Gender Depiction in Preschool Books: A Comparison Between Early Care and Education Classrooms in the United States and Norway

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GENDER DEPICTION IN PRESCHOOL BOOKS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION CLASSROOMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND NORWAY

A Dissertation
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Doctor of Philosophy

by
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Abstract

Preschool children’s perceptions around gender identity and development can be influenced by their experiences. With many children spending a portion of their day in child care, the environmental factors of these programs are important. One aspect of the environment can impact preschool children is the books that are available to them. For over 40 years, children’s literature in the United States has been studied and found to be biased in their portrayal of males and females. Males were more often found as main characters and depicted as capable leaders and thinkers. Female characters were shown as weaker, often appearing in home settings and in traditional work roles.

This study was conducted in Denver, Colorado and Oslo, Norway to compare the preschool literature between the two countries, since Norway has consistently ranked as one of the most gender equal countries in the world. The question was whether the greater equality in Norwegian society would be reflected in the books that are read to its young children.

The results of the study indicate that while both countries continue to need improvement on the proportion of male and female main characters, Norway had nearly three times the number of books that depict a male and female main character sharing the role of main character. This could indicate a pattern of shared responsibilities between the sexes in Norwegian culture, as compared to the more patriarchal American society.
The United States had significantly more instances of fact books, such as letter and number recognition.

The investigation of traditional role depiction of male and female characters showed additional significant differences between the two countries. The United States literature depicted females in traditional roles more often and included lower instances of characters in non-traditional roles. Norwegian books were most likely to depict characters in gender neutral roles.

It does appear that the cultural norms of gender equity in Norway are reflected in the literature that is available to the children in their preschool programs and that American teachers may be able to learn how to more closely examine their own classroom libraries for bias.
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# Table of Contents

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. vii  

Chapter One: Introduction .............................................................................................. 1  
  Child Care in the United States ...................................................................................... 1  
  Introduction to the Problem .......................................................................................... 1  
  Problem Statement ..................................................................................................... 3  
  Purpose and Significance ............................................................................................ 3  
  Research Question ..................................................................................................... 4  
  Assumptions .............................................................................................................. 5  
  Definition of Terms .................................................................................................... 5  
    Gender: .................................................................................................................. 6  
    Gender Identity: ..................................................................................................... 6  
    Gender Role: ......................................................................................................... 6  

Chapter Two: Literature Review .................................................................................... 7  
  Gender Identity Development in Young Children ....................................................... 7  
  Gender Bias in Early Care and Education ................................................................. 8  
  The Influence of Literature on Young Children ........................................................ 11  
  Gender Depiction in Preschool Books ....................................................................... 13  
  Norway and the Gender Gap ..................................................................................... 18  
  Using Literature to Promote Gender Equality in the United States ......................... 21  

Chapter Three: Methodology ....................................................................................... 25  
  Book Selection ........................................................................................................... 25  
  Sampling in the United States and Norway ............................................................... 26  
  Participants ................................................................................................................... 27  
  Coding Preschool Books ......................................................................................... 28  
  Books in Norwegian Centers .................................................................................... 31  

Chapter Four: Findings ................................................................................................ 32  
  Data Analysis ............................................................................................................ 32  
    Main Character ....................................................................................................... 33  
    Number of Characters ............................................................................................ 34  
    Male Traditional versus Male Non-Traditional ...................................................... 35  
    Female Traditional versus Female Non-Traditional .............................................. 37  

Chapter Five: Discussion ............................................................................................. 40  
  Introduction ............................................................................................................... 40  
  Alignment with Previous Research ......................................................................... 40  
  Implications ............................................................................................................... 42  
  Limitations ................................................................................................................ 44  
  Recommendations for Further Research ................................................................. 45  
  Implications for Professional Development ............................................................. 46  
  The Question of National Policy .............................................................................. 47
Conclusion.................................................................................................................................................48
References....................................................................................................................................................50
Appendix A: Photographs taken in Norwegian preschools.........................................................55
Appendix B: Email invitations sent to programs in Oslo- Norwegian........................................58
Appendix C: Email invitations sent to programs in Denver- English...........................................59
Appendix D: Informed consent forms for Norwegian programs- Norwegian..................61
Appendix E: Informed consent form for American programs- English.................................64
Appendix F: Occupation Classification of the United States Census Bureau .................67
Appendix G: IRB International Research Questions............................................................69
Appendix H: IRB Approval .................................................................................................................71
List of Tables

Table 1. Categorization of traditional versus non-traditional activities for males and females.......................................................... 31

Table 2. Comparing Norway and the United States in each main character category..... 34

Table 3. Comparing the United States Proportions in the Male Traditional and Male Non-Traditional Category........................................................................................................ 36

Table 4. Comparing Norwegian Proportions in the Male Traditional and Male Non-Traditional Category........................................................................................................ 36

Table 5. Comparing the United States and Norwegian Proportions in the Male Traditional, Male Non-Traditional and Neutral Category.................................................................................. 37

Table 6. Comparing the United States Proportions in the Female Traditional and Female Non-Traditional Category........................................................................................................ 38

Table 7. Comparing Norwegian Proportions in the Female Traditional and Female Non-Traditional Category........................................................................................................ 38

Table 8. Comparing the United States and Norwegian Proportions in the Female Traditional, Female Non-Traditional and Neutral Category.................................................. 39
List of Figures

Figure 1. Bar graph showing the number of characters in each category of main characters by country........................................................................................................................................30

Figure 2. Bar graph showing the total number of male and female characters in all books by country...............................................................................................................................................32

Figure 3. Bar graph showing the number of male traditional versus male non-traditional character depictions in all books by country.................................................................................................33

Figure 4. Bar graph showing female characters depicted in traditional versus non-traditional roles by country...........................................................................................................................................35
Chapter One: Introduction

Child Care in the United States

Programs for young children are becoming increasingly necessary as the number of women with children who have entered the workforce has risen to over 70% (United States Department of Labor, 2010). The United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Child Care estimates that between 60 and 71 percent of preschool age children are enrolled in some type of center-based care for at least a portion of the day (2009). With so many children in the position to be impacted by the quality of the environments, interactions and activities within these programs, it is no wonder that early care and education has been the subject of much research and debate in the United States.

Introduction to the Problem

Gender equity is as much the subject of research and discussion today as it was in the 1970s - the height of the women’s liberation movement. A simple search of the words “gender” and “equity” in ERIC (the Educational Resources Information Center) provides over 800 peer reviewed journal articles for review. One of the areas of education where gender has been often investigated is early childhood, or preschool education.

It is a widely held belief that gender is learned from the beginning of a child’s life (Kohlberg, 1966). Children are shown and told that their gender is an important part of
who they are; ñwhat a pretty little girlô or ñhe is such a boyô (Evans, 1998). Caregivers in early childhood in the United States are no exception to this. Well-meaning educators can often fall into the trap of treating children differently based on their gender (Ahn & Stifter, 2006). Literature on gender bias in the early years suggests that play patterns that are based on stereotypes are not conducive to the optimal development of young girls and boys (Ebbeck, 1998) and that there is great benefit to ensuring a balance for all children.

Several questions arise:

- If gender bias can be detrimental to young children, how do we address this issue?
- How can early education professionals create opportunities and environments that are equal for all young children?
- Can we look to the examples of other nations, such as Norway, that have different policies and procedures in place to ensure greater equity?

According to the World Economic Forum (2008), Norway is one of the world leaders in gender equity. The Global Gender Gap Report measures countries (n=134) on the economic opportunity, education, health and political status of women and the Scandinavian countries have dominated the top four slots for several years (in 2009 and 2010, Norway ranked number 3 and 2 respectively, with the U.S. at number 31 and 19). This more equal culture and the policy of education in Norway is one that United States educators may learn from because gender equity is clearly defined in national policy (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). State Secretary Lisbeth Rugvedt, in her presentation hosted by the Ministry of Education and Research (2006), proclaimed that gender equality must begin during the preschool years.

However, does the culture of gender equity which is started in early childhood contribute to later equality? If so, how can we, as American child care professionals,
learn from our Norwegian counterparts and address the disparity in materials, activities and interactions between girls and boys in our care?

**Problem Statement**

A vital component to any quality preschool program is literature. Teachers utilize stories and books to enhance the educational environment of the classroom. In the international and widely used quality rating instrument, the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale- Revised (ECERS-R), one of the subscales is called Language-Reasoning and the first category in this subscale is Books and Pictures (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). In fact, a “literacy center” or library is a required part of the classroom set-up both for the ECERS-R and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation system (2007), which checks for quality of care for preschool children. However, as early as 1972, researchers in the United States were discovering that women were underrepresented in children’s books and were most often depicted in stereotypical sex roles (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokada & Ross, 1972). These biased depictions were also thought to be detrimental to the self-image and aspirations of female children. More recent research has found that although representation of females has changed somewhat, stereotypes are still prevalent enough to be of concern (Gooden, & Gooden, 2001).

**Purpose and Significance**

The purpose of this study was to examine children’s literature in the United States and Norway to compare how gender is depicted in books accessible to children in
preschool classrooms. Classrooms in each country were visited and books in their preschool libraries were read and coded based on categories developed from earlier literature. This study differs from currently available literature due to the fact that previous research has focused on award-winning and/or best-selling books only. One of the issues with this type of book selection is that it does not, necessarily, include the books that children are exposed to daily in the preschool classroom. Best-seller lists do not provide information on whether books purchased were for home, school or other purposes, and award winners are not always those that are purchased for the classroom. This study was aimed at providing information on literature that may have more influence on children’s gender development due to the frequency that they have access to them, both by choice and by teacher direction during group gatherings, informal readings or activities based on stories.

The study utilized quantitative research methods to compare the gender of the main characters in books, the numbers of male and female characters included, and the traditional and non-traditional role depiction within the preschool literature to which children were being exposed. The information obtained can be used to inform the professional development sessions of early care and education professionals to help ensure that children are being exposed to appropriate, non-biased literature in their classrooms.

**Research Question**

Do books in preschool classrooms in Norway and the United States differ in gender depiction?
Assumptions

One of the main purposes for selecting Norway as the country to compare to the United States is that Norway has consistently scored higher than the U.S. on the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2008) and the United Nations Development Programme’s Gender Inequality Index (2011). These reports are an indicator that there is more equity between males and females in Norway. This study was an attempt to compare preschool literature, which is one area that has historically been gender biased in the U.S., between two countries that score disparately in the reports. The assumption underlying this comparison is that teachers and other early childhood professionals in a country where there is less gender bias may choose to expose their young children to literature that is non-biased. Would the fact that Norwegian culture is more gender equal be visible in the books that are read to their children?

Definition of Terms

It is important to note that the terms “child care,” “preschool” and “early care and education” utilized in this document all refer to programs serving children before they reach the age of formal schooling, generally children from birth to age 5. These preschool programs are referred to as “kindergarten” in Norway. The primary focus of this study was programs serving the older children of this group, or children aged 3 to 5.

The definitions of the terms utilized for the purposes of this study were taken directly from the American Psychological Association’s Report of the Task Force on Gender Identity and Gender Variance (2009) and include:
Gender:
Gender refers to the attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

Gender Identity:
Gender identity refers to a person's basic sense of being male, female, or of indeterminate sex.

Gender Role:
Gender role refers to behaviors, attitudes, and personality traits that a society, in a given historical period, designates as masculine or feminine— that is, more typical of the male or female social role.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Gender Identity Development in Young Children

Children are active learners who often utilize play as a vehicle for learning. They use their experiences to construct understandings about the world around them (Piaget, 1961). When a child is born, the first question usually asked is, ¿boy or girl? This gender question signals the beginning of the social influence on the child’s gender identity development (Jacobson, 2011). Young children learn about the differences between being a boy or a girl through their everyday experiences; during play, interactions, and through direct and indirect instruction from adults and other children (Kohlberg, 1966). They are beginning to construct their gender schema, or the behavior that is utilized to sort out information regarding the meaning of gender in their world (gender here meaning both the biological and cultural aspects of gender. Bem, 1983).

Children can observe how males and females are treated and how others classify the sexes (Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999). They learn what are considered appropriate behaviors for males and females and to begin to accept society’s definitions of behaviors that are worthwhile for men and women (Gooden & Gooden, 2001 and Jacobson, 2011). The development of gender identity influences how children perceive themselves and the expectations that adults and other children have of them (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993). At two years and younger, children do not demonstrate a preference for gendered interactions and behaviors (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2011), however as
children age there is an increase in the knowledge of gender stereotypes (Ruble, et al, 2007). By the time children reach the age of five, they are able to distinguish and express preferences regarding sex roles (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokda and Ross, 1972). Children have even been shown to vary their behaviors based on situational variables which include adult observation, indicating that they have learned early what gender behaviors are expected of them (Wilansky-Traynor & Lobel, 2007).

In early childhood classrooms, many children's first encounter with groups, play is the vehicle for the development of a multitude of skills; it is the way that children learn. Imaginative play allows children to explore different gender roles (Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter, 2002). This helps them to gain an understanding of these roles so that they can practice gender appropriate behavior in front of peers and adults. These roles are based on their understanding of gendered behaviors and the relationships the children have with others who are significant in their lives; this includes teachers (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2011). They can experiment with toys and develop an awareness of what toys are considered appropriate for boys and/or girls (Ebbeck, M., 1998). Some of the environments for children are accepting of non-traditional gender role play and encourage the exploration of many types of behaviors and play, while others are not as accepting and may, in fact, be biased (Couchenour & Chrisman, 2011).

**Gender Bias in Early Care and Education**

Chick, Heilman-Houser and Hunter (2002) studied the impact that child care has on gender stereotyping during gender role development. Their observations on the
interactions between caregivers and children revealed three gender themes that indicated bias. These were:

1. girls receive less attention than boys,
2. boys tended to exert more power and,
3. boys tend to receive teacher comments regarding their size and physical skills while girls receive more comments regarding their appearance.

The researchers conclude with this comment, “it should be seen as the responsibility of caregivers to be attentive to and reinforce gender-fair behaviors” (Chick, Heilman-Houser and Hunter, 2002, p. 153). This differentiating behavior on the part of adults supports other research findings that bias is evident in current preschool classrooms of the 21st century.

The social and emotional development of children is a prime focus of many quality early childhood care and education programs. How teachers interact with children can help them to learn how to process emotions in a healthy way. Ahn and Stifter (2006), in their study on teacher response to emotional expression by children, discovered that the gender of the child influences teacher behavior. When negative emotions were expressed by a boy, teachers were more likely to assist the child in finding constructive ways to handle their emotions, while girl children received more physical comfort for the same emotional expression.

The attitudes and behaviors of early childhood teachers play a role in the development of children’s gender schema (Fleer, 1998). Cahill and Adams (1997) explored the beliefs of preschool teachers in regards to gender roles and how this impacted their attitudes about the gender roles appropriate for children. They found that teachers who had non-traditional beliefs were more likely to hold these beliefs for
children, as well. They were more likely to be lenient toward children’s behaviors that were considered crossing over perceived gender boundaries. It was their conclusion that teacher attitudes may impact the perceptions of children around gender. This concept of teacher perception was examined further by Ostrov, Crick and Keating (2005), who found that male teachers were more likely than their female counterparts to have gender biased perceptions of children’s behavior.

An important aspect of adult interaction with children is self-awareness. Teachers must become and remain aware of how their perceptions influence their own behavior towards, and in interactions with, children. However, this takes a level of skills and knowledge that not all early childhood professionals possess. Duke and McCarthy (2009) suggest that teachers begin by engaging in reflection to clarify and examine any bias that may impact teaching. This self-awareness can lead to more open discussions with children around gender issues such as toy and activity choice, fairness and equality.

Awareness of gender bias can be the beginning of the creation of meaningful change in preschool education, but a commitment to gender equity must be present for any change to be sustainable. In their investigation of teacher commitment to equality, Lee-Thomas, Sumsion and Roberts (2005) found that teachers often underestimated the impact of sexism on children and were pessimistic regarding their own capacity to create change. They conclude that additional education is necessary before preschool teachers will have the capacity to carry the equity work forward. In their literature review on sexism in early childhood education, Duke and McCarthy (2009) reviewed early childhood literature and found that preschool programs often reinforce the bias prevalent
in our society. They advocate for educator programs to incorporate instruction on social justice in order to assist teachers in being able to challenge bias.

The Influence of Literature on Young Children

An important component to most quality preschool programs is literature. Teachers utilize stories and books to enhance the educational environment of the classroom. Children who are exposed to books are learning vital skills that can lead to lifelong literacy (Cryer, Harms & Riley, 2003). In the early childhood classroom, literature is introduced to children in several ways. Books are chosen by preschool professionals and are utilized by teachers during group and individual readings, as well as being used to extend concepts being taught through various activities within the curriculum. Books are often displayed for children in classroom libraries. These libraries are available for children’s choice during “free play” or choice periods of the daily schedule. Most children have access to books during the majority of the preschool day (Uttley & Roberts, 2011) and another frequently used strategy for the library area is the utilization of books during transition times throughout the day: for example, this researcher has observed several teachers that have the children congregate in the book center as a means of keeping them in one area for easier management, often before and after washing hands for meals. During these and other times throughout the preschool day, children pick up and look at books of their own choosing. An observer can often see children sitting in the area “reading” to themselves or to peers. Because of the frequency in which classroom books are viewed by children, choosing appropriate books is an important aspect of classroom set up.
The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale- Revised (ECERS-R) is a quality rating instrument that is used to rate preschool classrooms on the level of quality programming that is being offered to young children. One of the scored subscales of the ECERS-R is called Language-Reasoning, and the first category in this subscale is Books and Pictures (Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 1998). The classroom materials that are available to children to support teacher interactions are inspected by a rater and reviewed for themes. In order to score well in this category, there must be a wide selection of books on a variety of topics. In fact, a "literacy/reading center" or library is a required part of the classroom set up for both the ECERS-R and the National Association for the Education of Young Children Accreditation system (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2007), which checks the quality of care for preschool children against national standards.

The development of literacy is not the only important aspect of literature in early childhood. Books that are accessible to children can also influence their understanding of gender (Roberts & Hill, 2003). Books written for young children reflect the values of a culture and can help persuade children to accept those values (Gooden & Gooden, 2001). Children's literature is a window to the world outside of their homes and classrooms and depicts the acceptable standards of behavior. Preschool children are impressionable and are hearing and seeing these books during the time that they are developing their own sexual identity (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokda and Ross, 1972). Kortenha & Demarest (1993) state that:
Given this long-term influence of books, there can be no doubt that the characters portrayed in children’s literature mold a child’s conception of socially accepted roles and values, and indicate how males and females are supposed to act (p. 220).

McCabe et al. (2011) express concerns over the influence that gender bias in books have on children’s understanding of gender and that these representations can legitimize a patriarchal system.

**Gender Depiction in Preschool Books**

The impact that children’s literature may have on children’s perception of their gendered selves makes it imperative that books for young children be studied to check for damaging messages and stereotypes (Tsao, 2008). The landmark study “Sex-role socialization in picture books for preschool children” was one of the first studies of gender bias in literature (Weitzman, Eifler, Hokda and Ross, 1972). This widely cited research study focused on the socialization of young children through preschool books. Sampled were Caldecott and Newberry award winning books (awarded by the American Library Association) and Little Golden and etiquette books (best-sellers in children’s books during that time). The authors found that males dominated as main characters, in illustrations and in book titles. Women were described as “invisible” (p. 1128) and “insignificant” (p. 1129), most often praised for physical attractiveness. Female characters were much more likely to be passive as compared to their male counterparts, and boys were depicted as leaders and saviors to their weaker female counterparts, who often appeared to be unable to solve their own problems. The authors discuss that women and men were found to be shown in traditional and stereotypical roles throughout
children’s literature and were concerned that girls were being taught that they have fewer opportunities available to them. They conclude by stating that “storybook characters reinforce traditional sex-role assumptions” (p. 1146).

The Wietzman et al. (1972) study is described as having “influenced attitudes toward books for very young children” (Worland, 2008, p. 43) and has been replicated by later researchers. In 1987, Williams, Vernon, Williams and Malecha, in their update of the landmark study, found that females were “no longer invisible” and that they now constituted one-third of central characters (p. 154). However, these characters were still depicted in traditional sex roles, with men portrayed as active and independent and females portrayed as passive and non-ambitious. In another update of the Wietzman et al. (1972) study, Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) developed a study to determine whether gender portrayal in children’s books was as biased as they had been found to be in the past. They analyzed 150 books for content regarding gender roles and found the number of female characters in books indicated a “trend of decreasing sexism in children’s picture books” (p. 229). The characterizations of males and females, however, indicated that the types of roles that were depicted for characters of different genders continued to be biased. Girls are more nurturing, caring for siblings and pets much more than boys (f = 117; m = 16). They were depicted as passive and dependent. Unfortunately, these findings were consistent with previous studies on children’s literature. Females who were central to a storyline were depicted as needing help, usually from a male character. When a male and female character were both central, only the male was in authority and dominant. An interesting finding in this study was the
portrayal of parents in the literature. Mothers often appeared to be ineffectual and in need of help while fathers were portrayed as capable authority figures.

Fathers were examined again in 2005 by Anderson and Hamilton in their study titled “Gender role stereotyping of parents in children’s picture books: The invisible father.” They note that books provide exposure to different parenting styles and techniques, as well as related gender roles for mothers and fathers and, that they may affect the socialization of both children and adults. They investigated whether fathers were present in children’s books and whether they were a central part of the depiction of families. The authors found that there was a difference in how fathers were portrayed in literature. Mothers were more likely to nurture and care for children, while fathers were under-represented (appearing in only 47% of the sampled books) and depicted as unaffectionate and uninvolved in the daily care of children. This study is interesting when compared to the Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) study (referenced in the previous paragraph), since that study found the fathers to be the authority figures.

Preschool picture books have been studied in a variety of ways since Wietzman et al. (1972). In their examination of emotional language in picture books, Tepper and Cassidy (1999) focused on the differences between male and female characters. The authors argued that since learning the language of emotion is a primary task in early childhood, investigating bias in children’s literature is important. The depiction of female characters as being more emotional has been noted in past research (Kortenhaus and Demarest, 1993), as well. Tepper and Cassidy (1999) hypothesized that the differences depicted in emotional language could lend evidence to the issue of gender
stereotyping in general. Their methodology differed from past studies in that they examined not only award winning books, but sampled books that parents reported having read to their children. Their results support the findings of other researchers studying gender bias in children’s books in that that females were underrepresented (one-third) in central role, title and illustrations. However, they did not find a difference in the number of emotional words used by male and female characters which did not support their original hypothesis. In this sample, children were not being exposed to stereotypical limits to the emotional range of males.

Less bias in children’s literature has been reported in some more current U.S. research. In a study by Gooden and Gooden (2001), eighty three “notable” picture books (a designation by the American Library Association) were examined for stereotyping. They found that the number of female main and title characters has increased since the comparable research done during the 1970’s, while the amount of gender stereotypes had decreased “slightly” (p. 96). However, they considered stereotyped images of females to remain a significant issue; male characters continued to dominate children’s books. The main concern, as reported by the authors, was that:

Children’s choices of what they want to become or accomplish is limited by stereotypes. Gender bias prevents individuals from exploring the activities and interests that are best suited to their personality and abilities (p. 97).

In 2006, Hamilton, Anderson, Broaddus and Young investigated gender stereotyping in 200 children’s books, utilizing a sample of award winning and best-selling books. Their concern was that:

Stereotyped portrayals of the sexes and underrepresentation of female characters contribute negatively to children’s development, limit career aspirations, frame
their attitudes about their future roles as parents, and even influence their personality characteristics (p. 757).

They found that women were still underrepresented in picture books, whether the books were award winning or not. Main characters were almost twice as likely to be male (95 versus 52) and have male character titles (75 versus 42). Occupational stereotyping was also significant with men and women being portrayed as having societally traditional jobs. Men were depicted in nine times as many traditional positions as non-traditional roles; women were ten times more likely than men to hold traditional occupations, particularly those that the author categorized as nurturing, which included:

- teacher,
- stewardess,
- librarian,
- nanny, and
- nurse.

According to the authors, modern children's picture books continue to provide nightly reinforcement of the idea that boys and men are more interesting and important than are girls and women (p. 764). This statement, though powerful, may reflect author bias regarding which roles can be described as interesting.

Worland (2008) states that picture books have evolved in their gender treatment since the 1960s. However, McCabe et al. (2011) examined 5,618 books published in the United States in the twentieth century and found that reported improvements have not been consistent. They maintain that inequality still exists and state that the disproportionate numbers of males in central roles may encourage children to accept the invisibility of women and girls and to believe they are less important than men and boys, thereby reinforcing the gender system (p. 199).
Norway and the Gender Gap

The current study focused on the differences in gender depiction in U.S. and Norwegian children’s literature because of the differences in those societies’ gender attitudes and norms. For the last five years, the World Economic Forum has published The Global Gender Gap Report (2006-2010). This report was commissioned by the Forum as one aspect of their mission:

The World Economic Forum convenes global leaders from business, policy-making and civil society to find creative and sustainable solutions to the challenges facing our world today. One particular societal and economic challenge is the persistent gap between women and men in their access to resources and opportunities. This gap not only undermines the quality of life of one half of the world’s population but also poses a significant risk to the long-term growth and well-being of nations: countries that do not capitalize on the full potential of one half of their human resources may compromise their competitive potential (2006, p. 5).

The report examines educational, economic, political and health opportunities for women in 115 countries (the n of this report increased to 134 in 2010). These countries represent over 90% of the world population. While no country was found to have eliminated this gap, the Scandinavian countries (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland) have reportedly reduced the gap by the greatest amounts, with Norway ranking in the top three each publication year.

Another measure of gender equity in various nations is provided by the United Nations Development Programme. Norway ranks number one on the Human Development Index and scores 0.075 on the Gender Inequality Index (2011) which is a measure of women’s empowerment, positions in the labor market and reproductive health
(the higher the score, the more inequality that exists), as compared to the United States, which scores 0.299. This places Norway as number 5 in the world and the United States at number 47.

While there are many variables that contribute to these rankings, one theoretical assumption is that a country that ranks consistently high on an index such as this has placed a high priority in creating an equal society for all. In fact, the government of Norway was one of the first to adopt an equal rights policy, enacting the Act Relating to Equal Status of 1978 and updating it in 2005. It was created to improve the lives of women in Norway and in that policy any discrimination on the basis of gender is outlawed, except in cases where the policy specifically promotes gender equality.

The Norwegian government has placed all preschool education under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Research. The Ministry includes gender equality as one of its main selected topics of interest and consideration (out of eight). The Ministry has placed the Action Plan for Gender Equity (2008) in effect, and it is described in the following terms:

The overall objective for the Action Plan is that kindergartens and basic education shall contribute to an equal society where everybody has the opportunity to use their abilities and interests irrespective of gender, and that equality and equity between the sexes must form the foundation for all learning and pedagogical activities in kindergartens and basic education. To achieve this, three main objectives have been given priority:

1. The learning environment in kindergarten and basic education shall promote equality between boys and girls.
2. A better gender balance when it comes to choice of education and career with special focus on vocational education and training and the recruitment of girls to sciences.
3. A better gender balance among members of staff in kindergartens and basic education
According to the position paper “Gender Equality in the Kindergartens” (2006), preschools must remain places where boys and girls have the same opportunities to participate in activities and work together. Early education should focus these activities on preparing young children to live in a society that is based on gender equality and avoid stereotyping children based on gender expectations. Professional educators are encouraged to examine their own views on gender, and their ability to accept each child as an individual with their own abilities. Gender equity is considered an ethical issue that must remain at the forefront of practice.

This focus on gender equity is a central part of all educational practice in Norway. In 2006, Norwegian State Secretary, Lisbeth Rugvedt, addressed the Plan of Action for Gender Equality in Kindergartens in her talk entitled “The good kindergarten is a gender equal kindergarten.” Rugvedt (2006) states that gender equality policy has a place in this government (p. 2), and discusses the plan for increasing the quality of preschool by heightening awareness of equity practice in the hiring and training of teachers, as well as in the policies that impact curriculum implementation. Her assertion that the early years are when gendered patterns are begun, and that without change in preschool practice, there can be no change in societal patterns, highlights the priority that child care has been given in the country. Education is seen as a tool for social leveling (p. 1).

There are authors that have created book series that are prevalent within Norwegian child care centers. These books are considered popular with parents, as well as teachers, and are often found in children’s homes. Of particular interest in these books was the depiction of males in their roles as fathers. Walking along the streets of Oslo, it
is not unusual to see fathers walking their young children in strollers, dropping off and picking up children at school, and grocery shopping. These commonplace activities are considered non-traditional for typical American men, but are the norm in Norway. This is reflected in the language and illustrations in books by these Norwegian authors. As an example, in the book series *Karsten og Petra* by Tor Åge Bringsvær (Bringsværd & Holt, 2011) crowd illustrations contain depictions of fathers as caregivers. Men in these stories frequent the child care centers that children attend and are often depicted as the teachers, as well. In this way, these books reflect the belief that men are important caregivers for young children and are another indication of the equitable distribution of labor in Norway.

**Using Literature to Promote Gender Equality in the United States**

Bias and stereotypes contribute to prejudice and are conveyed to children throughout their lives (Derman-Sparks, 2001). As discussed previously, one way that children are exposed to these stereotypes is through literature in preschool classrooms. Research supports the conclusion that there is literature available to children that could be damaging to their sense of self, particularly their gender identity development. Characters in literature provide role models of appropriate male and female behavior; these role models may not be conducive to promoting positive self-esteem in children, particularly girls (Aina & Cameron, 2011). Many teachers and other early childhood professionals are committed to creating environments where all children can thrive and reach their full potential. Attempts to assist early childhood educators in creating a more
gender fair environment do exist in the literature (Evans, 1998). The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), in their position paper titled "Guidelines for a Gender-Balanced Curriculum in English Language Arts Pre-K to Grade 6," made the following statement:

As teachers and adults who work with children, we advocate wide reading of good literature as one way for children to have vicarious experiences in which they can identify with strong characters across a wide range of human experiences which cross traditional gender boundaries. But . . . if children's books and the characters in them remain gender-bound, the ideas which might cause children to develop expectations for the future, responses to life's events, and stances on issues may also remain stereotypically gender-bound (1995, p.1).

The negative impacts of literature on children's stereotypical views on gender would indicate that, perhaps, positive outcomes could result from the exposure to books with positive gender messages. Gooden and Gooden (2001) state that "children's books have the potential of altering perceptions and possibly helping to change lives (p. 90)."

In fact, in the article "Combating gender disparity in education: Guidelines for early childhood educators," Evans (1998) suggests three areas for professionals to focus upon. The first of these is called Nonbiased Literature. Among the strategies in this section are:

1. teachers find books that accurately reflect the diversity of the human population,
2. read books that contradict popular stereotypes regarding gender, and
3. introduce books that depict a variety of different family types and roles within families.

Research by Trepanier-Street and Romatowski (1999) suggests that literature can be used as a way of purposefully challenging children's stereotypical views of gender. In their study, books were chosen for their descriptions of character roles that were culturally non-traditional. After pre-testing children on what occupations were seen as suitable for people of each gender, these books were read to the children over a period of
two months and were accompanied by activities that further reinforced non-traditional views of gender roles. The children’s responses to the post-test and their increasing selection of both genders as being appropriate for a wider variety of roles indicated that children can be influenced positively by books. They conclude that literature is a valuable resource for exposing children to non-traditional gender roles and the possibility of having an influence on attitudes regarding gender.

Since literature is a large part of the daily routine for most preschool classrooms in the United States, it appears that non-biased quality literature can be used to promote the ideals of equity. Books can be utilized to challenge stereotypes and depict people who are engaged in non-traditional behaviors (Gooden & Gooden, 2001, Duke & McCarthy, 2009). Books containing sexist messages can inspire discussion with the children and help them learn to recognize and challenge sexism. Books that are read to and are available for children must be carefully selected (NCTE, 1995 and Chick, Heilman-Houser & Hunter, 2002). Indeed, this care must be taken in all aspects of pedagogical study (Sandberg & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2005), as it is important that curriculum and activities are not limited to stereotypical views (Trepanier-Street & Romatowski, 1999 and MacNaughton, 1997). The Women in Literature and Life Assembly (NCTE, 1995), offer a booklist to help teachers create a more gender balanced environment, as well as ideas for building a more balanced language arts curriculum through literature. Their suggestions include:

1. adding books about females throughout the preschool experience,
2. seeking out books with active and successful female role models, and
3. reading books that counteract stereotypical roles for both male and female characters.
Another group to provide support for gender-fair books is the Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association when they began the Amelia Bloomer Project to identify feminist books. Nominations are taken and books are evaluated for positive images for young readers. Each year, a list of books is identified and circulated through public libraries. These lists are available to any who are interested and are posted at: [http://ameliabloomer.wordpress.com/about/](http://ameliabloomer.wordpress.com/about/).

Chick, et al. (2002) advise adults to "evaluate the books read to young children to ensure that they are free of gender bias. Teachers often choose books based on personal preference, without considering the appropriateness of gender messages (p. 153)" and in her paper to the Children and Library publication, Worland (2008) challenges the reader to build on the progress that has been made. Her call to "move toward the possibility of offering young children literature that is free of stereotypes and is truly egalitarian, inclusive, and empowering to readers (p. 45)" is a call to all those in positions to influence the lives of children, including the early care and education professional.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Book Selection

Prior studies have focused mainly on best-selling and award winning children’s literature, such as Caldecott award recipients. The current study altered the focus to include those books that are accessible to children on a daily basis in child care classrooms since the books purchased for centers are not necessarily best-selling or award winning. This focus was developed during observations of hundreds of preschool classrooms over the past 20 years. This researcher has seen classroom libraries with several books that are available for children during choice or free play. These books are generally kept at children’s eye level on book shelves that display the front covers of the books. These library areas are usually open for a large portion of the day for children to select books to look at and are generally equipped with small furnishings or pillows for children to sit upon. Teachers may also use the book/library area in the classroom as a place to keep children busy, and theoretically more manageable, while transitions occur during the course of the day. For example, a teacher can ask the children to go to the book area to “read” while waiting for their turn to wash hands for lunch. The assumption underlying the purposeful selection of these books for this study was that these are the stories that the children are more likely to have direct exposure to, regardless of whether they have won any literary awards or appear on any list.
Sampling in the United States and Norway

Denver, Colorado was chosen as the data collection area in the United States and Oslo was chosen as the data collection area in Norway. Both are large urban cities that have substantial immigrant populations. Denver is a city with an approximate population of 610,000 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2009), while the Oslo municipality has a population of 559,000 (Statistics Norway, 2011). Denver’s largest immigrant population is comprised of persons who identify themselves as "Hispanic or Latino" (30% of Denver’s population), with 11% self-identified as "Black. Oslo’s immigrant population totals 26%, with the majority being from the Middle East (7%) and Africa (5%) (Oslo Municipality Development Department, 2011).

The sampling frame for the United States was the 80 classrooms in Denver, Colorado that receive funding through the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP). These classrooms are located in community preschool sites that contract with Denver Public Schools (DPS) to provide preschool services to children in Denver. They include a wide variety of settings; Head Start, large non-profit agencies, for-profit programs, small centers and homes. These programs are ones in which this researcher has quite a bit of contact with throughout the course of the school year, enabling an invitation to participate utilizing a list serve (see Appendix C). Each program had the opportunity to accept or decline participation after receiving an emailed invitation. The books from 20 classroom book areas were sampled from those sites willing to participate.

The Norwegian classrooms were chosen in much the same way. Each preschool program in the Oslo is listed on the Municipality website
(http://www.oslo.kommune.no/), which has a link to all of the programs by city area, including their contact information. All preschool programs in Oslo Municipality were invited, by email, to participate (see Appendix B). These centers were similar to those in Denver in terms of funding sources (private and government), with for-profit and non-profit status and family child care homes being represented. Of the 21 Norwegian respondents, 20 classrooms were chosen. To create a representative list of the most common books that preschool children have access to in both the United States and Norway, data was collected in 20 classrooms in both countries (40 classrooms total).

The main difference between the sample in Denver and the one in Oslo was that the Denver sample included mainly classrooms that serve children who have been labeled as “at-risk for early school failure” from a list of legislated list of risk factors. Since there was no information found on whether classrooms serving children who are living in mostly lower socio-economic environments choose different types of books than those serving a more “middle-income” group (like those living in Oslo, where rates of poverty are very low, 9.68%, 2011), it is unclear whether these two groups are meaningfully different in any way.

**Participants**

21 centers in Oslo responded to the initial email request for participation. One program was excluded from the study due to their status as an “International” preschool. When the preschool administrator was interviewed, she stated that their focus was on children becoming fluent in the English language; in fact, the teachers and most of the
administration were from Great Britain. They were excluded from the study because the staff background was not Norwegian and because the people choosing the books for the children had not grown up in Norway. Therefore, it was unclear whether or not they would choose literature from the Norwegian cultural perspective and thus would not help answer the research question.

The data collection for the Norwegian programs was completed between September 1, 2001 and December 10, 2011, with 387 books coded and photographed. Each participating preschool determined the time of the visit with some choosing after hours so that no children were present and the director of the program was asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix D).

Each community (non-Denver Public Schools district) preschool program receiving funding through the Early Education Department received an email invitation to participate. 20 programs in Denver, Colorado made themselves available for visitation. These programs chose the time for the data collection visit and were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix E). 384 books were coded in these classrooms.

**Coding Preschool Books**

Each children’s book was read and evaluated in 7 categories; main character, male characters, female characters, male traditional, male non-traditional, female traditional and female non-traditional. *Main character* was coded by examining both the title character of the book, as well as the character that was dominant through the story. This variable was coded using the following guidelines:
1. "male" if the central or title character(s) was a man or boy,
2. "female" if the central or title character(s) was a woman or girl,
3. "both" if there were more than one central or title character and each gender was represented,
4. or "none" if no main character was specified or if the main characters were a group comprised of both genders.

The "none" category mostly occurred when the main topic was alphabet, numbers, shapes, animals, seasons or other natural objects which had no gender specification; typically in non-fiction or "fact" books.

*Male character* was a count of any character that was either referenced as a male, called "he" in the story, or was depicted in an illustration as being a man or boy.

The category *female character* was a count of women or girl characters. In any instance where it was not possible to accurately categorize a character as male or female, which occurred in illustrations of street or other group scenes and in fiction books where animals were characters in the story but were never called by a gendered pronoun or depicted in typical male or female clothes, these characters were not added to either the male or female character score.

The final four categories, male traditional, male non-traditional, female traditional and female non-traditional, were counts of character actions within the story, either verbalized or illustrated. These were actions or activities that have been historically considered male or female. This table of activities (see table 1 below) was created from prior research, and from the United States Bureau of the Census Brief (2000) that stated:

Even though women have made progress in entering occupations predominately held by men (especially executive and professional specialty occupations), the majority of women are still in traditional "female" occupations. Women continue to be overrepresented in administrative support and service occupations and
underrepresented in precision production, craft, and repair occupations, and the transportation and material moving occupations (p. 2).

Service occupations were listed as:

- Hairdressers, hairstylists, and cosmetologists
- Miscellaneous personal appearance workers
- Child care workers
- Personal and home care aides
- Recreation and fitness workers
- Residential advisors
- Personal care and service workers, all other

Office and Administrative Support Occupations were listed as:

- Switchboard operators, including answering service
- Telephone operators
- Customer service representatives programs
- File Clerks
- Library assistants, clerical
- Receptionists and information clerks
- Stock clerks and order fillers
- Secretaries and administrative assistants
- Data entry keyers
- Word processors and typists
- Office machine operators, except computer
- Proofreaders and copy markers
- Office and administrative support workers, all other

These are partial lists from the Census Bureau, for a complete list see Appendix F.
Table 1.

*Categorization of traditional versus non-traditional activities for males and females*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Traditional</th>
<th>Male Non-Traditional</th>
<th>Female Traditional</th>
<th>Female Non-Traditional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Police Officer</td>
<td>Primary Caregiver</td>
<td>Primary Caregiver</td>
<td>Police Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighter</td>
<td>Preschool Teacher</td>
<td>Preschool Teacher</td>
<td>Firefighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Pushing Strollers</td>
<td>Pushing Strollers</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Chef</td>
<td>Cooking for Family</td>
<td>Cooking for Family</td>
<td>Professional Chef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Wage Earner</td>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>Cleaning</td>
<td>Main Wage Earner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politician</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>Politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Work</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Construction Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>Hair Stylist</td>
<td>Hair Stylist</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Books in Norwegian Centers**

The most prevalent set up for preschool centers in the United States was individual classrooms for each group of children. These classrooms were, most often, self-sustaining; meaning that each group of children had their own classroom with the materials needed to implement a curriculum. However, this preference for individual classrooms was not always evident in Norway, nor was the concept of displaying books so that children can see the front covers. There were two centers (10% of the programs visited) in which children had no home room; these were called "basse barnehage." The children and their caregivers move as a group from one curricular area to another, most often these were rooms that were set up into different interest areas, such as dramatic play, block rooms, science areas or others. The emphasis of the reading areas of these two programs appeared to be on the quantity of books available and many books were torn and outdated.
Chapter Four: Findings

Data Analysis

20 child care programs in Oslo, Norway were visited. At each program, a preschool classroom was chosen by the center director. If there were more than 20 books available, 20 books were chosen at random. In one classroom, there were less than 20 books and, in that case, each book was coded. In the 15 classrooms that had children present, the children that were interested in the goings-on of data collection were asked, "Kan jeg se på en av bøkene dine?" ("Can I see one of your books?"). Five classrooms had no children present, so books were chosen by the researcher by placing all of the books in a pile and choosing every other book to code until 20 was reached. A total of 387 books were read and coded in Norway.

20 programs in the United States were visited and their books were read and coded using the same methods (n = 384 books), 16 of these had children present. Two classrooms had less than 20 books, so all of their books were coded. A total of 771 books from both countries were included in the data collection.

The books were scored and then mean scores for each coded group were analyzed for significance in the following areas:
Main Character

The main character was coded in every book in the sample. In the United States programs, 384 books were coded. The largest group, with 38% (n = 147) was the “none” group. This meant that a large segment of the books had no main character identified by gender. They included mostly books that were non-fiction, with alphabet and number recognition stories or facts about animals and nature. The books with a male main character totaled 131, or 34%, and female main characters were the next largest group with 22% (n = 86). The category “both”, where the book had two main characters with one of each gender, was coded in 5% of the books (n = 20).

The preschool books in Norway showed a different pattern. Male main characters were the largest group, comprising 53% (n = 206) of the sample, while female main characters were the next largest group, but at only 26% (n = 102) of the sample or half the number of males.

![Bar graph showing the number of main characters in each gender category by country.](image)

*Figure 1.* Bar graph showing the number of main characters in each gender category by country.

The categories of “male” and “female” were compared within each country using a Z-test of proportions. The sample in the United States indicated a difference that was
significant at the 99% confidence level \((z= 3.632707, p = .01)\). In the Norwegian sample, there appeared to be similar relationship between the \textit{male} and \textit{female} category, with the difference being equally significant \((z = 5.456511, p = .01)\) indicating that males still significantly outnumber females in the Main Character category in both countries. This finding was surprising and appeared to indicate that neither country has addressed the issues of gender bias in the main characters of preschool books.

When comparing each of the categories between the two countries, the results were significant at the 99% confidence level in all categories except the number of female main characters (see Table 2, below).

The most interesting of these findings were the number of books that had both a male and female main character. In Norway, 59 out of 387 books scored \textit{both}, while in the United States only 20 out of 384 did so. This indicates a much greater likelihood that children will be exposed to books where a male and female are simultaneously a main character role in Norway than they will in the United States.

Table 2.
\textit{Comparing Norway and the United States in Each Main Character Category}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Proportion-Norway</th>
<th>Proportion-United States</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>20/387</td>
<td>147/384</td>
<td>12.141136</td>
<td>p = .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>206/387</td>
<td>131/384</td>
<td>5.4464</td>
<td>p = .01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>102/387</td>
<td>86/384</td>
<td>1.280574</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>59/387</td>
<td>20/384</td>
<td>4.661375</td>
<td>p = .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Number of Characters}

All distinguishable characters in the books from both countries were counted. In the United States sample, there were 319 male characters and 299 females \((n = 618, 52\% \text{ male})\)
and 48% of total characters, respectively). The Norwegian books contained 330 male characters and 287 female characters (n = 617, 53% and 47% of total characters, respectively). No significant differences for found in the number of characters of each gender by comparing each country of by comparing the two countries to one another.

![Bar graph showing the total number of male and female characters in all books by country.](image)

**Figure 2.** Bar graph showing the total number of male and female characters in all books by country.

**Male Traditional versus Male Non-Traditional**

Using a chart of gender-traditional jobs created from the literature (see the above chapter on Methodology, subsection "Coding Preschool Books" for a complete description of how the list was generated), each book was studied and coded by placing any male character into one of three categories:

1. "Male performing a gender-traditional role"
2. "Male performing a gender-non-traditional role" or
3. "Male performing a gender neutral role"

A rating in one of the first two categories was then entered into a total. For example a male firefighter would add one to the traditional tally and a male cooking dinner for his
family would add one in the non-traditional category. A rating in the neutral category did not add points to either traditional or non-traditional. Examples of this rating were depictions of males eating, sitting or walking with family members; males who were walking with their children without a female were added to the non-traditional total.

The male characterization in the United States were primarily neutral (206/319), as was the Norwegian male characters (180/330). When comparing all of the males categorized in a non-neutral role in the United States (n = 139), 90 were scored \( \text{traditional} \) and 49 \( \text{non-traditional} \) (65% and 35% respectively, see table 3, below). In the Norwegian sample, 68 characters were coded as \( \text{traditional} \) (55%) and 56 as \( \text{non-traditional} \) (45%, n = 124, see table 4, below).

**Table 3.**
Comparing the United States Proportions in the Male Traditional and Male Non-Traditional Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Category</th>
<th>Male Traditional US</th>
<th>Male Non-Traditional US</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Traditional vs. Non-Traditional</td>
<td>90/319</td>
<td>49/319</td>
<td>3.956926</td>
<td>P= .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4.**
Comparing Norwegian Proportions in the Male Traditional and Male Non-Traditional Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Category</th>
<th>Male Traditional Norway</th>
<th>Male Non-Traditional Norway</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Traditional vs. Non-Traditional</td>
<td>68/330</td>
<td>56/330</td>
<td>1.183014</td>
<td>Not Significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Z test comparing the total number of male characters to the number of male characters depicted in traditional roles showed a significant difference (\( Z = 1.991163, p = \))
.05), indicating that male characters are more likely to be depicted in traditional roles in the United States than in Norway (see table 5, below). The number of depictions of males in non-traditional roles showed no difference between the two countries.

Figure 3. Bar graph showing the number of male traditional versus male non-traditional character depictions in all books by country.

Table 5. Comparing the United States and Norwegian Proportions in the Male Traditional, Male Non-Traditional and Neutral Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Category</th>
<th>Proportion - Norway</th>
<th>Proportion - United States</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male Traditional</td>
<td>68/330</td>
<td>90/319</td>
<td>2.257</td>
<td>p = .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Non-Traditional</td>
<td>56/330</td>
<td>49/319</td>
<td>0.552522</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>206/330</td>
<td>180/319</td>
<td>1.556251</td>
<td>Not significant (80%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female Traditional versus Female Non-Traditional

The female characters in the coded books were examined in a manner similar to that of the males. Each distinguishable character was placed in one of three categories:

1. Úfemale performing a gender-traditional roleû
2. Úfemale performing a gender-non-traditional roleû or
3. Úfemale performing a gender neutral roleû
The females in the U.S. books who were depicted in a role other than neutral were depicted in a traditional role 70% of the time (n = 105) and in non-traditional roles 30% of the time (n = 44, number of neutral depictions = 150/299). The females in Norwegian books who were depicted in a role other than neutral were depicted in a traditional role 76% of the time (n = 76) and in non-traditional roles 24% of the time (n = 24, number of neutral depictions = 187/287). When comparing the proportions of female traditional and non-traditional roles, both countries were significantly more likely to depict females in traditional roles (See table 6 and 7, below).

Table 6.
Comparing the United States Proportions in the Female Traditional and Female Non-Traditional Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Category</th>
<th>Female Traditional US</th>
<th>Female Non-Traditional US</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Traditional vs. Non-Traditional</td>
<td>105/299</td>
<td>44/299</td>
<td>5.925624</td>
<td>P = .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.
Comparing Norwegian Proportions in the Female Traditional and Female Non-Traditional Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Category</th>
<th>Female Traditional Norway</th>
<th>Female Non-Traditional Norway</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Traditional vs. Non-Traditional</td>
<td>76/287</td>
<td>24/287</td>
<td>5.87221</td>
<td>p = .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Females were most likely to be depicted in gender neutral roles in books in the Denver classrooms, but were significantly more likely to be so depicted in Norwegian books available in Oslo classrooms (z = 3.709657, p = .01, see Table 8, below)).
Figure 4. Bar graph showing number of female characters depicted in traditional versus non-traditional roles by country.

Table 8.
Comparing the United States and Norwegian Proportions in the Female Traditional, Female Non-Traditional and Neutral Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Category</th>
<th>Proportion- Norway</th>
<th>Proportion- United States</th>
<th>Z-Score</th>
<th>Significance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Traditional</td>
<td>76/287</td>
<td>105/299</td>
<td>2.262016</td>
<td>p = .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Non-Traditional</td>
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<td>44/299</td>
<td>2.398699</td>
<td>p = .05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>150/299</td>
<td>3.712763</td>
<td>p = .01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

Research conducted since the influential Weitzman, et al, study of 1972 indicates that, despite what changes have been made to improve gender equity in American society in general, children’s literature remains biased. Since children’s books are often a reflection of the society in which they are created, this study investigated preschool books in Oslo, Norway and Denver, Colorado in order to compare samples from two countries that are very different in how their societies have evolved in regards to gender policies and practices. The question asked was how these two countries compared in their depiction of males and females in books for young children. The answer was multifaceted and indicates that the cultures of the United States and Norway do, indeed, appear to be reflected in the preschool literature in child care programs.

Alignment with Previous Research

A thorough review of the literature can, and should, inform the practice of the early childhood professional, despite those who champion the cause of “teacher instincts” or long-held traditions and habits as their evidence for best practices. That gender identity in young children can be influenced by books in their environment has been documented by researchers. The focus for this study was on children’s literature; how it
affects children’s gender identity development, how bias has been discovered and described by researchers and how to promote gender equity utilizing preschool books.

Many studies in the past counted only the main characters of the books and found that male main characters outnumbered females by a wide margin, but this narrow lens missed other important aspects of the literature. This study did include a main character count as one aspect of the comparison, but added other variables to analyze. A total of 771 books were coded, 387 from 20 classrooms within Oslo and 384 books from 20 classrooms in Denver. Each book was read and examined on eight variables:

1. country,
2. main character,
3. number of male characters,
4. number of female characters,
5. traditional male role depictions,
6. non-traditional male role depictions,
7. traditional female role depictions, and
8. non-traditional female role depictions.

Historically, female main characters have been outnumbered by males. Unfortunately, the results of this study prove to be no different; neither country improved upon the findings of previous research. Of main characters categorized as male or female, females made up only 40% of the American sample and 33% of the total in the Norwegian sample. Male main characters continue to dominate the preschool literature in both countries. However, an interesting finding resulted when the countries were compared on how many books had both a male and female main character sharing the title role. In Norway, a large number of books had both a male and female main character, while this number was very small in the U.S. sample; the number of such paired characters was significant at nearly 3 times the number of such stories in Norway.
This could indicate a pattern of shared responsibilities between the sexes in Norwegian culture, as compared to the more patriarchal American society.

One focus of this study was to investigate the number of examples of traditional and non-traditional tasks that were depicted for males and females. The intention of this focus was not to place any value on the goodness or error in depicting traditional roles; it was simply to investigate the variety of roles and the balance of options that were depicted for children. This variable showed significant differences between the two countries. The preschool literature in the United States was far more likely to depict male characters in traditional roles than was the Norwegian sample. When looking at female depiction in the literature, females in the U.S. sample of books were depicted in a traditional role 70% of the time, while Norwegian female characters were most likely to be depicted in a gender neutral role.

This research indicates that the culture of greater equity between the genders that occurs in Norway is reflected in the literature available to children in their preschool classrooms, however even the Norwegian books had a greater number of male than female main characters, so change is necessary in Norway, as well. Both American and Norwegian educators must become aware of the biased messages that we may be sending to our youngest children.

**Implications**

With the large number of American children participating in preschool group care, both in full and part-day settings, the environments where they spend these
formative years can shape who they become as adults. As they develop their ideas around gender roles, will they view their options for roles in the world as limited by their gender or not? Prior research suggests that literature that depicts limiting roles for children, both male and female, is detrimental to their ideas about gender identity; who they are and what they can become. It is important that we, as educators in the United States, look critically at the messages that we are sending to the children in our care.

Since bias can contribute to lowered expectations and prejudice, ensuring that the literature children are exposed to is free of bias and contain empowering stories and illustrations can assist all children in reaching their full potential. Past research supports the understanding that there are books that are available to children that can be damaging to their sense of self, providing role models not conducive to promoting positive self-esteem, particularly for children who may not conform to preconceived notions of gender appropriateness.

Teachers in preschool classrooms can readily find examples and assistance in creating more gender fair environments. Examples include the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) position paper, "Guidelines for a Gender-Balanced Curriculum in English Language Arts Pre-K to Grade 6," or the Evans (1998) article "Combating gender disparity in education: Guidelines for early childhood educators." These and other examples from the previous literature review chapter can help teachers examine their own classroom environments and practice for potential biases.

Biased literature has been shown to negatively impact children, so it stands to reason that positive images may do the opposite and assist children in changing their
perceptions by challenging biased notions. In this way, literature can be a valuable resource in promoting ideals of equity. Sexist books can be discussed with children in an open forum and can assist them in learning to challenge bias.

Booklists that specialize in gender fair books are available to teachers. The Women in Literature and Life Assembly (NCTE, 1995), offers practical suggestions and lists of books that teachers can add to their classroom libraries, as well as the Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association’s Amelia Bloomer Project list of feminist books.

Limitations

The small scale of this quantitative study, 20 classrooms per country, limits the amount of information that can be generalized from the findings. In Denver and Oslo alone, there are hundreds of child care and preschool program classrooms that were not represented. Also, both of these cities are urban cities, so generalizability to other regions of each country would be suspect. As much was done to ensure that the samples were as closely representative of the population of centers as possible, but the above limitations should be taken into consideration.

The coding of the preschool books was another area of possible limitation, as the coding was done by one researcher. A larger scale study with more than one person doing the analysis of the literature would increase the reliability of the data.

Another possible limitation to the study was the difference in the way that books were chosen. In any classroom with children in attendance, books were chosen by the
children who were interested after the researcher asked each child, “can I see one of your books?” After each child had chosen one book, the remaining books were stacked and every other book was chosen to ensure that there was no bias in the selection. It is unclear whether this difference in the selection method would have made any significant difference, since most classrooms did not contain many more than 20 books to begin with.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

The issue of gender bias in preschool settings continues to be a rich one that researchers can continue to study. The result regarding the large number of fact books in the U.S. was an interesting one and could be the focus of further research. Are these books about subjects other than people (colors, numbers, letters, and nature) an indication of the push down of the elementary school literacy standards or are they simply a result of the increasing awareness of the variety of books that can make up a quality children’s library?

There are other noteworthy inclusions in Norwegian literature for children that would provide rich information for researchers. While these do not necessarily fall under the realm of this research study, they are worthy of mention since they depict the culture of acceptance that is reflected in preschool literature.

1. In *Karsten og Petra Kler Seg Ut* by Tor Åge Bringsværd, two best friends of the opposite gender, explore her mother’s closet for dress up clothes. Both children put on women’s clothing, including high heels, and show the parent. While a little boy dressing up in women’s clothing can be cause for alarm with some American parents, this act is treated as inconsequential and is not portrayed as being deviant in any way.
2. In *Mari og Hunden* by Tove Appelgren, a family sits down to dinner together to discuss getting a dog. In the illustration, the mother is breastfeeding the baby while eating. This activity, which this researcher has never seen depicted in an American children’s book, is treated as the commonplace event that it is.

The interactions between the characters in the books were not a part of the current study and may be another fruitful area for additional research. A content analysis of these interactions could then be compared to previous studies that found that males were more often depicted as the problem-solvers in male/female relationships. Analysis of the books that were coded *both* for main character, could bring focus upon the interactions between the male and female main characters and to investigate the relationship between the characters in terms of who has the power in the relationship and how is that relationship depicted.

**Implications for Professional Development**

Because prior research indicates that children’s gender identity can be influence by the literature that they are exposed to, it is imperative that early educators in the United States turn a critical eye to the books in their classrooms. Reviewing research, including this study, can inform professional development opportunities to educate preschool teachers on gender issues within the early care and education field. The information gathered in this study can be used to inform the professional development sessions of early care and education professionals.

One tool that has been developed to aid in the implementation for training preschool educators in Europe is the Gender Loops Project. The Toolbox for Gender-
Conscious and Equitable Early Childhood Centres (2008, English version) was created through the EU-Leonardo Da Vinci Programme of the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Project and was carried out by organizations from five different countries, including Norway (Germany, Lithuania, Spain and Turkey were the other four). The Leonardo Da Vinci Programme accepts requests for proposals for funding of worthy projects in learning and the toolbox is the result of one such funding opportunity. The main recommendation that can be taken from the report is that early educators need to be trained to carry out gender work and taught to understand the development of gendered behavior so that they can look critically at behaviors in their classrooms. That way, they can engage children in the process of exploring their own gender identity. The Toolbox document contains practical guides, activities and recommendation that create a simple way for teacher to begin to implement gender fair practices. This document has been distributed to every child care center in Norway and can be utilized in professional development trainings here in the United States (it is available for download at: http://www.genderloops.eu/docs/toolbox.pdf).

The Question of National Policy

With the focus on policy, it appears that the Norwegian government has placed a high priority on creating an equal society for all. The fact that Norway was one of the first to adopt an equal rights policy is an indication of how strong a focus has been placed on equity between genders in that country. That preschool education has been placed under the direction of the Ministry of Education and Research and that the Ministry
includes gender equality as one of its main topics of consideration suggests that the education of young children is included in that focus. It appears that this emphasis on creating educational experiences that promote equality between boys and girls is visible in their preschool classrooms, specifically in the literature for children. The findings of this research project indicates that the United States may to need look at implementing policy that can effect similar sorts of outcome.

Conclusion

Young children begin to learn and accept social definitions regarding what are considered appropriate behavior for males and females as they develop their gender identity. There is research available that indicates that American educators may underestimate the impact of sexism in classrooms, allow the gender of the children to impact their behavior and need additional training and education to begin to understand their own biases. Included in this is the need to gain an understanding that accessible books can influence children’s very understanding of gender, that these books can persuade children to accept societal norms regarding gender roles, and that there are books that remain biased and unequal in their treatment of male and female characters.

Perhaps we can look closely at the policies that Norwegian officials and early educators have placed into practice. Included are action plans with goals to create preschools that can contribute to an equitable society where all children have opportunities to pursue their own interests, regardless of gender, and classrooms that promote equity between genders. Educators are encouraged to reflect on their own
perceptions and to focus on activities that prepare children to live in a society where
gender equality is the norm. Overall, equality is viewed as an issue of social justice and
ethics, and preschools are encouraged to be places where all children have the chance to
work together and participate in the same activities.

Some clear recommendations have come from studying the literature that exists
regarding gender bias in U.S. early childhood classrooms. These recommendations can
help teachers improve children’s perceptions of themselves as gendered individuals, and
include; reinforcing gender-fair behaviors, finding books that reflect human diversity
more accurately, and purposefully challenging views based on stereotypes. Acting on
these recommendations and perusing professional development opportunities can make a
difference in the lives of the children that are entrusted to our care.
References


Appendix A: Photographs taken in Norwegian preschools

Library in a Norwegian preschool classroom

Picture taken from “Lillesøster” (Little Sister) book depicting mom going to work while dad stays home to care for 2 young children.
...våkner Karsten. Han er kvalm og svimmel. Og han begynner nesten å gråte. For han skjønner ikke hva som er hendt, eller hvor han er. Så da er det jammen fint at Randi er med!

Picture taken from ÆKarsten og Petraåbok depicting a female physician in an Emergency Room.


Picture taken from ÆAu, Det Gjør Vondtå(ouch, That Hurts) depicting a male preschool teacher helping the children visit the teddy bear doctor.
Picture taken from "Emma er Storsøster" (Emma is a Big Sister) book depicting a little girl fixing her own wagon.

Picture taken from "Nam, Nam" (Yummy, Yummy) with both a male and female main characters cooking together.
Appendix B: Email invitations sent to programs in Oslo- Norwegian

Note: English version in Appendix C

Jeg ønsker å be dere om å delta i et kort forskningsprosjekt.

**Forskning:**
Førskole bøker: En sammenligning mellom tidlig omsorg og utdanning i USA og Norge
Jeg ber deg om tillatelse til å komme inn i en barnehage klasserommet en dag i ca 1-2 timer, for å gjøre følgende oppgaver:
1. skrive ned navnen/tittel på de bøkene som er tilgjengelig for barna
2. se gjennom bøkene og ta notater av innholdet i de.
(Vi avtaler dato og klokkeslett, og jeg kommer på et tidspunkt som passer for dere, med eller uten barn til stede)

**Risiko og plager:**
Det er ingen risiko å delta i dette forskningsprosjektet utover et mulig ubehag av å ha en ekstra voksen i klasserommet

**Fordeler:**
Jeg håper å lære mer om forskjeller og likheter i norske og amerikanske førskole bøker. Denne informasjonen vil bli brukt til å informere lærerne om betydningen av et nøye og bevisst valg av de bøkene som er tilgjengelig for barna i klasserommet.

**Betaling for deltakelse:**
Det er ingen kompensasjon for å delta i denne forskningsprosessen.

**Fotografier:**
Eventuelle fotografier tatt under dette forskningsprosjektet vil bare være av bøker, og det vil ikke bli tatt bilde av voksne eller barn.

**Personvern / Konfidensialitet:**
Det vil ikke på noe tidspunkt være mulig å identifisere klasserom eller deltakere i studiet.

**Frivillig deltakelse:**
Deltakelse i dette forskningsstudiet er helt frivillig. Alle deltakerne kan bli fjernet fra studiet når som helst uten straff.

Vennligst ta kontakt med meg spørsmål eller å sette opp en avtale for meg å besøke en av dine barnehage klasseromer.

MVH
Cathrine Aasen Floyd, Universitetsstipendiat
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Cathrine.Floyd@du.edu; mammacathrine@hotmail.com
45 77 60 81
Appendix C: Email invitations sent to programs in Denver- English

Hello Everyone!
I am asking you to participate in a short research study. This email is designed to give you information about this study. I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. Please let me know if I could come and visit your classroom.

Project Title: Preschool books: A comparison between early care and education classrooms in the United States and Norway

Principal Investigator: Cathrine Aasen Floyd, Doctoral Student
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Cathrine.Floyd@du.edu

Faculty Advisor: Kent Seidel, Associate Professor
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Kent.Seidel@du.edu

What the study is about
The purpose of this research is to compare books in preschool classrooms in the United States and Norway.

What I will ask you to do
I will ask you to allow me to come into your classroom for 1-2 hours on a day and time of your choice to:
1. write down the names of the books that are accessible to children
2. look through the books and take notes on their content

Risks and discomforts
There are no risks to participating in this research project beyond the possible discomfort of have an additional adult in your classroom

Benefits
I hope to learn more about the differences and similarities in Norwegian and American preschool books. This information will be used to inform educators of the benefits of carefully selecting books that will be accessible in the classroom.

Payment for participation
There is no compensation available for participating in this research process.

Photographs
Any photographs taken for this research project will be of books only, no adults or children will be included.
Privacy/Confidentiality
At no time will participating classrooms or the members of the classroom be identified. However, if we communicate by email, please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Taking part is voluntary
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. All participants can be removed from the study at any time with no penalty.

If you are injured by this research
In the event that any research-related activities result in an injury, treatment will be made available including first aid, emergency treatment, and follow-up care as needed. Cost for such care will be billed in the ordinary manner to you or your insurance company. No reimbursement, compensation, or free medical care is offered by Denver University. If you think that you have suffered a research-related injury, contact Kent Seidel right away at 303-871-2496 or Kent.Seidel@du.edu.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Cathrine Aasen Floyd, a doctoral student at the University of Denver. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Cathrine.Floyd@du.edu or Kent Seidel at Kent.Seidel@du.edu.
If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at du-irb@du.edu or 303-871-4050.
Appendix D: Informed consent forms for Norwegian programs- Norwegian

Note: English version in Appendix E

Samtykkeskjema for Forskningsstudie

Jeg ber deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt. Dette skjemaet er laget for å gi deg informasjon om forskningsstudien. Jeg vil beskrive studien for deg og svare på evt. spørsmål.

Prosjekttittel
Førskolebøker: En sammenligning mellom tidlig omsorg og klasseromsutdanning i USA og Norge.

Hovedforsker
Cathrine Aasen Floyd, Universitetsstipendiat
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Cathrine.Floyd@du.edu

Fakultetsrådgiver
Kent Seidel, førsteamanuensis
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Kent.Seidel@du.edu

Hva undersøkelsen handler om
Hensikten med denne forskningen er å sammenligne bøker i førskoler i USA og Norge.

Hva jeg vil be deg om å gjøre
1) komme inn i klasserommet i 1-2 timer på en valgfri dag, og tid
2) skrive ned navnene på de bøkene som er tilgjengelig for barn
3) se gjennom bøkene og ta notater på innholdet deres
4) ta noen bilder av bøkene

Risiko og plager
Det er ingen risiko å delta i dette forskningsprosjektet utover mulig ubehag av å ha en ekstra voksen i klasserommet

Fordeler
Jeg håper å lære mer om forskjeller og likheter i norsk og amerikansk førskole-bøker. Denne informasjonen vil bli brukt til å informere lærere av fordelene å nøye velge bøker som vil være tilgjengelig i klasserommet.

Betaling for deltakelse
Det er ingen kompensasjon for å delta i denne forskningsprosessen.
**Fotografier**
Eventuelle fotografier tatt for dette forskningsprosjektet vil være av bøkene, ingen voksne eller barn vil bli inkludert.

**Personvern / Konfidensialitet**
Ikke på noe tidspunkt vil deltagere i klasserommene eller medlemmer av klasserommet identifiseres. Men hvis vi kommuniserer på e-post, vær oppmerksom på at e-kommunikasjon verken er private eller sikre. Selv om jeg tar forholdsregler for å beskytte ditt personvern, bør du være oppmerksom på at informasjonen som sendes via e-post kan leses av en tredjepart.

**Å ta del i forskningsstudien er frivillig**
Deltakelse i denne forskningsstudien er helt frivillig. Alle deltakerne kan bli fjernet fra studien når som helst uten straff.

**Hvis du er skadet av denne forskningen**

**Hvis du har spørsmål**
Hvis du har spørsmål angående dine rettigheter som fag i denne studien, kan du kontakte Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Deltakere på du-irb@du.edu eller 303-871-4050.

Du vil få en kopi av dette skjemaet.

**Underskrift på samtykke**
Jeg har lest informasjonen ovenfor, og har fått svar på evt. spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til å delta i studien.

Din signatur ___________________________ Dato __________

Ditt navn (trykt) __________________________________________
Programnavn ___________________________ Klasserom ____________

Underskrift av personen som innhenter samtykke ___________ Dato __________

Trykte navn på person innhenter samtykke ________________________________

Dette samtykkeskjemaet vil bli holdt av forsker i minst fem år utover slutten av studien.
Appendix E: Informed consent form for American programs- English

Research Study Consent Form

I am asking you to participate in a research study. This form is designed to give you information about this study. I will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions.

Project Title: Gender stereotyping in preschool books: A comparison between early care and education classrooms in the United States and Norway

Principal Investigator: Cathrine Aasen Floyd, Doctoral Student
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Cathrine.Floyd@du.edu

Faculty Advisor: Kent Seidel, Associate Professor
University of Denver, Morgridge College of Education
Kent.Seidel@du.edu

What the study is about
The purpose of this research is to compare books in preschool classrooms in the United States and Norway.

What I will ask you to do
I will ask you to allow me to come into your classroom for 1-2 hours on a day and time of your choice to:
1. write down the names of the books that are accessible to children
2. look through the books and take notes on their content

Risks and discomforts
There are no risks to participating in this research project beyond the possible discomfort of having an additional adult in your classroom.

Benefits
I hope to learn more about the differences and similarities in Norwegian and American preschool books. This information will be used to inform educators of the benefits of carefully selecting books that will be accessible in the classroom.

Payment for participation
There is no compensation available for participating in this research process.

Photographs
Any photographs taken for this research project will be of books only, no adults or children will be included.
Privacy/Confidentiality
At no time will participating classrooms or the members of the classroom be identified. However, if we communicate by email, please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Taking part is voluntary
Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. All participants can be removed from the study at any time with no penalty.

If you are injured by this research
In the event that any research-related activities result in an injury, treatment will be made available including first aid, emergency treatment, and follow-up care as needed. Cost for such care will be billed in the ordinary manner to you or your insurance company. No reimbursement, compensation, or free medical care is offered by Denver University. If you think that you have suffered a research-related injury, contact Kent Seidel right away at 303-871-2496 or Kent.Seidel@du.edu.

If you have questions
The main researcher conducting this study is Cathrine Aasen Floyd, a doctoral student at the University of Denver. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at Cathrine.Floyd@du.edu or Kent Seidel at Kent.Seidel@du.edu.
If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at du-irb@du.edu or 303-871-4050.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature ____________________________ Date _______

Your Name (printed) ____________________________

Program Name ________________________________ Classroom _______________________

Signature of person obtaining consent ________________ Date _______

Printed name of person obtaining consent __________________________
This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study.
Appendix F: Occupation Classification of the United States Census Bureau

OCCUPATION CLASSIFICATION
(Beginning January 2011)

These categories are aggregated into 23 detailed groups and 11 major groups (see page 10-14). The codes in the right hand column are the 2010 SOC equivalent. Changes from the Census 2007 classification are noted by an asterisk (*). These codes correspond to Items PEIO1OCD and PEIO2OCD in positions 860-863 and 868-871 of the Basic CPS record layout in all months except March. In March, these codes correspond to Item PEIOOCC, and are located in positions 91-94 of the Persons Record.

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5150 Procurement clerks 43-3061
5160 Tellers 43-3071
5165 Financial clerks, all other 43-3099
5200 Brokerage clerks 43-4011
5210 Correspondence clerks 43-4021
5220 Court, municipal, and license clerks 43-4031
5230 Credit authorizers, checkers, and clerks 43-4041
5240 Customer service representatives 43-4051
5250 Eligibility interviewers, government programs 43-4061
5260 File Clerks 43-4071
5300 Hotel, motel, and resort desk clerks 43-4081
5310 Interviewers, except eligibility and loan 43-4111
5320 Library assistants, clerical 43-4121
5330 Loan interviewers and clerks 43-4131
5340 New accounts clerks 43-4141
5350 Order clerks 43-4151
5360 Human resources assistants, except payroll and timekeeping 43-4161
5400 Receptionists and information clerks 43-4171
5410 Reservation and transportation ticket agents and travel clerks 43-4181
5420 Information and record clerks, all other 43-4199
5500 Cargo and freight agents 43-5011
5510 Couriers and messengers 43-5021
5520 Dispatchers 43-5030
5530 Meter readers, utilities 43-5041
5540 Postal service clerks 43-5051
5550 Postal service mail carriers 43-5052
5560 Postal service mail sorters, processors, and processing machine operators 43-5053
5600 Production, planning, and expediting clerks 43-5061
5610 Shipping, receiving, and traffic clerks 43-5071
5620 Stock clerks and order fillers 43-5081
5630 Weighers, measurers, checkers, and samplers, recordkeeping 43-5111
5700 Secretaries and administrative assistants 43-6010
5800 Computer operators 43-9011
5810 Data entry keyers 43-9021
5820 Word processors and typists 43-9022
5830 Desktop publishers 43-9031
5840 Insurance claims and policy processing clerks 43-9041
5850 Mail clerks and mail machine operators, except postal service 43-9051
5860 Office clerks, general 43-9061
5900 Office machine operators, except computer 43-9071
5910 Proofreaders and copy markers 43-9081
5920 Statistical assistants 43-9111
Appendix G: IRB International Research Questions

1. Will an IRB in the host country review the protocol? What is the process for gaining approval/permission for conducting research in this setting?
   After consulting with Dr. Nina Rossholdt at University College in Oslo, or Høgskolen i Oslo, no IRB approval is required for this literature study. The Norsk Samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste AS, or Norwegian Social Sciences Data Services, is owned by the Ministry of Education Research and has the responsibility for ensuring that research is conducted ethically and that personal information is protected. NSD is the Data Protection Official for Research for all of Norway and has guidelines that must be met for researchers to be able to do studies within the country. Since no personal data, pictures, videos or recordings of human subjects will take place, the research is exempt. Approval for the study will come from the director of each participating center.
   A description of the NSD guidelines can be found at http://www.nsd.uib.no/nsd/english/pvo.html.

2. What is your relationship with, familiarity and/or experience in the community in which research participants will be recruited?
   Norway is a second home to me. Both of my parents are Norwegian citizens and the majority of my family live there. My family and I have been living in Norway since June of 2011. I speak, read and write Norwegian fluently.

3. What are the ethical challenges of conducting research in this country?
   There are no ethical significant challenges to conducting research in Norwegian child care centers. The cultural, educational and political climate lends itself to gender studies in particular.

4. What is the standard method for obtaining informed consent in the host country?
   E-mail is considered an acceptable method for recruitment and obtaining consent.

5. What is the current situation in the host country regarding freedom of speech, press, and interaction with researchers from American universities?
   Norway is a social democracy that has strong legislation in place for freedoms and a strong history of collaboration with universities in other countries.

6. What are the potential academic, legal, political and social risks for participants in your study?
   None at this time

7. What modifications may need to be made to DU's standard consent language regarding limits to confidentiality?
   None at this time

8. What are the risks to US and collaborating host-country researchers?

69
No significant risks

9. Is capacity building in the host country an essential element of the research protocol?
   Not at this time
Appendix H: IRB Approval

The following human subjects protocol application has been approved by the IRB, effective 10/19/2011.

Protocol Director: Cathrine Floyd
Protocol Title: Gender depiction in preschool books: A comparison between the United States and Norway
Protocol Number: 2011-1788
Submission include DPS Collaboration Letter, International Research Questions, Norwegian Consent- Forskning Samtykke skjema, Research Study Consent Form

For New/Renewals

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the above named project. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol for a period of 12 months.
This information must be updated on a yearly basis, upon continuation of your IRB approval for as long as the research continues. Please submit any changes, revisions and unanticipated events reports in a prompt manner. We will send you a courtesy continuation/renewal email reminder as this expiration date approaches. However, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to keep track of the expiration date for each protocol. No human subjects-related work can take place during an expiration period. Please see your official IRB approval letter.

Approval Letters:
You may find your approval letter on eprotocol as well. Your IRB application will now be listed under protocols approved. Select the protocol ID of interest and open in view mode. On the left menu, please select "Event History".

For Revisions

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed revisions to the above named project. The revision has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. The expiration date for this revision is the same as the original IRB approved application. Revisions do not extend the approval period.

The Institutional Review Board appreciates your cooperation in protecting subjects and ensuring that each subject gives a meaningful consent to participate in research projects. If you have any questions
regarding your obligations under the Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact Research Compliance at du-irb@du.edu