GENDER ROLES:

A STUDY OF THE MAIN CHARACTER IN SELECTED BASAL

READERS ADOPTED BY THE STATE OF TEXAS

THESIS

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By

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DEDICATION

"It is not length of life, but depth of life."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The author wishes to dedicate this thesis to Judy Row. Thanks for helping me find that other dimension. Words will never be able to express my gratitude.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Basal readers are an integral part of most schools' reading programs. Throughout the nation, 85 to 90% of public school classrooms use a basal reader series as the basis for reading instruction in grades one through eight (Britton, Lumpkin, & Britton, 1984). This reading program consists of many different types of children's literature (i.e., picture book stories, chapter book stories, award-winning stories, etc.). Recent studies have evaluated the role of the male and female characters in these stories (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Goss, 1996; Heintz, 1987; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). While some studies have concentrated on the ratios of males/females in the titles, illustrations, central roles, or subsidiary roles (Bordelon, 1985; Collins, Ingoldsby, & Dellman, 1984; Creany, 1995; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Patt & McBride, 1993; Peterson & Lach, 1990), others have focused on the traits and characteristics of the male and female characters (Crabb & Bielawski, 1994; Kortenhaus &Demarest, 1993; Sadker

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& Sadker, 1994; Schubert, 1980; Temple, 1993; Vaughn-Roberson, Tompkins, Hitchcock, & Oldham, 1989; Witt, 1996).

Some research has discovered that the ratios of males and females were almost balanced between the 1970s and the 1980s (Collins et al., 1984). From the 1970s to the 1980s, researchers found the male/female ratios to be more balanced by virtue of the number of stories that contained a main character that was classified as "other." A main character classified as "other" was one in which the main character role or other roles in the story were shared by males and females or the main character was a personified animal (Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). In a 1984 comparison study by Collins et al., the researchers found that the ratios between males and females in titles, central roles, pictures, and animal roles had changed from an average of 25:1 to an average of 2:1. Similar studies have drawn similar conclusions concerning the ratios of male characters to female characters in the central roles, in titles, and in illustrations (Bordelon, 1985; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Peterson & Lach, 1990, Vaughn-Roberson, et al., 1989).

However, more recent studies by Patt and McBride (1993) and Foley and Boulware (1996) have come to different conclusions. In a study of 129 different children's books, Patt and McBride found in the analysis of the central role that the male appeared almost three times as often as the female.

Their study showed the male in the central role 70% of the time and the female in the central role only 24% of the time (1993). Foley and Boulware evaluated characters in three seventh grade basal reading textbooks and found 70% of the 415 characters portrayed were male (1996).

Other studies have concentrated on the characteristics or traits of the male and female characters. More than one study has found that even though the female character was represented more frequently as a main character, her role was still "stereotypically" female (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Kortenhaus &Demarest, 1993; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989; Witt, 1996). The studies showed the male characters as having more "female traits" but rarely did they show the female as possessing "male traits." The studies also found that males were described as competitive, creative, resourceful, independent, and active whereas the females were described as dependent, submissive, passive, incompetent, and nurturing (Bordelon, 1985; Craft, 1993; Goss, 1996). The male characters continued to be employed as doctors, soldiers, police officers, or scientists whereas the females' occupations were usually nurses, teachers, clerks, cooks, mothers, or children (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). In 1993, Temple discussed a study of Theodore Geisel (Dr. Seuss) which

reviewed all the books written by Seuss and found that the only active characters in Seuss' stories were male.

Other studies have concentrated on the effect characters from books have on children's ideas about behaviors in society (Britton et al., 1984; Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Fox, 1993b; Purcell & Stewart, 1990). Kortenhaus and Demarest found that portrayals of the main character in a story help "mold a child's conception of socially accepted roles and values, and indicate how males and females are supposed to act" (1993, p. 220). In 1984, Britton et al. stated "Textbooks are a major influence in shaping attitudes. Subliminally and overtly, they teach attitudes about self, career options, ethnic groups, the elderly, and society's sex role expectations" (p. 724).

Even though the ratios of males to females depicted in children's literature were almost balanced between the 1970s and the 1980s by virtue of the number of stories that contained a main character that was classified as "other," the extent to which there is a balance concerning characteristics or traits of the male and female character has not been fully explored. There is a need for a study that examines gender representation in the basal readers currently used in the school districts to determine if publishers of basal reader series have moved away from "stereotypical male" and "stereotypical

female" traits and occupations and allowed both the male main character and female main character to represent characteristics and occupations more equivalent to one another.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the main character as portrayed in selected samples of first, second, fifth, and sixth grade basal readers adopted by the State of Texas. First, the research team identified the gender of the main character as portrayed in the story. The research team will tallied the number of male main characters and female main characters to determine if males and females are represented an equal percentage of times. Secondly, the research team examined the occupation or role of the female main character. The research team listed and tallied the occupations to determine if the female main character is portrayed in a wide variety of occupations or roles. Next, the research team analyzed and tallied the traits of the male and female main characters. Finally, the research team evaluated the traits of each main character and determined if the main character of each story evaluated was portrayed positively or negatively. Adaptations of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1978) were used during the last two evaluations.

Research Questions

1. For the basal readers examined, are males represented as main characters more frequently than females are represented as main characters?

2. For the basal readers examined, are the female main characters portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that are not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations?

3. For the basal readers examined, is the number of positive male traits found in female main characters greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main characters?

4. For the basal readers examined, is the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters?

Operational Definitions

1. author: "a person who writes a novel, poem, essay, etc.; the composer of a literary work, as distinguished from a compiler, translator, editor, or copyist" (Flexner, 1987, p. 139).

2. basal reader: "book or program for developing basic reading skills which steadily progresses in difficulty" (Page & Thomas, 1977, p. 38).

3. Caldecott Award: "an award offered yearly to the illustrators of children's books for excellence" (Good, 1973, p. 54).

4. female negative traits: traits used to describe the female main character that include gullible, shy, yielding, and childlike (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

5. female positive traits: traits used to describe the female main character that include sensitivity to needs of others, understanding, gentle, compassionate, and cheerful (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

6. gender bias: a prejudice that fails to portray males and females "equally" in children's literature. This bias usually does not allow male or female characters to exhibit characteristics of the opposite sex. For example, a story that contains gender bias would not allow a female main character to be the one who "solves the problem" or "saves the day," nor would it allow the male main character to exhibit female traits and characteristics (Schau & Scott, 1984).

7. <u>illustration</u>: something that "furnishes (a book, magazine, etc.) with drawings, pictures, or other artwork intended for explanation, elucidation, or adornment" (Flexner, 1987, p. 954).

8. <u>main character</u>: the person or persons around whom the action or plot is centered, or the character whose activity is essential to the plot. The main character has the primary dialogue and is usually the decision-maker (Britton et al., 1984).

9. <u>male negative traits</u>: traits used to describe the male main character that include dominant, aggressive, forceful, and competitive (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

10. <u>male positive traits</u>: traits used to describe the male main character that include independent, risk-taking, self-reliant, assertive, and athletic (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

11. <u>negative status</u>: the status assigned to a main character who possesses more negative male and female traits than positive male and female traits

12. <u>negative traits</u>: qualities that hold the potential for "self- or social-destructiveness" (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989, p. 65).

13. neutral traits: traits that could be used to describe both males and females. Traits include helpful, moody, happy, unpredictable, reliable, and jealous (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

14. Newberry Award: "award offered annually to the authors of children's books for excellence in plot, style, and content" (Good, 1973, p. 54).

15. occupation: "one's usual or principal work or business, especially as a means of earning a living" (Flexner, 1987, p. 996).

16. "other" character: when the main character role is shared by males and females, personified animals, inanimate objects (microscopes and planets, for example), or abstract concepts (democracy and freedom, for example) (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987).

17. personified animal: an animal portrayed with human characteristics including speech but who does not have a sex role (Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987).

18. positive status: the status assigned to a main character who possesses more positive male and female traits than negative male and female traits

19. positive traits: traits used to describe the male or female main character that include independent, compassionate, self-reliant, and loyal (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

20. publisher: "a person or company whose business is the publishing of books, periodicals, engravings, computer software, etc." (Flexner, 1987, p. 1563).

21. role: "a part or character to be played" (Flexner, 1987, p. 1241).

22. stereotypical female traits: traits of a female who is described by words similar to "dependent," "submissive," "emotional," "helpless," "incompetent," or "unambitious." The occupations for this type of female usually include nurse, wife, secretary, teacher, flight attendant, child, or cook. These females are usually acted upon rather than being active; they perform passive, routine, and domestic tasks; and they are valued for their beauty (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989).

23. stereotypical male traits: traits of a male who is described by words similar to "competent," "instrumental," "clever," "creative," "resourceful," "adventurous," "active," or "aggressive." The occupations for this type of male usually include doctor, scientist,

mayor, soldier, police officer, farmer, or minister. These males make things happen, solve the problems of females, and assume the role of dominance and authority (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Vaughn-Roberson, et al., 1989).

24. subsidiary character: the supporting or minor character in the story (Foley & Boulware, 1996).

Delimitations

1. This study is delimited to basal readers.

2. This study is delimited to the basal readers used in first, second, fifth, and sixth grades.

3. This study is delimited to the primary texts of the series, not the supplementary texts.

4. This study is delimited to the three most frequently used basal readers series adopted by the State of Texas in the 1998-1999 school year.

5. This study is delimited to every third story (not poems, skill lessons, comic strips, riddles, fables, etc.) of each text.

Significance of the Study

Children are impressionable. Studies show children formulate ideas about gender-specific roles before they reach the age of five (Collins et al., 1984; Fox, 1993a; Peterson & Lach, 1990). The formation of these gender or sex roles is not solely biological. The establishment of some of the roles is a learned behavior (Purcell & Stewart, 1990). The ideas that are formulated by children come from many sources that include parents, friends, television, and school (Goss, 1996; Kortenhaus &Demarest, 1993; Peterson & Lach, 1990; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Witt, 1996). Within the school setting, children receive instruction in reading primarily through the use of basal readers. Through the adopted basal reader series, children are exposed to a wide variety of literature—picture books, folk-tales, fables, fantasy, poetry, and realism. Through the illustrations and use of language, these stories help define the standards for masculine and feminine behavior (Narahara, 1998).

When children read or have stories read to them, they identify with the characters in the stories. When reading, children look at the characters in the stories as role models for their own lives (Foley & Boulware, 1990; Goss, 1996; Narahara, 1998; Purcell & Stewart, 1990). In 1986, Shannon stated (as cited in Goss, 1996):

> "The books children read and those read to them contribute to their intellectual, emotional, and social development. Moreover, these books provide examples that confirm and challenge the decisions of children's daily lives. The effect of these books is rarely immediate; rather it is the result of repeated exposure over long periods of time." (p. 656)

When children read, the characters teach children acceptable and unacceptable actions; influence their attitudes, behaviors, and self-concepts; and give them inspiration and motivation for their lives (Caldarola, 1995; Couch, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1990; Goss, 1996).

A number of studies in the past have concentrated on the portrayal of the main character. In 1977, Britton and Lumpkin completed a research project that concluded that 61% of the main characters in the basal readers examined were male, 16% were female, and 23% were classified as "other." Studies in the 1980s have found the percentages to be more balanced, while more recent studies suggest the percentages continue to be more mixed. However, the actual role of the female main character has not always been portrayed as positively as that of the male main character (Caldarola, 1995; Couch, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1990; Goldberg, 1994; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989). In studies by Fox (1993), Hitchcock and Tompkins (1987), Schubert (1980), and Temple (1993), results showed the male main character portrayed in

roles such as doctor, scientist, soldier, or police officer while the female

main character was portrayed as nurse, wife, mother, or teacher.

If children are shown positive examples of both male and female role

models, occupations, and characteristics, the children may not be as prone to

"pigeon-hole" the different sexes into specific categories. Purcell and

Stewart (1990) stated "it is important to make sure the role models children

are presented with coincide with social realities and are not based on

outdated stereotypes" (p. 177). If the authors, illustrators, and publishers of

basal reader series can publish series that are free of these biases, our future

leaders may have a clearer picture of ways the opposite sexes work together,

interact, and communicate (Fox, 1993a).

Summary

Basal readers are an integral part of most schools' reading programs.

Research studies have evaluated the role of the male and female characters

in basal readers and children's literature (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Goss,

1996; Heintz, 1987; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). While some studies

have concentrated on the ratios of males/females in the titles, illustrations,

central roles, or subsidiary roles (Bordelon, 1985; Collins, Ingoldsby, &

Dellman, 1984; Creany, 1995; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Patt &

McBride, 1993; Peterson & Lach, 1990), others have focused on the traits and characteristics of the male and female characters (Crabb & Bielawski, 1994; Kortenhaus &Demarest, 1993; Sadker & Sadker, 1994; Schubert, 1980; Temple, 1993; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989; Witt, 1996).

The purpose of this study was to analyze the main character as portrayed in selected samples of first, second, fifth, and sixth grade basal readers adopted by the State of Texas. The research team evaluated the texts to find if males are represented as main characters more frequently than females are represented as main characters, if females main characters are portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that are not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations, if the number of positive male traits found in the female main characters are greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main character, and if the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters is greater than the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters. The research team evaluated every third story (not poems, skill lessons, comic strips, riddles, fables, etc.) of the primary texts in each grade level of the three chosen series.

Children formulate ideas about gender-specific roles before they reach the age of five (Collins et al., 1984; Fox, 1993a; Peterson & Lach, 1990). Within the school setting, most children receive instruction in reading

primarily through the use of basal readers. When children read, the characters teach them acceptable and unacceptable actions; influence their attitudes, behaviors, and self-concepts; and give them inspiration and motivation for their lives (Caldarola, 1995; Couch, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1990; Goss, 1996).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Basal readers, an important element in a school's reading curriculum, are part of a reading program that is adopted by the school district to be used as the primary instrument to teach basic reading skills (Britton et al., 1984; Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Witt, 1996). The basal series contains a wide range of literature that includes picture book stories, chapter book stories, Caldecott Award-winning stories, Newberry Award-winning stories, novelette stories, and many others. [Caldecott Awards are given annually to the illustrator of the most distinguished American picture book published for children in the previous year (Good, 1973). Newberry Awards are given annually to the authors of the most distinguished novel or novelette for children in the previous year (Good, 1973).] Most children, first grade through sixth grade, receive daily contact with basal readers throughout their reading instruction in the classroom. The basals are used to help teach and

reinforce skills in the areas of comprehension, sequencing, cause and effect, inferences, main idea, fact and opinion, drawing conclusions, and vocabulary. Current and past research has revealed issues concerning the amount of gender bias found in children's literature and in basal reader series (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Britton et al, 1984; Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Gonzalez-Saurez & Ekstrom, 1989; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Kingston & Lovelace, 1977-78; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989; Witt, 1996). Current researchers are trying to discover whether the authors and publishers of basal programs are addressing and compensating for these issues.

The issue of gender stereotyping in texts, basal readers, children's literature, and picture books has been studied on and off for the past thirty years. While some studies have looked at ratios and frequencies of male and female main characters (Bordelon, 1985; Collins et al., 1984; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Gonzalez-Suarez & Ekstrom, 1989; Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Peterson & Lach, 1990), others have concentrated on areas such as role or occupation of the main character (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Caldarola, 1995; Fox, 1993a; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989; Witt, 1996). Additional areas researched on the topic include gender of author, gender of animals in

stories, gender representation in illustrations, number and gender of subsidiary characters, and stereotypical language used in text.

This review of literature will discuss the following issues: gender of male/female main character in central roles and subsidiary roles, roles and occupations portrayed by the male and female main characters, male/female traits and characteristics, and the effect gender representation in basal readers and children's literature has on the reader.

Gender of Main Character

When evaluating characters in central and subsidiary roles, research has found the main character to be portrayed as a male a greater percentage of times than as a female. As will be discussed below, some studies in the 1970s found a male character taking the central role almost four times as often as a female character. In the 1980s, different studies found the "other" category increasing in percentage, the male main character portrayal decreasing in percentage, and the female main character percentage staying the same. ("Other" included stories where the main character role was shared by males and females or the main character was a personified animal.) Studies of the 1990s have found the male main character to be represented a greater number of times than the female main character.

In 1977, Britton and Lumpkin completed a research project that concluded that 61% of the main characters in the basal readers examined were male, 16% were female, and 23% were classified as "other." Hitchcock and Tompkins (1987) conducted a similar survey and found that the percentages had changed tremendously from 1977 to 1987 in the categories of male and "other" as main character, but remained relatively the same for the female as main character. Reviewing six popular basal reading textbooks used in the first, second, fifth, and sixth grades (1,121 stories from fifty-five different books), Hitchcock and Tompkins found that 18% of the main characters were males, 17% were females, and 65% were "other." Hitchcock and Tompkins noted that the number of female main characters had increased, but they believed the reading textbook publishers appear to be avoiding the questions of sexism and gender stereotyping by creating neutral ("other") characters or by having the role of the main character shared by a male and a female.

Collins et al. (1984) assessed sixteen annual Caldecott award-winning picture books and runners-up from 1972 to 1982 for sex-role distribution. They analyzed the books in terms of the following factors: female in title, male in title, female in central role, male in central role, females in pictures, males in pictures, males and females together in pictures, female animals,

male animals, male and female animals together, character types without sex, central character, role function, activity inside or outside, major theme, women in traditional or nontraditional roles, and types of occupations character was involved in. In the study, the researchers found that the ratios for the males and females had almost leveled out, and that females were taking on more nontraditional characteristics when taking the central role. However, when not in the central role, the female character reverted to traditional female stereotypes (i.e., passive, quiet, inconspicuous, and dependent).

In 1993, Patt and McBride evaluated 129 different books presented in an observation classroom. The researcher counted pronouns, the nouns referred to by the pronouns, and story characters in the stories. Patt and McBride found that in the role of central character, the male appeared as the main character almost three times as often as the female. The study found the male in the central role 70% of the time and the female in the central role 24% of the time.

In 1996, Foley and Boulware evaluated three popular seventh grade basal reading textbooks. Of the 415 characters the researchers found in the stories, 70% were male. The study found the males were distributed evenly across the main, supporting, and minor character roles, but males appeared

more often as the main character than did females. Females portrayed only 19% of the main characters. The researchers found the female character cast most often in supporting or minor character roles with the males twice as likely to be portrayed in stories of real-life situations and three times more often in biographies. The representation of the female character was most often in science fiction and fantasy stories.

Goss (1996) examined 45 books from the International Reading Associations 1992 Children's Choices book list. The books were coded to determine the difference in gender role models for males and females in children's books. The study found 36% of the main characters were female, 47% male, and "17% undifferentiated or androgynous characters" (p. 6). In the subsidiary roles, 47% were female, 41% were male, and the rest were undifferentiated. In the illustrations, Goss found 36% of the characters to be adult males.

Roles and Occupations of Main Character

When evaluating the roles and occupations of the main character, research has found the male main character in a wide variety of roles and occupations and by contrast the female main character in roles and occupations that involve nurturing roles and children. The male main

character has been portrayed in several different types of roles whereas the female main character was usually limited to a narrower range of roles.

Stewig and Higgs (1973) examined 154 picture books randomly selected from a collection of 957 books available at a university education department library. In all the books that portrayed women, researchers found 83% of the women were portrayed in homemaking roles that included cooking, shopping, washing clothes, and working with a child. The 17% of women who were portrayed in professional roles were employed as teacher, maid, nun, nurse, and store clerk. Professional roles of the male characters included sailor, rancher, policeman, soldier, and businessman.

In 1983, Britton and Lumpkin surveyed 2,972 stories taken from 77 books in seven different basal series published between 1980-1982. The researchers identified the different gender and roles portrayed by the characters in the stories, while also examining the ethnicity of the characters. The male roles found included soldier, doctor, farmer, police officer, scientist, king, and warrior whereas the female roles found included mother, teacher, worker, slave, factory worker, princess, and artist. Researchers noted that the roles were neither realistic nor necessarily available to all students. The study found 64% of the careers were attributed to Anglo males while 14% of the careers were attributed to Anglo females. Males of color

carried 17% of the career roles, while females of color carried 5% of the career roles. Additionally, the researchers noted that the basal had left out single-parent homes, handicapped individuals, and the elderly.

Reviewing six popular basal reading textbooks used in the first, second, fifth, and sixth grades, Hitchcock and Tompkins (1987) noted that prior to 1980, male characters were usually identified as doctors, science teachers, majors, ministers, and writers whereas females were depicted as teachers, nurses, clerks, stewardesses, and cooks. Female characters were also portrayed as children, students, authors, and grandmothers. The study concluded that 54% of all the female main characters were portrayed as young students in a classroom setting.

In 1987, Heintz examined the activities and occupations of males and females in award-winning Caldecott books published between the year 1971 and 1984. The researcher found the male characters portrayed in 29 different roles, while the female characters were portrayed in only 10 different roles. Heintz also found almost half of the females were shown as homemakers who tend to babies, cook meals, and clean house. Farmers, tribal dancers, athletes, soldiers, merchants, hunters, guards, artisans, priests, kings, fishermen, and police officers occupied the male roles. The researcher concluded that the male characters were still portrayed in greater

number and in a greater variety of occupations and activities than were females.

Temple (1993) noted a study of sexual stereotypes found in award-winning Caldecott Award books. Regarding the books examined, Temple stated that a majority of the books showed the female character as a caretaker: mother, princess, kitchen helper, teacher, and nurse. Male characters, however, were portrayed as fighters, explorers, and adventurers of various sorts.

Traits of Main Character

After evaluating the traits and characteristics of the main character, research has found the male main character described by words such as "independent," "self-reliant," and "assertive;" whereas, the female main character has been described by words such as "gentle," "compassionate," "sensitive to the needs of others" (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989). "Instrumental and independent" describe the male main characters; however, "passive and dependent" refer to female main characters (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993).

Using the same type materials as Hitchcock and Tompkins (six basal reading textbooks from first, second, fifth, and sixth grades), Vaughn-

Roberson et al. (1989) evaluated the male main characters of each story to discover whether or not positive female traits were being attributed to the male characters. Through the use of Bem Sex Role Inventory (1978), Vaughn-Roberson et al. assigned the following traits to each of the male characters: male positive, male negative, female positive, female negative. Examples of characteristics for each of the traits are listed below:

male positive: independent, risk-taker, self-reliant,
                  assertive, athletic

male negative: dominant, aggressive, forceful, competitive

female positive: sensitive to needs of others, understanding,
                  gentle, compassionate, cheerful

female negative: gullible, shy, yielding, childlike

Through the study, the researchers found textbooks described the male characters as competitive, clever, creative, resourceful, and active; and female characters as passive, dependent, docile, and emotional. While the males took the role of high-paying occupations such as doctors and scientists who tend to "make things happen," the females were depicted as nurses, wives, flight attendants, secretaries, or teachers and those who learn to "deal with things that happen to them" (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989, p. 63).

In 1990, Purcell and Stewart examined 62 readers used in three different Texas cities. The researchers classified the stories according to the gender of the main character, listed the occupations of the men or women, categorized the illustrations, and analyzed the presence of certain traits in the boys' and girls' actions. Through the analysis, the researchers found the girls to be represented equally in number to the boys in the sample of the books; however, the girls' traits did not mirror the same equality in representation. For example, girls showed bravery while waiting to be rescued, but they still could not help themselves out of trouble. Although the boys were occasionally portrayed babysitting and crying over a bruise, they were shown more often as being forced to deny feelings and show their manhood.

In 1993, Kortenhaus and Demarest conducted research to determine if sex bias in picture books still existed and if the frequency of males and females in pictures and their characterizations had changed. For the study, the researchers reviewed 150 children's picture books (25 of which were Caldecott winners or runners-up) written between the 1940s and 1980s. Frequency counts were taken of the females in titles, males in titles, females in central role, males in central role, females in pictures, males in pictures, female animals, and male animals. The researchers found that the males still

outnumbered the females, but when compared to previous surveys, the number of females in children's literature had increased. However, an analysis of the type of roles showed that boys were more often characterized as "instrumental and independent," while girls were made to look "passive and dependent" (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993, p. 230). In the study, girls were cast in nurturing roles more often than boys. Female characters helped, watched over, or cared for a sibling or pet more often than the boy characters (female—117 times; males—16 times). The researchers also discovered that in stories that pictured boys and girls, only the boys assumed the role of "dominance and authority" whereas the girls were cast as "helpless, incompetent, and unambitious" (p. 230). Kortenhaus and Demarest found

> "the things that girls do and say in these books reflect the stereotype that 'all girls are emotional.' Mothers are shown as ineffectual and appear overwhelmed by problems, always needing to rely on fathers or sons to solve their dilemmas. Fathers, on the other hand, are portrayed in a capable, take-charge manner, seldom consulting the mother about any decision." (p. 230)

Kortenhaus and Demarest indicated an awareness and sensitivity by the authors to increase the female presentation but felt the manner in which the females are being presented was still sexist and biased.

In 1993, Temple noted a study of Theodore Geisel's (Dr. Seuss) books for gender portrayal. The study reviewed nearly all of the books

written by Seuss and found that the only active characters in Seuss' stories were male. Temple listed one example where a little girl in Seuss' story "thunk up" the Glunk, but it took her father to "unthunk" him.

In 1996, Turner-Bowker examined 30 award-winning Caldecott Medal and "honor" books published between 1984 and 1994. The researcher focused the study on the text and the adjectives used to describe characters. The most common female adjectives included "beautiful," "frightened," and "worthy." "Big," "horrible," and "fierce" were the most common adjectives used to describe the males. Turner-Bowker also found females represented significantly fewer times than males in the pictures and titles.

Witt (1996) examined sixteen third grade basal readers adopted since 1993 from six different publishers. The researcher evaluated the readers to determine whether the readers could be classified as androgynous or traditional in gender-role orientation. The researcher evaluated 142 stories, 567 characters, and 5,147 behaviors. Behaviors were rated using masculine and feminine traits according to the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1978). Masculine traits and feminine traits were tallied for both the male and female characters. The study found that male characters were classified as predominantly masculine by all six publishers and that masculine traits were

portrayed more often than feminine traits for all the characters. In five of the six publishers' readers, the female characters were classified as androgynous. One publisher's basal reader series portrayed the female characters in traditional roles. The researcher also found that in thirteen of the sixteen readers examined, the female character had more masculine traits than feminine traits. In only three books were the feminine traits found in greater numbers than masculine traits for the female characters.

Effect of Gender Representation

Research evaluating the effect of gender representation on the reader has found that children formulate ideas about gender-specific roles before they reach the age of five (Collins et al., 1984). Research has also found the ideas formulated by children come from a wide variety of sources that include parents, friends, television, and school (Goss, 1996; Peterson & Lach, 1990; Witt, 1996). When children read stories, they identify with the characters in the stories and look at the characters as role models for their own lives (Foley & Boulware, 1990; Goss, 1996; Narahara, 1998).

Studies have shown basal readers as an important tool in the education of children (Britton et al., 1984; Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987; Witt, 1996). Studies have also shown that the

content of the stories and the portrayal of the main character help influence children's ideas about the behaviors and roles of males and females in society (Britton, et al., 1984; Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Fox, 1993b; Goss, 1996, Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Peterson & Lach, 1990; Purcell & Stewart, 1990). Kortenhaus and Demarest found that the portrayal of the main character in a story helps "mold a child's conception of socially accepted roles and values, and indicates how males and females are supposed to act" (1993, p. 220). In 1984, Britton et al. stated, "Textbooks are a major influence in shaping attitudes. Subliminally and overtly, they teach attitudes about self, career options, ethnic groups, the elderly, and society's sex role expectations. Repetitious exposure to reading texts can influence children at an impressionable age" (p. 724).

Foley and Boulware (1996), Fox (1993a), and Goss (1996) also found that stories from basal readers provide a method for the children to use to identify social attitudes and behaviors, to understand how to interact with society, and to determine what is acceptable and expected in their culture. According to the 1975 edition of Dick and Jane as Victims, boys and girls are consistently being "sold" sex-stereotyped information (as cited in Britton & Lumpkin, 1983). In 1983, Britton and Lumpkin found that texts continued to limit young readers' "choices and career aspirations especially

when it came to options for females" (p. 6). Approximately 90% of a child's learning time in school revolves around textbooks (Schau & Scott, 1984); therefore, "it is important that the materials chosen foster a sense of independence, respect, and equality of all people" (Caldarola, 1995, p. 1).

Summary

Gender bias exists in children's literature and in the basal reader series used in school districts across the country (Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Purcell & Stewart, 1990; Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989). Numerous researchers have shown that the females are not represented equally to the males. Research has also shown that roles assigned to females generally do not have as high status as the roles assigned to males.

Furthermore, textbooks are a major influence in shaping students' attitudes (Britton et al., 1984; Caldarola, 1995; Foley & Boulware, 1996; Fox, 1993b; Goss, 1996, Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993; Peterson & Lach, 1990; Purcell & Stewart, 1990). "Subliminally and overtly, they [textbooks] teach attitudes about self, career options, ethnic groups, the elderly and society's sex role expectations" (Britton et al., 1984, p. 724). Foley and Boulware stated, "What students are required to read in school may lead them to reflect upon their very self-worth, assuming that the texts they read

about real life are true-to-life depictions of how society views the sexes"

(1996, p. 221). With the approach of the twenty-first century, publishers and

authors need to focus on the roles the male and female main characters are

portraying and the traits, whether stereotypically positive or negative, they

possess.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the materials and methods
necessary for this study. The research team analyzed the first, second, fifth,
and sixth grade readers of the top three basal readers adopted by the State of
Texas for the 1998-1999 school year. The research team first identified the
gender of the main character; secondly, the research team identified the role
or occupation of the main character; next, the research team identified the
traits and characteristics of the main character. Finally, the research team
evaluated the traits assigned to the male and female main characters and
decided whether the characters were portrayed positively or negatively. The
topics in this chapter include the selection of texts, a discussion of the
measurement instruments, the procedures for data collection, a discussion of
reliability measures, a review of the pilot study, results of the pilot study,
and the methods of data analysis.

Selection of texts

The study examined the three most frequently used basal reader series adopted by the State of Texas for the 1998-1999 school year (Texas Education Agency, 1999). The basal readers from the top three publishers were evaluated since their books were used most often throughout the state. The principal investigator contacted representatives from the Texas Education Agency to determine the top three basal reader series used in the state. Inquiries were made through individuals from the Division of Textbook Administration to determine which publishers to evaluate. As Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989) and Hitchcock and Tompkins (1987) have done, stories were evaluated in the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade readers. The principal investigator and other coders from the research team evaluated every third story (not poems, skill lessons, comic strips, riddles, fables, etc.) Most basal reader series for each of the lower grades contain an average of three books with each book containing approximately twelve stories. The basal readers for the upper grades contain an average of one book with each book containing approximately 27 stories. By examining every third story in the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade readers in three different publishers' series, the research team evaluated 114 individual

stories within 25 books. The research team examined only the primary texts in the series, not the supplementary texts.

Measurement

The research team completed a checklist that related to the gender of the main character, the role or occupation of the main character, and the traits of the main character. The research team also noted the publisher of the book, the grade level of the book, the book number, the story title, and coder number (the number of the reader on the research team.) Each checklist was designed to evaluate one story per book.

Like studies by Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989) and Witt (1996), the instrument used in the study (see Appendix C) was based on the Bem Sex Role Inventory which was developed in the early 1970s as a means of measuring individual differences in masculinity and femininity (Bem, 1978). The scale contains 60 descriptive words or phrases that can be used to describe an individual. Twenty items measure masculinity, twenty items measure femininity, and twenty items are gender neutral. The principal investigator and two coders met to review and evaluate each of the traits listed on the Bem Sex Role Inventory (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989). Next

the research team identified the positive and negative traits of the male and female as stated in Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989).

After identifying the publisher, grade level, book number, story title, and coder number, the research team identified the main character as male, female, or "other." ("Other" included stories where the main character role was shared by males and females or the main character was a personified animal.) This data was used to determine if males were represented as main characters more frequently than females were represented as main characters. After identifying the gender of the main character, the research team identified the role or occupation the main character was portraying. This data was used to determine if the female main character was being portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that were not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations. Next, the research team checked the different traits that described the main character. The research team chose between male positive, male negative, female positive, female negative, and gender neutral. This data was used to compare the traits assigned to the male main character and the female main character. Finally, the research team tallied the traits assigned to the male and female main character. This data was used to determine if the main character was portrayed positively or negatively.

Procedures

Each story was evaluated using an instrument adapted from a study

conducted by Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989) (see Appendix C). In 1989,

Vaughn-Roberson et al. examined the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade

textbooks of the most recently published editions of six basal readers series.

The study used the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (1978) scale as a checklist to

evaluate male main characters. The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (1978)

contains 60 descriptive words or phrases that are classically associated with

male, female, or either gender. The inventory contains twenty words or

phrases for each of the three categories. In 1996, Witt used the same traits

from the Bem Sex Role Inventory (1978) to evaluate sixteen third grade

readers from six different publishers. This study also used the same 60 traits

as used in the Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989) and Witt (1996) studies.

The research team examined the first book of the first series that was

evaluated. (For example, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich was the first series to

be examined; therefore, the research team started by examining the first

book in the first grade series in Harcourt Brace Jovanovich's basal series.)

The research team filled out the portion of the instrument that asked for

information about the publisher, the grade level of the book, the book

number, the story title, and the coder number.

The first research question asked whether for the basal readers examined, the males were represented as main characters more frequently than the females were represented as main characters. To gather and analyze data related to research question one, the following procedures were employed. First the research team read the story. Next, the research team determined the gender of the main character. The main character was defined as the person who was most important in the story. The plot of the story usually took place around this character. The main character was the one who carried most of the dialogue and the one who made the decisions (Britton et al., 1989). The research team identified the main character as male, female, or other. "Other" refers to the main character role shared by male(s) and female(s), inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or animals (real or personified) (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). Once the research team determined the gender of the main character, the researchers denoted the gender of the main character by writing down the role or occupation that the character was portraying in the story. How the role or occupation was determined is discussed in the next paragraph.

The second research questions asked whether for the basal readers examined, the female main characters were portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that were not exclusive to "stereotypical female"

occupations. To analyze and gather data related to research question two, the following procedures were employed. First the research team determined the role or occupation of the main character as portrayed in the story. For example, the male main character might have been portrayed as a lawyer, bus driver, athlete, child, or pilot whereas a female main character might have been portrayed as a doctor, teacher, student, mother, or scientist. Next, the research team recalled the gender of the main character and filled in the checklist with the role or occupation that main character was portraying rather than marking an "X". The role or occupation written down was used to determine if the female main character had been portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations.

The third research question asked whether for the basal readers examined, the number of positive male traits found in the female main character was greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main character. To analyze and gather data related to research question three, the following procedures were employed. First, the research team reread the story and marked the traits that described the main character throughout the story on the coding instrument. There was no minimum or maximum number of traits that could be marked on the instrument. The research team chose between traits that were categorized as positive male,

negative male, positive female, negative female, or gender neutral. The main character could be assigned traits from any of the five categories. Additionally, the main character's traits could change throughout the story. For example, the main character could possess negative traits at the beginning of the story and positive traits by the end, and visa versa.

Traits judged positive for males were ones that portrayed the male characters as independent, willing to take risks, self-reliant, assertive, etc. whereas negative male traits would be ones that portrayed the male characters as dominant, aggressive, forceful, competitive, etc. Traits judged positive for females were ones that portrayed the female characters as sensitive to needs of others, understanding, gentle, compassionate, etc. whereas negative female traits were ones that portrayed the female characters as gullible, shy, yielding, childlike, etc. (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989; Witt, 1996). Gender neutral traits were used to describe both masculine and feminine traits. Gender neutral traits could be used to describe both male and female behavior. These traits include helpful, jealous, friendly, inefficient, happy, moody, etc. (Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989). The research team put an "X" next to the traits that described each main character. Next, the research team tallied the number of traits for each category. Finally, the tallied traits were analyzed to determine if positive

male traits were used to describe female main characters more often than positive female traits were used to describe male main characters.

The fourth research question asked whether for the basal readers examined, the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters was greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters. To analyze and gather data related to research question four, the following procedures were employed. First, the traits were tallied, and the research team compared the number of positive traits (male and female, combined) with the negative traits (male and female, combined). The research team counted the positive and negative traits in each category to determine which category had the most traits. The category with the most traits determined whether the character was portrayed positively or negatively. Any story that had a character that was hard to code was set aside. After all stories and main characters were coded, the three coders evaluated the stories set aside as a group to determine how the main character was portrayed.

After evaluating all of the stories in the first book of each series, the research team continued to evaluate the remainder of the books in the series in the same manner. The research team evaluated all the textbooks of one publisher's series (all books in first, second, fifth, and sixth grades) before beginning the evaluation of another publisher's basal reader series.

<u>Reliability</u>

According to Munt (1991), there are two types of consistency—

consistency among coders (reproducibility) and consistency through time

(stability). The first means different coders should be able to produce the

same results when applying the same strategies to the same content while the

second refers to coders producing the same results when applying the same

strategies on the same content at a different time (Munt, 1991). Reliability

was tested at the beginning of every publisher's series through the evaluation

of the second grade texts.

The first two stories of the second grade texts were read and coded

together, and the last two stories were read and coded together. The stories

in between were coded individually. Reliability was addressed in the

following ten categories: male main character, female main character,

"other" main character, role or occupation of main character, positive male

traits, negative male traits, positive female traits, negative female traits,

gender neutral traits, and status of main character.

After data was gathered and tallied, the principal investigator

calculated the "intraclass correlation" of the data. "Intraclass correlation,"

as defined by Frick and Stemple and Silverman, is a commonly used method

of calculating observer agreement (as cited in Munt, 1991). The reliability is

"obtained by dividing the number of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and disagreements per category or class. An overall reliability is then calculated. The calculation will produce a reliability/agreement coefficient which can range from 0.0 (no agreement) to 1.0 (perfect agreement)." (Munt, 1991, p. 47)

According to Silverman, a coefficient of 0.85 or better is considered a good or acceptable level of rater agreement (as cited in Munt, 1991). Therefore, this study used a 0.85 reliability coefficient as the minimum standard for the overall reliability in the study. The "intraclass correlation" tested reliability in the ten areas of data analysis for this study, as noted in the previous paragraph.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was performed to train the research team and test reliability in each of the ten categories that were evaluated. Two coders and the principal investigator made up the research team. During the pilot study, the principal investigator explained the purpose of the study, reviewed studies of the past, and reviewed the data-gathering instrument. Each research question was explained and the principal investigator showed the correlation of each research question to the data-gathering instrument. The research team reviewed and discussed the definitions of the 60 traits of the

Bem Sex Role Inventory (1978); furthermore, the research team defined

traits that were not definable by a dictionary (i.e., "defends own beliefs.")

After the research team reviewed the trait definitions and the

instrument, the principal investigator explained the need for reliability

among the coders. In order that the study be sound, the research team

needed to evaluate the stories in the same manner. The stories were

addressed for reliability in two different areas—stability and reproducibility.

Stability measured consistency over time, while reproducibility measured

consistency among the coders (Munt, 1991). Reliability was addressed in

the following ten areas: male main character, female main character, "other"

category, role or occupation, positive male traits, negative male traits,

positive female traits, negative female traits, gender neutral traits, and status

of main character.

Stability was tested at the beginning of every publisher's series

through the evaluation of the second grade texts. The results of each coder's

evaluation of the second grade texts were compared for the stability test.

Second grade texts were coded instead of first grade texts because the

second grade texts contained more stories with main characters that were not

classified as "other." The first two stories were read and rated together, as

were the last two stories. The stories in between were coded individually.

In addition to stability, reproducibility was tested at the beginning of every series. To test reproducibility, the research team used the results of the evaluations of the second grade texts. Dividing the number of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and disagreements per category tested the reliability. According to Silverman, the quotients must be greater than 0.85 (as cited in Munt, 1991). A score of "0.0" showed no agreement, and a score of "1.0" showed perfect agreement (Munt, 1991).

Results of the Pilot Study

The purpose of the pilot study was to train the research team and to test the reliability in each of the ten categories evaluated. During the pilot study, a list of all the stories to be examined was made so there would be no confusion among coders as to which story should be evaluated. Additionally, the "intraclass correlation" was applied to the ten categories coded on the instrument. The principal investigator found the reliability coefficient by dividing the number of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and the number of disagreements. Coefficients were tallied for each of the ten categories. Of the ten categories, nine contained data from the pilot study. All categories had a coefficient that was greater than 0.85. The average of the nine coefficients was 0.96. (See Appendix D).

Data analysis

Research question one asked if males were represented as main characters more frequently than females were represented as main characters. To analyze data related to research question one, first the principal investigator tallied the number of main characters portrayed in the categories of male, female, or "other." Next, the principal investigator used the tallied numbers to find the percentages represented in each category. Next, the principal investigator developed bar graphs of the percentages to evaluate the data. Finally, the principal investigator compared the percentages of male main characters to the percentages of female main characters to find if males were represented as main characters more frequently than females were represented as main characters.

Research question two asked if the female main characters were portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that are not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations. To analyze data related to research question two, first the principal investigator listed and tallied each role or occupation. Next, the principal investigator took a frequency count of each occupation, and the frequency count was calculated into percentages. Finally, the principal investigator developed a bar graph that showed the percentages of roles or occupations portrayed by the female main character.

Research question three asked if the number of positive male traits found in the female main character would be greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main character. To analyze data related to research question three, first the principal investigator tallied the number of positive male traits for the female main character and the number of positive female traits for the male main character. Next, the principal investigator developed a bar graph that compared the number of positive male traits in the female main character with the number of positive female traits found in the male main character.

Research question four asked if the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters would be greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters. To analyze data related to research question four, first the principal investigator tallied the number of positively portrayed male and female main characters. Next, the principal investigator used the tallied numbers to find the percentage of main characters portrayed positively for the males and females. Finally, the principal investigator developed a bar graph that compared the status of the male and female main characters.

Summary

The research team analyzed the top three basal readers series adopted by the State of Texas for first, second, fifth, and sixth grade. The research team studied the gender, role/occupation, and traits of the main character of every third story in the basal series. The research team identified the gender of the main character and the role he/she portrayed in the story. The categories for gender included male, female, and "other." "Other" was denoted when the main character of the story was shared by male(s) and female(s), inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or real or personified animals (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). Not only did the research team compare the number of male and female main characters; the research team also examined the roles/occupations of the female main character as portrayed in the stories. Next, the research team examined the traits of the male and female main character. The research team compared the positive and negative traits assigned to each character. Finally, the research team decided whether the male and female main characters were portrayed positively or negatively based on positive male, negative male, positive female, and negative female traits.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the results found after evaluating stories in the first, second, fifth, and sixth grade basal readers published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1993), Houghton Mifflin (1993), and Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (1993). The research team evaluated 58 characters in 114 stories across 25 books (see Table 1).

The research team identified the gender of the main character, identified the role or occupation of female main characters, identified traits that described the main character, and evaluated the traits assigned to the

Table 1. Number of Books, Stories, and Characters Analyzed, by Publisher

Publisher	# of books	# of stories	# of characters
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich	10	48	23
Houghton Mifflin	7	32	16
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill	8	34	19
Totals	25	114	58

male and female main character to determine if the characters were portrayed positively or negatively. The topics of this chapter include gender of main character, roles or occupations of main character, traits of main character, and status of main character.

Gender of Main Character

Research question one asked if for the basal readers examined, males were represented as main characters more frequently than females were represented as main characters. The number of instances of male and female gender of the main character was tallied from all the coded instruments for all stories and converted into percentages. One percentage was calculated to compare how often males were portrayed as main characters and how often females were portrayed as main characters (see Figure 1). For this calculation, characters portrayed as "other" were excluded. Data analyzed for research question one yielded the following results. The calculation revealed that for all of the publishers' series combined, the main character was portrayed as male 52% of the time and as female 48% of the time. Another percentage was calculated that compared the proportion of male main characters and female main characters in each individual basal reader series (see Figure 2). This calculation indicated that the main character was

Figure 1. Total percentage of main characters for all publishers combined, excluding "other"
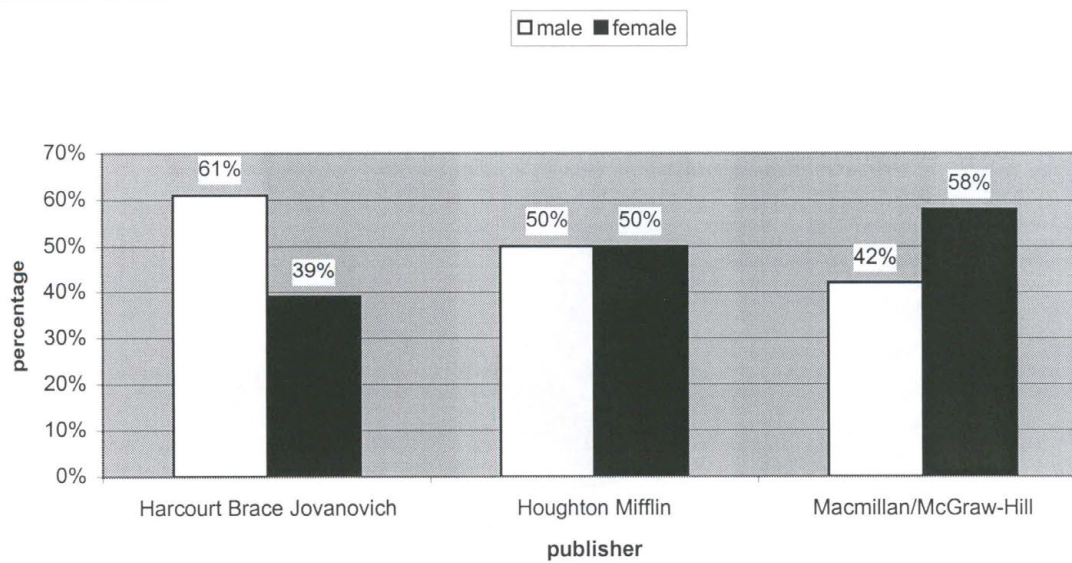
Figure 2. Percentage of main characters per publisher, excluding "other"

represented as male 61% of the time and the main character was represented as female 39% of the time in the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich basal reader series. In the Houghton Mifflin basal reader series, the main character was portrayed as male 50% of the time and the main character was portrayed as female 50% of the time. In the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill basal reader series, the main character was portrayed as male 42% of the time and the main character was portrayed as female 58% of the time. The reliability coefficient for research question one was 1.0 (see Appendix D).

Additional calculations were made that compared the frequency of portrayals of main characters as male, as female, and as "other." When comparing all of the publishers together it was found that the main character was portrayed as male 26% of the time, as female 25% of the time, and the "other" category was chosen 49% of the time (see Figure 3). For each publisher, an additional evaluation compared the portrayal of the male main character, female main character, and "other" main character (see Figure 4). In the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich series, the main character was portrayed as male 29% of the time, as female 19% of the time, and the main character was portrayed as "other" 52% of the time. In the Houghton Mifflin series, the main character was portrayed as male 25% of the time, the main character was portrayed as female 25% of the time, and the main character
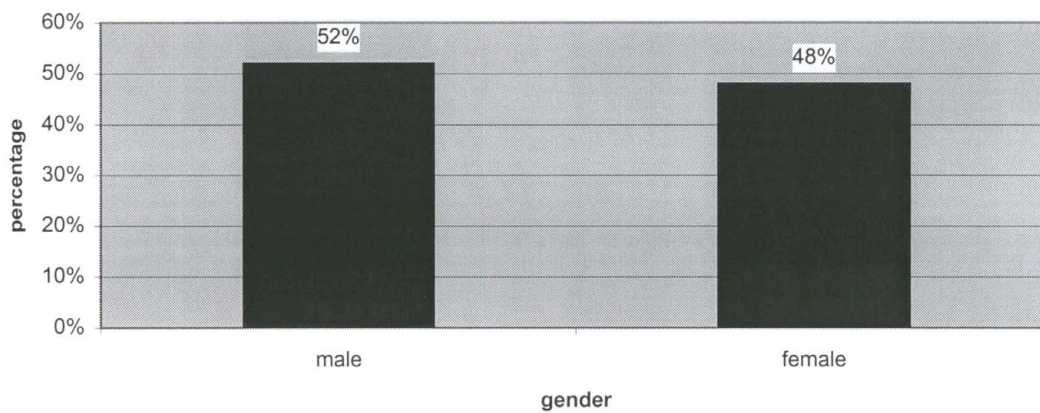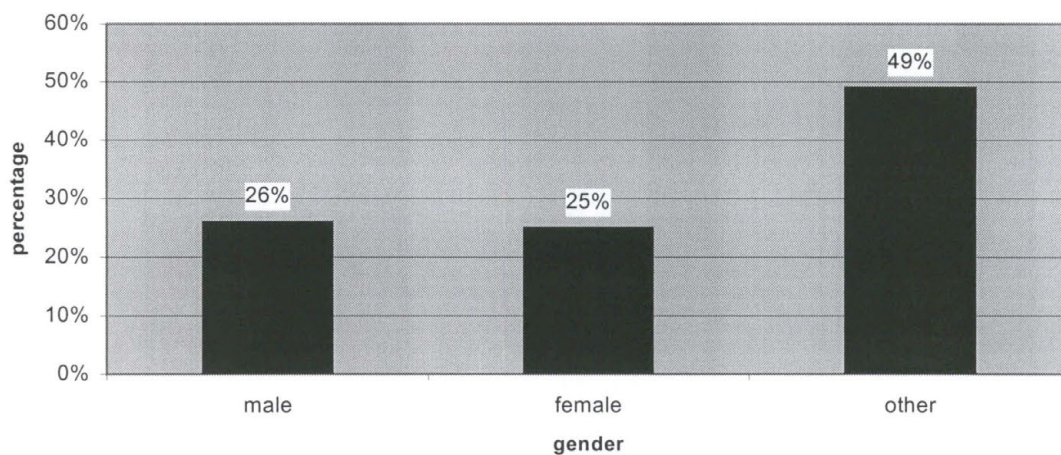
Figure 3. Total percentage of main characters for all publishers combined
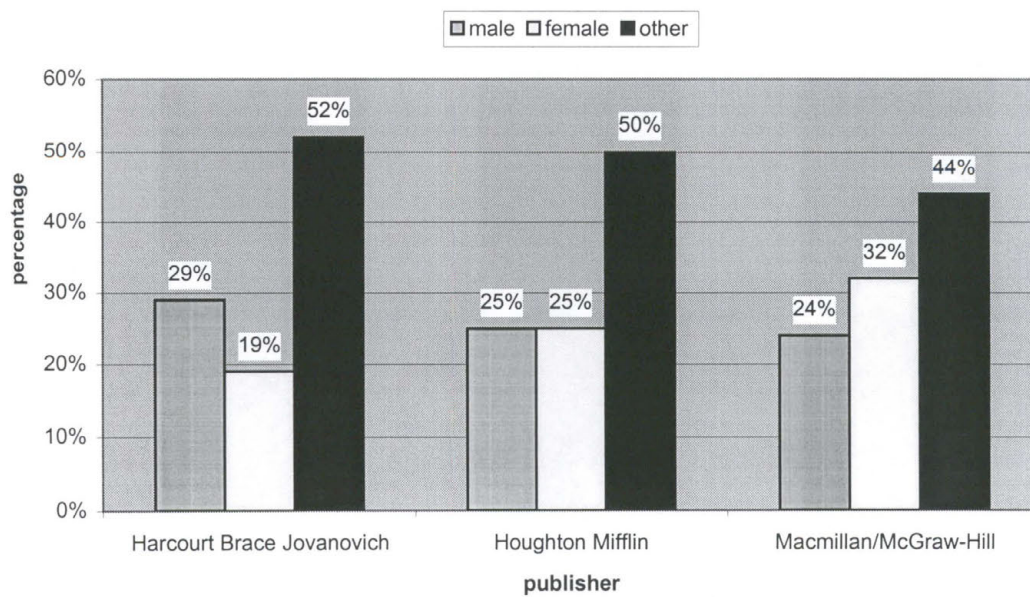
Figure 4. Total percentage of main characters per publisher

was portrayed as "other" 50% of the time. In the MacMillan/McGraw-Hill series, the main character was portrayed as male 24% of the time, the main character was portrayed as female 32% of the time, and the main character was portrayed as "other" 44% of the time.

Roles and Occupations of the Main Character

Research question two asked if for the basal readers examined, female main characters were portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that were not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations. The roles or occupations of the female main character were listed and tallied. The tallied results were converted to percentages and ordered from most frequently portrayed occupation to least frequently portrayed occupation (see Figure 5.) Data analyzed for research question two had the following results. The female main character was portrayed as a child 79% of the time, an artist 7% of the time, an aunt 7% of the time, a grandmother 3.5% of the time, and a teacher 3.5% of the time.

An additional evaluation listed and tallied the roles or occupations of the male main character. The tallied results were converted to percentages and ordered from most frequently portrayed occupations to least frequently portrayed occupation (see Figure 6.) The male main character was portrayed
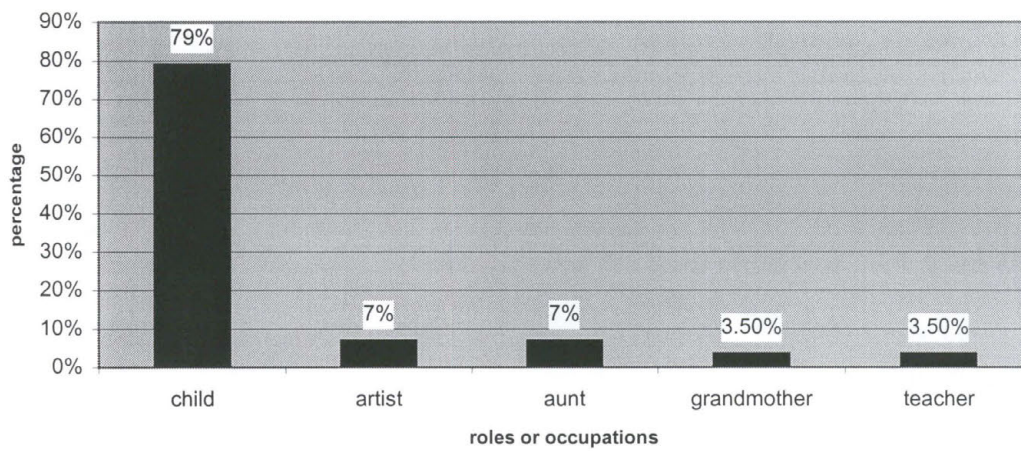
Figure 5. Roles or occupations of female main characters
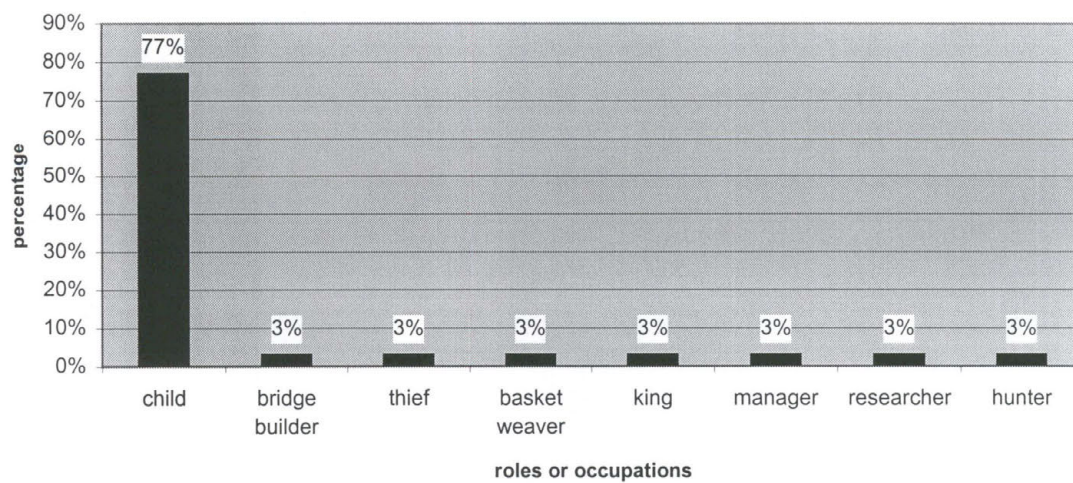
Figure 6. Roles or occupations of male main characters

as a child 77% of the time, a bridge builder 3% of the time, a thief 3 % of the time, a basket weaver 3% of the time, a king 3% of the time, a manager 3% of the time, a researcher 3 % of the time, and a hunter 3% of the time. The reliability coefficient for research question two was 0.98 (see Appendix D).

Traits of Main Character

Research question three asked if for the basal readers examined, the number of positive male traits found in the female main characters was greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main characters. The positive traits of the male and female main characters were tallied and presented in a bar graph (see Figure 7.) Data analyzed for research question three had the following results. The female main

Figure 7. Positive traits found in male and female main characters
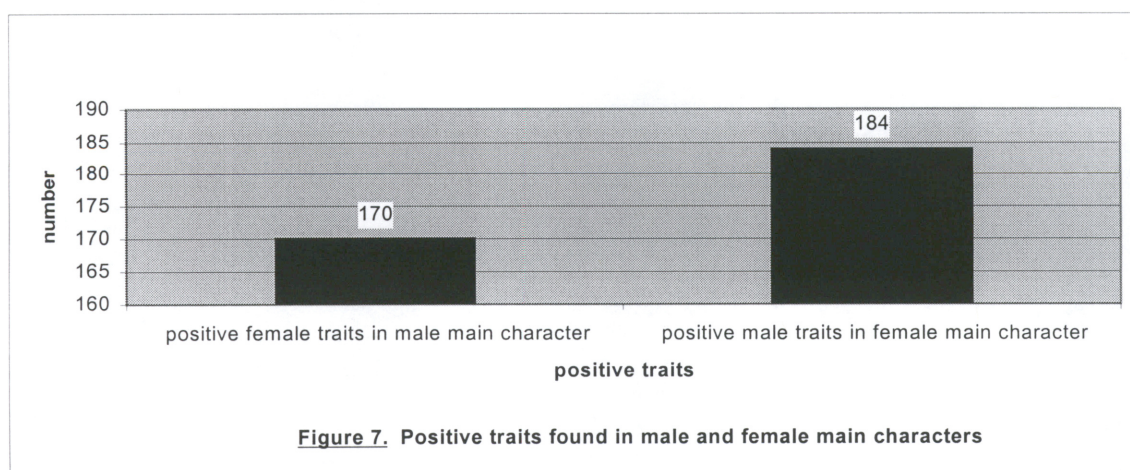
characters exhibited positive male traits in 184 instances, and the male main characters exhibited positive female traits in 170 instances.

Additionally, the male, female, and gender neutral traits were tallied and converted into percentages without regard to gender. The traits were listed from most frequently to least frequently portrayed for each character to see which traits were attributed to the main characters most often (see Figures 8, 9, and 10). The reliability coefficient for research question three was 0.93 (see Appendix D).

Status of Main Character

Research question four asked if for the basal readers examined, the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters was greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters. First, the research team tallied the positive male and female traits for each character. Next, the research team tallied the negative male and female traits for each character. The status of the character was determined by comparing the totals of the positive and negative traits. The highest total determined if the character was portrayed positively or negatively. The positive status of the male and female main characters was tallied and converted to percentages (see Figure 11.) Data analyzed for hypothesis four had the following results. The conversion indicated that 90% of the time the male characters were
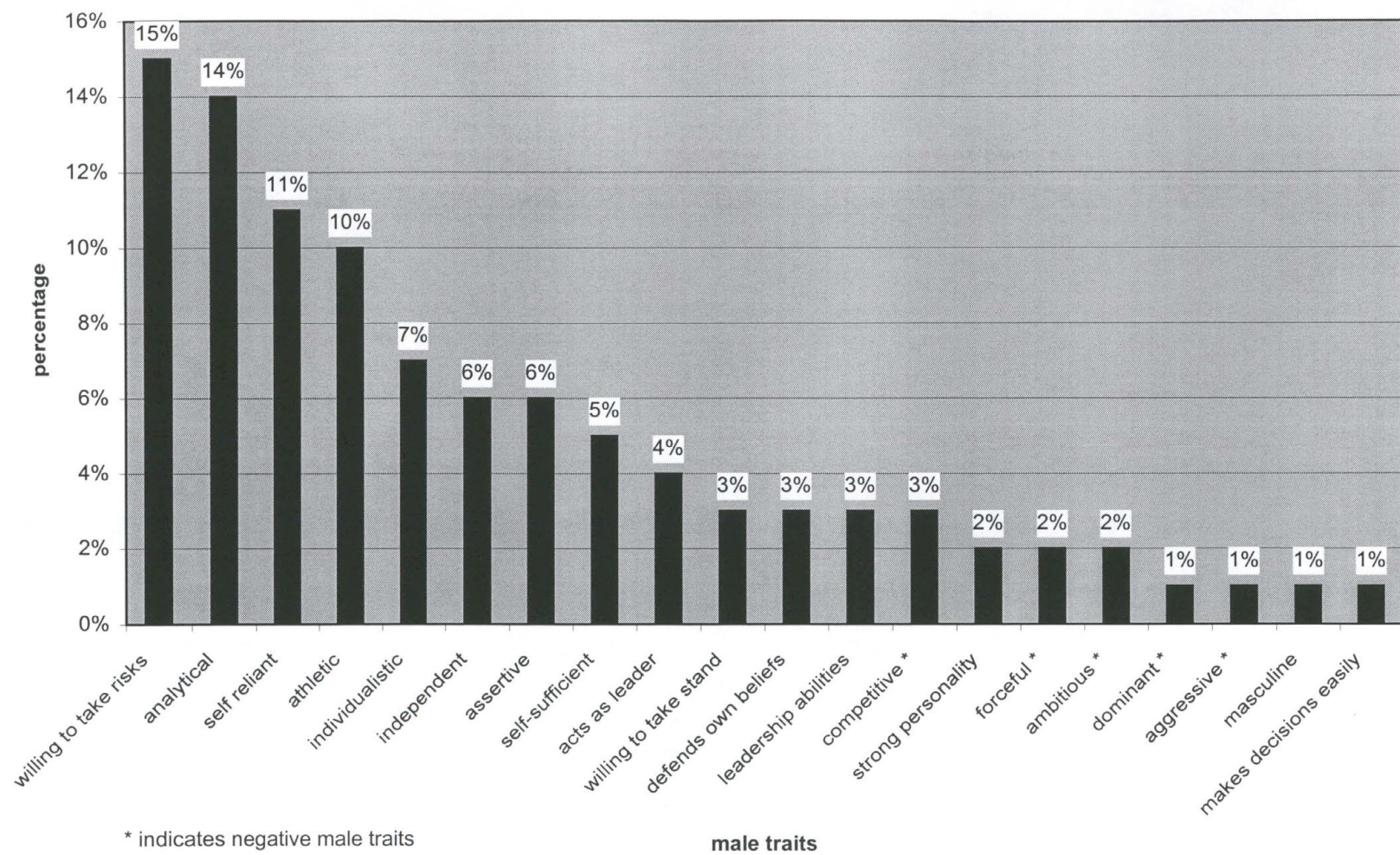
Figure 8. Percentage of male traits found in all main characters

* indicates negative male traits

male traits

59

* indicates negative female traits
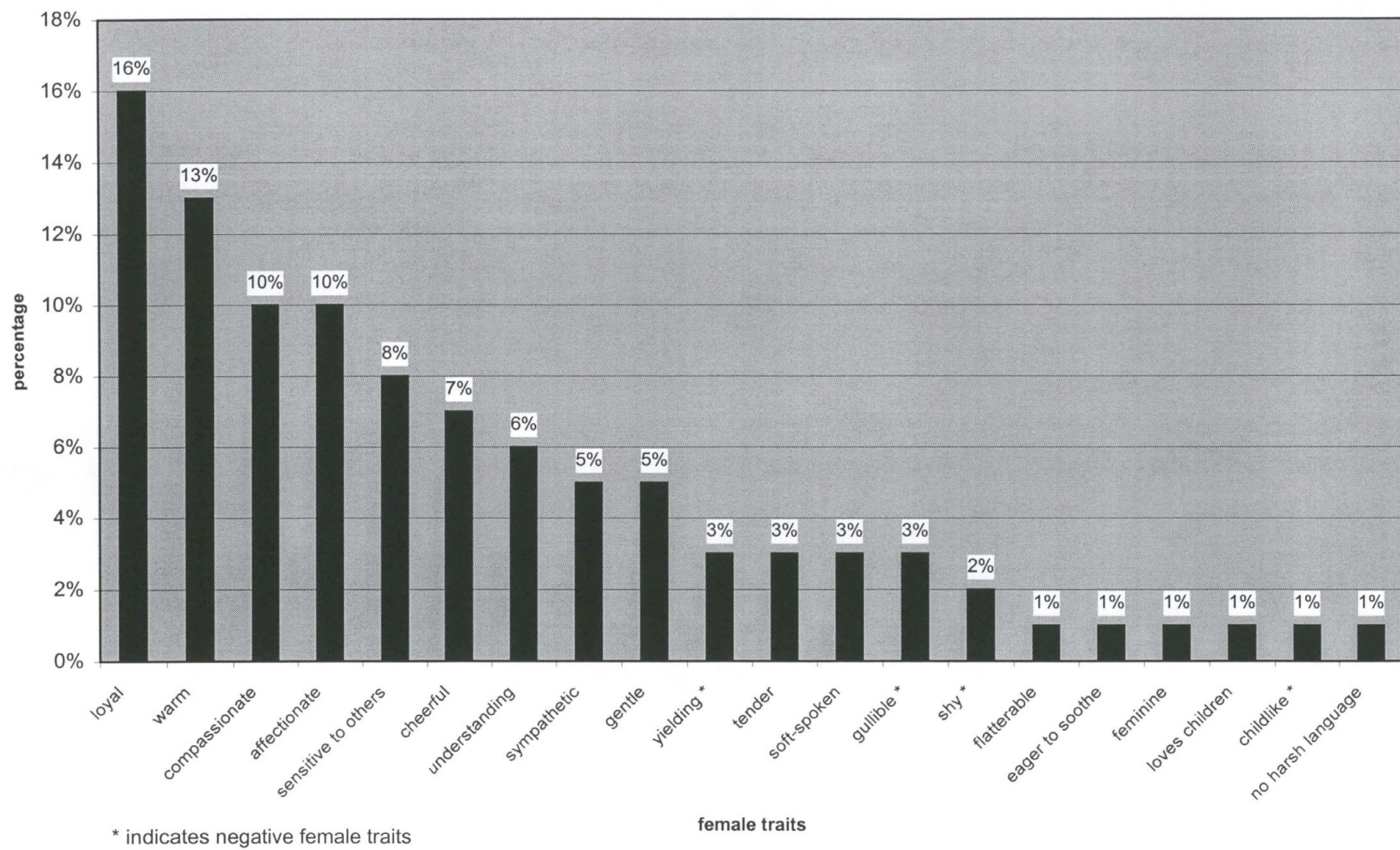
Figure 9. Percentage of female traits found in all main characters
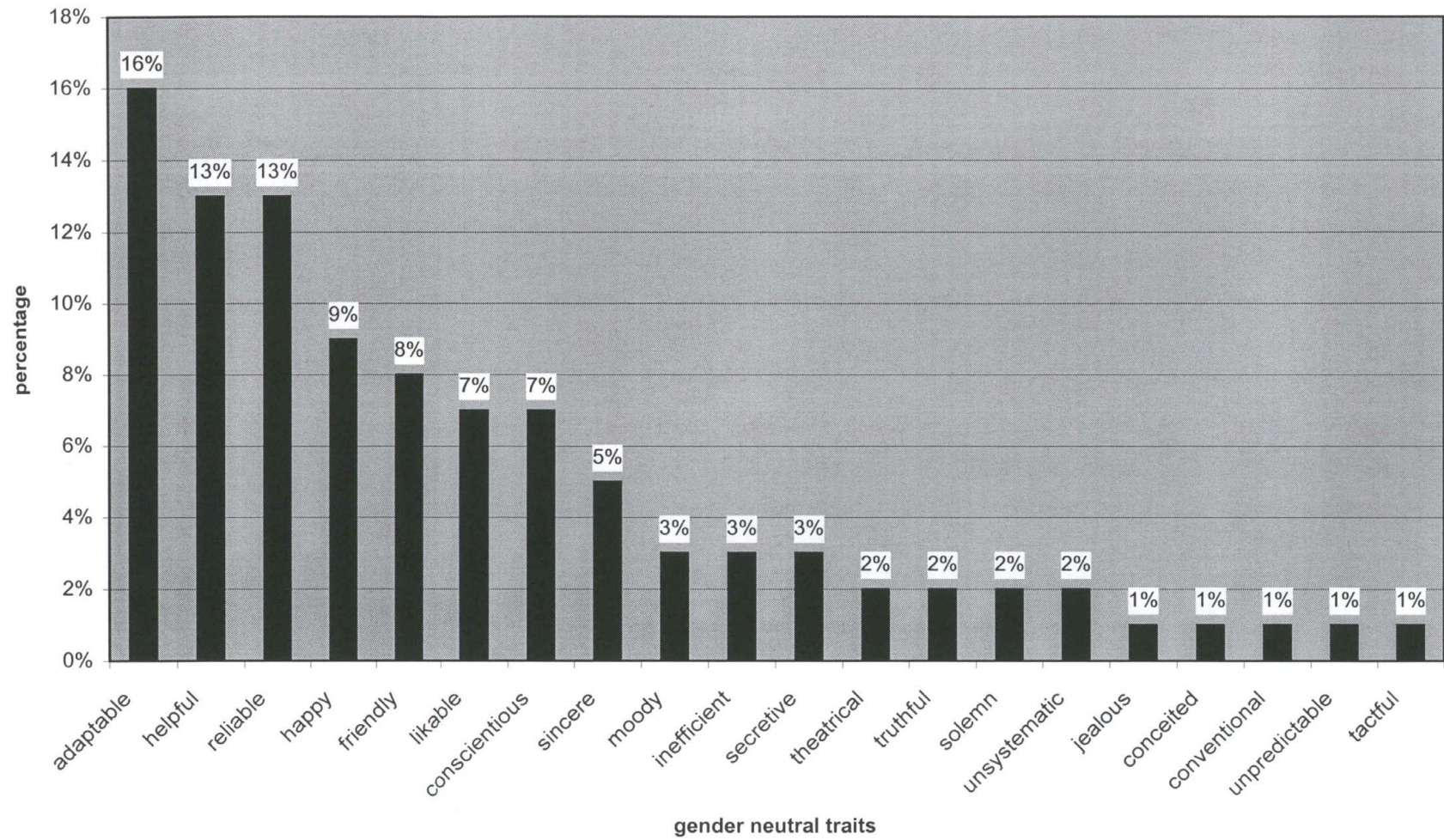
Figure 10. Percentage of gender neutral traits found in all main characters

portrayed positively and 93% of the time female characters were portrayed positively.

Additionally, the negative status assigned of the male and female main character was tallied and converted to percentages. The conversions found the male characters were portrayed negatively 10% of the time and the female characters were portrayed negatively 7% of the time. The reliability coefficient for research question for was 1.0 (see Appendix D.)

Figure 11. Percentage of main characters portrayed positively and negatively
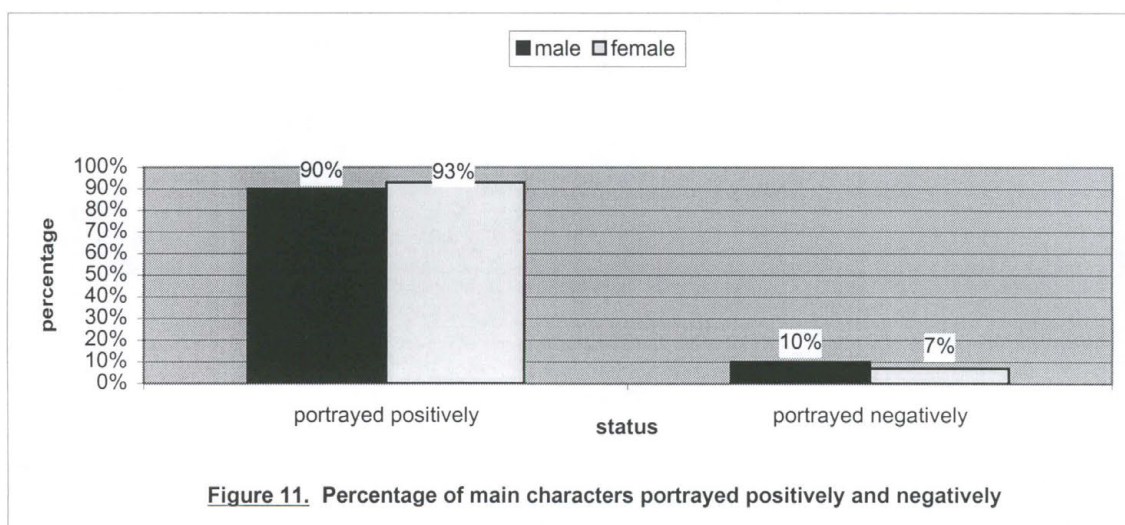
Summary

In 114 stories, 58 characters were evaluated according to their gender, role or occupation, and traits. Results from research question one showed that the main character was portrayed as male more frequently than as female when analyzing all of the publishers together. Analyzed

individually, one publisher represented main characters as males more often than as females, one represented main characters as females more often than as males, and one represented main characters as females as often as males. Character role analysis related to research question two revealed the female was portrayed as a child 79% of the time. Additionally, the female main character was portrayed in only five different roles or occupations. When the positive traits depicted by the main character were tallied for research question three, it was found that the female main character possessed more positive male traits than the male main character possessed positive female traits. Additionally, results from research question four found the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters was greater than the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to analyze the main character as

portrayed in selected samples of first, second, fifth, and sixth grade basal

readers adopted by the State of Texas for the 1998-1999 school year. The

research team evaluated 58 characters in 114 stories published in 25 books.

First, the gender of the main character in each story was identified. Next,

the percentage of male main characters and female main characters was

tallied to determine if the main character was represented more frequently as

males than as females. Secondly, the research team examined the role or

occupation of the female main character to determine if that character had

been portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that were not

exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations. Next, the research team

analyzed and tallied the positive traits of the male and female main character

to determine if the number of positive male traits found in the female main

character was greater than the number of positive female traits found in the

male main character. Finally, the research team evaluated the traits of each main character to determine if the main character was portrayed positively or negatively. This data was used to determine whether the percentage of positively portrayed male main character was greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main character. The topics in this chapter include gender of main character, role or occupation of main character, traits of main character, status of main character, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for future research.

Gender of Main Character

Research question one asked if for the basal readers examined, males were represented as main characters more frequently than the females were represented as main characters. Results from this study found the answer to research question one to be "yes" when looking at all three publishers' series combined. The main character was portrayed as male 52% of the time while the main character was portrayed as female 48% of the time. Although the two percentages are close in number, the same is not true when analyzing the percentages for each individual publisher's series. In the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1993) series, the main character was portrayed as male 61% of the time, and the main character was portrayed as female 39% of the time.

By contrast to Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1993), the Macmillan/McGraw-Hill series portrayed the main character as male 42% of the time and as female 58% of the time. The Houghton Mifflin (1993) series offered an equal percentage of portrayals of the main character as male and as female: both genders are represented 50% of the time. Evaluating the gender of the main character with all the publishers combined, the research team discovered the gender representation is almost equivalent. However, analysis of the individual publisher's main characters resulted in a different conclusion. The data showed that the publishers of the Houghton Mifflin series have published a series where the male and female main characters are represented equally. In the series reviewed, neither Harcourt Brace Jovanovich nor Macmillan/McGraw-Hill has published a series in which main characters are represented equally by gender.

In concurrence to the findings related to the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich and Macmillan/McGraw-Hill series, Foley and Boulware's (1996) study of seventh grade basal textbooks and Patt and McBride's (1993) study of children's books both indicated the main character was found to be portrayed as male 70% of the time. Foley and Boulware (1996) also found that male characters were "twice as likely to be cast in stories of real-life situations and three times more often in biographies" (p. 222).

When the "other" category was included, the percentages of the male and female main characters in all the publishers combined were only one percentage point apart. However, the "other" main character category represented almost 50% of the data. All publishers combined portrayed males as the main character 26% of the time, females 25% of the time, and "other" 49% of the time. Evaluating the individual publishers resulted in a different conclusion. In the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich series, the main character was portrayed as male 29% of the time, portrayed as female 19% of the time, and as "other" 52% of the time. By contrast, Macmillan/McGraw-Hill's percentages of main character were male 24% of the time, female 32% of the time, and "other" 44% of the time. Houghton Mifflin offered a balanced series where the male and female main characters are each represented 25% of the time, while the "other" main characters were represented 50% of the time. The data shows that the publishers of the Houghton Mifflin series have published a series in which the male and female main characters are represented equally. When the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, and Houghton Mifflin data results were averaged, the composite results did not reflect an accurate picture of what each publisher offers in terms of gender representation. The overall picture has shown that the publishers have almost balanced the percentages

of male and female main characters; however, almost 50% of the stories contained in publishers' books do not have a male or female main character. In concurrence to this study's findings, Hitchcock and Tompkins (1987) evaluated six different basal series and found the main character portrayed as male 18% of the time, as female 17% of the time, and as "other" 65% of the time. After evaluating stories and finding more than 50% of the stories featuring main characters classified as "other," Hitchcock and Tompkins concluded that "rather than take on the challenge to refashion the male-dominated world of basal reading series into a more holistic environment devoid of gender stereotypes, publishers have created a preponderance of neutral characters" (as cited in Vaughn-Roberson et al., 1989, p. 63). Additionally, Hitchcock and Tompkins stated, "instead of adding more female main characters, publishers are portraying females in shared main roles or they have created neutered characters, such as a talking tree or animals without sex role" (1987, p. 289).

In contrast to this study's findings, Goss (1996) coded 45 children's books and found main characters portrayed as male 47% of the time, the main character portrayed as female 36% of the time, and the main character portrayed as "undifferentiated or androgynous" 17% of the time (p. 6). However, when evaluating the secondary character, Goss found secondary

characters portrayed as male 42% of the time, as female 41% of the time, and as "undifferentiated" 11% of the time.

Thus, this study has shown that the gender representation was almost equivalent when examining all the publishers combined; however, analysis of the individual publisher's main characters resulted in a different conclusion. Houghton Mifflin has published a series where the male and female main characters are represented equally. Neither Harcourt Brace Jovanovich nor Macmillan/McGraw-Hill has published a series in which main characters are represented equally by gender.

Role or Occupation of Main Character

Research question two asked if for the basal readers examined, the female main characters were portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that were not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations. Results from this study found the answer to research question two to be "no." The female main character was portrayed in only five different roles: child, artist, aunt, grandmother, and teacher. The female main character was portrayed as a child 79% of the time. The female main character was portrayed in a profession less than 11% of the time. The remaining 89% of

the time, the female main character was portrayed as a member of a family (i.e., child, aunt, and grandmother.)

In 1987, Hitchcock and Tompkins evaluated basal readers and found the female characters were portrayed as children, students, authors, and grandmother most often. The female characters were portrayed as children 54% of the time. Thus, this study has shown that Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, and Houghton Mifflin reader series have depicted female main characters in a limited range of roles and occupations. In 1996, Foley and Boulware stated that "if female students cannot find relevant role models in the textbooks they read, their personality growth could actually be inhibited" (p. 221). Publishers of these series do not offer a wide variety of examples of roles or occupations for children to model.

The results of the male main character analysis for this study revealed that 77% of the males were portrayed as children; however, the male main character was portrayed in eight different roles. While two of the roles were unattainable or undesirable (king and thief), the other five were roles or occupations a child could aspire to attain. In contrast to this study's findings, Heintz's (1987) study of Caldecott Award-winning books found the male characters portrayed in 29 different roles. In another review of

Caldecott Award-winning books, Temple (1993) stated males were portrayed in action roles such as fighters, explorers, and adventurers of various sorts. According to Kortenhaus and Demarest (1993) "the roles portrayed in children's literature do not present an accurate representation or close approximation of the actual behavior of males and females in our society" (p. 231). Since male and female main characters are portrayed as children over 75% of the time, perhaps the publishers of basal reader series feel that young children are more interested in reading stories about other young children than stories about adults (Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987).

Traits of Main Character

Research question three asked if for the basal readers examined, the number of positive male traits found in the female main character was greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main character. Results from this study found the answer to research question three to be "yes." When tallying positive traits for male and female main characters, the research team found the female main characters to possess positive male traits in 184 instances and the male main characters to possess positive female traits in 170 instances. The average of this count shows 7 positive male traits per female main character and 6 positive female traits

per male main character. Even though the main character was represented

less often as a female than as a male (48% to 52%), the female main

character still possessed more positive male traits than the male character did

positive female traits. Examples of positive male, negative male, positive

female, and negative female traits found in the study follow:

> positive male—a young girl saving the life of another person
> negative male—a man breaking into a house to get gold coins
> positive female—a young girl consoling an upset young boy
> negative female—a girl turning away from a new situation.

This data helped the principal investigator draw a conclusion that authors are

writing stories that allow the female main character to exhibit several male

traits. However, the data does not indicate that authors are portraying male

main characters who exhibit positive female traits as frequently. In

concurrence to this study's findings, Witt (1996) stated, the male main

characters are still portrayed in a masculine manner, but the female main

character are becoming more balanced with both male and female traits.

In contrast, Purcell and Stewart (1990) found in their study of

children's readers that females were portrayed in more active roles, such that

"they are still shown as being very brave while waiting for rescue, but they

still cannot help themselves out of trouble" (p. 184). Kortenhaus and

Demarest (1993) found that even in stories where females were portrayed in

the main character role, the females needed help to solve a problem. In most cases, an older male provided the help.

> "Mothers are shown as ineffectual and appear overwhelmed by problems, always needing to rely on fathers or sons to solve their dilemmas. Fathers on the other hand, are portrayed in a capable, take-charge, manner, seldom consulting the mother about any decision" (p. 230).

Status of Main Character

Research question four asked if for the basal readers examined, the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters was greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters. Results from this study found the answer to research question four to be "yes." When comparing the positive traits of the main character, the study found the female main character to be portrayed positively 93% of the time and the male main character to be portrayed positively 90% of the time. Even though the percentage of female main characters was less than the percentage of male main characters, the percentage of positively portrayed females was still higher than the males. When analyzing the negative status of the main character, the male main character was portrayed negatively 10% of the time and the female main character was portrayed negatively 7% of the time. This data indicated for the basal series examined, the female main characters have moved away from the "stereotypical female traits"

such as helpless, dependent, and emotional and started to possess traits that are portrayed positively.

In a study of male main characters portrayed in basal readers, Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989) found results similar to this study's results. Males were portrayed positively 95% of the time and males were portrayed negatively in 5% of the time. The authors note that characters often learned to overcome negative traits in the course of the story so that their overall portrayal was positive.

Examples of positively portrayed characters and negatively portrayed characters found in the study follow:

> positively portrayed—a young boy who cares for his younger
> brother throughout the story
> negatively portrayed—a man who manipulates people
> throughout the story in order to steal gold coins

Recommendations for Practice

After reviewing data gathered from the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Authors of basal reader series (a title used to refer to those who compile stories used in the series) may want to consider surveying the field of children's literature to find more stories that contain one central main character to counter the large

percentage of stories that have "other" portrayed as the main character. The stories need to portray female main characters as frequently as they portray male main characters. Additionally, the stories need to portray both the male and female main character in a wide variety of roles or occupations so that children will have models for roles that they can aspire to attain.

2. Publishers of basal reader series need to evaluate all the stories that are submitted for publication in terms of gender of main character. Publishers may want to study the relative proportions of main characters who are male, female, and "other" in their basal series. Furthermore, publishers may want to study the effects of the distribution of the main characters on the quality of young readers' literacy experiences. Additionally, publishers need to find stories that portray both the male and female main characters in a positive light.

3. Consumers of basal reader series need to evaluate the series before adopting them to be used in their schools. Textbook committees need to be given checklists to help evaluate the different publishers in the area of gender of the main character

and role or occupation of the main character. Consumers need to be aware of how the male and female main characters are being portrayed in the stories. Additionally, the consumers need to be aware of the impact the stories have on their intended audience.

Recommendations for Future Research

After reviewing data gathered from the study, the following recommendations have been made:

1. Research studies need to be conducted that will evaluate the main character as portrayed in pictures and illustrations found in basal reader series. Studies need to evaluate the pictures and illustrations to see if the male and female genders are being represented an equal percentage of times.

2. Research studies need to be conducted that will evaluate the ethnicity of the male and female main character as portrayed in the basal reader series. The studies need to analyze the data to see if each gender of each ethnic group is being represented equitably in proportions similar to the population.

Summary

In this study, the top three basal reader series adopted by the State of Texas for the 1998-1999 school year were analyzed. The researcher evaluated the gender, role or occupation, and traits of the main character of every third story in the Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (1993), Houghton Mifflin (1993), and Macmillan/McGraw-Hill (1993) series readers used in first, second, fifth, and sixth grade. After identifying the gender of the main character, the principal investigator found the main characters were represented as male somewhat more often than female, although this varied by publisher. When analyzing the role or occupation of the female main character, the principal investigator found the female to be portrayed in only five different roles, hence representing a limiting range of roles or occupations. Within the five roles, the female main character was portrayed as a child 79% of the time, while the male main character was portrayed as a child 77% of the time. Next, the principal investigator evaluated the positive traits of the main character and found the female main character possessed more positive male traits than the male main character possessed positive female traits. Finally, the principal investigator evaluated the status of the main character portrayal. Data indicated the female main character was portrayed positively more often than the male main character.

Recommendations were made for the authors, publishers, and consumers of the basal reader series. Publishing stories with a balance of male and female main characters was recommended. Additionally, publishing stories with a greater percentage of characters who are portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations was recommended. Future analysis of main characters as portrayed in pictures and illustrations of basal readers was recommended, as was study of the ethnicity of male and female main characters as portrayed in the basal reader series.

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APPENDIX A

PILOT STUDY

INITIAL MEETING WITH CODERS

1. Explain purpose of study then go over expectations of coder.

2. Discuss studies of the past the areas that were studied. (central and
    subsidiary roles, roles and occupations, traits and characteristics, and
    effect of gender presentation)

3. Review data gathering instrument.

4. Explain each hypothesis and show how data will be gathered for each
    hypothesis on the instrument. Next, show how data for each
    hypothesis will be analyzed.

5. Discuss and define main character. Explain categories for gender of
    main character—male, female, other.

6. Discuss definitions of traits. Explain positive, negative, and gender
    neutral. Read over definitions and discuss meaning of each. Since
    some definitions could not be defined by dictionary, the coders will
    work together to define the following terms: defends own beliefs,
    strong personality, leadership abilities, willing to take risks, makes
    decisions easily, willing to take stand, acts as a leader, sensitive to
    others, eager to soothe, no harsh language, and loves children.

7. Explain coder's responsibilities to include identifying main character, identifying the gender of the main character, identifying the role or occupation of the main character, and marking traits that describe the main character throughout the story. The coder should think about the defined traits as he/she is reading the story. The coder should mark the traits that describe the main character as the character changes in the story. If the coder thinks of a description of the main character that is not on the instrument, it is not necessary to try to find another trait that will substitute for one not on the instrument. For example, "supportive" and "rude" are not on the list of traits; however, "loyal" and "conceited" are on the instrument. Although the words have similar meanings, they may not have the same connotation in the story. It is not necessary to substitute similar traits when the coder feels there is a word with a different meaning. Do not over analyze. When unsure about the traits in a story, set the story aside for the research team to code together.

8. Explain reliability among the coders. Stories will be coded as a team at the beginning of each publisher's series. The first two stories will be read and coded together, and the last two stories will be coded together. The stories in between will be coded individually. The

stories will be addressed for reliability in two different areas—

stability and reproducibility. Stability measures consistency over

time, and reproducibility measures consistency among the raters

(Munt, 1991). Reliability will be addressed in the following ten areas:

male main character, female main character, "other" category, role or

occupation of main character, positive male traits, negative male

traits, positive female traits, negative female traits, gender neutral

traits, and status of main character. Stability will be tested at the

beginning of every publisher's series through the evaluation of the

second grade basal readers and comparing the results of the coders.

Reproducibility will be tested at the beginning of every series, too.

The reliability will be tested by dividing the number of agreements by

the sum of the number of agreements and disagreements per category.

The quotient must be greater than .85. A score of "0.0" means no

agreement; whereas, a score of "1.0" means perfect agreement (Munt,

1991).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CODING (PILOT STUDY)

1. Before coding each story, review definitions of terms used to describe traits of the main character. Remember, traits that are categorized as "negative" are ones that cause self- or social-destruction.

2. Before reading a story, fill out the top portion of the instrument that asks for the publisher, grade level, book number, story title, and coder number. Use the following guidelines to fill out the top portion of the instrument.

    a. Publisher: Write the name of the publisher on the line marked "publisher."

        Harcourt Brace Jovanovich

        Houghton Mifflin

        Macmillan/McGraw Hill

    b. Grade level: The grade level of each book is listed numerically on the back cover of the book. Write the number of the grade level on the line marked "grade level" (1, 2, 5, or 6).

    c. Book number: The book number of each book is listed numerically on the back cover of each book after the grade level. (ex: 1:2—This would be the second book in a first grade

series.) If there is not a number after the grade level, then there is only one book for that grade level. Remember, the study is evaluating only the primary texts, not the supplementary texts. Numbers with a star or an asterisk beside them denote supplemental texts. Write the number of the book on the line marked "book number."

d.   <u>Story title</u>: The study is examining every third story in each book. Do not count poems, skill lessons, comic strips, riddles, etc. Write the story title on the line marked "story title."

e.   <u>Coder number</u>: Each coder in the research team has been assigned a number. Circle your number next to the line that says "coder."

3.   Read the story.

4.   After you read the story, identify the main character. The main character is defined as the person who is most important in the story. The plot of the story usually takes place around this character. The main character is the one who carries most of the dialogue, and the one who makes the decisions (Britton, et al., 1989)

5.   Next, place the main character into one of three categories: male, female, or other. "Other" refers to the main character role shared by

male(s) and female(s) or a story about inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or animals (real or personified) (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). If the main character role falls into the category "other," write who or what the story is about in the box that corresponds with "other." Since this study is evaluating only the male or female main character, you will continue to the next story at this point. It is not necessary to fill out the part of the instrument that describes traits of the main character if the main character falls into the "other" category.

6. After determining the gender of the main character, identify the occupation or role the character is portraying in the story. A role is defined as "a part to be played" (p. 1241). An occupation is defined as "one's usual or principal work or business, especially as a means of earning a living" (p. 996). Examples of different roles or occupations include doctor, nurse, child, teacher, scientist, police officer, wife, soldier, secretary, etc. Denote the gender of the main character and the role or occupation of the main character in the same chart. Having decided the role or occupation of the main character, write it down in the box that corresponds with the gender of that main character.

7. Next, mark the traits that describe the main character. Reread the story, mark the traits that describe the main character throughout the story. There is no minimum or maximum number of traits that can be marked. The traits are divided into the following five categories: positive male, negative male, positive female, negative female, and gender neutral. The main character can be assigned traits from any of the five categories. The main character's traits can change throughout the story. For example, the main character can possess negative traits at the beginning of the story and positive traits by the end, and visa versa. If a story is difficult to rate, place it aside. The research team will evaluate and interpret these stories and traits together until a consensus is reached.

8. Total the number of traits for each of the five categories. Write the total on the line marked "total" below the chart for each category.

9. Find the total number of positive traits for the main character. Find this total by combining the total number of positive male traits and the total number of positive female traits. Put this total on the line marked "total positive traits" below the chart.

10. Find the total number of negative traits for the main character. Find this total by combining the total number of negative male traits and

the total number of negative female traits. Put this total on the line marked "total negative traits" below the chart.

11. Finally, you will determine if the main character's overall portrayal in the story is positive or negative. This will be determined by comparing the totals of the positive and negative traits. The highest total will determine whether the main character is portrayed positively or negatively. Denote this by circling "portrayed positively" or "portrayed negatively" at the bottom of the page. If the total of the positive and negative traits is equal to one another, place the story aside. The research team will evaluate the story and traits together until a consensus is met.

12. Only one publisher's series will be evaluated at a time. The first two stories and the last two stories of each second grade books will be coded together by the research team. The stories in between will be coded individually. After these stories have been evaluated, the research team will tally the instruments and compare the results. If the results are compatible, the coders will continue to work individually on each story. When all the books and stories have been evaluated in one series, the research team will work together again on the second grade books in the next series.

NOTES FROM INITIAL MEETING AND PILOT STUDY

PUBLISHER NAME AND STORY NAME

After reviewing the data gathering instrument, it was suggested that each coder write out the name of the publisher and the name of each story. It was felt that writing out the publisher's name or initials would make it easier to manage the data later. There was also concern about the coders getting out of sequence by picking every third story. Coders were afraid that if the count was messed up, individual coders might be evaluating different stories. It was suggested that the name of each story from each basal reader be listed so that there would be no confusion to which story should be evaluated. The researcher made a list of each story title to be used as a guide for evaluating the correct story. It was suggested that the line for "Publisher:" and "Story:" should be made longer on the data gathering instrument.

DELIMITATIONS

In the delimitations, there was a question about "fables." The researcher inadvertently left "fables" off the delimitations list. The study will be

delimited to every third story (not poems, skill lessons, comic strips, riddles, fables, etc.)

DEFINITIONS

The research team reviewed the definitions of the five categories of traits: positive male, negative male, positive female, negative female, and gender neutral. As a team, the raters defined the following eleven phrases: defends own beliefs, strong personality, leadership abilities, willing to take risks, makes decisions easily, willing to take stand, acts as a leader, sensitive to others, eager to soothe, no harsh language, and loves children. The coders felt that "willing to take risks," "makes decisions easily," "no harsh language," and "loves children" were phrases that define themselves, and marked the definitions accordingly.

RELIABILITY

The researcher explained to the coders the need for reliability throughout the data-gathering process. The researcher also explained the importance of consistency. According to Munt (1991), there are two types of consistency—consistency among coders and consistency through time. The first means different coders should be able to produce the same results when

applying the same strategies to the same content. The second refers to

coders producing the same results when applying the same strategies on the

same content at a different time (Munt, 1991).

The researcher explained "intraclass correlation" as defined by Frick and

Stemple and Silverman (as cited in Munt, 1991). According to Silverman,

"intraclass correlation" is a commonly used method of calculating observer

agreement (as cited in Munt, 1991). "It is obtained by dividing the number

of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and disagreements

per category or class. An overall reliability is then calculated. The

calculation will produce a reliability/agreement coefficient which can range

from 0.0 (no agreement) to 1.0 (perfect agreement)" (Munt, 1991, p. 47).

According to Silverman, a coefficient of 0.85 or better is considered a good

or acceptable level of rater agreement (as cited in Munt, 1991). Therefore,

this study will use a 0.85 reliability coefficient as the minimum standard for

the overall reliability of the study. The "intraclass correlation" will test

reliability in the following ten areas: gender of main character as male,

gender of main character as female, main character as "other," identification

of role or occupation, positive male traits, negative male traits, positive

female traits, negative female traits, gender neutral traits, status of main

character.

PILOT STUDY

The pilot study consisted of ten stories. Two stories were coded together as

a team, six stories were coded individually by each coder, and the last two

stories were coded together as a team. At the end of the pilot study, the

"intraclass correlation" was applied to the ten categories coded on the

instrument. The researcher found the reliability coefficient by dividing the

number of agreements by the sum of the number of agreements and the

number of disagreements. The researcher tallied the number of similarities

and differences for each of the ten categories studied. Table 1 was used to

evaluate the data. Of the ten categories analyzed, nine contained data in the

pilot study. All categories had a coefficient that was greater than 0.85. The

average of the nine coefficients was 0.96.

APPENDIX B

DEFINITIONS OF TRAITS

Positive Male

Self-reliant—relying on oneself or one's own powers (p. 1295)

* Defends own beliefs—stands up for what the individual believes in by word or action

Independent—not influenced or controlled by others in matters of opinion, conduct, etc. (p. 723)

Athletic—physically active and strong (p. 94)

Assertive—given to stating with assurance, confidence, or force; positive; aggressive (p. 90)

* Strong personality—outgoing; not afraid to express feelings and opinions; unwavering

Analytical—skilled in or habitually using a method that studies the nature of something and determines its essential features and their relations (p. 53)

* Leadership abilities—able to influence and guide others without coercion

* Willing to take risks—phrase defines itself

* Makes decisions easily—phrase defines itself

Self-sufficient—able to supply one's own or its own needs without external assistance (p. 1295)

Masculine—having the qualities or characteristics of a man; manly; virile; strong; bold (p. 881)

* **Willing to take stand**—willing to stand by beliefs without being influenced by others

* **Acts as a leader**—takes charge of a situation

Individualistic—characterized by great independence or individuality in thought or action (p. 725)

Negative Male

Forceful—full of force; powerful; vigorous; effective; acting or driven with force (p. 554)

Dominant—ruling; governing; controlling' having or exerting authority or influence (p. 424)

Aggressive—characterized by or tending toward unprovoked offensives, attacks, invasions, or the like; militantly forward or menacing (p. 28)

Competitive—of, pertaining to, involving, or decide by competition (p. 300)

Ambitious—eagerly desirous of achieving or obtaining power, superiority, or distinction (p. 46)

Positive Female

Cheerful—full of cheer; in good spirits (p. 252)

Affectionate—of, caused by, or expressing emotion or feeling; emotional (p. 24)

Flatterable—able to be pleased by complimentary speech or attention (p. 541)

Loyal—faithful to one's oath, commitments, or obligations (p. 851)

Feminine—pertaining to a woman or girl; gentle (p. 523)

Sympathetic—characterized by, proceeding from, exhibiting, or feeling sympathy; sympathizing; compassionate (p. 1441)

* Sensitive to others—aware and supportive of other's feelings

Understanding—mental process of one who comprehends; comprehension; personal interpretation (p. 1545)

Compassionate—having or showing feeling of deep sympathy or sorrow for another who is stricken by suffering or misfortune, accompanied by a strong desire to alleviate the pain or remove its cause (p. 299)

* Eager to soothe—offers encouragement or consolation

Soft-spoken—speaking with a soft or gentle voice; mild (p. 1353)

Warm—characterized by or showing lively feelings, passions, emotions, sympathies, etc. (p. 1609)

Tender—easily moved to sympathy or compassion; kind (p. 1462)

* No harsh language—phrase defines itself

* Loves children—phrase defines itself

Gentle—kindly; amiable (p. 591)

Negative Female

Yielding—inclined to give in; submissive; compliant (p. 1655)

Shy—bashful; retiring; easily frightened away; timid (p. 1322)

Gullible—easily deceived or cheated (p. 630)

Childlike—like a child, as in innocence (p. 256)

Gender Neutral

Helpful—giving or rendering or assistance; of service (p. 659)

Moody—expressing or exhibiting sharply varying moods; temperamental (p. 929)

Conscientious—controlled by or done according to the sense of what is right or wrong in one's conduct or motives, impelling one toward right action (p. 311)

Theatrical—suggestive of the theater or acting; artificial, pompous, spectacular, or extravagantly histrionic (p. 1470)

Happy—delighted, pleased, or glad, as over a particular thing (p. 644)

Unpredictable—not predictable; not to be foreseen or foretold (p. 1560)

Reliable—that may be relied on; trustworthy; dependable in achievement, accuracy, honesty, etc. (p. 1212)

Jealous—feeling resentment against a person because of his rivalry, success, or advantages (p. 765)

Truthful—telling the truth, especially habitually (p. 1521)

Secretive—having or showing a disposition to secrecy; reticent (p. 1289)

Sincere—free from deceit, hypocrisy, or falseness; earnest (p. 1330)

Conceited—having an exaggerated opinion of one's own abilities, appearance, importance, etc. (p. 304)

Likable—agreeable; congenial (p. 830)

Solemn—grave, sober, or mirthless, as a person, a face, speech, tone, mood, etc. (p. 1354)

Friendly—like a friend; kind; helpful (p. 569)

Inefficient—not efficient; unable to effect or achieve the desired result with reasonable economy of means (p. 727)

Adaptable—able to adjust oneself readily to different conditions (p. 16)

Unsystematic—not characterized by a system or method; not methodical (p. 444)

Tactful—having or manifesting a keen sense of what to say or do to avoid giving offense (p. 447)

Conventional—conforming or adhering to accepted standards, as of conduct or taste (p. 319)

Vaughn-Roberson et al. (1989)

* Words or definitions defined by research team.

All other definitions found in The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1983).

APPENDIX C

CODING INSTRUMENT

Publisher: _____ Book number: _____ Rater: 1 2 3

Grade level: _____ Story: _____

MAIN CHARACTER	ROLE/OCCUPATION
Male	
Female	
Other *	

* "Other" refers to the main character role shared by male(s) and female(s), inanimate objects, abstract concepts, or animals [real or personified] (Britton & Lumpkin, 1983; Hitchcock & Tompkins, 1987). In 1989, Vaughn-Roberson et al. divided the traits from the Bem Sex Role Inventory into the following five categories (Bem, 1973).

	TRAITS								
X	POSITIVE MALE	X	NEGATIVE MALE	X	POSITIVE FEMALE	X	NEGATIVE FEMALE	X	GENDER NEUTRAL
	Self-reliant		Forceful		Cheerful		Yielding		Helpful
	Defends own beliefs		Dominant		Affectionate		Shy		Moody
	Independent		Aggressive		Flatterable		Gullible		Conscientious
	Athletic		Competitive		Loyal		Childlike		Theatrical
	Assertive		Ambitious		Feminine				Happy
	Strong personality				Sympathetic				Unpredictable
	Analytical				Sensitive to others				Reliable
	Leadership abilities				Understanding				Jealous
	Willing to take risks				Compassionate				Truthful
	Makes decisions easily				Eager to soothe				Secretive
	Self-sufficient				Soft-spoken				Sincere
	Masculine				Warm				Conceited
	Willing to take stand				Tender				Likable
	Acts as a leader				No harsh language				Solemn
	Individualistic				Loves children				Friendly
					Gentle				Inefficient
									Adaptable
									Unsystematic
									Tactful
									Conventional

_____ Total positive male   _____ Total negative male   _____ Total positive female   _____ Total negative female   _____ Total gender neutral

Total positive traits (male and female) _____   Total negative traits (male and female) _____

Portrayed positively   Portrayed negatively

APPENDIX D

RELIABILITY RESULTS

Reliability Check for Coders
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich
Second Grade—book 1 and book 2

story	male mc		female mc		"other"		role		(+) male		(-) male		(+) female		(-) female		gen. neu		status	
#	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif	same	dif.
1	3						3		9	1			4	1			6		3	
2			3				3						18	1			6	1	3	
3					3															
4					3															
5			3				3						8	2			12		3	
6					3															
7					3															
8			3				3						9	1			1	1	3	
9	3						2	1	9	1					3		6		3	
10					3															
total	6		9		15		14	1	18	2			39	5	3		31	2	15	
rel.	1		1		1		0.93		0.9				0.89		1		0 94		1	

average reliability—0.96

Reliability Check for Coders
Houghton Mifflin
Second Grade—book 1 and book 2

story	male mc		female mc		"other"		role		(+) male		(-) male		(+) female		(-) female		gen.	neu.	status	
#	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.
1			3				3		3				6	1			12		3	
2					3															
3					3															
4	3						3		6						3		6		3	
5	3						3		9	2			3				9	2	3	
6			3				3		12	2			6	1			6	1	3	
total	6		6		6		12		30	4			15	2	3		33	3	12	
rel.	1		1		1		1		0.88				0.88		1		0.92		1	

average reliability—0.96

Reliability Check for Coders
Macmillan/McGraw-Hill
Second Grade—book 1 and book2

story	male	mc	female	mc	"other"		role		(+)	male	(-)	male	(+)	female	(-)	female	gen	neu.	status	
#	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif	same	dif.	same	dif	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif.	same	dif	same	dif
1	3						3		6	1			9	1			15	1	3	
2			3				3						12				3		3	
3					3															
4					3															
5			3				3						9	1			9		3	
6			3				3		9				12	1			3	2	3	
7					3															
8			3				3		6	1							3		3	
total	3		12		9		15		21	2			42	3			33	3	15	
rel.	1		1		1		1		0 91				0 93				0 92		1	

average reliability—0.97

APPENDIX E

TEXTBOOKS AND STORIES USED IN STUDY

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich--1st grade author

  At My Window (book 1)
Better Move On Frog Ron Maris
  A Friend Like You (book 2)
Quick as a Cricket Audrey Wood
I Went Walking Sue Williams
  Across the Fields (book 3)
What Game Shall We Play? Pat Hutchins
The Chick and the Duckling Mirva Ginsburg
  Let's Shake On It (book 4)
Together George Ella Lynn
Who Will Be My Friends? Syd Hoff
  The Deep Blue Sea (book 5)
D.W. All Wet Marc Brown
Punky Goes Fishing Sally G. Ward
The Cake that Mack Ate Rose Robard
The Doorbell Rang Pat Hutchins
  Sliver of the Moon (book 6)
Peace at Last Jill Murphy
Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me Eric Carle
Henny Penny Stephen Butler

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich--2nd grade author

  Up One Hill and Down Another (book 1)
Ronald Morgan Goes to Bat Patricia Reilly Giff
I Have a Sister. My Sister is Deaf Jeanne W. Peterson
Mitchell is Moving Marjorie W. Sharmat
Junk Day on Juniper Street Lilian Moore
Miss Eva and the Red Balloon Karen M. Glennon
  Wouldn't You Like a Dinosaur (book 2)
Awful Aardvark Mwalimu
A Dinosaur Named After Me Bernard Most
Family Pictures Carmen L. Garza
The Night of the Stars D. Gutierrez & M. Oliver
Ant Cities Arthur Dorros

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich--5th grade author

  Light Up the Sky (book 1)
The Second Day of School Barbara Park
In Rare Form Mildred P. Walter
Tell Them I Sing Patricia MacLachlan
Three Puzzlers George Sherman
Is There Anybody Listening? Gary Paulsen
The Speech Zibby Oneal
Like Jake and Me Mavis Jukes
Many Moons James Thurber
One Day in the Desert Jean C. George
Tree of Life Barbara Bush
Flying Susan Green
The Light of a New Sun Jill P. Walsh

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich--6th grade	**author**
Beyond Expectations (book 1)	
Milo's Mystery Tour	Norton Juster
The UFO Question	Melvi Berger
B-Ball: The Team That Never Lost a Game	Ron Jones
Phoebe and the General	Judith B. Griffin
A New Way of Life	Paul Rutledge
The Mummy Project	Paula Danziger
Kwani Green, Teacher Supreme	Walter Dean Myers
The Horse That Played the Outfield	William Heuman
Exploring the Titanic	Robert D. Ballard
The Big Spring	Jean C. George
Red River Crossing	Marjorie F. Stover
Hard Choices	Irene Hunt

Houghton Mifflin--1st grade	**author**
Me, Myself, and I (book 1)	
Here Are My Hands	B. Martin & J. Archambault
Leo the Late Bloomer	Robert Kraus
With a Crash and a Bang (book 2)	
This is the Bear	Sarah Hayes
Do Like Kyla	Angela Johnson
Strange Bumps	Arnold Lobel
Chitina and Her Cat	Montserrat del Amo
Bookworm (book 3)	
Jimmy Lee Did It	Pat Cummings
Stone Soup	Ann McGovern
The Birthday Party	Ivar DaColl
What's For Lunch?	Reading Science textbook

Houghton Mifflin--2nd grade	**author**
Silly Things Happen (book 1)	
My First American Friend	Sarunna Jin
The Wolf's Chicken Stew	Keiko Kasza
Do You Know About Stars?	Mae Blacker Freeman
Come One, Come All (book 2)	
Clean Your Room, Harvey Moon	Pat Cummings
The Art Lesson	Tomie dePaola
Nessa's Fish	Nancy Luenn

Houghton Mifflin--5th grade	**author**
Fast as the Wind (book 1)	
Ghost of the Lagoon	Armstrong Sperry
Andy Bear: A Polar Cub Grows Up at the Zoo	G. Johnston & J Cutchins
Turtle Watch	George Ancona
The Streets are Free	Kurusa
Mars	Seymour Simon
The Orphan Boy	Tololwa M. Mollel
The Gift Giver	Joyce Hanson

Houghton Mifflin--6th grade	**author**
<u>Beyond the Reef</u> (book 1)	
Boar Out There	Cynthia Rylant
Long Claws	James Houston
Papa's Parrot	Cynthia Rylant
The Figgerin' of Aunt Wilma	James Thurber
Barrio Boy	Ernesto Galarza
The Hunter Who Wanted Air	Alexander Whitney
The Alligator War	Horacio Quiroga
Seeing the Unseen	Patricia Lauber
Oceans of the Earth	<u>Earth Science</u> textbook

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill--1st grade	**author**
<u>Here We Grow</u> (book 1)	
Everything Grows	Raffi
You'll Soon Grow into them, Titch	Pat Hutchins
<u>Goodness Gracious Me!</u> (book 2)	
Coco Can't Wait	Taro Gomi
The Story of Chicken Licken	Jan Ormerod
<u>Sing a Sweet Song</u> (book 3)	
The Great Enormous Turnip	Alexei Tolstoy
The Gunnywolf	A. Delaney
The Line Sophie Drew	Peter & Susan Barrett

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill--2nd grade	**author**
<u>Window to the Sky</u> (book 1)	
Henry and Mudge	Cynthia Rylant
Family Pictures	Carmen Lomas Garza
Nine-in-One, Grr! Grr!	Blia Xiong
The Goat in the Rug	C. Blook & M. Link
<u>Make a Splash</u> (book 2)	
Dear Daddy	Philippe Dupasquier
Angel Child, Dragon Child	Michele Maria Swat
Our Soccer League	Chuck Soloman
The Sun, the Wind and the Rain	Lisa W. Peters

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill--5th grade	**author**
<u>Don't Forget to Fly</u> (book 1)	
The Wreck of the <u>Zephyr</u>	Chris VanAllsburg
Dive to the Coral Reefs: A New England . . .	Tayntor, Erickson, & Kaufman
The Gold Coin	Alma Flor Ada
Breaker's Bridge	Laurence Yep
The Best Bad Thing	Yoshiko Uchida
A Wave in Her Pocket	Lynn Joseph
Long Claws: An Arctic Adventure	James Houston
The News About Dinosaurs	Patricia Lauber

Macmillan/McGraw-Hill--6th grade   **author**

 Just Past the Possible (book 1)

Last Summer with Maizon	Jacqueline Woodson
To Live in Two Worlds	Brent Ashabranner
Mummies, Tombs, and Treasure: Secrets . . .	Lila Perl
Opera, Karate, and Bandits	Huynh Quang Nhuong
Your Three Minutes Are Up	Ellen Canford
The Phantom Tollbooth	Norton Juster
Talking About Stepfamilies	Maxine B. Rosenberg
Danza!	Lynn Hall

APPENDIX F

RESEARCH MATRIX

RESEARCH QUESTION	PROCEDURE	ANALYSIS
1—For the basal readers examined, are males represented as main characters more frequently than females are represented as main characters?	a. determine gender of main character as male, female, or other b. sort completed instruments into three categories: male main character, female main character, and other	a. frequency count of male main character and female main character b. percentages of male main characters and female main characters c. additionally, percentages of male main characters, female main characters, and other
2—For the basal readers examined, are the female main characters portrayed in a wide variety of roles or occupations that are not exclusive to "stereotypical female" occupations?	a. determine role or occupation of main character b. sort completed instruments into three categories: male main character, female main character, and other c. examine instruments with female main characters	a. list and tally female roles and occupations b. list roles and occupations in rank order (most common to least common) c. calculate percentages of each role and occupation portrayed d. additionally, calculate percentages of roles or occupations portrayed by male main character
3—For the basal readers examined, is the number of positive male traits found in female main characters greater than the number of positive female traits found in the male main characters?	a. identify traits that describe main character—male positive, male negative, female positive, female negative, gender neutral b. tally traits for each of the five categories c. sort completed instruments into two categories: male main character and female main character	a. list totals of positive male traits for female main characters b. list totals of positive female traits for male main characters c. compare totals of each positive traits for male and female main character d. additionally, list and tally gender neutral traits for all characters

| 4—For the basal readers examined, is the percentage of positively portrayed male main characters greater than the percentage of positively portrayed female main characters? | a. sort completed instruments into three categories: male main character, female main character, and other

b. tally number of positive and negative traits for male and female main characters

c. determine positive or negative status of main character by greatest number of traits in each category | a. frequency count of male main character and female main character's status

b. percentages of positive status for male main character and female main character

c. additionally, calculate percentages of negative status for male main character and female main character |

VITA

Johnna Beth Dennis was born in Sherman, Texas, on January 16, 1969, the daughter of Jo Elizabeth Dennis and John Madison Dennis, Jr. After completing her work at Whitesboro High School, Whitesboro, Texas, in 1987, she entered Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas. She received the degree of Bachelor of Science in the field of Interdisciplinary Studies from Texas A&M University in December 1991. In 1993, she was employed as a second grade teacher at Scudder Primary School in Wimberley, Texas. She is still employed with the district in the same position.

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