Pretty Princesses and Brave Knights:

The Presentation of Gender in Children's Picture Books

Emma Mannfors

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1. Introduction

The preschool years are a crucial time in a child's development. It is their first exposure to the world outside their family unit, and is usually the first time they truly interact with peers of their own age. The attitudes learned at this stage will form the basis for their future development. Children's literature strongly affects this socialization; exposure to stereotypical images can legitimize gender inequality (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 218). When a particular group is presented in a certain way by media, friends, and relations, it is likely that children will accept this as an appropriate way to view the group (Hinton 2000, 19).

Children learn by example. Not only from the lessons taught at home, but from what they see in the media: in the books they read and the movies they watch. If women are consistently presented as weaker, less intelligent or more submissive than their male peers, this attitude will be passed on to children and they will begin to see it as normal.

For this reason, this thesis will study picture books written for preschool age children. As the child usually cannot read for themselves, these books are meant to be read with a parent. Picture books are some of the first media a child will consume in their lifetime and will thus have a strong impression on a child's view of the world. Additionally, this is the age in which children are beginning to form their understanding of sex roles and of their own sex and gender (Béreaud 1975, 195). As they read, children form a picture of the world and the values of the society around them. Though television and movies play an increasing role in children's entertainment, books are still widely consumed by small children. Puffin Books, one of the largest publishers of children's literature, publishes approximately 150 titles a year (Puffin: Overview n.d.). After all, books and the ability to read are still seen as the path to later academic success. "Babies are given books almost as soon as they are born" (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 238).

"Gender is a social creation" (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 218) and has always been seen as one of the important defining characteristics of a human. People are gendered from the moment their sex is known. Infants are assigned different characteristics due to gendered stereotypes (Kacerguis and Adams 1979, 370), as shown by a study in which parents described similarly-sized newborn boys as stronger and larger than newborn girls.

These attitudes are pervasive in Western society. Gendered attitudes and stereotypes are subconsciously learned through exposure to stereotypical presentations of gender. While a single text will not reinforce stereotypes, recurring patterns will lead to the "solidification of knowledge" and may imprint themselves on the cultural consciousness (Jäger and Maier 2009, 38 as quoted in Sunderland 2011, 35). When this exposure is constant, these attitudes become normalized.

Biological differences are regularly used to justify unequal treatment. Yet, this view is extremely simplistic and does not take into account the power of socialization. Unfortunately, this attitude also leads to the acceptance of discrimination due to gender. For example, most US citizens condemn racial segregation, knowing that there are no important biological differences between the races. On the other hand, gender segregation is accepted in many contexts (Killen, et al. 2002, 12). As it is believed boys and girls have biologically determined, separate interests, the participants of Killen et al.'s study were willing to accept excluding a girl from a club on the basis of her gender, yet were not willing to do the same to Black boy on the basis of race.[1] The lack of biological reasoning is echoed by other researchers: "Social factors and pressured are more important than physiological ones" (Naffziger and Naffziger 1974, 253).

The study of gender is a fascinating one. Gender is a feature we carry with us, it is always on display and affects other peoples' impressions of us. We cannot change our sex without costly medical procedures. Therefore understanding society's beliefs and attitudes towards sex and gender is crucial.

Children's picture books are very direct; they "do not hide [their] ideological agenda" (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 238). In other words, the lessons present in these books are often stated very explicitly. There has been a push in recent years to include a more diverse cast of characters in children's entertainment, not only in terms of gender, but also of race and disability. Explicitly sexist literature is more difficult to find; however, implicit stereotypes are much more difficult to overcome. When stereotypical characters and a strongly enforced gender binary are present in a majority of stories, these ideals become normalized in a child's

[1] This does not, of course, mean that implicit racial prejudice is not severe and sometimes deadly. However, *explicit* racial discrimination is frowned upon more seriously than explicit sexual discrimination.

mind. It has already been shown in the 1970s that the presence of less stereotyped characters in film and books could alter the perception of stereotypes in young children (Kacerguis and Adams 1979, 372).

Additionally, children have become a major consumer group. Products are tied in with media; movies advertise toys and books advertise television shows. Franchises have become an integral part of children's marketing. This kind of culture "touches almost all aspects of children's lives" (Levin and Paige 2003, 427). These ever-present messages are everywhere.

Thus, the study of the gender roles presented to children is important, as the ideals formed at this age will help form their identities as they grow older. Books are agents of social change, with the power to normalize either sexist or nonsexist ideals in young children.

Many others have studied children's books, however many of the studies performed have been on books which had been written before the 1990s; furthermore some authors have studied only the gender relations of protagonists. This thesis will study the stories children are exposed to today. Therefore, books only from the past two decades, and which are popular among children, will be focused on.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first section, Analysis Section One, is a quantitative section which will focus on the amount of female and male characters presented to children. One of the most noticeable gender discrepancies in previous studies has been the much higher prevalence of male characters when compared to female characters. This section will study whether the same pattern is visible in modern children's books, specifically by comparing the amounts of protagonists, named characters, and illustrated characters of each gender. Moreover, the types of roles given to characters of each gender will be studied to determine whether these roles legitimize gender stereotypes. Section One will not go into detail about specific characters or texts, and is rather a broad, quantitative study.

Analysis Section Two is a qualitative section, and will look at a smaller selection of stories in more detail. It will focus on eleven of the most checked out children's books from the past few years, as determined by the Helsinki public library. Verbs associated with male and female characters will be collected and divided into one of seven categories. The differences, both in the magnitude of category and in type of verb in each category, will be analyzed in order to study whether there are significant differences in the presentation of the

genders. A special case study is made on two corresponding books, *I love my mummy* and *I love my daddy.* Both books are written by the same author, in the same format, and illustrate a very obvious example of the discrepancy in the presentation of gender.

This thesis will seek to answer a few questions about the presentation of gender to young children, namely:

Are male and female characters present in differing amounts in children's media?

Do male and female characters fulfill differing or stereotypical roles?

Do females and males have equal agency in children's books? In other words, are a similar amount of verbs used to refer to female children as to male children?

Do the verbs used to describe male and female characters differ in some way?

In short, it is the goal of this thesis to study whether implicit prejudices are still at play. If the findings from previous studies hold true, one can expect to see some differences in the presence and treatment of female and male characters. The first Analysis Section will seek to answer the first two thesis questions. Analysis Section Two will answer the last two.

2. Theory

An individual's gender can be divided into three categories (McDermott and Hatemi 2011, 89). These three categories are biological sex, gender, and sexual orientation. Additionally, a fourth category of gender identity has been added. Biological sex includes physical features, chromosomes, and hormones. The majority of humans are either male or female, though many intersex[2] or agender[3] people exist.

Gender relates to the act of performing gender. These include a person's behavior, interests, and appearance, in other words, how the individual expresses their gender. A person's sex is commonly believed to be associated with certain behaviors, yet most individuals do not perform their gender according to stereotypes.

[2] Intersex: having biological or physiological markers of both sexes, for example an individual with male chromosomes and female genitalia.
[3] Agender: lacking a gender, genderless. This can be both physiological (biological) and mental (gender identity).

A categorization not included by McDermott et al., but an important distinction nonetheless, is gender identity; or the gender an individual associates themselves with. The majority of the population is cisgender, identifying with the sex they were assigned at birth. However, a significant portion of the population is transgender, identifying with a different gender than the one assigned to them at birth. These people can also identify within the gender binary, but also with multiple, other, or no gender. Though a person might behave or dress in accordance with their gender identity, the performance of gender does not define an individual's gender identity.

The third aspect categorized by McDermott et al. is sexual preference. Sexual preference is not truly linked to gender, nonetheless "these notions are often conflated in the public discourse, whether intentionally or not" (McDermott and Hatemi 2011, 90). In other words, sexual preference, or orientation, is equated by many with gendered behavior. The breaking of gender roles is regularly associated with homosexuality.

This thesis will focus on the second category. An individual's biological sex, gender identity, and sexual preference are innate. Gendered behaviors, on the other hand, are at least partially learned. Though there are certain variations between the biological sexes, intra-sex variability is far larger than the difference between males and females.

2.1. Gender in Children's Books

Children's books, for the most part, present an extremely binary view of gender, and generally do not differentiate between sex and gender. Of course, this ideal is also present in other aspects of society. "The division of people into males and females is so fundamental to our talk as usual and to our understanding of identity, that it is generally understood as a natural fact of the real world rather than something that we have *learned to see* as natural" (Davies 2003, 7). Humans tend to divide the world into binary categories of female and male, to code certain behaviors and actions as feminine and others as masculine. This is so normalized in our worldview that humans see this divide as a consequence of the natural world as opposed to a construction of modern human society. People and ideals which seek to challenge this gender binary are frequently vilified.

An argument could be made that children's books do simplify the world in other ways. They of course do not portray any aspects of sex or of adult lives. The majority of families in

children's books are made up of two heterosexual, cisgender[4] people. Unless a book is specifically dealing with alternate families, such as single or homosexual parents, these will not be present. This of course means that parents are usually differentiated by the male-female divide; male and female are presented as opposite. While there are generally no value judgments made about alternate families, it can be problematic when children's books consistently present a binary view of gender. As Davies stated, constant exposure to the same ideal will begin to normalize it. Children (and adults) will no longer question *why* it is that mother is the one who is shown cooking for her child. Instead, they will begin to believe gendered differences are innate. As a result, the nuclear family will be seen as the normal, default family structure to which other types of families are subordinate.

Children's books are especially vital to these ideals. The books studied in this thesis are some of the first pieces of media a child will be exposed to, and thus will be crucial in formation of their worldviews. As Weitzman et al. point out, "Stories have always been a means for perpetuating the fundamental cultural values and myths" (1148). In other words, stories teach children what the world is like and impart the beliefs and ideals of the culture.

Children's books do focus more strongly on males, as all previous researchers have found. A study of popular children's books throughout the 20th century was calculated, and in no field were females more prevalent than males (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 209). Weitzman et al. studied Caldecott Medal winners[5] and found that female characters were underrepresented in all aspects of the text and images (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1128). The same was found in French children's books, with women "relegated to minority status" (Béreaud 1975, 197). Even twenty-first century studies confirm this. Most of the books the authors studied featured at least one male character, less than 75% had one or more female characters (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 249).

When female characters were present, they were commonly shown to fulfill stereotypical roles. Women, when present were left with very little to do and remained unnamed in the text. At the same time, girls were mostly found indoors while boys were allowed to play

[4] Cisgender, meaning a person who is not transgender, their gender identity matches their biological sex. (Transgender is an umbrella term which includes those whose identities do not fit into the gender binary.)

[5] The Caldecott Medal is given by the Children's Service Committee of the American Library Association for the most distinguished picture book of the year. (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1127)

outside, severely limiting the available stories about girls (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1132-33). Girls only existed to aid the males in their families (1133). Men were frequently shown in positions of power or those requiring technical skill. Women, when they were allowed to work outside the home, were placed in careers which emphasized traditionally feminine skills such as caretaking (Béreaud 1975, 198). In the 1980s, as a response to Weitzman et al.'s study, a similar study was performed in France which found improvement (though not equality) in the ratios of characters, but none in their role in the story (Kolbe and La Voie 1981, 369). Women were still shown as caretakers, in nurturing and supporting roles as opposed to dominant ones. Modern studies, once again, show similar themes. Only in the role of parents were mothers more common, and housework was still extremely gendered. Positions of power and authority were still a male domain (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 253).

In children's books, girls are hardly ever pictured without the presence of men; meanwhile boys were shown playing together without a female presence. Motherhood has been shown as a full-time job (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1135) and mothers and fathers have been given different characteristics. Mothers were shown to be afraid, restrictive and generally not good for having adventures with. On the other hand, they were great when a child was in need of nurturing, love, or care. Fathers, in contrast, were said to be adventurous and to know that a child was "big enough and brave enough to do lots of things that mommies think are much too hard for [them]" (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1134). Though protagonists can be of either gender, adult heroes were almost always male (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 253). This paints the picture of mothers, and of women, as supporting characters who are good for taking care of children and not much else. Adult women are barely ever allowed to have their own adventures, their own dreams or thoughts. And while young boys can dream of being astronauts or pirates, girls are extremely limited in their heroes. If female characters are rarely shown having adventures or even straying outside the house, is it any wonder both boys and girls prefer reading stories about males?

The pattern in all previous studies is obvious. Males are overrepresented in almost all areas of study; only in parenthood are women more common. The studies span over a range of decades, and though improvement has been made it is clearly not as quick as some would predict. Similar results can be predicted for the results of this thesis.

2.1.1. Differentiating between Male and Female in Media

There is a tendency in popular culture to treat (white heterosexual) males as the norm. Therefore, it is necessary to use some physical markers to denote when a character is not included in the majority. In human characters, this is easy enough: a female and a male can be drawn differently from one another.

When characters are nonhuman or small children, this can be more difficult. Some illustrators simply choose to draw adult female animals with breasts and a thin waist, or, in the case of animated films, moving in a particularly feminine way. One example of this is the Pixar movie *Happy Feet*, in which the female penguins are drawn with a slim waist and chest markings reminiscent of breasts.

Gender differentiation can also quite easily be made with clothing: many female characters wear a skirt or another traditionally feminine article of clothing such as hair accessories. For example, the video game character Ms. Pac-man looks like her male counterpart with a bow and lipstick. Many young girls are differentiated from young boys by the clothes they wear or by hair length.

Color can also be used to differentiate between genders. If a nonhuman group has a female member, she is predominantly pink. If a story presents a male and female character, the stereotypical pink-blue dichotomy will commonly be used. Another common method of identifying nonhuman females is the presence of eyelashes. In many cases, a female character will look just like a male with large eyelashes. All these are simple, easily understood methods of immediately showing to an audience the gender of the characters.

2.1.2. Gender in other media

Children's books are not the only method of presenting media to children. Movies and television, as well as toys present many opportunities for observing gender. Boys are more common in almost all aspects of children's media, "from G-rated films…cartoons…video games…and even coloring books" (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 221). This lack of female characters is partly due to simple marketing: a belief exists that young boys will not want to watch female characters. This has been famously illustrated when J.K. Rowling, author of the popular *Harry*

Potter series, was asked by her publisher to use her initials as they did not believe young boys would read a book written by a woman (Sunderland 2011, 192). It is also believed that girls may empathize with male characters but that boys will not empathize with a female character. Marketing is largely split upon a clear gender divide, with products marketed either to girls or to boys. Girls may watch shows designed for boys, but it is not believed that boys will wish to consume media marketed to girls.

It is not commonly questioned *why* it is believed that boys, and perhaps even girls, prefer male characters. Several researchers have argued that this is simply due to the wider range of roles given to male characters. In a study of books recommended by the Australian school system, it was found that "in addition to their over-representation, male characters also did a greater *range* of things, *and* more interesting things, than female characters" (Sunderland 2011, 43). The author theorized that children do not automatically empathize with males, but rather they have been presented with male characters who are allowed to do more and to be more, in short, that male characters are simply more interesting. This of course leads to a cycle, with media makers and advertisers believing that male characters are preferable, thus continuing to make duller, less important female characters.

Children's toys, too, are extremely gendered. Most toy stores have aisles dedicated to girls' and boys' toys, with catalogs showing kids playing with toys which conform to gender stereotypes. In recent years there has been a backlash to this type of advertising though change is slow.

The toys thought most appropriate for girls were those related to domestic tasks, childcare, and beauty while toys considered best for boys were those related to sports, technology, or action (Messner 2000, 777-78). Beuf (1974) argues that, as children become aware of their gender, toys provide cues to what is appropriate for their sex. This attitude toward gendered toys has been extremely clear in a recent scandal involving the Disney-owned Marvel superhero franchise *The Avengers*. A blogger compiling data on the prevalence of toys for each character found that the only female of the team was barely present in toys, even though she had more screen time than several of her fellow heroes (Avengers Toys). This same pattern was repeated in toys related to the second film, with even robotic drones and henchmen surpassing her in amount of toys though the character was once again one of the most important in the film (Ultron Toys n.d.). Many have theorized that this is due to the belief

that girls do not want to play with heroes, and that boys do not want to play with female characters. Beliefs such as these lead children to see heroics and strength as the domain of men, with women once again relegated to a supporting role (if they are present at all).

Films, too, play an important role in the entertainment of children. Additionally, books, toys, and movies are often interconnected; a successful movie may result in the novelization of the story. Franchises are important as well; many children's books are later turned into television shows, or vice-versa. Disney is a particularly visible example of this, producing movies, television shows, toys, and books featuring their popular Disney Princess line.

Films promote similarly stereotyped ideals of gender. One famous example of this is known as the Bechdel Test, developed by the American cartoonist Alison Bechdel. "The test asks three questions – Does the film have at least two women? Do they talk to each other? And if so, is there conversation about something other than men?" (Dutt 2014, 10) The online Bechdel Test database has 6056 movies, of which 57.6% pass all three requirements (Bechdel Test Movie List n.d.).

Women and girls tend to be downplayed in all movies; a study found that 32.8% of speaking roles in top-rated movies for 2009 were given to women (Dutt 2014, 5).This same trend is seen in children's movies, which also rely on "stereotypical characterizations" (Dutt 2014, 25). In fact, in family films males outnumber females by three to one, a ratio that is the same as it was in 1946 (S. Smith n.d.).

As can be seen from the Bechdel Test, these same gendered stereotypes are carried into the adult world. Some stereotypes change, as adult women are further sexualized. Stereotypes of passivity, physical appearance and a dependence on men remain similar. It is a well-known fact that actresses in romantic films are far younger than their male counterparts, age gaps of twenty or even thirty years are not uncommon (Buchanan n.d.) as youth and beauty are seen as the most important characteristics for leading ladies. Girls and women are taught to live in accordance with male desire, as women in media are shown almost exclusively as housewives or sex objects (Lee and Vaught 2003, 458), defined by their relation to men. They are repeatedly seen as 'prizes' for the male hero, as a reward for completing his quest but without agency or desires of their own. In other cases, women are shown as victims

in situations which are “sensational and eroticized” (Farrell 1995, 644), hurt to provide motivation or trauma for the male hero.

2.2. Stereotypes

A stereotype is a broad categorization based on external characteristics, such as gender or race. Humans live in an infinitely complex social world. Therefore, classifying others based on these external characteristics has been necessary. A stereotype is defined as “a special kind of cognitive schema, called a role schema, in which the central concept is a group of people who share a common characteristic (Fiske and Taylor, 1984)” (Ganong, Coleman and Mapes 1990, 287). These are not necessarily negative. Humans need to categorize their world, including social interactions, to understand them due to our limited capacity to process information (Hinton 2000, 21, 32, 55). Stereotypes are “energy saving devices” (Fridkin and Kenney 2009, 55)which simplify the processing of social events.

Nevertheless, stereotypes alter an individual’s perception of other members of society. An individual’s perception of events may even be subconsciously altered to remain consistent with stereotypes already held (Fridkin and Kenney 2009, 55). In describing a soccer event featuring a teams of girls and boys, it was noted that parents observing certain situations did not see the children’s performance of gender as a social construct but rather as a direct result of innate, biological differences (Messner 2000, 769-70). Though children are socialized from birth, parents will not see it this way. This is illustrated in an example given in Messner’s study: while the children played among their own gender, they showed remarkable similarity in behavior, in competitive spirit and interest in the game. However, it was a single event of gendered difference which enforced parents’ prejudice that was remembered (Messner 2000, 771).

Gender stereotypes can be divided into two categories; prescriptive and descriptive. Descriptive stereotypes include beliefs about the supposed traits possessed by a gender; prescriptive stereotypes rule how an individual should act (Bobbitt-Zeher 2011, 774). For example, a descriptive stereotype states that women are naturally more nurturing; a prescriptive stereotype states that all women should strive to be mothers.

Prejudices can manifest themselves in both implicit and explicit ways. Explicit acts of sexism are, for example, a stated belief that women do not have the capacity to study the

sciences. These prejudices are direct and easy to notice, and are becoming more and more frowned upon. Implicit stereotypes are predominantly subconscious, for example, a professor routinely hiring only white male researchers due to internalized prejudices about the abilities of women and people of Color. These are much harder to break out of, as usually an individual will not even notice they are prejudiced.

2.2.1. Intersectionality

Not every individual experiences gender in the same way. Our experiences are colored by our other identities; most notably those of race, sexual orientation and class. “Intersecting forms of domination create both oppression and opportunity” (Steinbugler, Press and Johnson Dias 2006, 807) write Steinbugler at al., explaining that an individual may be disadvantaged by one identity and advantaged by another. For example, in Western society a White woman will be disadvantaged by her gender, but will enjoy privileges not available to women of Color. Stereotypes also differ by race as well; while White women in media are regularly forced into the role of love interest, Black women are stereotyped as independent, but also unlovable.

Intersectionality has of late been utilized in feminist theory, recognizing the need to take into account the experiences of women who are not of a White, cisgender and heterosexual identity. The relative advantage of White women and girls is evident in these children’s books as well; not one protagonist in any Section Two book is Black, and there is only one instance of a nonwhite character speaking in any of the books.

2.2.2. Masculine and Feminine Ideals

Certain traits have always been associated with men and women. These ideals have changed over time and throughout the world (Hoang and Yeoh 2011, 718).

Western ideals of men and women have a long history, dating from pre-medieval times. A man’s duty has been to care for and lead his family, while the woman’s was to carry children, raise them and keep house. Therefore, gentleness, kindness, chastity and beauty were seen to be a woman’s greatest gifts. In fact, most heroines in older folktales are described by their beauty and sweetness. Ugliness was reserved for the villainous old woman. A chivalric knight was the ideal of male perfection. He was noble, brave, and a protector of the weak. This, of

course, led to many a story in which the hero had to rescue a damsel in distress; and in doing so, win her heart. These tales are still common nowadays, in many films in which the woman exists only to fall in love with the hero. These types of stories are seen to be romantic, yet present the woman as a prize to be fought over and won instead of an individual with agency of her own. Well-known examples of this are all older Disney princesses.

This is reflected in the ideals of public and private spheres. "…in many societies, there is an unwritten and enduring gender boundary between public and domestic spheres occupied by men and women respectively" (Hoang and Yeoh 2011, 719). Simply put, the public sphere involves everything to do with the outside world, especially with careers outside the home. Meanwhile the private, or domestic, sphere encompasses everything inside the home, from family to housework. Throughout Western history, the private sphere has been seen as the dominion of women, whereas the public sphere has been ruled by men.

Masculine and feminine ideals are intersected by other ideals such as race and class. A lower-class woman may have been expected to work and support her family; meanwhile an upper-class woman would never have been allowed to. White women were stereotyped as nearly asexual, whereas Black women were seen as hypersexual. Black women were and are recurrently stereotyped as "'the mammy,' the 'matriarch,' the 'welfare queen,' and the 'jezebel' (Steinbugler, Press and Johnson Dias 2006, 808). The stereotyped image of White women as doting, loyal mothers and Black women as single, poor mothers is still pervasive in modern culture; a White woman is more likely to garner sympathy from outsiders. Black women are also seen as an "exotic" fantasy by white men, someone different from the "proper, feminine" White woman. Black men, on the other hand, are seen as extremely dangerous, violent and neglectful of their families while White men are still stereotyped as strong protectors of their families.

"Masculinity and femininity are relational terms, often defined in opposition to each other, and definitions of masculinity are reactive to changing definitions of femininity" (Hoang and Yeoh 2011, 718). This harkens back to the gender binary, in which men and women are direct opposites, contrasting in every way. Sex has long been thought to be a clear-cut method of dividing the population.

Not only do stereotypes hinder women's opportunities, they also create pressure on men. "Studies on men and masculinity emphasize productive work as the most fundamental foundation of masculinity identity" (Hoang and Yeoh 2011, 719). In most cultures, the man must be the primary breadwinner, leading those who are unemployed or whose wives receive a higher salary to feel that their masculinity is challenged. Even if women are primary breadwinners, men may be hesitant to perform their share of domestic tasks (Hoang and Yeoh 2011, 721). Additionally, when men do care for children it is not taken as seriously, they are only considered to be "helping out" (Hoang and Yeoh 2011, 720). Women are seen to provide for a child's needs, while men are only seen to play with their children. "Breadwinning is so inextricably related to fathering that it is doubtful that men who are skilled at parenting but poor wage earners would be given much credence as fathers" (Troilo and Coleman 2008, 225). This dichotomy trivializes men's caretaking and creates unequal labor divisions in the home. This dichotomy is very clearly illustrated in the comparison between the books *I love my mummy* and *I love my daddy*, studied in section 5.3.

Children, too, are exposed to stereotypes. Little boys are expected to be brave, to lead and to rescue others. Girls, meanwhile, are taught and perhaps even expected to be the passive victim. They are taught to serve and to think of the pleasure of others before themselves (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1125).

2.2.3. The Effects of Stereotype on Individuals

Though exposure to stereotypes, gender roles become internalized in "stable personality traits" which result in "stronger affiliative[6] orientations and behaviors" in women and "more emphasis on autonomy" in men (Miller 1990, 312). Stereotypes affect an individual's interests, self-image, occupations and relationships (Krafchick, et al. 2005, 85). In addition to forming potential personality traits, gendered stereotypes will affect the treatment of individuals. Those who enter careers or fields which are traditionally not associated with their sex may face discrimination in hiring as well as questions of their competency due to perceived stereotypes.

[6] Relating to the formation of social and emotional bonds with others or the desire to create such bonds.

Adults have been influenced by the gender roles in their childhood. In turn, they pass these along to their own children (Messner 2000, 771-72). Children who are taught by the society around them to conform to gender roles will carry these roles with them throughout their adult lives and will, in turn, pass these same messages on to their children. Every adult who takes part in the production of children's media, from authors and illustrators to filmmakers and television producers, has been socialized with a certain image of gender.

However, the reverse is also true. A constant exposure to egalitarian books will also shape a child's beliefs about gender and sex though a few egalitarian books are not likely to have much effect (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 200).

It is not simply society which imposes its ideals on children. Children are remarkably effective at policing their own gender. By preschool, children categorize themselves and others into one of two gender categories (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 199) and are very aware of appropriate gender roles and tasks (Kacerguis and Adams 1979, 370). Gender stereotypes also emerge sooner than do stereotypes of race or ethnicity (Killen, et al. 2002, 200). Perhaps due to the acceptance of gendered discrimination, children start to see gender at an extremely early age.

This policing was commented on by Davies who, while discussing heroic depictions of women, found elementary[7] age boys vehemently opposing these new depictions. While working with the children, both girls and boys, to write a story which "resisted the dominant discourse," she found that they struggled with "binary forms of thought, particularly in relation to women" (Davies 2003, 6). If a woman was not pretty, she must be ugly; if not good then she must be evil.

Davies also discussed the children's vehemence to nonstereotypical women. The boys were angry at being "cast out of the heroic role," which resulted in them attacking the female character, particularly by sexualizing her (Davies 2003, 6). This is a common feature is society. "When gender barriers for particular positions begin to crumble, a backlash may promote the re-creation of gender differences" (Deutsch 2007, 115). There is in many instances a backlash from those in power, who, like the young boys in the study, find themselves afraid that they will no longer be able to enjoy their privileged position.

[7] Around age 6 to 10

2.2.4. Parental Enforcement of Gender Roles

Of course, it is not only children who enforce gender roles. Parental attitudes towards children who broke stereotypical gender molds depended greatly on the sex of the child. Parents' reactions to daughters breaking the gender mold were almost overwhelmingly positive (Kane 2006, 149, 157). Kane did note that this attitude may become less lax once girls reach adolescence, "as they move into the heterosexualized gender system of teens and adults" (Kane 2006, 158). On the other hand, reactions toward sons participating in traditionally feminine activities were much more complex (Kane 2006, 149). Young boys were given certain freedom to break gender molds, but this was severely limited when compared to young girls. Parents were quite accepting of their sons learning domestic abilities and empathy; parents were not upset if boys played with kitchen sets as this could prepare boys for adulthood (Kane 2006, 158).

Even so, many parents' reactions were negative when their sons showed interest in what Kane refers to as "iconic feminine items, attributes, or activities" (159). These include wearing traditionally feminine clothing such as pink or frilly clothing, dresses, skirts or tights or any sort of dress up games in feminine clothes. Furthermore, many parents were concerned about their sons wearing nail polish. Traditionally feminine sports such as dance, especially ballet and figure skating were especially frowned upon, as was an interest in Barbies (Kane 2006, 159-60). Showing stereotypically feminine forms of behavior such as frequent crying or passivity were another source of worry for many parents (Kane 2006, 161).

The attitudes of parents toward children of both sexes breaking gender roles show a rejection of femininity. "Parental responses may suggest a different kind of gendered phenomenon closely linked to the pattern evident in responses toward sons: a devaluing of traditionally feminine pursuits and qualities" (Kane 2006, 157). Feminine-coded activities and interests were seen by parents to be frivolous and less important than traditionally male qualities. Masculine hobbies and ideals are thought to lead to a more successful future for children. In trying to create equal opportunities for girls and boys, many parents are simply encouraging their children to reject femininity.

It is clear that there are more sanctions on males acting in a feminine way compared to girls acting in a masculine way. This can be seen in sometimes violent reactions to boys and

men breaking gender molds; up to 98% of violence directed at transgender people was perpetrated against transwomen[8] (Christinastephens n.d.).

This same vehemence to boys showing interest in female-coded activities and toys is already present when children are quite young. Many researchers have made the link between the lack of acceptance of non-traditional behaviors and fears of homosexuality. This was especially strong when applied to young boys (Martin 2005, 456, 470) and can even thwart caretakers' attempts at breaking gender molds (458). This is despite any clear evidence showing a link between gender nonconformity and sexual preference (472).

This attitude can be seen in a study of parenting columns, in which Martin noted that columnists were quick to explain away any gender nonconformities in children as simply temporary phases, or to turn the story into something that confirms stereotypes. For example, a parenting website advised the parent of a three-year-old who liked to play Cinderella that the story also includes themes of "rescue and protection against evil" (Martin 2005, 472), linking his play with masculine traits. These answers uphold the notion of gender conformity, stating that 'deviant' behaviors are things to be explained away as opposed to natural variations in an individual child's temperament.

This constant struggle to perform gender correctly places stress on boys and can hinder development. "Children's literature may seem to favor the male children by investing all active pursuits in the man. Yet at the same time this curious, active, forceful boy person is burdened with the responsibility of not expressing his emotions, and of being the sole support of his wife and children if he lives through his required military service" (Naffziger and Naffziger 1974, 256). The young boy must be always brave and independent, as showing emotion would seem to make him less of a man. Krafchick links this emotional illiteracy to "depression, substance abuse and addiction, anger and violence, and difficulties in forming later relationships and in expressing emotional vulnerability" (85).

Adults, especially parents and teachers, are a huge influence on a child's life and worldview. "It is widely accepted … that parents, schools, and the media shape gendered behavior to some degree" (Martin 2005, 467). Children continuously study the actions of the adults around them, any attitudes and norms will be quickly picked up by these children.

[8] Women who were assigned male at birth.

Segregating children by gender is very common in schools during the elementary school years (Killen, et al. 2002, 87). Martin points out that "many advisors entangle the development of sexual identity with the development of gender identity… most assume the development of heterosexuality" (Martin 2005, 467). Schoolteachers see gender as an easy, and acceptable, dividing line, prompting cross-gender competition and highlighting gendered differences. Martin states that schoolteachers, like most others, confuse gender identity with sexual orientation, and assume that all children will grow up to be heterosexual.

2.2.5. The Importance of Representation

A lack of representation may have severe effects on young children. Children's media shapes their idea of the adult world; if no women are presented as working outside the home or participating in adventures, children may start to believe that women do not belong in prestigious careers, or that they are not brave enough to have adventures. When girls and women are always relegated to a secondary or supportive role, these characters suggest that women are not as important as male characters (McCabe et al. 218). Sometimes, authors have heeded to calls about stereotypical depictions of women, but have not replaced these with anything else. "Though traditional images of women have been eliminated, authors have not created new ones, so that girl readers are shown a world from which adult females are almost entirely excluded" (Bereaud 205).

Stereotypes can be a self-fulfilling prophecy. For example, many biological causes have been given to explain the success of males at certain tasks, such as spatial reasoning and other skills which contribute to proficiency in STEM fields. However, no biological cause has been identified to cause this discrepancy (G. 2015); on top of this discrepancies of certain tests have shrunk too fast to account for biology (G. 2015). The remaining discrepancy was removed in a study performed in 2008, in which a group of people were primed with certain gendered stereotypes before being administered a spatial reasoning test. A pronounced gender difference emerged "only in the *female* priming condition…whereas it disappeared in the *male* priming condition" (Ortner and Sieverding 2008, Abstract). Priming both female and male students with male stereotypes eliminated gendered differences. This finding can be explained by stereotype threat.

"*Stereotype threat* is being at risk of confirming, as self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about one's group" (Steele and Aronson 1995, 797). When an individual is reminded of their role in a minority group, this causes pressure. Any adherence to negative stereotypes about one's group will help confirm that stereotype in other's eyes (797). This effect is stronger if the individual is one of the only members of a minority group; this is very common in many scientific communities, for example. This was first discussed in a landmark study in 1995 by Steele and Aronson, who studied the effect of stereotype threat on African American test-takers, who are also burdened with stereotypes about poor academic performance. In effect, the fear of confirming a stereotype may cause an individual to fail at a task, further perpetuating the stereotype.

These ideas carry on to adult life. Exposure to stereotypes and lack of representation may affect the career choices of a child. One example of this stereotype at play is the continued dominance of men in STEM[9] fields. Though women earn more PhDs in biological and social sciences, only approximately 30% of physical sciences PhDs are awarded to women (Dctorates by Gender, 2013 2014). Clearly, something is discouraging women from entering these fields. It is probable that stereotypes and erasure of female scientists are at least in part contributing to this loss. Less than 21% of female characters in family films or children's shows are depicted working in STEM fields. For computer science, 15 men are presented for every woman (Welle and Smith 2014) (Smith, et al. n.d., 8). In fact, over 80% of characters working in *any* career were male (S. Smith n.d.). Homogeneous pictures of careers may lead minorities such as women feel unwelcome and perhaps even unsafe in these fields. Lack of representation, combined with the effects of stereotype threat, contribute to a belief in the professional incompetence of women and lead to more prejudice in the workforce.

Essentially, women feel that their gender is seen more than their work, they are "viewed first as women, second as workers" (Bobbitt-Zeher 2011, 771). Women who do enter these fields feel the need to distance themselves from women and femininity (Rhoton 2011, 701). This is also apparent in politics; female candidates must go out of their way to show that they do not conform to gender stereotypes (Huddy and Terkidsen 1993, 503). Much as children, these women are required to reject femininity to succeed in the world.

[9] Science, technology, engineering, mathematics

To feel welcome in a place in society, a child needs motivation from outside. They need to understand that they have a place in the field. Ultimately, being presented by an endless array of white, male scientists will convince many young women and other minorities that they are not welcome, that they are not capable and will not be successful. This ideal holds true for all careers, not just the sciences. A man who wishes to be a kindergarten teacher or a woman who wants to join the military will see themselves erased, perhaps mocked, in public consciousness.

Of course, gender roles apply very strongly inside the home as well. The idea of women as mothers is common, with most media presenting as fact the stereotype that all women will eventually want to be mothers. The domestic sphere had been seen as a woman's place for centuries in the West. Though more women are entering the workforce, the division of labor has not been shifted at home. Mothers put more physical hours, and more labor into parenting than do fathers. This is true even when mothers work full-time (Craig 259).

2.3. On Verbs and Activity

Many times it is said that "men act, women are." This has been found to be the case in many forms of media. Women are primarily described by their looks or their relation to other characters, while men are defined by their actions. The original plan was to study whether male and female characters were associated more with adjectives or with verbs, but it was soon noted that there are very few adjectives at all in the data.

Children's books, after all, are very simple. They do not have complex sentence structure, but rather sentences consisting of a character in the subject position, who performs a verb on a usually inanimate object. Characters are rarely described as images are an integral part of children's books. These drawings then take the place of adjectives; they describe the setting and the appearance of the characters. Therefore, only verbs will be studied in this thesis. Even without adjectives, verbs can say a lot about the characters in a text. Female and male characters may be given different verbs or different relations to the verbs.

Verbs are "the essential part of a clause" (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2012, 42) and refer to a "type of state or action" (42). The main verb of a clause controls what other features can appear and specifies a "meaning relation" (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2012, 103) between these

features. Practically every complete sentence written or said contains a verb; a clause is not complete unless it contains a verb (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2012, 46). Thus, verbs are both a highly utilized and an important feature of all types of text. Additionally, their central role in sentence structure guarantees that verbs will be common in these books.

The verb classifications in the thesis will be based on categories created by Biber, Conrad and Leech in their *Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (2012). He identifies seven different semantic classes of lexical verbs: activity, communication, mental, and causative verbs, verbs of occurrence, verbs of existence or relationship, and verbs of aspect. All examples presented come from Biber's book or from the data.

Activity verbs are perhaps the most commonly used verbs. They refer to "an action performed intentionally by an **agent**," though occasionally the agent is not the cause of the action. For example, in the sentence, "Then you should **move** any obstacles," the bolded move is an example of an activity verb. The verb *race* "We **race** across the drawbridge," (*How to Catch a Dragon*) is another example of an activity verb. Communication verbs are verbs which describe communication, speech and writing. For example, "'And on Halloween' **said** Olivia 'what did all the girls go as?" (*Olivia and the Fairy Princesses*) contains *said*, a communication verb which is in fact the most common lexical verb.

Mental verbs are used to describe mental states and activities, and thus do not represent physical action. In addition, mental verbs can describe mental states (*think*), emotions and attitudes (*love, prefer*), perceptions (*see*), or the receiving of communication (*read, hear*). A mental verb is found in the sentence "The Vegimals didn't **know** where the Octopod would be" (*The Octonauts Explore the Great Big Ocean*).

Causative verbs indicate that some agent brings about a change. Causative verbs are fairly rare, and include words such as *allow, help, let* and *cause*. Verbs of occurrence describe things which happened without action by an agent. Often, the verb is acting on the subject of the sentence, for example, "The lights *changed*." I which "the lights" is the subject of *changed*. Other common verbs of occurrence are *become, grow,* and *develop*. Verbs of existence or relationship "report a state of existence or a logical relationship that exists between entities"

(Biber, Conrad and Leech 2012, 109) Many of these are copular[10] verbs. Examples include *seem, appear, exist, live,* and *include*. Finally, verbs of aspect "characterize the stage of progress of an event or activity" (109). These include verbs such as *begin, continue, start,* and *stop*.

3. Methodology & Materials

3.1. Materials

The books for both sections came from the HelMet library. The HelMet library system includes all public libraries in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The library is a popular place for families of young children to go. The library will keep only popular books in stock. This means that books present in the library will reflect what children are currently reading. Additionally, using library books has prevented any personal bias from affecting the choice of books. Library books will present a broad spectrum of books, intended for both boys and girls and on many subjects.

3.1.1. Analysis Section 1

A fairly large sample size was needed for the empirical section of the study. The books used for this study came from the public library.

69 books were sampled from the catalogue of the HelMet public library (see Appendix section 8.5 for a complete list of books included). To create a truly random sample, books were picked off the shelf in alphabetical order.

The books studied are in English. However, this portion may include books which have been translated from other languages. Some restrictions will be placed on books:

First, the books studied were from the year 1990 or later. This thesis aims to study attitudes toward gender in modern children's books. Older books are a product of their day and would most likely be gendered in a more traditional way. Most books in the library were from the 21st century, thus very few books needed to be removed on these grounds.

[10] "Copular verbs are used to associate an attribute with the subject of the clause" (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2012, 140).

Second, counting books have also been excluded. A counting book is a book which lists umbers of characters. For example, “One dog eating lunch. Two cats playing tag.” These books generally do not contain a story or protagonist, nor do they usually contain any mentions of gender.

Third, some books were excluded due to story. Old fairytales are public domain, and thus have been printed over and over. A simple reprint of a fairytale thus would not tell a modern story. On the other hand, any retellings of fairytales are accepted into this study, an example of this would be a feminist retelling of Cinderella.

This thesis also only aims to study original characters and stories. Therefore, any books based on a major existing franchise are excluded. This would include a book about Disney princesses, for instance.

3.1.2. Analysis Section 2

The eleven books used for this section are the most checked out books of 2014 in the HelMet library and are listed in appendix section 8.6. This list was provided by the staff at the public library in Pasila. The books used, then, show what modern children (or their parents) are choosing to read. These books are, as in the first research section, English language children’s picture books. Most of the books have been published in the United Kingdom, all except a few were originally written in English.

There were a few criteria for these books. First of all, as in Analysis One, books which were simply lists of objects, such as numbers of colors, have not been included. These books have no narrative, and simply list a series of objects, for example, from *Moomin’s Little Book of Opposites*, a spread shows a character inside, and then outside, a teapot. The text simply reads, “in” and “out.” In the case that the same author has several books, starring the same characters, on the top-twenty list, only the most popular (should it fill all other requirements) will be studied. An author’s style, especially in the case of popular characters, is unlikely to change greatly from one book to the next. Books which are based on television series and franchises will be disregarded as well. However, a book which has later been adapted for a television show will be included. All of the books studied have been published after the year 2000.

Several of the books have been disregarded from the study for various reasons. *Hullunkurinen Kuvasanakirja: Suomi-Englanti*, though the most popular, is an illustrated dictionary and has not been included in the study. *This is Helsinki* is not an originally English book. *That's not my hamster: its ears are too fluffy* is a touch-and-feel book made for very young children. The story has no narrative, moreover; the hamsters presented in the book have no gender. *Peppa goes to the Library* is explicitly based on a television show, and so has not been used, the same goes for *Please may I have some of yours?*. *Maisy Learns to Swim* has come out much later than the television show, and therefore has been disregarded as it is most likely strongly influenced by the show. *Peppa's Busy Day* is the second Peppa the Pig book on the list, and therefore will not be studied. For the same reason, *I am not sleepy and I will not go to bed* and *Maisy Plays Football* are disregarded. *Maisy's First Colors: A Maisy Concept Book*, *Ten Little Pirates*, *Moomin's Little Book of Numbers* and *Moomin's Little Book of Opposites* are all list-type books and thus have not been used. *Moomin and the Moonlight Adventure* and *Moomin and the Winter Snow* are based on a massively popular franchise which has been created many decades ago, the popularity of these books is not affected by their gender role presentation. *The Snowman and the Snowdog* is also disregarded, as it was created to mark the 30th anniversary of the famous short film *The Snowman* and is thus part of a franchise.

3.2. Methodology

3.2.1. Analysis Section 1

The amount of characters of each type per book was counted. The species of the characters as well as their role in the text was written down. Children's stories regularly feature characters which are not human. Animals are common, though even inanimate objects can be characters, as was the case in a story of a leaf.

Characters were divided into three different types: protagonists, named characters, and illustrated characters. Protagonists are the main characters in a text. The story may be told from their point of view, or from a third-person perspective. This character was usually a child.

Named characters are defined as any character which has been named in the text, excluding the protagonist. This does not have to be a proper name, as many times characters in these books are named after professions, such as "The Postman" and "Teacher." Likewise,

adult family members are usually never given names other than their relation to the child (i.e. "mother"). In books which feature animals, the character's name is frequently their species. These names function as a character's proper name in the text. These two categories are fairly precise, as the gender of the characters can usually be inferred from pronouns or from a gendered name such as "Miss Sparkles" or "Father."

The third type studied is illustrated characters. These include characters which have not been mentioned in the text and are simply drawn in the background. This can also refer to a group of characters who have been named simply as a group. A story which mentions "five teachers" does not specify the gender of the teachers, and so it is up to the illustrator to determine which gender (s)he wants to present these characters as. Of all three types, this section is the most imprecise. A few assumptions have been made about the illustrated characters. The first is that any character pictured wearing a dress is a female. It is extremely unlikely that a children's book not specifically dealing with non-majority gender or sexual identities would include any characters who dress against gender norms, and such behavior would most likely be commented on in the book. On a similar note, anyone with facial hair has been interpreted as male. Problems do arise with characters who wear pants. While it is more likely that a person wearing a suit is male, it is not unheard of for females to wear one. This problem becomes even more difficult with children. This can result in a higher amount of male characters calculated. In books with massive crowds of illustrated characters, only a few pages have been counted.

Three different types of gender were counted in this thesis; male, female, and neutral. Sometimes, it is not clear from the text if the character is male or female. In this case, the character has been given a neutral (N) marking. This marking is most common in illustrated characters, though quite prevalent in named characters as well. Even one protagonist has not been given a gender. The gender of a character is usually deduced from the text itself, for instance by using gendered personal pronouns. The name is also commonly an indicator of gender, though care must be taken in the case of names which can be used for boys and girls. Lacking any proof in the text, illustrations have been used to determine gender. However, unless a character's gender is explicitly clear from the text, pictures, or their name, they have been given a neutral marking.

A table was compiled of all the roles in the text, by gender. These were then categorized into several groups: Family/Personal, Professional, Animals, and Fantasy Characters.

Anyone who had a close relationship with the main character was included in the first section. This included mostly family and friends. Many children's stories include royal families, in which kings and queens mentioned usually take on the role of parents. Thus, royal titles have been included in both the personal and professional lists.

The professional group includes people who are defined by their job. Fairly common were teachers, who of course play a large part in many children's lives. Curiously, stories about pirates were also extremely common.

Animals make up the third category. Of course, many children's books feature animals who act in human roles. Those have not been included in the animals section. Instead, only pets and animals who behave as animals in the stories have been included.

The fourth group consists of fantastical characters. These include mythological characters, as well as inanimate objects acting as people, for example, a story told from the point of view of a truck or a leaf.

3.2.2. Analysis Section 2

This thesis will take a closer look at the types of verbs used to categorize male, female, and neutral characters, if such exist. The grammatical function of the words will also be looked at; for example, whether male characters are associated with verbs significantly more than female characters. Verbs will be categorized using the methodology developed by Biber, Conrad and Leech in *The Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. This categorization has been described in full in Section 2.3.

Verbs have been counted, first looking at the total number of verbs, or tokens, of each category. After this, unique verb types have been counted, combining each instance of a verb into one. Different forms of a verb have not been considered, *swam* and *swimming* would both be marked under the infinitive version *to swim*. Percentages of tokens verbs relative to the total have then been calculated; both for each category and for verbs overall. Children's books do include speech. When speech is addressed to a person, the verbs present have been marked to the gender of the speaker, as when the *Singing Mermaid* speaks to the circus owner

"I beg you." *Beg* has thus been marked feminine. When speech is about a person, as are the poems in *The Rhyming Rabbit*, it has been marked to the gender of the subject. When the rabbit says of the fox "You *are* sly," this has been marked neutral.

The relative abundance of categories per gender has also been calculated. Certain categories have been further broken down in order to study potential stereotypical differences. Activity verbs have been divided into five semantic categories: academic/science, physical, quiet, descriptive and emotive. Academic/science activity verbs were related to scientific fields or to school and included *study* and *research*. Verbs which evoked physical, active behavior were marked into the physical category; examples include *grab, race*, and *stampede*. Quiet activity verbs referred to activities which were quiet or passive, for example, *carry* and *hug*. Descriptive activity verbs described states, such as the verb *to tire*. Emotive activity verbs were evocative of an emotion; for example, *cross fingers* or *laugh*.

Communication verbs were also divided into two categories: quiet and loud. These simply referred to the volume of communication: verbs such as *shout* and *cheer* were marked loud, chat and *beg* were marked quiet.

Verbs have been studied as percentages of the total, but are ultimately compared to the prevalence of characters of each gender. Should one gender show a clear majority, it is obvious that they ought to also associate with more verbs. However, if the prevalence of a certain category strongly differs from that of character prevalence, it is then clear that these differences are caused by something other than character dispersion.

For this reason, verbs per character have been calculated by dividing the number of tokens of each category by the number of characters present in Section Two books. This gives a weighted ratio for the verbs.

4. Analysis 1

The prevalence of male characters when compared to female characters has been noted by many researchers. The first part of this thesis aims to study newer (post-1990) literature and to see whether this pattern is still evident. Judging from previous research, it is predicted that discrepancies will still exist, though perhaps with more attention paid to female characters this discrepancy will not be so blatant.

Furthermore, even when present, female characters have been found to have very stereotypical roles. Are female characters still more likely to be mothers? Are gendered professional roles still evident in children's books?

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Number of Characters by Gender

Male protagonists were over twice as common as female ones *(Table 1 and Fig. 1)*. Out of 81 protagonists studied, 64% were male. The discrepancy in named characters was slightly smaller *(Fig. 2)*. The ratios of these were practically equal, with male characters being only about 9 percentage points more common than female ones. However, it should also be noted that neutral characters were only 0.6 percentage points less common than females. As stated, the results for illustrated characters have a higher error margin. Even in this category there is an extremely large prevalence of males: almost half the characters drawn are male *(Fig. 3)*. This gender gap cannot be completely explained away with error margins. When comparing characters who are mentioned in the text, i.e. named characters and protagonists, males made up 44.1%, females 30.7%, and neutral characters 25.2%. When neutral characters are factored out, males comprise 60% of characters mentioned in the text, females 40%.

Results have been summarized in the following table.

Protagonists			Named characters			Illustrated characters		
Total: 81			Total: 343			Total: 836		
Male	Female	Neutral	Male	Female	Neutral	Male	Female	Neutral
52	25	4	135	105	103	413	250	173
64.2%	30.9%	4.9%	39.4%	30.6%	30.0%	49.4%	29.9%	20.7%
Average Characters per Book								
0.75	0.36	0.06	3.9	3.0	3.0	11.8	7.1	4.9
Total: 1260 characters								
Male			Female			Neutral		
600			380			280		
47.6%			30.2%			22.2%		

Table 1: Gender distribution of characters in children's books.

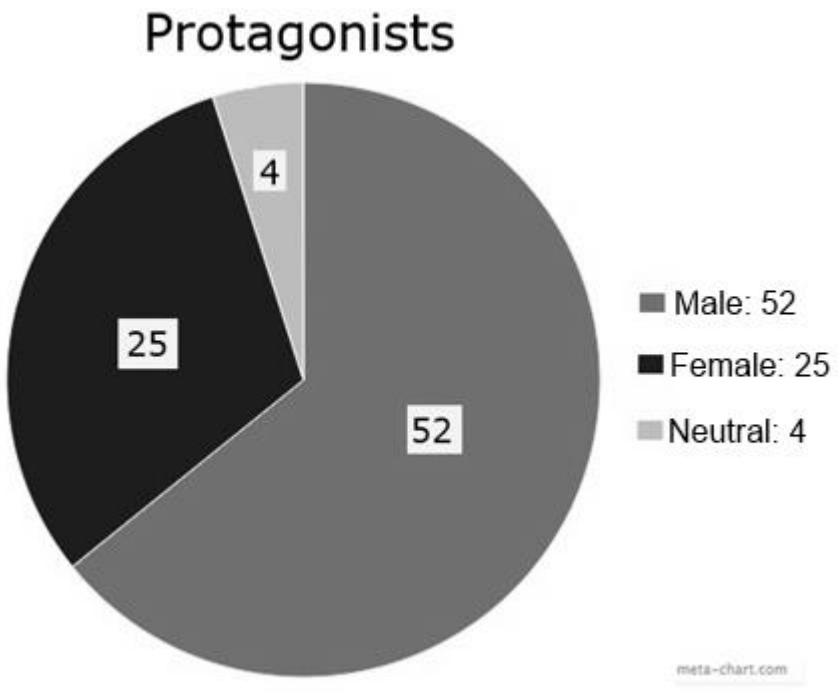

Fig 1: Number of protagonists.

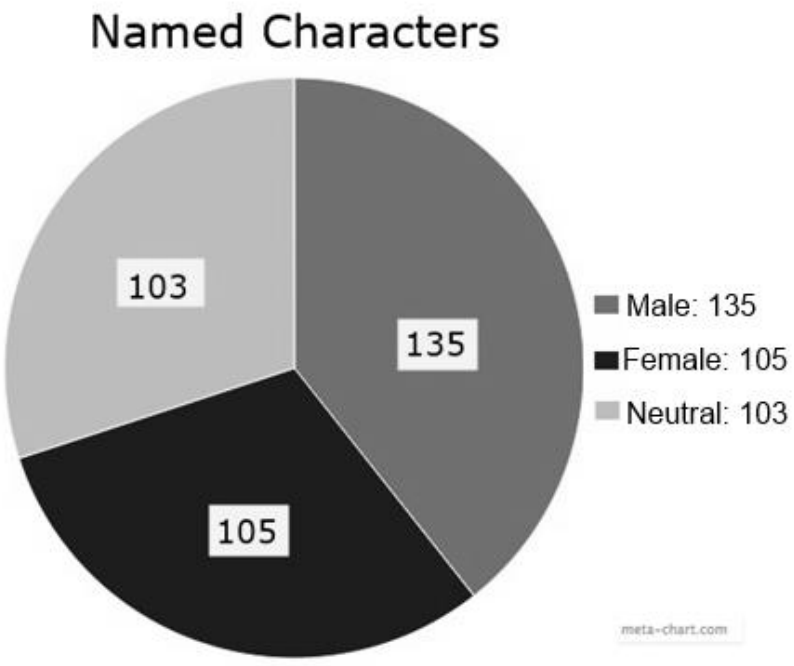

Fig 2: Named characters.

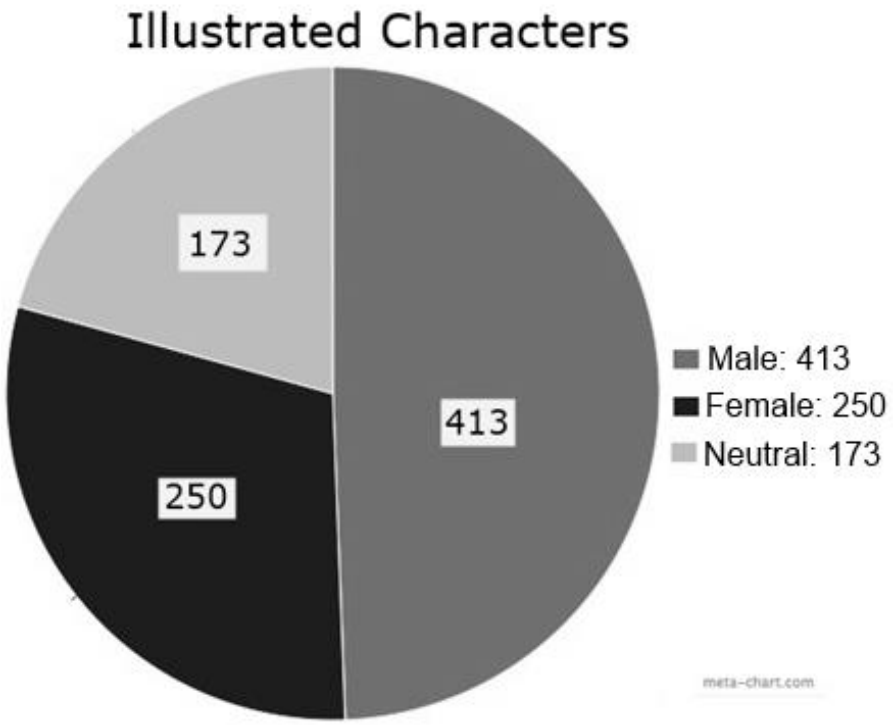

Fig 3: Illustrated characters

A large part of the named characters were in fact parents of the children. I was interested in knowing whether these made up a significant portion of the characters, and whether this would be different among the genders. Therefore, from the data all mothers and fathers were removed. The results can be seen in *Fig. 4*. The numbers of both male and female characters were reduced by a significant amount. However, female characters suffered a much larger drop than males while the amount of neutral characters obviously did not change. Out of the 287 characters remaining, 39% were male and 36% neutral. Meanwhile, the percentage of females had dropped to only 25%. Almost a third of named female characters were mothers; this does not even include females in mother-like roles, such as grandparents or aunts. In comparison, only a little over 16% of male characters were fathers.

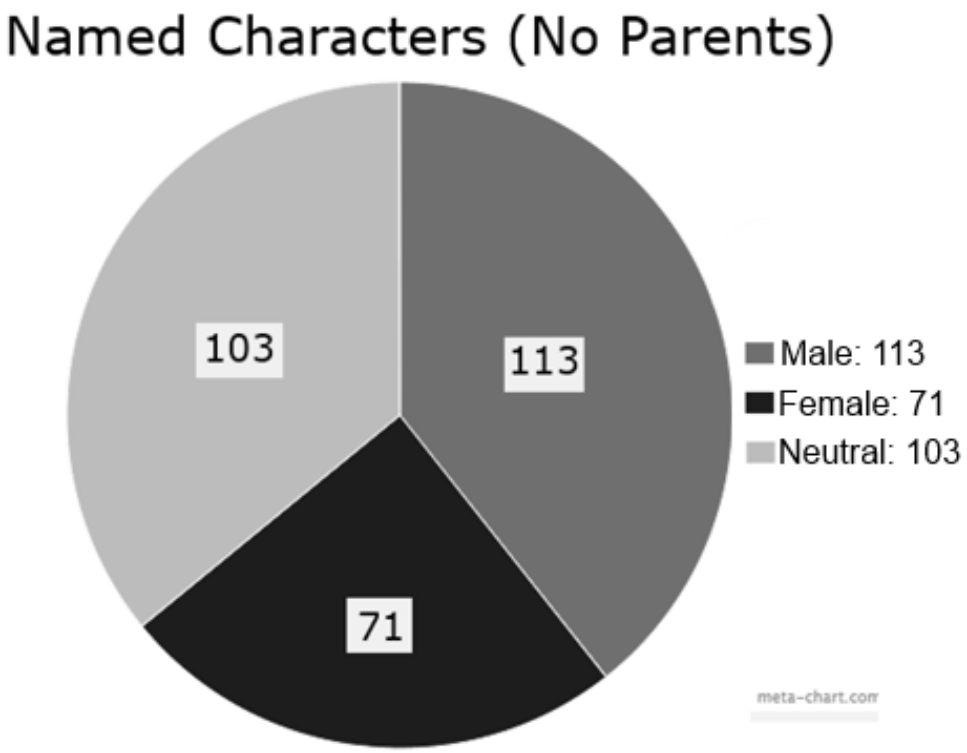

Fig 4: Named characters, with parents removed.

In summary, male characters were far more prevalent than females; the ratio of females to males was about 5/8. There was an average of 0.75 male protagonists in each book, compared with an average of only 0.36 females, showing a clear bias toward male protagonists. Though the differences are not so explicit in the other categories, they also show the same trend. In each section, male characters are featured far more strongly than female characters.

4.1.2. Type of Characters

Even if characters were prevalent in equal amounts, roles given to the characters can still be extremely stereotypical. Therefore it is interesting to study whether male and female characters were given similar roles in the text.

Role	Male	Female
Family/Personal	Dad, Kids (friends and siblings), King, brother, competing kids, relatives, little brother, baby, nephew, grandpa	Mom, kids (friends and siblings), fiancé, love interest, wife, aunt, sister, Queen, princess, baby sister, grandma, letter recipient
Professional	Factory boss, teacher, astronaut, pirate, painter, "court dwarf" , courtiers, king, postman, navigator, cabin boy, doctor, priest, knights, princes, teacher, truck driver, foreman, construction workers, doctor, inventor, choir boys	Tailor, artist, headmistress, teacher, nurse, maid in waiting, "court dwarf", governess, courtiers, Queen, princess, mayor, pirate captain, bus driver, ballet teacher, soothsayer, maid, pirate, librarian
Animals	Bear, rhino, rat, baby crocodile, poet rabbit, dragon, pet bug, shark, tiger	Cat, hippo, poet sheep, parrot
Fantasy characters	Great Bear, First Bear, Wolfman, zombie, Dracula, sea monster, Igor, leaves, Greek gods, Moonchild, Moonbird, Snowman, truck	Moon, Mother Earth, Witch, Fairy Godmother

Table 2: The roles of characters in Section One books.

As can be seen, family members of both genders were extremely important in these texts. When corresponding roles (mother/father, king/queen) and simple family relations are

removed, the results are more interesting. Males have *competing kids*. Meanwhile, females have *fiancé, love interest, wife, princess,* and *letter recipient*. The one male category directly shows competition and activity, stereotypical male traits. Meanwhile, three of the female categories (love interest, fiancé, and wife) are defined in relation to a male. No male character was defined by his relationship to a female character.

There were about equal numbers of female and male professional characters (22 male and 19 female). While some professions showed up for both genders (royals, teachers), others were gendered. More men were in positions of power: though one female mayor and one pirate captain were found, males had foremen, priests and factory bosses. All characters presented in STEM[11] fields (doctor, astronaut) were male. Females were more likely to have nurturing or caretaking jobs such as teachers, nurses, maids and maids in waiting. Both males and females were presented in creative jobs such as artists.

There were not many pets presented in these stories. Nonetheless, male animals are far more dangerous than their female counterparts; tigers, dragons, bears and sharks as opposed to cats and parrots. Hippos, though dangerous animals, do not have a reputation as such and are seen as fat, happy creatures. It is interesting to note that, in fact, *no* female animal is a dangerous creature.

There are more male fantasy creatures as well, though this is in part due to one book which presented a large number of horror monsters, mostly male. [12] Both genders had deity-like characters. First Bear and the Great Bear are presented as almost gods. Moonbird and Moonchild were sent to Earth from the heavens. The Moon has also been worshipped as a goddess in many cultures worldwide, and of course Mother Earth is a very familiar nature goddess. Both instances of inanimate objects were male. While a sample size of two is admittedly not a very big sample, it is still interesting to note that when giving a gender to an object, both authors chose to make the character a male.

[11] Science, technology, engineering, mathematics
[12] Wolfman, zombie, Dracula, sea monster, Igor and witch are all from the same book.

5. Analysis 2

5.1. Intro

This section focuses on 11 of the most popular books for children. The focus will be on the text of the books, though the case study in Section 5.3 will also study images in addition to text. This section will seek to answer the final two research questions; whether females and males are active in equal amounts in children's books, and whether the verbs or types of verbs used to describe male and female characters differ in a meaningful way. The relative amounts of verbs can say something about the presence of female and male characters in books. If far more verbs are associated with males overall, then it is clear that the female viewpoint is not presented in as much detail in children's books. Girls and women are not allowed the chance to tell their own stories to the same extent as boys and men. Additionally, even if overall amounts of verbs are similar, the types of verbs may differ. As stated by Bob Dixon in *Catching them young: sex, race, and class in children's fiction (1977)* "Girls often *are*. Boys *do* – they invent, plan, think about their future careers and are shown moving into the world. They are confident, outgoing and give instructions (usually to girls)" (Sunderland 2011, 120). Though both are verbs, males are associated with a higher amount of action verbs whereas females usually receive higher amounts of existence or relationship verbs.

The character breakdown of the books, by gender, is shown in the following table. Methods used were the same as in Analysis Section one, though illustrated characters were not counted. This table does not include the characters from *I love my mummy* and *I love my daddy*.

Protagonists			Named characters		
Total: 11			Total: 59		
Male	Female	Neutral	Male	Female	Neutral
8	3	0	30	18	11
72.7%	27.3%	0%	50.8%	30.5%	18.6%
Total: 70					
Male			Female		
38			21		
54.3%			30%		

Table 3: The ratios of characters in Section 2 books.

5.2. Analysis of data

5.2.1. Numerical analysis

The chart presenting the data is located in appendix section 8.3. The verbs have been written in their infinitive mode, *is* and *was* are both marked as *be* for example. It is easy to see that male verbs outnumber female verbs. This data is presented numerically in Table 4. Verbs are counted by type. Each case of a verb is counted separately; the word *be* has been counted 27 times among male-associated existence verbs, and so on. In parentheses is the number of types, for this number each instance of a verb was only counted once. Percentages, per gender, of total verbs in a category have been presented under each row. Additionally, verbs per character have been calculated. These verbs show the prevalence of these verbs relative to the number of characters present in the text.

This table does not include the verbs from the case study comparing *I love my mummy* and *I love my daddy*, as these were not among the most popular books list. Neutral verbs also include verbs which set the scene, such as “It was night-time” (*The Rhyming Rabbit*), though these are fairly uncommon as previously mentioned.

Tokens (types)	**Male**	**Female**	**Neutral**	**Total**
Activity	**170 (102)**	**68 (48)**	**50 (39)**	**288 (189)**
%	*59.0*	*23.6*	*17.4*	-
Verbs per character	4.5 (2.7)	3.2 (2.3)	4.5 (3.5)	4.1 (2.7)
Existence/relationship	**50 (3)**	**15 (3)**	**21 (4)**	**86 (10)**
%	*58.1*	*17.49*	*24.4*	-
Per character	1.3 (0.08)	0.7 (0.1)	1.9 (0.4)	1.2 (0.1)
Communication	**41 (16)**	**31 (17)**	**7 (3)**	**79 (36)**
%	*51.9*	*39.2*	*8.9*	-
Per character	1.1 (0.4)	1.5 (0.8)	0.6 (0.3)	1.1 (0.5)
Aspect	**2**	**1**	**2**	**5**
%	*40*	*20*	*40*	-
Per character	0.05	0.04	0.2	0.07
Occurrence	**1**	**0**	**0**	**1**
%	*100*	*0*	*0*	-
Mental	**90 (29)**	**23 (13)**	**12 (9)**	**125 (51)**
%	*72.0*	*18.4*	*9.6*	-
	2.4 (0.8)	1.1 (0.6)	1.1 (0.8)	1.8 (07)
Causative	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
%	*0*	*0*	*0*	-
Total	**354 (153)**	**138 (82)**	**92 (57)**	**584 (292)**
By percent	*60.6*	*23.6*	*15.8*	-
By character	9.3 (4.0)	6.5 (3.9)	8.4 (5.2)	8.3 (4.2)

Table 4: The number of verbs of each type, divided by gender. Duplicates have been counted. In parentheses are the numbers of types.

In two categories females are associated with more types than males: existence and communication. Due to the fact that there are only three types of existence verb per gender, this difference is not significant. The difference is more noticeable in communication verbs, with female characters having double the types of males. In most categories neutral characters are allowed far fewer verbs than males or females; when compared to prevalence of

characters this ratio changes. Neutral characters have more activity verbs per character than do females; they also are associated with four times the rate of male or female existence verbs. Mental verbs, too, feature more neutral verbs per character than female verbs.

Verbs, per gender, by type have also been calculated and are presented in the following three tables. These include duplicate verbs. As can be predicted, activity verbs are most common for all three genders. Due to the structure of children's books, most sentences describe some sort of action. Females have a slightly larger percentage of activity verbs; however this difference is small. Existence verbs make up around 15% of all verbs; they are more common in male than in female characters. The second largest category for female verbs is communication; almost a fifth of all the verbs fit into this category. Partly this can be explained with the large numbers of female characters who are mothers.[13] Mothers are fairly commonly described talking to their children, as in *Don't put your pants on your head, Fred!* when it is said of Fred's mother that "Mum tells me to change my pants daily." Communication verbs are the fourth most common category for males; the second most common are mental verbs and the third are existence. Mental verbs are fairly common in protagonists, as they most often tell of thoughts and feelings, primarily of the protagonists. As over a third of protagonists are male, it is not surprising that mental verbs are, percent-wise, more common in males.

Aspect and occurrence verbs are fairly uncommon. As these are also more uncommon in normal speech, this is not unsurprising. Causative verbs were not found in these texts.

Verbs associated with neutral characters have more noticeable differences. However, it must be noted that neutral characters make up a significantly smaller population in these books. Activity verbs are most common for these characters as well, though existence verbs are almost twice as common for neutral characters as for others. Communication verbs, on the other hand, are present in one third the rate of those of female characters; this may simply be due to the fact that those characters who speak in the text are more likely to reveal their gender. Mental verbs are also common, at a slightly smaller percentage than that of female characters. Though aspect verbs are twice as likely to occur with neutral characters, the overall

[13] As seen in Analysis section 1

percentages are so tiny as to be insignificant. Occurrence verbs are not present in relation to neutral characters.

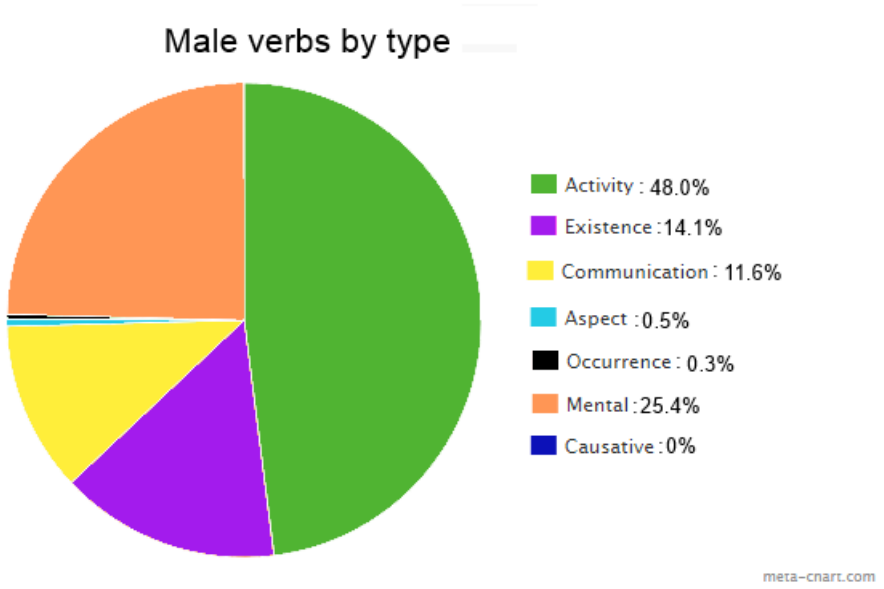

Fig 5: Verbs describing male characters by type, counting duplicates, as a percentage of total male verbs. Starting at activity, the categories go clockwise around the chart.

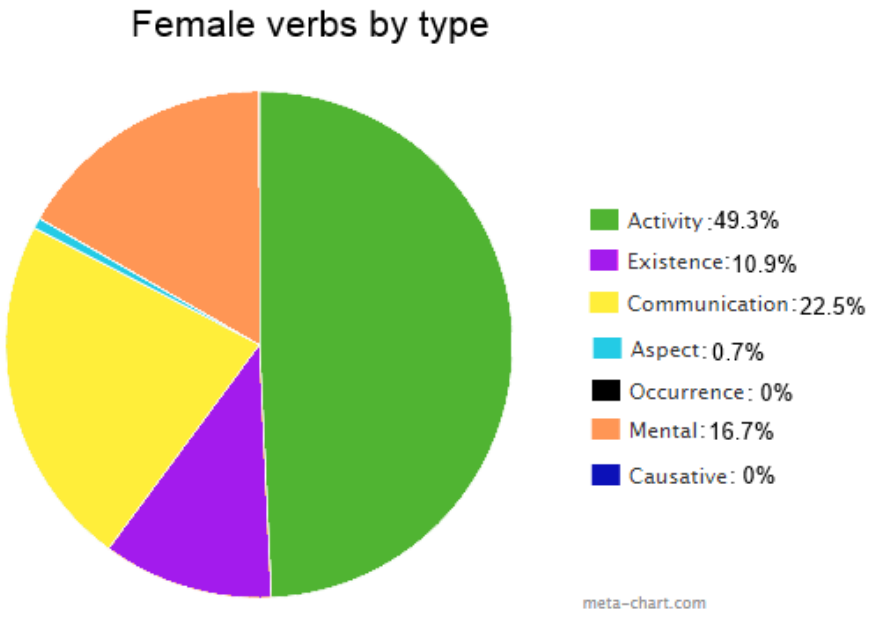

Fig 6: Verbs describing female characters by type, counting duplicates, as a percentage of total female verbs. Starting at activity, the categories go clockwise around the chart.

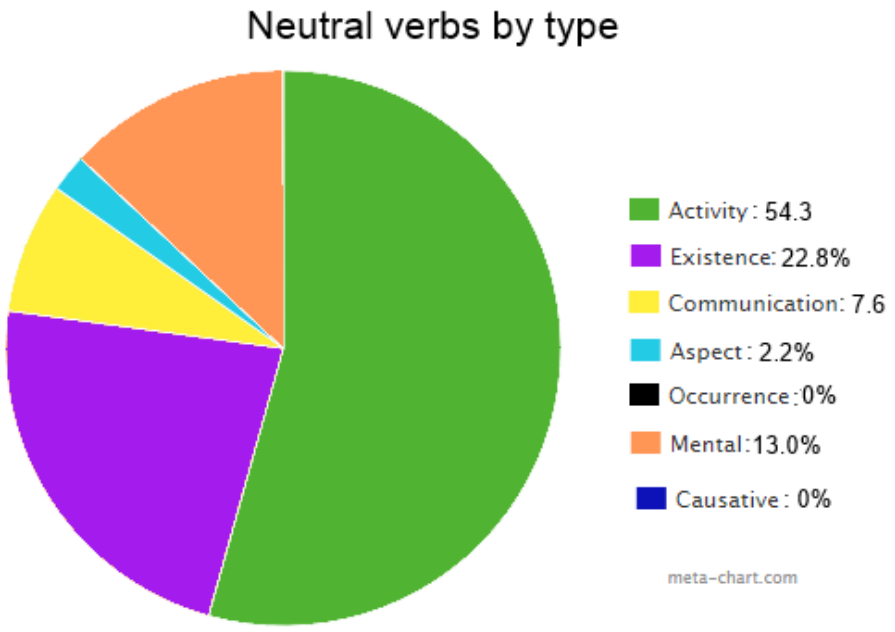

Fig7: Verbs describing neutral characters by type, counting duplicates, as a percentage of total neutral verbs. Starting at activity, the categories go clockwise around the chart.

5.2.2. Differences in verbs

The fourth and final thesis question asked whether the types of verbs males and females are given differ. Though there are slight differences, the percentages of verbs of different types do not significantly vary between male and female characters. Only the difference between communication and mental verbs is noticeable. It is still interesting to see whether the specific verbs in each category are different for each gender; for example, are girls more likely to be seen cooking or hugging than boys?

5.2.2.1. Activity verbs

Male and female characters have several activity verbs in common: *close, drive, fly, giggle, go, grin, kick, lead, make, pull, put, share, sigh, smile, stand, stay, swim, take, tiptoe, try, turn, walk, wear* and *work*. However, while boys had the verb *put* alone, girls in both instances *put on* something.

Activity verbs were divided into a few semantic categories: academic/science, physical, quiet, descriptive and emotive. If stereotypes present in previous research hold true, it is likely that male characters will have a higher percentage of active activity verbs, whereas females would feature more emotive and passive verbs.

Academic/science activity verbs were related to these fields; for male characters this included the words *invent, research,* and *study* and for females, the word *update*, which in itself is not a scientific word but was connected with updating software. Males had four science terms (three tokens), females had one.

Physical activity verbs were any activity verbs which denoted active, physical behavior. This section included words such as *grab, rush, race, stampede, gallop, lunge,* and *tear*. Females had 7 types and 10 tokens; males had 62 tokens (40 types).

Quiet verbs, though still referring to activities, included behavior which was quiet, ongoing, or passive. This included, for example, *carry, hug, rub, wear, leave, comb, sit,* and *give*. Females had 13 types, 16 in tokens. Males had 31 types, 45 tokens.

Descriptive verbs described states. The only example of this was one female verb, *tire*. Emotive activity verbs are actions which denote an emotional state. These included *gulp, laugh, gasp,* and *cross fingers*. Male characters had four types, five token emotive verbs while female characters had three tokens, all unique types.

Therefore, 61% of male activity verbs were physical; the percentage for females was 32%. In the case of quiet verbs, 44% of male activity verbs fit into this category whereas half of female verbs did. Though male and female characters had approximately equal numbers of emotive verbs, 9% of female activity verbs fit into this category while only 5% of male verbs did. Males had more science verbs, but due to the larger number of male verbs this is not surprising. Tokens per character have been collected into the following table:

Tokens per character	Male	Female
academic/science	0.1	0.05
Physical	1.6	0.5
Quiet	1.2	0.8
Descriptive	0	0.05
Emotive	0.1	0.1

Table 5: Tokens per character for each category of activity verbs.

When those verbs associated with neutral characters are ignored, 71.4% of activity verbs are associated with males; 28.6% with females; this correlates to 4.5 tokens per male character compared with 3.2 per female character.

5.2.2.2. Existence/Relationship

All three genders had many occurrences of the existence verb *be* and some of the verb *can*. Both females and males had some variation of *have* as well.

Neither female nor male characters had unique existence verbs. Other than the smaller amount of female verbs, there are no significant differences between male and female existence verbs. Perhaps it is interesting to note that male characters had almost triple the occurrence of *be* than did female characters.

When neutral verbs are factored out, female characters have 0.7 existence verbs per character, males have 1.3.

5.2.2.3. Communication

Communication verbs were also fairly common in children's books. All three genders featured instances of the word *say*. Other verbs male and female characters had in common were *ask, call, cry, reply, sing, tell* and *yell*. In this context, *cry* refers to a shout, not to the act of crying tears. The female *call* referred to calling someone on the telephone whereas the male *call* referred to *calling out*, i.e. shouting. Though male characters have more instances of communication verbs, female characters have more types.

These were divided into two sections; quiet and loud forms of communication. Quiet communication included discussion and everyday speech, such as the words *declare, explain,*

reply, chat, and *moan*. Loud communication included *screech, shout, growl,* and *cheer*. Both males and females had more quiet than loud communication, though surprisingly it was females who had a higher percentage of loud verbs. Of course, females also had fewer verbs overall.

It is interesting even to notice the differences in the quiet communication section. Male characters have several quite forceful forms of declaration. They *declare* their opinions, *tell* another character what to do and *explain* situations. Many of these are quite authoritative methods. Female characters, on the other hand, primarily feature submissive methods of communication. They *add* on to another character's speech, they *beg* and *moan* and simply *chat* with another character.

The loud verbs are also quite interesting. Males *beam, screech,* and *shout*. These all denote independent noise and emotions. On the other hand, female characters *cheer* for somebody else; cheering can be equated to giving praise to someone. *Growling* and *hissing* are, however, sounds made by quite dangerous animals.

	Male	Female
Loud	Beam Screech Shout	Cheer Growl Hiss
Quiet	Address Declare Explain Stutter Tell Yawn	Add Beg Chat Moan Recite Suggest

Table 6: Communication verbs, by type.

Communication verbs have the highest percentage of female association. Female characters are associated with 43.1% of these verbs; males with 56.9%. This correlates to 1.5 verbs per female, compared with only 1.1 verbs per male.

5.2.2.4. Mental

Mental verbs were also a large category. Once again, male and female characters have several verbs in common: *dream, find, know, listen, look, make up, read, think, want,* and *wish*. Female characters only have three types of mental verbs: *care, long*, and *worry*. Neither worry

nor longing involve any action, but rather are indicative of powerlessness. To care, in the context of the story, meant to like, another passive mental verb.

Male characters have a larger set of types of mental verb. Some of these, such as *hear, hope*, and *gaze* do also denote inactivity. However, male characters are also shown to be curious and inquisitive about their world. They *discover*, *notice,* and *observe* their surroundings. They are also allowed to take an active role in their thoughts. Male characters *decide* to do something, and are shown to have *hopes* and to *feel* a certain way about something.

Male characters have 2.4 verbs per character, females only 1.1. This is the highest percentage of male association.

5.2.2.5. Aspect and Occurrence

These sections are so small that they will be dealt with together. All three genders have one instance of the aspect verb *start*; both neutral and male characters also have one instance of *begin*. One occurrence verb, the male-associated *become*, has been found in the data. Both of these categories are so small that it is impossible to draw any conclusions. These, too, follow the pattern seen in previous categories. Males are associated with 75% of these verbs, females with 25%.

In summary, in all but one section female characters are represented less than 30% of the time. This is reflected in the verbs per character; only in communication verbs is this higher for females than for males.

The final percentages and verbs per type of character are summarized below.

	Male *64% of Section 2 characters*	Female *36% of Section 2 characters*
Communication	56.9% 1.1	43.1% 1.5
Activity	71.4% 4.5	28.6% 3.2
Aspect & Occurrence	75% 0.08	25% 0.05
Existence/relationship	76.9% 1.3	23.1% 0.7
Mental	79.6% 2.4	20.3% 1.1
Total	72.0% 9.3	28.0% 6.5

Table 7: The relative percentages of male and female tokens for each category when neutral characters are ignored, starting from the highest female ratio. Also included are tokens per character of each gender.

5.3. Case study: *I love my mummy* vs. *I love my daddy*

It is interesting to see the textual differences between males and females in a practical example. For this case study, two books have been studied: *I love my mummy* and *I love my daddy*, two of a series of books written by Giles Andrae which also contain titles such as *I love baby*, and *I love you*. Both books follow a similar format. They are narrated by a child of unknown gender. In fact, little is revealed about the child, showing that this child is simply a narrative tool and a stand-in for the target audience of young children. In both books, the child talks about their parent in a simple format. "I love my mummy very much, she's great to cuddle, soft to touch." (*Mummy,* First page of text) or "I love my daddy, yes I do, He's very kind – and funny too." (*Daddy, First* page) There are approximately two lines of text per page, accompanied by an illustration showcasing the event.

The covers of both books also follow a similar format; a picture of the child with their parent (*Fig 8*). The child is gender-neutral. There are several quite striking differences between the two covers. The first is the choice of color and symbols. The mother is standing on a lilac background, surrounded by pink hearts[14]. Her shirt, as well as the cover text, is also pink. Only the child's blue shirt adds color. Daddy stands in front of a blue background surrounded by

[14] The yellow star on the *Mummy* cover is a sticker added on later.

stars. His cover is far more colorful; the stars are red and orange, the text is white. The child's outfit, too, is more colorful with green, red and orange. Furthermore, the parents' poses are very different. The mother is pictured from eye level, hugging her child. Her pose is nurturing and caring and very intimate. The cover suggests warmth, comfort and love.

The father's pose also shows closeness with his child. However, he is pictured from just slightly below chin-level, making him immediately appear taller. The viewer looks up at daddy, whereas mommy is seen from straight ahead. The father's pose is also more dynamic. He is carrying his child on his shoulders. The two are looking out, giving the impression that the two are in motion, perhaps heading out on an adventure. Likewise, the blue cover suggests a sky, and the hat the baby is wearing lets the reader assume the two are outside. Daddy's relationship with his child seems to be a more playful one; perhaps leading to the assumption that mummy will care for the child's emotional needs while daddy is the exciting, adventurous one.

The covers, while thematically similar, provide very different pictures of the relationship between the baby and each parent. The mother's cover suggests nurturing care. Meanwhile, the father's cover is much more active and dynamic. The mother's cover seems domestic, while the father's cover shows the characters out of the house, clearly enforcing the divide between the feminine-coded private sphere and the masculine-coded public sphere.

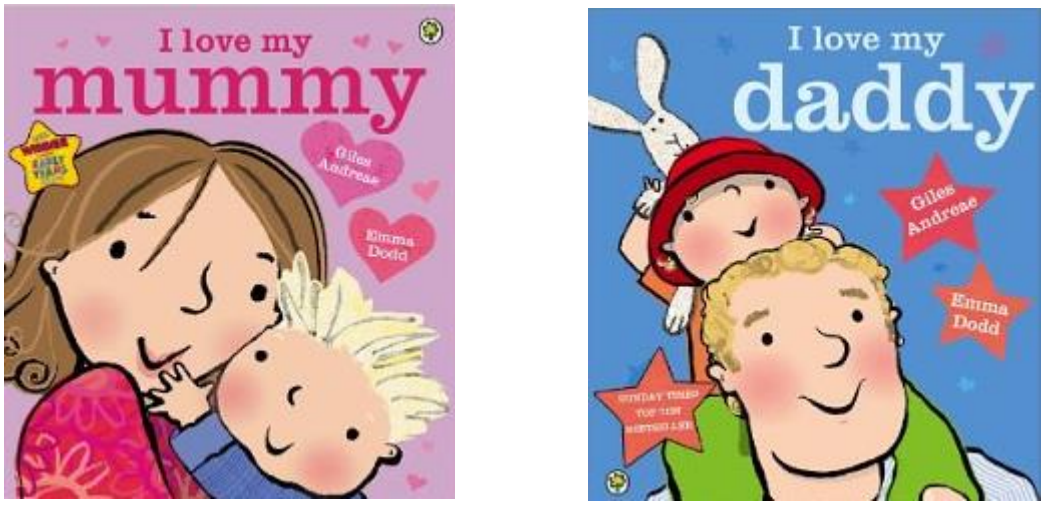

Fig 8: The covers of I love my mummy *and* I love my daddy.

The text inside both books is fairly similar in terms of sentence structure. The text is composed of rhyming sentences, one to two on each page. The sentences describe the parents, either giving aspects of the parent's personality or of activities the child enjoys doing with the parent. These results are presented in the table below

	Mommy	Daddy
Activity	Brushes hair Dances around Tickles me Wipes my nose Wipes my tears Takes me shopping sings (to me) (**my** favorite songs) holds my hand cooks (yummy things) helps me do a wee kisses me on the head	Teaches me Lets me clamber on his back Plays horsies Sings (to me) (**his** favorite songs) Lifts me on his shoulders (we) play on swings Does silly things Gives me treats Cuddles me[15] Tucks me safely into bed Watch TV[16]
Existence/relationship	Is kind Is great Is great to cuddle Is soft to touch	Is kind Is funny Has big shoes Is silly Is clever Has prickles on his chin Is a lovely man
Communication	Asks me not to scream and shout	Asks for a bite of my food Tells stories (from his head)
Mental	(we) love to giggle and do fun things reads me stories	

Table 9: the words used to describe mommy and daddy.

The types of verbs with which each parent is presented differ strongly. There are some similarities: Both parents are described as kind, and both sing to their child and read it stories. Of course, activity verbs make up the largest portion for each gender. The father, perhaps surprisingly, has three more existence verbs than the mother. Then again, this value is also quite small. Both each have a communication verb, where they ask their child for something. The mother has two mental verbs.

[15] I love to cuddle him
[16] "When mommy's not at home, we sometimes watch TV alone"

The mother's activity verbs almost all denote caring. Brushing hair and wiping tears are very caring activities, while cooking and shopping are very stereotypical female activities. Only dancing and ticking denote action, and even tickling is a very intimate activity. The other verbs all have to do with administering to the physical or emotional needs of a child. There is one exception, when the mother "dances in her underwear," which can be seen to be a playful activity much like those performed by the father. The verbs of existence used to describe mummy are few; she is kind and soft to touch, all extremely nurturing descriptors. None of these describe the mother as a person, and only describe her relationship to her child.

Though the father has just one more activity verb than the mother, almost all of his are full of action. He plays on the swings, he plays horsie, and he lifts his child on his shoulders. Of course, daddy's verbs also show him caring for his child. But while mommy is shown as a caretaker, daddy is a playmate and a teacher. The father tucking his child "*safely* into bed" shows a protective angle. While mommy wipes the child's tears, daddy is shown as protecting the child from danger.

In fact, many of the father's descriptors denote strength and courage. "Big shoes" shows that the child thinks their father is a big man, and presents the father as a physically more imposing figure than the mother. This is also reflected in the covers, as the father is presented from an angle which makes him appear taller and stronger to the viewer.

Father's verbs of existence also describe him more as a person. He is silly, clever, and funny. None of the father's adjectives only describe his relationship with his child; funny and clever are words that can be used to describe a person. He serves as the subject in these sentences. Meanwhile mommy's "great to cuddle" and "soft to touch" both make her an object in the sentence, with the baby being the unimplied subject. She is being described by her relationship to her child, while the father is being described by qualities that he possesses.

These are some clear differences even between verbs which are similar. Both the mother and father sing songs to their child. However, mummy sings *my* favorite songs while daddy sings *his* favorite songs. The mother is not shown having any opinions of her own; rather she devotes all her energy to her child's pleasure. Meanwhile, the father is allowed to show dominance and choose which songs he prefers to sing. On the same note, daddy *tells* stories *from his head* while mommy *reads* stories. Once again, the father is given far more autonomy

and creativity in his relationship with the child. Father is clever; he creates stories which are explicitly stated to come from him alone. Mummy, once again, does not create or own anything of her own. Rather, she simply reads stories which have been created by somebody else.

Interestingly, while *I love my mommy* does not mention the father at all, *I love my daddy* does include the mother. This also suggests that while a father may be absent from family life for longer periods of time, a mother is indispensable to a family. This all creates an atmosphere where a mother's role is shown to be the primary caregiver. She is not shown to have much of a life outside her children. Meanwhile, it is suggested that a man's care is not as necessary for his family's well-being; rather that he is the fun parent, almost a friend. This ties back to the thought of fathers who care for their children as "helping out," rather than as proper parents doing their share. Though neither parent is shown working, it can perhaps be assumed that in this family, it is the father who is the breadwinner.

6. Discussion of Results

At the start of this thesis, I asked four questions:

Are male and female characters present in differing amounts in children's media?

Do male and female characters fulfill differing or stereotypical roles?

Do females and males have equal agency in children's books? In other words, are a similar amount of verbs used to refer to female children as to male children?

Do the verbs used to describe male and female characters differ in some way?

Analysis Section One looked to answer the first two questions; Section Two the final two. Previous studies (Weitzman, et al 1972, Brugeilles, et al. 2002) among others, had found a consistent inequality between female and male characters. With the rise of feminist critique in the 1970s, there has been a constant push for gender equality in children's media (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 237). Superficially, things are certainly improving; as an example, a book featuring several construction workers made sure to illustrate a few women. Clearly there is a conscious attempt to create more equal images in children's books. Subconscious prejudices, on the

other hand, are far more difficult to overcome. The results of this study are in line with those of previous ones.

First, in both sections male characters outnumbered female characters in all aspects of the text. Around 65% of protagonists were males; less than a third were female. This correlates with figures found in other studies, where 1.6 male protagonists existed for each female protagonist (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 197). It is also noticeable, when looking at the covers of books with female protagonists, that many of these are specifically marketed toward girls. The cover of *The Singing Mermaid*, for example, promises "glitter on every page." The cover of *Camilla the Cupcake Fairy* is bright pink. Of course, nothing says that boys cannot like pink, but in marketing pink and sparkles are commonly used to denote something intended for females. In contrast, most of the covers of books featuring boys are neutral in tone. This only reinforces the idea that, while girls are allowed to read books about boys, stories about girls are meant only for girls (Sunderland 2011, 192).

This same trend of erasing girls and women was visible in all character categories. As in previous studies, these books "relegate women to minority status" (Béreaud 1975, 197). Women are also less present in illustrations; once again less than a third of characters shown are clearly women. Similar figures were found in (Brugeilles, et al. 2002, 248), where only half of cover illustrations for children's books showed female characters. Only in the case of named characters were the roles somewhat more equal; approximately 40% of these were males compared with 30% females.

Weitzman et al. (1972) also found an underrepresentation of female characters in all aspects of text. "[Women] remain both inconspicuous and nameless" (1128). Though this ratio is certainly better than in 1972– named women are, after all, almost as common as named men –they continue to play less significant roles in stories.

Despite the push for equal opportunities, it seems that women are still regularly relegated to the role of mother. Of course, parents are extremely important in a young child's life and it is to be expected that they will form a large portion of the supplementary characters. Yet this does not justify why, when mothers and fathers are removed from the data, women make up a smaller population than neutral characters. The lack of fathers has been noted by other researchers as well. Less than a third of parents were fathers in the study

by (Béreaud 1975, 204), and when present, fathers were almost never shown helping in childcare duties (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1141). If a gendered labor divide is present a majority of children's books, then it is obvious that mothers would be more common. A stay at home mother would be more involved in her child's life than would a working father. This distinction is clearly illustrated in the case study of section 5.3, where mummy is described taking care of her child, showing it gentleness and kindness. In contrast, daddy is seen having fun with his child. He has greater agency, he has opinions and creates stories of his own whereas the mother does not seem to have a life separate from her child.

Though mothers are important in a child's life, they are not on the whole important in the story. Rather, they are tangential to the story, seen in the background cooking or caring for their children. Rarely are they involved in the adventure or imaginative play of the child protagonist. For example, in *How to Catch a Dragon*, one of the Analysis Section Two books, the protagonist's mother is undoubtedly important to his life. However, her function in the story is to drive him to the library and back home. The story itself takes place fully in the imagination of the child.

When girls and women are not present in stories, their voices are silenced. Children will be exposed to stories from a male point of view, at the same time being taught that women's voices do not matter. Children will learn that women do not go on adventures, that their lives are not interesting or important enough to write about. Other researchers agree, stating that "children scanning the list of titles of what have been designated as the very best children's books are bound to receive the impression that girls are not very important because no one has bothered to write books about them" (Weitzman et al. 1129). From even a cursory glance over the data, it is easy to see that male characters are being favored in all aspects of a text. This choice may be unconscious, but it reinforces the idea of women and girls as secondary characters.

The second thesis questions asked about the role of the characters in these stories. Were women and men shown in different roles? Previous studies have found an improvement in the ratio of males to females; certainly now there are stories featuring female protagonists. Despite the fact that women and girls are still far less common, they could still be presented in nonstereotypical roles, though previous research does not support this idea. The roles female

characters have been given tend to be extremely stereotypical and insignificant (Kolbe and La Voie 1981, 373). Once again, the findings of this thesis confirm previous results.

As discussed above, mothers were far more prevalent than fathers. Furthermore, a significant portion of female characters were mothers, despite the fact that male characters outnumbered female characters, showing a constant trend of presenting women as only mothers.

In family relations, men were never described in relation to women. On the other hand, some females were described as wives or love interests, defining their entire character by their relation to a man. This behavior was even more obvious in Weitzman et al.'s 1972 study, where they noted that most of the women in picture books were defined by their relationships with men (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1146). Judging by the relative rareness of these descriptions, however, it is easy to see that some improvement has been made.

Both women and men are shown in careers outside of the home. An analysis of the occupations described in the books shows that, even now, male characters are shown in position of higher authority and technical knowledge than women. "Men are doctors, women are nurses," (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1145), in other words though they are in a similar field, women are principally in an assisting, less prestigious role. Male careers included highly skilled, powerful careers such as doctor, astronaut, inventor, boss, and foreman. Women were in a few powerful roles as well; one was a mayor and one a pirate captain. Queens, of course, were common due to the popularity of princess stories but these women usually functioned simply as the wives of kings. Another woman was a headmistress of a school. Though a powerful position, teaching has commonly been thought to be a traditionally feminine career which is associated with nurturing and care. A headmistress, too, is simply a continuation of this trope.

The majority of women were in teaching or supporting roles such as maids and nurses. In addition, artistic careers were fairly popular with several dancers and artisans among the characters present in the stories. Several male characters, too, were shown as artists. One cannot claim that these jobs are not as difficult as those associated with male characters. Nonetheless, many of the female jobs are ones which require a lower level of education and which are not as well paid.

These same traits are visible in Section Two books. Two women are teachers and one is a librarian. Male characters include a circus owner, an inventor and military personnel. No female character in any text is presented in a technical or scientific career; the inventor presented in *The Monster Machine* fulfills the stereotypical image of the white male scientist in a lab coat and wild hair. Young girls interested in science or little boys who wish to be dancers will not see themselves represented anywhere. As was previously discussed in Section 2.2.5., this may have devastating effects on the future careers of these children.

Other authors have noticed this discord between male and female careers. One study found women in 26 different jobs, and men in 147 (Sunderland 2011, 117). Though in this sample men and women had approximately similar numbers of possible careers, those of men were far more varied. It seems that despite all efforts to the contrary, women are still presented with few career options outside of mothering.

Those who have studied the difference between human and animal characters point out that gender differences are even more extreme in tales which feature animal characters (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 209). Though this thesis does not specifically study this divide, it is interesting to note the differences between male and female animals in these texts. Though these animals studied functioned as animals, not as people, in the text, they still showed clear differences. All female animals were animals which could be stereotyped as "safe," half of them were domestic. Only a hippo is an animal people would not want to keep at home, and though it is extremely dangerous, is commonly seen in media as a calm, happy creature. Male pets included a rabbit, rat, and a pet bug; all the other male animals were dangerous wild creatures. Furthermore, even rats and bugs are not traditional pets. Other male animals included a tiger, bear, dragon, shark, and a baby crocodile. A similar pattern was found in the Section Two book, *That's not Funny!* This book features several animals from different regions of Africa; Hyena, Cheetah, Hippo, Wildebeest, and Rhino, who are male, as well as Snake and Ostrich who are female. Two male characters are dangerous carnivores; rhinos too are known to be extremely strong. Ostriches are perhaps the least dangerous animals of the group, and snakes too are small and hunt by stealth, not by strength. Both female animals are also smaller in stature than all the male animals.

Though the samples are admittedly small, a clear pattern emerges. Animals which are less dangerous and more domestic are much more likely to be female. Women and girls are,

after all, stereotyped as safer, more likely to be the victim than the perpetrator. Men, on the other hand, are frequently seen to be more aggressive. These traits are then projected onto animals in stories. Perhaps authors have more difficulty in imagining a fearsome predator as a woman despite the fact that children's books never show these animals committing any acts of violence.

Fantasy characters, too, show a difference between males and females. In addition to the Greek gods, males feature four characters who are deities. The only female deity is Mother Earth, a classically female goddess who is characterized as the mother of the human race. It is also interesting to note that two books featured inanimate characters, both of whom were male. These characters' gender had no impact on the story; one must wonder whether it was deliberate that both authors chose to represent these as male characters. After all, male is predominantly seen as the default and it is only recently that the masculine pronoun *he* has stopped referring to the entire human race. Thus it is not surprising that authors would more commonly choose to make a character male.

Not only were male characters more prevalent, they also were mentioned more in the texts. When neutral characters are ignored, male characters featured in the text[17] made up almost 60% of all characters, yet were associated with 72% of verbs. Meanwhile, the 40% of female characters were associated with less than a third of verbs. In other words, male characters had an average of 9.3 verbs per character, females an average of 6.5 verbs per character. This was especially interesting given the fact that neutral characters had 8.4 verbs per character, much higher than the rate of female characters.

As can be seen, even when the prevalence of male characters is accounted for, female characters are allowed to *do* less in the texts. Once again, children who read these texts will be left with the impression that young girls are not allowed or able to do so much as little boys; that they do not have the same adventures and dreams as boys. This, too, may explain why girls are not as likely to identify with female roles, and why boys and men are very likely to identify with male characters (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1130).

Due to stereotypes, perhaps it could be expected that males would be associated more commonly with activity verbs, and female with communication or existence verbs. In

[17] That is, protagonists and named characters from both Sections One and Two.

pure amount, this is not the case in any category; males are referred to more commonly in each. However, when compared to the relative abundance of characters mentioned in the previous paragraph, this ratio changes for one category: communication verbs. Females have an average of 1.5 communication verbs per character, 0.4 more than males. Not only this, but female characters have more types of communication verbs than males, at 0.8 types per character compared with 0.4 types per male character.

Approximately equal numbers of male and female characters, relative to prevalence, are speaking. Why is this, when women are underrepresented in all other aspects of text?

First of all, communicative verbs are more likely than mental verbs, for instance, to be given to side characters. Communicative verbs are the most common form of interaction between different characters, followed by activity verbs. They are external and on the whole do not give much insight to a character's inner thoughts. As always, there are some exceptions to this; to *moan* and *cheer* both refer to emotional states of discomfort and excitement, respectively. Yet on the whole these verbs are not particularly internal.

As was discovered, a large portion of female characters are mothers, or mother analogies. As said before, mothers do not usually go on adventures with their child; their primary mode of interaction is to talk. Perhaps due to the stereotype of women as greater talkers than men, authors tend to associate more speech acts to female characters.

In all other categories female characters were less emphasized. The second highest relative amount, by percentage, is among activity verbs, with almost 30% of these verbs associated with female characters. This correlates to 3.2 verbs per female character compared with 4.5 for males. As can be seen, activity verbs are by far the most common verb type, having over double the verbs per character compared to other categories. Interestingly, the disparity between female and male characters is 1.3 verbs per character, or as high as that of mental verbs. Thus, despite the relatively high percentage of female activity verbs, the disparity is quite large. This is once again due to the size of the activity verb category.

Activity verbs, too, are a fairly external type of verb. Actions are visible to others and do not give such insight into the mind of a character. Naturally activity verbs may also indicate emotional states; to *grin* and to *gulp* and to *beg* are all indicative of certain moods or

situations. All the same, these are verbs which, like communication verbs, are visible to the outside. One need not enter the mind of a character to see that they are crying, for instance.

Consequently it is likely that the relative abundances of communication and activity verbs are due to the external nature of these verb categories. Only three out of eleven protagonists were women, thus the female characters that exist are more likely to be side characters.

Existence and relationship verbs were the third highest category of female associated verbs[18], with just over a fifth being assigned to female characters. The disparity, in words per character, was smaller than that of activity verbs; a difference of only 0.6 verbs per character. However one must remember that this category is also a third the size of activity verbs.

There were few unique existence verbs; most of these verbs were some form of *to be*. For example, the protagonist of *The Singing Mermaid* "*wasn't* friends" with a certain character; another female in *The Octonauts* "*was* busy." Existence verbs are a class which may denote actions which are observable to the outside world, such as the two examples above. On the other hand, it may also refer to emotional states; "Olivia *was* depressed" in *Olivia and the Fairy Princesses*. Perhaps due to the increased association with inner states of mind this category was quite rare among female characters; male characters are more likely than female characters to be described.

Of the four significant categories, existence and relationship verbs were the least varied with only five unique verbs total, furthermore most of these verbs were some variation of *to be*. The relative scarcity of female existence verbs is quite surprising when one brings to mind the much quoted "men *do*, women *are*" (Sunderland 2011, 120). As the findings from this thesis show, men are described more often than women. On top of this, women are associated with more activity than existence verbs; they clearly *do* more than they *are*.

Mental verbs were by percentage least likely to be used in conjunction with female characters and had one of the greatest disparities between genders, 1.3 verbs per character more for boys and men. Though this is the same disparity as that of activity verbs, mental

[18] Disregarding aspect & occurrence verbs

verbs are a much smaller category; thus, compared to the overall number of verbs the disparity in mental verbs is larger.

This category almost exclusively describes internal processes such as thoughts and emotions. Hence, these are almost always reserved for the protagonists. Only a few examples of mental verbs referring to non-protagonists emerge. Side characters may *hear* or *watch* others; they may *read* stories to other characters. A seagull "does not *want* to help" the protagonist of *How to Catch a Star*. Some instances of mental verbs from side characters occur when they are working in conjunction with the protagonist, as in *Camilla the Cupcake* Fairy when Camilla's friends "*wished with her."* Likewise, everyone "felt free to be themselves" in *Mr. Tiger goes wild*. Nevertheless, the majority of these verbs describe the mental state of protagonists. They *know* and *wish* for certain things, they *do not want* to dress up as a princess, for example.

A clear pattern emerges. The more a verb category references inner thoughts of a character, the less likely it is to be associated with a female. Thus it can be seen that when women are present, they are given a far more superficial role in the story. They are more likely to be supporting characters, described solely by their actions or by their communication with other members of the story. Girls' inner thoughts are time and time again left a mystery, contributing to a "symbolic annihilation" (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 198) of female thought.

Along with the prevalence of verbs of different categories, it is also important to note the differences between male and female-associated verbs within a category. It has already been seen that female characters are more likely to be described with superficial activity and communication verbs than with internal mental verbs. Previous research has found that "loving, watching, and helping "were some of the only activities available to women (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1130), that is, girls and women in stories were expected to be quiet and helpful and to make men's comfort a priority.

Over a 60% of male activity verbs fit into the physical category,[19] slightly over 40% into the quiet, correlating with 1.6 physical and 1.2 quiet activity verbs per male. This is in keeping with stereotypes about boys as discussed in section 2.2.2. It is said that male characters in books are more active, spending more time outside and having adventures. Girls, meanwhile,

[19] For examples, see section 5.2.2.1.

are frequently left at home, engaged in quiet play or housework (Béreaud 1975, 199). This is certainly reflected here. Only 32% of female activity verbs were associated with physical behavior, or about 0.5 verbs per female, a third of the rate of boys and men. Male characters also had more verbs which were reminiscent of fighting or the military; for example, *draw* (a sword), *block, race, march* and *gallop*. Girls *bit,* and *lunged*. Fighting and war games are seen as a traditionally masculine activity; none of the books with female protagonists featured any sort of fighting. Books with male protagonists, on the other hand, did feature military and action themes. *How to catch a dragon* starred several knights on an adventure (albeit in the companion of a female troll), and *Don't put your pants on your head, Fred!* involved Fred visiting a military barracks.

While male characters were also featured with a large number of quiet activity verbs, this category was the largest by percentage for female characters. Emotive verbs had a slightly higher verb per character ratio than did quiet verbs; this difference too is small.

Several male quiet verbs also denoted some sort of expertise or power; male characters *guided* another character. Female characters were described *combing their hair* twice. Though a little girl was described *choosing* a costume, this, too is related to the upkeep of beauty. The verb *wear* did show up in both male and female lists, however unique beauty-related verbs were present only with female characters.

Both male and female characters are allowed to have some freedom compared to older studies; despite this old stereotypical views are still present. Girls are far more likely to be shown in passive roles, following instructions and playing quietly. Verbs associated with the upkeep of appearance (such as *brushing hair*) were not common with either gender, but were more typical of females. Male characters, once again, had a wider range of activities associated with them though an emphasis was on games which denoted active play and agency. Unlike the stereotypical image of boys, these characters were allowed to *hug* and *snuggle* with others; boys were not expected to be constantly self-sufficient and unemotional.

It is interesting to note that neither gender featured many words associated with helping others; in fact no child in the books is shown doing housework. Then again, all but one book take place in some version of a fantasy world.

An emphasis on male authority is noticeable in the differences between communication verbs. One can see in Table 6 (Section 5.2.2.3.) that most of the female "quiet" verbs denote subordination in a conversation. A character who *adds* onto a discussion is not directing or controlling discourse, someone who *recites* is simply repeating previously written material. *Begging* and *moaning* are both verbs connected with suffering; *begging* especially with powerlessness. Boys, in contrast, *address* other characters and *declare* their intentions. No unique female communicative verb is evocative of control or of dominance in a conversation; even the "loud" verb *cheer* is a method of giving praise to other characters, in the particular text to boys and men.

Chatting, too, is typically seen as a superficial form of communication; speech in which nothing of much importance is said. This is in direct contrast with the male-associated verb *to explain*, in which the speaker is assumed to have in-depth knowledge of the subject they are discussing.

In consequence, even though female characters are described speaking in a slightly higher percentage than male characters relative to prevalence, the way they are described speaking contributes to their relative lack of power. Female characters are not generally allowed to take charge in a conversation, but rather react to others' declarations. A female association with submissive, frivolous verbs undervalues and trivializes female communication. In the professional world, there is recurrent backlash against women who are presumed to be acting inappropriately; by speaking their mind or refusing to submit to male opinions (Kacerguis and Adams 1979, 369). Young girls, too, are taught that it is not proper for a woman to be too confident. The contrast between male and female communication verbs highlights this attitude very clearly. Girls in these books are not shown speaking as forcefully or confidently as boys are, but are instead deferring to others in conversation.

Unlike communication verbs, mental verbs are relatively uncommon for female characters. Additionally, their mental verbs types are also quite telling of stereotypes. Women *care, long* and *worry*; all three of these verbs connote some form of powerlessness. To *care* is quite explicitly to nurture someone. Women, especially mothers, are frequently stereotyped as excessive worriers (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1134). *Longing*, too, is a verb which is associated with lack of agency; those who long for something generally do not have the power to change

their situation. This is the case in the source book. *The Singing Mermaid* "longed for the deep blue sea" as she was trapped in a circus, unable to rescue herself.

The male verbs types, on the other hand, have several terms of independent thought. Boys are described *observing* their surroundings and *discovering* interesting things. Picture books never give the opportunity for young girls to find gratification through intellectual pursuits (Weitzman, et al. 1972, 1146). Though these words were written in 1972, the same sentiment is still visible today. Unlike boys, girls in these stories are rarely shown to have a rich inner world. When their thoughts are shown, it is frequently in the context of feeling fear or powerlessness, or in caring for another character. Children are not seeing girls with forceful personalities, who observe and investigate their world.

Female characters are sometimes shown creating things of their own. *The Rhyming Rabbit*, a male, meets a female sheep who, like him, enjoys making up poems and is shown to be an equal in that skill. Both male and female characters *dream, know* and *think*. Yet it cannot be doubted that male characters are, once more, given a far wider variety of mental verbs. What's more, male-associated verbs often show greater engagement with the outside world as well as greater self-sufficiency.

Have there been improvements since the landmark study by Weitzman et al.? Certainly changes have happened. Not every female is a homemaker or a powerless victim. The titular Olivia of *Olivia and the Fairy Princesses* actively rejects the stereotypical female ideal. "For the dance recital, *everyone* was trying out for the fairy princess ballerina. Even a couple of the boys," she complains. "I'm trying to develop a more stark, modern style." Olivia is a forceful personality, frustrated with the constant presence of princesses. In the end, she realizes what she truly wants to be: a queen. Likewise, the only female character in *How to Catch a Dragon* is a troll, much larger than the other characters, and who is described as "hideous and hairy" and a legitimate threat to the protagonist and his friends. Yet she is not evil, instead she joins the party as another friend. Certainly some authors consciously reject stereotypical gender norms; *Olivia* is perhaps the clearest example of this.

Yet, many stories preserve gender norms. *The Singing Mermaid*, which promises "glitter on every page," presents a heroine who is helpless and naïve throughout the story, held captive by a greedy businessman. She is only rescued by a male seagull at the end.

Likewise, most stories present some form of stereotype whether it be through erasure of women and girls, or through the usage of gendered language which renders women and girls powerless or insignificant.

The characters presented in these stories offer young readers “models for the future” (Béreaud 1975, 201). They teach children what is acceptable and what is not, and how the world around them works. Though they make up over half the population, women are not present in as large numbers as men. When they are, their roles and contributions are erased or made inconsequential. Young children will learn to “accept the invisibility of women and girls and to believe they are less important than boys and men” (Mccabe, et al. 2011, 199). Male characters truly are more important than female characters in the majority of these stories; they exist in larger numbers, and are more active and dominant.

The larger the sample size, the more accurate the results would be. There is undoubtedly always inherent error or disagreement in the categorization of these verbs. Perhaps not everyone would agree with the placement of this or that verb into a certain category. Humanities is not an exact science, and thus the observations made by different researchers might differ. By using a team to classify verbs, such as in the Kolbe and La Voie study (Kolbe and La Voie 1981), error due to personal preference would be lessened.

7. Conclusion

Gendered stereotypes have not disappeared from current children’s picture books and significant discrepancies still persist in all aspects of gender. Four thesis questions were asked:

Are male and female characters present in differing amounts in children’s media?

Do male and female characters fulfill differing or stereotypical roles?

Do females and males have equal agency in children’s books? In other words, are a similar amount of verbs used to refer to female children as to male children?

Do the verbs used to describe male and female characters differ in some way?

It was found that there was significant disparity between the number of female and male characters. A little under half of all characters present in children’s books were male; less than

a third were female. The rest were characters of indeterminate gender, marked as neutral gender. This incongruity was largest in the case of protagonists, where almost two thirds were male. Side characters in the text were most equal. This was found to be at least in part due to the presence of mothers, who made up almost a third of all named female characters; twice the ratio of males.

In addition to the overabundance of mothers, females were also present in less prestigious and less varied careers than males. The careers given to males included astronauts, business owners, doctors and inventors. Many of the male careers require high competence, especially in technical fields. Female careers, on the other hand, tended to lean toward nurturing and caring careers such as teachers and nurses. A few exceptions did exist; females were also a mayor and a pirate captain.

Women were also more likely to be described by their relationship to a male character, for example as a wife or a fiancé. Not a single example of this existed for male characters. Female animals, too, were found to be of a less dangerous or powerful species than male animals.

Even when compared to relative abundance, male characters were discussed in the text far more frequently than female characters. Only verbs of communication were distributed approximately equally; female-associated verbs made up less than a third of all other categories. The largest disparity existed in mental verbs which are perhaps most commonly associated with protagonists. As women and girls are more likely to be side characters, their thoughts and feelings are not presented in as much detail as that of boys and men. Verbs of existence, though more common for females than mental verbs, also showed great disparity.

In addition to intercategorical differences, there are also striking differences with respect to specific words. Overall, female-associated words show less agency and less dominance of a situation. Where a woman *begs*, a man *declares*. A girl or a woman is more likely to be associated with passive verbs or those having to do with care or worry. Furthermore, men have a greater range of verbs in all categories except communication verbs. Male-associated verbs suggest that boys are inquisitive, brave and exciting characters who go on adventures and explore their world. Girls are given far less range and are often marginalized. Their stories are not as fully told nor their characters as well explored as those of boys.

The disparity is slowly lessening. Whereas Weitzman et al. found almost no examples of women as anything but mothers, now women do have options. Some books, such as *Olivia and the Fairy Princesses*, explicitly challenge both gender and even racial stereotypes. “Why is it always a pink princess? Why not a princess from Thailand or an African princess… There *are* alternatives.” Yet, as the answers to these thesis questions show, much more is needed for truly equal children’s literature.

Future research could include a larger sample size to eliminate error and improve accuracy. Interesting questions arise from these findings. Does the gender disparity change by country? Would, for example, a country with greater gender equality also produce more equal children’s literature? The intersection of race and gender is also quite interesting. Perhaps a similar study could be performed, but looking at race as opposed to gender though due to the lack of characters of Color in these books, an even larger sample of books would be required for this experiment.

The study of children’s books is an important one. These stories will stay with a child throughout their life, helping to mold their ideals and understanding of the world and of themselves. Unequal representation reinforces the invisibility and insignificance of women and girls. Furthermore, by ignoring the stories and viewpoints of half of the population, many interesting and unique stories are not being told. A greater presence of intelligent, exciting little girls would help close the gender gap and teach children that women, too, can have adventures.

8. Appendices

8.1. Most Popular Books

The most checked out English-language books of 2014 from the HelMet library in order of popularity. This list includes those books which have not been used in the thesis.

1. Hullunkurinen kuvasanakirja : suomi-englanti / Mauri Kunnas
2. This is Helsinki / Aino Havukainen and Sami Toivonen ; [translated from the Finnish by Owen F. Witesman]
3. Please may I have some of yours? / characters created by Lauren Child ; [text based on the script written by Carol Noble
4. Maisy learns to swim / Lucy Cousins
5. Peppa goes to the library / [based on the TV series Peppa Pig created by Neville Astley and Mark Baker]
6. The singing mermaid / written by Julia Donaldson ; illustrated by Lydia Monks
7. Moomin and the moonlight adventure / based on the original stories by Tove Jansson
8. The Octonauts explore the Great Big Ocean / Meomi
9. That's not my hamster... : its ears are too fluffy / [written by Fiona Watt ; illustrated by Rachel Wells]
10. Peppa's busy day
11. Don't put your pants on your head, Fred! / Caryl Hart ; [illustrations] Leigh Hodgkinson
12. Mr. Tiger goes wild / Peter Brown
13. How to catch a star / Oliver Jeffers
14. Maisy's first colours : a Maisy concept book / Lucy Cousins
15. Moomin's little book of numbers
16. Moomin's little book of opposites
17. Olivia and the fairy princesses / written and illustrated by Ian Falconer
18. I completely love winter / characters created by Lauren Child
19. The Rhyming Rabbit / written by Julia Donaldson ; illustrated by Lydia Monks
20. Camilla, the Cupcake Fairy / [written by] Tim Bugbird ; [illustrated by] Lara Ede
21. Ten little pirates / [text:] Mike Brownlow ; [illustrations:] Simon Rickerty
22. Maisy plays football / Lucy Cousins
23. The snowman and the snowdog / based on characters created by Raymond Briggs ; and the story written by Hilary Audus and
24. That's not funny! / Jeanne Willis and Adrian Reynolds
25. Moomin and the winter snow / based on the original stories by Tove Jansson
26. The monster machine / Nicola L. Robinson
27. I am not sleepy and I will not go to bed : featuring Charlie and Lola / Lauren Child
28. How to catch a dragon / Caryl Hart & Ed Eaves

8.2. Section One Data

The data from Analysis Section One, into which are collected the amounts, per book, of protagonists, named characters, and illustrated characters of each gender. (M=male, F=female, N=neutral)

	Protagonists			Named Characters			Illustrated Characters		
Name	Male	Female	Neutral	M	F	N	M	F	N
	0	0	0	2	2	0	121	62	0
	0	1	0	3	6	0	7	9	1
	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	0	0
	2	2	1	2	0	2	14	1	0
	0	0	0	7	2	2	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	1	0	0	2	1	3	0	0	10
	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	20
	0	0	0	7	0	48	0	0	0
	1	0	0	2	0	0	5	4	20
	1	0	0	15	3	0	30	20	0
	2	0	0	0	0	0	44	22	4
	1	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	0
	1	0	0	1	0	0	11	1	0
	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1
	0	0	1	2	1	0	6	2	0
	1	0	0	2	0	0	6	0	1
	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
	1	0	0	6	6	0	2	0	0
	1	0	0	0	0	1	8	2	3
	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
	1	0	0	4	5	0	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	10
	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	1	0	0	5	3	0	3	2	0
	0	1	0	7	12	0	8	6	0
	Protagonists			Named Characters			Illustrated Characters		
	M	F	N	M	F	N	M	F	N
	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0
	1	0	0	0	2	8	0	0	9
	1	0	0	3	1	1	0	0	10

	1 1 0 0 2 1 2 0 1 0 0 1 2 1 1 1	0 0 1 1 0 1 0 1 1 1 4 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 8 1 1 1 0 0 1 4	2 0 1 1 0 1 0 0 0 7 1 3 2 0 0 1 1	2 0 2 2 0 0 0 1 7 1 3 2 0 1 1 1	1 3 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 4	0 0 3 0 0 5 8 12 7 7 2 20 0 0 0 0	0 0 2 0 0 4 7 16 5 4 0 12 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 15 0 0
	0 1 1 1 0 0 1 1 1 0 0 1 0 1 1 0	1 0 0 0 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 1	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 1 2 1 3 7 2 2 0 0 0 4 2 2 3 5	0 0 2 1 3 2 1 2 1 0 0 4 1 1 4 2	1 0 1 0 0 0 5 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 4	0 0 0 0 0 0 4 1 0 0 0 20 15 0 34 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 3 1 0 0 0 12 9 0 28 0	10 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 20 0 30 1 0 0 0 0

8.3. Section Two Verb Table

Verbs which male and female characters have in common are in italics.

	Male	**Female**	**Neutral**
Activity	Arrive Block Bring Carry (x2) Catch (x2) Change Clap Climb Cling *Close (x2)* Come (x2) Dig (x7) Do (x2) Draw (a sword) *Drive* Eat (x3) Fall (x2) Feed *Fly (x4)* Follow Gallop *Giggle* *Go (x7)* Grab (x2) *Grin* Guide Gulp Hug Hurry (x2) Invent Join *Kick (x2)* Lasso Laugh (x2) *Lead* Leave Lend Line up Lock *Make (x2)* March (x2) Meet (x3)	Adopt Bite Choose Clear (x2) *Close (x2)* Comb hair (x2) Cross fingers *Drive* Expose *Fly* Gasp Get *Giggle* Give *Go (x2)* *Grin (x2)* Hold Hop Jiggle *Kick* Lay *Lead* Lunge *Make(x2)* Place *Pull* *Put on (x2)* *Share (x2)* *Sigh* Sit (x2) *Smile (x3)* Sort *Stand (x4)* *Stay* *Swim* *Take* Tear (x2) Tie *Tiptoe* Tire *Try (x3)* *Turn*	Build Catch Chisel Climb Crouch Do (x6) Eat Fall Fill Flop Go (x3) Grow (x2) Hammer Land Lay (eggs) Lead Lie down Make (x2) Measure Nail Pack Paint Play Polish Run (x2) Sand Shine Skid Slip Smell Sniff Snore Stalk Stop (x2) Taste Teach Torpedo Trip Wash up

Activity	Open Pass (x2) Perch Pick up Play Point Practice Press Prick up (ears) *Pull (x2)* *Put (x5)* Race (x2) Reach (x2) Research Rub Rule Run (x5) Rush Scrabble (x2) Scratch Send Set (x2) Shake (x2) *Share* Show off *Sigh (x2)* Sit (x2) Skid Sleep (x5) Slip Slump *Smile* Snore Snuffle Snuggle Sound Stamp Stampede *Stand (x2)* Startle *Stay (x2)* Steal Step (x2) Stop (x2) Struggle Study (x2) *Swim* *Take (x3)*	Update Use Wave (x3) *Walk* *Wear (x2)* *Work*	

Activity	Tap Tickle *Tiptoe (x2)* *Try (x4)* *Turn (x2)* Wait (x5) Wake *Walk* *Wear* Widen Wiggle *Work*		
Existence/relationship	*Be (x27)* *Have (x11)* *Can (x12)*	*Be (x11)* *Have* *Can (x3)*	Be (x14) Look (appear) Can (x2) Have (x4)
Communication	Address *Ask (x2)* Beam *Call out* *Cry [shout] (x2)* Declare Explain (x2) *Reply (x3)* *Say (x19)* Screech Shout (x2) *Sing (x2)* Stutter *Tell* Yawn *Yell*	Add (x2) *Ask* Beg (x2) *Call* Chat Cheer *Cry [shout] (x4)* Growl Hiss Moan Recite *Reply* *Say (x10)* *Sing* Suggest *Tell* *Yell*	Moan Say (x5) Yell
Aspect	*Begin* *Start*	*Start*	Begin Start
Occurrence	Become		
Mental	Decide (x3) Discover (x3) *Dream (x5)* Enjoy Feel (x9) *Find (x4)* Forget (x2) Gaze (x2) Guess Hear (x5) Hope (x2)	Care *Dream* *Find* *Know* *Listen* Long *Look (x5)* *Make up (x3)* *Read* *Think (x2)* *Want (x3)*	Feel Hate Know (x2) Lose Read See Want (x3) Watch Worry

	Know (x6) *Listen* *Look (x6)* Love (x2) *Make up (x9)* Miss (x3) Notice (x2) Observe Read (x2) Remember (x2) See (x4) Stare *Think (x3)* Think up *Want (x5)* Watch (x3) *Wish* Wonder	*Wish (x2)* Worry	
Causative			

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