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One aspect of the book which caught my attention was the illustrations. The illustrator as male. At first I thought that he was not at all gender biased in his illustrations, as he depicted a neutral subject, who was vomiting, as a girl. Indeed, many illustrations were asexual, which can be easily done with undeveloped children. However there were 27 illustrations where he took it upon himself to allocate gender to a poem's character by the illustration. Some were fairly distributed, as when two poems of friendship showed girls and a poem of peace featured a boy. Also, one poem featuring untidy people depicted boys and a neutral subject with smelly feet was a girl. But other illustrations were more disturbing. Both doctors mentioned were portrayed as male and the only nurse and both teachers were female. A poem about 'gutses' was illustrated using two boys, not one boy and one girl. Similarly, an illustration of children kicking animals contained two boys, and in both illustrations concerning teachers, they were being hit by boys. The two poems which mentioned robbers also featured only boys. However, the poem about being 'blessed with children' depicts a girl. This contrasts with the eight poems where girls are depicted as being just as tough as boys. For example, a traditional nursery rhyme which has been given a new twist at the end (Factor 1983:30):

Little Miss Muffet  
Sat on her tuffet,  
Eating her curds and whey.  
Along came a spider  
Who sat down beside her,  
And little Miss Muffet said:  
'Buzz off, hairy legs!'

It seems that children can accept girls who tell spiders to 'Buzz off, hairy legs' but the illustrator chooses only to show them in this light when the poem is sex-specific. He is inflicting his gender stereotypes on these otherwise stereo-free poems and subtly reinforcing stereotypical gender roles. Illustrations can often have a far greater effect on small children than the text (Sandell 1980:29).

My study has shown that the sexually biased 'input' children receive from their school readers as described in Freebody and Baker (1987) is not confirmed by their own 'output'. Characters in children's rhymes are often gender-free, semantic roles are not as severely restricted, descriptions and actions are not allocated by gender and relationships are viewed as being two-way. There is some sexism but, as I have shown, this occurs so infrequently that it is almost negligible. While school readers take children to a place where 'mythical creatures [inhabit] a mythical world' (Freebody and Baker, (1987:102), children's rhymes do just the opposite. They depict a real, violent world, almost ignore familial relationships and rarely assign stereotypical tasks. This seems to indicate that children are paying more attention to the world around them than to the unreal, sanitary life depicted in books.

My brief look at children's literature has done little to substantiate Freebody and Baker's concerns about the effect of school readers on children's attitudes to gender roles. However, the children who 'wrote' this book are still young and therefore likely to change their perception of their roles in life, along with the accompanying gender biases, as they develop. If this is the case, then the quality of the 'input' they receive is of the utmost importance. Nevertheless, while there is some blatant sexism, on the whole young children's writings ignore gender and stereotyping. In fact, I would say that boys are denigrated far more than girls in this insightful little book.

I was going to the country,  
I was going to the fair,  
I met a senorita  
With the curls in her hair.  
Shake senorita, shake it all you can,  
Shake senorita, till you find a handsome man.  
Rumble to the bottom,  
Rumble to the top,  
Turn around, turn around,  
Turn around, stop.

She is shown to be using her physical attributes to catch a male - stereotypical female behaviour. This is found again in a poem where 'boys have got the muscles', 'teacher's got the brains and 'girls have got the sexy legs' (Factor 1983:89):

Firecracker, firecracker,  
Boom, boom, boom.  
Firecracker, firecracker,  
Boom, boom, boom.  
The boys have got the muscles,  
The teacher's got the brains,  
But the girls have got the sexy legs  
So they win the game.

But this rhyme depicts stereotyping in a different light as the final line says 'so [the girls] win the game'. They have turned stereotyping to advantage. Notably, the boys do not have brains either. Both are only described in terms of physical attributes.

Marriage is another subject which comes up, but it is not seen as "girl-chasing-boy", the stereotypical scenario. It is seen as a reciprocal act (Factor 1983:99):

Two in a car  
Two little kisses,  
Two weeks later  
Mr and Mrs.

Neither boy nor girl does the chasing, it simply happens and is seen as a fait accompli, and treated as a fact of life. Another instance of non-stereotypical behaviour is seen in a rhyme where 'you' may be 'blessed with little ones', who can be given various household tasks to perform, to relieve 'you' of your domestic burden (Factor 1983 :99):

When you get married  
Happy may you be  
Blessed with little ones  
One, two and three.  
One to wash the dishes  
One to scrub the floor  
One to rock the cradle  
In case there's any more.

This is hardly stereotypical nurturing.

found that males and females have clearly defined roles in literature (1987:88), children themselves seem rarely to allocate roles by gender in *Far Out, Brussel Sprout*.

Similarly, while there were few adjectives used to describe characters, those that do appear are not typical of those found in school readers. Freebody and Baker (1987:87) allocate 'naughty' only to boys, but its only occurrence in *Far Out, Brussel Sprout* is to describe a girl (Factor 1983:77):

If I did, she would say:  
'Naughty girl to disobey'.

Similarly 'little' is used mainly of boys (that is, five times but only once for girls), which is quite different from Freebody and Baker (1987 :87) where over 50% of its usage is for girls. Girls are described as 'poor', 'little', 'old' , 'naughty', 'Spanish' and 'Dutch', once only for each adjective. There are no cutesy adjectives like 'darling' used. Males are found to be 'fat' twice, 'old' three times, 'little' five times, 'simple' once, 'dead' twice, 'blind' once and 'dumb' once. There are no stereotypical 'good boys' here. Children do not seem to allocate adjectives on a gender basis either, but to distribute them fairly evenly in my study.

Freebody and Baker (1987:90) found notable differences in what male and female book characters like, with boys liking inanimates and girls liking animals. But 'like' hardly enters into children's rhyme. Only one instance was found (p.95), where girls like 'coffee', 'tea' and 'sitting on Daddy's knee', that is, both inanimates and an action. More importantly, 'love' occurs three times, but only in a reciprocal context, between 'you' and 'me' (Factor 1983:103):

|      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |      |   |         |
|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|------|---|---------|
| down | ↑ | and  | ↓ | you  | ↑ | if   | ↓ | find | ↑ | you  | ↓ | you  | ↑ | will    |
| and  |   | you  |   | love |   | you  |   | I    |   | love |   | for  |   | be      |
| up   |   | will |   | I    |   | love |   | if   |   | me   |   | love |   | forgot. |
| Read |   | see  |   | that |   | me.  |   | And  |   | not  |   | my   |   |         |

It seems that 'love' works both ways, with neither gender being more loved than the other.

Relationships, other than those of people in love, were rare in the children's poems. When they do exist, what a male does to a female is repaid in kind, as with 'Granny' and the 'bogey man' (Factor 1983:87):

Granny in the kitchen  
Doing a bit of stitchin',  
Along comes a bogey man  
And kicks her out.  
Bogey man in the kitchen  
Doing a bit of stitchin',  
Along comes granny  
And kicks him out.

It seems equality is alive and well. Unlike school readers (Freebody and Baker 1987:95), gender is not marked by the choices the children make. Males and females behave in the same way and are unmarked by dress.

However, there is blatant sexism in four of the poems, as evidenced by the 'senorita' who is told to 'shake it all [she] can' to 'find a handsome man' (Factor 1983:84):

In the rhymes that I studied, girls are told what to do five times, but boys are never given direct orders as in the following example from Factor (1983:77):

My mother said, I never should  
Play with the gypsies in the wood.  
If I did, she would say:  
'Naughty girl to disobey'.

But this is a low percentage when the book is viewed as a whole. While Freebody and Baker (1987:101) noted that girls are more deferential, for example, they tend to make more frequent 'statements or actions of concurrence or deference', this does not occur in the poems under discussion. Deferential expressions were not found anywhere. In fact, the opposite would seem to be true in light of the actions associated with male and female characters in the collection, where boys were more often denigrated than respected, as pointed out above.

Throughout the collection of poems, male characters not only perform the stereotypical acts of driving (p.36), shooting (p.42), swearing (p.73) and getting drunk (p.6), they also get killed six times (on pages 67, 11, 50, 56, 73 and 78), are defecated upon (p.16), get hurt (p.19), insulted (pp.26, 34, 35 and 37) and fall into a toilet (p.18). They are also depicted as fools seven times (on pages 5, 26, 35, 37, 39, 50 and 52). A typical example of this is (Factor 1983 :37):

Simple Simon met a pieman  
Going to a fair:  
Said Simple Simon to the pieman,  
'What have you got there?'  
Pies, stupid!

But, they are also seen to get married twice on page 99, sew (p.87), cry (pp.66 and 73), kiss (pp.93, 98, 100 and 101) and do the splits (p.88). The following poem is one where a male character is seen to cry (Factor 1983:73):

Inky pinky ponky  
Daddy bought a donkey,  
Donkey died  
Daddy cried  
Inky pinky ponky.

This mixture of stereotypical male and female roles is also reflected in the actions associated with females. They too marry (p.99), kiss (pp.93, 98 and 101), sew (p.87) and do the splits (p.85) but they also get hit by a train (but notably not killed) on page 10, catch and torture insects (pp.12 and 13), act tough (pp.30 and 31), lose their teeth (p.32), have boyfriends (p.48), hurt boys (p.54), get into trouble (p.80) and behave mischievously (Factor 1983:12):

Nellie Bly caught a fly,  
Tied it to a string.  
String broke, cut its throat,  
Poor little thing.

The female stereotyping is present, with female characters sitting on daddy's knee (p.95), making tea (p.13) and dancing (pp.21 and 84), but this is made palatable by the fact that there are poems where both males and females perform both types of action. While Freebody and Baker

the analysis of the rhymes would corroborate Freebody and Baker's conclusion that gender relations depicted in school readers were 'powerful sources of learning' (1987:104) influencing the way in which children perceived their roles in life. However, while some sexual denigration and stereotyping does exist in this compilation of children's rhymes, by and large, gender is almost ignored by these budding literati.

The rhymes collected were from across Australia, from children of mixed ethnic backgrounds and with a view to diversity (Factor 1983:109). However, the author notes that she omitted many rhymes 'of sexual interest and racial and religious prejudice'. While this may limit my study somewhat, I believe there should be enough data in the book to show if children have any predilection towards sexist stereotyping. The constructions in *Far Out, Brussel Sprout* are simple, with little ornamentation or conversation. There is no mention of how many rhymes were composed by females and how many by males.

Freebody and Baker found that boys appeared more often than girls by a ratio of three to two (1987:83). In the rhyme collection I examined there were 37 poems concerning males and 16 poems concerning females, out of a total of 133 poems. There were 25 poems where both sexes appeared and 55 where the subject was what I term "neutral". By "neutral" I mean that the subject was simply a pronoun with no gender identification, such as 'I' or 'you', or a term for an animal or occupation. So while males may appear more frequently than females, they are far outnumbered by asexuals. Some animal poems used gendered pronouns. There were six uses of 'he', for animal subjects such as an elephant, goat, pig and worm. There were three uses of 'she' for what could have been gender-free subjects. Notably, these were for a rabbit and two teachers. The rabbit, in particular, gives credence to Freebody and Baker's 'cuddle factor' (1987:87) as she has a 'little powder puff (Factor 1983:17):

A rabbit has a shiny nose,  
I'll tell you why my friend:  
Because her little powder puff  
Is on the other end.

The notion of women being designated specific, traditional roles in life is also reinforced by the two rhymes with teachers. However, there would seem to be some external evidence for this as most primary schools in Australia have a predominance of female teachers. These nine usages aside, the majority of pronouns used for neutral subjects were asexual, indicating a preference for gender-free characters.

The distribution of semantic roles was interesting. Both females and males appeared four times as actors/agents. But as undergoers/experiencers, males exceeded females, being the brunt of the action fourteen times to the females' eight. Neutral characters were undergoers/experiencers sixteen times, only slightly more than males. So while neutral subjects are preferred overall, male characters are also well favoured as objects. To my mind this makes them less the dominator and more the dominated in terms of having events happen to them, unlike Freebody and Baker, who found boys more dominant (1987:101). Freebody and Baker's conclusion was drawn through analysis of the frequency of pronoun usage, that is, male characters were found to use 'I' seven times but female characters only four times.

Similarly, male characters used 'me' twice but female characters used this pronoun only once. 'We' was used by male characters five times, but only three times by female characters. Conversely, female characters used 'you' six times but male characters used 'you' only twice.

## OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES:

### Children and Stereotyping

Julie Reid

Children are born with no conception of gender, they learn about it from the world around them. Children learn about their environment by actively seeking information from all possible sources in that environment' (Sandell 1980:32). By learning to speak a language, we learn not only how to be a member of that culture, but also the 'cultural role assigned to [us] on the basis of [our] sex' (Coates 1986:121). Traditional stereotyping of behaviour reinforces these roles. In our culture, children are often given toys thought to be appropriate to their sex, such as dolls for girls and cars for boys. While many enlightened parents try to avoid toys which reinforce stereotypical behaviour, one area which is often overlooked is children's literature. Children are given a glimpse of the world and their futures through the books they read, both at home and at school. School readers especially play an important role as they represent official documents in a pedagogical environment. The children have their gender roles in life subtly reinforced by the words and images they find on the pages in front of them.

Some American studies in this area show that readers available to their grade school children are now less sexist than earlier this century. Steinbach (1989:142) found that, while children's books in the 1960s were certainly sexually biased, those of the 1980s were far more balanced - 'boys and girls speak for equal amounts of time, share friendships, and are depicted visually similarly'. Likewise, Hess (1989:76) found that two very popular authors of children's books 'equalize the speech of men and women'. These books were written between 1952 and 1979. However, Sandell (1980:32), who examined illustrations in children's literature, found that 'male characters were depicted in more fanciful and imaginative illustrations' and that 'females were depicted.. .in realistic form and color'. As children tend to be drawn to attractive illustrations (Sandell 1980:29), this type of literature lends credence to stereotypes of males leading more active, colourful lives. Even when the text of a story is non-stereotypical, the illustrations can counter this, for example, 'one verbally accurate textbook.. .included an illustration of a woman changing the oil in the family car — while dressed in high heels, apron, and dress' (Sandell 1980:33).

Australian researchers Freebody and Baker (1987) found a great deal of sexism in the texts of children's early schoolbooks. Boys appeared more frequently than girls, with 246 appearances by boys and 168 by girls in the corpus (Freebody and Baker 1987:83). Boys also appeared more often on their own. The verbs of which terms for boys were subject were all examples of stereotypical male actions, such as 'answer', 'hurt', 'shout' and 'work. These all reinforce the males' supposedly dominant role in life. Terms for girls on the other hand were the object of verbs like 'hold onto' and 'kiss', allocating them a passive role in life. Boys were described as 'brave' and 'naughty', but never girls, who were 'young' and 'pretty' (Freebody and Baker 1987:87). This stereotypical behaviour extended to the depiction of parents who performed the tasks gender bias would allocate: for example, only fathers 'paint, fix and 'drive' while only mothers 'bake', 'kiss' and 'thank' (Freebody and Baker 1987:88).

With this sort of 'input in mind, I decided to examine the 'output' produced by the children themselves. To this end I chose to compare my analysis of the contents of *Far Out, Brusse/Sprout*, a compilation of prepubescent children's chants and rhymes, with the findings of Freebody and Baker (1987), both applicable to the Australian context. The hypothesis was that