



## Consumer Products for Children Field Trip Project - An Observation



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### Introduction

The Sociology class goal for the course is that "Students will learn to recognize and challenge the assumptions about social life that guide their everyday lives."

In a society where sex and gender are centrally important, societal lessons of what it means to be a girl or boy are transmitted through several social institutions – the family, of course, but also healthcare, schooling, religion, and the economy.

In this assignment, students will conduct disciplined examinations of the contemporary U.S. material culture marketed for children (birth through high school). They will be evaluated on the ways that they collect their data, as well as on the credibility of the conclusions they reach.

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### Group Project - Content Analysis: Consumer Products for Children

One group will visit the children's clothing sections in local stores, another group will review children's literature and video games, and a third group will visit toy stores (in each case, some members of your team might go in person, while others observe online). The groups will present their findings to the class, using either PowerPoint, poster board or some other visual format to illustrate their data and support their conclusions.

**In class discussion that day we will use your findings in all these areas— clothing, toys, books, etc.—to analyze the role that consumer products play in socializing children into "appropriate" gender roles.**



## Instructions

1. **Complete your Background Research:**
  - a. Read Chapter 5 on Socialization and complete the Chapter Review; these sections lay out many social influences on people's learning what it means to be male/female.
  - b. Keep in mind what we have learned about research methods.
2. **Investigate:** We will visit a **Target store** so that you can observe the items offered for sale to children (from birth through high school). I encourage your group to look at different age periods (infancy, preadolescent, adolescent) across several product categories.
3. **Interpret:** When you are at the store pay attention to where items are displayed, how they are organized, how they are packaged, how they are designed. Do you see clues about which items are for girls or boys? Make lists of the items intended for boys/girls. Are there non-gendered items? Provide visual examples of what you see. A worksheet will be provided to assist you.
4. **Report in Writing:** Your group should submit one report (max 500 words, double-spaced, 12-point, in-text citations if used, no cover page) analyzing what you observed:
  - a. Summarize & Interpret: What patterns did you see (kinds of objects, names, colors, advertisements, store placement, packaging, pictures suggesting use, etc)? Was there anything unusual or unexpected?
  - b. Compare & Contrast: How can you tell that an object is intended for a girl or boy? Are some items encouraging boys and girls to be similar to each other ("gender-neutral")? Document your comparisons with visual examples in your presentation/poster.
  - c. Conclude: What kinds of things might children learn about gender from these items? Think for example about how clothes design might affect a child's movements, or how particular toys might affect their interests. Are there objects that present a version of adult behavior in miniature? Are there objects meant purely for children to play as children?
  - d. Generalize & Evaluate: Based on your evidence from these products, what does it mean to be a boy or girl today? In other words, what do these products say about how boys and girls look like, act like, enjoy doing, and so forth?
5. **Communicate Visually:** Prepare a poster, PowerPoint, or other visual presentation that presents your findings in your **Report in Writing**. – *You might use photos, advertising literature, downloaded images, or actual objects. (Posters and PowerPoint slides should have only a few words, for quick and easy understanding – it's all in the visual impact).*



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Consumer Products for Children Project (Toys)

1. What is the layout of the store? Are their isles separating toy types? Are there distinct boys' and girls' sections?
2. Record which toys are targeted for each gender. What types of toys are marketed towards girls? What types of toys are marketed toward boys? Include the UPC (Barcode) number.

Girls Toys	Boys Toys

3. Was **Goldie Blox** Toys found in the store? If found, which section did you find them?
4. What are the most common colors to market the toys? Are there any particular colors that are dominant?

## Consumer Products for Children Project (Costumes)

1. Are there Halloween or Cosplay costumes in the store? Are they separated into categories or types? Are there distinct boys' and girls' sections?
2. Are there distinct boys' and girls' costumes?



## Consumer Products for Children Project (Clothing)

1. What are the three dominant colors most commonly used in Girls' clothing design?
2. What are the three dominant colors most commonly used in Boys clothing design?
3. Is there any Gender Neutral clothing (that is that can be worn by either girls or boys) found in the store?

Provide the UPC (Barcode) for these items.

Gender Neutral Clothing	UPC Code

4. Can you find the following items:
  - Snuggie for Kids – Are they Gender neutral?
  - Swaddle Me - Are they Gender neutral?
  - Colored clothing hangers for babies? - Are they Gender neutral?

## Consumer Products for Children Project (Greeting Cards)

1. What is the layout of the products store? Are cards separated into categories or types? Are there distinct boys' and girls' sections?
2. Is gift wrapping separated into categories or types? Are they distinct boys' and girls' products?

# Sociology

## Grading Rubric

Criteria	Minimal 0-10 pts.	Satisfactory 11-20 pts.	Excellent 21-30 pts.	Your Score
Paper provides statements of methods used, generalizations, recognition of patterns.	Examples but no generalizations, or generalizations that are not supported.	Several generalizations with one supporting example each, or several examples but few general patterns identified.	Numerous examples identified, and they are helpful in supporting your generalizations.	
Students demonstrate understanding of terms through appropriate use in paper and oral report.	Report and Visual make only perfunctory reference to course materials.	Ideas from readings are invoked in your paper, but they are not central to your arguments	Analysis continually integrates data with points raised in textbook.	
Visual presentation illustrates and supports your paper report.	A few examples, but no real order or connection to your paper	Visual examples are clearly organized by paper sections. Labels are present but do not always aid in highlighting important points (i.e., too many words or too few labels)	Visual presentation supports and illustrates your ideas in your paper. Any text is abbreviated but sufficient to see why you are including it.	
Criteria	Inadequate 0-6 pts.	Adequate 7-10 pts.		Your Score
Paper uses appropriate format, grammar, spelling and punctuation.	Many mechanical problems interfere with your presentation.	Occasional errors, but not enough to interfere substantially.		
<b>Total Score (out of 100):</b>				

*All members of a team will ordinarily receive the same grade, but team members will be asked to comment on whether every member contributed fairly to the effort; this might affect individual members' grades.*