over representing men and under representing women (Wood, 1997). Nearly 25 years ago a study revealed that there were approximately three male characters for every female character (Women on Words and Images, 1972). A replication of the previous study (Purcell and Stewart, 1990) found that male characters are still featured in two-thirds of the pictures and photographs in books, again, telling children that men are the standard in society (Wood, 1997).

More important than the numbers of male and female characters is the way in which each of these characters is portrayed. Purcell et al. (1990) found that both

sexes were portrayed in sex-stereotyped ways. Females were shown depending on males to help and rescue them; males were portrayed as taking part in more involved adventurous activities than females, and males were shown in a wider range of careers. When girls see male characters fulfilling high ambitions and affecting the course of events, they are discouraged from those self-perceptions (Wood, 1997).

The verbal and nonverbal behavior used in teaching and learning settings also reveals prejudice and sexism. The most obvious way teachers' communication expresses the view that males are more important than females is in the sheer amount of attention given to students. From preschool through graduate school, teachers pay more attention to male students (Chapman, 1988; M. Sadker and D. Sadker, 1986: Wood, 1997). Male students also dominate a classroom in other ways. They receive more verbal praise from teachers (Byalick and Bersoff, 1974; Good, Sikes and Brophy, 1973; M. Sadker et al., 1986; Simpson and Erickson, 1983), more nonverbal praise (Meyer and Thompson, 1956; Simpson et al., 1983), and more nonverbal and verbal criticism (Chapman, 1988; M. Sadker et al., 1986; Simpson et al., 1983).

They also receive more nonverbally neutral communication (Simpson et al., 1983), and more correction (M. Sadker et al., 1986). In addition, teachers introduce topics that are of more interest to boys (Chapman, 1988), and provide male students with more individualized instruction and time than they give to female students (Epperson, 1988; M. Sadker et al., 1986; Hall and Sandler, 1982, 1984). Not only do female students receive less attention, but they also receive less encouragement and less serious regard than their male peers

(Sexism in the Schoolhouse, 1992). Although "girls enter first grade with the same or better skills and ambitions as boys...by the time they finish high school, 'their doubts have crowded out their dreams'" (Sexism in the Schoolhouse, 1992, p. 62). The cumulative effects of communication that devalues women students and that presents white heterosexual males as normal and important, and females as less important creates a downward intellectual mobility cycle in which "girls are less likely to reach their potential than boys" (Sexism in the Schoolhouse, 1992, p. 62; Wood, 1997).

Peers in school settings also influence gender identity. From age 5 to the early 20s, peers have an influence at least equal to that of families and is especially strong in encouraging gender stereotypical attitudes, behaviors and identities (Huston, 1985; Martin, 1989). As soon as children begin interacting with other children the power of "peer pressure" sets in and begins to influence attitudes and identities (Wood, 1997). Children who conform to gender stereotypes seem to be accepted better by peers than those who don't (Martin, 1989), especially boys (Fagot, 1984). Peers make it clear that boys are supposed to act like boys and not act feminine or do girl things (Wood, 1997). This reinforces the cultural message that masculinity is more valuable than femininity: boys may **not** act feminine, but girls can act masculine (Wood, 1997).

Although peers are important to both sexes, they seem more critical to boys' development of gender identity (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1987). Males may rely on peers for gender identity because of the physical and psychological distance fathers often maintain from their family. In addition, men are often less available

as models.

Media, like parents, teachers and peers, offer lessons and messages about gender. Gender stereotypes have been found in the media as early as the 1800s when beauties served coffee, washed clothes and promoted hair care products (Friedman, 1977). Most recently gender stereotypes have been evident in films (Babener, 1992; Berland and Wechter, 1992; Bromley and Hewitt, 1992; Davis, 1992; Joshel, 1992; Molitor and Sapolsky, 1993; Oliver, 1993; Rohrkemper, 1992), in newspaper and magazine articles (Busby and Leichty, 1993; McGrath, 1993), on television (Craig, 1992; Furnham and Bitar, 1993; Messner, Carlisle, Duncan and Jensen, 1993; Renn and Calvert, 1993; Riffe, Place and Mayo, 1993; Signorielli and Lears, 1992; Sommers-Flanagan, Sommers-Flanagan and Davis, 1993; Vande Berg, 1993; Vest, 1993), and in children's story books (Kortenhaus et al., 1993; Peterson et al., 1990).

The media's influence on children begins with the influence on their parents as they select toys for newborns, infants and toddlers. Parents and non-parents often select a gift for little ones by purchasing toys they have seen in a catalog, magazine or on television. Influenced by strongly sex-stereotyped advertisements and packaging, adult consumers search through catalogs and stores with separated gender sections for the perfect toy (Pomerleau et al., 1990). The girls section contain dolls and accessories, doll houses, arts and crafts, toy beauty sets, and housekeeping and cooking toys. The boys section includes building sets, sports-related toys, transportation toys, workbenches and tools (Pomerleau et al., 1990).

While shopping for preschool age boys many adults select a gun, a toy kept

popular by the media. Guns are "an inevitable part of the developmental process" due to the fact that we live in a television-driven society, according to Shapiro (1990, p. 58). They serve as the focus for fantasies about the way a boy is going to make himself powerful in the world (Shapiro, 1990).

As children grow they absorb messages from story books, television, music and videotapes. Popular culture transmits patriarchal myths and attitudes through literature, films, television, music, advertising, etc., (Sheffield, 1987). Many of the gender images created in the media are unrealistic, stereotypical and provide limiting perceptions. Media typically: 1) under represent the actual proportions of men and women in the population, leading us to believe that men are the cultural standard. 2) portray men and women in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender and 3) depict traditional-role relationships between men and women, and 4) normalize violence against women (Wood, 1994).

Media reinforce stereotypical views of men, women, and male-female relationships. They reinforce longstanding cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity. Males are: hard, tough, powerful, active, independent, sexually aggressive, unafraid, violent, superior, totally in control of emotions, and --- above all--- in no way feminine (Wood, 1994). Women are: dependent, passive, subservient, ornamental objects whose primary functions are to look good, please men, and stay quietly on the edge of life (Wood, 1994). Relationships between men and women in the media also are stereotypical; reflecting and promoting traditional associations between the sexes.

Hegemony

Hegemony is a process by which a powerful social group gains popular consent to dominant ideology and the established social order. In that way, subordinated groups of individuals come to participate in their own domination (Clair, 1994). Hegemony supports the values and ideas held by the dominant ideology of a particular culture while devaluing values and ideas that oppose or are different from the dominant ideology (Connelly Loeb, 1990).

Hegemonic masculinity supports traditional views of family, patriarchy and gender roles (Connelly Loeb, 1990). It says that the man is the one who is employed and has control over the finances, makes important decisions and maintains emotional distance from his wife and children. His domestic duties exist outdoors. He is the one who plays with the children, but does not satisfy their daily needs. Hegemonic masculinity means that the woman must define herself by the appearance of her home and the relationships she has with her children and her spouse. It means that, although she is allowed to make everyday decisions, she must consult her husband for more important ones. Her domestic duties exist inside the home. Hegemonic masculinity defines "what it means to be a man," and secures the dominance of men in the gender system (Hanke, 1990).

Many media offerings seem more modern and less sexist than previous work. According to Hanke (1990), however, a key issue is to see how masculinity is defined. Hegemonic masculinity works in media portrayals by appearing to broaden gender roles while more subtly reinforcing the ideology of patriarchy. Examples of hegemony are apparent in the television series

thirtysomething (Hanke, 1990). *Thirtysomething* appeared to portray nontraditional masculine characters in that the lead male characters formed close friendship bonds, were emotionally sensitive, and engaged in personal self-disclosure. However, in this series two of the three leading men are professional advertising men, reinforcing the masculine work ethic that links identity to the notion of achievement and successful performance (a career). When the male characters relate to other men it is signified by scenes of leisure, sports in particular. Competitive sports traditionally signify patriarchal ideology by emphasizing physical strength, bodily control and skillful performance. The leisure activities of the female characters involved visiting and talking with each other while one or more of them engage in some kind of housework or child care (Hanke, 1990).

Another example involves the issue of men and fatherhood. All of *thirtysomething's* major male characters are parents, whereas half of the major female characters are parents. This takes on added meaning when we consider that Hearn (1987 as cited in Hanke, 1990) calls fatherhood one of the major institutions of patriarchy in the private sphere. In this series fathers appear to challenge traditional roles by attempting to be more involved in raising their children, but ultimately remain bystanders because they are ultimately less-suited than women to be primary care givers. An example of this appears in an episode in which Gary and Susanna attempt to reverse traditional parental roles when Susanna must work outside the home. But Gary feels that being a full-time parent is "unnatural", so he decides to resume his teaching career (Hanke, 1990).

The main family on the series (Michael and Hope Steadman) also reinforce traditional sex-roles. Their family is nuclear and patriarchal and their household is organized around Michael's career (a woman's place is in the home) (Hanke, 1990). The Steadmans are very similar to other TV nuclear families -- at a time when nuclear families are actually declining in society.

Because the media are extremely powerful in reaching their audience, their treatment of the sexes is extremely important. Since they project the image people acquire for themselves, they are primary agents of socialization (Friedman, 1977). Even when media portrayals appear on the surface to challenge traditional roles, they often simultaneously support and maintain traditional patriarchal views of acceptable lifestyles and roles for men and women.

Gender identity is formed through the socialization of each individual. Although children are born much more alike than different, parents, teachers, peers and the media provide stereotypical definitions of gender identity which help individuals understand and organize their social environment. As a result, males and females soon learn which identities to assume, and which personal, civic and vocational opportunities are open to them.

Gender Stereotyping in Children's Books

History

Research done on picture books published during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s focused on the number of female/male characters, sex-typed activities, and social roles represented in picture books (Davis, 1984). In the 1960s a

number of researchers in the United States began to notice the prevalence of gender (and other) stereotypes in children's books, as well as in other media (Peterson and Lach, 1990). Most of these studies found these similarities: 1) males outnumbered females by a significant proportion, regardless if the characters were humans, animals, machines or fantasy characters, 2) males were most likely to be portrayed as positive, active and competent, and 3) females were likely to be portrayed as negative, passive and incompetent (Peterson et al., 1990).

In the '70s researchers were concerned with the numbers of male and female characters in titles, illustrations and story lines of the books; delineations of social and occupational roles performed by each sex; and a description of the behavioral characteristics, traits, and images of male and female characters portrayed in sampled preschool picture books (Davis, 1984). The content of randomly-selected books (Stewig & Higgs, 1973), and popular and inexpensive contemporary picture books (Bereaud, 1975), seemed to contain the same lack of gender balance as award-winning picture books (Nilsen, 1971; Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada and Ross, 1972; Kolbe and LaVole, 1981); sex-role stereotyping seemed to be pervasive in each type of preschool children's picture book (Davis, 1984). The Weitzman et al. (1972) study, for example, which reviewed Caldecott medal winners and honor books over a five-year-period, found that men and boys were depicted 11x as frequently as women and girls. And there were 95 male animals for every female animal.

Even the analysis of nonsexist books about girls proved disappointing, causing one researcher (St. Peter, 1979) to conclude, "despite the attempted

improvement of sex-role models, the majority of children's picture books continue to under represent women and to stereotype female and male characters. The fact is that, when Jack goes up the hill, Jill stays home" (p. 260).

A more extensive, comprehensive study of 25 Caldecott winners or runners up and 125-non award picture books published between the 1940s and 1980s confirmed the trend of decreasing sexism in children's picture books (Kortenhaus et al., 1993). But once again it showed sexism in role portrayal and characterization; boys were characterized far more often as instrumental and independent, while girls were shown as passive and dependent. Female characters were also more nurturing than male characters. In addition, boys were shown engaging in outdoor play three times as often as girls and they solved problems five to eight times as often as girls. Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) conclude that children's books do not adequately reflect the changing roles of women in the workplace of American society, and do not present an accurate representation of the actual behavior of males and females in our society.

Another study (Barnett, 1986) done in the '80s used readers instead of researchers to review 1,537 children's picture books and determine whether male and female story characters in children's books were depicted as helping boy and girl characters at different rates and in different ways. The results showed that males were generally represented more frequently, both as helpers and as recipients of help, and that although male and female humans were not sex-stereotyped, nonhuman helpers such as animals and cartoons were.

In summary, children's story books present females as passive, dependent, nurturing, less competent in their ability to accomplish tasks (Kortenhaus et al., 1993), nonsignificant and expressive (Kolbe et al., 1981), and negative (Peterson et al., 1990). At the same time males were depicted as far more instrumental and independent (Kortenhaus et al., 1993), positive, active and competent (Peterson et al., 1990. They were also shown as problem solvers (Kortenhaus et al., 1993).

"The media provide young women with few female images to emulate and provide few positive images of womanhood for people of either sex to respect. Female invisibility not only deprives the female audience of inspiring role models, but also produces what George Gerbner has called 'symbolic annihilation " (Friedman, 1977, p. x).

Girls must identify with male figures in these stories if they are to acquire any sense of competence or achievement from the literacy role models. "The trend in children's books is based on the premise that, 'boys do, girls are'" (Kortenhaus et al., 1993, p.221).

Books as an Agent of Gender Socialization

One of the many experiences common to a great number of preschool and elementary school children in the lower grades is listening to and reading stories in books, particularly illustrated picture books. These books are a commonly overlooked modeling influence (St. Peter, 1979) and are an important early source of children's sex-role learning, therefore contributing to the socialization of the sexes in the early years of childhood (Arbuthnot, 1964;

Davis, 1984; Kortenhaus et al., 1993; Mischel, 1970) .

Children's books help develop a set of values and attitudes, likes and dislikes, goals and purposes, patterns of response and a concept of self (Smith, Greenlaw and Scott, 1987). Researchers such as Kummel (1970), Weitzman et al. (1972) and Zimet (1973) discussed the importance of books as socializing agents several years ago. Even 50 years ago researchers Child, Potter and Levine (1946) believed that when reading a story, a child goes through symbolically, or rehearses the episode that is being described in the story. The same principles that were expected to govern the effect of the story on the child would govern the effect of actually experiencing such an incident in real life, they said. Today researchers call books "a vital force for persuading children to accept those values" (Peterson et al., 1990, p. 189).

Throughout the history of children's books, authors have told their stories not only to entertain, but to articulate the prevailing cultural values and societal standards (Arbuthnot, 1964; Peterson et al., 1990). Children's books are especially useful indicators of societal norms, and have, for a very long time, defined society's prevailing standards of masculine and feminine role development, according to Peterson et al. (1990). They provide children with socially sanctioned sex-typed role models and clear images that prescribe for the children what they can and should be like when they grow up (St. Peter, 1979; Weitzman et al., 1972). Although children learn from models of both sexes, their behavior usually reflects the activities they think are appropriate for their own sex.

The more often male or female characters appear in a book, the more often

they will be available for role models. The more often the social roles of the character are restricted, the lower levels of power, competence and social status that character will have (Davis, 1984). Repeated exposure to powerless role models is likely to have detrimental effects on the development of children's self-esteem, particularly on that of girls, and on the perceptions children have of their own, and of others' abilities and possibilities (Peterson et al., 1990). Although sex-role stereotyping has restrictive, dysfunctional consequences for both sexes, the harmful effects are more pronounced for females (Flerx et al., 1976).

Exposure to sex-role stereotypes in children's books is likely to be more harmful to girls than boys because, as discussed in a previous section of this proposal, the characteristics and functions specifically assigned to females are less highly valued than those associated with the masculine role. Males are described as intellectual, competent, adventurous and skilled in worldly affairs, while females are characterized as passive, dependent, illogical individuals who are restricted to household and child care duties (Broverman et al., 1972 and Kohlberg, 1966 as cited in Flerx et al., 1976).

Gender stereotypes in children's books affect readers' perceptions of others and themselves. They influence how children perceive their behavior, their memory for that behavior and the inferences they draw from it (Bem, 1981; Berndt and Heller, 1986). Gender stereotypes in books also affect self-concept and potential for achievement (Peterson et al., 1990). Kindergartners who heard stories about mothers who worked outside of the home said there were more types of jobs women could be employed in, compared to kindergartners

who listened to stories in which traditional roles were used (Barclay, 1974). In addition, when preschoolers were read stories in which males or females displayed achievement-oriented behavior, both boys and girls spent more time working to complete tasks (Barclay, 1974).

Today books play an ever-increasing role in gender development for two reasons: because more and more children are moving into day-care, preschool and nursery settings where their exposure to books is greater than in the home, and because the content of the material available to the children is unknown to the parent(s). By the year 2000 it is expected that 80 percent of all children in the United States, younger than age six, will be in some kind of preschool setting (Day, 1988).

Children are especially likely to be influenced by books in the classroom. If teachers read aloud 20 minutes, 4.3 times per week for one school year (36 weeks), then children will have listened to 361 hours of stories by the time they finish sixth grade. In addition, if these 254 teachers have average classes of 25 students for a total of 3,119 combined years, then nearly 78,000 students have been exposed to these teachers' read-aloud preferences (Smith et al., 1987).

According to Smith et al. (1987), "Even without direct statement of what is important, interesting, valued, or acceptable, messages are sent to children indirectly by the content in the books that teachers choose to read aloud," (p. 400). The message from these books to children is that girls do not do interesting, exciting things -- only boys do. In addition, the message tells children that boys should be active and aggressive, not passive and reflective. And although grade titles for grades 4 to 6 contain a lower percentage of male

protagonists, "it comes too late in the socialization process in the eyes of many concerned about the acquisition of positive self esteem in girls and respect for girls by boys" (p. 405).

Nonsexist Books and Gender Socialization

Progress

Since women in our culture do not consistently conform to traditional definitions of femininity, we may expect some children's books to show female characters as instrumental, independent problem solvers. Indeed, research shows that such books do exist, and studies have been done comparing the effects of these books which don't contain sex-role stereotyping with books that do contain sex-role stereotyping.

When St. Peter (1979) investigated sex-role portrayals in nonsexist picture books as compared to more conventional picture books (including Caldecott medal winners), the results showed greater representation of females in the titles, main characters, and illustrations of the nonsexist books, as well as preponderance of female characters performing instrumental vs. expressive roles. In a similar study Davis (1984) identified behaviors (as distinguished from sex-typed activities or social roles) exhibited by female and male characters in nonsexist books, and compared these portrayals with those presented in more conventional picture books (Caldecott award winners and contemporary best sellers). Results showed that those books rated as nonsexist had highly independent females, and nurturant and nonaggressive males as characters -- clearly different characters than those portrayed in the conventional books.

Nonsexist males were often shown praising their peers, displaying affection, and providing help, comfort, and support to those in need. They rarely expressed hostility toward others, attempted to physically or emotionally hurt another person or animal, or attempted to destroy objects.

Progress also includes the publication of books which list non stereotyped children's literature. One such book, Gender Positive! A Teachers' and Librarians' Guide to Non stereotyped Children's Literature, K-8 (Roberts, Cecil and Alexander, 1993) describes more than 200 books whose main characters are resilient and non stereotypic. Whereas the majority of books demean, leave out or misrepresent females and minorities, these selections use strong, non stereotypic young male and female characters who break out of expected patterns to demonstrate that there are no incorrect roles or behaviors for either gender. The main characters in nonsexist books are assessed using a set list of categories or standards (see Appendix A-1):

The first category is *Balance*. Balance means the number of females depicted as main characters and in illustrations as compared to the total number of males depicted as main characters and in illustrations.

The second category is *Variety in Occupations*. Nonsexist books portray females and males in a variety of occupations, not just the traditional. A key is to look for the reversal of traditional gender roles.

The third category is *Reversal of Traditional Roles*. Nonsexist books feature portrayals of females in roles that are predominantly active, dominant and capable. Look for portrayals of males in roles that show their dependency needs in a sympathetic manner.

The fourth category is *Desirable Traits*. Desirable traits are those that are socially valued. Society seems to value the following traits: instrumental, independent, competent, nurturant, nonaggressive. Nonsexist books portray females with desirable traits as often as they portray males with desirable traits. Undesirable social traits are different for males and females. Undesirable masculine traits are: dependent, incompetent, passive and nonaggressive. In some situations being emotional can be a socially undesirable trait for males. Undesirable feminine traits are: unemotional, non nurturing and aggressive. In some situations being independent may be a socially undesirable trait for females.

In sexist books females have undesirable traits while males have more desirable traits. Research shows that traits that are feminine (nurturant, dependent, incompetent, emotional, passive and nonaggressive) are considered negative traits, while traits that are considered masculine (instrumental, independent, competent, unemotional, non nurturing and aggressive) are considered positive traits. As pointed out by Wood (1997), girls can exhibit masculine characteristics and still be accepted by their peers, even though boys may **not** act feminine.

The fifth category is Variety *in Character Types*. Stories which include sex-role stereotyping often show the main female characters as exotic or as someone who has made a special accomplishment. These types of stories featuring female lead characters should not out-weigh stories of characters in realistic roles.

The sixth category is Contributions *of Females as Well as Males*.

Nonsexist stories present the contributions to society of females as well as males.

These attributes provide a way to examine stereotypical and non stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity in children's storybooks. They can provide both practical and research benefits. The practical benefit is that these attributes can help parents, teachers and librarians identify nonsexist books for children to read. The benefit for research is that these attributes can provide an organizational scheme to pinpoint aspects of books which perpetrate sexism/gender stereotyping and which don't.

Effects of gender portrayals in children's books

Studies done on nonsexist books seem to show that reading nonsexist books creates a different effect than reading gender-role material. A 1979 study by Frost (cited in Campbell and Wirtenberg, 1980) concluded that elementary school children engaged in five 30-minute reading sessions with non-stereotyped books showed decreases in gender stereotyping in personality characteristics and in their attitudes toward both peer and adult activities. These findings are consistent with those of Barclay (1974) who found that children who were taught with non-sexist stories or books over sustained periods of time showed reduced sex-role stereotyping. In their research Campbell et al. (1980) refer to other studies which have examined whether materials which eliminated sex-bias would affect children's attitudes and achievements in school. The results show that the longer children were exposed to materials containing sex-bias and stereotypes, the more sex-

stereotypical their attitudes became, and the longer those attitudes were retained.

One study (Flerx et al., 1976) demonstrated that female role stereotypes can be modified through the use of books that portray egalitarian sex roles. This modification was greatest for 4-5 year old females. Scott et al. (1979) further demonstrated how female role stereotypes can be changed through the use of nonsexist material. When female characters were placed in roles traditionally assumed by males, both boys and girls increased their perceptions of the number of girls who could engage in these activities.

The symbolic models children encounter in picture books are important factors in changing sex-typed stereotypes (Flerx et al., 1976). Extensive, repeated exposure to media that portray broad, flexible conceptualizations of male and female roles should be considered an effective method of abolishing restrictive, dysfunctional sex role stereotypes.

Problems

The availability of nonsexist books appears to hold promise of social change toward respect and egalitarianism for both females and males. Unfortunately, research indicates that most children are unlikely to come in contact with nonsexist story books. In a 1990 telephone survey (Peterson et al.), parents of children under age 7 were questioned about their reading practices and selection of reading material for their children. Approximately 80 percent of the 124 parents who responded said that they bought or borrowed at least 10 books per month for their children, and 50 percent said they spent more than 2

hours per week reading to their children. The parents said their book selections were influenced by their own personal childhood favorites (29%), friends' and relatives' suggestions (18%), and teachers' recommendations (14%).

This means that parents in their 20s, 30s and 40s who select their own childhood favorites to read to their children are choosing books published in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Historical comparisons done on children's picture books of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s do not indicate significant declines in sex-role stereotyping in the post-1960 years (Davis, 1984). Even research in the 1980s offered only slight improvement of sex-role stereotyping. In a follow up to the Weitzman et al. (1972) study, Kolbe et al. (1981) examined 19 Caldecott medal and honor book selections for 1972 to 1979 and found that while the ratio of female pictures and characters had improved considerably, role portrayal and characterization had not changed. "Although young children reading these books will encounter more pictures of females and female characters, their roles continue to be non expressive, nonsignificant and stereotyped," said the researchers.

Kolbe et al. (1981) found that the factors that were most important for purchasing a book were: a match to the child's interest (87%), the quality of the illustrations (73%), and creative language use (57%). Parents acknowledged that they seldom screened books for stereotypes, but if they did they evaluated the books on the basis of: racial stereotypes (40%), disability stereotypes (23%), and gender stereotypes (11%).

The profile of the parent most concerned about stereotypes was a 25-34 year old who had completed some college courses, and who earned a mid-level

income. Female respondents were almost twice as likely (62%) to voice concern as were male respondents (38%). "The general lack of attention to gender issues in selecting books for children was disturbing, given the significant impact such books may have on children's lives," concluded Peterson et al. (1990, p. 192).

The books children are exposed to in the classroom may not be any less sexist than the books they read and see at home. When Smith et al. (1987) asked 254 elementary teachers to list their favorite books to read aloud to children, the educators produced a list of 631 books -- 43 percent which have male protagonists, 21 percent which have female protagonists, 13.5 percent which have a male and a female protagonist, and the remaining books had a neuter protagonist or none. Of the top 10 titles selected by the teachers, eight of the books had male protagonists, one had a female protagonist and one had a female and a male protagonist (see Appendix A-2). Only five books (10%) of the teachers' preferences were non stereotyped books. Of the 30 favorite titles chosen by the kindergarten to third grade teachers, 73 percent showed male protagonists, 20 percent showed female protagonists, and 7 percent showed both male and female protagonists (Smith et al., 1987) (see Appendix A-3).

Worse than the quantitative imbalance is a qualitative aspect of these books, according to the research team. Smith et al. (1987) found that adult women were characterized as mothers or homemakers only. "While it is realistic to characterize women in these roles and with these personalities, when these characterizations dominate the images of women presented through teachers' read-aloud choices, the cumulative effect on children's socialization is

extremely problematic," (Smith et al, 1987, p. 402). "It is the cumulative dominance of male images...not the appropriateness of individual titles" that is the problem (Smith et al, 1987, p. 404). If children are not exposed to nonsexist books in the classroom, then their potential to alter the development of children's gender identities will be unrealized.

Another problem with nonsexist books is that they are not always as nonsexist as they seem. A study of books published during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s revealed that the approximate number of male and female main characters were nearing equality, and the discrepancy between the types of situations in which characters are portrayed was diminishing (Peterson et al., 1990). Yet although girls are now allowed to have adventures, they are still being shown in a domestic setting. And even though they now appear as the main character in folk, fantasy and adventure stories slightly more often than boys, they are equally as likely to appear as the main character in socially-oriented and family stories. These apparently non-sexist books are still reinforcing stereotypes and limiting female characters to traditionally female settings and plots.

Rationale and Purpose

As we have seen, books have the power to instill, as well as to change, cultural values (Kolbe et al., 1981). Studies have shown that it is through the words in these books that gender identities take shape, and a little girl learns how to be a "she" and a little boy learns how to become a "he". Books with sexist content can create stereotypes which children incorporate into their lives,

and books with nonsexist content can show characters breaking these stereotypes and being an individual. Yet books that appear to violate gender stereotypes in certain respects may also contain content that reproduces status quo meanings of gender.

Studies of recently-published books depict positive interactions among the sexes and more positive role models for both males and females than some books published previously. Unfortunately these same books still provide more role models for boys and tell girls that they should be more emotional than boys. They show more male characters that are instrumental and independent, while showing female characters as passive and dependent. As Kortenhaus et al. (1993) concluded, children's books do not adequately reflect the changing roles of women in the workplace of American society, and do not present an accurate representation of the actual behavior of males and females in our society. Today's books are still sexist in the hegemonic sense (Connelly Loeb, 1990; Hanke, 1990). They support traditional views of family, patriarchy and gender roles.

Although the parents concerned with gender stereotyping may make a conscious effort to select and read equalitarian character books to their children, we must remember that only 11% of parents say they screen books for gender stereotypes (Peterson et al., 1990). There are many more parents unaware of gender stereotyping in children's books and the limiting influences it is having on their children's future. One must also be haunted by the sex-biased read-aloud preferences of the teachers in the Smith et al. (1987) study. If preschool and day care owners and managers stock their libraries with their

own personal childhood favorites, as 29% of parents do, the children in these settings will be hearing and seeing male-dominated stories. Since the number of working parents is growing at a fast pace, it appears that the majority of children are being exposed to books with sex-role stereotyping.

We must also consider the material on the shelves of school libraries. Many preschool and school libraries contain a large number of books published in the '60s and '70s (Peterson et al., 1990). With school budgets shrinking and less money for libraries to spend, few new books are being purchased for the shelves. What are the chances of a young student being exposed to quality material? If parents can instill positive self-esteem in young girls through books with strong female lead characters, it may very well be washed away by the words their daughters hear and the images they see in preschool, kindergarten and grade school.

Researchers don't know as much as we should about the perpetration of sexism and gender stereotypes in children's books because few researchers have done in-depth qualitative analysis on this issue. Previous research and the concept of hegemony suggest that the perpetuation of sexism and gender stereotypes in children's books is more complicated than originally thought. Counting the number of stereotypical and non stereotypical portrayals of characters is not the answer, because counting does not tap into the process by which cultural meanings of gender are reproduced. Qualitative research is also needed. When book characters are portrayed as violating gender stereotypes, there may be elements in the character portrayals, the storyline, interactions with other characters, and so forth, which reinforce traditional

meanings of gender. Qualitative research can be used to examine elements such as these. Researchers can also use the six categories of books like Gender Positive! A Teachers' and Librarians' Guide to Non stereotyped Children's Literature, K-8, discussed earlier in this paper, to pinpoint which aspects of a book are nonsexist and which reinforce stereotypical meanings of gender (e.g., bipolarity, males as more valued and more powerful). As previous research on hegemony has shown (Hanke, 1990), the key is to see how masculinity is defined in a context. Although hegemonic masculinity works in media portrayals by appearing to broaden gender roles, it also subtly reinforces patriarchy.

The purpose of my study, then, is to provide an in-depth analysis of portrayals of masculinity and femininity in children's storybooks. It will examine whether, and how, stereotypical and non stereotypical meanings of gender, masculinity and femininity are constructed in children's books. I will use the category scheme set by Roberts et al. (1993) in my study. The categories will be useful because they pinpoint six areas which can be examined for sexist and nonsexist aspects. By using a standard category scheme, like that in Roberts et al. (1993), researchers can use the same units of analysis in their studies, and later can combine their findings to provide a composite picture of children's storybooks.

The research shows that although sexism in children's picture books is decreasing, it still is evident in role portrayal and characterization (Kortenhaus et al., 1993). In 1990 Peterson et al. found that the approximate number of male and female main characters was nearing equality. Therefore I have formulated

hypothesis 1:

H1. The number of female lead characters will be equal to the number of male lead characters.

Research done by St. Peter (1979) and Kortenhaus et al. (1993) found that the majority of children's picture books stereotype male and female characters. A 1987 study (Smith et al.) found that adult women were characterized as mothers or homemakers only. A more recent study (Cooper, 1993) of Caldecott winners published between 1980 and 1990 revealed that no female character was shown working outside the home, and that no male characters were shown working inside the home. Another section of the study which examined Newbery winners published between 1980 and 1990 found that, for the most part, females have less powerful occupations than males. Women are shown as caterers, maids, school librarians and nurses while males are shown as school principals, authors, businessmen and president of the United States. Other research shows that although girls are now allowed to have adventures, they are still being shown in a domestic setting (Peterson et al., 1990). Therefore I formulated hypotheses 2 and 3:

H2. Male lead characters will be shown in a variety of occupations (occupational settings outside the home), while female lead characters will be shown in mostly traditional feminine occupations.

H3. More female and male lead characters will be shown in traditional gender roles than in nontraditional roles.

Researchers have shown that female characters are depicted as having feminine traits such as nurturing, passive, dependent, incompetent,

nonsignificant, non aggressive and negative (Barnett, 1986; Kolbe et al., 1981; Kortenhaus et al., 1993; and Peterson et al., 1990). None of these characteristics except nurturing and nonaggressive are socially desirable personality traits, and even nonaggressive is sometimes undesirable. However, socially prescribed masculine traits include: instrumental, independent, competent, unemotional, nonretiring, non nurturing and aggressive. Of these traits, only non nurturing and aggressive are potentially negative personality traits, and even these are situationally very positive. Further, as pointed out by Wood (1997), girls can exhibit masculine characteristics and still be accepted by their peers, even though boys may **not** act feminine. This led me to formulate hypotheses 4 and 5:

H4. Female lead characters will have more undesirable personality traits than desirable personality traits, while male lead characters will have more desirable personality traits than undesirable personality traits.

H5. Female characters will have masculine traits more often than males will have feminine traits.

Most female characters in children's story books are depicted as less competent in their ability to accomplish tasks (Kortenhaus et al., 1993), and appear as lead characters most often in folk, fantasy and adventure stories than boys (Peterson et al., 1990). From this information I formulated hypothesis 6:

H6. More female lead characters will be shown in exotic roles and in unrealistic storylines than male lead characters.

As noted earlier, researchers have shown that children's story books often picture adult women as mothers or homemakers only (Cooper, 1993; Smith et

al., 1987) and show girls in a domestic setting (Peterson et al., 1990), while males are portrayed in a greater variety of roles. The Cooper (1993) study found that females in Caldecott books were depicted as mothers ballet dancers, shoppers, princesses and wives. It summarized that women who are married do not work outside the home. Since our society values work accomplishments outside the home more than domestic responsibilities and child rearing, I propose hypothesis 7.

H7. More stories will present the contributions of males to society than will present the contributions of females to society.

Some recent studies done on children's storybooks show improvement in the area of sex-role stereotypes, while others provide mixed results. A study (Kortenhaus et al, 1993) done on award-winning picture books published between the 1940s and 1980s confirmed that sexism was decreasing in children's picture books. But the study also found that sexism was still apparent in role portrayal and characterization. Another study (Barnett, 1986) concluded that although human characters were not sex-stereotyped, nonhuman helpers such as animals and cartoons were. The Barnett (1986) study also determined that overall males were represented more frequently than females.

Even the content of nonsexist books proved disappointing to researchers (St. Peter, 1979), causing one researcher to conclude that "despite the attempted improvement of sex-role models, the majority of children's picture books continue to under represent women and to stereotype female and male characters" (P. 260). These findings led me to formulate RQ1:

RQ1. In books where there are nonsexist elements do sexist elements still prevail?

Chapter 2 - Method

This study employed the systematic observation method of research (Babbie, 1995). In particular, a content analysis was done to examine the sexist and nonsexist content of a set of children's story books (Howard, 1985).

Content Analysis

Content analysis methods may be applied to almost any form of communication (Babbie, 1995). Artifacts which may be studied include books, magazines, poems, newspapers, songs, paintings, speeches, letters, laws, and constitutions, etc., (Babbie, 1995). Content analysis is particularly well-suited to the study of communication and to answering the question, "Who did what, to whom, why, how, and with what effect" (Babbie, 1995).

According to Babbie (1995) there are four steps in content analysis: 1) determining a unit of analysis 2) selecting a sampling technique 3) determining what to code 4) coding the categories of study, and 5) dealing with problems of validity and reliability.

Step 1, determining a unit of analysis, means selecting the individual units about which or whom descriptive and explanatory statements are to be made. It is important to be clear on the unit of analysis because the sample selection depends largely on what the unit of analysis is. In the present study, the unit of analysis is the children's story book.

Step 2, selecting a sampling technique, means deciding if you should use random, systematic, stratified or cluster sampling. A sampling technique will determine your sampling frame (the list of the items to be studied). Sampling in

the present study is stratified sampling. First I obtained a list of Caldecott winners and a list of Golden Sower winners, and then I selected the past 10 years of each list for examination.

The sampling frame in this study will be two types of books: 1) award-winning Caldecott books and 2) award-winning Golden Sower books. Caldecott books were chosen because they are regarded highly for their content and artistry by parents, children's libraries and school systems. Caldecott nominees are judged on the basis of excellence of execution in the artistic technique employed, excellence of pictorial interpretation of story, theme or concept; excellence of appropriateness of style of illustration to the story, theme, or concept; and excellence of delineation of plot, theme, characters, setting, mood, or information through the pictures (Kauffman Peterson and Leathers Solt, 1982). They have a large mass distribution and children are encouraged to read them. For these reasons they are recognized as a major influence in young children's literature. Weitzman et al., (1972) examined other groups of children's books and concluded that the Caldecott winners were representative of most picture books. Golden Sower books were chosen because they have been selected by Nebraska elementary school children as their favorite books to read.

A total of 20 preschool and primary (K-3) books published between 1986 and 1995 were used for this study; 10 Caldecott books and 10 Golden Sower books. All books analyzed were checked out from public libraries in Tekamah, Fremont and Blair, Nebr, or through inter-library loan.

Books examined:

10 Caldecott selections   **Author**
1986 Polar Express   Chris Van Allsburg
1987 Hey, Al   Richard Egielski
1988 Owl Moon   Jane Yolen
1989 Song and Dance Man   Karen Ackerman
1990 Lon Po Po: A Red Riding Hood Story (China)   Ed Young
1991 Black and White   David Macaulay
1992 Tuesday   David Wiesner
1993 Mirette on the High Wire   Emily McCully
1994 Grandfather's Journey   Allen, Say
1995 Smoky Night   David Diaz

10 Golden Sower selections   **Author**
1986 Peabody   Rosemary Wells
1987 Miss Nelson has a Field Day   Harry Allard
1988 Don't Touch My Room   Patricia Lakin
1989 Piggins   Jane Yolen
1990 Magic School Bus at the Water Works   Joanna Cole
1991 Tacky the Penguin   Helen Lester
1992 Talking Eggs   Robert San Souci
1993 Riptide   Frances Ward Weller
1994 Rough Face Girl   Rafe Martin
1995 Martha Speaks   Susan Meddaugh

Step 3, determining what to code, means determining if the researcher will code the manifest content (the visible or surface content) or the latent content (underlying meaning) of the communication. Coding the manifest content has the advantage of ease and reliability in coding. Coding the latent content is less specific and reliable. Whenever content will be coded in the present study. The manifest content coded in this study was the number of male and female lead characters, and the occupations of male and female lead characters. The latent content of this study was the traditional gender roles of female characters (e.g.

mothers and homemakers), the undesirable and desirable personality traits of male and female characters, the type of stories lead characters appear in (realistic, unrealistic or fantasy), and the roles picturing female lead characters and male lead characters in domestic and non domestic settings, and overall sexism of a book. The overall sexism of a book was determined by examining the nature of the sexist and nonsexist elements present in each book, and then making a general judgment to label each book as primarily sexist or nonsexist. For example if a book contains sexist elements such as female lead character being shown as a mother only, yet also contains nonsexist elements such as showing the female lead character as instrumental and independent, I examined the story to see which of these traits was more strongly emphasized in the story, and judged whether the book was, overall, more sexist or more nonsexist.

Step 4 is coding the categories of study. The operational definition of each variable is composed of mutually exclusive and exhaustive attributes.

Variables

Variable number 1 is the sex of the lead character. Lead character is defined as the person who plays the main role in a story. This variable will have two coding categories: male and female. Male characters include male people and male animals. Female characters include female people and female animals.

Variable number 2 is type of occupation. Occupation is defined as an activity that is one's regular source of livelihood or vocation. This variable will have two coding categories: traditional feminine occupation and traditional masculine

occupations. Traditional feminine occupations are based in the home or provide nurturing and care taking. They include: homemaker, mother, teacher, secretary, nurse and waitress. Traditional masculine occupations are based outside the home. They include: businessman, principal, doctor, farmer, construction worker, mechanic, mailman and airplane pilot.

Variable number 3 is gender role traditionalism. Gender role traditionalism is defined as females and males being shown in the same roles they have been shown in for generations. Females are traditionally shown in the roles of mother, caretaker and homemaker, while males are traditionally shown in the roles of head of family, wage earner, disciplinarian and authoritarian (boss).

Variable number 4 is trait desirability. A trait is defined as a feature of a person's character. Trait desirability is defined as features of a person which are socially valued and desired. This variable has two coding categories: desirable personality traits and undesirable personality traits. Desirable personality traits are defined as features of a person's character which are socially valued and desired by society. Desirable personality traits include: instrumental, independent, competent, nurturant and nonaggressive. Undesirable personality traits are defined as features of a person's character which are not valued or desired by society. Undesirable personality traits include: aggressive, non-nurturant, dependent, incompetent, and passive. Some traits (aggressive, nurturant, emotional) could be considered desirable in some situations, and undesirable in other situations. To determine if a trait is desirable or undesirable I will look at the context of the situation.

Variable number 5 is stereotypical nature of traits. Stereotypical nature

of traits is defined as males possessing certain traits which signify masculinity, while females possess different traits which signify femininity. This variable has two coding categories: masculine traits and feminine traits. Masculine traits are defined as characteristics of a man. Feminine traits are defined as characteristics of a woman. Each of these coding categories is identified and operationally defined below, with an example provided to illustrate each.

Masculine traits

Instrumental - means being partly responsible for a result; contributing to a result; being task-oriented.

Example - The male character contacts a talent agent to arrange a performance for the female character.

Independent - means being free from the influence, guidance or control of others.

Example - A boy goes off to play what he wants to play, even though his friends encourage him to join their game.

Competent - means being capable of a task, position or assignment.

Example - A male character spends one month at the library preparing to lead students on a class field trip.

Unemotional - means not being readily affected or stirred by emotions.

Example - A male character does not cry when another character takes away a toy or knocks him down.

Non-nurturing - means not providing loving care and attention; not displaying affection or providing help, comfort or support to those in need.

Example - When a male character's little brother gets into trouble, the male character does not attempt to soothe his little brother's feelings, nor does he hug him.

Aggressive - means expressing hostility toward others, attempting to physically harm another person or animal, or attempting to destroy objects.

Example - The male character cries when his friend grabs his toy car, knocks down his castle and rips ups his books.

Feminine traits

Nurturant - means providing loving care and attention; displaying affection and providing help, comfort and support to those in need. A character that is described as emotional is readily affected or stirred by feelings.

Example - The female character approaches another character, who is crying, to ask why she is crying, and to comfort her.

Dependent - Means being influenced, guided or controlled by others.

Example - A female character relies on a male character to help her get out of the tree house, instead of figuring out a way to do it herself.

Incompetent - means not being able to complete a task, assume a position or accept an assignment.

Example - Although the female character is to assume the duties of a lifeguard, she does not take control of the area and order young children to come out of the deep water.

Emotional - means being readily affected or stirred by feelings.

Example - The female character cries after she runs into the woods because she is scared to go home.

Passive - means receiving or subjecting to an action without responding or initiating an action in return; accepting or submitting without objection or resistance.

Example - One character orders a female character to do all of the housework, and the female character does it without objecting.

Nonaggressive - Means not expressing hostility toward others or attempting to physically harm another person or animal, or attempting to destroy objects.

Example - Even though her friend took her book, the female character did not shove her friend or take the book and throw it down.

Variable number 6 is realism of character in story lines. Realism of character in story lines is defined as real-life characters being depicted in real-life situations. This variable has two coding categories: realistic characters in story lines, and unrealistic characters in unrealistic story lines. Realistic characters are defined as characters that represent people and animals you could encounter almost daily. Unrealistic characters are defined as characters that represent people or animals which possess unusual or unreal characteristics or which do not exist in reality. Examples of unrealistic characters include: mermaids, witches, centaurs, and so forth. Examples of characters with unrealistic characteristics include: a dog that talks, a woman who is still active and alive after her head has been chopped off.

Variable 7 is contributions to society. Contributions to society is defined as providing a service to others; doing something good for others.

Variable 8 is sexism of the book. Sexism of the book is defined as attitudes, conditions or behaviors in a book which promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender. This variable has two coding categories: sexist and nonsexist. Sexist books are defined as books in which the sexist elements overwhelm the nonsexist elements. Nonsexist books are defined as books in which the nonsexist elements overwhelm the sexist elements. The decision to label a book sexist or nonsexist is partly based on the number of sexist elements, and partly based on how strongly these elements suggest hegemonic masculinity, which supports traditional views of family, patriarchy and gender roles.

Step 5 is dealing with problems of reliability and validity. The first protection against the problems of reliability is being aware that a problem may exist. Since I am aware that my study deals with concepts which are interpretive, I am aware that the reliability of the study may depend on the coders' identities. Coders checked for the presence of each trait, not the number of times each trait appeared. An action was considered a trait if the action was recurrent. If an action, such as aggressiveness, was displayed by the character only one time, this was considered to be a single incident, not a trait of that person. Each coder would make an overall judgment to determine if an action was a trait of that character or a single incident displayed by that character.

In addition to myself, a second coder analyzed one (10%) of the books included in the study. The second coder was a female elementary school

teacher. After I examined the first book of my study I gave the following materials to the second coder: the book; the six categories from the <u>Gender Positive!</u> (1993) book; my variables and coding categories; and my hypotheses and research question.

The second coder examined the same story book and then I went through her results, comparing both sets of results for agreements and disagreements. I clarified variables with her and then she coded a second book on her own. I assessed inter-coder reliability by checking total coding reliability. I used the following formula (Holsti, 1969, p. 140) that determines the ratio of agreements to the total number of coding decisions: C.R. = 2M/N1+ N2.

In this formula C.R. is the coefficient of reliability, M is the number of coding decisions on which the two judges agreed, and N1 and N2 refer to the number of coding decisions made by judges 1 and 2, respectively. The coders agreed on 16 out of the total of 16 coding decisions. The formula is completed as follows:

$$C.R. = \frac{2 \times 16}{16 + 16} = \frac{32}{32} = 1$$

Since the first and second coder agreed on all coding decisions, the total coding reliability is 100 %.

When dealing with problems of validity researchers can use logical reasoning and replication. Logical reasoning means basing conclusions on earlier or otherwise known statements, events or conditions. Replication means repeating a study to check and see if the same results are produced each time. After obtaining results from my study, I examined my findings and considered

how the findings relate to one another, and then referred to results from other studies to help me draw conclusions. My study could also be replicated by other researchers to see if they achieve the same results I did.

Chapter 3 - Results

This chapter reports the results of the content analyses used to assess the hypotheses and research question of the study. The results for each of the six hypotheses are reported in turn. I conclude with an assessment of the overall sexism of each book.

According to hypothesis 1 the number of female lead characters would be equal to the number of male lead characters. This hypothesis was not supported. Of the 20 lead characters, 35% (n=7) were female, 55% (n=11) were male, and 9% (n=2) had no clear sex. The seven female lead characters were little girls (n=3), a teenage girl (n=1), a dog (n=1) and teachers (n=2). The eleven male lead characters were little boys (4), a man, grandfathers (2), a dog, a penguin, a pig and a teddy bear. Two lead characters were sex neutral; one was a flying pig, and the other was a child bundled in a winter coat, hat and scarf with its face covered, so you could not distinguish if it was male or female.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that male lead characters would be shown in traditional masculine occupations (occupational settings outside the home), while female lead characters will be shown in traditional feminine occupations (which are based in the home or provide nurturing and care taking). Since the lead character was a child who had no occupation in all the books except one, the occupation of the lead character's same-sex parent or key adult in the story was coded.

Hypothesis 2 was strongly supported as shown in Table I. Of the eleven males, 45% (n=5) were placed in traditional occupations, 0% were shown in nontraditional occupations and 55% (n=6) did not reveal occupations for the

lead character, parent, or other key adult. Of the seven females, 57% (n=4) were shown in traditional occupations, 14% (n=1) were shown in nontraditional occupations and 29% (n=2) were not linked with an occupation.

Males were shown in four different occupational settings outside the home: janitor, butler, train conductor and businessman. The only males shown in an occupation inside the home was a retiree. Females were shown in only one occupational setting outside the home: a teacher. The occupational settings for females inside the home were mother and operator of a boarding house.

Table I

Frequencies and Percentages for Male, Female and Sex Neutral Characters and their Occupations

	Female		Male		No Sex*	
Variables	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Nontraditional occupations	1	14%	0	0%	0	0%
Traditional occupations	4	57%	5	45%	0	100%
No occupation given	2	29%	6	55%	2	9%
Total	**7**	**100%**	**11**	**100%**	**2**	**100%**

No sex means the sex of the character was not clear.

The prediction of Hypothesis 3, that more female and male lead characters

would be shown in traditional gender roles than in nontraditional gender roles, was supported. As shown in Table II, a total of 61% (n=11) of male and female lead characters were shown in traditional gender roles. Eleven percent (n=2) of lead characters were shown in nontraditional gender roles and 28% (n=5) were not associated with any gender roles. For the two characters whose sex was unclear, the traditionalism of gender roles could not be coded.

Male lead characters were shown in the following traditional gender roles: father, wage-earner, playmate, head of family. Female lead characters were shown in the following traditional gender roles: caretaker and mother/homemaker. Females were shown in the following nontraditional gender roles: wage-earner and disciplinarian.

Table II

Frequencies and Percentages for Male and Female Characters and their Gender Roles

	Female		Male		Total	
Variables	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Nontraditional roles	2	11%	0	0%	2	11%
Traditional gender roles	4	22%	7	39%	11	61%
No gender roles	1	6%	4	22%	5	28%
Total	**7**	**39%**	**11**	**61%**	**18**	**100%**

Hypothesis 4 predicted that female lead characters would have more undesirable personality traits than desirable personality traits, while male lead characters would have more desirable personality traits than undesirable personality traits. As shown in Tables III and IV, this hypothesis was not supported. Of the 7 female lead characters, 86% (n=6) had more desirable than undesirable personality traits and none had more undesirable than desirable personality traits. Fourteen percent (n=1) had an equal number of desirable and undesirable personality traits. Of the 11 male lead characters, 73% (n=8) had more desirable than undesirable personality traits, and none had more undesirable than desirable traits. Twenty-seven percent of males (n=3) had an equal number of desirable and undesirable personality traits.

Of the 5 personality traits seen as desirable (competent, instrumental, independent, nurturant and nonaggressive), both males and females displayed all 5. Of the 5 personality traits seen as undesirable (aggressive, non-nurturant, dependent, incompetent and passive), males displayed 3, (non nurturant, dependent and incompetent), while females also displayed 3, (aggressive, dependent and passive). The results are displayed in Table IV.

The following are examples of male and female lead characters displaying desirable personality traits:

Competent - The boy asks his mother to check his homework so he can finish it. (from Black and White). Oldest sister Shang plans how to trick the wolf so she and her sister will be safe (from Lon Po Po).

Instrumental- The boys stuffs mail into his father's hand trying to get him to stop being silly and marching around with a newspaper outfit on (from

Black and White). Mirette, the daughter of the woman who runs the boarding house, helps Bellini complete his high wire walk above the city after he froze in fear (from Mirette on the High Wire).

Independent- The dog pays no attention to lifeguards (who try to chase him out of the water) and instead herds toddlers into shallow water (from Riptide). Although other classes take field trips to the zoo or circus, Ms. Frizzle takes her class on a field trip through the water system (from Magic School Bus at the Water works).

Nurturant- The grandfather hugs his grandchildren and holds his grandson's hand as they climb the stairs to the attic (from Song and Dance Man). Oldest sister Shang tells her younger sisters about the wolf's plan to eat them in order to to keep them safe (from Lon Po Po).

Nonaggressive - Baby Benji pulls brother Aaron's hair, but Aaron just gives Benji a hug (from Don't Touch My Room). Blanche did not hit her mother or sister Rose back when they hit and scolded her (from The Talking Eggs).

The following are examples of male lead characters displaying undesirable personality traits:

Non nurturant- The grandfather is shown in illustrations as always standing at a distance from his wife and daughter, and never touching, hugging or holding them (from Grandfather's Journey).

Dependent- Peabody depends on Annie to learn how to garden and ski, and to go to the seashore (from Peabody).

Incompetent- Al quits his job to fly away with a bird to an exotic island

(from <u>Hey Al</u>).

The following are examples of female lead characters displaying undesirable personality traits:

Aggressive- Miss Nelson stops the football fullback from leaving the playing field by physically tackling him (from <u>Miss Nelson has a Field Day</u>).

Dependent- Blanche's actions are controlled by her mother and her sister (from <u>The Talking Eggs</u>).

Passive- Blanche is told to iron the clothes each morning, chop cotton in the afternoon and string beans for supper without objecting while mother and sister sit on the shady front porch, fanning themselves and talking about getting rich and moving to the city (from <u>The Talking Eggs</u>).

For the two characters for which sex could not be determined, one displayed three desirable personality traits, and one displayed two desirable and one undesirable personality trait. A flying frog displayed three desirable personality traits (instrumental, competent, nonaggressive) and no undesirable personality traits. A child whose sex was not clear displayed two desirable personality traits (instrumental, competent) and one undesirable personality trait (dependent).

Table III

<u>**Frequencies and Percentages for Male, Female and Sex Neutral**</u>

<u>**Characters and their Personality Traits**</u>

Variables	Female		Male		No Sex*	
	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>f</u>	<u>%</u>
More undesirable						
personality traits	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
More desirable						
personality traits	6	86%	8	73%	2	100%
Equal # desirable/						
undesirable	<u>1</u>	<u>14%</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>27%</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0%</u>
Total	**7**	**100%**	**11**	**100%**	**2**	**100%**

*No Sex means the sex of the character was not clear.

Table IV

Frequencies and Percentages for Male and Female Characters and Desirable and Undesirable Personality Traits

Personality Traits	Female (n=7)		Male (n=11)	
	f	%	f	%
Desirable				
competent	7	100%	7	64%
instrumental	6	86%	9	82%
independent	5	71%	1	9%
nurturant	2	29%	5	45%
nonaggressive	3	43%	2	18%
Undesirable				
aggressive	3	43%	0	0%
nonnurturant	0	0%	1	9%
dependent	1	14%	3	27%
incompetent	0	0%	3	27%
passive	3	43%	0	0%

Note: Columns add up to more than 100% because the characters displayed multiple traits.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that female characters would have masculine traits (instrumental, independent, competent, unemotional, non-nurturing and aggressive) more often than males would have feminine traits (nurturant, dependent, incompetent, emotional, passive and nonaggressive). This hypothesis was supported. As shown in Table V, of the 7 female lead characters, 86% (n=6) displayed masculine traits while 64% (n=7) of the 11 male lead characters displayed feminine traits. A total of 57% (n=4) of females displayed feminine traits; while 91% (n=10) of the males displayed masculine traits. One female (14%) and 4 males (36%) displayed an equal number of feminine and masculine traits. The two characters whose sex was not clear displayed only masculine traits.

Table V

Frequencies and Percentages for Male, Female and Sex Neutral Characters with Masculine and Feminine Traits

Variables	Female		Male		No Sex*	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Masculine traits	6	86%	10	91%	2	100%
Feminine traits	4	57%	7	64%	0	0%

Notes: *No Sex means the sex of the character was not clear.

Columns add up to more than 100% because many characters displayed both masculine and feminine traits.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that more female lead characters would be shown in exotic roles and in unrealistic story lines than male lead characters. As shown in Table VI, this hypothesis was strongly supported. All of the female lead characters (100%) were shown in exotic roles and unrealistic story lines. Forty-five percent of the male lead characters were shown in exotic roles and unrealistic story lines while 55% were shown in every day roles. Of two lead characters who could not be clearly labeled as male or female, one was shown in an exotic story line, and one was not.

The female lead characters were shown in the following exotic roles and unrealistic story lines: a female elementary teacher who substitutes for the high school football coach; a female elementary teacher who takes her students on a field trip through the water purification system (the school bus rises into the clouds and the children become raindrops and fall to earth); a young girl who meets an old witch woman who introduces the young girl to two-headed cows, dancing rabbits and talking eggs; a young girl who learns how to walk on a high wire; a young Indian woman who meets and marries an invisible being; a female dog who begins to speak after eating a bowl of alphabet soup; and a young girl who outsmarts a wolf dressed as her grandmother. No female lead characters were shown in every day roles.

Five male lead characters were shown in the following unrealistic story lines and exotic roles: a little boy who is taken on a train to the North Pole to visit Santa Claus; a male butler who is a pig; a male teddy bear who expresses human feelings and emotions; a male penguin with human characteristics; and a man and his dog who are flown by a bird to an exotic island. More male lead

characters (n=6) were shown in every day roles than in exotic roles/unrealistic story lines. Everyday roles in realistic stories include for example, an elderly man playing with his grandchildren, and an elderly man taking his grandchild to see an owl at night.

Table VI

<u>**Frequencies and Percentages for Male, Female and Sex Neutral Characters and Exotic Roles/Story lines and Everyday Roles**</u>

	Female		**Male**		**No Sex***		**Total**	
Variables	<u>**f**</u>	<u>**%**</u>	<u>**f**</u>	<u>**%**</u>	<u>**f**</u>	<u>**%**</u>	<u>**f**</u>	<u>**%**</u>
Exotic roles/ story lines	7	100%	5	45%	1	50%	13	65%
Everyday roles	0	0%	6	55%	1	50%	7	35%
Totals	**7**	**100%**	**11**	**100%**	**2**	**100%**	**20**	**100%**

*No Sex means the sex of the character was not clear.

According to hypothesis 7 more stories would present the contributions of males to society than would present the contributions of females to society. Contrary to this hypothesis, results showed that only 36% of male lead characters (n=4) contributed to society, while 64% did not (see Table VII). However, 86% of female lead characters (n=6) made contributions to society, while only 1 (14%) did not. The two lead characters who were neither male nor

female both made contributions to society.

Male lead characters contributed to society by: saving a little girl from drowning in the ocean, solving a crime, shielding his little brother from unfair scolding, and taking his family away from a war.

Female lead characters contributed to society by: saving her sisters from harm, helping revive an old woman who was about to faint from the heat, helping a high wire artist complete his walk between two buildings, calling police about a burglar who has broken into their home, coaching the football team to win a game, and teaching children about the water purification system.

Table VII

Frequencies and Percentages for Male, Females and Sex Neutral Characters and Contributions to Society

	Female		Male		No Sex*		Total	
Variables	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
Contributions to society	6	86%	4	36%	2	100%	12	60 %
No contributions made	1	14%	7	64%	0	0%	8	40%
Total	**7**	**100%**	**11**	**100%**	**2**	**100%**	**20**	**100%**

No Sex means the sex of the character was not clear.

Research question 1 asked whether the books were sexist. Sexist books use

attitudes, conditions or behaviors to promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender. My answer to this question is yes. In books where there are nonsexist elements, sexist elements still prevail. All 18 of the books which had either a male or female lead character contained both sexist and nonsexist elements. In order to label a book sexist or nonsexist I used three criteria. First, I counted the number of sexist and nonsexist elements present in each book. Sexist elements included: characters in traditional gender roles, traditional occupations and stereotypical traits. An unrealistic story line and characters who do not make contributions to society can also be considered sexist. Second, I decided how applicable these variables are to a reader's lifestyle today. I assessed whether the personality traits portrayed were traditional or modern and if today's readers were likely to display them. Third, I assessed how strongly these elements suggest hegemonic masculinity. Books which show characters in traditional occupation and gender roles and story lines often suggest hegemonic masculinity.

Books which I labeled clearly sexist were: The Talking Eggs. Piggins. Grandfather's Journey. Don't Touch My Room. Black and White. Polar Express. Song and Dance Man. Riptide and Smoky Night. These books contained more sexist than nonsexist variables. The two books which contained the most sexist variables were Don't Touch My Room and Song and Dance Man. Don't Touch My Room contained almost no variables that challenge our society's definition of gender (male lead character, father as head of family (gender role), all desirable personality traits, everyday story line, male contribution to society). It also contained one nonstereotypical variable (an equal number of masculine

and feminine traits). In <u>Song and Dance Man</u> the lead character, a grandfather who is a retired vaudeville entertainer, is depicted in the traditional male role of playmate and friend. He displays 3 desirable (and masculine) personality traits (instrumental, nurturant and competent) and is shown interacting with his grandchildren in an everyday storyline. The only nonsexist variable in the story is a lack of a contribution to society.

Nonsexist books contained more nonsexist than sexist variables. I examined the variables to determine if those that were nonsexist clearly showed the lead character in non stereotypical roles, occupations, and so forth, and as displaying non stereotypical personality traits which could be applicable to today's readers. An example of this is <u>Lon Po Po.</u> It contained mostly nonsexist variables (female lead character, all desirable personality traits, masculine personality traits, and a female contribution to society) and also contained two sexist variables (female character in traditional gender role, female in unrealistic storyline).

The book which contained the most nonsexist variables was <u>Peabody</u>, a book about a male teddy bear who is the most treasured toy in the life of a little girl, Annie. Because Peabody is an animal, and there were no adults in the story, no occupations or gender roles were given. Peabody displays an equal number of desirable and undesirable personality traits (1 each) and an equal number of masculine and feminine traits (1 each). Because he was an animal who had human characteristics, he was coded as being in an unrealistic storyline. He also made no contribution to society.

Some books were hard to judge as sexist or nonsexist, usually due to an

equal number of sexist and nonsexist variables. For example, The Rough-Face Girl contained 3 sexist elements (traditional gender role, exotic storyline and a female character who made no contribution to society), two nonsexist elements (a female with more desirable personality traits and masculine personality traits) and one neutral variable (no occupation given). Because the story is Indian folklore and took place long ago, I judged the gender role of the female lead character (homemaker) and the exotic storyline as a portrayal of history. Because the characters live in a teepee I felt it would be hard for today's readers to put themselves in the characters' places. In contrast, I felt the female lead character's desirable personality traits (which are also masculine) can apply to the lives of young girls today. Therefore I judged these nonsexist elements as more important than the sexist elements to today's readers, and labeled the book nonsexist overall.

Of the 20 books in the study, I rated 14 of them as supporting hegemonic masculinity (traditional views of family, patriarchy and gender roles). Over half of male and female lead characters (61%) were shown in traditional gender roles such as father, wage-earner and head of family (males) and caretaker and mother/homemaker (females). Only 11 percent of lead characters were shown in nontraditional roles. These findings support the idea that men function as disciplinarians and playmates to their children, but are not responsible for their daily needs or for domestic roles. For women, it supports the idea that they are responsible for relationships and caring for others. Of the characters linked to an occupation, 100 percent of males and 80 percent of females were shown in traditional occupations, supporting the idea that men are expected to earn

wages in jobs that take place outside of the home, while women are responsible for their home and the family.

Hegemonic masculinity is also supported by male lead characters appearing in everyday roles and female lead characters appearing in exotic and unrealistic story lines. These depictions reinforce the idea that only males achieve goals in reality.

Overall, I rated 9 books as sexist, 9 as nonsexist and two as neutral. The two neutral books were rated as such because the sex of the lead character could not be determined. Interestingly, 6 of the 7 books with female lead characters were rated nonsexist, while 3 of the 11 books with male leads were rated nonsexist. Of the 6 books with female leads which were rated nonsexist, only one had a nonhuman (animal) lead character, while 2 of the 3 books with male leads which were rated nonsexist had a nonhuman (animal) character.

One might wonder if male or female authors write sexist books. Of the 20 books studied, 10 were authored by males and 10 were authored by females. Of the 10 books authored by females, 6 were labeled as nonsexist, 3 were labeled as sexist and 1 was labeled as neutral. Of the 10 books authored by males, 4 were labeled as nonsexist, 5 were labeled as sexist and one was labeled as neutral.

Chapter 4 - Discussion

The purpose of this study was to: provide an in-depth analysis of portrayals of masculinity and femininity in children's story books that were selected as outstanding by Caldecott and Golden Sower voters. It examined whether, and how, stereotypical and non stereotypical meanings of gender, masculinity and femininity are constructed in children's books. This chapter reviews the findings from the study and integrates the results with previous literature on children's story books.

Of the seven hypothesis posed in this study, five received at least partial support. These hypotheses focused on the lead characters' occupations, gender roles, personality traits, and the realism of the character roles and story lines.

Occupations

Hypothesis 2 focused on the occupations of male and female lead characters. This research, like the studies done by St. Peter (1979) and Kortenhaus et al. (1993), found that the majority of children's books stereotype male and female characters. Only 45% of female lead characters were shown in nontraditional occupations, while none of the male characters were also shown in nontraditional occupations. The results are consistent with the findings of Cooper (1993), who found that women are rarely shown working outside the home, adults males are never shown working inside the home, and that, for the most part, females have less powerful occupations.

Gender roles

Hypothesis 3 examined the number of female and male lead characters in

traditional and nontraditional gender roles. The results indicated that only 11% of the lead characters were shown in nontraditional gender roles. Female lead characters were twice as likely to be shown in traditional gender roles than nontraditional gender roles, and none of the male lead characters were shown in nontraditional gender roles. These findings expand upon the study done by Smith et al. (1987), which concluded that adult women are characterized as mothers and homemakers only. The present study showed that females sometimes are characterized in nontraditional gender roles of wage earner and disciplinarian, but males are not portrayed in domestic roles.

Personality traits

Hypothesis 4 was only partially supported. This hypothesis predicted that female lead characters, but not male lead characters, would have more undesirable than desirable personality traits. Contrary to the hypothesis, most lead characters of both sexes had more desirable personality traits than undesirable personality traits. In fact none of the female lead characters had more undesirable than desirable personality traits, and only one lead female had an equal number of desirable and undesirable personality traits. This data does not support earlier studies (Kortenhaus et al., 1993; Peterson et al., 1990) which found sexism in role portrayal and characterization. However the finding that male lead characters had more desirable than undesirable personality traits provided support for hypothesis four.

The finding that all of the male and female lead characters displayed desirable personality traits has important implications. These books show both males and females as instrumental, independent, competent, unemotional and

nurturing, providing positive images for boys and girls to identify with and emulate. When young readers see female as well as male characters taking part in adventurous activities, taking risks and making decisions on their own they begin to realize that boys and girls can take part in the same activities, sports and classes. Perhaps more importantly, girls begin to realize that it is possible for them to fulfill high ambitions and affect the course of events. Girls begin to see themselves as important as boys and realize that they don't have to act masculine to be accepted, they just have to display traits desired by society.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that female lead characters would have masculine traits more often than males would have feminine traits. Although the majority of both males and females displayed gender traits typically assigned to the other sex, female lead characters did display masculine traits more often (86%) than male lead characters displayed feminine traits (64%). Perhaps in an effort to strengthen female characters authors have provided them with more desirable traits, which also happen to be masculine. In a society where masculinity is considered more valuable than femininity (Renzetti et al., 1992; Wood), providing girls with male characteristics can make boys as well as girls want to read these stories. The fact that four male characters had no feminine traits at all also may reflect society's devaluation of femininity, as well as the stereotypical image of masculinity that excludes anything feminine.

There were numerous characters who had both masculine and feminine traits. In fact, four male lead characters and one female lead character had an equal number of masculine and feminine traits. These characters can be

considered non stereotypical because the androgynous blend of traits they possess does not define them as either masculine or feminine. Characters like these defy society's prevailing standards of masculinity and femininity and provide both sexes with a positive self-concept and potential for achievement. Both young boys and young girls will also receive positive feedback from society for displaying characteristics and functions which are valued by society.

Exotic roles/ unrealistic story lines

Hypothesis 6 predicted that more female lead characters would be shown in exotic roles and in unrealistic story lines than male lead characters. Support for this hypothesis was strong, supporting previous research. Some studies have proposed that because female characters in children's story books are depicted as less competent in their ability to accomplish tasks (Kortenhaus et al.), they often appear in fantasy stories (Peterson et al., 1990). The results of this research support these findings; 100% of female lead characters were shown in exotic roles and unrealistic story lines, compared with only 45% of male lead characters shown in exotic roles and unrealistic story lines.

Female lead characters may be human, yet they are often involved in unrealistic surroundings (a farm yard with two-headed cows, dancing rabbits and talking eggs) or in unusual and exceptional feats (a female teacher who substitutes as the head football coach, a young girl who marries an invisible being). When male lead characters are human, they are sometimes involved in unrealistic settings (a little boy who is taken on a train to the North Pole to visit Santa Claus) and when they are animals they are sometimes shown in unusual and exceptional feats (a pig who is a butler, a teddy bear who expresses

feelings and emotions). Yet when male lead characters are human they usually are involved in every day roles (an elderly man playing with his grandchildren). These story lines imply that females should not deal with every day issues and problems but should spend their energy fantasizing. When females don't appear in every day story lines young female readers cannot use story themes in their actual behavior, as they sometimes do (Peterson et al., 1990) and cannot use the same sex characters as every day role models. Repeated exposure to powerless (fantasy) role models is likely to have detrimental effects on the development of children's self-esteem, particularly on that of girls, and on the perceptions children have of their own, and of others' abilities and possibilities (Peterson et al., 1990).

Two hypotheses were **not** supported by the data. These hypotheses focused on the number of male and female lead characters and the contributions these characters made to society in the stories.

Number of lead characters

Hypothesis 1, which predicted that the number of female lead characters would be equal to the number of male lead characters, was not supported. In the present study there were more male lead characters (55%) than female lead characters (35%). This finding is inconsistent with some previous research (e.g. Peterson et al., 1990) which concluded that the approximate number of male and female main characters was nearing equality. However, these results do agree with the work done by Cooper (1993), who revealed that there were more male than female main characters in Newbery winners. The present study suggests that no long-term pattern of decreasing numerical dominance of males

in children's story books has actually been established.

Contributions to society

Hypothesis 7 predicted that more stories would present the contributions of males to society than would present the contributions of females to society. Surprisingly the results showed the opposite trend: 86% of female lead characters were shown contributing to society while only 36% of male lead characters contributed.

The key explanation for this finding may be that all of the female lead characters who contributed to society were involved in unrealistic storylines or exotic roles. Girls were often shown as a heroine in a fantasy and were placed in a situation in which they could make a contribution to society. The indirect message these books may convey to children is that females make contributions to society only in fantasy. This finding supports previous research. One study (Barnett, 1986) done in the 1980s found that male characters helped other characters more than female characters and were shown as problem solvers (Kortenhaus et al., 1990). This seems to perpetuate the meaning of femininity; that female characters are passive, dependent and incompetent.

Even more surprising was the data that showed that of the four male characters who made a contribution to society, three were animals and one was a young boy. Two characters were in unrealistic roles/story lines and two appeared in everyday roles. No adult male characters provided a service to others or did something good for others. Previous research (Barnett, 1986) concluded that males provide help to other characters more frequently than females.

In summary, this research shows that in the story books examined, male lead characters outnumbered female lead characters, and both male and female lead characters were stereotyped in traditional occupations, gender roles, and story lines. However, both male and female lead characters displayed masculine, feminine and socially desirable personality traits and were shown making contributions to society. These findings indicate that these books possess a mix of sexist and nonsexist elements. The portrayals of characters' personalities seem to challenge traditional meanings of masculinity and femininity. Simultaneously, however, the numerical dominance of male lead characters and the stereotypical portrayals of gender roles and occupations function to perpetuate traditionally defined gender relations.

Sexism in Children's Story books

I rated 9 books as sexist, 9 as nonsexist and two as neutral (because the sex of the lead character could not be determined). Although no other study I examined judged books as sexist or nonsexist, some previous research supported my findings. Kolbe et al., (1981) concluded that although young children will encounter more pictures of females and female characters, their roles continue to be expressive, nonsignificant and stereotyped. Kortenhaus et al., (1993) concluded that males dominated instrumental behaviors, depiction in titles and positive statements, females outnumbered males in almost all passive and dependent roles. In a more recent study (Peterson et al., 1990) showed that although there is equity in proportional representation of characters and context (adventure vs. domestic scenarios), statistically these trends were both nonsignificant, meaning that the numbers could be due to chance. In addition, it

must be noted that the books used in this study were listed in *The Horn Book*, a primary resource used by preschool teachers and librarians in the United States. It is quite likely that *The Horn Book* selectors were aware of issues like stereotyping and therefore excluded books containing stereotypes.

These findings suggest that the content of children's story books support the definition of hegemonic masculinity. When adults were shown in these books they were often shown in traditional occupational and gender roles similar to the roles shown in children's story books in the '60s, '70s and '80s. All of the female lead characters (100%) were shown in exotic roles and unrealistic story lines. For example, one female elementary school teacher took her students on a field trip through the water purification system using a school bus which rose into the clouds. The children then became raindrops and fell to earth (Magic School Bus at the Water Works). Another female lead character (a young girl) helps a dehydrated old woman get a drink of water, and the woman then introduces her to two-headed cows, dancing rabbits and talking eggs (Talking Eggs). When female characters are constantly being depicted as being employed in traditional occupations (teacher) or filling traditional roles (care giver), the traditional views of family, patriarchy and gender roles are supported. In addition, when female characters are routinely shown in fantasy roles, young girls read about few interesting, exciting and valuable things other girls/women do, and have few strong and successful role models to emulate. When books fail to show the progress women have made in careers, education, relationships and everyday situations, they support outdated models of masculinity and femininity in our society, traditional views of family, patriarchy and gender roles

(Connelly et al., 1990), and thus support hegemonic masculinity.

Although the large number of female characters displaying desirable and masculine traits may inspire young female readers to attempt tasks, and be active and competent, it does little good to encourage young girls to possess desirable, masculine personality traits if they must repress them once they become an adult. The message still being sent is that women achieve in caring for others while men achieve in employment opportunities.

Books labeled as sexist promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender through attitudes, conditions or behaviors. These books provide children with society's definitions of masculine and feminine and with socially sanctioned sex-typed role models and clear images that tell children what they can and should be like when they grow up (St. Peter, 1979; Weitzman et al., 1972). Sex-role stereotyping has restrictive, dysfunctional consequences for both sexes, but the harmful effects are more pronounced for females (Flerx et al., 1976). Because gender stereotypes in children's books affect readers' perceptions of others and themselves, stereotyping must be decreased, and, if possible, eliminated. Changing the occupational and gender role portrayals of male and female adults in children's literature will not solve all the problems of sexism, but it will give very young readers the message that all roles are appropriate to anyone who chooses them.

Conclusion

The results of this study demonstrate that almost all of the children's story books in this study contain sexist as well as nonsexist elements, and that half of these children's story books can still be judged as sexist.

When I first began this study I believed the gender of a book's lead character to be its most influential element in a child's gender socialization. However, through this research I have discovered that variables such as the occupation or gender roles of a lead character, or the story line they appear in can equally be as influential in a child's gender socialization.

This study is an eye-opener for parents, educators and concerned adults because it confirms the presence of stereotyped variables in children's story books, concluding that story book characters of the'90s are still, in some ways, very similar to story book characters of the '60s, '70s and '80s. As the parent of a first-grade daughter it is frightening that women strive for equality daily, while their daughters see them in story books only as caregivers or fantasy figures.

I especially find the results troubling as a parent searching for quality material for my children to explore. In today's society where television programs are criticized for their violent and sexual content, it is disheartening to know that story books such as these award-winners are, in their own traditional way, not quality material either. One would think that selecting a prestigious book such as a Caldecott Award winner or a Golden Sower Award winner would mean that the contents of that book are of excellent quality, and are free from violence, sexual content or stereotyping. Apparently this is not so. If a parent cannot choose an award-winning book as good material for their child, how can they find nonbiased, positive stories to read?

Limitations

This study is limited in a number of ways: the small number of books used,

the use of only award-winning selections; coding of the presence of traits and not the number of times they occurred; and the interpretation of the coders.

The first limitation is that only 20 books were analyzed in this study. If a larger number of books was examined, the results could more convincingly be generalized to all books published between 1986 and 1995, including non-award winning books.

A second, and related, limitation of this study is that only award-winning selections were analyzed. Although Caldecott honor books are considered representative of most picture books, they were chosen as winners based on their excellence in several areas. One could clearly argue that they are not representative, but are instead, the best of what is published.

The third limitation is the interpretation of the coders. Because one's race, gender, education, and other life experiences may affect a coder's decision, it is reasonable to believe that one coder may interpret a variable such as traditional occupation differently than another coder. One coder may say a female employed as a doctor is traditional because it involves care taking, while another coder may say the same situation is nontraditional, because it has only been in the past few years that more and more females have become doctors.

I realize that I may judge a variable as outdated, while another person may judge the same variable as modern and applicable to a reader's life. I am aware that elements which I believe suggest hegemonic masculinity, such as a female character shown in the mother/homemaker role, may be viewed by others as a true representation of our society today, or as an ideal situation for families today, and not an ideology of a powerful social group.

Future Research

The findings of this study suggest several directions for future research. One direction could pursue the study of Caldecott and Golden Sower books. Future research could replicate the present study's focus on Caldecott selections and Golden Sower selections to see if one type of book contains more sex-role stereotyping than the other type of book.

Another area for future research on gender in children's story books is the portrayal of power. For example, the criteria for power from Cooper's study (1993) could be applied to the books examined in the present study to see if males or females have more power in these books, and how powerful males and powerful females are depicted. Cooper's study examined two types of power: numerical power and views of females. To determine numerical power the researcher must ask: 1) How many books primarily concern females? Concern males? and 2) How many books are written/illustrated by females? By males? To determine the power held in the views of females the researcher must ask: 1) Are females depicted working in occupations other than those traditionally associated with females? 2) What are the roles (stereotypical or non stereotypical) of the main characters? and 3) Are females portrayed as powerless in their communication (using hedges, apologies, polite forms, etc.,)? The criteria used to determine both types of power discussed by Cooper could be applied to the books examined in the present study.

Further examination of children's books could assess power in the communication of females, adding an additional dimension to the interpretation of these books. Through this work we could label the characters in these books

as intelligent or stupid, powerful or powerless, and study the hidden messages in the characters' exchanges of words.

A final area for future research could focus on the illustrations in children's story books. Researchers could separate the illustrations from the text to see which depicts more stereotypical occupations and gender roles. While analyzing the books in the present study, I noted that stereotyping sometimes appeared stronger in the text, and sometimes appeared stronger in the illustrations. By separately examining the two, researchers may be able to suggest which part of a book is more strongly suggesting hegemonic masculinity.

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Appendix A-1

Gender Positive! Categories

used to identify non stereotypical books

1. Balance

2. Variety in Occupations

3. Reversal of Traditional Roles

4. Desirable Traits

5. Variety in Character Types

6. Contributions of Females as Well as Males

Appendix A-2

Books most frequently read aloud in grades K-6

Title	Main protagonist
Charlotte's Web	male and female
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	male
The Mouse and the Motorcycle	male
James and the Giant Peach	male
Summer of the Monkeys	male
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	male
Where the Red Fern Grows	male
Where the Wild Things Are	male
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day	male
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH	female

male: 80%   female: 10% female/male: 10%

Appendix A-3

Books most frequently read aloud in each grade

Title	Protagonist

Kindergarten

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day	male
Charlotte's Web	female/male
Curious George	male
Clown of God	male
Corduroy	male
The Giving Tree	male
Katy No-Pocket	female
Little Bear	male
The Snowy Day	male

male: 80%   female: 10%   female/male: 10%

1st Grade

Charlotte's Web	female/male
Where the Wild Things Are	male
Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day	male
Curious George	male
The Giving Tree	male
How the Grinch Stole Christmas	male
Millions of Cats	male
The Night Before Christmas	male
The Snowy Day	male
Winnie the Pooh	male
The Tale of Peter Rabbit	male

male: 91%   female: 0%   female/male 9%

2nd Grade

Charlotte's Web	female/male
The Mouse and the Motorcycle	male
Ramona the Pest	female
Where the Wild Things Are	male

Amelia Bedilia	female
Miss Nelson is Missing	female
Ribsy	male
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	male
Curious George	male
Henry Huggins	male
The Three Billy Goats Gruff	male

male: 64%   female: 27% female/male: 9%

3rd Grade

Charlotte's Web	female/male
The Mouse and the Motorcycle	male
The Little House on the Prairie	female
James and the Giant Peach	male
Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	male
Stuart Little	male
Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing	male
The Boxcar Children	female/male
Did You Carry the Flag Today, Charlie?	male
Encyclopedia Brown	male
Ramona Quimby, Age 8	female
Henry Huggins	male

male: 67%   female: 17% female/male: 16%