SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPING IN YOUNG CHILDREN

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Approved: _____
Faculty Advisor

Approved: _____
Thesis Committee Member

Approved: _____
Thesis Committee Member

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Abstract

Sex-Role Stereotyping In Young Children

Maryllzabeth Anne Lamie

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To examine the development of sex-role stereotypes in the children of professional, working mothers, 40 children between the ages of 5 and 7 were tested with the Sex Stereotype Measure II. Children were asked to categorize sex-role stereotypic attributes as representative of one of four response categories: girls, boys, both girls and boys, and a mystery box. Results revealed that older children provided more androgynous responses than younger children. There was no difference between males and females in their assignment of stereotypic attributes yet male sex-typed attributes were assigned with a significantly higher frequency than female sex-typed attributes by both sexes. An objective measure of the social desirability of the stereotypic gender-role attributes was developed and the results indicated that there was no significant difference between these attributes on this measure of social desirability by either females or males.

Introduction

Many studies have investigated the existence of sex-role stereotypes in various age groups and populations. Numerous studies of children's sex-role development have shown that the stereotyping process is already evident in children as young as 2-to-3 years old (Gettys & Cann, 1981; Kuhn, Nash, & Brucken, 1978; Reis & Wright, 1982; Slaby & Frey, 1975).

Four issues arising from this literature are addressed by the present study. First, the extent to which sex-role stereotyping characterizes 5-,6-, and 7-year-olds is investigated. This age group has been shown by the literature as displaying a high degree of stereotypic responses (Garrett, Ein, & Tremaine, 1977; Payne, 1981; Tremaine, Schau, & Busch, 1982; Williams, Bennett, & Best, 1975). To explore the degree of children's stereotyping, the Sex Stereotype Measure II (SSM II) was used. This measure, originally devised by Williams, Bennett, and Best (1975) as the Sex Stereotype Measure (SSM), was revised and extended by Best et al. (1977).

This instrument was developed to assess a child's knowledge of the female and of the male stereotype. The first step in its development by Williams et al. (1975) involved administering the 300 - item Adjective Check List (Gough & Heilbrun, 1965) to 50 male and 50 female college students instructing them to select those

adjectives which were more frequently associated with women than with men and vice versa (Williams & Bennett, 1975; Williams & Best, 1977). An adjective was included as part of one of the stereotypes if there was consenus by at least 75% of the male subjects and 75% of the female subjects that the adjective was descriptive of a particular sex. Thirty-three adjectives comprised the male stereotype and 30 adjectives the female stereotype.

In the second part of this procedure, Williams and his colleagues attempted to translate the adult stereotypes into a vocabulary that could be readily understood by children. A panel of 4 judges, including 2 psychologists and 2 undergraduate psychology students, composed simple stories to illustrate the adjectives. Some adjectives which were difficult to translate (e.g., flirtatious) were omitted while groups of adjectives which appeared synonymous (e.g., adventurous, daring, and courageous) were represented by a single story. The resulting measure included 12 children's stories to represent the male stereotype developed from 25 of the 33 adult male stereotype adjectives. The female stereotype was also represented by 12 children's stories developed from 24 of the 30 adult female stereotype adjectives. These 24 stories composed the initial SSM (Williams et al., 1975) which was revised by Best et al. (1977) resulting in SSM II. SSM II includes 32 stories, 16 representing so-called "female" traits and 16

representing so-called "male" traits (see Appendix A). Thirty-one of the male traits and 28 of the female traits are reflected in these new stories.

A third step in the development of SSM II was to check whether the resulting stories reflected the adult stereotypes. The SSM II items were validated by giving them to university students who were asked to indicate, for each item, whether it was associated with women or men. Eighty percent of the students associated the adjectives with the expected sex. Also, the responses from each student were scored to determine the number which were stereotypic. Of the 16 female items, the mean number was 14.8 while 15.1 was the mean number for the 16 male items suggesting that the items from SSM II adequately corresponded to the adult sex-trait stereotypes.

Furthermore, illustrations of a man and of a woman were drawn to accompany each of the SSM II stories. In the original version, line drawings were used but the findings obtained suggested that methodological problems could result from story-picture confounds (Williams et al., 1975). According to Williams, the children's responses may have been influenced by the male and female figures possessing inherent qualities of the adjectives. Williams suggested minimizing such problems by using "specifically prepared drawings of persons that are identical in all respects except the cues used to define sex" (p. 641). To this end, Best et al.

(1977) developed black silhouettes of girls and boys in various poses. The present experiment attempted to deal with this methodological problem by using "stick" figures whose sex was defined by hair style and clothing but who were identical in all other respects. In addition, these figures did not appear to have any inherent characteristics or present poses which could be associated with any of the adjectives used (see Appendix B).

In the present study, children were asked to assign attributes from SSM II to one of four response categories, namely girls, boys, both girls and boys, and a "mystery box" which was the equivalent of a "cannot say" category. Earlier researchers used only two response categories: boys or girls. Children were asked to identify activities, attributes, or careers as belonging to one of these two categories. From this research, it was concluded that a child's ability to stereotype increases with age (Gettys & Cann, 1981; Leahy & Shirk, 1984; Reis & Wright, 1982; Ward, 1985; Williams et al., 1975). However, a methodological artifact has been pointed out in that the children were presented with a two-choice response format (Sterlicker & Kurdek, 1982; Urberg, 1982). When studies included an androgynous category such as "both males and females", children displayed less rigid stereotyping and provided more androgynous responses with age (Garett, Ein, & Tremaine, 1977; Marantz & Mansfield, 1977; Payne,

1981; Sterlicker & Kurdek, 1982; Urberg, 1982). To overcome this methodological problem, the category "both boys and girls" was therefore included in this study.

Also, the children of professional, working women only were selected for this investigation. Research has shown that change in sex-role stereotypic behaviour is likely to occur in this population more readily than in other populations. The data suggest that parents with higher levels of education are likely to foster more non-traditional sex-role attitudes (Bandura & Walters, 1963) and that women and men who strive for graduate degrees express more liberal sex-role beliefs (Lipman-Blumen, 1972; Zukerman, 1981; Zukerman & Sayre, 1981).

In a study conducted by Marantz and Mansfield (1977), the impact of mother's employment on sex-role stereotypes in female children was explored. It was found that daughters of working mothers held fewer sex-role stereotypes, and that stereotyping decreased with age in both groups. An interesting relationship between mother's employment status, degree of stereotyping, and age of subject was noted. Working status of the mother was not relevant to stereotyping in 5-to-6 year-olds or in 9-to-11 year-olds; 5-to-6 year-olds displayed rigid stereotyping while 9-to-11 year olds showed little stereotyping. However, stereotyping in 7-to 8-year-olds was optimally affected by maternal work status.

Further support for the contention that working mothers affect the acquisition of sex-role stereotypes in female children is provided by Urberg (1982). In her research, the daughters of working mothers held fewer sex-typed views than the daughters of non-working mothers while the same did not hold true for the sons.

To summarize, the above literature suggested that the inclusion of the category "both boys and girls" would lead to a more androgynous manner of responding in older children and that professional women were likely to encourage the expression of less traditional sex-role views. In addition, working mothers appeared to have greater impact on sex-role stereotyping in female children compared to male children (Urberg, 1982) with the age group of 7-to-8-year-old females being optimally affected by maternal employment (Marantz & Mansfield, 1977). Since the present investigation included the category "both boys and girls" and selected the children of professional, working women only, three hypotheses were developed. First, it was expected that both females and males would select more androgynous than stereotypic responses; secondly, that older children would provide more androgynous responses than younger ones; and thirdly, that there would be no difference between older females and older males in their selection of androgynous responses. Although the above studies suggested the likelihood of female children, especially

those between the ages of 7 to 8, expressing fewer sex-typed views than their male counterparts, It should be noted that these children had working mothers. In this study, all of the children had professional, working mothers with the term professional being synonymous with educated; all of these women had at least one university degree and more often, they had two university degrees. Therefore, it was hoped that to these mothers it would be just as important to effect changes in sex-role stereotypic views held by their sons as those held by their daughters.

The second area that the present study explored was whether a difference existed between boys and girls in their assignment of stereotypic gender-role attributes. Recent studies have supported the contention that males as a group stereotype more than females (Payne, 1981; Sterlcker & Kurdek, 1982; Urberg, 1982). Because of its selective, homogeneous population, this investigation predicted that there would be no difference between boys and girls on this dimension.

As a third objective, this research investigated the relative frequency with which particular stereotypic (female versus male) gender-role attributes were selected by both sexes, hypothesizing that there would be no difference on this measure. Although there is evidence which suggests that the male stereotype is learned at a much earlier age (Williams & Best, 1982) and that the stereotyping

of male attributes occurs more often than the stereotyping of female characteristics (Best, 1982; Payne, 1981; Ward, 1985), it was hoped that the influence of professional women would lead to a contradiction of past research.

As a fourth, but nonetheless primary area of interest, the present study explored the social desirability among children of the female and male stereotypes. The bulk of related research has been conducted with adult populations and consequently has limited generalizability. Earlier studies indicated that masculine attributes were perceived as possessing greater social value than feminine traits (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz, & Vogel, 1970; Lynn, 1959; Sherriffs & McKee, 1957; Rosenkrantz, Vogel, Bee, Broverman, & Broverman, 1968). More recent information suggests that there is no longer a consistent tendency for the male stereotype to be perceived as being more socially desirable. Werner and La Russa (1985) replicated a 1957 study of sex-role conceptions published by Sherriffs and McKee and they reported a change in the valuation of the two sexes. Results suggested that women are viewed more favourably than in the past and men less favourably. These findings were especially true for female respondents. Williams and Best's (1982) documentation of sex stereotypes in 25 countries revealed that in some countries the female stereotype was evaluated more favourably than the male

stereotype while the reverse was true in other countries. A reexamination of Broverman's findings by Phillips and Gilroy (1985) found no significant relationship for social desirability of traits and conventional sex-role stereotypes at least within an adult population.

On the other hand, children's evaluations of sex-role stereotypes have not been studied extensively. What limited research has been done indicates that children have a tendency to assign positive attributes to their own sex (Kuhn, Nash, & Brucken, 1978; Urberg, 1982; Zalk & Katz, 1978) and negative characteristics to members of the opposite sex (Kuhn, Nash, & Brucken, 1978; Urberg, 1982). A recent study by Etaugh, Levine, and Mennella (1984) provides support for the earlier studies. In their investigation, children were presented with items such as "Some children work hard. Who is like that? Do girls work harder, do boys work harder, or are they the same?" (p. 916). Half of the subjects were given two choices: girls or boys while the other half were given three choices: boys, girls, or both sexes equally. They reported that children in all grades from 2 to 10 assigned more desirable traits to their own sex and more undesirable traits to the opposite sex. However, with increasing age both sexes showed more negative evaluations of their own sex and more positive evaluations of the opposite sex.

The present study attempted to obtain an objective measure of the "positive" and "negative" valence of the attributes stereotypically assigned to males and females. This was accomplished by presenting the child with a stick figure which did not possess any inherent characteristics stereotypically associated with male or female sex roles. The child was then asked to select the attributes which would be considered "positive" or "desirable" for this figure. As a result of this more objective means of evaluating the female and male stereotypic attributes and because these subjects were all the children of professional, working women, it was hypothesized that there would be no difference between the male and the female stereotypic attributes on ratings of social desirability by either sex.

Finally, a "mystery box" category was included in an attempt to determine the extent to which 5-, 6-, and 7-year-olds were able to understand the traits to which they were responding. Urberg (1982) attempted to do this by using a "nobody" category. In this study, children were asked to sort the attributes developed by Williams et al. (1975) as belonging to boys, girls, both boys and girls, and "nobody". They were given instructions to use the fourth category "nobody" if they thought that nobody was like the people in the story or if they did not understand the story. However, Urberg (1982) reported that this category was used too

infrequently to be considered for scoring purposes. In the present study, it was hoped that the "mystery box" category would be a more useful and interesting concept to the child compared to a category called "nobody", and, as a result, would be used with a higher frequency.

To summarize, this investigation explored four aspects of children's sex-role stereotyping in a highly selective, homogeneous population: children of professional, working women. Six hypotheses were generated. First, it was predicted that both girls and boys would select more androgynous than stereotypic responses; second, that older children would provide more androgynous responses than younger ones; and third, that there would be no difference between older females and older males in their selection of androgynous responses. Fourth, it was hypothesized that there would no difference between girls and boys in their assignment of stereotypic gender-role attributes. As a fifth hypothesis, this research predicted no difference in the relative frequency with which male versus female attributes would be stereotyped. As a sixth and final hypothesis, the present study predicted that there would be no difference between female and male attributes in terms of social desirability by either sex.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 20 boys and 20 girls ranging in age from 5 years, 0 months to 7 years, 11 months. The children were selected by three methods: by word-of-mouth, from cumulative school records provided by a municipal school board, and from information given by directors of day care centres. A letter which briefly explained the study as well as a consent form was sent to parents (see Appendix C). Parents were requested to sign and return these forms before a child participated in this study. In total, children were selected from two day care centres, three elementary schools as well as by word-of-mouth. The day care centres, schools, and private homes were all located in middle-class neighbourhoods.

All of these subjects were the children of professional working women. A professional working woman was defined for the purposes of this study as a woman possessing at least one and preferably two university degrees and currently employed in a career related to her educational qualifications on a part- or full-time basis. Twenty-one of the respondents' mothers had graduate degrees.

Materials

The sex-role questionnaire used in this study was the 32 item

Sex Stereotype Measure II developed and validated by Best et al. (1977). Two-sentence stories composed to illustrate each attribute were read to each child. An example of a story is the following: "Some people are emotional. They cry when something good happens as well as when everything goes wrong. Who are the emotional people? Are they girls, boys, both girls and boys, or maybe you do not understand the story?" The child's task was to point to one of four 5" x 8" cards placed on a table in front of her/him. Each card consisted of a "stick" figure drawing of a boy, a girl, a boy and a girl, and of a mystery box. The "stick" figures as described in the introduction were developed specifically for this experiment.

In the second part of this experiment, Best's Sex Stereotype Measure II was also used. However this time the child was presented with a "stick" figure drawn on a 5" x 8" card which did not possess any innate characteristics that could be associated with either femininity or masculinity. Once again, the attributes accompanied by a two sentence story were read to each child. This time the child's task was to determine which of the attributes would be considered desirable when applied to the stick figure.

Procedures

All subjects were tested individually by a female experimenter.

Testing was carried out either in a room within the school, pre-school, or child's home. Each child was tested in a single session which varied in duration from 20 to 40 minutes. As a first step, subjects were shown two of the "stick" figures and asked to identify the male and the female. Only those who were able to accurately do so were included in the experiment. The subjects were informed that they would be told stories about people and their job was to tell whom the story was about. They were told that the story might be about girls, boys, or about girls and boys, or that they might not understand the words. The child was instructed to point to the mystery box if he/she did not understand the word and/or the story (see Appendix D for verbatim instructions). The Examiner then read 32 words to each child (from SSM II) accompanied by a corresponding story. The order of the 4 response-choice cards was counterbalanced so that a different order was presented with each story. The Examiner recorded each child's responses (see Appendix E for recording sheet).

The children's responses were scored to yield a "male stereotype score" by counting one point for the selection of the male figure in response to a male stereotype item. A "female stereotype score" was arrived at in the same manner, that is, by counting one point for the selection of the female figure in response to a female stereotype item. Both the male and female

stereotype scores were added together to yield an "overall stereotype score". The possible range for this "total sex stereotype score" was 0 to 32. An "androgyny score" was also calculated by counting the total number of traits the child assigned to the category both males and females. The total number of traits assigned by the child to the mystery box category was used to yield a "do not understand score". In addition, a "counterstereotype score" (a concept suggested by Urberg, personal communication, March, 1986) was calculated by counting one point for the selection of the male figure in response to a female stereotype item and by counting one point for the selection of the female figure in response to a male stereotype item.

Following the responses to the sex-role questionnaire, the child was then shown the sexless stick figure. The child was given the following instructions:

> This is a person. I'm sure you know what a person is. Now I am going to read the words and stories to you just like I did before. This time your job is to tell me which of these words this person would like to be called; the words that this person thinks would be a good thing for other people to say about them. An example of a story is the following. "Messy". Some people are messy. They never pick up their things and are always leaving their clothes on the floor. Do you think

that this person would like to be called "messy"? Would this person think that "messy" was a good thing for other people to say about them?

The 32 item SSM II was administered to each child by the Examiner and the children's responses were recorded.

Following this, each child was asked the question, "Tell me what you think a person is". The child's response was recorded. If a child's response suggested that she/he identified the stick figure as being either female or male, attributed stereotypic male or female sex-role characteristics to this stick figure, or did not understand the word "person" then he/she was eliminated from this study.

A "female stereotype desirability score" was calculated by counting one point for the selection of a female stereotype item as being desirable for the stick figure. In the same manner, one point for the selection of a male stereotype item as being desirable for the stick figure was counted to yield a "male stereotype desirability score".

To determine the likelihood of eliminating a large number of subjects at this point in the investigation, prior to conducting this research, a pilot study was carried out. The purpose of this study was to determine whether 5-, 6-, and 7-year olds were able to accurately identify the word "person". The author entered 10

different classrooms at the Primary, Grade I, and Grade II level in three different elementary schools and asked children in each of these classes to raise their hands and respond to the question "What is a person?". Of 100 children surveyed, only two responded to this question in a way which would have eliminated them from this study. One child's response indicated that he did not understand the term "person" by saying "A person is a duck" while another child's response attributed stereotypic male characteristics to the term stating "A person is big and strong."

Results

Identification of the Male and Female Stick Figures

All 40 children were able to accurately identify the female and male stick figures. As a result, no children were eliminated from the study on this basis.

Responses to the Question "What is a Person?"

Of the 40 children involved in this experiment, no one responded to this question in a manner which would have eliminated her or him from this study.

Mystery Box Responses

The "Mystery Box" category was used too infrequently to be

considered for scoring purposes.

Stereotyping Versus Counterstereotyping

In order to investigate the extent to which children selected stereotypic responses (implying that they knew the conventional stereotype) as opposed to counterstereotypic responses, the Wilcoxin matched-pairs signed-ranks test was performed. A significant difference was found for females ($T = 0$; $n = 19$; $p < .01$) and for males ($T = 14.5$; $n = 18$; $p < .01$).

Stereotyping Versus Androgyny

It was hypothesized that children would select androgynous responses with a higher frequency than stereotypic ones. This was investigated by performing the Wilcoxin matched-pairs signed-ranks test. No difference was discovered for either male or female subjects.

The prediction that there would be no difference between females and males in the frequency with which they selected androgynous responses was investigated by performing a t-test for independent means. No significant difference was observed.

Stereotypic Responses In Younger Versus Older Children

In order to determine the effect of age on stereotyping,

children were divided into younger and older subjects using 6.6 as the dividing age.

T-tests for independent means were performed to investigate the hypotheses that (1) younger children would select more stereotypic responses than older children, (2) younger females would choose more stereotypic responses than older females, and (3) younger males would select more stereotypic responses compared to older males. A significant difference was found between younger and older children (t = 1.84; df = 38; p < .05) with younger children giving more stereotypic responses than older ones. As well, younger females selected significantly more stereotypic responses than older females (t = 2.12; df = 18; p < .025). No significant difference was obtained between younger and older males in their selection of stereotypic responses.

Androgynous Responses In Younger Versus Older Children

It was hypothesized that (1) older children would select more androgynous responses than younger ones, (2) older females would select more androgynous responses than younger females, (3) older males would choose androgynous responses more often than younger males, and (4) there would be no difference in the selection of androgynous responses between older females and older males.

T-tests for independent means were carried out to investigate

these four hypotheses. A significant difference was noted between younger and older children ($t = 2.49$; $df = 38$; $p < .01$) with older children giving more androgynous responses compared to younger ones. In addition, older females provided significantly more androgynous responses than younger females ($t = 2.11$; $df = 38$; $p < .025$) with no significant difference observed between younger and older males as well as between older females and older males.

Stereotyping by Males Versus Females

T-tests for independent means were performed to investigate the hypothesis that no sex difference existed in the stereotyping of either "female" or "male" adjectives. No significant difference was observed: an equal number of boys and girls used stereotypic adjectives regardless of the class of the adjective. Put another way, one sex does not stereotype more than the other.

Stereotyping of Female Items Versus Male Items

It was predicted that there would be no difference in the frequency of assignment of female or male adjectives by the children - by either males or females. The Wilcoxin matched-pairs signed-ranks test was performed and indicated that male stereotype items were used significantly more often than female stereotype items by females ($T = 7$; $n = 15$; $p < .01$) as well as by males ($T =$

5; $n = 14$; $p < .01$). When they do stereotype, both sexes prefer to use "male" rather than "female" adjectives.

Desirability Data

The hypothesis that no difference would exist between males and females in their perception of the social value of (1) male items and (2) females items was examined by performing t-tests for independent means. No significant differences were noted.

The Wilcoxin matched-pairs signed - ranks test was performed to explore the prediction that there would be no difference in the frequency with which the total sample selected female items as being more socially desirable than male items. No significant difference was discovered for males or for females.

Discussion

The present study examined several issues in the area of children's sex-role stereotyping. Included in these was the prediction that children of professional, working women would select androgynous responses with a higher frequency than stereotypic ones. Although when statistically analyzed, there was no significant difference between the frequency with which

children selected stereotypic as compared to androgynous or overlap responses, both sexes did assign attributes to the overlap category more often. Females selected 230 stereotypic responses as opposed to 305 androgynous ones; males chose 196 stereotypic responses compared to 338 androgynous responses. This is an encouraging finding, especially because further statistical analysis suggested that children had knowledge of the sex to which the stereotype should be assigned; that is, they selected stereotypic responses with a significantly higher frequency than counterstereotypic ones. Despite this, and consistent with Urberg's finding (1982), when given a chance to categorize traits as both masculine and feminine, children saw considerable overlap between traits applicable to females and to males.

Previous studies which provided only the two response categories of girls or boys suggested that the stereotyping process increases with age (Gettys & Cann, 1981; Leahy & Shirk, 1984; Reis & Wright, 1982; Ward, 1985; Williams et al., 1975) while other studies which provided a third response category, girls and boys, indicated that children provided more androgynous responses with age (Garrett, Ein, & Tremaine, 1977; Marantz & Mansfield, 1977; Payne, 1981; Sterlicker & Kurder, 1982; Urberg, 1982). As predicted, the present investigation which included an androgynous alternative provides support for the latter studies

indicating that older children selected significantly more androgynous responses than younger ones. At first glance, it would appear that this finding resulted from the female respondents. As hypothesized, older females did provide significantly more androgynous responses compared to younger females. Although no significant difference was discovered between younger and older males in the number of androgynous responses given, there was a definite trend in this direction. In so far as a comparison of the means is concerned, older males tended to provide more androgynous responses than younger males (see Appendix F).

This tendency for older children to select more androgynous responses than younger ones may be explained by reference to an observational learning model. According to this theory, parental models are seen as an important factor in influencing the sex-role concepts held by children, a finding strongly supported in a review of the literature by Katz (1979). However, it may be that observational learning can result in changes in behaviours only when the child is mature enough to process this information (Marantz & Mansfield, 1977). Before the age of 7 to 8, the child may not be cognitively ready to attend to and process relevant stimuli. Selective attention to the model must occur before a corresponding change in behaviour is affected.

As already stated, older children provided more androgynous responses than younger children, and furthermore, as predicted, there was no difference between older females and older males in their selection of androgynous responses. Urberg (1982) reported that the working status of mothers affected the acquisition of sex-role stereotypes in female children but not in male children while Marantz and Mansfield (1977) indicated that 7-to 8-year-old females were optimally affected by maternal employment. However, it must be remembered that while the children in the latter studies had working mothers, the children in this study had working mothers who were also professionals. Again, an observational learning model would suggest that children are more likely to imitate the behaviour of models who, among other things, are similar to them and more importantly, who are likely to reinforce their behaviour (Bandura & Walters, 1963). It may well be that working mothers, by nature of the fact that they are employed, model a non-traditional role but do not provide reinforcement to their children for expressing non-traditional sex-role beliefs. As a result, the female children of working mothers, being more similar to their mothers by virtue of their gender, would be more likely to imitate their mother's behaviours than would the male children of working mothers. On the other hand, professional, working women not only model less traditional

sex-typed roles for their children, but may also frequently initiate discussions with and provide reinforcement to their children for the same. Since it may be that these professional women are just as interested in influencing and changing the roles of their male children as of their female children, both sexes are likely to receive considerable reinforcement for expressing unconventional viewpoints.

In contrast with earlier studies which suggested that males as a group stereotype more than females (Payne, 1981; Stericker & Kurdek, 1982; Urberg, 1982), as predicted, the results of the present study indicated that no significant difference existed between females and males in the number of stereotypic responses given. Again, the conflicting results may reflect the fact that these children were from a highly selective population where reinforcement was given to both sexes for the expression of responses which were inconsistent with sex-role stereotyping.

The finding in the present investigation that both sexes stereotyped male items significantly more often than female items, while not expected to occur in this study, is supported in the literature (Payne, 1981; Ward, 1985). Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) indicate that the differential acquisition of stereotypes reflects the more intense socialization experiences of boys compared to girls. Considerable social pressure is placed upon boys for

engaging in sex-typed behaviours especially by fathers, whereas for girls the expected behaviours are less clearly defined and less firmly enforced. According to Bardwick and Douvan (1972), from a very early age, boys are rewarded for exhibiting "masculine" behaviours and punished for exhibiting "feminine" behaviours while young girls are given more role freedom until puberty. As a result, the male stereotype, through a system of rewards and punishments, is learned at a much earlier age. Since the children in this study were all the offspring of professional, working mothers, it was predicted that there would be less of a tendency for these mothers to differentially reward and punish appropriate "masculine" and "feminine" behaviours. Although this may be the case it should be noted that the effects of other agents of sex-role socialization including fathers, peers, media, and schools cannot be overlooked.

Contrary to past research (Etaugh, Levine, & Mennella, 1984; Kuhn, Nash, & Brucken, 1978; Urberg, 1982) which suggested that young children assign positive attributes to their own sex and negative characteristics to members of the oppositive sex, the results of the present investigation indicated that there was no significant difference between female and male attributes in terms of social desirability. This difference was expected and may arise from two factors. First, it is possible that this

homogeneous group of mothers, by both ideology and example, reflect and encourage a positive valuation of female as well as male characteristics.

A second explanation which could account for this difference is that the previous research was confounded by a methodological artifact. In the previous studies, a bias may have been introduced making it impossible to obtain an objective evaluation of the desirability of stereotypic items. Young children were presented with adjectives which had acquired social value to them and asked to indicate whether these adjectives were associated with their own sex or with the opposite sex. It is unlikely that they would indicate that an undesirable attribute was descriptive of their own sex probably because they would interpret this as a reflection of themselves and would be unwilling to describe themselves in an unfavourable manner. In the same vein, when presented with a positive adjective, it is highly likely that they would select this adjective as descriptive of their own sex perceiving their selection as presenting themselves in a favourable light. The present study provided a more objective evaluation by having the children respond to a neutral stimulus of a "person".

In Urberg's experiment (1982) the category "nobody" was not used often enough to be considered for scoring purposes. The

same was true of the "mystery box" in the present study. Although it was hoped that the "mystery box" would be a more useful and interesting concept to the children, this was not the case. The category was used a total of 17 times by females while males selected this category only 7 times. Examination of the children's individual responses indicated that no single adjective was consistently assigned to the mystery box suggesting that the adjectives were generally understood by the children.

The desirability ratings each attribute received (see Appendix G) may also provide information as to whether these adjectives are understood in a similar way by children as they are by adults. The words "independent" and "steady" received relatively low desirability ratings while "submissive" and "flirtatious" received a higher rating. It is possible that the stories developed by Best et al. (1977) to convey the meaning of these adjectives may not give the same meaning to children as to adults. This issue may merit further investigation.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study, it might be worthwhile to look at subjects who give highly androgynous responses and compare them to subjects who provide highly stereotypic responses to determine whether one group selects more attributes as desirable relative to the other group. There appears to be an attitude in society which suggests that

stereotyping results in a negative evaluation of a group of people; it might prove interesting to explore this further.

Finally, the results of this study suggest that in the present study these children had knowledge of the stereotype, but that this knowledge did not result in one sex-role stereotype being devalued relative to the other. The recognition and acceptance of differences between the sexes without devaluation is an encouraging finding.

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Appendix A

Table A-1

Female (F) and Male (M) Stereotype

Adjective(s) and Children's Stories

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
1	F	emotional	Some people are emotional. They cry when something good happens as well as when everything goes wrong. Who are the emotional people?
2	M	aggressive assertive tough forceful	These people are always pushing other people around and getting into fights. Which people get into fights?
3	M	adverturous daring courageous	These people are adventurous. They went on a safari to explore Africa. They saw lots of lions, elephants, and monkeys. Which

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			people are adventurous?
4	F	appreciative	When you give one of these people a present, they appreciate it very much. They always say "thank you". Which people say "thank you?"
5	F	weak	These people are weak. They need help to lift heavy things. Who are the weak people?
6	M	independent	Some people can get along by themselves. They don't need someone to help them or to talk to them. Which people get along by themselves?
7	M	disorderly	Some people are messy. They

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			never pick up their things and are always leaving their clothes on the floor. Who are the messy people?
8	F	talkative	Some people talk a lot. Sometimes it seems like they talk all the time. Which people talk a lot?
9	F	rattlebrained	Some people are always changing their minds. They might say "yes" now and five minutes later say "no". Which people are always changing their minds?
10	M	ambitious	Some people have always wanted to own a big store. They saved

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			up all their money and were finally able to buy it. Which people own a big store?
11	M	jolly	Some people are jolly. They like to laugh a lot and tell funny stories that make other people laugh. Who are the jolly people?
12	F	gentle	These people are gentle. When they hold puppies, they are careful not to hurt them. Who are the gentle people?
13	F	frivolous	Some people spend money on silly things. They often buy things

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			they do not really need. Which people buy silly things?
14	M	cruel	Some people are cruel. They sometimes hurt other people on purpose and make them unhappy. They throw rocks at dogs when they come into the yard. Who are the cruel people?
15	M	steady stable unemotional unexcitable	Some people are steady. They do not get very excited about either good things or bad things. Who are the steady people?
16	F	fussy nagging	Some people are always fussing at their children about the

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			things they're supposed to do. They never stop fussing, even when you have finished what they say. Which people are always fussing?
17	F	meek mild	Some people are shy. They are quiet and afraid to talk to others. Who are the shy people?
18	M	boastful	Some people boast all the time. They are always bragging about the things they have done. Which people are always bragging about the things they have done?
19	M	coarse	Some people have bad manners and

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			they often say bad words. Which people say bad words?
20	F	whiny complaining	Some people are whiny. They are always complaining no matter what you do. Who are the complaining people?
21	F	flirtatious charming attractive	Some people flirt. When they want to get attention from someone they wink and smile. Which people flirt a lot?
22	M	severe stern	Some people are stern. They frown when someone does something wrong and want them to be punished. Who are the stern people?

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
23	M	loud	Some people talk so loudly, you can hear them all over the house. In fact, if they're talking in the living room, you can hear them across the street. Which people talk loudly?
24	F	excitable high-strung	Some people get excited easily. When something happens suddenly, they are often surprised. They even jump when they hear a door slam. Which people get excited easily?
25	F	affectionate	Some people are very affectionate. When they like someone they hug and kiss them a lot. Which people like to hug and kiss a lot?

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
26	M	dominant autocratic	These people make most of the rules. When they tell you what to do, you have to do it. Which people make most of the rules?
27	M	confident self-confident	These people are very sure of themselves. They know they will do well in their jobs. Which people are sure of themselves?
28	F	soft-hearted sentimental sensitive	These people are soft-hearted. They feel sorry when they see a kitten get hurt. Which people are soft-hearted?
29	F	submissive dependent	These people depend on other people a lot. They like to

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
			have other people around who can help them decide what to do, and to make the rules. Which people depend on someone else to make the rules?
30	M	logical rational realistic	When these people have a problem they sit down and think carefully before deciding what is the best thing to do. Which people solve their problems carefully?
31	M	strong robust	Some people are strong. They can lift heavy things by themselves. Who are the strong people?
32	F	sophisticated	These people have such good

ITEM	STEREOTYPE	ADULT ADJECTIVE(S)	CHILDREN STORIES
		prudish affected	manners, it makes you sick. They always do everything just right. Which people do everything just right?

Appendix B

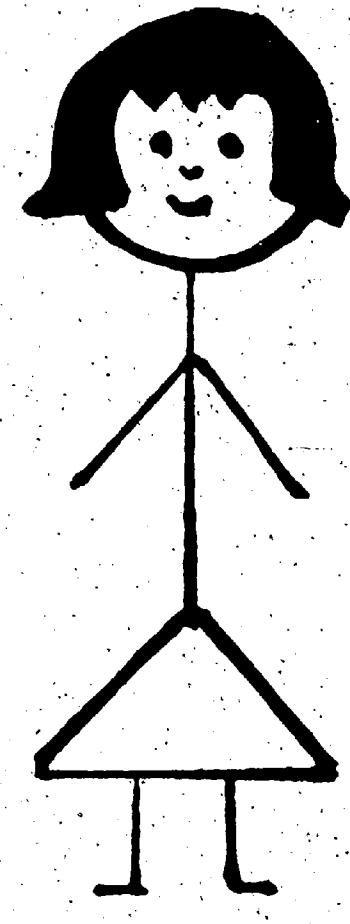

FIGURE I GIRL STICK FIGURE

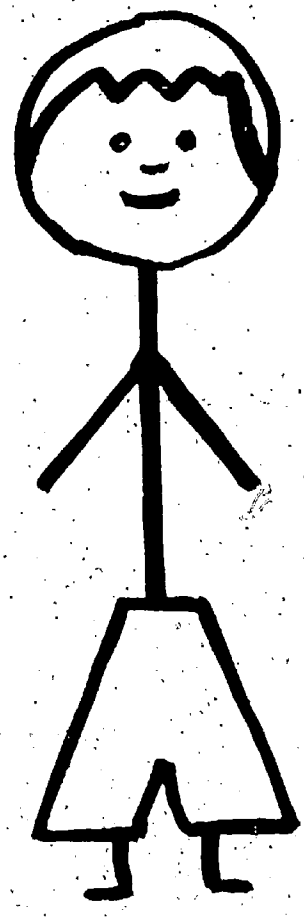

FIGURE II BOY STICK FIGURE

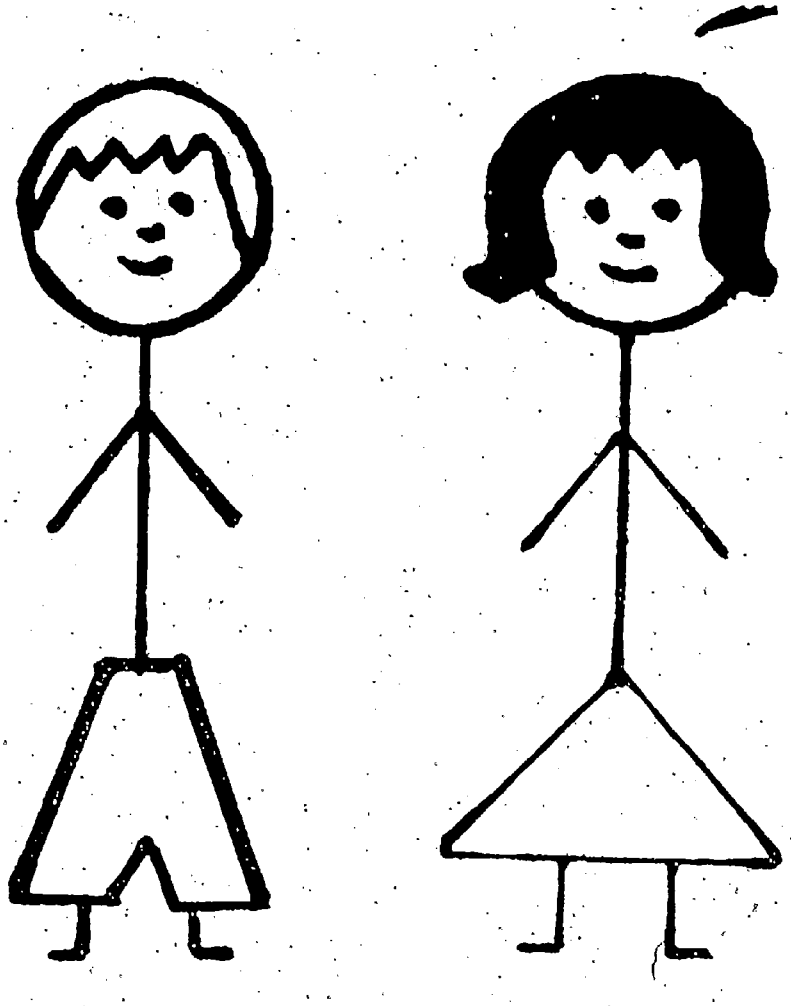

FIGURE III BOY AND GIRL STICK FIGURE

FIGURE IV MYSTERY BOX

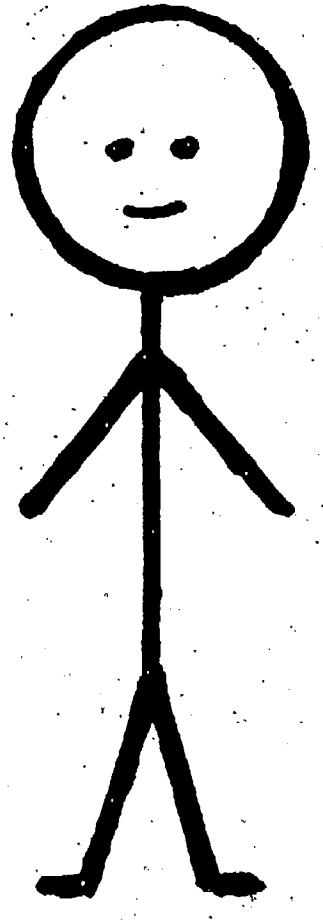

FIGURE V PERSON STICK FIGURE

Appendix C

Dartmouth District School Board

95 Victoria Road,
Dartmouth, N.S.
B3A 1V2 421-2005

April 10, 1985

Dear

For the past five years, I have been employed in the Guidance, Counselling and Psychological Services Department of the Dartmouth District School Board. I am currently working on my thesis for a M.Sc. Program in Applied Clinical Psychology at St. Mary's University in Halifax. My thesis deals with Sex-Role Stereotyping in Five-to-Seven-Year-Old Children whose mother has a university degree and is employed part-time or full-time in the area in which she received her degree. With your permission, I would like to include your child as a participant. In this study, the child is presented with pictures and adjectives and asked to select the most appropriate picture for each adjective. Following this, the child is asked to determine the social desirability of the adjectives.

Testing will be conducted at the school your child attends and will require removing him/her from the classroom for approximately twenty minutes.

This study will not result in any physical or psychological harm or upset to your child. Children who have participated thus far have reported to me that they have found

their involvement to be "fun" or enjoyable. All participants and their responses will be treated in a confidential manner. Although individual results will not be made available, each parent, if requested, will be supplied with a summary of the group results of this study upon completion of the thesis.

I would like to thank you in advance for any assistance which you may be able to provide to me. If further information is required, contact me at 421-2027 during the day and in the evenings at 425-6206.

Yours truly,

Marylizabeth Lamie

Marylizabeth Lamie,

Psychometrist-Counsellor.

* In letters which were sent out to parents whose children attended day care centres, the word "day care" was substituted for the word "school".

Dartmouth District School Board

95 Victoria Road,
Dartmouth, N.S.
B3A 1V2 421-2005

CONSENT FORM

I give permission for my daughter/son _____
Print name in full
to participate in a study on "Sex-Role Stereotyping in Five-to-Seven-Year-Old Children".

YES _____ NO _____

I would like to receive a summary of the results of this study.

YES _____ NO _____

_____ _____
Date Parent's Signature

_____ _____
Mailing Address Mother's Occupation

_____ _____
Mother's Education

Return to:

Marylizabeth Lamie
Dartmouth District School Board
Guidance, Counselling & Psychological Services
95 Victoria Road
Dartmouth, N. S.
B3A 1V2

Appendix D

Verbatim Instructions to Children

SSM II Instructions

What I have here are some pictures I would like to show you and some stories that go with each one. First of all, I would like you to point to the picture of the boy and now I would like you to point to the picture of the girl. Fine, now here is a picture of both the girl and the boy and here is a picture of a mystery box. Now, I want you to help me by pointing to the person or the people that you think this story is about.

Sample Story

Some people are emotional. They cry when something good happens as well as when everything goes wrong. Who are the emotional people? Are they boys, girls, both boys and girls, or maybe you do not understand the story? If you think this story could be about boys, then point to the picture of the boy. If you think this story could be about girls, then point to the

picture of the girl. If you think this story could be about both boys and girls, then point to the picture of both the boy and girl. Finally, if you do not understand the story, then point to the picture of the mystery box.

Desirability Data Instructions

This is a person. I'm sure you know what a person is. Now I am going to read the words and stories to you just like I did before. This time your job is to tell me which of the words this person would like to be called; the words that this person thinks would be a good thing for other people to say about them (read each story). Do you think that this person would like to be called (read the adjective for example, "messy"), _____ would this person think that _____ was a good thing for other people to say about them?

What is a person, anyway? (Ask each child after all the stories have been read again).

Appendix E

Sex Stereotype Measure II (SSM II)

Record and Scoring Sheet

Name _____ Mother's Occupation _____

Age _____ Father's Occupation _____

Sex _____ Date Tested _____

Date of Birth _____

Adjectives	Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Female Stereotype	Overlap	D.K.	Stereotype Desirability Score		Stereotype Undesirability Score	
						F	M	F	M
emotional	F								
aggressive	M								
adventurous	M								
appreciative	F								
weak	F								
independent	M								
disorderly	M								
talkative	F								
rattlebrained	F								
ambitious	M								
jolly	M								
gentle	F								
frivolous	F								
cruel	M								

Adjectives	Stereotype	Male Stereotype	Female Stereotype	Overlap	D.K.	Stereotype Desirability Score		Stereotype Undesirability Score	
						F	M	F	M
steady	M								
fussy	F								
meek	F								
boastful	M								
coarse	M								
whiny	F								
flirtatious	F								
stern	M								
loud	M								
excitable	F								
affectionate	F								
dominant	M								
confident	M								
soft-hearted	F								
submissive	F								
logical	M								
strong	M								
sophisticated	F								

Male Stereotype: _____
Female Stereotype: _____
Total Stereotype _____
Overlap _____
D.K. _____

Male Stereotype
Desirability _____

Female Stereotype
Desirability _____

Appendix F

Table F-1

Mean Number of Stereotypic and Androgynous Responses Selected by Children

Subjects	n	Responses: Stereotypic	Responses: Androgynous
Older Males	8	8.63	20.38
Younger Males	12	10.58	14.33
Older Females	9	8.66	19.33
Younger Females	11	13.91	11.91
Older Children	17	8.59	19.83
Younger Children	23	12.17	13.17

Appendix G

Table G-1

Percentage of Time Attributes were selected as Being Socially Desirable by Females, Males, and Both Sexes

Attributes	Desirability Percentages (%)		
	Females	Males	Both Sexes
Emotional	20	35	27.5
Aggressive	0	0	0
Adventurous	90	70	80
Appreciative	100	100	100
Weak	15	15	15
Independent	50	45	47.5
Disorderly	0	0	0
Talkative	5	15	10
Rattlebrained	5	5	5
Ambitious	85	75	80
Jolly	70	80	75
Gentle	100	100	100
Frivolous	10	0	5
Cruel	5	0	2.5
Steady	40	40	40
Fussy	0	0	0
Meek	20	10	15
Boastful	0	0	0
Coarse	0	0	0
Whiny	0	0	0
Flirtatious	55	50	52.5
Stern	5	0	2.5
Loud	5	0	2.5
Excitable	30	25	27.5
Affectionate	75	85	80
Dominant	30	20	25
Confident	85	90	87.5
Soft-Hearted	75	75	75
Submissive	50	45	47.5
Logical	80	80	80
Strong	100	85	92.5
Sophisticated	100	100	100