DOES GENDER MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER AND PLAY OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

A Thesis

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in

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by

Marcia Lenae Jones

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ii

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Marcia Jones

Approved by:

_____, Committee Chair
Sherrie Carinci, Ed.D.

_____, Second Reader
Angela Leslie, Ed.D,

_____
Date

Student: <u>Marcia Jones</u>

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_____, Department Chair _____
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Graduate and Professional Studies in Education

Abstract

of

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Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to observe gender differences in children's play in the socio-dramatic play area of a preschool classroom. Also, to gain retrospect on children's ideas of gender roles through a facilitation of discussion through reading of children's literature. The data was collected qualitatively through use of observational methodology and analyzed thematically. The following research questions were examined: What kind of gender roles do children display through interactions with peers in: sociodramatic play area, block area, children's conversations, peers assigning roles, adult roles (mommy/daddy), and dramatic characters (superheroes)? What are the ways in which these gender role behaviors are expressed, verbally (speech) and non-verbally (actions)?; What are children's responses to literature concerning gender roles?

Sources of Data

The researcher conducted this study at a Northern Sacramento preschool. Participants in the study were all aged 3 to 5 years old. There was a total of 18 children, six girls and 12 boys that participated in this study. The racial background of children consisted of: eight of the 18 participants were African American; five of the 18 participants were Caucasian; three of the 18 participants were Asian American; and two of the 18 participants were Hispanic. As far as age, there were a total of four 5 year olds, eleven 4 year olds, and four 3 year olds. All of the children's names used in this study were pseudonyms.

Conclusions Reached

Throughout the data, children seemed to express a sense of traditional and non-traditional feminine and masculine roles. The overall arching themes evident in the data were: Dress up prior to play, Helping roles, Nurturing roles, Domestic roles, Dominance, Aggression, and Risk Taking Roles, and Use of Stereotypical Language. The data concerned with children's responses to the selected children's literature displayed some significant results that are explained following the themes. Also, children's reactions to the readings of the selected text were enthralling. Children demonstrated interest in all three texts. Both boys and girls exemplified attentiveness to the stories read aloud. Most importantly, the researcher observed that children learn and create their belief systems of behavior through close observations of others. Ultimately, more global awareness to gender behavior that children display and

communicate, will grant parents, teachers and other important role models in a

children's life the moments to support and teach children about gender equality.

_____, Committee Chair
Sherrie Carinci, Ed.D.

_____
Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Gender identity plays a fundamental role in young children's lives, aiding them

in their beliefs and behavior of what it means to be a boy or a girl. Many factors in

society such as parents, educators and peers, contribute to the reinforcement of the

stereotypical beliefs relating to gender. The social construct of gender identity occurs

at the beginning of early childhood. Several researchers come to an understanding

that gender- socialization starts as young as birth (Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter,

2002; Lips, 1989; Zosuls, Miller, Ruble, Martin & Fabes, 2011). Gender socialization,

a socially constructed phenomenon, affects just about everyone in society. "Without

question, socialization has a powerful impact on the development of females and

males in the united states" (Schaefer, 1994, p. 431). Zosuls et al. (2011) confirm that

gender socialization in children occurs earlier than researchers think, from the name

that parents choose to the way that they treat their child. In other words, parents

impose their preferences of particular gender roles on their child, giving their child no

choice of his or her own. Schaefer (1994) defines gender roles as society's

orchestrated beliefs of suitable conduct, and self-conduct for women and men. Chick

et al. (2002) argue that gender role development is a social construct and also begins at

a very young age. By the age of 12 months, children have an idea of what gender they

are and choose activities accordingy to their assigned gender (Chick et al., 2002).

Very often, boys and girls are raised stereotypically by their caregivers and

treated differently according to gender. As babies, boys are usually given more

independence, observed less closely than girls who are usually not as influenced to discover their environments freely (Lips, 1989; Orr, 2011). Children's gendered actions are a direct relation to their parents' socialization tactics (Lips, 1989; Orr, 2011). For example, the language that is used with boys is often consistent with problem solving strategies and numerals (Lips, 1989). Middle class families are more in agreeance with equality of the sexes, whereas low-income families impose harsher constraints on girls than their male counterparts (Lips, 1989).

Due to the social nature and development of gender identity, social learning theory is relatable for many reasons. Theoretically speaking, social learning theory is the dialogue and actions of others that children observe and seek to imitate, which ultimately informs them of what gender behavior is deemed relevant to them (Wood, 1996). Social learning theory is the ultimate basis of what this proposal is grounded on. The researcher believes that the environment, and social interactions, greatly impact children's beliefs and behavior (Cueavas & Hollis-Sawyer, 2013). It is those social exchanges in the environment that influence their learning and behavior.

Peers, and teachers also share responsibility in children's socialization of gendered behavior (Lips, 1989). Children are constantly searching for the approval and acceptance of their peers (Lips, 1989). One noteworthy claim, states that younger children tend to engage in more play with their peers of the same-sex (Lips, 1989). Lips (1989) maintains that children strongly encourage their peers to continuously uphold gender behaviors, often making fun of those children who dare to cross gender appropriate boundaries. During play, boys are more straightforward with ordering

their peers to do something and girls are more passive and expressive about needs (Lips, 1989). In addition to peer's strong influence of gendered behavior, teachers also contribute to children's views of masculinity and femininity.

Educator's ideas and beliefs of gender appropriate behavior also encourage the gender norms of society (Lips, 1989). Teacher's selections of text, curriculum, play activities and reinforcement of certain behaviors in children contribute to gender differences in children (Lips, 1989). Research implies that teachers consistently give more care to boys than to girls, giving more attention to aggressive boys and only attention to those girls who are reliant on their assistance (Lips, 1989). The society in which one lives, is the ultimate determinant of the way people are socialized into gender categories.

Gendered behaviors vary among children depending upon their social context and the gender socialization that the child has received (Levy, 1994). The particular way a child has been socialized has a vastly different impact on boys and girl's gendered typed behavior (Levy, 1994). The researcher of this study firmly believes that these gendered behaviors are reflected in play and has tremendous effects on their choices and ways of playing with gendered toys (Chick et al., 2002). For young children, they're experimentation with masculinity and femininity transpires during fictitious play (Chick et al., 2002). For example, girls have a higher tendency to engage in play that is a clear replica of adult gender roles, such as imaginative play in the dramatic play area.

Preschool are the fundamental years in a child's life in which they gain social skills and autonomy. Halim, Ruble, Tamis-LeMonda and Shrout (2013) agree that a child's preschool years are the most critical years of their life. During these times children acquire their gender identity and very openly show significant signs of gender rigidity. At this age, children's actions reflect society imposed gender roles, which leads to gender inequities in their future (Halim et al., 2013). Halim et al. (2013) discovered through observations that both boys and girls exposed rigid gender-typed behaviors. Boys and girls most often engaged in play with same-sex peers. These studies suggest that gender conduct in children is highly typical in preschoolers. There seems to be a lack of research concerning gendered behavior specifically in the sociodramatic play area, and the way that children interact with peers.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the apparent dynamics of gender socialization and who it embroils, the definitive problem here is that gender socialization has many detrimental effects on children's expression of self (Schaefer, 1994). Gender socialization suppresses an individual's expression of self and identity, assigning people society's socially constructed beliefs of ways of behaving which keeps them suppressed in society. Starting from birth, individuals are culturally forced to conform to and abide by societies, learning from others, gender roles and norms and withhold their own specific beliefs and attitudes (Wood, 1996). As a result, there are many consequences of gender socialization (Lips, 1989; Martin & Ruble, 2004; Orr, 2011). In fact, many imposed gender roles help in the influencing of gender stereotypes (Sherman &

Zurbriggen, 2014). Women and young girls especially, are of the oppressed majority but males are affected as well.

Research suggests that boys display a lot of aggression compared to females, females performances in mathematics, sciences and engineering are generally lower than that of boys, giving only males the upper hand in pursuing relating fields of study and careers in the future (Lips, 1989). As young girls become adults, they find that they are limited in society, specifically to their career choices due to their restricted education, with arithmetic and science being the least of those focus areas and literature being the highest (Lips, 1989). Males have a higher chance at obtaining construction, computer-technical, engineering careers than women because of the education and upbringing they received which was centered on science, mathematics, and engineering (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014).

Aside from career limitations, girls at a young age are very often exposed to sexually attractive women and influenced to look as so (Martin & Ruble, 2004). For example, girls are highly motivated and more likely to receive Barbie's as toys and objects to play with (Martin & Ruble, 2004). Girls grow into women who are often judged by their attractiveness and are portrayed as sexual objects in the media (Martin & Ruble, 2004). Females tend to then shift their focus from academics to appearance and beauty and become more concerned with the way they look.

Contrastingly, men also are tremendously impacted from gender socialization as well. They are constantly being influenced to be strong, aggressive, dominant, and competitive (Thompson, 2004). Males are continuously socialized to be tough and are

often scrutinized by their peers by showing emotions which are categorized as weak, by society (Thompson, 2004). At a young age and through adulthood, men encounter many challenges surrounding the idea of toughness becoming confused with their own identities if they do not live up to the standard (Thompson, 2004). Men become intimate in heterosexual relationships and feel the need to be the superior one, having all control, and find it problematic to view women as an equal (Thompson, 1994). These inequities create barriers for women in society and continuously oppress those who do not fit in to the rigid norms of society. This ultimately creates a lack of equal opportunity and pursuit of happiness for many unique individuals whose gender identity differs from others in society.

Purpose of Study

Since gender socialization starts young in early childhood (Zosuls et al., 2011), teachers can play a pivotal role in children's gender development and need awareness of this topic pertaining to gender socialization in the classroom to foster gender-equitable teaching (Carinci, 2009). One study found that children's childcare environment, where children were engaged in play and interactions with teachers and peers had a pro-founding effect on their ideas of gender behavior (Chick et al., 2002).

Since many educators are unaware of what gender socialization and its effects, this can allow parents and teachers to become more cognizant of these topics. Also, this research might suggest what change if needed to counteract gender inequities in the preschool classrooms. Preschool teachers can also profile patterns or themes that emerge throughout this study and compare or contrast them to the current behaviors

they may see in their classrooms. The best start to creating gender equitable preschool classrooms is to first create awareness of the topic at hand and this study will do just that, by adding to the research.

This study involved observations of children's play and children's picture books that centered on gender roles that were non-traditional, in society. The goal was to facilitate discussion of gender roles, norms and capture children's ideas and provoke children's thought. The purpose of this study is to create some understanding behind the phenomena of gender socialization and preschooler's gendered play behaviors. The investigator specifically focused on children's expression of gender roles. The researcher observed children at play in the sociodramatic play area, noting their verbal and non-verbal behavior. Since the researcher sides with the social environment having the most influence and most importance on a child's life, the observations were grounded on Bandura's social learning theory, in which exclaims that social interactions in the environment greatly impact children's beliefs and behavior (Cueavas & Hollis-Sawyer, 2013).

The researcher also used children's books to facilitate discussion of gender roles, and masculine and feminine behaviors, to provoke and challenge children's thoughts. During the readings of the selected story, the reader will simply read and ask how children feel about the story and their thoughts and record children's comments and thoughts of the story for later data analysis. Ultimately, the researcher plans to investigate children's ideas of masculinity and femininity through peer play.

The following research questions were examined: What kind of gender roles do children display through interactions with peers in: sociodramatic play area, block area, children's conversations, peers assigning roles, adult roles (mommy/daddy), and dramatic characters (superheroes)?; What are the ways in which these gender role behaviors are expressed, verbally (speech) and non-verbally (actions)?; What are children's responses to literature concerning gender roles.

Methodology

Observational methodology was selected for this study because qualitative data allows exhaustive and elaborative detail permitting an abysmal exploration and analysis (Boudah, 2011; Wyatt, 2015). "Direct observation allows educators to learn more about the extent and quality of their students' play and the themes and toys that interest them most" (Stanton-Chapman, 2015, p. 105). Overt observations defined the study since children knew they were being observed (Boudah, 2011). Observations consisted of multiple children being observed at one time, and for long periods of time (Boudah, 2011). Later, thematic analysis was used to analyze observations and responses to the readings. Thematic analysis is a unique way to analyze and present figures in a way that displays relevant categories consisting of significant events reoccurring within the data that was collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was specifically selected for this particular research since the data was collected through observations. Thematic analysis amplified the researcher's ability to condense the data and then organize the data into applicable concepts relevant to the research questions.

This qualitative study consisted of two parts: observations of children at play and readings of three selected children's books to the same group of children. The study was conducted at a Sacramento, California preschool that serves low-income families. The population enrolled at the site entailed a very diverse population with children of many different ethnicities. There were 18 children participants in this study. The researcher included 13 boys and 6 girls around the ages of 3-5 years old. The study started in February 22nd and ended April 18th, lasting nine weeks.

The researcher obtained parental consent from parents of the children who were sampled at convenience (Appendix A and B). The behavior, actions and words of children who were not given permission from their parents to participate in this study were excluded from documentation and transcription. Children's names and or personal information was not used at all in this study and will be referenced to by numerals and pseudonyms instead. The first part of the study entailed observations of play.

During observations, the researcher watched from a distance and did not partake in the actual observations which is often regarded as non-participatory observations (Boudah, 2011). The observations took place in a preschool classroom, during free-choice. These observations consisted of children's verbal and non-verbal behavior during play in the socio-dramatic play area and block area. The researcher focused on children's conversations, peers assigning roles, adult roles (mommy/daddy), and dramatic characters (superheroes). The data collected pertaining to this aspect of the study was documented on field notes (Appendix C and D).

The researcher specifically planned to provoke thought and behavior surrounding gender in children and stimulate thinking during dialogue. The children's books read were: *Not all Princesses Dress in Pink* by Jane Yolen and Heidi E. Y. Stemple, Anne-Sophie Lanquetin (2010)*, Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti* by Anna Grossnickle Hines (1986)*,* and *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino and Isabelle Malenfant (2014)*.* These books were chosen because they challenge the average gender roles of society in a fun, thought-provoking way which is fundamental to this research. During the readings of the selected story, the researcher asked relevant questions that would prompt children to express their feelings, in regards to the story. Following that, the researcher noted children's comments pertaining to gender, and transcribed the dialogue for later data analysis.

Limitations

Children who were selected and allowed to participate in this study are currently enrolled at the school. However, retaining enrollment of children who were involved in the study, varied due to unforeseen circumstances such as parent's personal matters (i.e., transportation, employment, personal choice). Also, children's absences from school due to any reasons had an impact on data collection as well because they were not in class and they could not be observed. In addition, children's behavior was merely influenced by the study itself and changes involved in the implementation of the study by the researcher. The researcher is a teacher at the school and in the classroom. So she has a profound impact on the children simply by just being an important role model. Since children already have an established

relationship with the researcher, children's behavior and ideas could have been affected temporarily due to the fact that they were the main subjects of this study. This concept influences the generalization of the study to other populations and is known as the Hawthorne Effect (Harris, 2002).

Due to the nature of the environment there are other unannounced emergencies and or events that happened in the classroom that disrupted the data collection process. This study required that the researcher obtain informed consent, prior to starting this study. Receiving the consent forms back from parents was an extreme challenge for the researcher being that parents were not always present at pick up and drop off times. Also, since the preschool prominently enrolls low-income families, this study only included children from these demographics. Due to these limitations, generalization of this study's data may not be applicable to certain populations.

Theoretical Basis for the Study

Gender socialization is universal across the globe when it comes to creating the norms of appropriate behavior for men and women (Wood, 1996). Gender inequities around the world are clearly much more apparent these days due to these socialization norms. A suggested consequence of gender socialization, are gender stereotypes (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). Gender stereotypes reinforce numerous amounts of inequities between men and women such as men feeling the need to be overly and consistently aggressive and dominant or "tough", in intimate relationships (Lips, 1989). Whereas, women are pressured to be passive, sweet and emotional (Lips, 1989). Not only are gender inequities a systemic issue, it is also an issue in the early

childhood classroom amongst children through interactions with teachers and their peers (Chick et al., 2002).

There are many theories that support these controversial ideas. However, the theories that seem to help make meaning of the social construct of gender and support the positionality of the researcher are: social learning theory, and social role theory.

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory is the interchange and actions between individuals that children witness and seek to replicate, which eventually enlightens them of what gender behavior is deemed relevant to them (Wood, 1996). It is the social environment, and social interactions, that greatly sways children's beliefs and behavior. After, retaining interactions between others, children began to classify meanings into schemas (Cueavas & Hollis-Sawyer, 2013). Since the social environment and children's beliefs and actions can highly influence that of another child, this theory argues that the behavior that children display during observations may likely reflect what they have learned from others. Those ideas that children display through interactions, may involve stereotypical beliefs of what society has socialized them to believe what it means to be a boy and girl, which is vital to this study's purpose.

Social Role Theory

In alliance with social learning theory, social role theory zooms in on behavioral related to one's sex, such as male or female and projects that individuals perceive stereotypical behaviors as the social group norm and reenact those behaviors

(Eagly & Koenig, 2014; Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Social role theory exclaims that the workforce is primarily to blame for the evolution of gender roles, due to the fact that women and men were limited in their job opportunities to careers that aligned with their biological attributes (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). Due to this great divide in career opportunities, women were socialized and limited to domesticated workloads while men took advantage of many other beneficial career opportunities (Harrison & Lynch, 2005). If social roles originated from the divide of the workforce, then this communicates particular gender roles to society as a whole, creating a norm. This will then have an effect on families' beliefs of gendered roles, which they will then influence how they reinforce their child's beliefs and behavior. Children participants may then reflect those philosophies through their behavior in the play areas which the researcher will be observing them in.

Definition of Terms

Femininity: Stereotypically, expressive, attractive, passive, womanliness associated with females (Alfonso, Hackney, Luque, & Mincey, 2015; Lips, 1989; Watzlawik, 2009).

Gender: Socially constructed descriptors, termed boy and girl (Chrisler & Pryzgoda, 2000; Fagot, Leinbach, Hort & Strayer, 1997).

Gendered behavior: Masculine and feminine behaviors that are based on tradition (Lee & Troop-Gordon, 2011).

Gender equitable teaching: Curricula centered on stereotypes, male and female interaction themes, and the lack of females in science, engineering, technology and mathematical studies (Carinci, 2009).

Gender roles: How a society feels individuals should behave, think and act, culturally, based on their gender, male or female (Schaefer, 1994; Brzuzy, Nagoshi, Nagoshi & Terrell, 2014).

Gender Socialization: Gender behaviors, often stereotypes deemed masculine and feminine, prescribed for boys and girls (Lips, 1989).

Masculinity: Stereotypically, competitive, strong, dominant, tough, superior often associated with males (Alfonso, Hackney, Luque & Mincey, 2015; Thompson, 2004).

Peer Play: An interaction between children, usually involving conversation and a shared focus (Roopnarine, 1981).

Sociodramatic Play: Children engage in fictitious, pretend play that fosters their social, emotional, and cognitive development (Calabrese, 2003).

Background of the Researcher

Marcia Jones earned her Bachelor of Arts in Child Development from Sacramento State University in 2013. During her undergraduate years, she had the wonderful opportunity to experience the EDUC 165: Sex Roles Stereotyping in Education course. This class intensified her passion in this study and brought her to terms with the fact that she truly believed in equitable treatment of all people, especially in regards to gender. While in this class, the researcher learned about the

Gender Equity Masters of Art program at Sacramento State University, and she decided that this was the path for her. This educational field has made her extremely cognizant of the inequities that many different types of people encounter in the world and how to counteract those.

As a preschool teacher with countless years of experience and knowledge of the critical age group of the children that Ms. Jones works with, she makes a difference in her classroom each day by educating students and fellow teachers on gender fairness. Due to her experience in the Gender Equity Master's program, she has gained much awareness on the many different gender biases that tend to take place in the classroom and ways to refrain from teaching in an unfair manner. With this newfound knowledge, Ms. Marcia hopes to continue being a gender equitable person and teacher in her preschool classroom and in her personal life.

Organization of Thesis

This thesis follows the guidelines produced by the Office of Graduate Studies, College of Education, Graduate and Professional Studies in Education. There are a total of five chapters. Chapter 1 contains: purpose of study, statement of problem, methodology, limitations, and theoretical basis for study, definition of terms, and organization of the thesis and the background of the researcher. Chapter 2 consists of a review the relevant literature pertaining to the history of gender, gender roles in society and education, gender in the preschool classroom, play behaviors in the preschool classroom and gendered play behavior in the preschool classroom. Chapter 3 focuses on the bulk of the methodology which entails the study design, research

questions, research instruments, participants, setting and procedures. Chapter 4

concentrates on the findings of the study. Lastly, Chapter 5 comprises the discussion,

limitations, recommendations, conclusions and reflections. Following, will be the

appendices with data collection forms, consent letter and references of authors utilized

in the study.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Gender role socialization can transpire through many forms. Everyone, from the time of birth, is influenced through various forms of communication to conform to the current gender norms in society (Chick et al., 2002; Lips, 1989; Schaefer, 1994; Wood, 1996; Zosuls et al., 2011). Educators, parents, peers and the media seem to have the most compounding influence on how we are all socialized in to the gender capacities reflecting upon today's society (Lips, 1989). "Without question, socialization has a powerful impact on the development of females and males in the United States" (Schaefer, 1994, p. 431). Furthermore, gender is a term created socially, and dictated by the customs of societies.

In direct relation to gender socialization, Social Role Theory explicitly discusses how people learn their own behaviors through behavioral observations of others (Eagly & Koenig, 2014). The social environment and the social interactions that people encounter effect their ways of portraying their ideas and beliefs of what gender roles are (Cuevas & Hollis-Sawyer, 2013). The particular way a child has been socialized has a vastly different impact on boys and girl's gendered typed behavior (Levy, 1994). Boys are often pressured to conform to strict forms of masculinity in society and are treated harshly if they do not conform (Sadker, 2000). Schaefer (1994) defines gender roles as society's orchestrated beliefs of suitable conduct for women and men.

The literature utilized and critiqued specific to this thesis, research relevant to the various entities involved in the communication of gender roles. The researcher examined the larger entity, gender roles as a social construct which specifically involved parents, peers, and teachers. Each of the following areas also entailed a preschool emphasis, along with the general topic. Research focusing on teacher training in regards to gender equity and the influence of the curriculum on gender roles. All of these specific areas of research were selected due to the actual purpose of this study, in order to provide some sort of background information on the topic pertaining to gender roles and how the socialization process comes about. However there are many limitations to the successes of the research of these specific topics.

The Social Construct of Gender Roles

The socialization process of societies way of imposing gender roles on people happens in various ways. Generally, the idea is that one is socialized based on his or her cultural norms and biological differences rather than their actual capabilities (Lips, 1989; Yaqin, 2002). It is through those socialized gender roles, that one is classified and expected to display specific behaviors common to their sex, varying culture to culture (Yaqin, 2002). Most researchers, very consciously aware and familiar to this specific topic, come to an agreement that the socialization of gender is a social conception dictated by society (Chick et al., 2002; Zosuls et al., 2011; Lips, 1989; Soulliere, 2006; Yaqin, 2002). Scholars who have completed research on this topic elaborate on some of the largest influences involved in the socialization and reinforcement of gender roles such as parents, peers, and teachers.

Consequences of Socialization

Due to the stereotypical notions of males and females portrayed through mass media, television, music, video games and other factors, reinforced through the reactions and responses of peers and family that add to the socialization of boys and girls, young adolescent girls feel that they must become a reserved, quiet, respectable person in order to be accepted by their peer counterparts (Theran, 2009). "That is, if girls have internalized the societal ideal of the ''good woman,'' they may be more likely to have lower levels of voice during adolescence, and feel that they cannot have both close and honest relationships" (Theran, 2009, p. 2). Young adolescent girls are believing that they must sacrifice the portion of them that is so valuable to who they are as a person, in order to receive the treatment that they enjoy from their peer counterparts, because of the messages they are receiving from the outside world (Theran, 2009).

As mentioned above gender socialization has many negative consequences on girls and boys (Lips, 1989; Theran, 2009; Orr, 2011). Universally, individuals around the world are basically handed a set of gender cultural norms, and are taught to conform to the chosen set of gender roles. Whole heartedly, that sends the message that one's personal views are not important compared to what society thinks and that they must do away them (Wood, 1996). This culturally normalized behavior in fact aids to reinforce gender stereotypes (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014).

Boys are often more aggressive, violent, and feel the need to remain as the dominant one in intimate relationships (Lips, 1989). Boys from a very young age are

taught to hide every emotion besides anger because this helps keep their image of

being tough (Pollack, 1999). Boys are strongly influenced to believe that if they show

any emotion such as sadness or fear, then they will be viewed as weak (Pollack, 1999).

Males emotions are not the only thing affected by gender socialization, their

academics are severely strained as well.

Due to boy's higher scores in subjects such as science, math and engineering,

compared to their girl counterparts, boys repeatedly dominate career positions

involving science, mathematics, and technology allowing them an advantage over girls

in obtaining jobs in those particular occupational fields (Lips, 1989). From the start of

secondary school, boys constantly receive education focused on science and math

related subjects, so they're chances of securing a career in those fields in the future are

higher compared to girls (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). "Men are more than twice

as likely as women to be employed in computer and mathematical occupations, more

than 3 times as likely as women to be employed in architecture and engineering

occupations, and nearly 5 times as likely as women to be employed in construction

occupations (Sherman & Zurbrigen, 2014, p. 195).

Social Construct of Gender: Parents, Peers, Teachers

Parents

Zosuls et al. (2011) state how as a young child we are gender socialized, far

earlier than we realize. Children are birthed into this world by their parents and

automatically given a set of gender demands facilitated through a variety of realms. In

fact, before birth parents are searching for names that will be the best fit to their baby

girl or baby boy (Lips, 1989; Zosuls et al., 2011). Chick et al. (2002) argue that gender

role development is a social construct and also begins at a very young age and parents

are at the forefront. By the age of 12 months, children have an idea of what gender

they are and choose activities accordingly based on their gender (Chick et al., 2002).

It is through the assigned gender norms of society that we are then held to a set

of gender role standards (Lips, 1989). Schaefer (1994) and Yaqin (2002) both come to

the terms that gender roles are defined as societies arranged values of what it is to be a

girl or boy. As babies, boys are usually unintentionally given more independence,

observed less closely than girls, who are usually not as influenced to discover their

environments freely (Lips, 1989; Orr, 2011). Girls are very often recommended to

remain nearer to home (Orr, 2011). Girls also are more likely to be given toys that

involve domesticity or motherhood like baby dolls or cooking materials (Orr, 2011).

Contrastingly, boys are brought up to be masculine at a very young age, with

less flexibility within the cultural norms that they are held to (Orr, 2011). Parents

socialize their boys to suppress the expression of their emotions, since that is

considered a weak characteristic normalized for young girls (Pollack, 1999). It is

through socialization, that boys are motivated to be dominant, aggressive, non-

feminine, macho, and other stereotypical characteristics (Orr, 2011; Pollack, 1999).

Parents also influence their child's self-esteem specific to their abilities.

Parents have the ultimate impact on their children compared to outside

influences. "Parental gender-role socialization has a more global impact than does the

communication of a particular set of "gender-appropriate" behaviors (Lips, 1989, p.

198). Lindberg, Shibley and Hirsch (2008) analyzed parent's and their children's social exchange during math assignments. It was reported that parent's ideas of their children's capabilities, had a significant influence on the child's actual self-perceived abilities and many of the children held the same opinions of themselves as their parents.

Parents were questioned about their views of their child's abilities in completing their math homework. Parent's personal responses reflected that they felt that boys and girls were both equally capable at doing math but felt it was more challenging for girls more so than boys (Lindberg, Shibley & Hirsch, 2008). Despite that both sexes had grades that showed both children were just as capable of being successful at doing math (Lindberg, Shibley & Hirsch, 2008). Aside from parents imposing gender norms, peers are another significant factor to consider.

Parents and Preschoolers

Parent's participation ultimately play a serious role in the education of their children (Qilong, 2015). Since parents are active role models in the transmission of ideas and beliefs especially pertaining to gender behavior, it is imperative that parents are careful of what messages they communicate to their children (Freeman, 2007). It is during these moments that children begin to develop their gender characteristics (Freeman, 2007).

Peers

During the start of early childhood, children are able to make friends, they become the most influential variable in that child's life. According to what was stated

above about social learning theory, people learn through the observation of others (Cueavas & Hollis-Sawyer, 2013; Wood,1996). Peers are such influential people in children's life because they are the start of sex-segregated play, creating a battle between the sexes through separation (Lips, 1989). Not only do they encourage segregated play but they also discourage same-sex play as well through negative treatment of those peers who do decide to go against the gendered norms (Lips, 1989).

Peers assist in promoting and reinforcing gender stereotypical behavior in others because children naturally want to be accepted by those like them so they usually comply with the cultural norms and friendship do's and don'ts. Peers maintain a lot of power in regards to gender and their peers. It is through severe unfair treatment that children face, that cause many to conform to the adamant goals of society. Those goals seem to reflect that of someone who conforms to what society believes and reinforces those beliefs through their specific behaviors. Peers are harsh on many of their peers that do not adhere to the norms of current society (Sadker, 2000). It is through play that children digest and create alternative meanings of the outside world (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). Children also began to formulate their construction of gender through fictitious play with peers (Chick et al., 2002).

Peers and Preschool

Peers in the preschool environment serve a significant purpose in children's lives. Through exchanges and play with peers, children develop sincere relationships with friends, find solutions to conflict, and how to take turns with toys (Stanton-Chapman, 2015). Peers at this age have a strong tendency to refrain from engaging in

play with those of the opposite sex (Lips, 1989). Children of this age group prefer to play with children of the same sex which often leads to the perpetuation of stereotypes. For instance, if girls are always playing with girls they may be more likely to abide by the cultural norms of what and how girls should play. Preschool play is not just any mediocre play, it is a crucial time in which children learn and develop (Chick et al., 2002). Children engaged in play with peers or themselves, also began to formulate their construction of gender through pretend play with peers since they began their exploration with gender norms (Chick et al., 2002).

Teachers

Teachers are another important factor to consider in socializing children to conform to gender roles since they reinforce the culturally appropriate behaviors in their classrooms using various teaching strategies and materials (Lips, 1989). Teachers display their personal gendered beliefs through the way they reinforce their expectations in the classroom. Educators often give boys more voice in the classroom, calling on them more often than girls (Sadker & Zittleman, 2005). Since girls are socialized to obey rules, conform and have little say in stating opinions, when they attend school they are often rewarded on those same behaviors (Theran, 2009). So in turn those gender roles that were planted in their minds beforehand are reinforced through "good" behavior at school, by educators. According to Orr (2011), in school young girls are rewarded for "good" behavior, which in turn socializes them to do well in school, and think that they must remain "good". It is actually the cultural norm for girls to remain respectful and compliant within schools expectations (Orr, 2011).

Through the lens of social learning theory, the actions that receive the most positive attention are likely to be continual (Orr, 2011). On the other hand, males are socialized to abide by the boy code (Pollack, 1999). It is through this code that young boys are taught from a very young age to be macho, non-emotional, strong, brave, non-dependent or afraid of anything (Pollack, 1999).

Teachers and Preschool

Teachers play a critical role in preschooler's lives pertaining to their development of acceptable social skills (Stanton-Chapman, 2015). Preschool teachers serve many roles through fulfilling their job duties as a teacher of early childhood education. These educators aid children in their development of knowledge of gender roles since children are so young when they enter these schools (Chick et al., 2002). The preschool environment typically consists of young children learning how to communicate and develop nurturing friendships with peers and adults.

However, in order for children to learn to fulfill their skills needed for effective social interactions, they need a highly qualified teacher to assist them along the way (Stanton-Chapman, 2015). Overall, children are at a very gullible age, in which they are constantly perpetuating behavior that they have learned from others. It is up to educators of these young children to foster an equitable environment for both boys and girls.

Gender Equity Training for Teachers

The California Standard

Since 1972, Title IX has been utilized to ensure that all students receive an equitable education. Either public or private, schools that gain monetary assistance from the government are restricted from discriminating against any student because of their sex (Stader & Surface, 2014).

> no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any academic, extracurricular, research, occupational training, or other education program or activity operated by a recipient which receives Federal financial assistance. (§106.31a) (Stader & Surface, 2014, p. 119)

It is a very clear measure, required in California that all students receive an adequate education free from prejudicial biases pertaining to their gender. In order to ensure that students are obtaining education free from gender biases, educators need training in gender equality.

Preschool Teachers lack of Gender Equity Training

Females are the utmost effected by gender inequities in the classroom (Jones, Evans & Byrd, 2000). However, boys and girls are affected by the gender injustices that play out in the classroom environment. Generally, girls do not obtain as much positive feedback as boys and boys are the ones who are actually given the most responses from the teacher (American Association of University Women [AAUW], 1992). Males also receive attention correlating with their abilities and intellect (Jones

et al., 2000). This constructs a problem for women because it impedes their confidence levels of achieving success in subjects such as mathematics and sciences, which dramatically effects their future in obtaining a career in those fields (Jones et al., 2000). It also indirectly communicates that these subjects should be dominated by males only (Jones et al., 2000).

Surprisingly, many preschool teachers still lack gender equity training and are unaware of what exactly gender equity entails. Research suggest that there is a huge shortage in preschool teachers with degrees from a university and is on the decline since the 1980s (Miller & Bogatova, 2009). Without a degree from an accredited university, it would be extremely difficult to become acquainted with the concepts related to gender and equality.

Since there is limited knowledge, research and training on the topic at hand, educators seem to misunderstand the purpose of gender equity trainings for teachers, let alone preschool teachers. Most educators would not know how to consider or interpret the idea that they may or may not be perpetuating gender bias in their classroom. With no training in the gender inequities that play out in the classroom, teachers may reinforce stereotypes within the deliverance of their curriculum or teaching style. Even those teachers who consider themselves to be gender neutral, and unbiased should be open to reflecting upon their current teaching strategies and collecting more knowledge and training concerning gender inequities in the classroom to better serve their students. Gender equity trainings can benefit teachers in their

ability to reflect from an equitable perspective and help to modify their outlook on inequalities in the classroom (Carinci, 2009).

Curriculum Influence on Gender Roles

Curriculum in school has a fundamental way of communicating various messages to students. The "hidden curriculum" composed of teacher's strategic way of conveying knowledge to students frequently sends students mixed, biased meanings (Esposito, 2011; Raines, 2012). This curriculum serves to impose conformity on students with a lack of concern for student's opinions and choice often reinforcing gender stereotypical behavior, favoring male dominancy and creating a disadvantage for the girls (Raines, 2012). "Students learn lessons about standard curricula and how their bodies fit into larger political, social and cultural contexts" (Esposito, 2011, pp. 143-144). Gender, race and social class all help in the contour of the hidden curriculum (Esposito, 2011). The school and teacher's choice of particular textbooks impact the way students receive their knowledge throughout school.

Children's Picture Books

Picture books are a huge part of young children's lives since they aid them in the establishment of their gender personality (Ya-Lun, 2008). Children's books grant children the opportunity to examine life through print, relating images, whether real or fake to their own life and creating a deeper meaning to life (Hollis-Sawyer & Cuevas, 2013; Ya-Lun, 2008). Research suggests that males tend to have the lead roles in story books over women which sends a gender biased message to children (Ya-Lun, 2008). Females are severely underrepresented in children's books and or tend to be presented

negatively (Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus, & Young, 2006). Children are not capable of deciphering stereotypes from reality and utilize a lot of the information they learn from picture books in their behavior to help develop their image of self (Ya-Lun, 2008).

"Picture books also have a particular influence on gender identities because they are viewed at a time when children are in the process of developing their individual identities" (Ya-Lun, 2008, p. 109). Picture books are similar to society's unequal distribution of cultural norms and values, in which they teach children that men are the dominant one and women are the powerless and passive individuals (Anderson et al., 2006; Ya-Lun, 2008). Despite the many positive uses of children's literature such as language development and comprehension of text, it is crucial for educators to analyze the deeper meanings of story books prior to the readings of them to children. This preparation will prohibit teachers the use of gender biases in their curriculum.

Summary

The review of literature intends to inform readers of the many factors involved in the way we are all socialized into society's gendered categories and raised to behave accordingly. Although there is still much more research needed to place an even deeper understanding of what helps us to perpetuate gender roles in society, research suggest that girls are still being limited in their capabilities through various factors in life (Lips, 1989; Schaefer, 1994; Woods, 1996). Since gender is something that is established by society, parents, peers, and teachers have a significant impact on the

gender categories that we all develop from a very young age. Gender equity training

for teachers should be required since it is through their curriculum they impose gender

inequities on students daily.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

As a preschool teacher, the researcher consistently works to foster gender equity awareness in her workplace, family, and personal life. She is very consciously aware of the many gender differences in behavior that children display throughout different elements of their lives and most significantly, in the classroom. This study's ultimate purpose was to observe children's behavior in the classroom for behavior that was stereotypically gendered, and to also facilitate a discussion of gender roles through readings of selected children's literature. The texts that were used during discussion were: *Not all Princesses Dress in Pink* by Jane Yolen. Heidi E. Y. Stemple and , Anne-Sophie Lanquetin (2010)*, Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti* by Anna Grossnickle Hines (1986)*,* and *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino and Isabelle Malenfant (2014)*.* The researcher also created a weekly schedule detailing the studies specific plans (Appendix F). The study took place in the classroom of a Northern California preschool. The data was collected and analyzed using qualitative research methods through observational checklist and anecdotal notes (Appendix C and D). There were a total of 19 children that participated in the study.

Study Design and Data Collection

The researcher designed the two part study to consist of: (a) Observations of children's play in the sociodramatic play area and block area and (b) Facilitation of

discussion through readings of selected text (Appendix A), and discussion questions after the story is read (Appendix E). Observations are a qualitative approach that allows the researcher to gain a microscopic view of behavior and discover patterns (Creswell, 2005). Observational methodology was also used specifically for this study to gain a general view of the occurrences and to be able to formulate a response that is central to why, how or what (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015). "Every aspect of a situation is a candidate for observation, including the physical environment, the social environment, verbal and nonverbal interactions, and activities" (Boudah, 2011, p. 134). Since there are so many children participants in the study, observations seemed to be the most effective way for the researcher to obtain information relevant to the purpose this study. Observations were significant to the search of themes prevalent within children's behavior through the process of thematic analysis. This particular analysis aids the researcher in extreme elaboration on the specifics of the data to later be able to rule out commonalities within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The researcher specifically chose to use children's literature containing non-stereotypical gender roles to provoke conversation pertaining to gender because research suggests that literature has an astonishing effect on the gender socialization of children (Oskamp, Kaufman, & Wolterbeek, 1997). The subject of the selected texts specifically revolves around non-stereotypical, feminine and masculine gender roles. The researcher decided to add discussion questions for children to share their ideas of the books. The ultimate goal was for the text to facilitate discussion amongst children concerning gender roles.

Research Questions

The following questions were explored:

1. What kind of gender roles do children display through interactions with peers in: sociodramatic play area, block area, children's conversations, peers assigning roles, adult roles (mommy/daddy), and dramatic characters (superheroes)?

2. What are the ways in which these gender role behaviors are expressed, verbally (speech) and non-verbally (actions)?

3. What are children's responses to literature concerning gender roles?

Research Instruments

Data was collected using observational tools. The researcher created an observational checklist to utilize for taking observations of children's play (Appendix B). In addition, there was also an observational form used to collect data during the facilitation of discussions of the stories that were read to children (Appendix C). Both of these observational instruments acted as anecdotal notes and assisted the researcher in gaining a full spectrum of the physical and social setting of the study to gain an understanding of what specifically was happening, in relevance to the focus of the study.

The stories selected for this study: *Not all Princesses Dress in Pink* (discusses how princesses can defy against the cultural norms by getting dirty and playing sports) by Jane Yolen, Heidi E. Y. Stemple and, Anne-Sophie Lanquetin (2010)*, Daddy*

Makes the Best Spaghetti (depicts how a father participates in non-traditional gender roles, such as shopping and cooking) by Anna Grossnickle Hines (1986)*, and *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (the author details a young boy's experience of being teased for wearing a dress in the play area, in his preschool classroom) by Christine Baldacchino and Isabelle Malenfant (2014), were all instruments used to facilitate a discussion of children's ideas of gender roles. The researcher selected these specific titles since they each entail plots centering on gender role behavior. The discussion questions were asked during the story and were very general questions to allow room for children to express their ideas. Children were not asked in any specific order (Appendix E).

Participants

The researcher conducted this study at a Northern Sacramento preschool. Participants in the study were all aged 3 to 5 years old. There was a total of 18 children, six girls and 12 boys that participated in this study. One child was not given consent to participate in the study. The racial background of children consisted of: eight of the 18 participants were African American; five of the 18 participants were Caucasian; three of the 18 participants were Asian American; and two of the 18 participants were Hispanic. As far as age, there were a total of four 5 year olds, eleven 4 year olds, and four 3 year olds. All of the children's names used in this study were pseudonyms.

Table 1

Participant Demographics: Gender

Boys	Girls
12	6

Table 2

Participant Demographics: Race

African American	8
Asian American	3
Caucasian	5
Hispanic	2

Table 3

Participant Background Information

Name	Sex	Age	Ethnicity
Eli	Boy	4	Caucasian
Brian	Boy	4	African American
Alicia	Girl	4	Asian American
Ivy	Girl	4	African American
Natali	Girl	4	Asian American
Laron	Boy	4	African American
Catrina	Girl	5	African American
Stephan	Boy	3	Mexican American
Jaleea	Girl	4	African American
Ayron	Boy	5	Mexican American
Aribelle	Girl	5	Caucasian
Benny	Boy	3	Asian American
James	Boy	4	African American
Julius	Boy	5	African American
Andrew	Boy	4	Caucasian
Nathan	Boy	4	Caucasian
Mickey	Boy	5	Caucasian

Brad	Boy	4	Caucasian

Setting

The preschool is located on a school campus and in an urban area. This study took place in a preschool classroom. The classroom consists of about 20 children to two teachers. The researcher is also a teacher in the classroom of where the study took place. Observations were about 30 minutes long and occurred in the mornings.

Procedures

To launch the study, the researcher obtained written consent from the site director and then obtained written signatures for informed consent from the participant's parents (Appendix A). The children participants were students of the researcher so they were selected at convenience (Boudah, 2011). Almost all of the children's parents gave permission for their child's participation. Only one participant declined their child's participation in the study. The researcher conducted 1-hour observations of children's play in the specified areas, socio-dramatic play area and block area for nine weeks (Appendix C). The researcher completed these observations were done in the classroom as an onlooker, with no involvement in the interactions during the observations (Boudah, 2011).

The discussion of the children's text consisted of the researcher's direct involvement. During the story and after the story the researcher asked children the following questions: What did you think of that story, what was the story about, who was the story about, where did the story happen, how did the people feel in the story, what do you see happening here. These questions were not asked in any orderly

fashion. The researcher used the discussion field notes observational tool to collect the data (Appendix C). The purpose of the discussion of the literature was to obtain elaborate retrospect of the participant's ideas of gender roles from their perspective through the use of gender appropriate books.

The books utilized for this study maintain gender fair perspectives of gender roles in society. Yaqin (2002) argues that books are an important channel of communicating prejudices and valuable information that will significantly help to shape children's viewpoints. After collecting data, thematic analysis will be used to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is a process where the researcher overlooks data obtained, searching for common subjects and or ideas and compile those into categories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Then, within those categories the researcher will code the data, identifying common themes in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure that reliability and validity are maintained through data analysis, the researchers will have volunteers review the data collected, analyzing messages and or content, for coding purposes (Soulliere, 2006).

Summary

The researcher's main intentions of this study was to examine gender differences in children's play in select areas of a preschool classroom. Also, to gain retrospect on children's ideas of gender roles through a facilitation of discussion through reading of children's literature. The data was collected qualitatively through use of observational methodology. As mentioned above, the selection of a methodology that utilized observations was beneficial to this particular research

because it allowed room for a greater analysis of a holistic view of an environment and

behavior (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015).

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

First and foremost, the most significant purpose of this work was to observe children's play with peers for gender role play, whether verbal or non-verbal. The second part of this study consisted of readings of particular children's books that discussed gender roles in a non-stereotypical manner. The objective of including selected children's literature was to facilitate some sort of conversation of gender roles with children to prompt them to share their ideas pertaining to gender roles. Books were also used to promote children to express their voice of gender through their behavior, in relation to the books. This product explicated in great profundity children's play patterns and other prominent findings through observational analysis. Throughout the nine week study, the researcher's aimed to examine children's play for gender roles and the various ways that children expressed these ideas.

The researcher created and utilized an observational tool checklist, as a coding mechanism of displayed behavior which was also used as a running record for writing of observations (Appendix B). A separate observational tools were also used during the readings of the selected text, to capture children's opinions relating to the text (Appendix C). The observational tool used for the readings simply listed the selected text that would be read to children (Appendix C). All of the data collected from the readings was based on children's responses to the specific questions (Appendix D).

The data was collected over a nine week span and was analyzed through a process called thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis allowed room for deeper examination of observations and creation of categories to put data into a larger perspective form for better analysis of data. The particular categories listed on the observational tool utilized for children's play were: Sociodramatic play area (House area), Block area, Conversations, Peer assigning roles, Adult roles (mommy/daddy) and Dramatic characters. The researcher selected these categories of play because she felt that they would most involve children's gender role play.

The following research questions were examined: What kind of gender roles do children display through interactions with peers in: sociodramatic play area, block area, children's conversations, peers assigning roles, adult roles (mommy/daddy), and dramatic characters (superheroes)?; What are the ways in which these gender role behaviors are expressed, verbally (speech) and non-verbally (actions)?; What are children's responses to literature concerning gender roles?

Table 4

Demographics

African American	8
Asian American	3
Caucasian	5

Hispanic	2

Qualitative Results

Throughout the data, children seemed to express a sense of traditional and non-traditional feminine and masculine roles. The overall arching themes evident in the data were: Dress up prior to play, Helping roles, Nurturing roles, Domestic roles, Dominance, Aggression, and Risk Taking Roles, and Use of Stereotypical Language. The data concerned with children's responses to the selected children's literature displayed some significant results that are explained following the themes. There were also some notable findings from the data as a whole that did not quite fit the terms of a theme that are discussed in depths following the reporting of the literature results.

Dress up Prior to Play

The sociodramatic play area in the classroom has many different types of clothing from dresses, insect wings, capes, patterned vest, jewelry necklaces, sunglasses, firefighter gear (jacket and hat), skirts, construction and army hats, bike helmets, high heels, flat dress shoes, and tennis shoes. All of these items were of great interest to the participants of this study and the children utilized these items in very unique ways. Children were able to express themselves using their imagination through play. Overall, children's choices of dress up reflected that of society's stereotypical gender roles. Often, girls dressed up in dresses, high heel shoes, skirts,

and other clothing deemed feminine. Likewise, boys frequently selected clothing representing masculinity, such as firefighter gear, and construction hats with vests.

On a consistent basis children dressed up in the clothing, materials provided *prior* to play with peers on interactions with the environment. Children used the clothing as a way to express their identity and imagination. It seems that children's dress up behavior appeared to mock that of Morris, the character in the text *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* (Baldacchino & Malenfant, 2014). Children created characters based on the clothing they wore. These mocking behaviors were most prevalent during weeks six through nine.

All children displayed a high level of gratitude in the socio-dramatic play area. Alicia, one 4 year old girl, put on the cheetah patterned dress upon entering the play area. Other instances children also took part in dressing up as firefighters. Ivy, was playing in the house area and went to put on a firefighter hat along with some high heel boots and said "I the firefighter girl." Directly after that a 4 year old child named Eli, went and put on the firefighter jacket and hat and began walking around the classroom. After wearing the firefighter jacket, Eli then put on the patterned vest. During a later time, Ivy put on wings and stated "I have fairy wings."

One 4-year-old boy, Brian wore the jewelry necklaces, with sunglasses. Then another occasion Brian wore the patterned vest with a bike helmet. Brian also attempted to wear a skirt but took it off shortly after Natalie told him "that's only for girls." Another boy Julius aged 4, enjoyed playing with capes. One time while

playing with the black cape he said "I'm Batman, the best superhero in the world."

Shortly after, Julius put on a skirt and said "I don't like dresses."

Helping Roles (Medical)

During interaction with peers and or the environment, children became fixated with the role of pretending to help others. More specifically, in the sociodramatic play area, one of the most popular objects were the doctor/nurse kit that consisted of a stethoscope, needle syringe, Band-Aids made of felt, and a blood pressure toy. Daily, almost all children used the stethoscope, placing it on their peers back, heart and legs, using the toy in their own way. Both boys and girls utilized the doctor's/nurse kit habitually. Girls were very often the leads of these play periods. It was evident that girls preferred to engage in this type of play with their same sex affiliates. One child, a 4-year-old girl named Ivy, consistently played with the stethoscope, daily using it on peers and she also used felt as a bandage wrapping it around a another child's leg. She then told her peer one day, "excuse me ladies" and then said "now you the doctor."

The next week, Ivy played in the house area and picked up the telephone saying "this 9-1-1 what's your emergency?", then slammed the receiver down, all while wearing the stethoscope. At another instance, a child named Brian, a 4-year-old African American boy, played with the stethoscope, and placed it on Ivy's heart area of her chest when she called to him saying "doctor." Ivy then told Brian "I need a shot" and another peer also wearing a stethoscope walked over to her pretending to assist her. Ivy then said "I'm the doctor."

Another 4-year-old child, named James joined the play area with Brian and Ivy and they all begin to have a conversation about being the doctor. Brian then said "I want to be a kid" and used the phone saying "9-9-1." James then picked up another phone and said "hello." During the same play time, another peer named Andrew also used the stethoscope placing it on the area of her peer's heart.

During the following weeks, Ivy also participated in play using the doctor/nurse kit in the sociodramatic house area. While wearing the stethoscope, Ivy told her peer "I gotta check your heart," putting the end of the stethoscope on the child's body. Ivy also played with another peer named Natalie who pretended be hurt, and said "ouch, my feet hurt." Ivy then went over to her pretending to assist her. One time, another child named Alicia, who is also 4-years-old, pretended to be hurt, held knee and said "Ouch, ouch." Natalie also 4-years-old, was in the area at the time, went and got a felt band from the kit and went over to her peer and wrapped it around Alicia's leg, and told her "There you go." At another occasion, Ivy used the needle syringe, putting it to her peer's leg and said "shot." Another child, Nathan who is 4-years-old, found interest in the doctors/nurse kit. He used the needle syringe putting it on his peer's stomach. Interestingly enough, one child that was 3-years-old, name Benny enjoyed putting the stethoscope on his peer's backs and laughed after doing so.

During the final weeks, Ivy wore the stethoscope with glasses with no lens and stated to another child, "that's nurse's glasses, it's broken." James was also in the house at this time and he and Ivy were engaged in play. Ivy put the needle/syringe to James's head and said "close your eyes" and said "it says 99%." Ivy then wraps felt

around his forehead and says "that's perfect." Children's helping role behavior remained consistent throughout all of the nine weeks and did not change after the readings of the selected text.

Nurturing Roles

Another imperative role that children seemed preoccupied with the displaying of affection and love to peers and or objects in their environment. Children regularly participated in play with peers and acted out different roles of mommy. For example, during the first few weeks, Natalie played in the house area on various occasions calling one peer, Alicia, "mommy." Alicia would then cater to her in a way, showing affection, such as bringing her play food on plates and pretending to cook for her using the stove. Girls were actually the only group of children to partake in the "mommy" pretend play. As a matter of fact, the same group of girls participated in the role playing of "mommy." Those girls were Alicia, Ivy and Natalie. Contrastingly, boys displayed affection in different ways. This particular behavior communicated by children, did not reflect that of any of the readings of the selected text.

For example, Alicia rolled a baby in a blanket and held the baby close to her body. She then handed the baby to Natalie and said "mom." Later, Natalie brought the baby back to Alicia and Alicia dropped the baby on the floor and said "woah." Natalie then told Alicia and Ivy "mom wait for me." Then Natalie stood on a chair and said "mom you leave me" and sat on a chair. The following day, Alicia crawls around on the floor making baby noises to her peer Aribelle, who is 5-years-old.

Aribelle walked around the house area dressed up in a cheetah print dress and high heels and Alicia called her "mommy." Towards the ending weeks, Natalie and another child, Brad aged 4 years old engage in play. Natalie tells him "I'm the mommy you the daddy." Brad didn't really partake in the mommy, daddy role play but went on to play with the puppets. Brian was also in the sociodramatic play area at the time and he walked around wearing an apron, rocking a baby in his arms with a blanket.

Domestic Roles

There were many separate occasions that children acted out roles that were specific to the household such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for others. During the first week, Alicia wore a dress, conversed with her peer and said "honey, you want me to cook dinner?" She then went and placed food on the stove, putting mini cakes in a pan and said "Bye honey, see you tomorrow." She then set the table with the food and plates. During week 8, Ayron aged 5, engaged in play with self, with other children around and used the oven mitts while placing pans on the stove and stated "this is only for cooking", "I was cooking a whole lot." He then told peers who were in the area at the time "someone please clean the floor."

During week 7, Natalie set up a blanket on the floor and brought dishes and cakes to plates on the floor, and pretended to eat with her peer. Ivy cooked on the stove using a tortilla pan and said "I making spaghetti." Alicia then told peer "honey you taking so long" and sat down on a chair, and made car noises all while she moved her arms around in a circular motion in the air.

A week later Natalie and Alicia participated in play once more. Alicia carried cakes to the stove placing them on pans, while Natalie sat with one cake. Alicia then put dishes in the sink and told Natalie "honey all done." Weeks later, Ivy pretended to vacuum the house and then placed food on the stove and said "I making dinner for my mommy." Jaleea aged 4, wearing an apron and high heels, holding a menu up to peers asked them "what you want from our menu?" She then went and got food and placed it on plates, telling them "sit down, I'm the food server."

Most of the domestic roles carried out during these play times were completed by girls. Girls were more likely to cook for others, eat meals with others, and clean the house area. Boys rarely displayed domestic roles. The boy, Ayron that displayed some forms of domestic roles gave other children orders rather than doing them himself. Another boy that gave out orders was Nathan. While playing with peers he picked up pretend corn and put it in peers face telling them "eat the corn". One domestic role observed displayed by boys, Nathan being one, was vacuuming. They every so often used the vacuum around the house area and classroom. The readings of the selected text *Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti* (Grossnickle Hines, 1986) seemed to appear through some children's expression of domesticity, such as Ayron and Ivy. However this role remained pretty consistent throughout the study.

Dominance

Leadership was a commonly displayed role in the sociodramatic area. Girls were more likely to distribute roles to other peers. Girls were also the ones to play in the house area the most, and when they did they often engaged in play for extended

periods of time with others, mainly girls. Some boys did play in the house as well but their play was short lived. Most of the boy's interactions were with the environment or themselves. For example, children like Natalie and Alicia often said "I the mommy you the daddy". Ivy often demanded who was the doctor and who was not. Overall, girls seemed to exhibit the most control over the house area entirely.

It also seemed as if girls dictated what objects were for who because when children did certain things it was usually the girls who attempted to correct their behavior. For instance, when Natalie told Brian, that skirts were only for girls and Brian actually removed the skirt at that point. Later, Natalie plays with Alicia and says "I'm the aunty" and she tells others "you both the aunty." These repeated behaviors did not mirror that of the three picture books.

Aggression

There were some forms of aggression that were acted out in the house area. Even though there were very minimal forms of aggression displayed through play, it stood out as an important behavior to discuss. During the weeks of observation, boys very frequently took toys from others, mainly the girls. This behavior had no relationship to the readings of the children's titles and remained the same throughout the nine weeks. In one instance, Brian and his peer James were both holding phones, appearing to be talking to each other back and forth. They were making eye contact with one another and James picked up a phone saying "Hello, I'm on the phone."

Brian then said "hello" through his receiver. James then responds saying "Ima beat you up" and changes his voice to a deeper tone. Brian then responds "Ima call

you back" and began conversing with others in the area. Later, Brian goes over to take a sushi roll toy from James. James replies "no he took my ice cream." Another child Laron aged 4, who was playing alone at the time played with the puppets saying "roar" using a deep voice. Laron then said "I want to be a dinosaur, I beat you up." Also, Stephan aged 3, while playing with peer took calculator away from Ivy while she was pretending to be a firefighter girl. He then told her "firefighters doesn't use phones."

Risk Taking Roles

Very few children were brave and curious enough to partake in risky behavior. Ivy, Julius, and Nathan frequently participated in role playing that attempted to break barriers through play. Interestingly, Ivy even seemed to have some sort of influence on other children's risky play. She was able to assign them roles and encourage them to play what she wanted to play. For example, one day while playing she dressed in a cheetah patterned dress and red sparkly flats. She then went up to Nathan and said "look", "how does it look" and posed sticking her knee out. Nathan just looked at her and he then went and put on some high heel shoes and went to play at the sink. These risk taking behaviors occurred throughout the story but seemed to spike during the readings of *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* by Christine Baldacchino and Isabelle Malenfant (2014). Children like Ivy, Julius and Nathan, bravely explored various items of gendered clothing that others did not show interest in.

During this same day Ivy went and changed to a red vest over her clothes, and said "I'm a boy". The following week, Ivy put on the cheetah patterned dress and said

"I don't want to be a girl, I want to be a firefighter" and she went and put on the high heel boots and firefighter jacket. She then said "I the firefighter girl." Julius, another child to break barriers put on a purple skirt and made a pouting seemingly confused facial expression. He then said "I don't like dresses." His peer Catrina, 5 years old told him "you so cute." Julius then responded "why am I a girl and why do I have on a dress, I don't like dresses." In that moment it seemed that Julius was very curious as to how it felt to supposedly be a "girl," and wasn't afraid to voice that to peers. This was not the only time that Julius decided to wear the skirt. A few days later he put on another skirt and said "ahcha."

Use of Stereotypical Language

A very large factor in the analysis of these observations was the language that children used during play with peers and or the environment. After reviewing observations, some of the words that children used were significant to discussion. Both sexes communicated in vastly different ways through play. Girls used words and phrases such as beautiful, honey, mommy, mom, cute, fairy wings, I love you, silly, excuse me, perfect, and ladies. Boys used words and phrases such as dude, stinky, batman, "aaah", "roar", and "beat you up". Girls word choice was much sweeter and kind, whereas boys choice of language was much more masculine.

Responses to Literature

Children's reactions to the readings of the selected text were pretty enthralling. As a whole, children demonstrated interest in all three texts. Both boys and girls exemplified attentiveness to the story. After the readings of N*ot all Princesses Dress*

in Pink children gave responses such as "The girl cracked her nails," "They were all in dresses," "At the end the princess's dance," "The princess ride her bike." These reflections display some understandings of the picture book. Also, since the story's main character revolves around girls, children's reaction showed their level of comprehension being that most children responded to questions about the text, using the word "she."

Despite some of the children's comprehension of what was going on in the story and who the story was about, other children's responses fed off of other children's opinions and weren't related to the story entirely. For instance, Nathan stated "About the monster" when asked what happened in the text. Stephan replied "It was dancing." Then, one boy aged 5 named Mickey, stated "If a monster comes it will go under her bed and bite." Alicia also added "They eat lunch" and Natalie then repeated the same response. Both of these responses were not related to the text. Based on the observations, children understood the repetition of the book that repeated the line "and a sparkly crown," more so than the underlying meaning of the book. Most of the children read that particular line of the text during the reading.

The next weeks entailed the picture book, *Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti.* Children displayed excitement to listen to this text, laughing and mimicking parts of the story. This story was goofier than the other titles and caught the attention of children in a comical way. During the discussion of the text children understood the plot of the text by answering questions about the text correctly. One child, Catrina said "The dad him is cooking dinner." Another child, Julius repetitively laughed at the

part of the book where the dad pretend plays with his son to motivate him to take a bath.

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine dress, seemed to grasp their attention the most. One child, Julius commented "Boys don't wear dresses" during the first readings of the text. Another child, Catrina, commented "The boy got on the dress and went click clack." Other children seemed shocked by the text when it discussed the boy enjoying wearing the dress at school. By the 3rd week readings of *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine dress,* children seemed to grasp the emotional reasoning of the main character in the text. This text seemed to catch the attention of all children, more so than the other books that were read outloud because children were more responsive, engaged, excited, and eager to listen to the story each week.

Summary

Qualitative research methods and thematic analysis aided the researcher in data analysis specific to the research questions. After completing the data analysis, the researcher discovered that while playing with peers in the sociodramatic play area of the classroom children display many distinctive gender roles. Children engage in role playing that ranges from babies to doctors. The most remarkable categories that emerged from the observational data are: Dress up prior to play, Helping roles, Nurturing roles, Domestic roles, Dominance, Aggression, and Risk Taking Roles, and Use of Stereotypical Language. The study pertaining to this particular population revealed that children engage in stereotypical play with very few children daring enough to go against the norm and partake in non-stereotypical gender roles. Children

displayed helping, nurturing, domestic, dominance, aggression and risk taking roles.

Also, that children learn and create their belief systems of behavior through close

observations of others.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

Introduction

This study explored children's expressions of masculine and feminine

behaviors through their play with peers. The researcher intentionally focused

observations on the gender roles that children present in their natural school setting

with other children of their age group. Observations of children were also focused on

the verbal language that children used to communicate with peers and their

environment. Also, the researcher included non-biased gender books to promote the

discussion of gender roles and gain retrospect of children's beliefs of gender roles.

The participants selected were enrolled at a northern California, preschool. The

ultimate goal of this study was to observe children at play in the sociodramatic area

and the block area scanning for specifics such as peers assigning roles, adult roles

(mommy/daddy), and dramatic characters (superheroes). Consistent themes

concerned with the focus of this research were, helping, nurturing, dominance,

domestic, risk taking, aggression and use of stereotypical language. All observations

were taken during free choice play in the morning in the same classroom. There are

minimal research studies focused on children's behavior with a focus to the gender

roles that they display. It was a huge challenge for the researcher to locate studies that

examined gender behavior that children display through interactions with peers in a

preschool setting. The ultimate goal of this study was to create awareness of the

gendered behavior that children display through interactions with others and how

children tend to have a massive influence on other children's behavior and values.

The population of this study consisted of children that were all aged 3 to 5

years old. There was a total of 18 children that were given consent to participate in

the study. Six girls and twelve boys participated in this study. The children's racial

backgrounds consisted of: eight of the 18 participants were African American; five of

the 18 participants were Caucasian; three of the 18 participants were Asian American;

and two of the 18 participants were Hispanic. There were a total of four 5 year olds,

eleven 4 year olds, and four 3 year olds.

The enrollment choices of the classroom do not involve the teacher at all and

children are enrolled on a needed basis, space permitting. These participants were

selected at convenience since the researcher is a teacher in the classroom (Boudah,

2011). The data was analyzed through the lens of observational methodology. The

researcher utilized observational tools such as checklists, field notes to detail the

setting as well as other phenomenon in the classroom of the area being observed.

Scholars (Chick et al., 2002; Lips, 1989; Solluiere, 2006; Yaqin, 2002; Zosuls

et al., 2011) highly suggests that gender roles are socially constructed and it was

imperative to this research study to detail observations of children in a social setting

amongst peers in which they have countless interactions. Social learning theory also

explicates that children learn socially through constant observations of others

(Cueavas & Hollis-Sawyer, 2013; Wood, 1996). In other words, people in social

environments, serve as role models for young children and children seek to be just like them, mocking their behaviors and familiarizing themselves to the same belief values. The most significant purpose of conducting this study was to observe children in their natural setting for gender stereotypical behavior and language through play interactions with their peers. Also, to expose children to gender equitable texts in hopes to facilitate some kind of conversation where children feel comfortable expressing their ideas concerned with gender and to see if it influences their patterns of interaction. The major themes evident in the data were: Dress up prior to play, Helping roles, Nurturing roles, Domestic roles, Dominance, Aggression, and Risk Taking Roles, and Use of Stereotypical Language

Dress up Prior to Play

Prior to interacting with peers and the start of pretend play it was observed very frequently that children often dressed up prior to playing. Children often chose dresses, vest, capes, and different styled shoes. It seemed that children often defined themselves and or their role through dressing up which allowed them ample opportunity to express their identities freely. Even though dress up play was more than often stereotypical, children seemed to validate themselves and beliefs through various clothing that they selected (Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014). For example, Julius put on the skirt and said "why am I a girl I do not want to be a girl." This child was very familiar with meanings that certain kinds of clothing created and made preferences based on his own likes.

Most importantly clothing is a cultural value that is used to express and identify one's identity. American culture categorizes clothing into certain gender categories based on the color and style of the clothing. Pink is almost always associated with girls and blue is usually defined as a boy's color. The media, popular culture, parents and peers all aid in the reinforcement of these gender labels of what boys and girls can wear, and have tremendous effects on children's ability to express oneself.

Gender specific clothing creates issues for those people who may feel like they don't fit in to the established categories based on the way that they dress. Within this study it was obvious that children used diverse items of clothing to identify themselves amongst others and to engage in play. Therefore, children should be exposed to more diverse, perspectives of gender roles to promote equality and tolerance.

Helping Roles

Children absolutely loved partaking in a role in which they assisted peers in need. Children displayed this behavior through play with a very familiar toy, a doctor's kit. Each and every day children of various ages, boys and girls participated in role playing scenarios that involved the use of the stethoscope, needle/syringe, blood pressure monitor and felt Band-Aids. Children made use of each object in the doctor's kit differently and created their own play scenarios with peers. Perhaps, since children involved in the study had parents that were employed in many different fields of employment, this had an impact on their play patterns.

Girls were very often the ones to arrange the play of this role in the sociodramatic play area. Girls were also more likely to participate in this play with other girls and the same group of girls. Peers in the preschool environment have a strong ability to motivate others play behavior (Lips, 1989). Peers are also the prominent ones who reinforces who children play with, and very often prefer and create play groups with peers of the same sex (Chick et al., 2002; Lips, 1989).

Nurturing Roles

Through play with peers children were highly motivated to pretend to play adult roles and displayed characteristics of warmth and care for others. The mommy role was a very popular role in the sociodramatic play area, amongst this group of 3 to 5 years olds. Children seemed very engaged with being the parent of their peers. Younger and older girls were the main ones to participate in this kind of play with peers on a consistent basis. Girls seemed to display a natural ability to care for others through this kind of play with peers, by pretending to cook for them and take care of them while they were hurt or emotionally upset. Girls actually voiced that they or their peer were the "mommy" during play. Parents behavior, the way they expressed love and care for others or their children involved in the study, affect the way children treated each other. In today's society girls are more highly influenced to be loving, compassionate, and caring, compared to boys. This gender role is often identified as feminine and boys are not encouraged to express these traits.

Boys did not participate in mommy play with peers or with themselves. One boy did however display small spurts of affection towards toy objects, such as babies

in the sociodramatic play area. Research suggests that girls more so than boys, are

socialized and very well acquainted with toys affiliated with mother roles from a very

young age (Orr, 2011). Parents are more likely to select feminine toy objects such as

baby dolls, kitchen materials, for their girls compared to their sons (Lips, 1989 Orr,

2011).

Domestic Roles

All children were very much involved with the pretend play food and cooking

on the stove. Girls had a huge tendency to partake in play roles that entailed the duty

of a chef or cleaning. Children would dress up in aprons and use menus to engage

themselves with play of this sort. Boys had a developing interest with cooking

materials but tended to do so with some peers on rare occasions. It seemed that boys

did it out of exploration and enjoyment, whereas girls on the other hand usually

cooked for others, especially for other girls. Girls also displayed interest in cleaning

the area, completing tasks, such as sorting toys to the correct areas and pretending to

vacuum using a toy vacuum.

These kind of play patterns reflect the socialization patterns of society and

parents (Lips, 1989; Orr, 2011). Young girls are frequently given toy cooking sets and

domestic toys as gifts from important adult figures (Lips, 1989; Orr, 2011). Thus,

increasing their motivation to play accordingly with these particular toys. Mothers are

often the sole cooks of the household and very seldom is the dad in the kitchen

cooking the families' meals. Children need exposure to women and men both

participating in various gender roles around the house to understand that those roles are not just designated for one sex.

Dominance

Research suggests that it is peers that hold other peers accountable by seeing to it that peers maintain and engage in society's social constructs of gender (Lips, 1989; Sadker, 2000). Peers also consistently repeat play patterns that reflect that of sex segregated play (Lips, 1989).

The role of being a leader was constantly displayed in the sociodramatic area. Ironically, this play area was very often dominated by females. Girls enjoyed play in this area more than the boys. While playing, girls were very consistent at playing for very long time frames with their same sex peers. The sociodramatic play area was also very frequently occupied with male counterparts but play patterns were often sparse and for short periods of time. Leadership was also observed through peers assigning others roles in play and influencing the play of others. Once more, girls seemed to create the most control in the atmosphere over others play choices and interactions within the environment. Girls also reinforced some stereotypical gender norms in this play area.

Aggression

Very often, aggression was observed during peer play. All of the observations concerned with aggression involved boys. Males were more likely to snatch toy

objects from other peers during their play episodes. During play, boys every so often acted out roles that involved aggressive behaviors, with other male and female peers. For example, two boys were having a phone conversation about fighting one another. Notable researchers (Lips, 1989; Pollack,1999) express that boys are socialized to show macho masculine emotions and hide soft weak emotions such as sadness. These ideas actually affects males in a negative manner misleading them on the idea of who to be and influences them to be more aggressive and violent (Lips, 1989; Pollack, 1989).

Risk Taking

The researcher observed various children on multiple accounts, engaged in play behaviors that dared to be different and went against the average norms. These girls and boys were not afraid to try out such behaviors while playing with peers. There were boys who tried on high heel shoes and skirts and a girl who pretended to be a firefighter girl and even going as far to pretend play as a boy. Children communicated these ideas very openly and with no regard to what others may think or say about them. It appeared that children were beginning to make meanings of their own view of the world and gender roles and doing so through interactions with peers and their environments and were not at all afraid to do so (Chick et al., 2002); Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014).

Use of Stereotypical Language

Children's choice of language was also stereotypical. Girls used more feminine words to describe others or communicate. Boys often used words that are

known to be more masculine. Girls very often voiced words that described affection and appearance such as "I love you, honey and beautiful". Often, the way children are socialized affects the gendered behavior that they display whether its parents, peers, society and or teachers, they all contribute to the gender development of children (Chick et al., 2002; Levy, 1994; Lips, 1989, Schaefer, 1994; Wood, 1996; Zosuls et al., 2011).

Responses to Literature

Children's responses to the selection of picture books were unanticipated. Participants showed an increasing amount of engagement during the readings of the selected text, compared to other books that were read to them. Children were highly interested in the third book *Morris MickleWhite and the Tangerine Dress.* Overall, children seemed to appreciate the views portrayed in that text. Despite the new ideas presented in the story about the tangerine dress, children were not opposed to the vastly different beliefs that were communicated in that story.

Children were rather open to the topics discussed in the text, through their engagement of the readings of the text. Even though *Not all Princesses Dress in Pink* generated more conversation and outbursts from children, children seemed a little uninterested in the text ideas and more enthused about the repetitive of the text itself. *Daddy makes the Best Spaghetti* also served a different purpose for children. Children were actually amused by the text concerning a dad and son who often played silly pretend games.

The fact that the dad enjoyed shopping and cooking rather went unnoticed to them. Ya-Lun (2008) contends that it is difficult for children to make honest judgements about text when it comes to prejudice ideas being communicated. There is a different kind of learning going on through readings of picture books which aids children in their development of making meanings of the outside world (Cuevas, Hollis-Sawyer, 2013; Ya-Lun, 2008). Picture books aid children in their articulation and development of meanings of the world around them.

Conclusions

The definitive purpose of this work was to complement to the research centered on children's play behavior with peers at the same time bring awareness to the topic concerning gender roles. This research had a more explicit concern for gender and the diverse kinds of gender role behavior that children display in the school setting amongst others. Qualitative methodology seemed to be of the best fit for this research because it allowed an ample amount of descriptive observations of children in their natural setting. This study suggested that boys and girls of this population display their ideas of gender roles in extremely different ways. Some of the roles that these population of children displayed was somewhat in accordance to society's beliefs of masculinity and femininity such as dominance, nurturing, helping, domesticity, aggression, and risk taking. Each and every child seemed to present those roles differently, and also portray similar meanings through play.

Boys showed more aggression during play and girls were more open to displaying a sense of concern for others. Both boys and girls were not intimidated to

share and express their own views regardless to the differences that lye in belief systems and cultures. It was expected that children would have ample opportunity to elaborate on their views of gender roles during readings of gender equal children books, but that was not the outcome. Children were enthralled about listening to the texts that were dissimilar to other books but the deepest facets of the gender equal books were not acknowledged by children. With more lessons, readings, discussion on gender equality, children would probably gain a deeper understanding of the topic at hand. Ultimately, with more global awareness to gender behavior that children display and communicate, will grant parents, teachers and other important role models in a children's life the moments to support and teach children about gender equality.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this study. There were many changes that played out in the classroom where the researcher conducted the study. The teaching staff changed so it put more responsibility of the children, on the researcher since she was the head teacher of the classroom. There was not much time to conduct one hour observations due to the change in the environment so the timing of observations was cut short. Also, other unannounced circumstances that occurred throughout the day, influenced the researcher to focus only on the sociodramatic play area for observations, rather than conducting observations of that area and the block area.

All of these unforeseen circumstances made it extremely difficult to complete data collection of daily observations. The alterations of staffing not only affected the observations but the readings of the selected text as well. The writing of children's

responses in the same moment was a very challenging task to complete. As a result data collection of children's ideas was slightly limited and affected the amount of data collected. Participants of the study were also absent from time to time so it impacted the ability to collect data. In addition, the data collection only focused on peer play in the house area, rather than the entire classroom play, limiting the results. Lastly, the population selected to participate in the study was relatively small, and lacks some representation of preschoolers around this age group that may reside in different demographical communities.

Recommendations

The results of this study describe many different gender roles that children display during play with peers in the classroom. It would be extremely intriguing to discover more in depth gender roles that children display through various areas around the classroom with interactions with adults, peers and the environment. More research is needed on different kinds of populations. To examine gender roles specifically in the classroom, one could add various toy objects to the environment and focus on how different children interact and utilize the toys compared to other children. Interviews from parents of the children participants about the ways they socialize their child and the kind of toys they use at home would add data for a future study. Also it would be interesting to examine the interactions from children concerning different gender equitable text for a longer period of time, examining how children's views of gender roles develop over time, such as a longitudinal study. Children's ideas of the text

pertaining to gender roles could even be drawn out by the children allowing children

to use art to express their views.

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

Appendix A
INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent
Parent/Legal Guardian
Children at Play in the Preschool Classroom

Your child is invited to participate in a research study which will involve direct observation of your child's play with peers and opinions of children's books. My name is Marcia Jones, and I am a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento, in the Gender Equality, Master of Arts program.

Your child's participation in this project is entirely voluntary. Even after you agree to allow your child to participate, you may decide to stop their participation in the study at any time.

Your child was selected as a possible participant in this study because he or she is a student in the class. The purpose of this research is to simply capture children's ideas of gender, feminine and masculine behaviors. If you decide to allow your child to participate, he or she will be observed along with other peers during play in the classroom. He or she will also be included in discussion of selected children's books, as he or she normally is during regular classroom activities. His or her participation in the discussion of the story will only last about 20 minutes.

Since each activity involved in this research is a part of the normal everyday schedule, and there will be no strangers involved, there are no risks.

Your child will remain 100% anonymous. The data obtained will be maintained locked in the researchers home and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

If you have any questions about the research at any time, please email me at mlj53@csus.edu or, call me at 916-563-5046 , or you can contact my advisor Dr. Sherrie Carinci at 916-278-7010. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a participant in a research project please call the Office of Research Affairs, California State University, Sacramento, (916) 278-5674, or email irb@csus.edu.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to your child's participation, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue your child's participation at any time, and that you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies.

Signature   Date

_____ _____

APPENDIX B

Checklist/Data Observation Tool

Appendix B

Checklist/ Data Observational Tool

Date:_____ Week:_____

__Sociodramatic play area:

__Block area:

__Conversations:

__Peers assigning roles:

__Adult roles (mommy/daddy):

__Dramatic characters (superheroes):

APPENDIX C

Readings of Selected Text/Discussion Notes

Appendix C

Readings of Selected Text/ Discussion Notes

Date:_____ Week:_____

___*Not all Princesses Dress in Pink*

___*Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti*

___*Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*

Notes:

APPENDIX D

Discussion Questions

Appendix D

Discussion Questions

1. "What did you think of that story"?

2. "What was the story about"?

3. "Who was the story about?"

4. "Where did the story happen?"

5. "How did the people feel in the story?"

6. "What do you see happening here?"

APPENDIX E

Schedule

Appendix E

Schedule

Predicted Schedule:

Weeks	Stories	Observations
(Feb 22) 1	*Not all Princesses Dress in Pink*	1-Hour each day
2	*Not all Princesses Dress in Pink*	1-Hour each day
3	*Not all Princesses Dress in Pink*	1-Hour each day
4	*Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti*	1-Hour each day
5	*Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti*	1-Hour each day
6	*Daddy Makes the Best Spaghetti*	1-Hour each day
7	*Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*	1-Hour each day
8	*Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*	1-Hour each day
(April 18th) 9	*Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress*	1-Hour each day

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