Sexism and corporations: whose social responsibility is it anyway?

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Abstract

The concept of corporate social responsibility has grown significantly over the last two decades with its impact on various disciplines including competitive advantage, innovation and charities marketing. While it is a well-researched area, questions as to where a corporation's social responsibility begins and ends still remain unanswered.

This exploratory study examines the role of CSR within the concept of children's entertainment industry, in the context of Crane & Kazmi's (2010) model.

The study notes that gender stereotypes are promoted through cartoon episodes, which can influence children's attitudes toward sexism. The findings suggest children's entertainment industry can play a role in helping solve the important societal issue of gender inequalities.

Introduction

There is a plethora of studies aiming to grasp children's attention in order to turn them into lifetime customers (Curtin, 2007; Haryanto, 2008). According to Narayan, et al, (2012), despite CSR being a widely used concept, different stakeholders have different expectations, practices and standards, which results in it being fragmented. This is important as generalizability of much of CSR research focusing on children is problematic.

One side of the debate is that the primary goal of corporations must be maximising profit for shareholders, while the other side claims that firms must go beyond shareholder profit to include social responsibilities (Mason & Simmons, 2011; Geva, 2008). It is noted in the literature that CSR is necessary for business survival and prosperity within the 21st century, where sustainability is vital (Mason & Simmons, 2011; Carroll & Shabana, 2010). According to Bolton, et al, (2011), corporations have been criticised by the public for their right to simply conduct business, thus they are struggling to prove that they are indeed socially responsible corporate citizens. It is also argued CSR is a source of competitive advantage (Vilanova, et al, 2009). There is another school of thought which argues that the competitive advantage-CSR relationship remains unclear (Smith, 2003; Porter and Kramer, 2006; McWilliams and Siegel, 2001; and Harrison and Freeman, 1999)

Research in CSR is usually conducted in industries such as oil and retail due to the fact that if something goes wrong, the negative impact on society is more visible. However, there is little evidence of research in the children's entertainment industry from the CSR perspective. This is rather difficult to understand, as children can arguably be considered as society's major stakeholders. Disney for instance through its cartoon episodes and merchandise can teach

children that boys can wear pink and play tea party, and that girls too can wear blue and play pirates. In this sense, children will arguably see this as the norm instead of the exception, and gender stereotypes will have the potential to either be minimised or eliminated. The purpose of this paper is to showcase this gap in the literature, and examine CSR in the children entertainment industry from a new perspective. The ultimate aim of this study is to set the scene for new research in the field of CSR, gender inequalities and the children entertainment industry.

Although literature on gender inequalities and CSR exists it mainly focuses on inequalities in the workplace (Grosser & Moon, 2005). The literature fails to showcase how corporations within this specific industry, who practice CSR, also promote gender inequalities. However, companies such as Disney and Mattel may practice CSR well towards their employees, but may yet promote gender stereotypes through their products (e.g. cartoon episodes and toys). This raises an important question that remains unanswered: "Where does a corporation's social responsibility begin and where does it end?" If children's entertainment industry practices CSR to create a better society, should they not be held responsible for how children's realities are constructed? Do these firms hold a vital role in shaping the views and expectations of society's younger members?

According to Narayan, et al, (2012), most organisations think that investing portions of their efforts and profits in the natural environment as well as society, positively impacts their financial performance, reputation, employee attitudes and competitive advantage. This raises the question of whether corporations engage in CSR activities for their own benefits or to help society. This study aims to examine CSR within children's entertainment industry and the issue of gender inequality. Overall, the study will also clarify the boundaries surrounding CSR.

Literature Review

In order to confirm the boundaries within which CSR should act requires clarity. Generally speaking, the concept has become more complex and it has engaged with various other subjects such as strategy, innovation, and sustainability, among others (e.g. competitive advantage). Various frameworks have been developed to showcase a corporation's responsibilities towards society. The earliest and most utilised one is Carroll's (1991) CSR pyramid.

Munilla & Miles (2005) have also focused on the extent of a company's CSR obligations noting actions considered a "social good" are functions of cultural and individual values that differ according to market segments as well as stakeholders. Campbell (2007) asserted that socially

responsible corporate behavior has a different meaning depending on the individual, the place and the time. Even though there are laws and regulations set to protect society and regulate business activities, society's expectations are constantly evolving, thus demanding more from corporations. Arguably, as society's norms change, so should the laws and regulations. For instance, gender discrimination existed within the workforce but shifts in society caused the formation of laws that protect people from such discrimination.

It could be argued that certain laws should be applied to the children entertainment industry, preventing it from promoting gender stereotyping through their products. In fact the children entertainment industry has a vital role since through its products (e.g. cartoons and toys) it teaches children what is right and wrong, what is accepted by society and what is not. Therefore, it can play a key role in educating society's most important members (children) and changing their views as to what is acceptable with regards to gender. Should this education then be a part of corporation's CSR agenda or not?

Ethical Responsibilities

Carroll also notes the importance of ethical responsibilities (Geva, 2008; Guiling, 2013); in order to be considered ethically responsible, corporations must follow morally correct conduct modes or else codes of ethics (Lee & Carroll, 2011). Ethical norms about justice and fairness are incorporated within legal and economic responsibilities (Carroll, 1991; Guiling, 2013). In fact, ethical responsibilities include societal expectations, standards, and norms that reflect employee, consumer, community and stakeholder concerns (Carroll, 1991; Bennet, 2011; Guiling, 2013). Specifically, ethical responsibilities can be seen as integrating emerging societal norms and values that companies are expected to meet, even if those norms/values reflect higher performance standards than the ones currently enforced by law (Carroll, 1991). In short, ethical responsibilities set up higher standards than the ones required by law, under which businesses should operate, while simultaneously encouraging the expansion of legal responsibilities (Carroll, 1991)

As well as legal responsibility the philanthropic responsibility of an organization also has an impact on its CSR activities (Geva, 2008); society expects companies to behave as good corporate citizens through actions (e.g. programs promoting goodwill/human welfare) encompassed in philanthropy (Carroll, 1991; Guiling, 2013). In fact philanthropic responsibilities are the reflection of society's desire to experience firms having an active role in

bettering society beyond their ordinary responsibilities (economic, legal, and ethical) (Lee & Carroll, 2011). Often, people confuse ethical responsibilities with philanthropic ones. However, they are different in the sense that philanthropic responsibilities are not expected in a moral/ethical sense (Carroll, 1991; Lee & Carroll, 2011). In fact, communities want companies to contribute their employee time, facilities and money to charitable purposes and programs however firms are not seen as unethical if they do not (Carroll, 1991; Lee & Carroll, 2011). This illustrates that philanthropy is not mandatory, but voluntary despite the fact that societies expect companies to provide it (Carroll, 1991; Guiling, 2013). This distinction between the two is vital since certain companies feel that they are socially responsible just by being good community citizens (Carroll, 1991).

Corporate Social Responsibility & Gender

Gender literature was also incorporated in CSR however only in the sense of hiring employees or examining the views of males and females on the relationship between CSR performance and investment decision. For instance, Shauki's (2011) empirical research concluded that female respondents give higher scores than male respondents in CSR performance related to investment decision. Another type of research regarding gender and CSR is Brammer, et al's, (2007) study which concluded that the relationship between organisational commitment and CSR differs according to gender; specifically the relationship between external CSR and employee commitment is stronger for women. Moreover, research on CSR and gender is conducted on areas like labour rights, environmental management, working conditions (Utting, 2007), and workplace issues (see Grosser & Moon, 2005). Other authors (see for instance Pegoraro et al., 2009) combine CSR with sport, claiming that it unites people from different cultures, ethnic/religious backgrounds, and social class. Arguably, in the same sense this logic can be applied to CSR and the children entertainment industry. Therefore, in the way in which CSR is linked with sport, it should also be combined with the children entertainment industry. Notably, there is a gap in the literature connecting CSR and gender in the children entertainment industry. In other words, there is lack of research on how corporations such as Disney and Mattel promote gender equality by adhering to laws for workplace discrimination, while simultaneously promoting gender stereotypes through their products. There is also a gap within the literature in showcasing the role of CSR in the promotion of such stereotypes within this industry.

According to Crane and Kazmi (2010), the CSR debate failed to acknowledge children as a vital area of firms' responsibility. Therefore, in order to illustrate companies' responsibilities towards children, the authors developed a framework called "The seven corporate responsibilities to children" **(see Figure 1).** This framework showcases that firms are responsible for the physical and moral protection of children, their economic well-being, education and employability, their social and cultural participation, children's charity, and their parental employment and family life. The authors include child labor and inappropriate content under moral protection, and also claim that corporations must ensure children's moral protection either directly (e.g. at work) or indirectly through their products. Firms within the telecommunications, leisure, and media industry are constantly criticised in regards to children's exposure to inappropriate adult content through: (a) services or products that contain inappropriate content for children like for instance alcoholic beverages, (b) services or products that allow children access to inappropriate content through venues such as the internet, and (c) services or products that allow other individuals to access inappropriate content that includes children images (Crane & Kazmi, 2010).

Insert Figure 1 here

Methodology

CSR-gender inequalities relationship within the children entertainment industry appears to be under-researched. Therefore the purpose of this study is to create rather than test, hence qualitative research would appear appropriate here.

Furthermore, the basis of qualitative research methodologies is verbal, rich and interpretive descriptions instead of statistical, quantitative, and numerical measurements (Gaytan, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, information is obtained from examining the language and colours used in various episodes of children's programmes; data is collected through non-participant observation. Margolis and Pauwels (2011) asserted that visual methods in anthropology and sociology are based on the idea that valid societal scientific insight can be obtained through observing, analysing, and theorising material products of culture and peoples' behaviors;

qualitative research allows people to examine individuals' experiences in detail through content analysis, visual methods and observation (Hennink, et al, 2011). According to Heath, et al, (2010) videos contribute various research opportunities within the social sciences field. In particular, they offer distinctive and new routes of data collection in regards to human activities as well as culture, that allows new forms of publication, analysis, and presentation (Heath, et al, 2010). Despite the increasing importance of videos as data collection devices, only few introductory texts address how they can be used to conduct research in social science; this method of data collection is also criticised based on data quality (Heath, et al, 2010).

Due to criticisms of interpretivist research and visual methods, secondary data is also utilised to support the study's findings; the use of various different methods is also referred to as triangulation, which mirrors a pursuit to secure an extensive understanding of the phenomena in question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Data was produced not collected (May, 2011), and in order for qualitative research to produce useful and meaningful results, the material under investigation should be methodically analysed, however tools for such an analysis are unavailable (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Important to also note is that, due to the small sample size of the cartoons analysed in this study and the limited time frame, this research results cannot be generalizable. Therefore the study will be regarded as exploratory in nature. Nonetheless it should provide direction for more in-depth future research.

A number of episodes of children's programmes (Barbie and Baby Looney Tunes cartoon episodes) are viewed and evaluated as evidence of this paradox. The analysis was specifically conducted on the following three Barbie episodes namely: (a) Barbie of Swan Lake released in 2003, lasting an hour and 26 minutes, (b) Barbie in the 12 Dancing Princesses released in 2006, lasting an hour and 22 minutes and (c) Barbie in A Christmas Carol released in 2008, lasting one hour and 16 minutes. Baby Looney tune episodes that were also analysed include: (a) Taz in Toyland/A Secret Tweet released in 2002, lasting 22 minutes, (b) Comfort Level/Like a Duck to Water released in 2002, lasting 22 minutes, (c) School Daze/Things that go Bugs in the night released in 2002, lasting 22 minutes, (d) The creature from the chocolate chip/Card bored box released in 2003, lasting 22 minutes, (e) All washed up released in 2002, lasting 10 minutes, and (f) Act Your Age released in 2002, lasting 10 minutes.

The focus of this study is to examine the paradox of encouraging sexism and simultaneously being socially responsible at corporate level. The Baby Looney Tunes episodes were analysed

based on colors and toys, while Barbie episodes were analysed based on the language used, lessons learned, character personalities, appearances, clothing, accessories, social class, and work. As part of two cases of multinational children entertainment firms (Disney: Baby Looney Tunes and Mattel: Barbie) which both have high profile CSR identities.

The initial challenge of this study was to find a website that would allow access to cartoon episodes released by the aforementioned companies due to copyright laws. The data was gathered based on different themes and recorded through observations. Important to also note is that the male characters present in the Baby Looney Tunes episodes, analysed in this study are four (Daffy, Taz, Bugs Bunny, Sylvester), while there is only one female character (Lola; Melissa only appeared in one episode). Therefore, the percentages for girls will be less than those of boys. In contrast, Barbie episodes had more female characters than male.

Research Findings

This study uses thematic analysis framework (Attride-Stirling, 2001) for summarizing and presenting qualitative findings. The episodes analysed for this research are based on 19 different basic themes, 9 organising themes, and one global theme. To form a better understanding of the collected data, see Figure 2.

Some of the overarching findings are listed below:

1. It is noticeable that all females in both Looney Tunes and Barbie episodes wear hair accessories (e.g. bows, head bands).
2. Further, all three Barbie movies include dancing (specifically Ballet) and singing; in fact female characters repeatedly said “I could dance forever and ever and ever.”
3. Female characters in Baby Looney Tunes do not wear high heels or makeup, while female characters in Barbie are seen to wear makeup, earrings, rings, necklaces, and have painted nails; actually in a Barbie episode one female character made stereotypical assertions such as: “Diamonds are a girl’s best friend.”
4. In Baby Looney tunes neither Lola nor Melissa are seen with male characters, while in Barbie all main female characters end up with males. That is arguably because Baby Looney Tunes are analysed instead of Looney Tunes, where Bugs Bunny is dating Lola Bunny, and Sylvester dates Mrs. Sylvester J Pussycat (at least at some point).

Insert Figure 2 here

By appealing to the appendices (1 to 15), various characteristics of children's toys and television programmes are considered.

It appears the most popular male color of the Baby Looney Tunes analysed in this study was blue with 25.36%, followed by yellow (19.11%) and green (17.68%). As for female colors, the most popular was pink (21%), followed by blue (18%) and yellow (14%). Despite the fact that blue is normally perceived as a male color and yellow is considered unsex, pink is feminine and remains a top choice when designing scenes with female characters. Even though the gap between pink and blue for females is small, pink still overruled blue for females, thus providing some evidence for colour and gender stereotype. Moreover, male characters appeared to be promoting more stereotypical practices than females (perhaps because there were more male characters than females). The fact that both blue and green colors (which are generally considered masculine) dominated amongst male figures, illustrated that stereotypical gender colors were present in these episodes. When it comes to toys, Lola (the female character in Baby Looney Tunes) seems to be playing with toys considered masculine (e.g. car & pirates) thus not conforming to gender stereotypical practices. However, it is important to keep in mind that her "playing buddies" are all males. When it comes to male toys/games, the most popular is the slide, followed by building blocks, cars, and balls. Apart from the slide (which is considered unisex), everything else is associated with males. Therefore, this possibly is an illustration of masculine stereotypical activities. In summary, data collected on Baby Looney Tunes demonstrates that the episodes analysed in this study, promote male gender stereotypes more than female stereotypes.

Barbie episodes were also analysed, specifically based on accessories, profession, clothes, social class, appearance, and language used.

The most popular female accessory was head bows (18%), followed by necklace (12%) and ear-rings (11%),which appears to illustrate that young girls are introduced to jewelry and accessories in general from such a young age are indoctrinated in what is acceptable by society and that this will make them look attractive like the characters in Barbie. In fact, most of the accessories

associated with women in Barbie episodes promote the classic gender stereotypical image of a woman, i.e. feminine colours, make-up and hair accessories.

Male accessories also appear to promote gender stereotypical images, since hat is the most popular male accessory with 33%, followed by scarf (18%) and gloves (11%). In today's society men sometimes wear wearing ear-rings, necklaces and bracelets, however in none of the Barbie episodes men were seen to wear such accessories. This appears to suggest that the Barbie episodes analysed here, fail to introduce children to "reality", but rather construct an imaginary world for them, which they grow to admire and love. Therefore, when children enter society and realize that it is different than what they expected, they cannot understand. If however, men in Barbie were seen to hold purses and wear dresses, children would have been introduced to a different society where such activities are not considered different, and perhaps would be more acceptable and less criticized.

Furthermore, when it comes to work, 44% of female characters are princesses, and 14% are queens. This demonstrates again stereotypical and unrealistic images for young girls, who all grow up wanting to be princesses. As for males, the most popular job was being a guard (53%), followed by servants (8%) and prince (6%) as well as hunter/archer (6%). Male jobs therefore also promote stereotypical practices, since the majority of them are considered masculine. The characters in the episodes appear to be polarized in terms of wealth with 25 female characters in the episodes were depicted rich, and 5 poor/working class characters. By contrast, 3 male characters were rich and 9 were poor. This appears to illustrate there is no middle ground, and that you can either be poor or rich, which is somewhat unrealistic. Also, the social class graph shows that there are more females than males (in Barbie), which leads to the assumption that Barbie and its products are gendered. In addition, the most popular female clothing was long dresses with a 55%, followed by semi-long dresses (19%) and ballerina shoes (11%). As for males, the most popular was shirt (25%), followed by trousers (pants) (21%) and boots (14%). Clothing in Barbie again promotes gender stereotypes, with only 2 female characters wearing jeans, while the rest of the females wore dresses in all three movies. Appearance also promotes stereotypes, with 39 females being skinny and 2 females being fat, 21 of them being tall, 7 being medium height, and 3 being short, 15 blondes and 15 brunettes, 40 with a small nose and thin lips, 35 with thin eyebrows, 34 with small ears, 19 with blue eyes, and 33 with long hair; the majority of male characters were also tall (16), skinny (15), and with short hair (15).

Furthermore, the language used in the episodes was analysed as well. The most popular stereotypical word was dance/dancing (13%) mostly associated with girls. The second most utilized was wish (11%) associated with females, and the third most popular was love (9%). As for non-stereotypical language, the most popular term was thank you with 27%, followed by please (19%) and sorry (15%) which are all courtesy words.

Generally each story appear to have something to teach its viewers e.g., "You will do great things in your own way," "Big or small there is a difference only you can make," "You are braver than what you think," "It is tougher to judge when you know the whole story," "Sometimes we need to face things that frighten us, it is how we grow," "A princess does not talk back," and "We do not have to make the same mistakes. We can change everything. We can help people." These are valuable lessons that cartoons potentially teach children in regards to life. This may have potential to teach children not to be homophobic and stereotypical.

However, the cartoons analysed in this study appear to promote more stereotypical activities as well as unrealistic imagery. In short, our observations and findings suggest that corporations within the children entertainment industry have the ability to teach children valuable life lessons, and thus may have a crucial role in solving gender inequality. Our research is exploratory in nature and further quantitative research may be necessary to help test some of the hypotheses. As a result, corporations within this industry have the opportunity to demonstrate to society that they indeed care, by incorporating gender equality in their CSR plans as well as activities.

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to explore if corporations within the children entertainment industry promote gender stereotypes through their products. Specifically, this research examines the cases of three global companies: Lego, Disney and Barbie.

Toys entertain and inspire children and companies endeavor to create toys that stimulate imagination. Moreover toys can be valuable tools for society's advancement, therefore they are extremely valuable (Lund, 2011). The companies examined in this study (Lego, Disney & Barbie), all target children through toys, movies and accessories, to mention a few. Toys are vital tools for children, because they teach them about competing, strategising, cooperating, and the dangers behind cheating, which are extremely valuable life lessons that have an impact on children's contribution to society and are not readily learnt elsewhere (Lund, 2011).

As an industry, animation (and the children entertainment as a whole) is different from other media industries because it is global, it travels easily, and it did not grow or contract significantly during the last decade (Westcott, 2010). This is perhaps because this genre is dominated by specific global companies such as Cartoon Network (owned by Time Warner), Disney, and Nickelodeon (owned by Viacom) (Westcott, 2010). This arguably provides these companies with the power to change peoples' (especially children's) perceptions. Lund (2011) claims that toy makers have the responsibility and opportunity to inspire/influence the lives of the next generation as well as the future of the current generation through their products. However, toy stores aimed at impressionable young children divide their space into two parts: blue on the one side and pink on the other (Cochrane, 2006). Therefore, it is hard for parents to protect their children from gendered products since they are regularly bombarded with such product advertisements from a young age (Cochrane, 2006). Due to the fact that as an industry, children entertainment has the potential to positively influence society through its products, it may be argued that new laws and regulations are necessary in order to raise the standards for companies aiming to be considered good corporate citizens. If corporations in children's toy industry wish to be recognized by the public as good citizens, their CSR agenda should arguably expand to include activities that promote gender equality through their products and media (e.g. toys & cartoons episodes) in order to solve large scale societal issue and positively contribute to society.

In order to obtain information on companies, people rely on television which, according to Pedűk (2012), remains the major and primary medium in the children entertainment industry in every country. Television has a key place in the lives of both adults and children; in fact during holidays, children (8 to 14 years old) mostly watch television (Pedűk, 2012). Hogan's (2007) research consumer sample results concluded that customers rely on obtaining toy information from media, which either positively or negatively impacts their purchasing preferences. In fact, consumer related outcomes have the potential to be affected by responsible company conduct (Zaharia & Zaharia, 2013). According to Zaharia and Zaharia (2013), customers evaluate corporations, whom they expect to behave ethically, and their evaluation is usually sensitive towards negative rather than positive CSR information. Notably, CSR impacts product attitudes, customer beliefs in regards to product attributes, and customer self-reported responses to products (Zaharia & Zaharia, 2013). The media has the opportunity to strongly influence public opinion, which holds them responsible for accurately informing their audience, and

commentating on issues fairly as well as critically (Hogan, 2007). As a result, the media must not overstep the boundaries of relying on companies for its profit through sponsorship, promotional offers, advertorials, and advertising, and to supply its stories through press releases (ibid.). Arguably, this is another reason why the industry is criticised by the public as to its CSR activities.

Despite television advertising targeted towards children being adapted and modified to adhere to self-regulation guidelines (e.g. truthful and honest product exhibition), the growth of online advertising raises extra concerns (Neeley & Schumann, 2004). In order to increase brand recognition when advertising to children, companies use cartoon spokes-characters because of the fact that children have a limited mental capacity; when children are in preschool they confuse brands with cartoon spokes-characters (Neeley & Schumann, 2004).

According to Pedűk (2012), children recognise moving events and objects, through hearing and seeing. Therefore, auditory as well as visual features constitute learning by appealing to multiple senses; television positively affects a child's education (Pedűk, 2012; Neeley & Schumann, 2004). Moreover, children learn best through mimicking plots that they observe around them during the development period; children mimic the individuals they see the most (Pedűk, 2012). This arguably illustrates the industry's power to change children's behavior and minimise gender stereotypical attitudes, by creating open-minded cartoon characters who accept everyone. When companies advertise to young children by using animated spokes people as their strategic communication tactic, they are being extensively criticised, examined, and debated by government officials, researchers, child advocates, and parents (Neeley & Schumann, 2004). Promoting gender stereotypes through cartoon characters in episodes is as harmful to children and society, as using animated spokes characters in children's advertising. Yet research and literature on corporations' CSR within this industry with regards to gender inequality is lacking. Therefore, future research on understanding the effect of cartoon characters' behaviour on children's behaviour is necessary, along with further clarification in regards to a company's responsibility on the matter within the children's entertainment industry.

Hogan (2007) notes media acts as a vital source of information for assessing the ethical credentials of an industry and customers incrementally demand corporations to act responsibly ; consumers' positive reaction towards responsible companies is also an incentive for firms to

engage in CSR activities (Zaharia & Zaharia, 2013). As a result, companies create customer loyalty by being good corporate citizens (Du et al.2010).

According to Hogan (2007), the toy industry tries hard to address society's concerns and become more trustworthy as well as responsible. This particular industry is competitive, thus certain firms fighting to survive in such markets, are often tempted to push the boundaries of what is legally acceptable or ethically permitted; the companies that do so, provide legislators with grounds to confine regulation and media with future story contents. The media has raised vital issues in regards to toy companies and toys in general that brought about change and are of public interest (for example: Barbie doll wearing lace lingerie thus raising concerns over what is or is not tasteful or unsuitable, and toy guns that could cause male aggressive behavior). Apart from toys, cartoons have come under criticism.

For example Pedűk (2012), and (Cochrane, 2006) argue aggression and violence are common in most television cartoons, with killing actions as well as wounding being illustrated as customary; boys are encouraged to be aggressive, interested in battle and weaponry games. By contrast, when people think of the word "princess" images such as sweet, pretty, passive, gently, tiny feet, and a prince saving her from drudgery come to mind; fairy tales like this end up with a beautiful wedding ceremony, providing minimal hints as to what follows later on which some people might guess as being a "happily ever after" (Cochrane, 2006). This might seem innocent in comparison to how males are portrayed, however it remains stereotypical.

Following, is a detailed analysis of Lego, Disney, and Barbie necessary to illustrate their ability to solve a large societal issue like gender inequality. For a brief illustration of the points raised from the analysis of the aforementioned companies, see table 1.

Insert Table 1 here

Lego

Contrary to Lego's claims boys in Lego City grow up to fly helicopters, surf and turf, and carry guns (Lange, 2012), which are all stereotypical activities. Lego is the most popular toy company among the male sector (Wieners, 2011). Lego is for boys as princesses are for girls, however unlike princess defined by pink and tiaras, Lego develops mathematical and spatial motor skills, allowing children to exploit their imagination; this upsets parents since girls do not have the

opportunity to invent and explore their originality (ibid.). Notably, despite Lego products being beneficial for young boys, the firm's products remain gendered (ibid.). The primary data of this study demonstrates that male characters in Baby Looney Tunes played with building blocks but the female character only did when all characters played together (this applies only to the episodes analysed in the study).

Lego has made an effort to develop products for girls; new mini-doll lady figures were also presented in 2012, each one having her own story

Disney

Walt Disney Company has been targeting young girls in various ways (e.g. video games like Disney Princess: Enchanted Journey, and Disney Princess: Magical Jewels) (Kilby, 2007); from the games' titles alone, one can argue that Disney is promoting gender inequalities. Disney is a firm with a huge potential and power to change gender inequality due to its ability to reach vast amounts of both adults as well as children. This is proved by the fact that its Princess brand has been successful for Disney since its launch in 1999, with retailer sales of $3 billion (approximately £2,000,000,000) worldwide in 2006 (Kilby, 2007).

One can argue that as a good corporate citizen, Disney should feel obligated to take on the challenge and initiative of solving such a large scale societal issue as gender inequality. A way in which Disney can promote gender equality is of course through its products (e.g. toys and cartoons). Disney can start with representing its Princesses without gender stereotypical connotations; the official Disney Princesses are Aurora (or else Sleeping Beauty), Mulan, Snow White, Pocahontas, Jasmine, Cinderella, and Belle, who all have great ball gowns and are in charge (Millard, 2006). On the one hand, one can argue that Disney princesses are non-stereotypically presented in the sense that they are portrayed as powerful, however they are also stereotypically presented because they all wear ball gowns and are unrealistically beautiful.

Wasko (2001) referred to May's (1981) study who concluded that Disney's heroines (most of them) only seem to be tested in regards to their external features, including a cheerful spirit, attractive face, and tiny feet, while heroes succeed based on their actions instead of their looks. Wasko (2001) also used Hoerner's (1996) study which concluded that women in Disney films, such as The Lion King and Snow White, are depicted as unable to act autonomously, weak, and flawless. According to Penny (2011), in every woman's head there is a princess that should be destroyed, because there is a lust for princess paraphernalia which constitutes the fantasy that if a

woman is good enough and beautiful, she will one day marry a prince. Notably, Disney's own research revealed that small girls do not see a Prince as a vital part of a Princess' life, unlike cape (Millard, 2006). Despite this however, every princess ends up with a male figure (e.g. Jasmine and Aladdin, Fa Mullan and Li Shang, Snow white and her prince, Cinderella and Prince Charming, Belle and Prince Adam, Pocahontas and John Smith, Aurora and Prince Phillip); this research's primary data also illustrate that Barbie ends up with a male figure and is involved in romance within every episode.

Barbie

Barbie has also been criticised as a gendered toy. Sharma (2008) asserted that Barbie is the first fashion doll of its kind and has been characterised, for generations, as a girl's favourite friend; it also symbolises American girlhood (Brown, 2013; Olazábal, et al, 2005), which alone is arguably stereotypical. Sharma further states that for the first generation owners, Barbie represented a notion of identity and independence since she was launched during a time when the world was recuperating from two world wars. The 1970s was a tough period because people attempted to banish gendered toys such as Barbie from their children's rooms, while dominant colors like blue and pink created a challenge of producing products that are made using unisex colors (e.g. yellow) (Cochrane, 2006).

In the Barbie episodes we analysed, she appears to be very stereotypical, having careers such as: a Princess/Queen, a Baker, and a Singer/Star. In addition, changing a woman's career does not necessarily break down stereotypical connotations. In fact, gender stereotypical attitudes involve more than just job positions, including things such as body structure, hobbies and personality. Indeed, Barbie was given a broader waist, as well as a friendly, fuller, and warmer look (Sharma, 2008) however she arguably remains unrealistically gorgeous, with a personality and hobbies that fit with stereotypical associations. Feminists continue to negatively judge Barbie stating that her curves as well as beauty portray women as objects, however there are others who view Barbie as the first "woman" who broke through the glass ceiling (Parker, 2008); glass ceiling is referring to an invisible yet existing barrier that prevents women from advancing in their careers, for instance as managers, due to gender stereotypes (for more information see Cotter, et al, 2001). Furthermore, despite the great non-gendered toy idea of the 1970s, consumerism forces require strictly defined markets for their products, thus games aiming to appeal to children regardless of gender do not fit the target market notions that currently govern society (Cochrane,

2006). Thus, toys who promote images like princesses (pink) and guns (blue), take advantage of the current market which is constructed to promote gender stereotypes (Cochrane, 2006).

Conclusion

Crane and Kazmi (2010) note much research attention in the context of CSR and children focused on the ethics behind advertising as well as marketing to children and child labour. However there is research-deficit in ethics behind promoting gender stereotypes through cartoon episodes.

It could possibly be argued that products (e.g. cartoons) promoting gender inequalities should be included under "inappropriate content for children" since they teach children what is or is not acceptable by society, thus when they come across something different than what they see on television would not resonate with them. However Crane and Kazmi (2010) failed to address this point and include gender equality promotion as part of a corporation's moral protection responsibility (see figure 3). This is perhaps because specific corporate responsibilities are vague, their incentives are unclear, and in general the field of CSR as well as the children entertainment industry is complex; it is complex because firms affect children in various, often uncertain and diverse ways (Crane & Kazmi, 2010). Either way data collected for this study illustrates that cartoons (those examined here) generally promote gender stereotypes, thus showcasing the need for further examination on the matter through research on the relationship between CSR and gender inequalities within the children entertainment industry.

Insert Figure 3 here

The present study illustrates that Disney and Mattel promote gender inequalities through their products (toys & cartoons) and suggests that this should change since educating children on such issues should arguably be a part of their responsibility.

In summary, this study illustrates that companies within the children's entertainment industry have a vital role to play in helping solve gender inequality; the promotion of gender equality must be incorporated in a firm's CSR activities and plans. The paradox that exists i.e. companies simultaneously promoting gender equality (e.g. through adhering to laws and regulations

designed to develop fair workplace practices) and inequality (e.g. by promoting gender stereotypes through products) requires further examination.

As discussed in the methodology, this study is exploratory in nature and the findings cannot be generalized. Notwithstanding its limitations, this study can be the start of research and debate on the role of corporations within the children entertainment industry, and a step towards help solving gender inequality.

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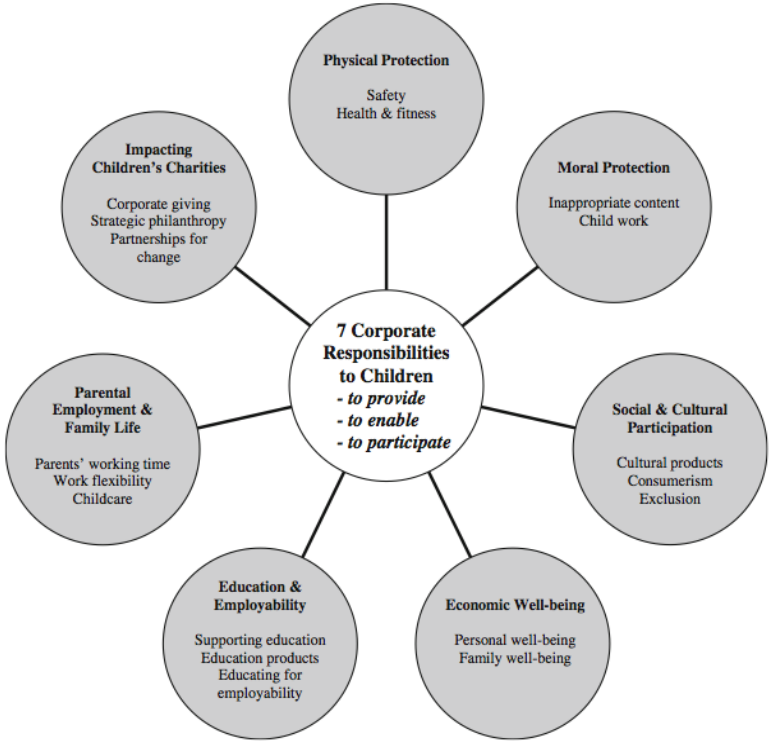
Figure 1: The seven corporate responsibilities to children



Source Crane and Kazmi (2010, p 574).

Figure 2: Constituted Reality (present study)

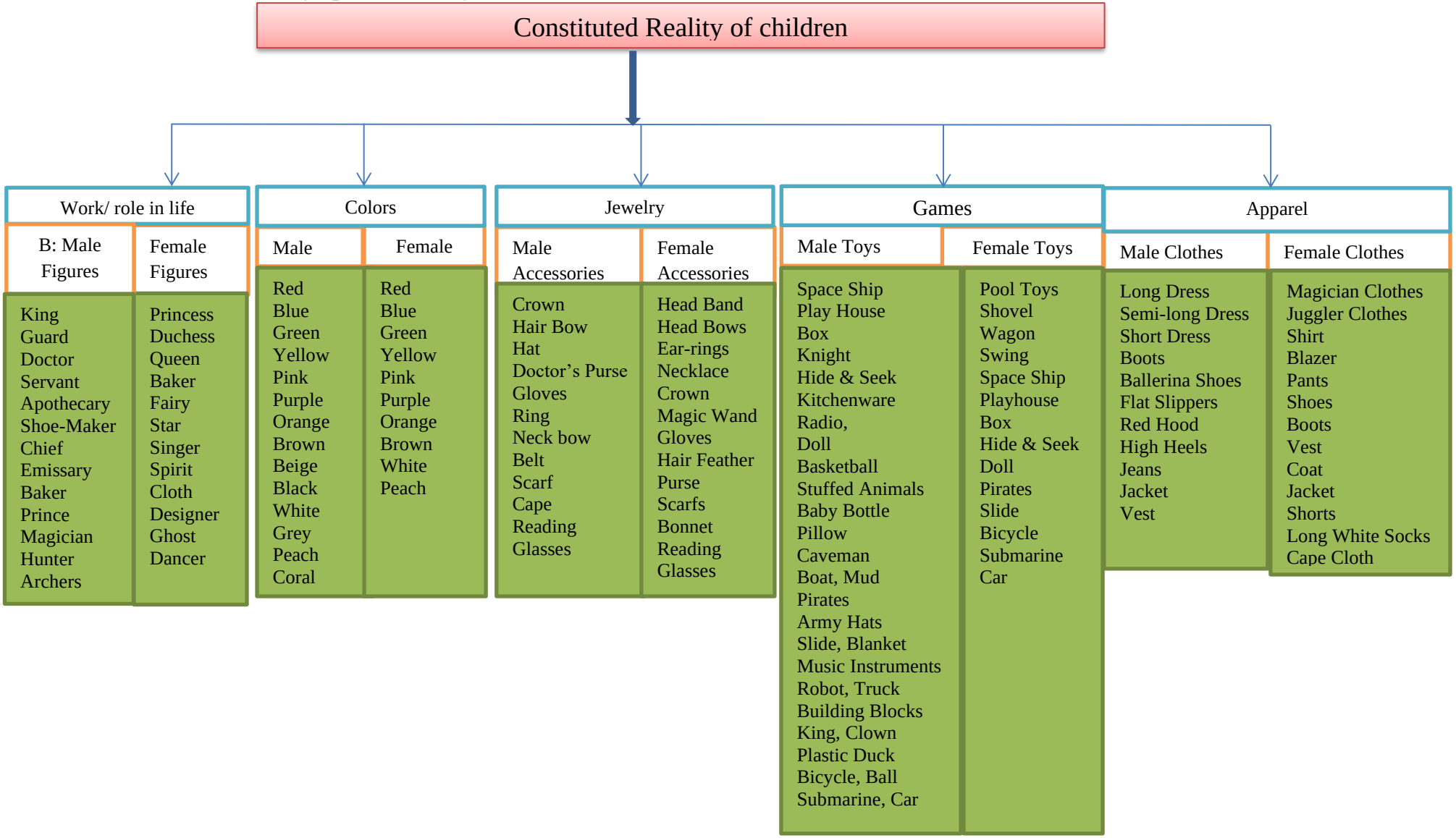
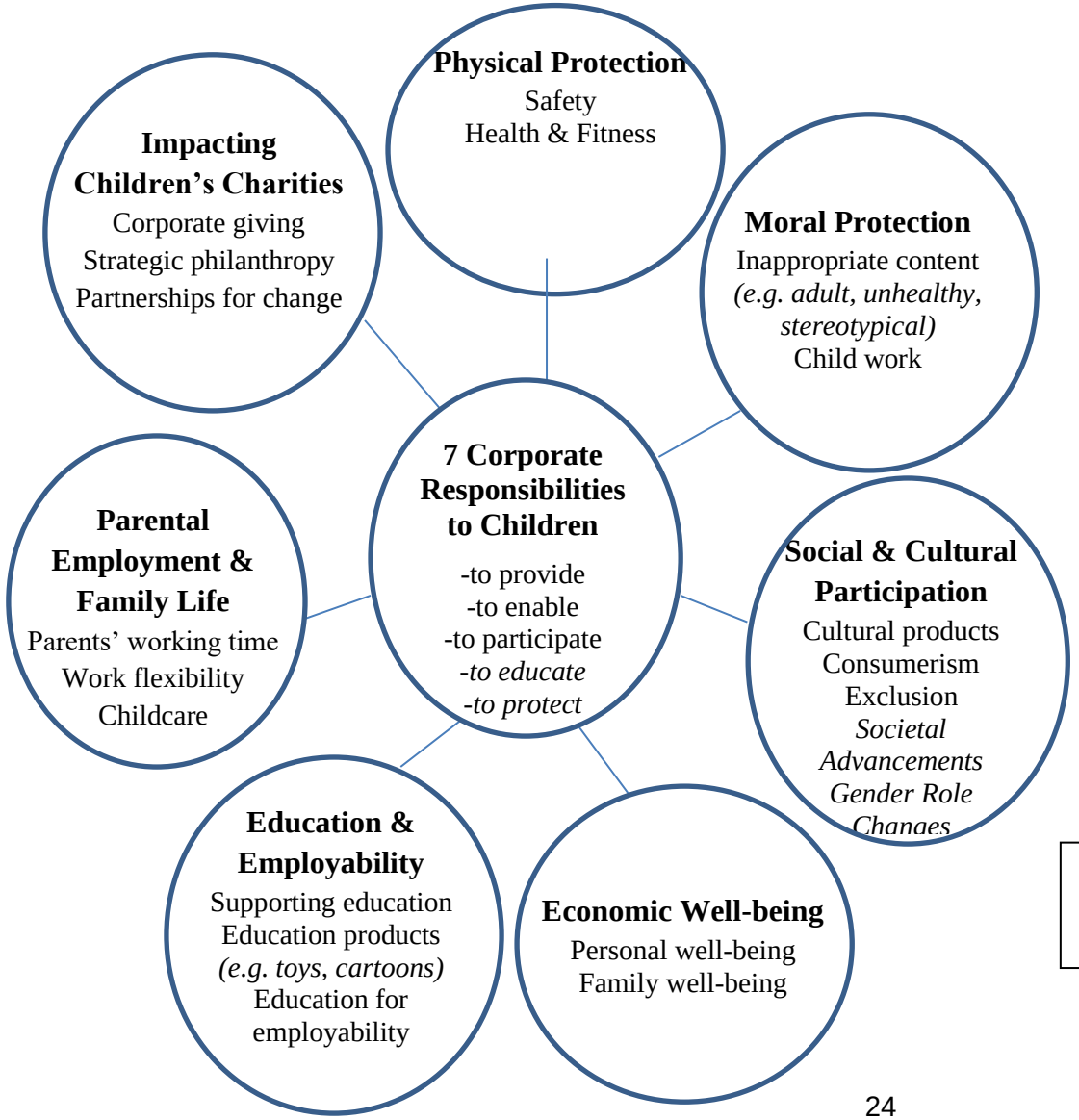


Figure 3: An extended version of "The seven corporate responsibilities to children"



Adapted from: Crane and Kazmi (2010), contribution from the present study included in the framework above in *italics*.

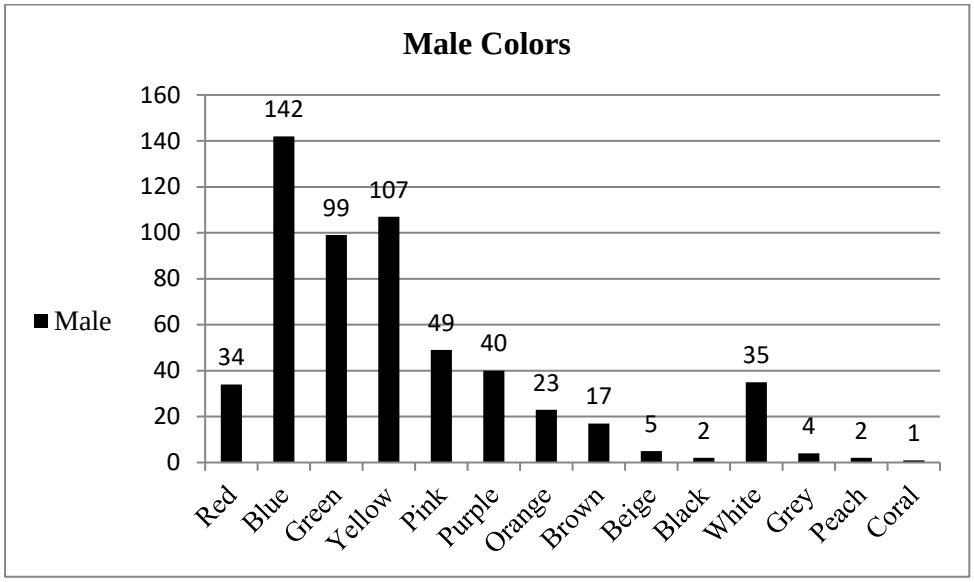
Table 1: Lego, Disney and Barbie: Summary of Findings

Companies	Findings	Recommendations
Lego	(a) Primary Target: Boys (b) Vast reach & power. (c) Allows children to exploit their imagination. (d) Gendered products (e) Developed Lego Friends to target girls. (f) Tries to break down stereotypes, but simultaneously develops new. (g) Targets children & adults. (h) Ability to teach children through its products.	(a) Target girls without reinforcing new stereotypical images. (b) Teach children about gender equality through toys and cartoons. (c) Use un-gendered colors (e.g. red, yellow & orange) more than gendered colors (e.g. blue & pink).
Disney	(a) Mostly targets young girls, but adults also. (b) Gender Stereotypical. (c) Ability to teach children through its merchandise. (d) Massive reach & power.	(a) Teach children that each person is unique and that it is okay to be different. (b) Dress female figures in more than just dresses. (c) Use un-gendered colors. (d) Go beyond the prince & princess idea to something more realistic. (e) Do not reinforce character relationships (e.g. Belle & Prince Adam). (f) Promote gender equality.
Barbie	(a) Stereotypical (b) Recognised as good corporate citizen (c) Provides philanthropic contributions to society. (d) Ability to teach children. (e) Huge reach & power.	(a) Go beyond just philanthropic contributions. (b) Promote gender equality through cartoon episodes & toys. (c) Use un-gendered colors.

Source: present study

Appendices

Appendix 1



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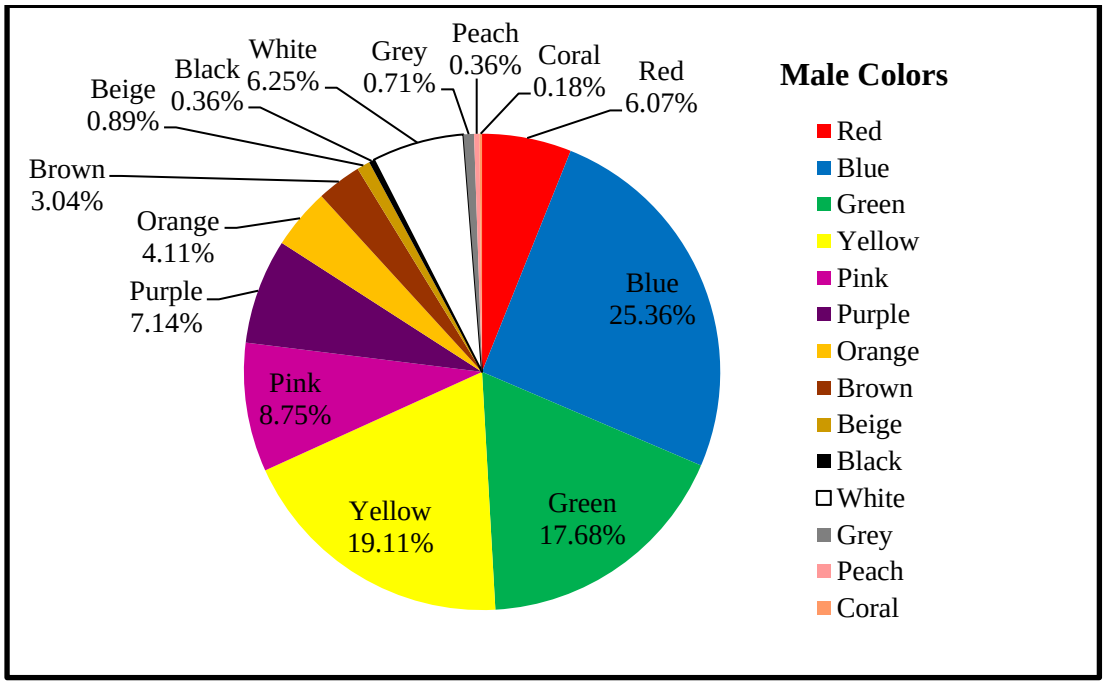

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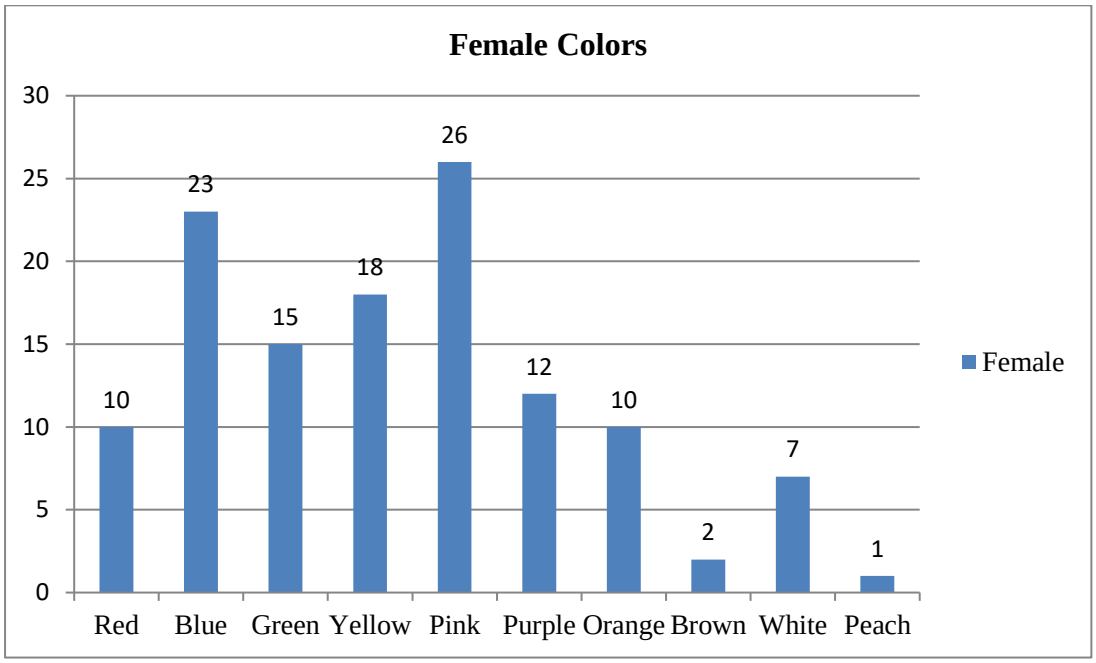

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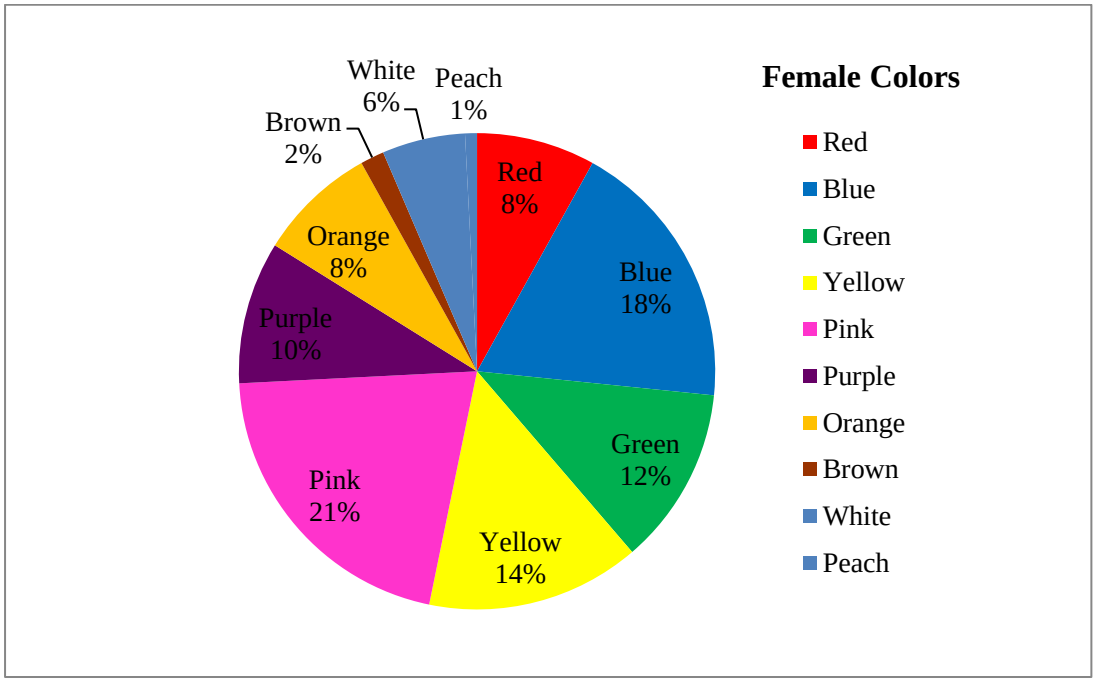

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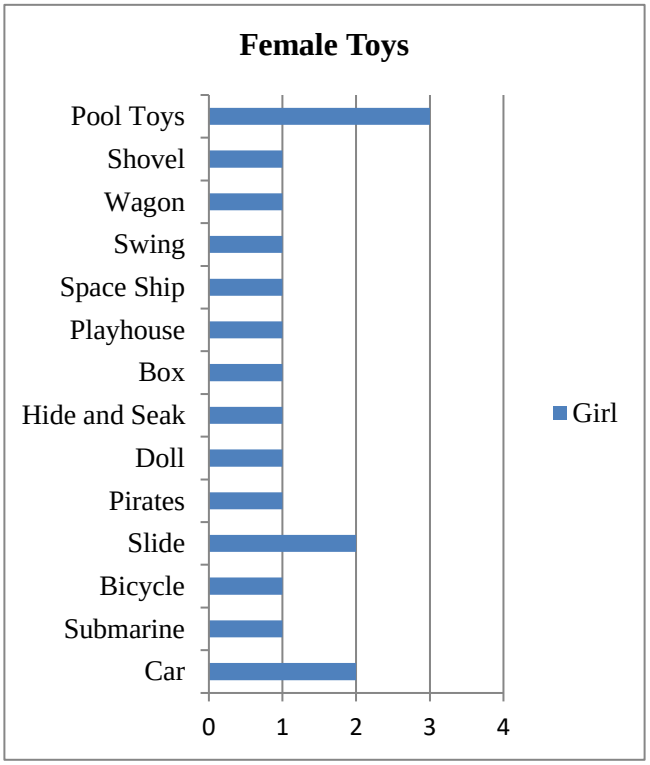

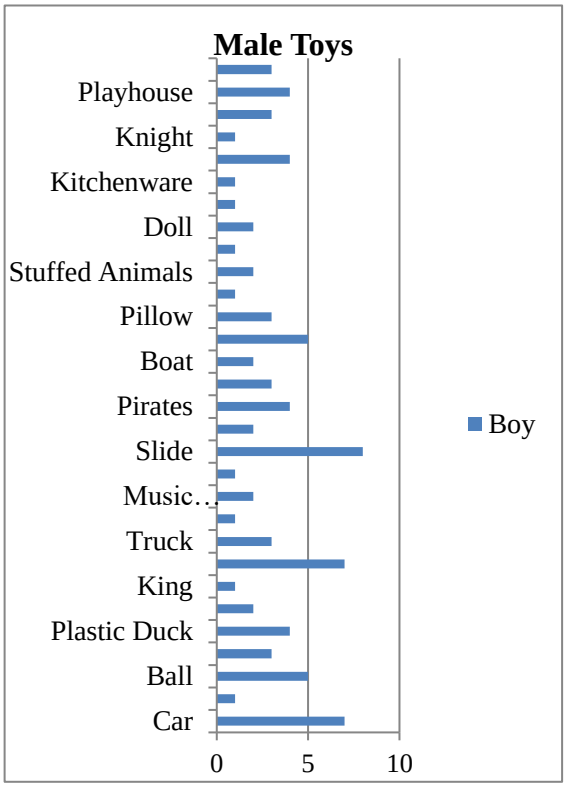

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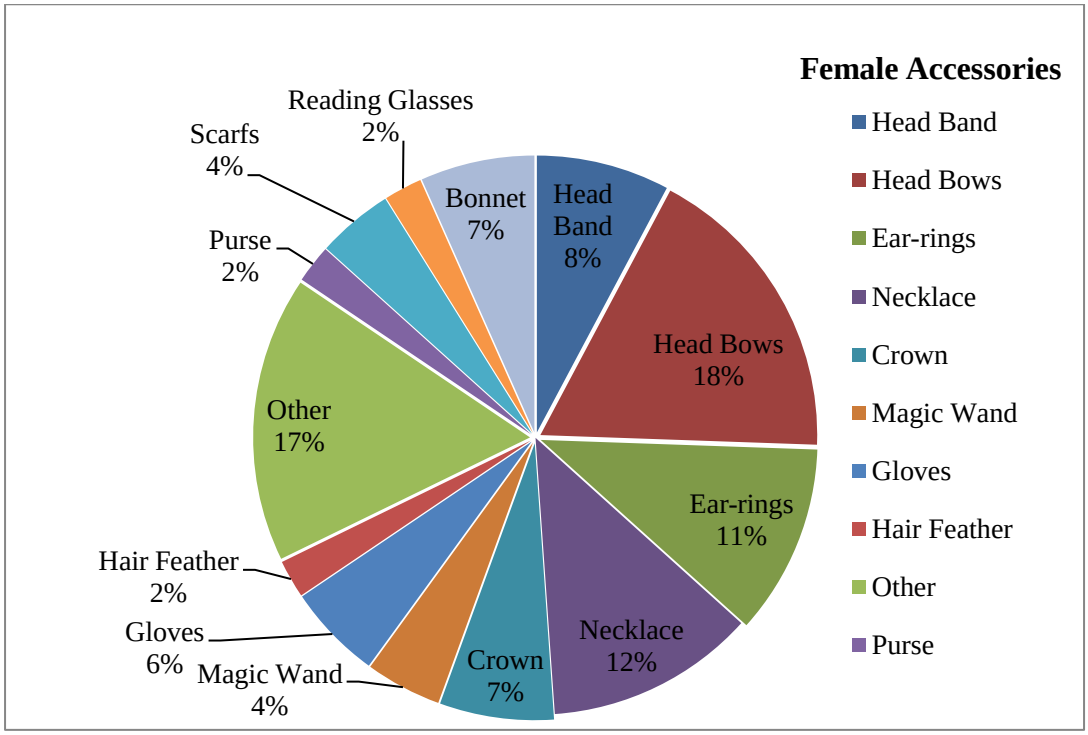
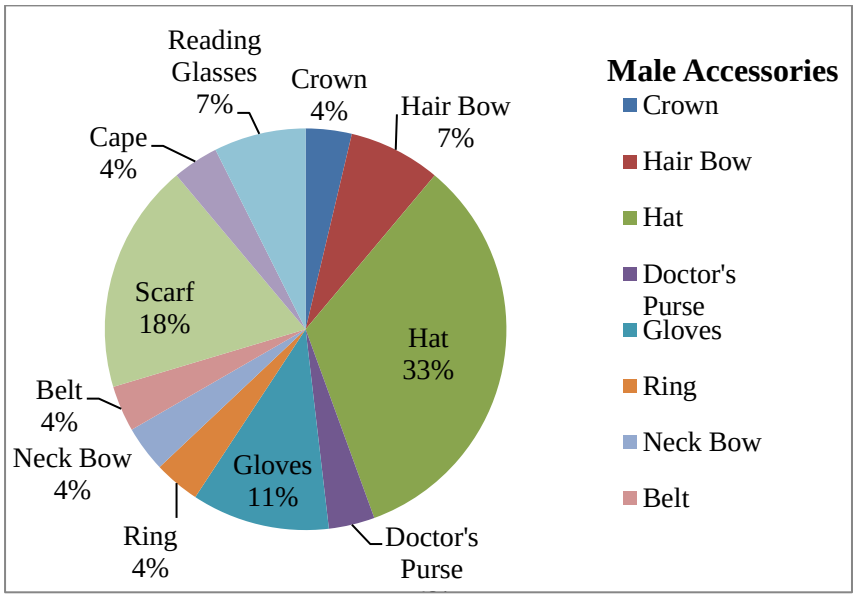


Note: Other = Book, Ring, Hair Cloth, Traveling Suitcases, Bracelet, Crystal, Jewelry, Wings, Make-up Tools, Perfume, Head Access, Hand Mirror, Hat, Scarf, Christmas flowers.

Appendix 7



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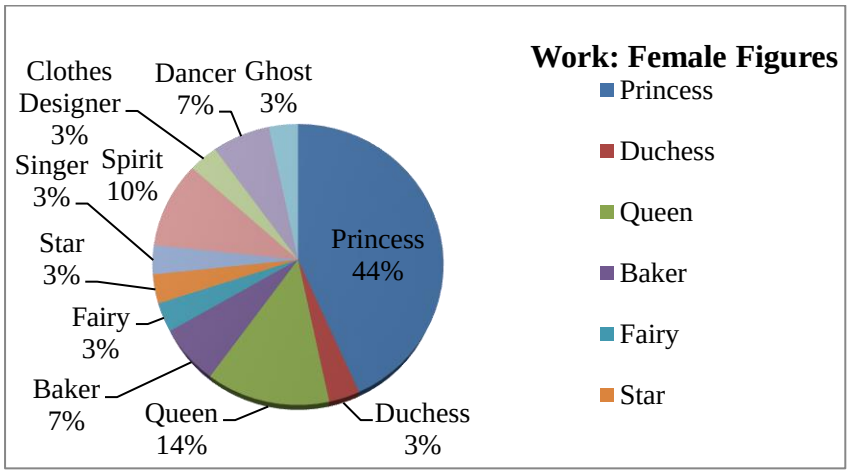

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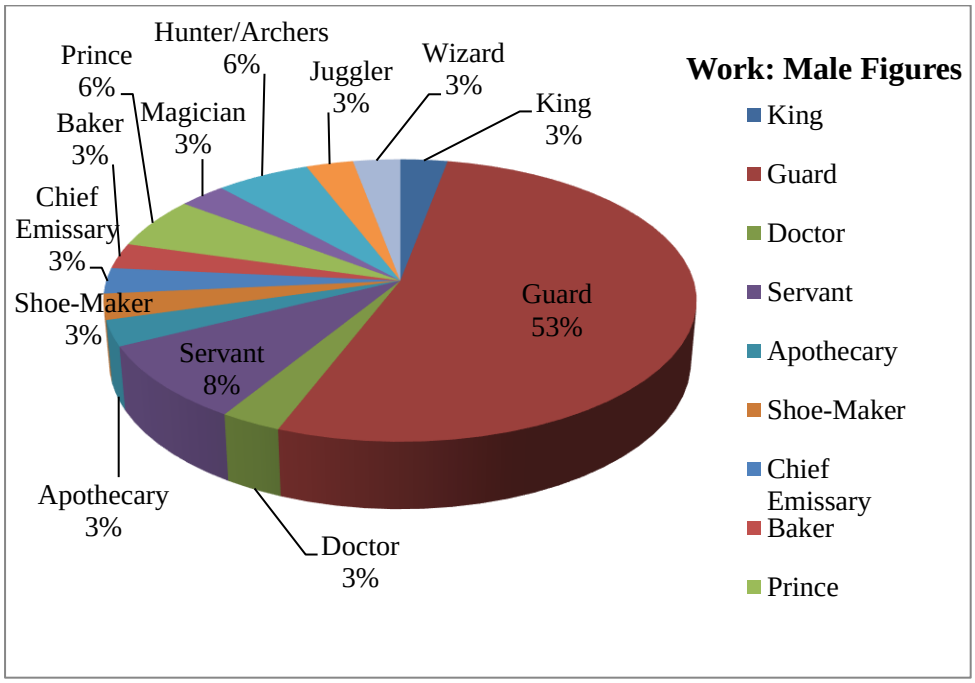

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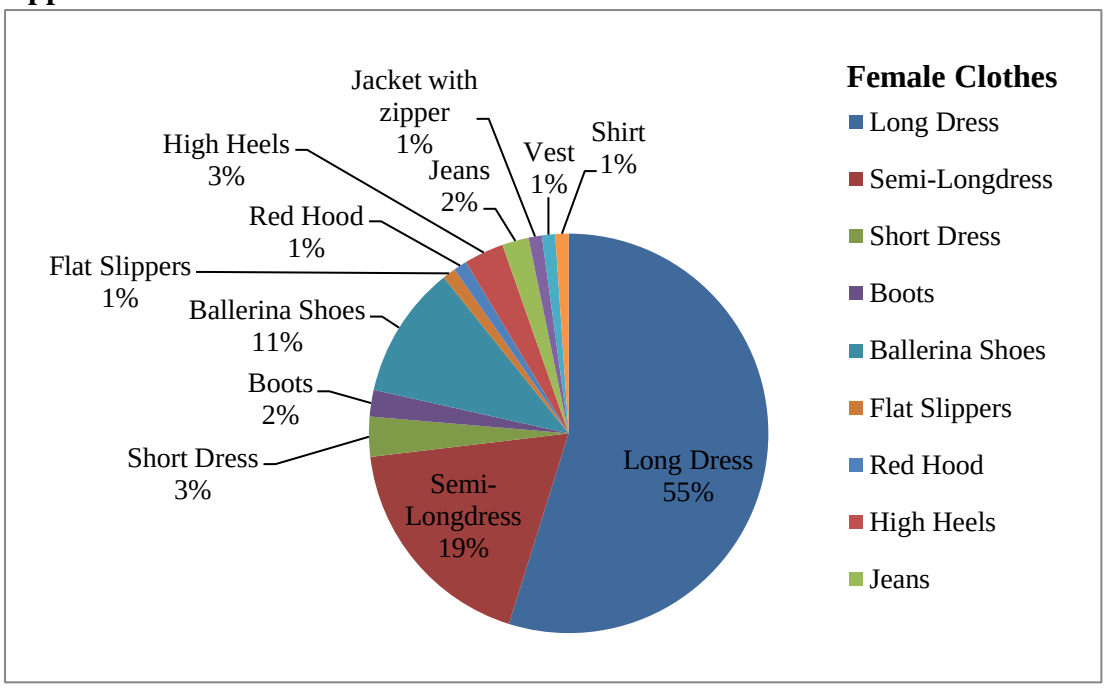

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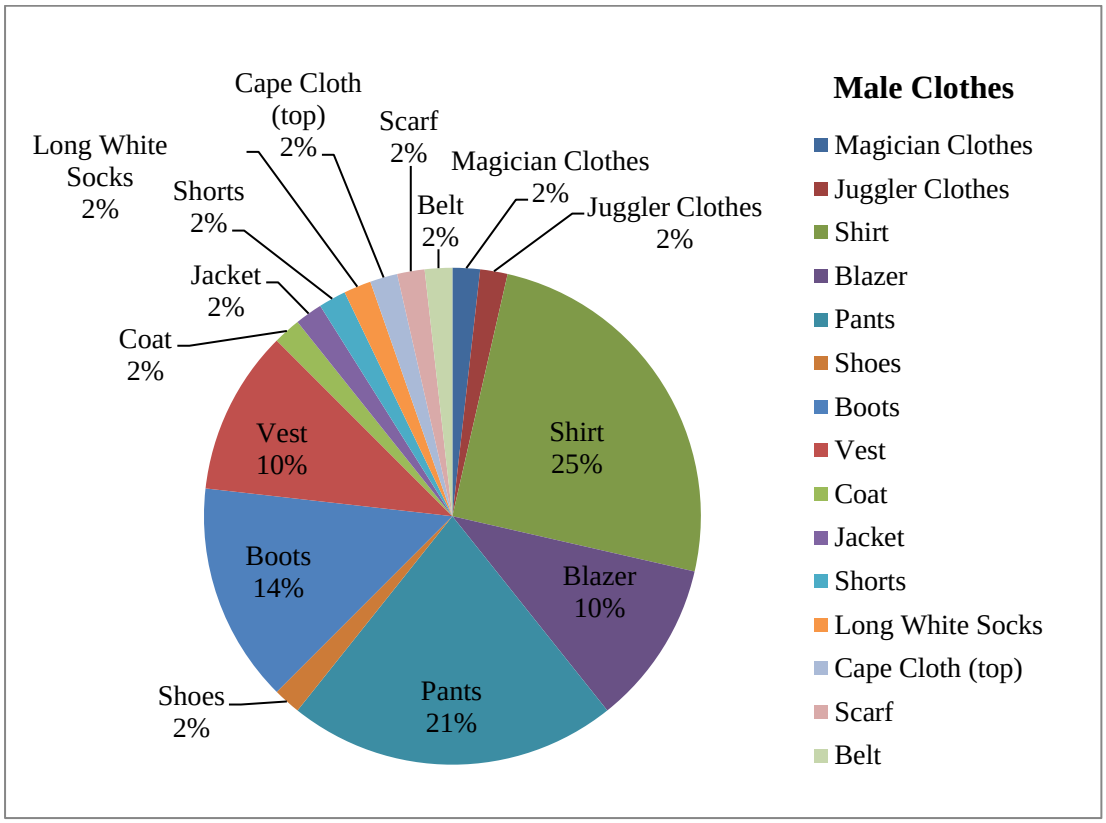

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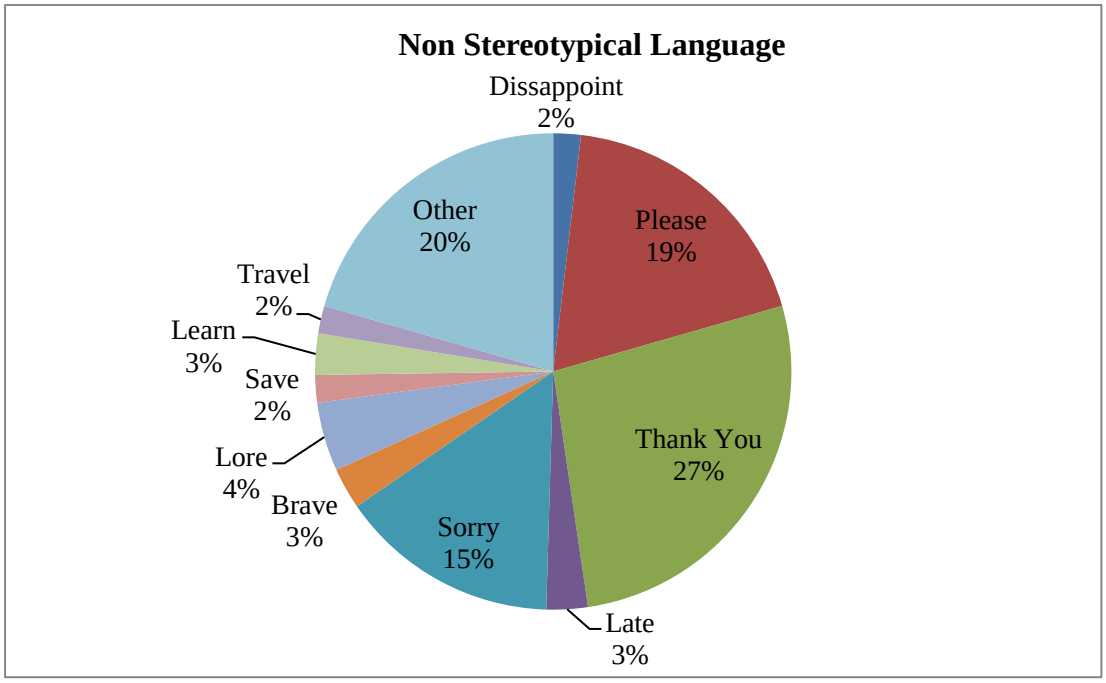

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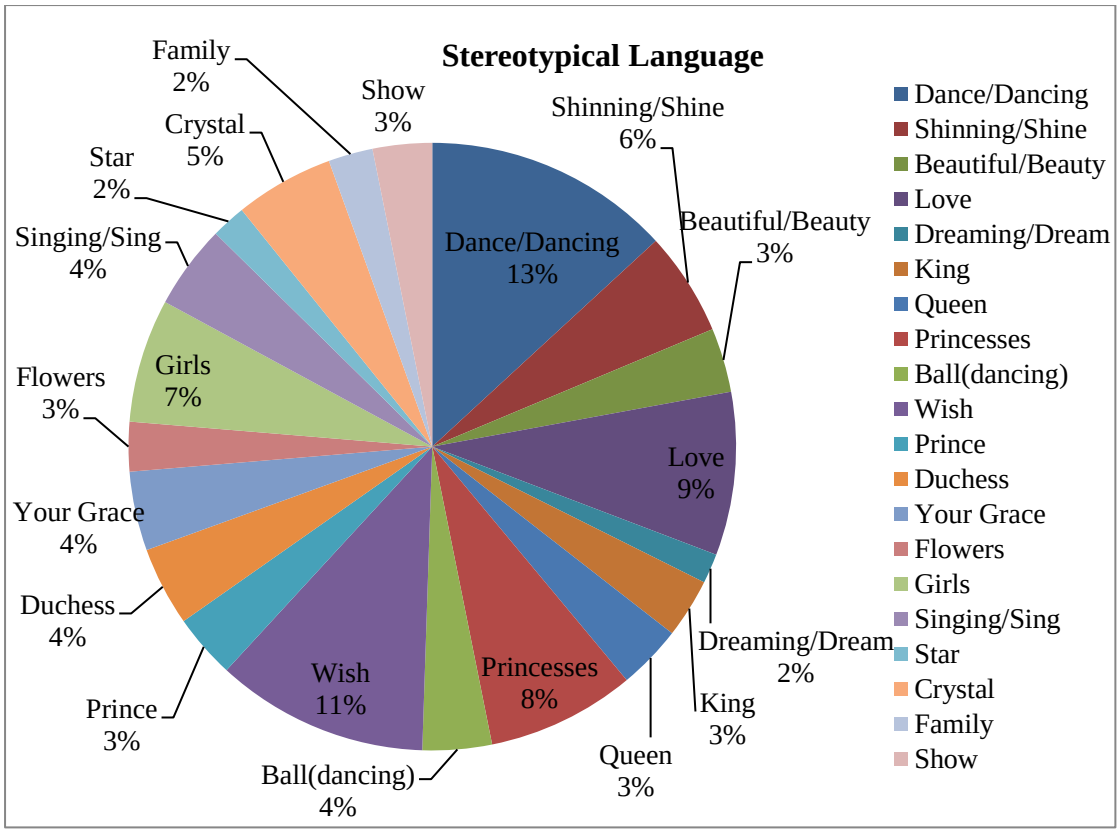

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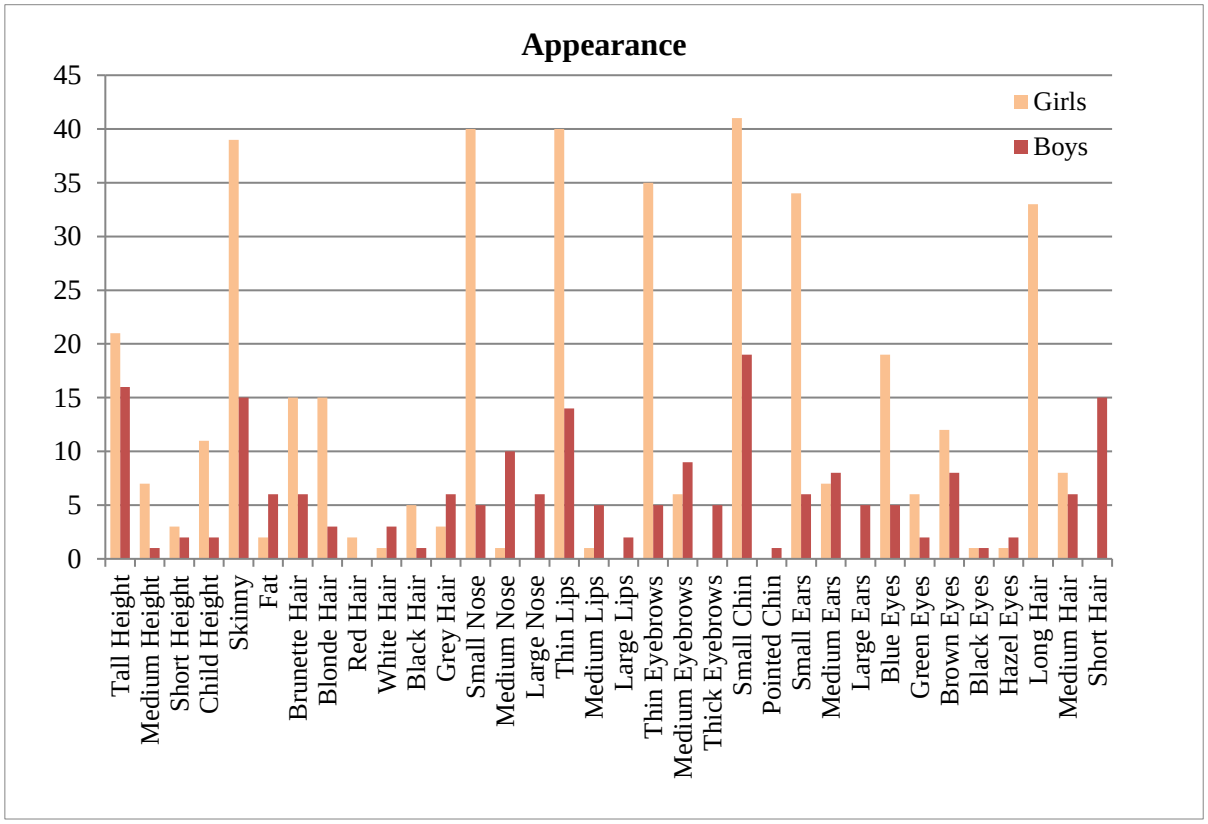

Appendix 15

Top Ten Barbie Life Lessons
1. You are braver than what you think.
2. Odette discovered courage in the strangest place: herself.
3. Good always wins over evil in the end.
4. The world is not selfish & you do not have to be selfish to succeed.
5. Sometimes we can learn from people who make mistakes.
6. It is tougher to judge when you know the whole story.
7. Sometimes we need to face things that frighten us. It is how we grow.
8. We do not have to make the same mistakes. We can change everything. We can help people.
9. Big or small, there is a difference only you can make.
10. You will do great things in your own way.