

SEX ROLE STEREOTYPING IN FIRST GRADE AND PRE-VOCATIONAL JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: AN ATTITUDINAL STUDY

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Abstract

Twenty-four girls and twenty-four boys in grade one and thirty girls and thirty boys in prevocational ninth grade class were presented with a list of 35 occupations and activities. Students responded by indicating woman, man or either. The results revealed that both first grade and ninth grade boys have very stereotyped views of occupations. Overall ninth grade girls are willing to accept both women and men in non-traditional roles. First grade girls hold stereotyped views, however they are receptive to some non-traditional roles. Implications for vocational counselling are presented.

Résumé

On a présenté une liste de 35 occupations et activités à deux différents groupes d'élèves: 24 garçons et 24 filles de la première année, 30 garçons et 30 filles de la neuvième année. L'élève indiquait si selon lui l'occupation et/ou l'activité s'adressait à un homme, à une femme ou aux deux. Les résultats révèlent chez les garçons, tant de la première que de la neuvième année, une conception stéréotypée des occupations. Dans l'ensemble, les filles de la 9e année acceptent que les hommes et les femmes jouent des rôles non-traditionnels. Les filles en première année possèdent elles aussi des opinions stéréotypées mais elles s'avèrent ouvertes à des possibilités de rôles non-traditionnels. Enfin, on présente certaines conséquences de cette recherche pour l'orientation professionnelle.

Within our society there has been increasing concern toward the needs and position of women in the work force. We see this concern in the women's liberation movement with its emphasis on a change in attitude toward sex role stereotyping in jobs. The passage of the Equal Rights Amendment will be legislative confirmation of attitude change by government. Many occupations which have been viewed as "masculine" such as doctor and policeman are being opened to women while men are accepting traditional "feminine" jobs such as telephone operator and nurse.

The mass media is beginning to deemphasize traditional sex roles and sex stereotyping of occupations. Magazines for and about women (*Ms.*, *Viva*, *Working Woman*) are appearing on the market, articles related to women are regular features of current magazines, occupational sex discrimination suits headline the newspaper and we can tune in to "Challenge of the Sexes" and "For Women Only" on television. Designations such as "chairperson" is commonly used in meetings. Shepard and Hess (1975) report that many advertisements are depicting women engaged in what have been considered traditional male pursuits.

Research on sex roles stereotyping reveal traditional attitudes are still quite common. Tibbets (1975) reports 21 girls and 21 boys in grades one through four were tested on sex role attitudes of 30 occupations. Both girls and boys made stereotypical responses as a general rule. The majority of the children agreed that women should be cooks, secretaries and nurses and that men should be lawyers, firefighters and police officers. However, they both agreed that men and women could be doctors, singers, and bus drivers. Weeks, Thornburg and Little (1977) report 17 kindergarten children in an experimental group were exposed to non-traditional role models and curricular materials and a control group, consisting of 22 kindergarten children were exposed to a curriculum unrelated to vocational or sex roles for two weeks. Neither group made significant changes in their vocational role preference. A study of the sex-role attitudes of 287 sixth grade pupils by Crow (1976) revealed similar stereotyped responses. Siegel's study (1973) with second graders revealed that almost 70% of the girls selected a smaller range of occupations (either teacher or nurse) while 32 boys chose 20 different occupations. Similar results were obtained by Konle (1973)

with a sample of 70 kindergarten children, by Looft (1971) with grade one and two, and by Schlossberg and Goodman (1972) with kindergarten and six graders.

In a study of 1,239 eighth and twelfth grade students, Kotcher (1975) found that those students who identified with stereotypic "male" sex role character appeared to see themselves in occupations more dominated by men with career being focal points in their lives. Those students who identified with stereotypic "female" appeared to be committed to some degree to career and homemaker and saw themselves going into occupations which are traditionally designated female.

Several studies reveal that there is an emerging shift toward liberality by females. Shepard and Hess (1975) presented four age groups (kindergarten, eighth grade, college and adult) with a list of 43 adult occupations and activities for which they responded by female, male or either. Androgynous either responses increased from kindergarten through eighth grade to college and decreased in the adult sample. In each group, except kindergarten, females were significantly more liberal than males. A study done by Izenberg (1978) and Iglitzen (1972) reveal similar results.

The purpose of this study was two fold: (1) To determine the attitudes of children toward sex role stereotyping in occupations and activities by comparing students by grades (first and ninth) and gender (female and male). To explore the differences in androgynous either responses to determine if there is an emerging shift toward liberality (accepting both men and women in non-traditional roles) by gender and grade level.

METHOD

Instrument: A sex-role attitude test was adapted from one described by Shepard and Hess (1975). It consisted of 35 occupations and activities in which the subjects were asked to answer *woman*, *man* or *either* to the question, "Who should do this job?"

Subject and Procedures: Thirty-five items were presented to 24 female and 24 male first grade students and to 30 female and 30 male pre-vocational junior high school students.

The first graders were six years old and attended a public elementary school. The examiner read the items to small groups of 10 students at a time and checked to see that each student used the proper line to respond to the questions. They were praised for listening attentively and keeping their place.

Volunteer students from pre-vocational junior high school classes were administered the attitude test during their social studies unit, "Getting a

Job." Pre-vocational students are of junior high school age who are unable to function in a regular school program because they are either learning disabled, slow learners or have an interest in non-academic or vocational pursuits. Technically, the classes are nongraded, however, because the students in the sample are age 14, they will herein be referred to as grade 9 for convenience of discussion.

RESULTS

Nonparametric statistics were used because of the nominality of the responses. Tables 1 and 2 summarized the findings of grade one and grade nine by reporting Chi square and significant probability level for the cross tabulations. Table 3 reveals a shift toward androgynous either responses when comparing girls (grade one vs nine) and boys (grade one vs nine) at .05 level of significance.

In general the responses of the *first grade boys and girls were stereotyped*. As shown in Table 1, the majority of the children agreed that women should iron clothes, knit, sew, sell perfume, cook supper, be a nurse, cheerleader and dancer. They also agreed that men should be soldiers, sportscasters, plumbers, car repair, go fishing and prime minister of Canada. Only in the case of pilot, vacuum house, firefighter, principal, and telephone installer was there a statistically significant difference (<.05) between responses of boys and girls in grade one.

TABLE 1
Responses of First Grade Students to, "Who should do these jobs?"

	Responses of Girls (N=24)			Responses of Boys (N=24)			χ^2
	Women	Men	Either	Women	Men	Either	
1. Dishwasher	45.8X	0X	54.2X	33.3X	8.3X	58.3X	2.51
2. Soldier	0	79.2	20.8	8.3	79.2	12.5	2.50
3. Pilot	0	29.2	70.8	4.2	62.5	33.3	7.14**
4. Knit	91.7	4.2	4.2	95.8	0	4.2	1.02
5. Iron Clothes	83.3	0	16.7	91.7	4.2	4.2	2.89
6. Sewing	66.7	12.5	20.8	83.3	8.3	8.3	1.93
7. Cashier	33.3	8.3	58.3	33.3	16.7	50.0	.82
8. Sell Perf.	79.2	4.2	16.7	66.7	12.5	20.8	1.36
9. Vacuum	41.7	8.3	50.0	75.0	0	25.0	6.28**
10. Firefighter	20.8	79.2	0	0	79.2	20.8	10.00**
11. Go Fishing	0	45.8	54.2	4.2	54.2	41.7	1.55
12. Tele Oper.	37.5	16.7	45.8	37.5	29.2	33.3	1.29
13. Principal	45.8	50.0	4.2	12.5	70.8	16.7	7.23**
14. Horse Jockey	25.0	12.5	62.5	8.3	37.5	54.2	5.14
15. Laundry	50.0	20.8	29.2	75.0	12.5	12.5	3.30
16. Doctor	8.3	37.5	54.2	4.2	45.8	50.0	.57
17. PM - Canada	12.5	66.7	20.8	4.2	75.0	20.8	1.11
18. Decorator	20.8	4.2	75.0	29.2	12.5	58.3	1.83
19. Sportscaster	0	83.3	16.7	0	75.0	25.0	.50
20. Car Repair	4.2	95.8	0	0	100	0	1.02
21. Tele Install	0	54.2	45.8	8.3	79.2	12.5	7.69**
22. Librarian	29.2	0	70.8	50.0	4.2	45.8	3.60
23. Cheerleader	79.2	4.2	16.7	91.7	8.3	0	4.55
24. Cook Supper	54.2	8.3	37.5	58.3	0	41.7	2.09
25. Childcare	37.5	4.2	58.3	50.0	4.2	45.8	.78
26. Dir. Traffic	8.3	45.8	45.8	12.5	70.8	16.7	4.75
27. Secretary	37.5	12.5	50.0	50.0	12.5	37.5	.85
28. Plumber	4.2	83.3	12.5	12.5	75.0	12.5	1.10
29. Nurse	70.8	16.7	12.5	50.0	4.2	4.2	3.44
30. Bank Teller	20.8	20.8	58.3	8.3	33.3	58.3	1.97
31. Lawyer	12.5	50.0	37.5	4.2	58.3	37.5	1.15
32. Deliver Mail	12.5	16.7	70.8	12.5	41.7	45.8	3.85
33. Dancer	62.5	4.2	33.3	70.8	16.7	12.5	4.19
34. Truck Driv.	16.7	20.8	62.5	12.5	41.7	45.8	2.42
35. Hair Dress.	66.7	8.3	25.0	83.3	8.3	8.3	2.66

*Based on number of students in each cell

**<.05 probability level

As shown in Table 2, the junior high girls and boys did not generally agree on sex roles: a number of differences were statistically signifi-

TABLE 2

Responses of Ninth Grade Students to, "Who should do these jobs?"

	Responses of Girls (N=30)			Responses of Boys (N=30)			χ^2 *
	Women	Men	Either	Women	Men	Either	
1. Dishwasher	43.3E	3.3E	53.3E	66.7E	0E	33.3E	3.86
2. Soldier	6.7	93.3	0	3.3	90.0	6.7	2.35
3. Pilot	3.3	16.7	80.0	0	56.7	43.3	10.81**
4. Knit	73.3	6.7	20.0	93.3	0	6.7	4.72
5. Iron Clothes	46.7	9.3	50.0	73.3	3.3	23.3	4.68
6. Sewing	43.3	0	56.7	50.0	0	50.0	.27
7. Cashier	30.0	6.7	63.3	33.3	6.7	60.0	.08
8. Sell Perfume	80.0	6.7	13.3	100	0	0	6.67**
9. Vacuum	36.7	10.0	53.3	73.3	0	26.7	9.33**
10. Firefighter	3.3	43.3	53.3	6.7	83.3	10.0	13.02**
11. Go Fishing	3.3	16.7	80.0	3.3	26.7	70.0	.89
12. Tele Oper.	33.3	3.3	63.3	40.0	3.3	56.7	.29
13. Principal	3.3	16.7	80.0	6.7	26.7	56.7	3.77
14. Horse Jockey	0	6.7	93.3	10.0	26.7	63.3	8.32**
15. Laundry	56.7	3.3	40.0	76.7	0	23.3	3.21
16. Doctor	6.7	6.7	86.7	3.3	20.0	76.7	2.51
17. Prime Minister	6.7	30.0	63.3	0	66.7	33.3	8.96**
18. Decorator	36.7	3.3	60.0	53.3	6.7	40.0	2.45
19. Sportscaster	0	60.0	40.0	0	83.3	16.7	4.02**
20. Repair car	3.3	50.0	46.7	3.3	83.3	13.3	8.05**
21. Tele Install	6.7	76.7	16.7	6.7	80.0	13.3	.13
22. Librarian	16.7	6.7	76.7	50.0	3.3	46.7	7.52**
23. Cheerleader	80.0	6.7	13.3	90.0	0	10.0	2.31
24. Cook Supper	30.0	0	70.0	30.0	6.7	63.3	2.10
25. Child Care	50.0	0	50.0	56.7	0	43.3	.26
26. Direct Traf.	3.3	56.7	40.0	3.3	46.7	50.0	.62
27. Secretary	70.0	3.3	26.7	70.0	10.0	20.0	1.29
28. Plumber	13.3	53.3	33.3	3.3	76.7	20.0	4.05
29. Nurse	66.7	3.3	30.0	83.3	6.7	10.0	3.89
30. Bank Teller	3.3	16.7	80.0	16.7	33.3	50.0	6.41**
31. Lawyer	3.3	13.3	83.3	0	26.7	73.3	2.53
32. Deliver Mail	6.7	13.3	80.0	6.7	23.3	70.0	1.01
33. Dancer	23.3	3.3	73.3	60.0	0	40.0	8.78**
34. Truck Driver	3.3	20.0	76.7	3.3	70.0	26.7	15.59**
35. Hair Dresser	43.3	0	56.7	56.7	3.3	40.0	2.39

*Based on number of students in each cell

**-.05 probability level

cant. The boys demonstrated very stereotyped views about roles for women and men. The majority of the boys agreed that men should be soldiers, repair cars, sportscaster, install telephones, plumbers, truck drivers and prime minister of Canada. They also agreed that women should continue to hold traditional feminine occupations and activities such as the following: sell perfume, knit, laundry, iron clothes, vacuum house and be a secretary, cheerleader and nurse.

Table 3 shows a shift toward more liberal either responses by girls in grade nine when compared with girls in grade one. The only

TABLE 3

A Shift Toward Androgynous "Either" Responses When Comparing Girls (Grades One and Nine) and Boys (Grades One and Nine) at <.05 Level.

	FIRST GRADE GIRLS			NINTH GRADE GIRLS		
	Women	Men	Either	Women	Men	Either
1. Soldier	0E	79.2E	20.8E	6.7E	93.3E	0E
2. Iron Clothes	83.3	0	16.7	46.7	3.3	50.0
3. Sewing	66.7	12.5	20.8	43.3	0	56.7
4. Firefighter	20.8	79.2	0	3.3	43.3	53.3
5. Go Fishing	0	45.8	54.2	3.3	16.7	80.0
6. Principal	45.8	50.0	4.2	3.3	16.7	80.0
7. Horse Jockey	25.0	12.5	62.5	0	6.7	93.3
8. Doctor	8.3	37.5	54.2	6.7	6.7	86.7
9. Prime Minister	12.5	66.7	20.8	6.7	30.0	63.3
10. Car Repair	4.2	95.8	0	3.3	50.0	46.7
11. Telephone Installer	0	54.2	45.8	6.7	76.7	16.7
12. Cook Supper	54.2	8.3	37.5	30.0	0	70.0
13. Secretary	37.5	12.5	50.0	70.0	3.3	26.7
14. Lawyer	12.5	50.0	37.5	3.3	13.3	83.3
15. Dancer	62.5	4.2	33.3	23.3	3.3	73.3
16. Hair Dresser	66.7	8.3	25.0	43.3	0	56.7

	FIRST GRADE BOYS			NINTH GRADE BOYS		
	Women	Men	Either	Women	Men	Either
1. Dishwasher	33.3E	8.3E	58.3E	66.7E	0E	33.3E
2. Sewing	83.3	8.3	8.3	50.0	0	50.0
3. Sell Perfume	66.7	12.5	20.8	100	0	0
4. Telephone Operator	37.5	29.2	33.3	40.0	3.3	56.7
5. Principal	12.5	70.8	16.7	6.7	36.7	56.7
6. Direct Traffic	12.5	70.8	16.7	3.3	46.7	50.0
7. Lawyer	4.2	58.3	37.5	0	26.7	73.3
8. Dancer	20.8	16.7	12.5	60.0	0	40.0
9. Hair Dresser	83.3	8.3	8.3	56.7	3.3	40.0

exception is soldier, telephone installer and secretary which is higher in androgyny for grade one girls. Boys in grade nine show more liberality toward a few occupations when compared with first grade boys. The only exception is sell perfume and dishwasher which is higher in androgyny for grade one boys. A Mann Whitney U Test confirmed results of Table 3.

TABLE 4

Results of Mann Whitney U Test Comparing Boys and Girls on Percentage of Androgynous (Either) Responses Versus Stereotyped (One Sex) Responses.

	Girls Compared With Boys	
	Ninth Grade	First Grade
1. Truck Driver	-3.84*	-1.15
2. Firefighter	-3.58*	-2.36**
3. Pilot	-2.90*	-2.57**
4. Horse Jockey	-2.80*	-0.58
5. Car Repair	-2.79*	-0.0
6. Dancer	-2.58*	-1.70
7. Bank Teller	-2.42*	-0.0
8. Librarian	-2.37*	-1.74
9. Prime Minister	-2.31*	-0.0
10. Iron Clothes	-2.13*	-1.43
11. Vacuum House	-2.09*	-1.77
12. Sell Perfume	-2.05*	-0.36
13. Sportscaster	-1.99*	-0.70
14. Principal	-1.93*	-1.40
15. Direct Traffic	-0.51	-2.16**
16. Cheerleader	-0.40	-2.07**
17. Install Telephone	-0.36	-2.51**

*Significant at .05 level.

**First grade boys.

The authors reexamined the data which had already been analyzed by Chi square. Responses were classified as stereotyped (choosing only a single sex to do a job) or androgynous (considering that either men or women could do the job). On jobs designated as significant by Mann Whitney U (Table 4), the boys and girls constitute two independent groups with the girls usually appearing higher in androgyny, except for firefighter chosen by first grade boys. Reference to Table 1 (Siegel, 1956) reveals that $z \geq 1.93$ or ≥ -1.93 has a probability of <.05. As shown in Table 4, the junior high girls were willing to accept both men and women in the following occupations and activities: pilot, prime minister, school principal, bank teller, truck driver, horse jockey, firefighter, librarian, sportscaster, car repair, dancer, iron clothes, vacuum house and sell perfume. First grade girls agreed with ninth grade girls that both men and women should be pilots. In contrast to ninth grade girls, they further saw the following occupations open to both sexes: install telephone, direct traffic and cheerleader.

DISCUSSION

This study was designed to investigate the attitudes of two age groups regarding sex role divisions in occupations and activities, and more specifically to explore androgynous either responses to determine if children are beginning

to view various occupations as open to both women and men.

The responses of the first grade girls and boys were generally stereotyped. Most children this age are involved in parental and school traditional sex-role socialization patterns, consequently, there are few if any opportunities for exposure to nontraditional roles. Changes in home socialization patterns may be difficult to accomplish, however, if we want children to become aware and receptive to various non-traditional occupations, then parents must make children aware that they are available. For example, female children can be taken to a female doctor and dentist; the child's pet to a female veterinarian. Many children have not been exposed to current social issues and their favorite programs on television (cartoons, situation comedies) still convey traditional stereotypes (Shepard & Hess, 1975). It is also noteworthy that the responses of the first grade girls are higher in androgyny, (.05 level) when compared to first grade boys except for firefighter.

The occupational choices for junior high boys were greatly stereotyped. One possible explanation for this may be the perceived fear of "loss of masculinity" as women begin entering the labor force and the demand for men to assist with household chores becomes inevitable. Another explanation is that vocational roles are more clearly defined for males than for females resulting in greater constancy and rigidity of preference for the male (Albrecht, 1976).

For prevocational junior high girls are more flexible in their views of many occupations. According to Shepard and Hess (1975), many teenage girls are aware and perhaps accept some tenets of the women's liberation movement which might account for their general overall liberality toward the acceptance of both men and women in nontraditional roles. It also appears that girls may stand to benefit more from the effects of the women's liberation movement since many vocational options which have been dominated by men are beginning to open. Junior high girls are also in the exploratory stage of life and consequently, they may have an interest in alternative social roles which is a part of their identity seeking. For example, one student researched the area of "auto mechanic" in a library career file, even though she indicated that her parents wanted her to be a "secretary."

There is clearly a shift toward liberality (accepting both men and women in non-traditional roles) when comparing girls at various age levels. A surprising result was that when compared with ninth grade boys, the first grade boys are more willing to accept both men and women washing dishes and selling perfume.

Perhaps many little boys are beginning to see both parents share some responsibilities in the home. The fact that many children go department store shopping with parents and are aware of the popularity of men's cologne might explain the selling of perfume for men. There is no equally likely explanation for liberal jobs (soldier, secretary, telephone installer) chosen by first grade girls vs ninth graders.

Overall, this study suggests that stereotypic attitudes toward sex-role divisions are breaking down, particularly with increases in age. Similar results were found by Albrecht (1975) and Shepard and Hess (1975).

Implications

If a deemphasis on stereotyped gender related vocational roles is a value of education, then the implication of these findings is that there is much to be done in the area of parent education, revision of educational curriculum, mass media and vocational counselling. It is important that nontraditional role models be presented to children. The vocational counsellor must be cognizant of changes in attitudes for some females. The counsellor should be willing to look beyond personal bias (if any) and encourage girls and boys to pursue various options which appear to be congruent with their interest.

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