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Pink or Blue? Which is for you?

The Discursive and Material Construction of Gender Identity through Children's Toys

by

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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Linguistics

in the faculty of Humanities

at the

University of the Witwatersrand

Supervisor: Professor T. Milani

Declaration

I, Caitlin Venter, hereby declare that this is my original work. It has never been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university. I am submitting this work for the degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.

Signed on the _____ day of _____ 2015.

_____

Caitlin Venter

Abstract

This research study will investigate how linguistic and visual resources are employed in children's toys in a variety of retail spaces, and how such resources reproduce and/or contest gender roles and stereotypes within a given semiotic landscape or space.

There are three main objectives of this study. The first objective is to determine the sexualisation and gendering of space within three different toy stores. The second objective is to understand whether, and if so, how the gendering of space is influenced by social categories such as race, age and geographical location. The third objective is to look at the way in which gender and other social identities are produced and created through children's toys.

In order to achieve these aims, the study will employ qualitative methods. The first qualitative aspect to this project is that of analysing pictures, toy packages and photographs of children's toys. The second qualitative aspect of the study includes an analysis of the interviews conducted with the parents to determine their thoughts and feelings regarding gender stereotypes and the construction of societal norms. The main Linguistic theoretical frameworks that are used throughout the research paper are that of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Multi-Modal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA).

It was found that heterosexual parents agree very strongly with the gender stereotypes that still exist within our community. They do not see anything wrong with the advertising techniques used and they do not think that change is necessary within our community. Lesbian parents felt that children should be allowed to be who they want to be without having the pressures of society pushing down on them. Gay parents agreed with this and felt that children should grow up to be themselves and if that is different to what society expects then that is also fine and acceptable. Two black parents agreed with the heterosexual parents on this matter, while two black parents sided with the gay and lesbian parents regarding gender stereotyping for little children.

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AIMS AND RATIONALE

Childhood culture is made up of interwoven narratives and commodities that span across television, toys, fast-food packaging, video games, T-shirts, bed linen, pencil cases and lunch boxes. Identity messages circulate through merchandise that surrounds young consumers as they dress in, sleep on, bathe in, eat from and play with commercial goods decorated with popular culture images, print, and logos (Wohlwend, 2009). This merchandise allows children to become immersed in the products and this further invites identification with familiar media characters and communicates gendered expectations about what children should buy, how they should play, and who they should be (Wohlwend, 2009, p.11). Wohlwend (2009) stated that toys in particular invite children to read and perform particular identities through play. Thus it is incumbent upon us, then, to examine the kinds of messages these toys send to children as they interact and play with them (Wohlwend, 2009, p.8). An important aspect of toys is that they teach children the importance of gender roles.

Of course, toys are not only tools through which children are socialized into gender. According to Santrock (2009) parents often use rewards and punishments to teach their daughters to be feminine with statements like "you are such a good mommy with your dolls" and with references to masculinity to boys with statements like "big boys don't cry". Moreover, critical discourse analysis of play activity shows that children regulate each other's gender performances through talk and actions that demonstrate their ability to adhere to the heterosexual matrix (Santrock, 2009). This continuously shows that children, at a young age, are aware of their surroundings and how they should and should not behave. Children are also able to show and regulate each other's play and behaviour through their speech and play sessions with one another, here again, emphasising the 'appropriate' way of behaving in public and society (Santrock, 2009).

Unlike such research which has focused mainly on socialization, this research study will take a discursive and material approach to toys. A social semiotic approach will be taken to analyse three different toy stores. This will include looking at the language (layout and design) of each store and will also include an analysis of the vocabulary of the toys themselves. The analysis of the vocabulary of the toys will focus specifically on the packaging and wording of the selected toys as well as the visual elements of each toy (e.g.

colour, font, wording, visual elements of each toy etc.). More specifically, this research study will investigate how linguistic and visual resources are employed in children's toys in a variety of retail spaces, and how such resources reproduce and/or contest gender roles and stereotypes within a given semiotic landscape or space.

There are three main objectives of this study, each of which will be discussed in more detail below.

The first objective is to determine the sexualisation and gendering of space. The toy store will be looked at as a space where children, parents and guardians, friends and family meet to purchase specific toys for either boys or girls or both. The objective here is to find out if these toy stores are organised along gender lines, and if so, how they are organised and what similarities and differences can be seen between the three selected toy stores.

The second objective of this study is to understand whether, and if so, how the gendering of space is influenced by social categories such as race, age and geographical location and here again to point out the similarities and differences between the three toy stores.

In order to achieve the first two aims, one needs to look at the way in which gender and other social identities are produced and created within the three different toy stores. One way to do this is to determine what gender identities are produced and circulated through children's toys and their respective packaging.

In order to achieve these aims, the study will employ qualitative methods. The first qualitative aspect to this project is that of analysing pictures, toy packages, photographs and advertisements of children's toys. This analysis will allow for a greater understanding of whether gender stereotypes and ideologies are indeed constructed through children's toys. The second qualitative aspect of the study includes an analysis of the interviews conducted with the parents to determine their thoughts and feelings regarding gender stereotypes and the construction of societal norms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This literature review will explore the relevance of toys for the purpose of this current research study. It will also look at various toy studies that have been conducted and compare and contrast these studies with the current research topic. Lastly, this literature review will shed some light on consumerism as it pertains particularly to children and children's advertisements and commercials which can be found in and around toy stores.

The current study is conducted within a poststructuralist framework in which language, society and identity are considered to be multi-faceted entities which can be seen as influential within a specific time period and at a specific place in time. This view of language, society and identity is a relatively recent phenomenon which differs from the previous structuralist approach to language, society and identity whereby all three of these aspects were regarded as closed, finite and predetermined categories.

In the sections that follow, I offer academic positions which have been taken from sociolinguistic literature and how these different literatures can be applied to language, social meaning and the construction of social identities, in particular gender identities within children.

2.2 TERMINOLOGY ASSOCIATED WITH GENDER IDENTITY STUDIES

2.2.1 THE TERM "SEX"

In this study, the term sex will refer to the biological classification that is used to distinguish males from females, characterised mainly by sex organs which are present. From birth and infancy, biological sex determines how parents and others will react to us as children and adults. For example, parental personality expectations for daughters are different from those held for their sons (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Basically, sex is a matter of genes and the secretion of hormones and the physical developments that result from them (Talbot, 2010). For this research paper, whether an individual has ended up as a male or a female is dependent on whether the individual's father gave him/her an X or a Y chromosome. It is these chromosomes which will determine the development of the gonads into either ovaries or testes (Talbot, 2010). Essentially, sex is a matter of bodily attributes and essentially dimorphic. One is either male or female.

2.2.2 THE TERM "GENDER"

Gender, by contrast, is socially constructed; it is learned (Talbot, 2010). Unlike sex, gender is not binary and as such we can talk about one man being more masculine or feminine than another (Talbot, 2010). Gender is one of the earliest learned and most influential social identities throughout the lifespan (Bem, 1993). Gender identity is usually seen as relatively stable and an individual remains either a male or female for life and is seen to display gender-typed behaviours throughout his/her life (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998).

Gender in this study will be defined as the amount of masculine or feminine characteristics including preferences, behaviours and aspirations that an individual possesses. Masculine characteristics are the attributes that societal norms deem to be appropriate for men and feminine characteristics are the attributes deemed appropriate for women. Gender has been distinguished from 'sex' in that it develops through social and cultural processes, and is thus an acquired description, rather than biologically determined (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

2.2.3 THE TERM "SOCIALISATION"

Socialisation is the process through which a child becomes an individual respecting his or her environment, laws, norms and customs (Crespi, 2008). Gender socialisation is however a more focused form of socialisation as it refers to how children of different sexes are socialised into their gender roles and taught what it means to be male or female (Crespi, 2008). Gender socialisation begins the moment we are born from the simple question "Is it a boy or a girl?" We learn our gender roles by agencies of socialisation, which are the "teachers" of society (Crespi, 2008). The main agencies of socialisation in Western society are the family, peer groups, schools and the media. Each of these agencies can reinforce and recreate gender stereotypes. Gender differences are thus a result of the socialisation process, especially during early childhood and adolescence.

Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) have noted that the way an adult goes about socialising a child with respect to the sex-typing of behaviour is commonly believed to depend on both the sex of the adult and the sex of the child. Research relevant to the differentiation of the socializing behaviour of adults has revealed that males stereotype child behaviour more than females (Sobieszek, 1978). There is also evidence to suggest that fathers take the lead in encouraging sex-appropriate behaviour more in boys than in girls, and are more restrictive than mothers towards their sons (Fling & Manosevitz, 1972). While mothers also discourage sex-inappropriate behaviour in sons, they do appear to encourage sex-appropriate interests more in girls than in boys (Fling & Manosevitz, 1972).

The way we are, behave and think is the final product of socialisation. From the moment we are born, we are being shaped and moulded into what society wants us to be. Through socialisation we also learn what is appropriate and inappropriate for boys and girls. Parents become a key socializing agent to gender development.

2.2.4 THE TERM "STEREOTYPE"

According to Crespi (2008), stereotypes are representative of a society's collective knowledge of customs, myths, ideas, religions and sciences. It is within this knowledge that an individual develops a stereotype or a belief about a certain group (Crespi, 2008). Social psychologists feel that the stereotype is one part of an individual's social knowledge (Crespi, 2008).

Stereotypic behaviour can be linked to the way that the stereotype is learned, transmitted and changed. Stereotyping is how we as individuals perceive each other, especially individuals outside our group (Crespi, 2008). Gender stereotypes are related to cognitive processes because we have different expectations for male and female behaviour and the traditional gender roles help to sustain gender stereotypes, such as males are supposed to be adventurous, assertive, aggressive, independent and task-orientated, whereas females are seen as more sensitive, gentle, dependent, emotional and people-orientated (Crespi, 2008).

2.3 UNDERSTANDING GENDER

2.3.1 GENDER DEVELOPMENT

Gender development has various influences but there are three that play a key role in shaping who we are. Firstly, the biological aspect refers to the chromosomes or genetic make-up of an individual that determines the sex of a person (Blakemore, Barenbaum & Liben, 2009). Secondly, the social aspect which determines the contrasting roles of men and women and lastly, the cognitive aspect which refers to development through observation and imitation of gender behaviours (Blakemore, Barenbaum & Liben, 2009). It is through the biological, social and cognitive processes that young children develop their gender attitudes and behaviours.

From the time a parent discovers the sex of their infant, the assignment of gender identity and roles begin. Colour coded by pink for little girls and blue for little boys, the infant is already placed into a position for his/her role within society. According to Kolhberg (1966) children as young as 19 months of age have been seen to demonstrate the relations between gender labelling and gender-typed play. A similar study by Gelman, Taylor and Nguyen (2004)

found that two-year-old children spontaneously used gendered language 90% of the time when referring to people depicted in story books with high rates of accuracy suggesting that by age two, children have a certain degree of gender knowledge and some concepts of gender stereotypes. Kolhberg (1966) further emphasised that this attainment of gender identity required that children understood that everyone, including themselves, is either male or female.

Albert & Porter (1983) conducted a study whereby they were able to show that by age six, children have well developed gender stereotypes and that further research studies in this field indicated that these stereotypes influenced their social judgement. As children enter grade school, sex-typed behaviours become more pronounced as they achieve what is called "gender constancy" (Medway & Cafferty, 1992). Gender constancy is a tendency and preference for being with and liking same-sex peers. During pre - adolescence, sex is the single most important determinant of friendship and it is not until late adolescence that friendships with the opposite sex begin to be important.

As children develop into adulthood, gender identity, its influences and expectations provide a rich mosaic for continued study on social and psychological behaviours of males and females and their roles in an ever evolving society. Children use toys and play activities as a way of indicating and expressing these gender roles and expectations and this research paper aims to explore and understand these behaviours more fully within a specific societal setting.

2.3.2 GENDER IDEOLOGIES

People's beliefs and views about gender influence how individuals view themselves and their relationships with other people. Life and goals are shaped to a great extent by whether one is male or female and how society and culture define what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is for men and women. Gender roles describe the set of expectations that dictates how men and women should think, act and feel. Santrock (2009) used the term gender typing to describe the process whereby children acquire the thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are considered appropriate for their gender and culture. Toys play a vital role in assisting or guiding children to play or behave in a particular way and allowing gender ideologies to be formed and adhered to within the Western society (Santrock, 2009).

Gender ideologies allow for differences to be formed between masculinity and femininity and in 2003 Jana Cviková conducted a research study whereby she focused on these aspects of gender ideologies and the stereotypical differences that can be seen between masculinity and

femininity within society. Her main focus was on how boys and girls are different and how society continues to reinforce and recreate gender ideologies and norms for children within a given society. Cviková (2003) stated that in order for society to run smoothly, it needs to clearly and unequivocally distinguish between the sexes and maintain the social distinctions between femininity and masculinity via deliberate (e.g. the law) and unintentional (e.g. fairy tales) mechanisms.

Cviková (2003) defined rules of femininity and masculinity which she felt is important to understanding how society as a whole functions and operates. According to Cviková (2003, p.4), concrete girls or women are confronted with the basic rule of femininity which states that in no case should a woman want to be like a man. "She is mindful that a man does not feel weak or inferior", "she finds her self-fulfilment in caring for others", "she is sensitive, gentle, and compliant" or, "she tolerates much and forgives a lot".

The opposite of this is seen to be true for the main rule of masculinity which states that since a man is not a woman, he never does what a woman does and as such will have expectations that could be summed up by statements such as "he wants to be stronger, smarter and wants to earn more money", "he finds his self-fulfilment in professional success", "he is tough, never showing his feelings" or, "he tolerates nothing and forgives nothing" (Cviková, 2003,p.4).

With Cviková's (2003) research in mind, this paper is further able to explore the relationship between the rules of masculinity and the way that children are socialised into society through the use of toys. These "intrinsic" rules of masculinity and femininity can be seen in the way that parents interact with their children and through examining the purchasing patterns of parents when they are buying toys for children of a specific sex.

2.3.3 GENDER PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY

Childhood is an essentially exciting time to view gender through the lens of social identity principles. It is during this period that individuals first learn about gender categories, the boundaries of those categories, and their performance (Ruble, Martin, & Berenbaum, 2006). Judith Butler (1990) had the greatest influence on gender as performance. Butler (1990) argued that language can be used in order to construct gender. Furthermore, gender itself is performative – a socially constructed and never-ending process, a 'work-in-progress' which we are continuously engaged in (Butler, 1990). Gender therefore becomes something that we do, rather than who we are: 'Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated

acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being' (Butler, 1990, p. 25). Everyone, according to Butler, engages in gender performance. Therefore the issue is not whether we do gender performance but rather, the form that it takes (Butler, 1990).

The conclusion that gender is performative can be seen in the intended social meanings of boys' and girls' toys as their differences are clearly seen (Butler, 1990). This performance is brought into being by social actors, namely parents, family and society who encourage children to behave in a specific gendered way. We constantly negotiate and are able to challenge our gender positions in relation to conceptions of femininity and masculinity (Butler, 1990). Identities are therefore by no means fixed or given, but are constantly rehearsed, claimed and performed in everyday life. This shows that gender performance is a continual process and that essentially there is no 'real me' as all gender performances are socially constructed and subject to change over time (Butler, 1990).

It is on this premise that this paper can conduct research that is relevant and unique to the field of sociolinguistics. Gender identities and the construction of these identities are the core theme for this paper and as such one needs to accept Butler's (1990) view on identity construction and use her theory to show how toys shape and construct gender identities for children but one also needs to accept that these identities are not fixed or stable, but rather changing and evolving to suit a given situation at a given time. Children do not have fixed gender identities and it is through Butler's (1990) research that one can understand how to further research this phenomenon within our own Western society.

2.4 THE RELEVANCE OF TOYS

Toys make up a large portion of children's lives and therefore become an effective tool which we as researchers are able to use to determine their role within our society and how these specific toys impact or influence the lives of our children on a daily basis. If toys were marketed solely according to racial and ethnic stereotypes, customers would be outraged, and rightfully so. Yet every day, people encounter toy departments and shops that are rigidly segregated — not by race, but by gender. There are pink aisles, where toys revolve around beauty, domesticity and submission, and blue aisles filled with toys related to construction, action and aggression.

Gender has and always will play a role in the world of toys. What is surprising is that over the last generation, the gender segregation and stereotyping of toys have grown to unprecedented levels. We have made great strides towards gender equity over the past 50 years, but the world of toys appears to be old-fashioned and out-dated, rather than progressive and changing like our very own society (Paoletti, 2012).

Gender is not something we have, but rather something that we constantly perform or do. This gender performance is accompanied by socialisation, through which we as individuals become members of society. Toys are a means through which children become socialised into being the ideal boy or girl through their play interactions. Their performance and play habits allow them to become socialised into society and ultimately become the ideal man or woman. Gender ideologies and stereotypes are prominent in children's toys and are therefore an indication of how young children should behave and how they should not behave within society. These ideologies and stereotypes allow individuals, namely children, to perform their identities in different ways according to what society deems as appropriate or inappropriate for their gender.

Parents, family members and guardians, friends and siblings often purchase toys for children, taking ultimate responsibility for the toys that these children are allowed to play with. Children will be guided by their parents, family members and friends regarding which toys they may or may not play with and this leads to socialisation for the child. Toys are thus relevant for analytical purposes because they are the means through which children become familiar with their gender roles and expectations.

This research paper takes a new look at gender identities in relation to children's toys and their placement within a social setting, namely the toy store. This research is therefore beneficial for the semiotic landscape field within sociolinguistics and will allow for greater understanding and knowledge to be gained with regards to how children's gender identities are constructed through the use of their toys.

2.4.1 TOYS AND PARENTAL INFLUENCES

Research in the field of parent-child gender socialization has relied heavily on toys as a measure of both parental gender roles and expectations and of children's gender development. Toys occupy a large amount of time in children's lives and are important to gender socialization. Toys also enable children to learn about the world around them and how

to react to it as they imitate those around them, namely adults, with whom they interact with on a regular basis.

The interaction between parents and children during play provides children with messages regarding which behaviours are appropriate and which are inappropriate for their age. Children are discouraged from engaging in cross-gender play and with cross-gender toys; parents encourage their children to play with toys that are congruent with their sex (Fisher-Thompson, 1990), and to play in congruent sex-typed play styles (Lindsey & Mize, 2001). Researchers have attempted to conduct studies whereby they are able to show that if a child plays with a toy that is seen to be specifically "for the other gender" then that child will not fit into society and will not develop as he or she should, but these studies have been inconclusive and have not proven that children will become 'misfits' in their later lives.

The majority of research in parent-child gender socialisation in the play context looks at children as young as 12 months old. For example, in a longitudinal study, Fagot and Hagan (1991) found that 18 months was the age at which parents used the most rewards and punishments with their children. They felt that parents feel the need to educate their children at 18 months of age regarding the appropriate social norms of their society. By the age of 3 and a half, children can make sex appropriate play decisions and toy selections (Fagot & Hagan, 1991). Following this finding, Fagot & Hagan (1991) found that parents displayed fewer reactions to the appropriateness of sex-typed play for their 5 year-old children compared to when their children were 18 months old. This is due to the fact that sex-typed play guidance through rewards and punishments is no longer required at this age (Fagot & Hagan, 1991). Children by this age should have learned the basic gender rules and be able to maintain them. Children therefore are seen as extremely impressionable at a very young age and as such their toys at that age will be highly gender specific to allow children to learn the appropriate ways of behaving in society as a little girl or as a little boy.

2.4.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF SEX-TYPED TOYS

Unlike older children, babies and toddlers have little choice in their toy selections, which often reflect the attitudes and beliefs of adults. Since children are known to acquire sex role stereotypes and begin to fit their own identities to these cultural norms during the first few years of life, this is a particularly useful way to understand how gender norms are negotiated, expressed, learned and changed. According to Paoletti (2012) it is important that we understand that these supposed "traditions" are of recent vintage and that they represent the

culmination of just over a century of dramatic change in what has been considered appropriate merchandise for infants and children.

Toys are used by parents and children to learn about gender roles and expectations. Toys have been used in many studies to indicate how children learn gender (Giuliano, Popp, & Knight, 2000; O'Brien & Huston, 1985; Eisenberg, Wolchick, Hernandez, & Pasternack, 1985; Langlois & Downs, 1980; Roopnarine, 1986; Fisher-Thompson, 1993). Much research has been done to assess the process of how gender socialisation occurs through the encouragement of sex-typed toy play. This is where this research paper is different to other research based on gender socialisation through toys in that this current paper also aims to analyse the semiotic space wherein these toys are found or purchased. An analysis of the semiotic space of toy stores is important as it allows us to determine the influence and power that these stores have over the construction and maintenance of gender ideologies and stereotypes that ultimately affect children. Toy stores aim to continuously recreate gender norms and societal beliefs by encouraging girls and boys to be different and this can be seen when analysing the space of the actual toy store.

Gendered toys are what a given set of social norms rule as being appropriate for boys and girls to play with. Guns, army toys, weapons, football uniforms and cards, airplanes, vehicles (cars, trucks, trains), sports balls, weight lifting gear, and tools are examples of toys that past research has found to be toys for boys and are hence considered to be "masculine"; jewellery boxes, dolls and soft dolls, sewing kits, kitchen gadgets, hair dryers and telephones are toys for girls, and hence are considered "feminine" (Fisher-Thompson, 1990). Liss (1983) stated that it is clear that masculine toys promote spatial movement whereas feminine toys could be seen as promoting domestic and imaginative play as dolls can be seen as the only toys that elicit nurturing play. As children are learning more about which toys are appropriate for them to play with, their gender schemas are becoming more concrete and will therefore continuously be recreated within society.

2.5 TOY STUDIES

Toys are resources that children use to understand the world (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004). Toys are often produced according to social meanings which vary historically and culturally and as such, are seen to convey different messages to children about the social world and the social practices that surround them (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004). Toys are intimately related to 'what goes on' in society, its ideologies and

values, and through this important medium, children learn to interact with others and with social meanings (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004).

Toys, like Barbie and Ken, or Action Man, represent social actors through their design, movement, colour schemes, among other things, and these are always conditioned by the social contexts and ideologies of the time of production (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004). Hall (1997) stated that representation is the process by which members of a culture use signifying systems to produce meaning. Following Hall's statement, toys, then, are representational in the sense that they signify what society is like: its power relations, technologies, identities and practices.

According to Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen (2004:95-96), toys can be seen as multi-modal as they are characterised by the following:

1. "Three dimensional objects that can be read and interpreted as texts;
2. Objects to be manipulated and used;
3. Interdiscursive, positioned within multiple, overlapping and even conflicting discourses;
4. They have intertextual links with other mass media, especially with classical and modern narratives such as books, films and comic strips; and
5. They are dialogical in that they are a means through which different kinds of conversations can be established".

Toys are seen as important visual elements to children and can be used to say things that language cannot say on its own. It is interesting to see that in shops, toys are placed strategically in specific positions to attract the attention of either a boy or a girl. This is again where this current research paper becomes influential as it aims to look at and analyse the positions of toys within the toy store and how the toy store itself is gendered in its layout and space that it creates.

Diagram 1 below shows the thought process of a little girl deciding which toy she should play with.

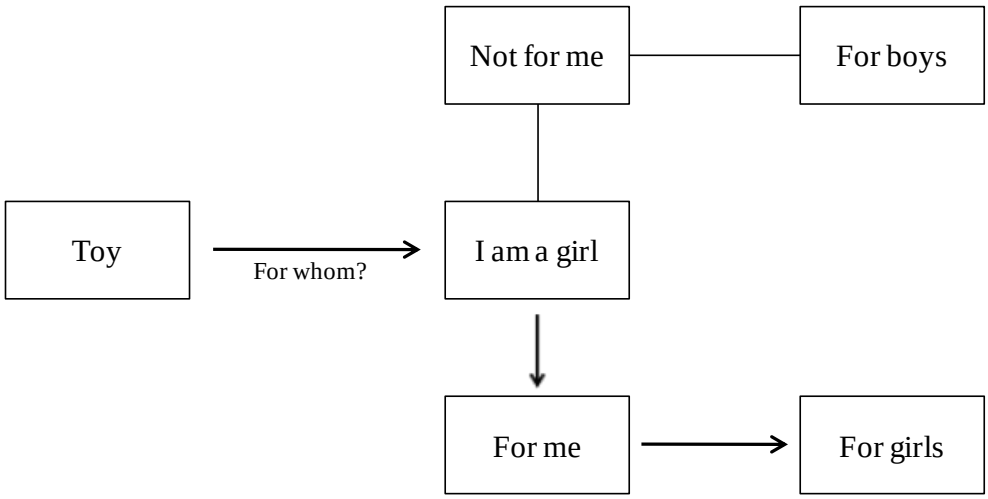


Diagram 1 – Children's reasoning about novel toys (taken from Martin, Eisenbud & Rose, 1995).

Caldas-Coulthard and Van Leeuwen (2004) focused mainly on the specific characteristics of toys themselves and how these toys are placed strategically to get the attention of the children who would purchase them. Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) focused specifically on how toys themselves fall into discourses and how these discourses influence children.

Machin & Van Leeuwen in 2009 conducted a study on children's war toys. Their starting point was from a statement made that most critics have failed to pay attention to the ways in which discourses of war are made available to children, and to the way children take up these discourses in play, even though children have been, and continue to be, a very important target of many systems of propaganda (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2009). Their starting point is very significant because it highlights the importance of discourses that are found in and around children of all ages. This links to the current research in that discourses about gender surround children in so many ways and these need to be considered when conducting research.

Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) found that the global toy industry itself is worth $60 billion a year and is dominated by a number of US companies such as Hasbro, who send GI Joe around the planet. US stores also dominate the global retail of toys through Toys R Us and the Walmart family of outlets, which among other war toys sell Special Forces automatic weapons and 'play suits' (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2009).

The main focus of their study and research was the way that toys of different eras have prepared children for specific kinds of warfare, fought in particular ways fused with specific political ideologies about the meaning of war and society itself during those times.

Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) looked at specific areas of interest when it came to war toys. These included settings, the soldiers, logos, camouflage, technology, sounds and the enemy. All of these areas of interest were analysed according to the actual toys themselves and these specific areas were compared to each other and the warfare discourse that is evident throughout the research. Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) stated that by looking at these aspects of toys, one is able to see that children's toys are miniature versions of the objects that the child will handle as an adult.

Psychologists such as Brunner (1968), Trevarthen (1993) and Winnicott (1971) have written of toys as transitional objects, through which children are able to practice their behaviour towards real things in the world (Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2009). Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) made use of 15 children in their study and they conducted interviews with these children, mainly asking them questions which related specifically to a toy gun. Through these interviews and play sessions, Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) concluded that war toys represent not only war itself but a 'body politic', teaching children about just what society is and what kinds of identities exist within it.

Machin & Van Leeuwen (2009) focused on specific toys, war toys, and how discourses around these toys influence children and their play sessions. Joel Best (1998) looked more specifically at how toys themselves can be problematic within society. Best (1998) stated that there needs to be an emphasis on the importance of child's play in developing the self and the child's competence as a social actor. Sociologists worry about the play's role in reproducing society's troubling features, such as gender inequality.

Best (1998) stated that play has an important place in society because it is educational, a means by which children learn about their world. Given play's centrality in child development, the choice and use of playthings becomes significant. Best (1998: 202) brings to our attention the fact that toys impart undesirable values that, in turn, lead to undesirable behaviour; "Toys carry with them a great deal of ideological baggage, which is all too easily assimilated into play and into children's views of the world. Toys replicate the larger culture; "[A toy] has the capacity to represent symbolically to the child whole constellations of cultural ways, to structure the child's imagination, helping to recreate the particular version

of reality that the adult generation chooses" (Best, 1998: 202). Playing with the wrong toys can have grave consequences (Best, 1998).

Best (1998) found that Barbie had either positive or negative views based on who was analysing the toy. Barbie promotes or discourages traditional gender roles, fosters or inhibits sexuality, discourages or encourages girls' independence, establishes or subverts racism and heterosexism, diminishes the importance of religion, celebrates capitalism and consumerism, causes anorexia, and fosters resistance (Best, 1998).

Best (1998: 204-205) provided us with ways of determining whether a toy is problematic or not:

1. Identify some type of toy; then argue that
2. These toys somehow represent undesirable values;
3. That children who play with these toys acquire those values; which, in turn
4. Leads to undesirable consequences.

Toys become "texts" to be "read" and their meaning and consequences need to be interpreted accordingly. Best (1998) concluded that although some toys encourage too much of the working kind of fun, we should however be aware that studying material culture means studying people – not objects. We should be watching children playing with toys, talking to children about their play, or – as Best (1998) has attempted to do in his research, examine how Claims-makers (those who assert that a social problem exists) turn toys into social problems, rather than trying to read the meanings embedded in these, or any other, cultural artefacts. Best (1998) concludes by saying that culture emerges in actions, not artefacts, and we as researchers ought to be where the action is.

2.5.1 CHARACTERISTICS OF TOYS

Pink or blue? Which is intended for boys and which for girls? There has been a great diversity of opinion on this subject, but in the 1800's, the generally accepted rule was pink for the boy and blue for the girl. The reason was that pink, being a more decided and stronger colour, was more suitable for the boy, while blue, which was seen as more delicate and dainty, was prettier for the girl (Paoletti, 2012). According to Paoletti (2012) the colour blue has never been as powerful symbolically as the colour pink was in the 1800's and this notion of pink for the boy and blue for the girl can be seen to differ from the current societal norm

which sees the colour pink being associated with girls and the colour blue being used for boys.

In the first half of the twentieth century, a cultural shift took place in the United States of America (Paoletti, 2012). In the span of a single generation, gender colour associations underwent a sudden reversal or change. Pink, which was a stereotypically masculine colour until the 1920's, had by the 1950's become associated with girls and femininity while blue had switched from a feminine colour to a masculine colour (Giudice, 2012). Paoletti (2012) found that the rules had changed so dramatically that the conventions of 2010 are nearly the reverse of those in 1890.

Children now enter a pre-structured world of expectations, hopes, limits and colours, in which gender as a social category plays a very important role (Cviková, 2003). The most interesting aspect of Cviková's research is the focus on children's worlds as either pink or blue and how these worlds influence children differently. Children enter a micro and macro-cosmos formed by the cultural pattern of gender duality and that in each moment of their lives the socialization of a girl or boy takes place in this divided and hierarchically organised world (Cviková, 2003). In our cultural and social setting, the girl is surrounded by the pink imperative and the boy by the blue imperative.

The attribution of gender roles happens by means of communication, evaluation, clothing and selection of toys and games. The decision between a doll and a car does not follow from the biological sex of the baby but from the social evaluation of the toy as either appropriate or inappropriate for a girl or a boy (Cviková, 2003).

The finding that toys have masculine and feminine attributes can be better seen through the research study which was conducted by Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen (2004). According to Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen (2004) the physical features of toys (large muscles or big breasts) connote exaggeration on the verge of distortion and their almost naked bodies assert their sexuality. Ken and Barbie, through their dress code, posing and looks in general are representatives of conformity and socially desirable activities such as going to work, going shopping etc. (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004).

Their findings show that certain roles in society, like practices of domesticity, are over-represented, while practices of 'fatherhood' are basically absent in the toy world (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004). By looking at specific aspects of design, movement,

colour and gender when analysing the children's toy products, they concluded that female dolls are represented as physically constrained in the ways they move, they are romanticised and are seen to be anchored on a 'real world' of domestic doings, they too are conventionally restricted to certain activities and social roles (Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen, 2004). They also found that boys' toys and their related representations construct danger, action, risk and power. Cviková (2003) found that boys typically belong to the public sphere whereas girls can be seen as typically belonging to the private sphere within a society.

2.6 CONSUMERISM AND ADVERTISING TOWARDS CHILDREN

Consumerism can be defined as a hegemonic culture that characterises everyday life in the global north (Iqani, 2012). Consumption is primarily a trait and occupation of individual human beings, whereas consumerism is seen as an attribute of society (Bauman, 2007). A consumer is an individual defined in terms of their ability to consume and their consumption practices; a subject who acquires, uses or disposes of commodities (Arnould, Price & Zinkhan, 2002) and who lives within the framework of a market society (Iqani, 2012).

Material culture and consumption involves those tangible aspects of the human experience that are created or modified by humans (Paoletti, 2012). These tangible aspects can be better identified as artefacts. These artefacts impose certain requirements upon the consumer. When purchasing an item, namely a children's toy, a parent or friend would need to know which age group the toy is aimed at, whether the toy appeals to a girl or to a boy, how the toy works and if it will be enjoyable to the child. Bearing this in mind, it is important to remember that the very act of purchasing toys allows for personal style and identity to be portrayed by the consumer. Identities and personal styles are produced through the act of buying and this allows for individualisation and differences among individuals to become evident. Identities and personal styles are therefore produced through consumerism.

It is almost impossible to imagine consumer society without the presence of a variety of forms of media and visual communication (Iqani, 2012). Consumer culture is notoriously awash with signs, images and publicity. Most obviously, it involves an aestheticization of commodities and their environment; packaging, shop display, point of sale material, product design and advertisements (Iqani, 2012).

Over the past three decades, children's estimated exposure to television advertising has doubled from an average of about 20,000 commercials per year in the late 1970s to more than

40,000 per year in the early 1990s (Pike & Jennings, 2005). Girls and boys are often seen as being portrayed in very stereotypical roles within television commercials, which are aimed primarily towards children and this has not changed dramatically over time (Pike & Jennings, 2005). Commercials and advertisements present gender stereotypes through overt characteristics, such as activities and language, and although many media messages tend to reinforce gender roles, very few researchers have explored the portrayal of non-traditional gender roles and stereotypes that are found within different advertising media (Pike & Jennings, 2005).

Pike and Jennings (2005) stated that there are two main theories that relate to mass communication and that these theories are particularly helpful to researchers in understanding how the media act as socialising agents, and how this in turn may influence the construction and perpetuation of gender constructs. The first theory is that of the cultivation theory, which provides descriptions of the current messages that are being vicariously learned via observation (Pike & Jennings, 2005). The second theory is that of the social learning theory, which states that learning can be achieved not only through direct experience, but also vicariously through observation of a variety of models which can be found in a child's surrounding and immediate environment (Pike & Jennings, 2005). According to Pike & Jennings (2005: 83), "these two theories work in tandem as the cultivation theory analysis provides descriptions of the recurrent messages that are being vicariously learned via observation and the social learning theory states that learning can be achieved not only through direct experience, but also vicariously through observation of a variety of models"". Social learning theory is based on the assumption that people learn behaviours by observing the rewards and punishments of others with whom they come in contact with. Research suggests that children are aware of the gendered portrayals in advertisements and thus have learned the gender "appropriateness" of toys through modelled behaviour, which may affect their toy preferences and the nature of their play (Pike & Jennings, 2005). According to Pike & Jennings (2005), the repeated exposure to these images contributes to the development of children's conceptions of gender and their expected roles as men and women. Kohlberg's (1966) early work on gender development suggests that children seek out gender-related information and look for ways to conform to these gender norms.

Pike and Jennings (2005) found that girls and boys are often portrayed in stereotypical roles within advertising media and that the activities that are portrayed often signify traditional gender roles. For example, Smith (1994) observed that girls engaged in shopping, whereas

boys did not, and that only boys performed antisocial behaviours, such as fighting and stealing. Further research indicates that a relationship exists between the exposure to these gendered images and children's perceptions about gender roles within society. Research on children's programs and advertising indicates that children perceive gender role stereotypes (Pike & Jennings, 2005). The research further suggests that children are aware of the gendered portrayals in advertisements and thus have learned the gender "appropriateness" of toys through modelled behaviour, which may affect their toy preferences (Pike & Jennings, 2005). Therefore, the repeated exposure to these advertisements and images contributes to the development of children's conceptions of gender and their expected roles as men and women (Pike & Jennings, 2005).

Public concern is growing about the nature of the advertisements' content and the lessons being taught and shared, particularly for young audiences. Commercials present gender stereotypes through overt factors such as activities and language but also through covert factors such as images and hidden meanings. Children and adults learn a great deal about their immediate environment through what they see and hear.

What has been found is that advertisements in catalogues and newspapers feature little girls dressed in pink clothes, playing with pink toys, carrying pink lunchboxes, typing on pink computers etc. in contrast, little boys are typically portrayed with clothing and toys that are blue (LoBue & DeLoache (2011). Smith (1994: 325) states that the effects of children's social learning from advertisements is that they are basically shown how to behave, eventually accepting without question the assumed images as 'real', taking cues regarding appropriate gender behaviour.

2.7 CURRENT RESEARCH TOPIC

The current research topic that I wish to embark on is significantly different to other research topics and studies that have been conducted on children's toys and gender construction through these toys. The main reason for this is that I aim to look at the visual constructions of the toys (wording and images) to determine how these toys shape gender identities for little children. The toys themselves form the basis from which parental interviews will be conducted, particularly with same-sex couples (both men and women) as well as with black, African parents. I also aim to look at the gendering of the space in and around the toy store. I will make use of semiotics to conduct this research.

THEORY AND METHOD

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1.1 LANGUAGE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE

Language in the public space refers to all language items that are seen and heard within our surrounding environments, societies and communities (Shohamy, 2005). The language that is displayed within these contexts refers to the physical language items that are found all around us. These language items are found both within the private and public spaces and are seen in streets, shopping centres, schools, markets, offices, hospitals and can be seen in various ways, for example names of streets, public signs, names of shops, advertisements, newspapers and billboards (Shohamy, 2005). One also needs to remember that language can be verbal and non-verbal and a case where non-verbal language is used is in pictures and images.

Shohamy (2005) noted that the presence or absence of language that is displayed in the public space communicates a message whether it is intentional or not and even whether it is conscious or not, and this can be seen to affect, manipulate or even impose a concerning fact which is related to language policy and practice.

Private signs include commercial signs on storefronts and business institutions (e.g. retail stores and banks), commercial advertising on billboards, and advertising signs displayed in public transport and on private vehicles (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). Government signs include public signs used by national, regional or municipal governments in the following domains: road signs, place names, street names, and inscriptions on state buildings including ministries, hospitals, universities, town halls, schools, metro stations, and public parks (Landry & Bourhis, 1997).

Space is not only physically but also socially constructed. Spatialization includes the many different processes by which space comes to be represented, organised and experienced (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). We create our identities in part through the process of geographical imagining, the locating of the self in space, claiming the ownership of specific places, or by being excluded from them, by sharing space and interacting with others, however subtly and fleetingly (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010).

Places are constructed and experienced as material artefacts and intricate networks of social relations (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). According to Jaworski & Thurlow (2010), these places are the focus of imagination, beliefs, views, desires, hopes, dreams and longings.

Places are filled with intense activity, whether material or discursive, and have symbolic and representational meanings and as such, places can be seen as the final product of power and authority (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Places can take the form of many different environmental and material objects. Jaworski & Thurlow (2010) explained that a building for example is seen as a representation of how individuals within that specific building organise their space. The way that the buildings are used and the way that the individuals relate to that building and each other are dependent on the written, spoken and visual texts that surround that building.

3.1.2 LINGUISTIC AND SEMIOTIC LANDSCAPES

Linguistic landscape is only one domain within language in the public space and it refers to specific language objects that mark the public space (Shohamy, 2005). Landry & Bourhis (1997) refer to linguistic landscapes as the visibility of languages as objects that mark the public space in a given territory. "The language of public road signs, advertising, billboards, street names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings combine to form the linguistic landscape of a given territory, region or urban agglomeration" (Landry & Bourhis, 1997: 25).

Landscape as a way of seeing is not to be confined to the mediated representations of space in art and literature (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). It is a broader concept pertaining to how we view and interpret space in ways that are contingent and geographical, social, economic, legal, cultural and emotional circumstances, as well as our practical uses of the physical environment as nature and territory, aesthetic judgments, memory and myth, for example drawing on religious beliefs, and references, historical discourses, politics of gender relations, class, ethnicity, and the imperial projects of colonization – all of which are still present today and consistently reproduced (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010).

Linguistic ideologies are "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization of justification of perceived language structure and use" (Silverstein, 1979: 193). The linguistic choices made on public signage are therefore indicative of their producers' identities and ideologies.

Semiotic landscapes can be seen as another contributing domain within language in the public space and is concerned with the interplay between language, visual discourse, and the spatial practices and dimensions of culture, especially the textual mediation or discursive construction of place and the use of space as a semiotic resource in its own right (Jaworski &

Thurlow, 2010). All landscape is semiotic in that its meaning is always constructed in the act of socio-cultural interpretation. Semiotic landscape is thus any (public) space with visible inscription made through deliberate human intervention and meaning making (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). As stated by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001:46):

> "...in the era of multimodality semiotic modes other than language are treated as fully capable of serving for representation and communication. Indeed, language, whether as speech or as writing, may now often be seen as ancillary to other semiotic modes: to the visual for instance. Language may be 'extra visual'. The very facts of the new communicational landscape have made that inescapably the issue."

According to Koller (2008: 398), Scollon & Scollon (2003) further stated that ideology is traceable through the signs observed in three-dimensional space, including writing systems, typography and colour choice. Space is not only physically but also socially constructed and can be divided into three main types: conceived space, perceived space and lived space (Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Jaworski & Thurlow (2010: 7-8) goes on to describe each type of space as the following: "Conceived space corresponds to mental or represented images of space, Perceived space is equivalent to material or physical space which is responsible for economic production and social reproduction and Lived space is produced through the experiential intersection and/or interaction of both conceived and perceived space". Therefore, the meaning and power of language is thus dependent on and derived from, space. Before delving into detailed textual analysis of relevant texts, however, I will now move on to present a framework that will allow me to theorize the links between language and the discursive and material constructions of gender categorization.

3.1.3 DISCOURSE, CDA AND MCDA

The term discourse refers to the way in which language is used in a specific context (Talbot, 2010). As stated by Spender (1985):

> "Language helps form the limits of our reality. It is our means of ordering, classifying and manipulating the world. It is through language that we become members of a human community, that the world becomes comprehensible and meaningful, that we bring into existence the world in which we live."

Critical discourse analysis uses the term 'discourse' and is further explained by Kress (1985: 6-7) who states that:

> "...discourses are systematically-organised sets of statements which give expression to the meaning and values of an institution. Beyond that, they define, describe and delimit what is possible to say and not possible to say with respect to the era of concern of that institution, whether marginally or centrally. A discourse provides a set of possible statements about a given area, topic, object, process that is to be talked about in that it provides description, rules, permissions and prohibitions of social and individual actions."

Therefore, discourses are historically constituted bodies of knowledge and practice that shape people, giving positions of power to some but not to others (Talbot, 2010). Discourses need to be analysed in order to fully understand their social and political powers within a society and one way of obtaining this analysis is through Critical Discourse Analysis.

The main theoretical paradigm that will be used throughout this study will be that of Critical Discourse Analysis. "Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theory and method that analyses the way that individuals and institutions use language" (Mayr, 2008:8). "CDA focuses specifically on the interacting relationship between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality" (Mayr, 2008:8). Institutions use language as a means to reproduce and maintain the relations of dominance and inequality within a society (Mayr, 2008). Images may seek to depict specific people and how these people can be used to connote general concepts, types of people, 'stereotypes', and abstract ideas (Machin & Mayr, 2012). CDA has a specific focus on language use and this is fundamental to the understanding of how children's toys, videos and advertising use language to portray specific social meanings.

In order to analyse children's toys, videos and print advertisements, one needs to take into consideration its written discourse as well as its visual elements. When carrying out an analysis of the way that meanings are communicated through a combination of linguistic and visual representational strategies, it is important to identify how the different affordances of the two modes have been used to create different meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2012). In Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) we are interested in showing how images, photographs and graphics also work to create meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Images can be used to say things that we cannot say in language (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Here it is

important to remember that visual communication, as well as language, both shapes and is shaped by society (Machin & Mayr, 2012). MCDA is therefore not only interested in the visual semiotic choices but it is also interested in the way that they play a part in the communication of power relations (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Machin and Thornborrow (2003:440) stated that "in any visual composition designers will have used semiotic resources to connote particular discourses that allow them, therefore, to define reality in a particular way." Through this study, the visual and the written data will be analysed to determine how reality is shaped and reproduced for young girls and boys. When analysing visual media, the following has to be taken into consideration: denotation, connotation, poses, objects, settings and participants. By taking into account all of these elements; one is able to combine the visual as well as the textual aspects to create a coherent meaning.

When analysing images it is important to understand that meaning is created through a variety of different elements. Three main things that become apparent when analysing images are salience, gaze and the colour saturation of each image (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Salience is where certain features in images are made to stand out, to draw our attention and to foreground certain meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2012). According to Machin & Mayr (2012), salience can be achieved through a number of different ways. These include potent cultural symbols, size, colour and tone, focus, foregrounding and overlapping.

Potent cultural symbols refer to certain elements in an image which carry cultural symbolism. The size of an image (whether small or large) can be used to indicate a level of importance or unimportance. Colour is important because it indicates the level of salience or which part of the image is the most important (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Images that make use of rich, striking colours indicate more salience, whereas images that make use of muted or less saturated colours indicate a less salient image (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Colour works closely with tone as this refers to the use of brightness to attract an individual's eye. According to Machin & Mayr (2012), advertisers often use brighter tones on products themselves to make them shine and attract consumers.

In images, focus is used to give salience to a specific element within the image. The element can be heightened to exaggerate details, or the focus can be reduced (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Another way of creating importance is through the use of foregrounding. Images that are placed further back are seen as being subordinate (Machin & MAYR, 2012). Overlapping is

also used to show importance but it involves placing elements in front of others and gives the impression that one image is more important than the others (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Gaze is a very important element to analyse when looking for meaning from an image. Is the individual looking at the viewer or is he/she looking away from the viewer and what does this mean for a researcher who is looking for a deeper meaning? According to Halliday (1985), when we as individuals speak, we can do one of four basic things: we can offer information, we can offer goods or services, we can demand information or we can demand goods and services. With an image however, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) thought that images can fulfil two of these, namely offer and demand. This indicates to viewers that images can in fact reference actual acts of interaction in talk.

A demand image is one where the individual in the image is looking directly at the viewer, creating a formal visual address where the viewer is acknowledged (Machin & Mayr, 2012). An offer image on the other hand is one where the individual in the image is not looking directly at the viewer but is instead looking away. This ensures that no demand is made on the viewer and no response is expected (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Another aspect to consider is when an individual in an image is seen to be looking off-frame. This invites the viewer to imagine what the individual in the image is thinking (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Often times, gaze is accompanied by postures that are either welcoming or hostile.

When using MCDA it is also important to consider the notion of individualisation versus collectivisation. People in images can be depicted as individuals or they can be depicted as a group. They can be homogenised as in they are made to look, act or pose like each other to different degrees which creates a "they are all the same" or "you can't tell them apart" impression (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Machin & Mayr (2012) found that individuals can also be excluded or not represented in certain images where they are in fact present. It is important to understand how and why these individuals have been excluded from the images and what impact this has on society.

Halliday was mentioned previously and it is important to consider the thoughts and theories that are presented with regards to semiotic systems. According to Halliday (1978), there are three basic requirements that need to be met in order for a semiotic system to function as a communicative system (Machin, 2007). These functions are the ideational metafunction, the interpersonal metafunction and the textual metafunction (Machin, 2007).

1. Ideational Metafunction

   A semiotic system has to be able to represent ideas beyond its own system of signs (Machin, 2007). When using discourse, this metafunction focuses on the participants (nouns, noun phrases and pronouns) as well as the processes (verbs) (Machin, 2007). The visual can focus on circumstances (where, who with, by what means, attributes (the qualities and characteristics) (Haratyan, 2011).

2. Interpersonal Metafunction

   A semiotic system must be able to create a relation between the producer and the receiver (Machin, 2007). When using discourse, this metafunction focuses on modality, mood and clause structure (Machin, 2007). The visual focuses on social distance, modality markers, address, involvement and power (Haratyan, 2011).

3. Textual Metafunction

   A semiotic system must be able to form coherent whole (Machin, 2007). When using discourse, this metafunction focuses on the information value, salience and framing (Machin, 2007). In the visual, the focus will be on the information given (Rheme and Theme), salience and framing of objects (Haratyan, 2011).

Halliday's theory of social semiotics explains that words mean not only on their own but as part of a network of meanings (Machin & Mayr, 2012). Therefore a complete analysis can be made by using every aspect of the toys, videos and advertisements. By focusing on the visual as well as the written discourse one is able to obtain a greater understanding of how femininity and masculinity is constructed through the use of play for young girls and boys in South Africa. Therefore, in order to fully understand the meanings conveyed by visual elements, language needs to come into play, especially in a post-structuralist framework, thus allowing for multiple meanings to be obtained. Individuals will view visual elements in different ways and it is therefore important to conduct interviews to obtain the linguistic element of this study. This gives a vantage point for the methodology to be discussed to further elaborate on how language and visual elements can be combined to give a variety of meanings.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2002) state that colour qualifies as a semiotic mode because:

- It is regular, with signs that are motivated in their constitution by the interests of the markers of the signs (p.345);
- It fulfils all three Hallidayan metafunctions in that it can clearly be used to denote specific people, places and things as well as classes (ideational metafunction), it is further employed to do things to or for each other (interpersonal metafunction), and in its textual metafunction, it can also help create coherence in texts through colour coordination (p.347).
- It forms a system of elements that can be combined with each other in a potentially infinite number of possibilities, but grammar rules operate upon appropriate combinations (p.352).

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The visual and linguistic data of children's toys that were used in this study were collected from 3 South African toy stores, namely a big toy chain store, Toyzone, an alternative store, Greenbusters, and lastly a store located in a small rural town, Malelane, in Mpumalanga. Data was also collected through interviews which were conducted with parents. The decision to obtain the above mentioned data was motivated by the fact that:

> "...young children search for cues about gender – who should or should not do a particular activity, who can play with whom, and why girls and boys are different. From a vast array of gendered cues in their social worlds, children quickly form an impressive constellation of gender cognition, including gender self-conceptions (gender identity) and gender stereotypes."
>
> (Martin & Ruble, 2004: 67)

The main chain store, Toyzone, was selected as it can be regarded as a representative platform from which other, smaller toy stores are able to obtain inspiration in terms of layout, competitive pricing, toy selection and marketing strategies. The alternative toy store, Greenbusters, was selected as it portrays 'unusual' and unique children's toys which may not be seen in a bigger, globalised toy store. These alternative toy stores allowed for greater insight into gender ideologies and gender constructions and how these may differ to those of a bigger toy store. The last store which was analysed was that of a store which was found outside of the Johannesburg borders. The motivation for the use of this rurally-located store

for the current research was to obtain data and information that could be used as a comparison to the larger and more accessible toy stores.

Once the toy stores were located, photographs were taken of the outside of each toy store to determine the visual spatial element of each store. This includes location, relation to other stores, size and appearance of the store. Once these photographs had been taken, photographs were taken of the interior of each store. The interior photos allowed for aspects of space to be determined within each store allowing for identification of boys' toys and girls' toys and how they were aligned or positioned within each store.

Zooming in is the next step in the process of taking photographs. This was done to specific toy products that could be classified according to a scale. This scale included the following 14 criteria or characteristics:

1. Whether or not the toy encourages nurturance
2. Whether the toy allows for aggressive and violent behaviour
3. Attractiveness of the toy
4. Whether or not the toy focuses on appearances or attractiveness
5. Is the toy expensive?
6. Whether or not the toy encourages domestic or household skills
7. Is the toy dangerous or risky?
8. Does the toy develop occupational skills?
9. Does the toy allow for flexibility and mobility?
10. Is the toy educational?
11. Does the toy encourage social play with other children?
12. Is the toy able to move on its own?
13. Does the toy encourage competition?
14. Does the toy represent the masculine or feminine ideal?

From the above mentioned categories, 13 of them were taken from Blakemore & Centers (2005) study and were used to determine the characteristics of children's toys. I added a new category, namely whether the toy is representative of the masculine or feminine ideal. The new question refers to how closely the toy is seen as a toy specifically for boys or for girls and how closely the toy depicts society's norms about men and women. Looking at the signs which appear within the toy store is also of great importance for this study. Signs which

appear in the store were relevant as they also contained linguistic elements which could be analysed to determine the language use and construction thereof.

Once these categories had been determined for each toy that was analysed, a comparison could be made between the many differences between boys' and girls' toys and how gender appropriateness is constructed and also reconstructed through children's toys. An analysis of the spatial elements of each store was also conducted to determine the store space as a whole and how each store is sexualised and how it accommodates/facilitates this sexualisation of space within the store. This gendering and sexualisation of space can be created not only through the material constructions of each toy but also through the linguistic and language constructions which can be seen in the advertising media of each toy.

Once the toy data had been obtained, the interviews were conducted and linguistic data gathered. The interviews that were conducted were done with parents who have children of their own. Each parent was asked the same open-ended questions and these were used to determine the thoughts and feelings that parents have regarding toys and their construction or reconstruction of gender stereotypes. These interview sessions allowed for personal and qualitative data to be obtained from the parents which also showed patterns of thinking that could later be generalised to include all parents and what they think and feel.

The analysis of children's toys was conducted using both the visual as well as the linguistic elements which are present in the toy stores, toys and the interviews that were collected. The majority of the analysis was on the linguistic construction of gender ideologies and stereotypes as seen by parents. The selection of toys and images that was used were chosen to give further insight into this gender construction. The combination of these elements aided greater investigation and further development into the understanding of how children's toys shape gender ideologies within a society, namely Johannesburg, South Africa.

Due to the nature of my research, complying with the ethics standards of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg is of utmost importance. Ethics forms and clearance forms were submitted to the ethics board and approval has been obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand for me as the researcher to conduct this current research.

RESULTS

In the section that follows, an in-depth analysis of the data will be provided. This analysis will make use of common sociolinguistic terminology and will provide insights into the toys themselves, the toy stores and the thoughts surrounding the construction and reconstruction of gender stereotypes within these toys and toy stores. The toys were selected based on their depiction of gender stereotypes that were visually evident. Some of the toys have specific wording that is related to gender and other products show only the visual elements of gender stereotypes within the actual toy itself. Toys were chosen based on their ability to influence young girls and boys to become socialised, larger individuals within society. The decision to include specific toys and exclude others is based on the notion that toys are items that children interact and play with daily and as such, the toys that will be seen to influence a young girl or boy to become an integrated individual within society are the toys that are of interest in this research paper, while those that do not have specific gender ideals were excluded from this research.

4.1 Results

Within this section, the visual elements such as words, images and a combination of the two, will be analysed to allow for a greater understanding into the ways and means that toys can create and recreate gender stereotypes as well as how the toy store is gendered in a specific way. The data and images in this research paper were obtained through the use of a photographic camera that was taken to each toy store.



The above image shows the three toy stores that were used for this current research paper. The toy store name found on the far left hand side of the image is that of Greenbusters. Greenbusters is an alternative toy store which is located in the affluent Northern suburbs of Johannesburg and sells toys that are predominantly imported from overseas toy suppliers. The toy store name in the middle of the image is that of Toyzone. Toyzone is known by many consumers as being one of the big toy store chains and one such branch can be found in the Westrand region of Johannesburg. Toyzone sells toys for all age groups and genders and is

large in size compared to the Greenbusters store. Lastly, the toy store name found on the far right hand side of the image is that of a Superspar which is located in the Malelane area within Mpumalanga. This is a well-known supermarket chain rather than a focused toy store; however it is the only store in this small town that sells toys for children.

The selection of these three stores is based on the premise that each store provides different information in terms of social class, race and degree of urbanisation. Toyzone, with this particular store situated on the Westrand, provides products that are aimed at the middle to upper-class consumers and is available to consumers of any race or ethnicity. This store is located within a busy shopping centre and can be accessed by a large number of individuals. The Greenbusters shop, situated in the affluent Northern suburbs of Johannesburg, has a target market consisting of predominantly upper-class consumers. The shop caters mainly for individuals of Caucasian ethnicity and is located within a busy shopping centre found along a main road. The Spar in Malelane provides products that are mainly for the lower-class individual and stocks toys aimed predominantly at the black ethnicity within the rural town itself.

The combination of these three stores provides a broad selection of data across a wide geographical area that can be analysed for this research project. Within each store, we will see a large variety of toys with certain similarities across groups of toys. We will also find unique toys, particularly when aimed at upper-class consumers who are able to pay a premium for unique toys. This selection of toys will be analysed to compare and contrast each store and their individual findings.

4.1.1 Greenbusters



When walking towards the Greenbusters store one will notice that it is nestled between two stores, namely The Body Shop which is seen on the left hand side of the photograph and another shop called Hydraulic to the right of the photograph. The Body Shop sells body products aimed at women and Hydraulic sells clothing which is aimed predominantly at men. This can be seen from the manikins in the store window, both men, with clothing on that has been made especially for men. The two stores on each side of Greenbusters are clearly larger in size than the Greenbusters store. Although it is unknown which stores were there first, this is a fairly strategic placement for a toy store as both men and women are likely to come across the store while making luxury purchases at either The Body Stop or Hydraulic.



Zooming and taking a close-shot of the Greenbusters store, one notices a clear, glass window that has a single entrance door on the left hand side of the store. Having the wide, open, glass windows allows passers-by to see what the store offers, namely toys for children. The store is inviting and one is able to see the large display of toys in the shop window. The windows to the store are filled with toys of different types and this invites the potential shopper to enter the store and find out what else lies in store for him or her. From the outside, the store gives the feel of being open, airy and inviting and this is what draws customers into the store.

A bright green illuminated sign shows us the name of the store at the top right hand side of the store. The brightness of the store sign portrays salience and allows the viewer to see that the store is important as the sign is large and bright, thus drawing attention. The sign is large enough to be seen from across the walkway within the mall. At the end of the sign is a green ghost who is seen to be whizzing past the sign and leaving its trail underneath the sign and behind it. Greenbusters can be seen as a play on the popular movie and children's show

"Ghostbusters". This is a concept which is thus immediately recognisable to the children, which will help to attract shoppers to the store, particularly parents walking through the shopping mall with their children.

Underneath the sign "Greenbusters" is written their slogan which says:

"The toy shop with a difference"

The slogan is written in a smaller font to the name of the store and is written in black with a fine white border around each letter. This slogan is not visible from the opposite end of the walkway and one has to be right outside the toy store to be able to read it. This indicates that the name of the store is of more importance and the owner wants shoppers walking past the store to remember the name rather than the catchy slogan. The slogan invites shoppers to explore why this toy store is different and potentially even unique. The use of the words "The toy shop" rather than "A toy shop" suggests that Greenbusters may even be unique as there is no other toy shop like this that promises an experience with a difference. In order to know why this toy store is different, the customer needs to enter the store and find out what makes it different to all the other stores that he or she may have entered in the past.

When one first enters the Greenbusters store, one is overtaken by the arrangement of colour and different toy types within the store. There is a noticeable lack of a gender divide. There are no clear markings demarcating a specific area of the store for either boys or girls. There appears to be a fairly equal split between toys traditionally aimed at girls and toys traditionally aimed at boys. When looking closely at the store, one notices that the store is arranged according to the toy suppliers and not according to a specific gender. Even within these supplier sections, there is no noticeable gender divide. The toys are not arranged systematically and are placed randomly within each section which makes it quite difficult to divide the toys when looking for similarities and differences between the genders.

The significance of this is that the store does not feel the need to divide toys according to gender. Presumably, this decision has been made in reaction to what the store owner believes is important and attractive to the store's targeting market. Although some of the toys within the store are marketed at either boys or girls, the store itself does not appear to promote the gender divide. The store also does not promote one gender more than the other.

The toys in Greenbusters are all imported from overseas companies, generally based in countries other than China, which results in pricing that is only appropriate for an affluent

target market. The fact that each toy company has its own section in the store suggests that Greenbusters appeals to parents who have a particular brand preference rather than a preference for a specific type of toy. I looked at each supplier and took photographs on the premise that the toys within each supplier section displayed a gender divide.

Suppliers like "Budkins" and "Play Mobil" had toys specifically for boys and girls and these images were used for my analysis. Other toy suppliers did not have toys specifically aimed at boys or girls, so in these cases I used a combination of toy suppliers for the remaining photographic analysis. In the images that follow, I as the researcher provide an analysis of the toys that I feel provide a division between boys and girls.

Budkins toys





According to the 'Le Toy Van' website (www.letoyvan.com), Budkins toys are described as follows:

> "A world of pure imagination: where toys set the scene for idyllic childhood adventures. From charming Daisylane doll's houses and Honeybake home-life to jolly pirate ships and enthralling castles: children are free to create their own stories."

It is interesting to note that the manufacturers themselves indicate that children need to be free to create their own stories; this can also imply that children are free to decide which toys they would like to play with and which stories (identities) they would like to create for themselves. This company also states that "toys set the scene" which immediately tells us that

their toys are the toys that are going to allow children to set their own lives on a specific path and that toys are ultimately the most important feature in a child's life.

The first toys from the supplier Budkins depict a very modest logo in lower case letters. The logo is written in a brown colour and hence does not indicate or specify a particular gender interest. The letters of the logo are all in lower case and they are seen to all be facing different angles which can indicate fun, playfulness and independence. The packaging is also modest, steering clear of bright colours and stereotypical images of children playing with the toy. The packaging clearly makes the toy the focus of the product rather than the packaging itself as is more commonly found in cheaper toys.

Although the packaging does not depict a girl playing with the dolls, the images do suggest stereotypes about little girls and the roles they have within society, regardless of whether a girl or a boy is playing with the doll.

The first soft toy shows a little girl that has long blonde hair, a smile on her face, a long, pink and yellow ballroom-type dress and pretty flowers in her hair. The dress has a heart in the centre and a couple of flowers spread across the dress with puffy sleeves. The doll is also wearing pink shoes. This toy doll is staring directly at the buyer and this makes the image a demand image as the buyer is acknowledged and addressed directly and this image makes the buyer want to do something, like purchase the toy (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

The doll is very interesting in a modern context as the clothing and style is clearly very old-fashioned. In a world of social media and continuous objectification of women in a sexual context, it appears that the affluent consumer would want to encourage his or her daughter to dress respectfully and modestly. This is in stark contrast to many Barbie-style dolls which depict an utterly modern lifestyle of skimpy clothing, fast cars and cell phones. As in Barbie however, blonde hair and pink clothing appears to be the stereotype for dolls aimed at girls.

The second soft toy shows an elderly looking woman who is holding a mop and a bucket in her hands. She is in a much softer pink than the other doll and she is portrayed as looking away from the buyer, making the image an offer image. An offer image is one that is not looking directly at the buyer but is instead seen to be facing away from the buyer and therefore no demand is placed on the buyer and no response is needed from the buyer (Machin & Mayr, 2012). By looking away from the buyer, the woman comes across as being

more submissive and shy and one can question whether society as a whole feels that housewives should behave in the same manner.

This doll further suggests that the older women in the family should be responsible for cleaning the house and generally running the household. The doll makes this an acceptable role for older women within the family and society at large.

Although the toys appear to be modest overall, they do make use of interesting and quite bold colours – shades of pink, white, yellow and purple being prevalent. These colours bring salience to the images, thereby creating importance and attracting consumers despite the modest packaging.

The dolls demonstrate the progression through a girl's life. She progresses from being a young girl who is dressed well with flowers in her hair, to an older woman who now has adult responsibilities and dresses in a more practical fashion, yet still in feminine colours.

It is interesting to compare these dolls to the following dolls from the same supplier which depict males:





Once again, the supplier Budkins uses modest packaging for male dolls as well. The style is very similar to the previous dolls, with bright colours used to attract attention.

Although the packaging does not give us guidance as to whether girls or boys should play with these toys, the dolls do allow us to compare and contrast the differences between boys and girls in the way in which they are portrayed by toys.

It is important to note that these images are both demand images, suggesting that the boys are powerful and confident in their actions rather than shy and modest. The dolls make it clear that these boys have very specific jobs – one is a policeman and the other one is part of the royal guard. It is very likely that these toys are imported from England (or at least intended for the England) as the dolls are clearly dressed in a British manner. What is interesting to note here is not the fact that these toys are imported from England, but rather that these toys are indeed dressed like a British policeman and a member of the royal guard which indicates status, power and authority.

The boys are depicted as upstanding community members in jobs that require integrity and bravery. Unlike South African policemen, policemen in the United Kingdom do not usually carry guns and this is the case with this doll which is armed with a nightstick. Interestingly, the nightstick is tucked away in the holster rather than being held aggressively by the policeman..

The element of salience is once again emphasised with bright, bold colours such as yellow, blue and red. There is a noticeable absence of pink, suggesting that colour stereotypes are prevalent even in toys aimed at parents who seem less concerned about gender stereotypes.

This analysis suggests that affluent parents are more concerned about the stereotypes portrayed by the toys than they are about the actual nature of the toy. These dolls portray both female and male stereotypes and there is nothing on the packaging to suggest that girls should be playing with these dolls. Even though boys may play with the dolls, the colour and gender role stereotypes that are commonly see in toys are also seen here. Affluent parents may be comfortable with their boys playing with dolls, but only if the dolls reinforce traditionally manly ideals.

Play Mobil toys

The second supplier that provides us with interesting material for analysis is Play Mobil, a manufacturer of toys for both boys and girls. According to the official Play Mobil website (www.playmobil.com), these toys have been manufactured since 1974 and were created by Hans Beck. About 2.7 billion of the beloved play figures with the characteristic smile have been produced and around 30 different play themes are distributed in over 100 countries. The website goes on to say that:

"The unique playing principle stimulates imagination and creativity and thus promotes child development: with Play Mobil, children can not only slip into many different roles, but also recreate and experience the world in miniature."

Here again we see a manufacturer that is encouraging children to take on different roles, to experience the world through play and to engage in different ways of thinking. Children are encouraged to recreate what they see on a daily basis and Play Mobil has provided a way for children to achieve this through their many unique and interesting play sets and combinations.

Unlike Budkins toys, these toys are not just dolls but rather full play sets, providing insights into stereotypes beyond the appearances of boys and girls.





As can be seen from the above images, Play Mobil toys come fully packaged in attractively coloured boxes. The Play Mobil logo appears in very modest, lower case lettering in a plain white colour. The letters all appear to be written in the same size font and there are no capital letters. The use of the white colouring ensures that the brand logo stands out and that it is noticeable when placed against a colour background. The toys themselves cannot be seen, however there are large images on the packaging of the toys. Similarly to Budkins, Play Mobil does not use pictures of children playing with the toys, but rather relies fully on the quality of the toys themselves to attract buyers. Play Mobil uses gender stereotyped colours, with significant amounts of pink included on the packaging for girls' toys. As we will now examine, the above images portray two very different aspects of girls within society.

The image on the left shows a woman pushing a pram with a young child in it. The woman is seen walking on a road with the pram and the child inside it. On the top she is wearing, the

word “FIT” is written, which automatically refers to an individual who is healthy and strong, especially because he or she does regular physical exercise. This image shows us that a woman is expected to have children but also that she should remain fit during the pregnancy as well as afterwards. This suggests that an important aspect of a woman is to look after herself physically throughout her life.

The second image shows a ‘princess’ in a castle scene. Although a ‘princess theme’ is portrayed, the girl who is depicted as the princess is not your typical or stereotypical princess. This princess is depicted as having brunette coloured hair which is a complete opposite to that of the tall, blonde, blue-eyed princess that most toy manufacturers make use of. When looking at the princess, we also notice that her dress seems to make her look plump and quite chubby, which is definitely not the ideal that is often thought of for little girls. The princess is in a ball gown dress with a tiara on her head which tells little girls that they are in fact little princesses that can have the fairy-tale life – a grand castle and two unicorns. In realistic terms, this encourages little girls to dream one day of having the material possessions that dreams are made of, namely large houses and fancy cars etc. When we look at the princess, we notice that she is looking off the frame and she is therefore an offer image as she invites the consumer to imagine what she is thinking and ultimately to imagine a life of wonder and beauty. A stereotypical analysis of this second image is that girls are seen to daydream more than men and are seen as having their “heads in the clouds”.

What is interesting to note is that when one looks at the image, one is drawn to the bright pink unicorn on the right hand side of the image. The unicorn is larger in size than the princess and indicates that the unicorn has in fact been foregrounded as more important. Machin & Mayr (2012) described foregrounding as bringing on importance within an image. The unicorn is of importance as it shows fantasy and imagination. When one thinks of a typical unicorn, one does not immediately think of a bright pink unicorn, instead, one thinks of a white unicorn. The unicorn is portraying a fantasy land for little girls but also indicates that this play set makes use of counter-gender stereotypes by portraying the princess as plump and chubby within this fantasy land.

The manufacturer has made use of bright, bold colours which immediately attract children to the toys. Children and adults are attracted to the vibrant colours and will purchase the toys without understanding or acknowledging the hidden societal messages that these toys contain. Girls are expected to make use of imaginative play but they are also made aware of the

expectations, although subtly, that are placed upon them by society through their toy selections.

The image below shows us the specific toys that they sell for boys and this can be seen as a contrast between boys' and girls' toys that Play Mobil make for children. The highly stereotypical colour of blue for boys is prevalent on the packaging.



The image on the left shows a play set that includes a policeman with a radio control monitor, handcuffs, a gun and a briefcase, as well as a criminal dressed in bright reds and yellows and who is standing upright and firm. The policeman is dressed in blue and is also seen to be standing strong in his form as a policeman. The bright colours again indicate salience and importance. The criminal is looking directly at the buyer which indicates that he is a demand image and is expecting a response from the buyer, whereas the policeman is seen to be looking off-screen, making him an offer image. This means the buyer is expected to think and imagine what will happen next and what he or she can expect from this toy purchase. What is interesting to note here is that the criminal that is depicted in the packaging has not been portrayed as a 'bad'' criminal. He is smiling, is neatly dressed and has not been depicted as being in custody by the police or an authority figure. By depicting the criminal in this way, Play Mobil is showing how not all criminals come across in a stereotypical way and that not all men should be seen as criminals. This 'criminal' could in fact be seen as a civilian who is assisting the policeman in an attempt to catch the real criminal. Here showing that civilians and men in general can work together to 'save' the world together.

The image on the right shows a man who is clearly a working man as he is seen as being dressed in a white jacket and is carrying a briefcase. Next to him are tools for working, ties, fake teeth, scissors, needles and a hand held drill which indicates that he is a dentist. There is

also a green car in the picture which shows us his form of transportation to and from work. All of these images show us that a boy or a man should be a working individual who serves the community in some way (e.g. policeman, doctor, dentist, and paramedic). Both of these images portray very stereotypical ideals for little boys indicating how they should act and be within society to enable them to become upstanding citizens within the community.

Both of these images for little boys make use of salience through colour and cultural symbols. Salience refers to the process of making certain features stand out more than others and therefore drawing attention to these parts (Machin & Mayr, 2012). The toy dolls have been made to stand out a lot more than their accessories which indicate that the way that these dolls look is of more importance within this image. The colours are made up of bright, bold and vibrant blues, reds, whites and greens. The cultural symbols include those of conforming to the normal way of living within society where the man is a working individual who is the breadwinner and provider for his home.

Play Mobil definitely manage to create a distinct difference between men and women through their toy selections. Men are encouraged to be brave, strong, powerful, working individuals who are independent whereas women are encouraged to be home-makers, caregivers and day-dreamers who are dependent on others.

Unlike the previous toys which appear to be quite clearly aimed at either girls or boys, Play Mobil also offers a selection of play sets that include both girls and boys on their packaging. This suggests that the toys may be suitable for either boys or girls to play with. However, when one takes a closer look at these toy boxes, one will notice that the stereotypes for little girls and boys seem to become very apparent. The toy box below is one such example of the Play Mobil selection aimed at both girls and boys.



In the above image one can see a family going on holiday for some "Summer Fun". The family is made up of a father, a mother and two children, a boy and a girl. This tells young children and presupposes that they should aspire to be involved in a heterosexual relationship where they are able to have children, preferably two, a boy and a girl. This brings in the concept of heteronormativity which refers to the world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal or preferred sexual orientation for individuals.

Going on holiday is a luxury that only fairly affluent families can enjoy. In addition, this family is staying in a hotel that is picking them up in a hotel shuttle, possibly from the airport (there is a plane in the sky on the left hand side of the image). This suggests that children should aspire to have enough money to be able to go on expensive summer holidays as a family. The fact that everyone in the image looks happy and relaxed suggests to children that the ideal family environment includes family holidays with everyone enjoying themselves.

In the image, the mother is seen to be organised as she has each family member carrying their own luggage to the hotel shuttle van. The mother is seen to be walking in front of the father and is almost seen as taking control of the situation. She is ensuring that the children and their luggage all make it onto the shuttle, while the father is walking behind as a protector and careful observer of his family. In addition, the mother is carrying a small camera which suggests that her role is to ensure that the family memories are captured and preserved for years to come.

When looking at this image, one notices that elements of overlapping are evident. The mother is seen to be overlapping the little boy, indicating that she is far more important than the little boy whereas the little girl is seen to be standing alone with her arms wide open being very welcoming towards the other members of her family. The mother is seen to be just in front of the father but when a closer look is taken, the father is much larger in stature than the mother and this indicates that he is the dominant individual within this image.

The father, the van driver and the little boy are all dressed in bright, bold, striking colours predominantly in the stereotypical colours of red, blue and green. The mother is dressed in a plain white top with bright pink pants and a bright pink handbag and the little girl is seen in white pants with a bright blue top. When looking at the image, one will notice that the father has been placed further back in the image which makes him seem a lot bigger than he actually is. This process is known as angling as we are seen to be observing this individual from a different angle (Machin & Mayr, 2012). It seems as if the buyer is looking at the

image from a birds-eye-view perspective as the father is seen as much bigger. The process of making the father seem bigger is to make him look and feel like the dominant gender and the mother is seen as the subordinate image. Here, the well-known stereotype that men are more dominant than women is clearly portrayed through the use of salience and angles.

This play set is therefore very interesting as it provides insights into the roles of men and women within a family dynamic. In addition to this, it suggests that a happy family is one which is wealthy enough to go on expensive holidays to exotic locations.

At the beginning of this section, the website slogan was given:

> "The unique playing principle stimulates imagination and creativity and thus promotes child development: with Play Mobil, children can not only slip into many different roles, but also recreate and experience the world in miniature."

What is extremely interesting to note here is that after analysing the toys individually, there is still the creation of a big gender division between the toys made for girls and the toys made for boys. It is not possible for children to slip into all possible roles and the website is extremely catchy as it makes use of gender neutral terms such as 'children' and 'child' and conveys a very different message to that of reality. Here, a subtle, covert and implicit message of gendering and gender divisions has been created by the Play Mobil manufacturers.

Other manufacturers

Greenbusters also sells toys which reflect the stereotypical differences between boys and girls in terms of their activities and interests. Examples of these toys will now be discussed.



Interestingly, this is the first toy to actually have an image of a little girl playing with the toy. The writing on the right of the packaging reads:

"We know kids"

It then goes on to say the following:

"Pretend play helps your child gain confidence, express **herself**, and get a feel for how the world works. It also boosts **her** imagination and fosters cooperative play, making sharing a natural thing."

This makes it absolutely clear that this toy is for a little girl and that parents can be reassured that the manufacturer of this toy "knows kids" and therefore knows what is best for them, particularly what is best for little girls. "We know kids" implies that the manufacturers or advertisers of this particular toy understand exactly what children want to play with and they know for a certainty that little girls are their target market for this specific toy. The word 'know' is a verb and indicates the action of having the knowledge about a certain idea or concept, in this case, the idea that this toy manufacturer has a specific knowledge about what children need and want. The use of the words 'herself' and 'her' (boldness added) gives a definite indication that this toy was made especially for a little girl and through this form of advertising, no little boy will want to play with this toy as it clearly states it is for girls.

There are no underlying presuppositions and the message that is being sent to children is very clear. The little girl in the image is busy painting her nails and she is performing a physical activity that can be easily replicated by other little girls. She is the focus of this image and has been made to stand out by being placed in the centre of the advertisement. She suggests an open image as she is facing the viewer and is seen to be enjoying what she is doing, almost as if she is inviting us to enjoy this moment with her.

The toy shows us that young girls are encouraged to engage in play activities that involve "girly" day-to-day activities. These activities ensure that girls have nails, hands and feet that are always neat and tidy. In this case, the little girl is pampering herself and pretending to be running her own salon. Although the little girl is not directly pampering another girl, the wording suggests "cooperative play" which encourages the little girl to pamper her friends and family and effectively take care of others. This toy relies heavily on the discourse that girls should be involved in co-operative play whereas boys should be involved in play that encourages competition and competitiveness. By not placing another girl in the packaging

image, we notice that little girls are not actually encouraged to become entrepreneurs and own their own businesses. “My little salon” indicates that a young girl should create this environment for herself at home and should ensure that she creates beautiful hands and feet through her own personal salon at home. Young girls are socialised through their play activities that include objects that are desirable and acceptable within society.

Bright colours are used to attract the attention of little girls, namely pink, green and pastel colours. The image of the little girl shows her looking down towards her nails. She is therefore not expecting the buyer to engage with her, instead she has made herself an offer image whereby she expects the potential buyer to imagine having her own nails done and how that makes her look and feel. This provides evidence of cultural symbols where women place great importance on looking and feeling beautiful.

On the other hand, boys are socialised into society through play activities that involve objects and hard physical labour. These objects can be seen in the following image:



This image shows a toy that appeals to the traditional stereotypes for boys, that of enjoying building things through physical labour. The toy also requires creativity and ingenuity, which combine with the physical labour element to create the typical traits of engineering pursuits. This suggests that these types of occupations are only acceptable for boys and should be contrasted to the previous toy which suggested that girls should rather focus on their personal appearance than creating things and making technological progress. The young boy in the picture is seen with a smile on his face and he is not facing the buyer so he is an offer image and a response is not expected by the buyer or the child. The child is however expecting the

buyer to use his or her imagination to create a situation where these tools will be needed, or a reason why this little boy in the image is smiling and making use of these tools.

When we first look at the image we are drawn to the little boy on the right-hand side of the box. He is large in comparison to the workbench and is seen to be engaged in a physical activity of sorts, that of constructing or building an object. He depicts an open pose and is inviting the viewer into his world through his open arms and wide smile. He takes up a large proportion of the advertisement and this makes him the ultimate focus. The main idea that is being brought forward here is that of the ideal little boy and what he should be playing with and doing, that of performing manual labour to build an object that will be useful to his family or home one day.

The slogan "solid wood – built to last!" indicates that if a young boy has a solid upbringing then this will last and he will not stray from what he has been taught. These teachings and ideals that have been instilled in young boys at a young age will ensure that they are maintained and that they last throughout his lifetime, more importantly, that these ideals are passed on from one generation to the next. The young boy should be engaged in physical play and should grow up to be strong and independent. A young boy's toys should include tools and workbenches that he can associate with and which can be used to fix and build things around him.

The colours that stand out in this image are those of blue, red, yellow and white. The suppliers have made use of these stereotypical boy colours to attract the buyer and to tell the buyer subtly that these toys are aimed predominantly at little boys. There are no stereotypical girl colours and this tells little girls that they should not be engaging in play with these toys. The depicted toy indicates that this toy is culturally known as a toy for boys and that if an individual were to see this image, they would know that only little boys should be playing with these tools and workbenches.



The toy above is a baking set, which is a toy that is typically associated with girls. This particular toy is interesting because there is fairly limited use of the stereotypical colour pink and there is no image of a little girl playing with the toy. Although the cupcakes do have hearts on them, which are stereotypical of toys for girls, the hearts are in several different colours, including the kind of bright colours that are more typical of boys toys. The actual mixing machine and tray are both seen to be in the colour blue while the mixing bowl is green. The rolling pin has also a blue colour which suggests that boys may be able to play with this toy and may in fact enjoy baking. This toy comes across as a hybrid between toys for girls and toys for boys as this toy makes use of the stereotypical colours for both genders and does not have a real-life image of a specific child on it to indicate who should be playing with this toy. Therefore, the baking toy, a hybrid, leaves no suggestions about whether a boy or girl should play with it, instead it leaves the decision up to the parents.

4.1.2 Toyzone

Toyzone forms part of a large toy store chain which is found countrywide. This selected store has a large variety of toys and can be seen as selling your everyday, 'normal' toys for children. This specific Toyzone is situated on the Westrand, Johannesburg and is recognised by consumers as being a major toy store where a large selection of toys can be purchased.



When walking towards the store one notices that the Toyzone is situated between two shops, namely an Incredible Connection on the right hand side and a Cajee's Cycle Corner on the left hand side (not seen in this image). By looking at the image one would not necessarily say that this store is very big, but when one enters the store and sees how far back the store extends one will notice that it is by far the biggest store in this shopping centre. It has a high roof and large windows along the outside of the store. This store has been very cleverly placed here as the two surrounding stores are aimed predominantly at adults, although they do both have products for children, while Toyzone is predominantly aimed towards children. In addition, Incredible Connection and Cajee's Cycle Corner are stores that sell items that people want rather than need, so visitors to these stores are consumers who have enough money to buy themselves luxuries. The adults who visit the adjacent stores are more likely to enter the toy store if they have children with them. This toy store is also the only toy store in this shopping centre which gives Toyzone a monopoly in the immediate area.

The name "Toyzone" makes it clear that this is a toy store. The sign is predominantly in yellow with a red layer around each letter and then a dark border. The font is large and is visible from the main road that leads into the shopping centre. The colours create an element of salience by being bold, bright and striking, indicating that this store is of importance and should be visited by everyone who sees the sign.

Both of the "O's" in the name have been changed to look different to the rest of the sign. The first "O" is white and has a small, black centre which can be seen to be imitating the actual eye of an individual (as often depicted by a big, white circle with a smaller, black circle in the centre, in children's toys and images). The second 'O' has been changed into a spiral which is often used as a hypnotising tool. This is significant because one is drawn, captivated and

controlled by the eyes that see the toys within the store. The store is enticing and once inside, the individual will not want to be released from the grip and enjoyment that the store brings. The eye is also a cultural symbol as all individuals need to be able to see with their eyes in order to obtain the full picture and enjoyment from the toys available. It is through the eyes that images and toys become alive and meaningful.

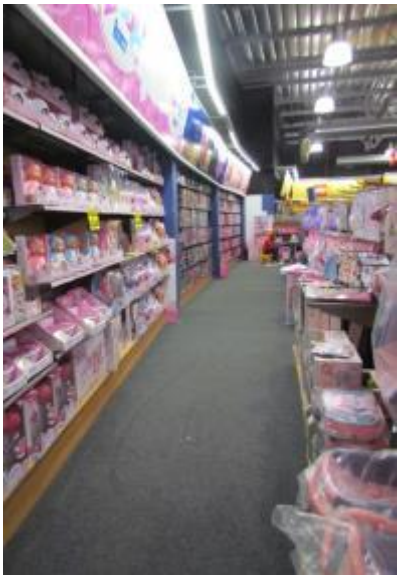


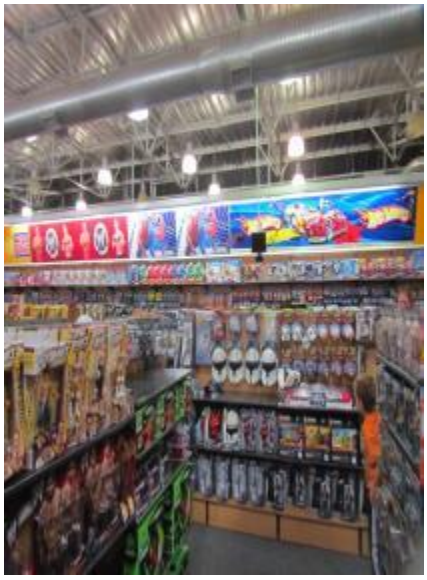
When one enters the store, one is instantly overcome by colourful, bright images of advertisements, images and toys. The roof is high and filled with many bright lights that help illuminate the entire store. Along the sides of the store one notices advertisements aimed at boys, girls or both. In the middle of the store one notices toys that are used for educational purposes – colouring in, experimentation or general purpose play.



Looking more closely at the advertisements along the sides of the store, it becomes evident that certain sections of the store are for girls whereas other areas are specifically aimed at boys. One also sees sections that are neutrally marked for boys or girls or both collectively. The store does not make use of actual sign posts to indicate the different sections; instead the store makes use of stereotypical colour markings to differentiate between these sections.

On the left hand side of the store we see advertisements for toys that are specifically aimed for little girls. The advertisements make use of bright pinks and purples. The bright colours indicate importance towards the products and toys that are being advertised. Colour is an important feature as it very clearly indicates who is supposed to be looking in this section of the store and who is not supposed to be looking there. The colour is also a means whereby society and the store continually reinforce the colour stereotypes that pink and purple are for girls. The store is very clearly creating a colour divide and hence a stereotypical colour divide is also evident. These advertisements include images of Barbie Dolls and other well-known girls' toys such as Bratz and Baby Born.





On the right hand side of the store one notices advertisements that are aimed purely at little boys. We see reds, blues, yellows and whites along with images of well-known toys for boys such as Spiderman, WWF wrestling figures and Hot Wheels. The boldness of the colour indicates importance towards these toys being specifically aimed at little boys. The colour divide is clearly seen here as well and it allows children to very quickly determine which section of the store will have toys particularly for them. The colours are attractive and appealing and encourage the buyer to purchase these specific toys.

It is clear from the layout of the store that certain areas within the store are only for girls whereas other sections of the store are only for boys. It becomes clear when looking at these completely opposite sections that these advertisements work off each other. On the left hand side of the store we have the soft, feminine, girly side and on the right hand side we notice the rough, tough and manly side of the store. The two sides of the store can be seen to be

polar opposites and this in itself creates the first gender divide within the toy store space. Before we even look at the specific toys within the toy store, we can already see that girls are made to respond to the colours pink and purple, while boys are encouraged to like blue, red and yellow. These two colour stereotypes are continuously reconstructed within this store before an individual even sees the toys that are sold in each of these sections.

When looking down the aisle on the left, one can see that it has been specifically marked for girls. Everything that the eye can behold is pink. The aisle is wide and open and the toys are all stacked on either side of the walkway. It is interesting to note that not all little girls like the colours pink and purple yet all the toys within the toy store are colour coded as either having pink, purple or both in their advertising. The advertisements make use of a collectivisation element where all girls are grouped into one category, that of being girly and liking the colours pink and purple. According to this toy store, there is no room for any deviation for girls.

The aisles on the right have been specifically marked for little boys and there is a sea of blue, red and yellow. Boys are conditioned into liking and recognising the colours red, blue and yellow as colours that are specifically aimed towards little boys. Again here we notice that boys are not given a chance to veer outside of the traditional boys' toys selection. A little boy is almost forced to play with toys in this section whether he likes them or not.

These aisles seem crowded by toys that are closely packed and full of options making it seem quite overwhelming and busy. The layout of the two different gendered aisles is very interesting as they seem to be organised in a stereotypical fashion.

The known preconception is that girls are daydreamers, organised and 'spaced' whereas boys are known as active, adventurous, disorganised and continuously thinking of new ideas and prospects. When one walks down the aisle which has been particularly allocated for girls one will notice toys placed in an orderly manner. The toy layout has been very clearly thought out and the toys are all placed neatly and carefully. Although the aisles are packed with toys, they do not seem to be placed in front of or behind other toys and all the toys have equal spacing and placing on the shelves.

The boys' aisles are a lot more disorganised, which is likely to be a deliberate tactic by Toyzone based on how well organised the girls' aisles were. The toys have unequal spacing and do not appear to follow a logical pattern in terms of how they are organised. The shelves

are packed with toys that portray action and movement and one will find that toys are often placed in front of or behind others which appeals to the stereotypical nature of boys – they are willing to spend more time going on an "adventure" to find the toys they are interested in.

It is evident that from the moment you walk into the store that this store has created a gender divide between boys and girls. The space within the toy store has been gendered and sexualised through the placement of toys and through the overt advertising techniques and banners which are placed strategically throughout the store.

The analysis will now move on to focus on the specific toys found in each section and the specific stereotypes that they create and encourage for boys and the girls. The girls' toys will be discussed first.

The nurturing and motherly role



The first toy section that we come across when walking through the girls section of toys is that of the vast array of Baby Born dolls. Baby Born makes toys for girls that are aimed at encouraging and promoting nurturing and loving qualities within young girls. The Baby Born sign is made up of pink, blue and white. The word 'Baby' is written in alternating pink and blue with the word 'born' written in a dark blue colour. Attention is immediately drawn towards the word 'Baby' and the alternating colours show that there are boy and girl dolls that little girls can take care of. The word 'born' shows that the word can be used as a compound word and that when the words are placed together, baby-born, we create an image of a new baby being born and cared for by its caregiver, namely the mother. The word 'born' also tells us what happens; the doll is born into a new family of love and affection. The white

background ensures that the word “Baby born” is foregrounded and that it stands out and looks more important and memorable.

One notices that all of the toys in this selection are pink, emphasising the stereotype that girls like and play with anything that is pink. Baby Born provides dolls which need to be looked after by young girls. The young girls need to feed the baby, change his or her nappy, push the baby in a pram, give it a dummy or a bottle and ultimately be responsible for the baby that she has been entrusted with. The stereotype is being encouraged and little girls are being trained into being loving, caring mothers. The dolls all have non-rotating heads and the facial expression remains fixed. Each doll stares blankly out towards the buyer, creating a demand image and encouraging the buyer or the caregiver to engage with the baby doll and give it what it requires - love, affection and nourishment.



Within the Baby Born section, we do not only see dolls and accessories for babies, but we also see motherly qualities and characteristics being continuously encouraged and promoted. We see a kitchen set for young girls to play with and again we see the pink ideal coming through strongly with the kitchen being pink and the counter top being white. There are no other colours in this range and a little girl is again forced to play with the colour pink regardless of whether she likes the colour or not. We see pots and pans, herbs, cooking books, a baking tray, a radio and a plate with a knife and fork. Here a young girl is being encouraged to play with toys that represent the ‘real world ideal’ which is that a woman should be in a kitchen cooking for her family and providing meals that are wholesome and good. This is a thoroughly modern kitchen, with a music player such as an iPod docked in the radio. This

suggests that although technology and the world in general have progressed significantly, the role of the mother in the home has remained constant. At the bottom of the box one sees the image of a young girl holding a baby doll in her arms, pointing to the kitchen and showing the baby where and how things are done in the kitchen. The little girl is seen as being a much younger image of what an adult mother would look like in her kitchen, holding her new born baby while still working hard in the kitchen to provide for her family.

Continuing along this notion of being a good mother, we see the following being sold to young girls:



This cleaning play set is clearly aimed at a young girl by using the very appealing colours of pink, purple and white. In addition to this, there is the image of a young girl holding these cleaning items in her hand on the left hand side of the backboard to the cleaning items. The toy is sold with a broom, a dustpan and a small dustpan brush. The young girl is seen to be facing the buyer and here we see the phenomenon of a demand image coming in to play. The buyer is addressed and is encouraged to purchase this toy as the young girl in the image portrays feelings of happiness and excitement about the toys that she is playing with. At the top right hand side of the product we see the words:

"Let the children study while they are playing and grow up while they are playing"

This is interesting because the wording is encouraging parents to allow their children to study and learn the ways of society while playing with the tools that will enable them to accomplish these ideals. The word 'study' is important here as this toy is not an educational toy nor does

it require a little girl to sit down and study for an exam. Instead, this toy requires a little girl to 'learn' how to be an upstanding member of society and this can only be achieved if she has learnt how to effectively clean her home. This is then followed on by the fact that parents should also allow their children to grow up while they are playing, again emphasising that these young girls should be learning how to be the perfect housewife while she is playing with the tools that will allow her to fulfil her role as a mother and wife one day when she is older.



Another similar product that also sells cleaning tools for young girls has the slogan

"Makes Cleaning Fun"

This slogan appears within a white heart and the words are written in pink, bold letters which are then surrounded by a yellow border. The white heart subtly shows how little girls should love their toys and what they depict. The heart can be a symbol of love for the duty (cleaning) that needs to be done. By encircling the slogan with a border, one is instantly drawn to the wording and this plays on the minds of adults as they realise that this toy is actually a "fun" purchase and their daughter, granddaughter or friend will enjoy playing with this toy. This slogan encourages young girls to see cleaning as a fun, enjoyable process rather than a chore that has to be done. According to this advertisement, a young girl is supposed to find the fun in what she does around the house, especially when it comes to cleaning the house.

The use of the verb 'makes' indicates that this toy is the reason that little girls enjoy cleaning, the toys that are found in this package are the exact toys that ensure that little girls have fun while performing household duties.



Along similar lines, this toy vacuum cleaner is branded "Electrolux" which is an actual brand of vacuum cleaner. This helps to make the toy more realistic but it is also a clever branding exercise by ensuring that a young girl becomes familiar with a product that she will probably buy as an adult. This is similar to car manufacturers ensuring that the toy cars played with by young boys, at least stereotypically, reflect actual brands that the boy may aspire to drive one day. A young girl is smiling and looking directly at the buyer, making her a demand image. She is staring directly forwards and this creates an expectation on behalf of the buyer, as he or she is encouraged to see the joy that this vacuum cleaner has brought to this little girl's life and this should encourage an adult to want this for his or her daughter, granddaughter or friend. The pose of this little girl can be seen as being open as she has her arms outwards as if to invite others into the situation. She is suggesting an activity and is encouraging others to be involved in this activity as well. The image of the little girl is not very big in comparison to the image of the vacuum cleaner and she is seen to be in the background. The vacuum cleaner is the main focus of the image while the little girl depicts the happy, smiling results that can be achieved through playing with this realistic toy. This is intended to ultimately lead to the purchasing of the product. Next to the little girl appears a thought bubble which states:

"Lots of role play fun"

The use of the thought bubble for these words is important as it indicates that the girl is actually thinking these words and agrees with them. This suggests once more that cleaning

and vacuuming should be seen as a fun process for little girls. There is also the notion that young girls should be engaging in role play activities where they pretend to be mothers and wives and as such are encouraged to act out their daily activities within the home environment. This process again confirms society's norms and beliefs about who and what little girls should become when they grow up.



Carrying on with the responsibility side of being a woman, she must also be able to handle basic medical problems which may arise within the home. This toy shows the basic medical tools that would be needed by a mother or nursing sister should the need arise. The toys name is "My Family Doctor" which again indicates that a mother and wife should also be a family doctor and she should be able to 'fix' most medical problems. She is the person that the family run to first when something (physical or emotional) happens and needs to be treated or sorted out. What is of importance here is the fact that a mother is just a family doctor, she is not a professional doctor and she has not studied the required material to enable her to become a professional medical doctor within society. The men are the ones who go out and become professionals while the women need to stay at home and look after the family and their basic needs.

The box is a bright pink box which also makes use of white, purple and yellow to attract the attention of a little girl. The use of these colours very clearly indicates that this toy was manufactured especially for little girls and it does not contain any colours that could be confused with a toy for a boy. Although there is no real-life picture of a little girl playing with this set, we assume that this toy is only for girls because of its use of colours.

Moving away from the nurturing and motherly role of women, we now examine the physical attributes that a young girl and mother should possess.



This Barbie mother is seen with her young daughter in the kitchen. The two of them are working together in the kitchen to make baked goods for the rest of their family. They have been baking and they are seen in the image to have made a cake. The mother and daughter are seen as very similar, they both have long, blonde hair, they are both dressed in pink and white and both of them are smiling and happy. Both toy dolls are looking directly at the buyer creating a demand image whereby the buyer is encouraged to be just like them. Barbie is seen as the perfect mother and this teaches young girls that they too need to emulate the qualities that she has. She is perfect in her dress, her accessories, her hair, her smile and above all, her motherly role within the home.

Physical attributes of women

This next section looks at the physical attributes that little girls are conditioned and expected to have when they grow up and become women within society.



The above toy is manufactured by a company called Bratz and they have made a head and shoulders model that little girls can play with. The toy comes with lip-gloss, a hair brush, make-up brushes and a styling booklet to assist girls in creating the perfect look. A little girl should practice these different styles on the toy and then be able to make use of them on herself. According to the box, a little girl should be "All Glammed Up". She should have long blonde hair, beautiful, big blue eyes and perfect lips which ultimately lead to the perfect smile.

There is again no real-life image of a little girl on this box but we can tell from the accessories and the doll itself that this toy is intended for a little girl and not for a boy. She should enjoy doing her make-up and she should ensure that she is always neat and presentable. She should be flawless in all that she is and all that she does.



Barbie has created a variety of dolls that depict many scenarios for little girls and also subtly create gender roles for little girls. A little girl should be a "Fashionista" by wearing the smartest, latest clothing and she must ensure that she is in good shape so that she is able to wear short, cute dresses that will be pleasing to her husband and family. Her outfits need to be accompanied by stylish shoes and beautiful jewellery.

This Barbie does not conform to the blonde ideal as she has dark brown hair which is a clever marketing tool as girls who do not have blonde hair will be able to relate to this Barbie doll. The outfits that are sold with this Barbie are predominantly pink in colour and the wardrobe itself is also a pink colour which shows a toy typically for girls. Barbie is looking directly at the buyer indicating a demand image whereby the child or adult is made to feel that she will also be able to achieve this look and be just like Barbie who is known as style icon for little girls.

Marriage and career paths

Once a young girl has been taught how she should and should not act, she then needs to be taught the next process in being a woman - marriage.



From a young age a little girl is taught that she needs to get married. This marriage is taught to be a heterosexual marriage where a male and a female get joined together legally. A young girl is taught and encouraged to marry a handsome young man who can provide for her. She is encouraged to have the fairy-tale wedding where she is dressed in white, smiling and happy and the groom is all neatly dressed in a suit looking handsome and just as happy. As a young girl, she is encouraged to search earnestly for this ideal.

Little girls watch movies (such as Cinderella, depicted in this toy) where the princess falls in love with a charming prince and they live happily ever after. This process of falling in love is highly accelerated in movies such as Cinderella, with the princess often deciding to marry the prince within just a few days of knowing him. She too should be striving towards this happy fairy-tale ending to her own life. Little girls are taught that they should only get married in a long, white dress as this portrays purity. Again, this is a norm that society has placed upon young girls.

As we will now see, life for Barbie is not as simple as just getting married. Barbie (and therefore young girls) are also expected to have a career.



One career path that a young girl should strive towards is that of being a medical doctor. Even as a doctor, a young girl is encouraged to stick to the stereotypical colours for girls and wear pink and white. Her medical equipment should be pink and she should have long, blonde hair, big, blue eyes and a radiant smile. This Barbie is seen to be standing upright and smiling while looking directly at the buyer, forming a demand image. She is standing tall as a woman and as a doctor and is proud of who she is within the society, an attribute all young girls should strive towards.

Not only does this toy teach young girls to aspire to a specific type of femininity, it also teaches them to nurture and care for those around them in a loving manner. There is no doubt that becoming a doctor is challenging and highly admirable, yet it is interesting that this encouragement of a young girl to become a working professional does not stray too far from the classic stereotypes of nurture and care. For example, becoming an engineer is also a highly admirable career option, yet the Barbie toys do not depict such options. Young girls are able to relate to the dolls and reality by looking at their own mothers and determining how well they live up the expectations of society.

Summary

It has been clearly shown how the aisles for little girls help to create and recreate gender stereotypes within the toy store. The colours pink, purple, yellow and white are almost always used in the toy advertisements which make these colours girl colours. From the above

images, it has been seen that young girls are moulded and shaped to be what society deems as the feminine ideal. The stereotypes that surround a young girl about what will make her the perfect mother, the perfect wife and the perfect female member within society are continuously constructed and often times reconstructed within the toy store.

The analysis will now move to toys aimed at little boys (based on their position within the store and the packaging) to find out if these toys also create stereotypes for boys.



When one looks at the advertisements that surround the boy's section of the toy store, we notice the stereotypical colours of red, blue, yellow and white being used. The colours are employed to draw a young boy's attention to these featured toys and subtly also conveys societal norms onto these young children. We immediately notice that these advertisements make use of images of grown, adult men who are well built and muscular. Comic book characters such as Spiderman feature strongly and toy cars (Hot Wheels) are highly prevalent. Young boys admire these figures and feel a need to emulate these characteristics and features within their own lives. These boys strive to be big, muscular, heroic men with fast cars and an adventurous lifestyle.

Young boys as grown handymen

When looking through the aisles of toys for boys, some themes can be immediately noticed by looking at the toy selection. One such theme is that of a boy growing up to become a handyman both within the house as well as outdoors. Boys are encouraged to be handymen and specific toys are made to encourage boys to use their hands and become independent through improving their personal skills.





The toys that are sold for young boys include items for the garden and tools that can be used in many other situations. The gardening tools pictured on the left are a turquoise colour with a grey handle and these gardening tools are set on a backdrop that looks exactly like green grass. The tools, known as Gardena, are in fact a replica of the gardening tools that are made for adults who work in the garden. The packaging contains real-life images of the gardening tools being used in a realistic garden which encourages and teaches young boys to make use of each tool. There are no real-life images of people on the packaging, but one automatically assumes that these tools were made for a boy as they are in a stereotypical colour and they can be found in the boys' section of the toys store.

The tool set on the right is made up of a toolbox with matching tools including a battery operated drill, a hammer, a saw, pliers, nails and a screwdriver. The colour yellow is prominent here with the toys being packaged in a blue box, again portraying the classic colours aimed at boys. The words 'My Workshop' appear in white with red as a border in bold letters, attracting a young boy to this toy and encouraging him to take ownership of it. A little boy can have and experience his very own workshop and this can be made possible through purchasing the toy. The toy is very interactive and encourages action by saying 'Try me!' which appeals to the adventurous side of young boys and encourages them to be part of society and learn how to make use of tools effectively

These tools allow a young boy to pretend that he is in fact building and fixing items around the house. This subtly teaches boys to be able to fix and maintin items in their own homes one day. The stereotype suggests that this will in turn make him a "real man" and an asset to his family. Again, no real-life image of a person appears on the packaging but due to the

placement and colour combinations of these toys we can safely assume that these are toys specifically for boys.

Boys as action heroes

Not only are little boys conditioned into being handymen and gardeners in and around the house, they too are encouraged to be powerful, strong and well built which ultimately leads them to being considered heroes.



When looking at the above image, one notices wrestling figures. Both men are muscular with arms and chests that do look disproportionately large when compared to the size of their legs. This is a look that a lot of grown men strive towards when they reach the appropriate age to start building muscles in a gym. Both figurines are seen in a fighting pose and the expressions on their faces are of aggression and pure concentration. They are seen to be looking away from the buyer and this makes them an offer image as they are allowing the buyer to be drawn into their world of fighting, imagining what it is like to be them. They are fully engaged in what they are doing, teaching little boys that they too need to be in the moment and remain focused if they wish to succeed. This is in stark contrast to the "head in the clouds" effect created by many toys aimed at little girls.

Boys are encouraged to be tough protectors and to solve confrontation through physical prowess, seen through the role playing of these two men fighting for a grand title. Boys see these images and watch television and live entertainment shows where these real-life individuals act out these scenes. These young boys aspire to be just like them. When boys see these toys, they immediately assume that society wants them to demonstrate their strength

and manliness through physical confrontation with other men. Through this type of play and by watching shows that encourage this behaviour, boys are taught that "real men" do not cry or show true emotion such as weakness or pain. A man needs to be strong (both emotionally and physically) and does not show his emotions to others.



Spiderman's costume in all the cartoons and television shows in which he appears is red and blue, which are very stereotypical colours that instantly appeal to young boys. Young boys imagine themselves as superheroes and they are able to reconstruct this ideal by playing with Spiderman and the like. They are able to act out scenes where he is saving innocent women, animals and other vulnerable people in the pursuit of protecting the world from danger. The boy is taught that being the hero is an ideal and that he too can become a hero by protecting his personal family, by protecting animals and by being a strong individual to those around him.

Spiderman is standing with his arms wide open, staring directly at the buyer with no facial expression due to the mask that he is wearing. Spiderman is muscular and athletic, making him a threat to others who are weaker. This is reinforced by his superpower of being able to climb up the sides of buildings and spin sticky webs like a spider, depicted in the toy by the web coming out of both his hands. By having his arms open wide, he is inviting little boys to be a part of his world and to join him for the journey. Being a demand image, he is expecting

a response from the buyer and this is often the action of purchasing the toy and then playing with it. He is strong and firm and boys should strive to be just like him in their daily actions.

Love of cars and motorbikes

Little boys are encouraged to love cars, motorbikes and anything that involves racing. Cars and the notion of racing fill many aisles within the boys section of the store and this makes it quite an important area of investigation.



The biggest car selection aisle is that of the brand Ferrari. Ferrari's brand colour is red and this whole shelf is covered in red boxes that contain cars and car parts for young boys to play with. Most Ferraris sold to adults are red in colour and this is interesting in the context that red is a stereotypical colour for boy's toys. A Ferrari is extremely expensive and represents significant material achievement. Young boys are introduced to the brand through toys, racing on television and sightings of the cars in real life. The racing is exciting and adventurous and results in the boy dreaming of one day owning a Ferrari and driving it at speeds that are exciting and risky.

Ferrari uses the colour red much like the toy store uses the colour red to draw the attention of little boys to this section of the store. This selection of toys teaches boys that cars are items that should be enjoyed, they are items to be lusted after and they are seen as very manly. Within this section, Ferrari has made toys such as car parts that little boys can use to construct and fix cars manually. This teaches little boys to use their hands, to be able to work on cars and to be able to understand that liking and having cars is a manly gesture. If a little

boy does not enjoy playing with cars then he is not seen as very manly within society and this notion is brought about through the use of play with these specific toy cars. The appeal of Ferrari also suggests that men in society should strive to attain substantial material wealth in order to be perceived as manly and successful.

Although the packaging shows mainly cars, Ferrari also makes use of little boys in their advertising. These little boys are seen as engaging in the product and are seen to be playing a racing game with the Ferrari cars. These boys are offer images and are looking away from the buyer towards the toys that they are playing with. These boys are asking other boys to imagine what they could do with these toys and what games and races they could perform by having these toys as their own. By making use of real-life images of little boys, we immediately associate these cars as toys for boys and the mere fact that they are placed within the boys section of the store means that they have been specifically manufactured to be purchased for and by little boys.



Along with loving and enjoying cars, young boys are taught that motocross racing and motorbikes are to be enjoyed by men. They are taught that the men that have motorbikes and those who use them to race are real men and that they have achieved the ideal manly status. Boys are taught that the men that race cars and motorbikes are those men who achieve great status among their friends and they are also those men that are seen as wealthy and having achieved great personal success in their lives. Motorbikes and cars are seen as items that only men should enjoy and this is also seen in the fact that no cars or motorbikes were produced for little girls to play with. This teaches a young boy from an early age to be active, free-spirited and brave. Again this teaches little boys that they cannot and should not cry as racing drivers are not seen as weak and they are not seen to be emotional, even when they have an

accident in their cars or motorbikes. Here again little boys are encouraged to keep their emotions and feelings to themselves. The figurine on the motorbike is staring out into the distance and this, by being an offer image, allows the buyer to stare into the distance as well and imagine being on the motorbike and enjoying the thrill. The motorbike is in yellow and the rider's riding gear is also in yellow and black. This radio controlled motorbike allows a little boy to be actively engaged in the play process and to attempt new tricks and stunts on his motorbike. On the packaging, one will notice a real-life scene of the motorbikes being used off-road to compete in a race, creating realism for the buyer and the little boy.

Being brave

Little boys are not only encouraged to be handymen and lovers of cars and racing, but they are encouraged to brave within society as well.



This set is a police play set and is made up of handcuffs, a radio, a whistle, a gun, a police badge and a rifle. All of these toys are replicas of the actual instruments that real policemen would use while they are on duty at work. By playing with these toys, little boys are taught to be brave, tough and strong. These young boys are also taught that being a policeman is a job that only men should enter into and that they are much stronger physically and emotionally than women are.

This toy set is made up of the colours grey, black, red and blue. Although only a few items appear in the stereotypical red and blue colours, they are still made a prominent colour feature within this set. The fact that red and blue have been used indicates that this is a toy

that has been specifically made for a little boy. It also appears in the boys' section of the store, adding to the notion that this was made for a boy.

Within the store, in the corner, between the section for girls and the section for boys is a section that displays Lego that can be sold to both boys and girls. It is interesting to see this section placed between the boy's toys and the girl's toys as this is almost seen as a 'neutral' section of the store. However, when one looks closer at this section, one notices that there are in fact gender differences between the types of Lego that are sold in this section.



As can be seen from the picture, this section of the store is in a bright yellow colour and contains the Lego logo in red. The red in the Lego logo is not automatically associated with toys for boys as this company logo is well-known to children and adults as a brand that sells figurines and building blocks that can be used to form scenes and play sets. From the colour and placement within the store, we do not automatically associate it with being either for a little boy or for a little girl; instead, we assume that this section of the store is a neutral spot. Yellow is a prominent colour that has been seen throughout the analysis thus far as being a colour that can be associated with either a little girl or a little boy and as such does not carry a gender stereotype. However, upon a closer look at this section we find that this section has very cleverly been sexualised into a section for boys and a section for girls.





When we look at the Lego sold for little girls, namely those between the ages of 2 and 5, we see that both boxes are bright pink in colour, again appealing to the pink ideal for little girls. In the box collection on the left we see a Disney Princess collection where there is a magnificent castle, a prince standing on the top balcony and a princess standing in the doorway. Both the princess and the prince are demand images as they are both looking directly at the buyer, encouraging them to purchase this toy set. At the bottom right hand corner of the box we notice a scene from the Disney movie Cinderella where a prince falls in love with a beautiful princess and they live happily ever after. We see here that the princess and the prince are staring lovingly at each other, forming offer images, where we as the viewers are allowed to join them in their fantasy land and be a part of their love and happiness. Again, we see the colours pink and purple being the two dominant colours on this display box. We notice that the princess has blonde hair, blue eyes and a beaming smile, all the characteristics that little girls should be striving to obtain. This image is also underpinning by heteronormativity, namely the idea that a man should marry a woman and vice versa. This teaches little girls that they should strive towards having a relationship that involves a member of the opposite sex and he should be of the same ethnicity as she is in order for the marriage to be considered appropriate.

The second Lego box on the right hand side shows a household scene with a mother, a father, a cat and a child. This teaches young girls that she should strive towards having the perfect family with a member of the opposite sex and the same ethnicity. She should be kind and loving towards each family member and they as a family should have one or more pets to make their family 'perfect' in the eyes of society. All the members of the family are smiling

and facing the buyer, displaying a demand image. The buyer is drawn into the image and an action is required from the buyer, namely that of purchasing the product. The box itself makes use of bright pink, aiding to the pink, feminine ideal and the play set includes a house with all the finishing touches in it so that young girls can make use of role play to act out certain scenes within this house. The wallpaper can be changed allowing for different home scenes to be played out by little girls. This Lego set is aimed at little girls between the ages of 2 and 5 and this is significant as both Lego sets in the above image are aimed at the same age group. This shows us that from a very young age, in fact as young as 2, little girls are being conditioned into becoming the perfect women that society will be pleased with.





When we look at the corresponding boxes for little boys of the same age group, namely 2 – 5 years of age, we notice that both boxes make use of the colour green, white and red to attract the attention of little boys. The first image on the left hand side shows the image of a hospital scene with a male doctor and two sick male patients. The image shows three men at a hospital, one of whom is sick in a hospital bed while the other two men are seen at the bottom of the hospital where one has his leg in a cast and the other is the doctor administering to the sick and afflicted. From this image, boys are taught that men should become doctors and help those in need. In contrast to some of the toys aimed at girls which focus on being a family doctor, in other words a caregiver to the woman's immediate family, this toy portrays the medical profession and qualification as a doctor as a desirable career. This teaches little boys that the man should go out and earn a living while the woman should stay home and look after the household and family needs. The two men seen at the bottom of the image form demand images as they are both looking directly at the buyer, encouraging a response while

the man lying in bed is facing directly forwards and staring out into the distance inviting the buyer to use their imagination when playing out this scene.

The image on the right hand side shows the scene of a policeman and a prisoner standing next to a police van. Both figures are clearly male. The policeman is smiling while standing and facing the buyer. By him facing the buyer, he is seen as a demand image and is drawing the buyer in and encouraging him to purchase the toy. The criminal is also facing the buyer but has more of a sly smile than an openly happy smile. The fact that his hands are in the air suggests that he has been caught by the policeman, which is in stark contrast to the toy at Greenbusters where the criminal was almost portrayed to be quite suave and carefree. Again, we see a demand image, but this time it is not an enticing smile that is encouraging the buyer to purchase the toy, but rather the sly smile and the curiosity of the criminal. This teaches boys that only men make up the police force and that men need to be strong, brave and courageous to work as policemen. It also teaches boys that only men are criminals and that they should strive towards not becoming a criminal within society as you will be caught and subsequently locked up in jail.

Having examined toys aimed at both girls and boys, we can draw several conclusions regarding stereotypes. Girls are encouraged to be housewives who stay at home and make sure that the needs of their families are met. They are taught to be upstanding members of society by having long, blonde hair, a sparkling white smile and big blue eyes. They also need to take care of their bodies and general wellbeing. These little girls are encouraged to get married to an individual of the opposite sex and same ethnicity as they are. Coupled with this, they are encouraged to have the stereotypically perfect family, that of a mother, a father, a child and a family pet.

In contrast, boys are taught that they will be the breadwinners in the family and thus they need to choose a career that represents manliness and success. This may be through the attainment of a high qualification, such as becoming a doctor, or through choosing a manly and dangerous career such as becoming a policeman. Despite a requirement to be the breadwinner for the family, boys' toys are generally devoid of family depictions. There is almost nothing to encourage boys to seek a marriage partner or to have children. It could possibly be argued that the depiction of men as successful in their career actually has very little to do with providing for a family, but rather has to do with attaining the material wealth required to drive fast cars such as the Ferraris which formed a large part of the toy section.

The main conclusion that needs to be drawn from this section is that this store, Toyzone, is a highly gendered and sexualised toy store. The different toys are separated according to gender lines and this has been made very obvious. From the moment one walks into the toy store, one will notice that the girls' section is on the left and the boys' section is on the right. The two sections are seen to mirror each other with pink and purple dominating the left hand side and blue and red dominating the right hand side. The left hand side contains soft, pretty, feminine images while the right hand side depicts fighting, superheroes and muscular men. The only section that appears to cross the gender divide is the Lego section, yet even that section has strong gender divides which can be seen once it is examined more closely. A combination of store placement, colour coding and real-life imagery makes it clear that the toy manufacturers as well as the managers of Toyzone believe that certain toys are appropriate only for girls and certain toys are appropriate only for boys.

4.1.3 Superspar

The final store in my research is that of the Superspar found in a small, rural town known as Malelane which is situated in the Mpumalanga region. The store brings in many tourists and travellers as it is the last town and area for shopping before these travellers and tourists reach the Mozambique border post or the Kruger National Park. This big super store seems out of place in this small, rural town as it is over-the-top and large in a town where poverty is rife and people cannot afford expensive items.



Underneath the sign 'Malelane' (which is the town name) we see what appears to locals as the very familiar sign 'Superspar'. The Superspar sign is familiar to local South Africans and is known as the store where one can purchase food, toiletries, baby products, fresh produce, cleaning products and which also proves a small selection of toys. The word Superspar is

written in white on a red background that is visible from across the parking lot. The red and white logo is very striking and catches the eye of potential shoppers. At the end of the word Superspar one sees a green tree-like image which is the Spar logo and image.



Walking towards the Spar entrance, one notices a large, spacious walkway with smaller shops on each side. The main focus of this walkway however is the large Superspar entrance. At the top of the entrance we see the words "welcome to our world" which is inviting customers and foreigners into this "world" of food, household goods and much more. The Superspar brings across a feeling of one exiting a poor, rural community and entering a wealthy, up-market community. From the beginning, one feels that he or she has entered into another way of being or living.

Finding the selection of toys within the Superspar is quite hard as there is only one, small section which is dedicated specifically to children's toys. This is not unexpected as this is a supermarket rather than a dedicated toy store which would not be economical in a town such as this. Despite the fact that there are only a few shelves with toys, these shelves are relatively bare, with substantial empty spaces (note the image below).



When one approaches the toy selection, one instantly notices that the toys are not placed on the shelves according to gender divides, but have rather been placed almost chaotically on these few shelves with large gaps on the shelves. Unfortunately, the analytical value of this store in terms of the gendering of space within a store is limited as this is not a specialist toy store. With that said, there is still analytical value to be found in the toys that are stocked by the store and which are aimed at people of a lower income group than those people in the urban areas of Johannesburg. This Superspar is the only shop in the area that sells and provides toys for the children in the community. The children thus have a very limited range of toys to choose from.



From the above image, it is evident that the selection of toys for girls and boys are visually very different. When one looks at the selection of toys on the shelves for girls, one is overwhelmed by the pinks and bright colours whereas the boys' shelves are filled with toys

that are dark in colour through the use of mainly blue and black. The two shelves are very different and will therefore attract the attention of different children and different age groups based on what they have been taught.

Taking a closer look now at the toys that are found on these shelves we find the following toys that are specifically marketed towards little girls:





These two toys are specifically aimed at little girls because of the bright colours and visual elements that are seen. The puzzle is a Barbie puzzle and one is able to see that Barbie has long blonde hair, pearly white teeth and bright blue eyes. This is indicative of what a little girl should strive to have one day. She should have long, beautiful hair, pearly, straight teeth and clean, open eyes. From this image we can also see that a girl should be caring and nurturing, just like Barbie who is caring for a cat. The puzzle advertisers have made use of bright pinks and purples in their packaging and this ensures that all girls know that this puzzle is specifically for girls and not for little boys. The use of Barbie is strategic as Barbie is an icon for little girls and at some stage in their lives they will all strive to be just like Barbie; beautiful and elegant. Barbie is looking directly at the buyer or child and this creates a demand image where the buyer is encouraged to purchase the toy. A puzzle is more of an educational toy than a role-play toy such as a doll, yet the same stereotypes for girls are still reflected.

The second image is that of a miniature tea set for girls. At the top of the box it reads “Most fashion, most (cannot be read due to the price sticker being placed over the writing), most beautiful”. This slogan introduces the idea that girls should be fashionable and beautiful. The

incorrect grammar (“most fashion”) suggests that this is a cheap toy, almost certainly imported from China, from a company which has tried to use the most common buzzwords for girls without actually knowing how to formulate the sentence correctly. This has significant analytical value, as even a lower quality toy made by a company with poor quality standards is subject to the usual stereotypical words for girls.

In the bottom left hand corner, the word “happiness” appears. This shows us that by engaging in correct stereotypical play, a girl will achieve happiness within herself and within society as she will be behaving in the way that society expects her to behave. In the bottom right hand corner we see an image of a young, white girl who is posing in a loving position and who is smiling. She is looking directly at the buyer, forming a demand image whereby an action is required. She has beautiful hair and clean skin which again tells little girls what they should be like and what they should play with. The use of the colour pink is seen again in this toy and is therefore indicative of it being a toy for girl.

The toys for boys that were seen in this section of the toy store are the following.





These images show which toys are advertised for boys and what they should be playing with on a daily basis. The cars in the image on the left include an Audi Q7, BMW Z4, Audi TT, Nissan 370 Z, Nissan GT-R, Mercedes-Benz CL 63 AMG and a Lamborghini Murcielago LP670-4 SV. These cars range from sports cars through to high-end supercars and are all luxury cars which are expensive and require substantial material success in order to afford them. Even though the kids in this rural town come from families with significantly less economic means than their urban counterparts, they are interested in toys that represent highly expensive cars. Many of the kids have probably never seen cars such as these in real life, especially the supercars. The cars are also specifically for boys because cars are seen as

manly and almost every little boy aspires to drive an expensive car when they get older. Sports cars in particularly have elements of danger and adventure, making them highly appealing to young boys.

The second picture is that of a water pistol. This toy is typically for boys as they are seen as the gender that would typically hunt or play war games with each other. In this region, which is near the Kruger National Park, there are some children from affluent families whose parents own or operate game farms which are home to many wild animals. This means that many of these children have encountered guns on a daily basis and do not see them as dangerous but rather as a means of controlling the animal population or earning a living through hunting activities. In this region, playing with a toy gun allows the boys to pretend to be hunters, farmers and game-rangers. They therefore portray stereotypical features of a man by being strong, powerful and in control of a situation.

Although in this store there was a definite division between toys for boys and toys for girls, there was also a section of toys that appeared to bridge the gender divide and are therefore not seen as gendered toys. Some of these toys are shown in the image below:



The toys above are portrayed in this store as toys for either boys or girls and there are no distinguishing features on the packaging that show gender distinctions in any way. The toys on the left are farm animals which appear in white, brown and orange while the words ‘Farm Animal’ appear in white, bold lettering. The colours are neutral and do not indicate a specific gender which implies that either a boy or a girl can play with this toy product. The toy on the left is that of glass marbles. The wording ‘Glass Marbles’ appears in a glossy white colour which fades into a bright red and orange blend. The packaging contains marbles of different

colours including pink, orange, red and blue which indicates that boys and girls are allowed to play with this toy.

Boys and girls are both able to play with these toys and they do not carry any stereotypical characters, qualities or features. Boys and girls are both able to play with farm animals and create farms and play scenarios and they too are able to play with marbles, both alone and with other children in their age group.

What is interesting to note in this selection of toys is that there are no toys that portray ethnic differences and qualities. All the toys in this toy store depict white children, characters and are not seen to depict children and adults of colour. From my observation, the town of Malelane is predominantly seen as a town that is home to many individuals of colour. According to the national census that was conducted in 2014, the total population for the Malelane area is 390,610 people and the racial makeup being that of 97,7% Black African, 0,2% Coloured, 0,3% Indian/Asian and 1,6% White (www.en.m.wikipedia.org). It is interesting then to see that the toys are all depictions of the white ideal. These toys are almost seen to be teaching the children of this town to strive towards the white ideal by altering his or her looks, conforming to traditional achievements and ensuring that his or her desires are that of the societal norm. This does not give children of colour a good background into their own social identity and socialisation within society.

When looking at the gendering and sexualisation of space within this store, one notices that this is not at all evident. There are no gender divides and the toys are not placed according to different, opposite sections. In fact, the toys are placed together along the same lines as if indicating that in fact all children can play with all toys, regardless of their gender, age or ethnicity.

4.1.4 Non-normative Toys

While looking through the toy selection at the different stores, certain toys were seen that did not conform to society's ideals and norms. These toys were significantly different to those that have been analysed above and the reasons for this will be explained in this section. The first toy that will be analysed is that of an African ballerina doll that was seen in the Greenbusters store in the Northern suburbs of Johannesburg.





When walking through the toy store one is bombarded with toys and gadgets with images of young, white individuals. It is very interesting to see that there was only one toy of colour in the entire store.

The only doll of colour in the entire shop was that of a black ballerina. This toy girl had a ballet outfit on in pink, once again showing how pink is the stereotypical colour for little girls regardless of race. She had a dark skin tone and had dark black hair that is stereotypical of a little African girl's hair. The doll had dark brown eyes and was seen to be staring directly at the buyer, thus indicating a demand image and a response from the buyer or child.

After taking some time to talk to the sales assistant at the shop, as the researcher, I was able to find out more about this little African doll. This doll was specifically ordered by an African mother from Johannesburg's affluent northern suburbs, who wanted her little girl to associate herself with toys of her own gender and ethnical background. The mother felt that the little white dolls were not a true reflection of her own child's upbringing and culture and she wished to instil these concepts into her young daughter from an early age.

This store does not supply or sell any dolls of colour and if parents wish to purchase such toys then these need to be specifically ordered from the manufacturers overseas. The reason for this is unknown and this is potentially an area of further research within this field of study.

The second toy that is interesting to analyse is that of a Barbie found in the Toyzone store from the Western suburbs of Johannesburg.



This Barbie doll is seen as contradicting the social norms and ideals within a community setting. This Barbie is a racing Barbie and this teaches little girls that it is acceptable for girls to be sporty and interested in car racing. It is therefore not seen as a sport exclusively for boys, as young girls are also being encouraged to take part in this type of sport, which was previously known as a male dominated sport. It is still interesting to note that this Barbie looks very much like your typical girl. She still has long, blonde hair, she has wide, blue eyes, a lovely, slim figure and she is wearing a slimming outfit that seems to 'hug' her body. The manufacturers of this toy are making the sport appealing while still making the Barbie figure look good. She has a pink helmet and a pink and blue racing outfit which is cute and attractive. The Barbie is holding a trophy, showing that she has won and that women too can be successful in this career or sport. On the far right hand side of the box we see a pink hairbrush, this is interesting as it shows us that although she is portrayed as a tough, brave woman, she is still in touch with her feminine side and she still wants to be neat and tidy.

This Barbie doll is interesting to analyse as she is going against the norms and ideals that society has placed on young girls and women. She is going out and making a success of herself, rather than being your typical stay at home mother who looks after the needs of her family. This Barbie teaches young girls that they too can decide what they want to achieve in their life and that they can go out and do it. Little girls are taught that racing is not just a sport or hobby for little boys and that she can pursue it and enjoy it but at the same time make it feminine and girly through her outfit and style.





When walking through the Toyzone store, I came across these two very similar toys. The image on the left and right shows a kitchen set which includes items such as a kettle, a toaster, a coffee maker, a cup and saucer and plates for food with eating utensils. Throughout the store it was made very clear that kitchen sets, cleaning products and any household items were made specifically for little girls. However, when one looks at these two images one notices that there is a little boy in the advertising material on the box. The little boy is looking directly at the buyer, thus he is a demand image encouraging the buyer to purchase the product that he is advertising. He has a bright, wide smile and seems to be enjoying his time with the kitchen utensils. The main image or focus is that of the kitchen appliances that can be bought and to the left of these images is a smaller image of the two children. This image is much smaller in comparison to the kettle and household appliances and places the children in the background. Both children suggest an open pose as they are in a close-shot and are smiling widely at the viewer. They are both suggesting a physical activity that can be performed by any individual. They are both quite relaxed and are displaying control over the actions that they are about to perform. This suggests that the children can be in control of their choices as to what identity they wish to portray and what they can and can't do with regards to their toy selection.

This product is unique as it is the only product on the shelf that has a little boy advertising a product that is typically associated with little girls. The reason for this may be due to the fact that it is becoming more and more acceptable to have men working and helping within the kitchen. This is now a concept that society is starting to embrace and advertise. This is further emphasised through the words "realistic role play set!" indicating that this is indeed a multi-purpose toy that is actually portraying a scene that is becoming more and more acceptable and realistic within society.

What is also interesting to note in this image is the presence of a little African girl in the advertising material found on the product box. This little girl is portrayed as very happy and friendly, she is looking directly at the buyer, forming a demand image where she is encouraging the buyer to perform an action, that of buying the product. Both of the children in this image have wide, open smiles with their teeth showing, thus portraying the image of happiness and joy that comes from using the product or toy. This image seems to go against all the other advertisements that have been seen on toy products as it contains a little boy and a little African girl together in one play scene. Neither of these images has been seen on toy boxes throughout the store, this is the only product that is seen to bring in little boys and then little girls of colour in their advertising methods. This company has been smart in its advertising techniques as they have made their product noticeable to parents of little boys and little girls of colour. This product is seen as being diverse as any child, boy or girl, black or white, can play with this item and at the same time be happy and joyous when using it. This company is changing the way parents view toys, what is seen as typically a toy for girls is now being marketed towards little boys as well. There is a general presupposition that this form of advertising is taken for granted and that this toy product and its stereotypical ideas are accepted without being contested or questioned by the general public.

Staying in Toyzone, another interesting finding came along. Again, an image of a little boy is seen on the box of a toy washing machine, a product or toy typically associated with little girls.



This washing machine is found in the same aisle as all the household cleaning toys that were seen and discussed above. However, this company is the only company that aims its marketing towards little boys as well as little girls. In this image, the little boy is looking down at the washing machine itself, he is seen as an offer image as he is inviting the buyer to use his or her imagination and think of themselves as if they were in the scene acting out the role play situation that this little boy is acting out. This little boy does not have a wide, open smile but instead seems to have a slight grimace which one can then bring into question as to whether or not he is actually having a good time and enjoying himself. He seems to take up a reasonable amount of space within the overall advertisement and he is definitely foregrounded to be noticed first. He is busy performing an action for the viewer (that of pouring washing powder into the machine) and is seen as being quite relaxed. Although performing an action, he is seen as depicting a closed pose as he is turned away from the viewer towards the washing machine and does not have a wide, open smile that is inviting.

Although not an inviting and open pose, this advertisement presupposes that society accepts this as the norm and that members of the community do not question what identities and stereotypes are being created and recreated through these images and advertising in general.

REPRODUCING AND CONTESTING GENDER NORMS: INTERVIEWS

While conducting my research, I came to realise that blackness and homosexuality were absent from the advertisements of the toys within the toy stores. Machin & Mayr (2012) stated that individuals or cultural groups will at times be excluded from advertisements and that this is seen clearly in the advertisements aimed at parents and children. From the three stores that were used, only one store sold a toy doll that was of colour. Although there was an African doll in the store, it later became apparent (after talking to the sales lady in the store) that this doll was in fact a custom order for an African mother who did not want her little girl to play with dolls that did not conform to her cultural and social standing within society. The other two stores had excluded these dolls from their shelves completely. This is particularly interesting in a country where the majority of the population is African. Within this African population, there is a strong, growing middle-class that would seemingly be the target market for such toys. This market appears to be largely ignored by the toy stores and indeed the toy manufacturers as well.

I, as the researcher, decided to take a different approach in my interviews and made the conscious decision to interview four African parents, four homosexual parents and four heterosexual parents. The interviews that were conducted with the four black parents were done randomly with either males or females, whereas the interviews that were conducted with the homosexual parents were comprised of two gay male participants and two lesbian female participants. I also decided to conduct interviews with four heterosexual parents in order to obtain data from a control group. This decision was made as the advertisements in the images above are all aimed at white, heterosexual individuals and I was interested in understanding how homosexual parents and parents of colour feel about the advertising techniques used and how this does or does not affect their purchasing decisions. By using the heterosexual parents as a control group, I am better able to draw conclusions and comparisons that will assist me in forming sound conclusions based on what has been said and seen. An important element for me was whether these parents feel the need to socialise their children into society according to the "societal norm" or whether these parents have a different outlook on parenting and society as a whole. It is interesting to determine how these families interact

with race, gender and normative ideals within society and I aimed to analyse these themes through the interview process.

I asked all twelve parents the same questions and the answers to these questions will be discussed and analysed in this section. Each African parent was asked how many children he or she had and what their gender and ages were. Based on the data collected, it was found that the average number of children per family was 2.75 while their ages ranged from the youngest being twenty months old to the eldest being twenty years old. It was found that of the eleven children that were mentioned, six were boys and five were girls. Likewise, each homosexual parent was asked how many children he or she had and what their gender and ages were. Based on the data collected, it was concluded that between the four parents, the average number of children per family was one while their ages ranged from the youngest being ten years old to the eldest being seventeen years old. It was found that of the five children that were mentioned, four were boys and one was a girl. Lastly, each heterosexual parent was also asked how many children he or she had and what their respective ages are. The average number of children that these parents had was 1.25 and their ages ranged from eight months to ten years of age. Of the five children that were mentioned, three were girls and two were little boys.

The toy stores frequented by the parents included Reggies, Toys R Us, Game, Pick ‘n Pay, Baby Boom and Checkers. This is a mix of supermarket chain stores and larger toy stores, with Baby Boom focusing on toys for younger children. None of the parents mentioned Greenbusters or any other specialty stores or Toy Zone which was interesting because this is one of the largest chains in South Africa.

Surprisingly, visits to toy stores appear to be few and far between for the parents that were interviewed. Several parents noted that toy store visits were mainly motivated by the need to purchase Christmas and birthday presents for their children. Other parents stated that they “seldom” visited a toy store. The use of the adverb ‘seldom’ implies that this process of purchasing toys does not happen very often and is a rare occurrence. This may also be a sign of the economic realities of most families in the modern world as toys are luxury items. This may explain why more upmarket stores, who have customers that are likely to purchase toys more regularly, are able to keep more unusual toys in stock. Major toy chains that need a high volume of sales to survive appear to be more focused on highly mainstream toys rather than more unusual toys such as those I found at Greenbusters.

According to the individuals who were interviewed, majority of them stated that the colour of the toys themselves, their appropriateness for a specific age group, the price of the items that are sold within the store and the variety of the products available all attract parents to the toy stores. These aspects are all contributing factors behind the reasons why parents, guardians and people who interact with children visit toy stores. These reasons seem to be consistent between all the individuals who were interviewed with the colour of the toy store being the main reason behind why individuals visit a specific toy store.

Toys that parents purchase for their sons include car toys, trains, rockets, Lego and puzzles while parents purchase dolls, teddy bears, tea sets, puzzles, Lego and cooking sets for their daughters. While Lego and puzzles seem to be a universal gift, mainly because of the educational element of these toys, other toys are bought according to stereotypical societal norms. Although Lego and puzzles are toys that have educational elements, there are Lego toys aimed more at boys and Lego toys aimed at girls. The same is true for puzzles, where the picture that the puzzle forms is often clearly aimed at either boys or girls. The interviews with these parents further confirm what my research has stated; that parents buy toys according to how they will benefit their child according to gender lines and norms which society places upon them.

When it came to a question on gender stereotypes and what parents felt this meant to them and their children, the responses were quite divided. Eleven parents felt very strongly that:

"Gender stereotypes are assumptions made about what specific genders like to do and how they should act."

According to these parents, gender stereotypes mean that if a child is a boy then he should play with cars, trains, Spiderman and guns whereas if the child is a girl then she should play with cooking sets, dolls and dress-up sets. One parent, however, said the following:

"Honestly I don't really have an opinion on it; I just feel that kids should interact with things that stimulate them while providing fun/enjoyment."

This statement is very interesting because this parent's mind has not been set in one way or the other. Instead, she is taking a stance to believe that children should be children and that they should play with things that provide enjoyment, fun and stimulation. Their toy choices should therefore not be based on a societal norm.

Ten parents agreed that toys do create gender stereotypes for boys and girls while the other two parents believed differently. The group of ten parents believe that toys make children feel that there is a certain way that a particular gender should behave:

"Boys grow up knowing, being taught that boys must play with boy toys like cars whilst girls play with dolls."

This parent stated very clearly that children grow up knowing what they should and should not play with. This is not an innate gift, but rather a learnt characteristic forced upon young children through society and societal norms. The modal verb 'must' has been used which implies that there is no alternative to this situation and that is definitely how it has to happen within a societal environment. This is reinforced through toys as boys play with toy cars and when they grow up they then buy these cars. Girls are encouraged to play cooking games and when they grow up they will love to cook.

The other two parents believe that parents actually create gender stereotypes for boys and girls:

"The parent or guardians think that there is something wrong with their little ones if they are interested in toys that are seen as being for the other gender. They then start to question the child's sexual orientation."

The use of the verb 'think' is interesting because it implies that a cognitive, conscious thought pattern has occurred in the mind of the parent or guardian. This suggests that members of society still feel that something is wrong with their children if they wish to play with toys that were originally made for the opposite sex. The way that parents react when they see their little boy playing with a pink pram or when they see a little girl playing with a toy gun is of utmost importance because children will respond to these feelings and thoughts and will then adapt their choice of play to suit their parents. This results in the children immediately adopting the societal norms and beliefs of their parents.

One of the parents, a homosexual parent, mentioned that she would be very happy to encourage her son to play with toys that are typically associated with girls. She felt that boys and girls should create their own identities within society and this will only be achieved if members within society allow children to play with any toy:

"I don't believe that children should be limited to these gender generalities and would have no problem encouraging my child to play with different toys."

Usually the modal verb 'should' is used to imply that an individual is encouraged to perform a certain task or activity but in this sense, the modal verb has been used to negate the notion of children being made to play with specific toy items. This mother is very open to her child playing with toys that were originally made to be played with by members of the opposite sex. She is open to changing the way that society views children and their respective toys.

What was interesting to note was that one heterosexual parent looked at this question from a very different angle by stating the following:

"I believe that society creates the stereotypes and the toys enforce them. Toy manufacturers just create toys and advertising that will generate the most money."

This is an extremely interesting point to make as the toy manufacturers are purely producing a mass toy selection which will be sold for a profit for the manufacturers. However, by giving the toy manufacturers such authority, we as consumers are in fact allowing them to dictate to us and our communities what is normal and acceptable and what is not. The toy manufacturers ultimately hold the power as to what society will deem as normal and what will be seen as abnormal or strange.

Parents were asked to look at the following images and report back on what they thought:



When it came to looking at the images of girls which are found on the left, parents stated that these forms of packaging teach girls that they are training to stay home and take care of the home and the husband. A lesbian parent stated the following:

"Women must be domesticated and men must go out to work and provide."

According to Fairclough (1992), modality includes any unit of language that expresses the speaker's or writer's personal opinion of or commitment to what they say such as hedging (I believe/think/suppose), modal verbs, modal adjectives and their adverbial equivalents. As can be seen from the above mentioned statement, the use of the modal verb 'must' indicates that this mother feels very strongly about this notion and that she feels very strongly about this belief. Her belief is that a little girl needs to grow up and become a domesticated young woman, while a little boy needs to grow up and become the provider for his family. Here again definite gender roles are being established, little girls have a definite role within society and likewise, little boys are conditioned to become an active citizen within society.

In accordance to the above mentioned statement, a black heterosexual mother had this to say concerning stereotypes and how they are created and recreated through the images of the toys:

"Stereotypes are created that girls should be able to do ironing, cleaning, like lots of things they need to do when they grow up. Boys need to be able to take care of broken things at home."

In the very first sentence, the use of the modal verb 'should' implies that this mother feels that this is what little girls ought to be striving towards. She is giving young girls advice about what she feels is correct for them. The modal verb 'should' does not carry a stern, firm connotation like the modal verb 'must' carries. The word 'must' immediately implies a command to perform a specific act, whereas the word 'should' implies an invitation to accept that way of being or behaving within a specific environment. In this mother's explanation, she mentions all the chores that a little girl should be doing which will in turn render her as a successfully domesticated woman when she is older.

The second sentence makes use of the modal verb ‘need’ which again brings on a different connotation when it is compared to ‘must’ and ‘should’. The verb ‘need’ implies that this is an absolute necessity and that it is essential for daily living and functioning within society. This mother is saying that a little boy has no choice in the matter; he has to be able to fix things that are broken around the home and that this is a very important quality to have.

According to a white heterosexual parent:

“Girls want to get married and have babies. They will then not have jobs but rather stay home to cook, clean, look after children and get their nails done.”

This mother feels that young girls have a desire or a need to become mothers and have children of their own. Her use of the verb ‘want’ shows her feelings as she is expressing a need for this lifestyle that society has instilled upon its young girls.

According to Machin & Mayr, 2012, the use of modals tells us something about the author’s identity and crucially, therefore how much power they have over others and over knowledge. Each of these parents has created a sense of power over their children and they as parents have the authority to say what their son or daughter will or won’t do because they as the parent hold the authority.

Parents felt that the toys for girls were all placed in stereotypical girl colours, namely pink, white and purple:

“The dolls for the girls are in “girl colours” – pink, white, purple etc.”

Parents also felt that the ideal ‘woman’ is being portrayed in a very controversial way:

“They portray the perfect body as skinny and tall. The message that is sent to girls is that “pretty” is only tall and skinny.”

According to this mother, the only way that society will deem a little girl or woman “pretty” is if that girl is seen as being tall and skinny. There is only a small proportion of women in society who are tall and skinny and thus conform to this stereotype of being “pretty.” This may lead to the vast majority of women in society feeling inadequate when compared to these “pretty” girls.

Girls are being portrayed as cooking, ironing, baking and cleaning. In other words, a young girl should aspire to one day become a 'housekeeper'.

While looking through the images that were presented to them, a black mother stated the following:

"I notice that there are no black dolls on display."

This statement is very profound because she was the only African parent to notice the distinct lack of black dolls or toys within the advertising media. It had enough of an effect for her to mention it in the interview. She was able to identify that all the advertising media was aimed directly toward the white, heterosexual norm that society is trying hard to enforce. The interesting part of this statement is that she doesn't question the reasoning behind this; she seems to accept it for what it is and merely states what she has observed.

On the other hand, the toys on the right are all advertised towards boys. Parents felt that the stereotypical boy colours were used, namely red, green, blue and yellow. It was noticed that boys play with outdoor and labour intensive toys such as gardening tools, in addition to toys such as cars. Boys are encouraged to use their hands and to make things happen outside of the home. Boys are encouraged to seek out a professional career and to be sporty.

After looking at the above images, parents were asked if they think that children should be conditioned to be or do what society sees as "correct or normal". Four parents believe that children should to some extent be guided by society. They feel that although children should be granted their own creativity and personality, they too should conform to society's norm as this is what dictates who their friends will be and how they are socialised when they attend school.

"A child needs to be allowed to be unique and a free thinker but they should still be shown what is normal. A child who is not 'normal' may struggle to fit in."

From the above statement we can see that this parent feels very strongly about the fact that children should be unique and they should be able to think freely. However, she is still very firm in her belief that children are to be taught what is normal as a child who is not seen as 'normal' may struggle to fit in. From this we can see that the notion of being 'normal' is very

evident within our society. One may question who decides what is normal and who is behind all of the power and authority to implement these rules and norms within our communities.

"Who set up the societal rules of normal or correct anyway?"

This is not a question that is very easy to answer and it has been a thought that many researchers and individuals have attempted to answer. Toy manufacturers hold the power and authority over which toys will be produced and sold to little children. They decide which toys to sell and to whom, which is based on what they perceive their target market to want. One can thus argue that these manufacturers are purely creating toys in a reaction to what parents want for their children. The actual toy product is therefore a reaction to parental wants, needs and desires regarding their children's gender identity formations. These wants of the parents form the basis for what society deems as normal and acceptable which in turn dictates which toys will be produced by manufacturers and then subsequently purchased by parents. Women and men have not yet managed to cross the gender bridge and this means that gender roles remain unchanged for many communities and cultures. According to Machin & Mayr (2012:18), language shapes and maintains a society's ideas and values, it can also serve to create, maintain and legitimise certain kinds of social practices which help to answer the above question. Language in itself and the way in which it is used within society helps to create a norm for the entire society.

A further eight parents believe that children should not be conditioned to be anything but good people who contribute positively to society and to always be themselves. A lesbian parent made a very interesting comment:

"Children should be conditioned to be what society sees as normal only insofar as they should obey laws and be well mannered. Definitely not in terms of gender norms. They should rather be allowed to explore their own strengths and be encouraged to do things that they enjoy as far as possible while being given the tools to deal with society's reactions should they not be considered to be 'normal'."

This parent does not seem to conform to the societal norm and, would be considered as thinking outside of the box when it comes to what society expects for children and adults. The one area that this parent feels is a definite is that of teaching a child to be well mannered and a law abiding citizen. Other than that, a child should be allowed to be independent and choose his or her own path during his or her lifetime. Teaching a child the required tools that he or

she will need is more important to this parent than dictating to him or her which gender or toy he or she should play with.

From all of the analysis in the previous sections, advertising is seen as being aimed purely at white, heterosexual individuals. While three parents saw no problem with advertising being aimed directly at white, heterosexual individuals, nine parents found it quite damaging and unfair towards African parents. Nine parents found that this form of advertising is very narrow-minded and perpetuates a diverse society, thereby inhibiting a cohesive society. These parents also felt that this form of advertising is unfair as it portrays "white" as superior to other races.

"I think it is a load of rubbish because it is portraying "white" as superior to other races."

Here the black parent is voicing her own thoughts and feelings about the fact that advertising is only aimed towards white individuals. When one reads the statement, one can instantly recognise an angry, disapproving tone, especially when the parent says "load of rubbish". The view, according to this parent is that society still accepts and continues to encourage the white, heterosexual family as the norm which in turn makes people feel like 'white' is the societal norm.

Parents feel that all kinds of dolls and toys should be made, including black, Indian, Chinese etc. A further two parents felt that advertising is not very important and that it is not the reason why they purchase toys or why they allow their children to play with these specific toys.

Although two of the parents did not have a particular stance towards advertising that goes against the norm, the other ten parents raised a very valuable point. They all stated in one way or another, that advertising as a whole goes against the norm in that it sends the wrong messages to children as well as diminishes other cultures and races.

"Advertising at its core makes you think. Any advertising that doesn't achieve this, has failed."

Another parent had the following to say:

"Most advertising goes against the norm because it sends the wrong message to our little ones and diminishes other cultures and races."

From these two statements, both of which come from black parents, we can see that these parents feel strongly that advertising in itself goes against the norm. The reason for this is that it makes individuals think, it makes them question what they are seeing or purchasing but even better, it makes them question the way that cultures and races are marginalised within a societal setting.

The parents all agreed that advertising needs to be tastefully done and it needs to make people think and in essence, it needs to question societal norms and values. Along these lines of unusual advertising techniques, parents were then shown the following images and asked to comment on them:







Parents first noticed that there were two images, one of a black ballerina and one of a boy doing the washing using a washing machine. Parents believe that by advertising a black doll, more black parents, especially mothers, will purchase more toys for their children. They felt that this form of advertising is very unusual and makes people think about the way in which society operates at the moment.

The image of the little boy shows that it is alright for a boy to do the work of a stereotypical woman's "job."

"In this way we are teaching our boys that it is okay for a man to do a woman's 'job'."

By using the word 'okay' the parent is saying that it is acceptable for a little boy to grow up and be able to successfully manage the chores or jobs that are typically viewed as women's jobs within society. In a way, this parent is also saying that there is nothing wrong with this and that we as members of society need to also see this experience as alright and acceptable.

There is greater diversity and greater growth when toys can be advertised to include all people, genders, sexual orientations and cultures. A gay man mentioned that he found this toy of the little boy quite humorous as this is not a true depiction of reality for men. He stated that he felt that this toy was imported as it does not depict South African men.

"I wish that when I was young I could have been given the washing machine type toy to play with. Must be an imported toy as South Africa doesn't do these types of toys."

The use of the modal verb 'could' emphasises the fact that these toys were around when he was young but that he was not physically allowed to play with them. He is seen to be expressing a desire to have been allowed access to these toys while he was growing up. What is very interesting to see is that he feels like these toys have to have been imported as South Africa does not make or agree with these types of toys for little boys. Although South Africa as a whole is growing to become more accepting of gender equality, we as a community are not there yet and there are still very definite roles for men and women within our country as a whole.

While parents believe that their children choose toys based on their attractiveness and ability to perform the tasks that they wish to portray, parents feel that a unique form of advertising should exist within the South African society especially since we are a diverse nation that claims to embrace all individuals, regardless of age, race, gender or cultural background. We as a nation need to ensure that these forms of advertising are enforced so that the children of South Africa grow up being surrounded by images of toys that they are familiar with and toys that they are able to relate to. Even more importantly, children need to be able to create their own unique identity through the toy selection that they choose to play and interact with.

MOVEMENTS AGAINST THE PINK IDEAL

Over the past few years, there have been a number of organisations and companies that have voiced their opinions and feelings over the gender stereotyping of children's toys within toy shops. These organisations and companies have protested about the gendering nature of toys and have brought it to the attention of their local governments in the hope that a change will be made to the gendering and stereotyping of children according to a specific gender, especially through their toys.

To the best of my knowledge, there is no organisation within South Africa that goes against the gender grain but if one looks globally, these gender roles and ideals are contested elsewhere and an example that I bring in is that of Pinkstinks. Although not a South African campaign, Pinkstinks targets the products, media and marketing that prescribe heavily stereotyped and limiting roles to young girls. They believe that all children, boys and girls, are affected by the "pinkification of girlhood." Their aim is to challenge and reverse this growing trend.

When one goes onto their website, www.pinkstinks.co.uk, one can go into the 'About Us' section which highlights the start of, aims and outcomes of Pinkstinks as follows:

"As parents, sisters and founders, Abi and Emma Moore were becoming increasingly alarmed by overtly gender-segregated, sexist products aimed at young children. They decided something had to be done to stem the tide. At the time, Abi was making a film for CNN about US scientist Naomi Hallas, who was doing some amazing work on using nano technology to find a cure for cancer. Abi's return to the UK coincided with the press furore surrounding the release from prison of Paris Hilton for drunk-driving offences. Intensely frustrated by the blanket press coverage of this non-event, this was the last straw for Abi and Emma. Pinkstinks was born.

Conceived in May 2008, Pinkstinks confronts the damaging messages that bombard girls through toys, clothes and media. Girls' products overwhelmingly focus on being pretty, passive and obsessed with shopping, fashion and make-up – this promotes a dangerously narrow definition of what it means to be a girl. These 'Girly' products and concepts are

marketed, for the most part, under the umbrella of pink. Pink has become the ubiquitous brand colour to represent modern girlhood. This restrictive conditioning and colour-coding rears its ugly head from the moment a girl is born and continues into adulthood – with repercussions for both sexes.

Pinkstinks run targeted campaigns, aimed at creating positive changes in the products, messages, labelling, categorisation and representation of girls. We use writing, social networking, video and blogging to raise awareness and tackle companies. Pinkstinks also seeks to offset current trends, by endorsing inclusive, positive play and adventure for both girls and boys. The website therefore features Pinkstinks approved toy/clothing companies and positive female role models for kids. We work with other organisations, campaigners and friends who share our vision.

Pinkstinks believes that by recognising and celebrating the fact that there's more than one way to be a girl, that the benefits for all children and wider society will be boundless."

When looking further into their 'About Us' section, it is interesting to note small linguistic elements that aid or enhance their viewpoint. Looking at the very first sentence of the second paragraph *'Conceived in May 2008'* we can see that the organisation views this campaign more as a birth of a child than just a typical non-profit organisation. They want this organisation to have heart and soul and to bring joy and happiness to those who follow or subscribe to it. The very next part of the sentence states the following:

"Pinkstinks confronts the damaging messages that bombard girls through toys, clothes and media."

The sentence above contains three very strong but interesting words, namely, 'confronts', 'damaging' and 'bombard'. The word 'confront' is a verb and it implies a problem or issue that seems to appear and which needs to be dealt with. Through the use of this verb we are immediately given an understanding about what Pinkstinks actually does. They as an organisation, confront, or deal with issues that relate to gender stereotyping and how this affects little girls within society. The word 'damaging' is an adjective and refers to something causing damage or harm to someone or something. In this case, it is not Pinkstinks that is causing damage but rather the subtle messages that advertising, toys and the media are sending to your young children, again, namely little girls. The word 'bombard' is interesting as it carries quite a heavy, angry tone and implies that little girls do not have a choice in the

matter. These ideals are basically forced upon them and they cannot change them as they appear so suddenly and with great force.

In this same paragraph, the sentence *"This restrictive conditioning and colour-coding rears its ugly head from the moment a girl is born and continues into adulthood"* shows us again how the concept of conception comes into play. A child is conceived and brought into this world much like Pinkstinks was thought of and brought into the world by its founders. This notion of conception is interesting as the colour pink is automatically associated with little girls from the moment that they are born right up until they are adults and Pinkstinks is attempting to stop this from being an automatic process.

Pinkstinks promotes their ultimate slogan all over their website which states that:

"*there's more than one way to be a girl"*

This slogan shows that a little girl does not have to love pink and follow the norms of being pretty, passive and obsessed with shopping in order to be considered a girl. She also doesn't need to follow society's norms of loving shopping, fashion and make-up in order to be seen as a girl within society. Girls are girls, not because they conform to society's norms and expectations but because they consider themselves girls because of who they are and what they do.

Pinkstinks also has a Facebook page and they have managed to accumulate 16 877 likes and followers. On their Facebook page they post recent news articles, thoughts and ideas surrounding the pink ideal and the pinkification of little girls. Pinkstinks has also created a Twitter account where they have over 15 100 followers and they have tweeted 3449 times thus far. Their commonly used hash tag is that of #ImNoPrincess. This is very interesting as the general advertising technique is to aim towards making little girls aspire to be a princess in her own right. Yet this campaign has the sole purpose of empowering little girls and parents to achieve more with their lives and not to conform to what society sees as fit for little girls, and at times, even little boys.

On the Pinkstinks Facebook page they list a couple of other pages or people that are following their trend of fighting against gender stereotypes for children, particularly little girls. They listed the following:

"Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, Let Toys Be Toys – For Girls and Boys, Princess Free Zone, Man vs. Pink, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and A Mighty Girl"

I decided to visit each of these Facebook pages and see how many likes they have and what their main aim or goal is. The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media is a non-profit organisation and has 77 649 likes and their slogan is "a campaign media to empower girls". The Let Toys Be Toys – For Girls and Boys Facebook page has 16 392 likes and they consider themselves to fall under the community section, with their slogan that says the following:

"We're asking retailers to stop limiting children's imaginations and interests by promoting some toys as only suitable for girls, and others only for boys."

The Princess Free Zone is considered to be a company and has 14 194 likes on Facebook and their aim on their website is to provide a brand that "offers an alternative to princess" for little girls. Man vs. Pink is a personal blog and it only has 404 likes on Facebook. This is a personal blog from a stay at home dad who states that little girls should aspire to be more than just princesses, that pink does not have to be the only colour that they like and that all toys should be gender-neutral. And, lastly, the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood is a non-profit organisation that has managed to get 25 469 likes on Facebook. Their goal is to limit children's exposure to commercial marketing by reducing screen time, creating and preserving commercial-free spaces for children.

A Mighty Girl is a teen/kids website and has 963 000 likes on Facebook. A Mighty Girl is the world's largest collection of books, toys, and movies for parents, teachers, and others dedicated to raising smart, confident, and courageous girls.

As a researcher I find it particularly interesting that Pinkstinks has a main focus on the impact of gender stereotyping on little girls. There is very little, if any, focus placed on the impact that gender stereotyping has on little boys. Boys and girls experience the same amount of gender stereotyping yet girls are afforded the time and efforts of others to counteract these thoughts and opinions whereas little boys are almost left to fend for themselves within the world of social media and the public forum.

By looking at these Facebook pages one immediately notices a trend – namely a move against the pink ideal. All of these pages are aimed at eliminating the pink ideal that little girls are faced with. From these pages it becomes apparent that the marginalised gender is still female and that girls and their respective parents feel a great need and desire to change the way that people view girls and women in general. It is quite sad to see that there appears to be little desire to have the same goals or aims for little boys within society. The stereotypes that little boys have to face are still real and are not being questioned at all which in itself is very interesting. Members of the community are attempting to change the way that individuals, advertisers, retailers and parents think about the gender stereotypes posed to girls but the same efforts are not being put into changing the notions around the stereotypes for little boys within society.

From the above, it is evident that there is definitely a trend towards minimising the effects of gender stereotyping for children especially when it comes to the toys that they come into contact with and this is an area where more attention should be focused in the years to come. Pinkstinks, Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, Let Toys Be Toys – For Girls and Boys, Princess Free Zone, Man vs. Pink, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and A Mighty Girl all originated overseas and to date no similar organisation has been formed within South Africa. As more individuals and companies become aware of this movement, so the area for further research and advancement in this field can be investigated within a South African context.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this thesis I had three definite objectives:

1. to determine the sexualisation and gendering of space within three different toy stores;
2. to understand whether, and if so, how the gendering of space is influenced by social categories such as race, age and geographical location;
3. to determine the way in which gender and other social identities are produced and created within three different toy stores through their toy selection.

Through the research process, I was able to draw many conclusions which allowed me to give a detailed analysis of the above mentioned objectives. These conclusions and thoughts will be discussed in more detail in this section that follows.

When walking through each toy store and by looking at the toys that are available to purchase, one notices the very stereotypical girls' and boys' toys. These toys are noticeable because of the stereotypical girl and boy colours that have been used on the respective packaging. Through my research, I was able to confirm that the stereotypical colours for girls are indeed pink, purple and white whereas the stereotypical colours that are used mainly for boys include red, blue, green and yellow. Girls are still being conditioned to become the perfect housewives, mothers and/or wives with stereotypically female careers. They are expected to be neat and tidy with a desire to one-day become wives and mothers. They are expected to be domesticated and should not strive towards having time-consuming and challenging careers. Boys on the other hand are encouraged to be tough, strong and ambitious. They are expected to be providers for their families and they need to go out and become businessmen, thereby earning a decent living for their families. They should not be interested in girl chores and should instead be interested in cars and motorbikes and labour-intensive activities.

This finding is in accordance with the findings that Caldas-Coulthard & Van Leeuwen (2004) generated. They found that girls' toys were based more on the domestic doings and the private home sector, whereas boys' toys focused more on danger, action, risk and power. This finding is also very obvious within the real-world environment where the average individual is able to recognise the stereotypes between girls and boys; their differences and similarities. This research however is different to the study that was conducted by Caldas-Coulthard &

Van Leeuwen in 2004 as I made use of qualitative data in the form of interview analysis. This allowed me to bring in the notion of race and sexuality while at the same time looking at the many voices and opinions that comprise our very own community within the South African context. These voices and opinions are those of parents; black, white, heterosexual, lesbian and gay who all have differences in opinions when it comes to the influence that toys have on the lives of their children. The notion of race was brought into the research through the use of interviews and this allowed me as the researcher to look at the differences in thoughts and opinions between black and white parents when it comes to the purchasing of toys, thoughts surrounding gender construction and their ideal forms of advertising techniques.

When looking at the toys, one cannot neglect the space in which we find them, namely, the toy store. Each toy store that I visited presented a very different finding. Toyzone presented me with a very broad view of a toy store layout as the moment I entered the store I could physically see the distinct gender divides and different sections which were divided according to gender. The toys are very clearly marked through the use of colour and images to indicate that a specific toy is either for a girl or for a boy or, at times, for both. There is no doubt about who the intended buyer or consumer should be. This specific toy store places their toys along definite gender lines, with the girls' toys on one side of the shop while the boys' toys are found on the opposite side of the store. The placement of these toys can be seen to mirror each other, each representing a direct opposite to the other gender's toy options. I definitely feel that the toys in this store have been consciously placed according to specific gender lines. The toy store layout has been very carefully planned and the separate sections have been clearly positioned within the store. This makes it easier for parents, guardians and friends to know exactly where to look should they want to purchase a toy for a specific gender. This, however, creates a societal problem when children wish to purchase toys from the 'wrong' section as they are then seen to be nonconforming and 'abnormal' within society.

The Spar store did not make use of any gender divides and the toys were randomly placed along the shelves. Although randomly placed, one was still able to distinguish between the boys and girls toys within this space. I acknowledge that the Spar layout would not have been given as much thought as the Toyzone layout as this is not traditionally known as a toy store but is more commonly known as a grocery store. Their main focus is not on selling toys, but rather on supplying the rural town with a few toys that the local people can purchase for their sons or daughters. In this town, children have a very limited selection of toys and chances are that boys and girls will be seen playing with toys that were originally intended for the

opposite sex. This store contained a larger variety of gender neutral toys which makes it easier for boys and girls to choose toys within this local supermarket.

The toys that are found in Toyzone and the Spar have distinct gender roles and these stores promote gender differences. The toys that are sold have distinct gender differences and the packaging that is used ensures that a parent knows who the intended consumer should be for that specific toy. Regardless of the actual layout of each store and their respective toys, the toys that are available have distinct gender identity markers and little boys and girls are taught from a very young age about which toys are for them and which are not intended to be played with.

Greenbusters, however, has a very different take on their store, toy layout and toy selection. By observing the toy store space and the toys and packaging respectively, I was able to deduce that the toys that are aimed at the more affluent parents (the target market of Greenbusters) are less aggressive in their marketing strategies in trying to create or recreate gender stereotypes. These toys are arranged in the store according to the type of supplier or manufacturer and not according to the type of toy which means that there are no definite gender divides in these stores. The packaging on each toy is very subtle and there are no distinct colour markings on the products. There are also hardly any real-life images of little boys or little girls playing with the toys which enables a parent or a child to make the decision about what he or she would like to play with. Perhaps more importantly, a child making a "contrarian" decision will not be made to feel embarrassed or guilty about the decision as there is not blatant marketing that persuades the child in one direction or another. Children are given the freedom to create their own gender identities without being exposed to the subtle messages that society enforces upon them through advertising and toy packaging.

As the researcher, I feel that this is a very interesting phenomenon because the toys that are found in each toy shop are so remarkably different when it comes to style, layout and toy type. One could suggest that the lower-middle income group are striving very hard to conform to societal norms and regulations with regards to gender stereotypes and expectations. These parents and children are constantly surrounded by the 'norm' and they are encouraged to conform to these norms in order to become an integrated member of a given society. The affluent members of society do not seem to be as bombarded when it comes to stereotypes and expectations of children. These children are allowed to play with any toy and they are not forced into choosing a toy based on its colour preference or norm.

Although this freedom is very much limited in the actual toys, it seems as though these children will automatically be accepted into society because of their affluent parents and as such, they do not feel the need to conform to the stereotypical norm as closely as the low-middle income group needs to do.

In a society where skin colour has been historically the root cause of oppression it is very interesting to note that there are very few, if any, dolls of colour in the toy stores. What is extremely interesting to note is that the minority of individuals within South Africa are white, the majority of individuals are people of colour yet our toy selection within toy stores does not reflect this reality. Our toy selections and choices are still based on the white, heterosexual norm. Even though one may argue that white people in South Africa are more affluent on average than their black fellow South Africans and thus have more buying power, one would think that in a generation when society, cultures and individuals are evolving to accept differences and changes, out children's toy selections would reflect this notion. This is not the case however; in fact, toy choices and varieties have not really changed much over the years. Our society has not changed its ways and it has not changed the way that it views men, women and children within a normative society and culture.

As a researcher you tend to question the reasons why manufacturers produce the products that they do. Without doubt, the manufacturers produce toys that will maximise profit. They thus produce toys that they perceive to be the toys that parents and children will be attracted to. We have seen evidence of "alternative" toys in the more affluent stores, but this may simply be because the more upmarket toy manufacturers believe that this will appeal to more affluent parents.

What has become very apparent to me through this research is that the manufacturers manufacture toys based on what they perceive their target market to be. In order to change the way that society thinks and responds to children playing with non-stereotypical toys, one needs to change the way that parents think. When the thought processes of the parental community are changed, the manufacturing processes and toy selections that will be made available will also change.

There have been many organisations and movements against the pink ideal and it would be beneficial for South Africa to start their own movement against these gender stereotypes which will enable us as a community to stand together and change the way that society thinks. One may ask whether it is right for one organisation or company to control and

enforce the norms that exist within our own society, yet at the same time, no individuals are coming forward to make a change within our own country and community.

What we all need to remember is that our society and community is shaped by the media and toys but the reverse is also very true – toy manufacturers and advertisers respond to what consumers want. If we as a society wish to see change in the selection of toys that we see on our shelves, then we as individual members of society need to change the way that we think about gender, identities and societal norms.

Asking questions is the most important way to determine the thoughts and feelings of the greater community. I asked many questions in my interviews and I found that heterosexual parents agree very strongly with the gender stereotypes that still exist within our community. They do not see anything wrong with the advertising techniques used and they do not think that change is necessary within our community. Lesbian parents felt that children should be allowed to be who they want to be without having the pressures of society pushing down on them. Gay parents agreed with this and felt that children should grow up to be themselves and if that is different to what society expects then that is also fine and acceptable. Two black parents agreed with the heterosexual parents on this matter, while two black parents sided with the gay and lesbian parents regarding gender stereotyping for little children.

What it came down to ultimately is that the stereotypes that have existed from the beginning of time still exist today; mothers still wish to raise feminine, pretty little girls while fathers still wish to raise tough, strong manly boys.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions to parents of colour

1. How many children do you have?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. What are their ages and genders?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. How often do you go to toy stores?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

4. Which toy stores do you visit regularly?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

5. What attracts you to a toy store?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

6. What types of toys do you purchase for your son/ daughter?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

7. What, in your opinion are gender stereotypes?

   _____
   _____
   _____

8. Do you believe that toys create gender stereotypes for little boys and girls?

9. If so, why? Or how?

10. If you look at the pictures on Annexure A & B, what do you notice?

11. What stereotypes are created or recreated through these pictures?

12. Do you think that children should be conditioned to do or be what society sees as “correct/normal”? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

13. What do you think about advertising that is purely aimed at white, heterosexual individuals?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

14. Does this affect your purchasing decisions? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

15. Do you adapt/ change the toys in any way to suit your cultural or family background better? If so, how?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

16. What do you think of advertising that goes against the norm?

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____

17. Look at the pictures on Annexure C, what do you think when you see these images?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

18. Would you buy more toys if they were advertised more towards your cultural or family backgrounds?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19. What would be your ideal form of advertising?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

20. What would you say are your child's reasons behind their toy buying decisions?

_____
_____
_____

Annexure A:

Toys advertised towards little girls



Annexure B:

Toys advertised towards little boys





















Annexure C:

Non-normative types of advertising





