and trains; the pretend kitchen and dining area; or the soft slide, tunnel, and rocking boat, for example.

While the "hardscape" remains the same throughout the workshop, the exploratory table changes each week to young patrons' absolute delight. This area of sensory exploration is a clear favorite of many toddlers. You might find little ones sorting pom poms by color or scooping colored rice in bins or rolling out soft modeling dough.

Another weekly change in the workshop is the community resource specialist. Each week, a different early childhood expert in the areas of child development, nutrition, literacy, motor skills, or speech and language attends to answer caregivers' individual questions in a casual setting.

Why We Love Being a Family Place Library

We've always been a family-friendly library. Joining the Family Place team reinforced what we already believed about the library's role and gave a structured way to accomplish that.

Now the programs we plan and materials we buy for children's services are viewed through the lens of Family Place philosophies, streamlining best practices and bringing a sense of cohesiveness.

Our weekly storytimes—two family storytimes and one infant lapsit storytime called Baby Bumblebees!—bring in a lot of families, but Family Place has helped us meet new families who came to be a part of our 1*2*3 PlaySmart workshops. Many of these families continue as valued library patrons long after the workshop ends.

New families coming to the library are always happy to see our offerings for young children. They are amazed, impressed, and thankful for the children's area with its extensive book collection and play area. It's so rewarding to see an adult and child reading together in one of the comfy seats. And watching the creativity as they enjoy the toys brings smiles to everyone.

We lean into the resources the Family Place Libraries national team provides, such as professional development videos, bibliographies for collection development, partnership and outreach resources, and marketing materials. Family Place has recently partnered with Baker & Taylor to offer Family Place libraries access to ParentTV, a database that offers thousands of on-demand videos and courses to support the parenting and care of children from birth to teens.

We've also established strong partnerships with the resource professionals that come to the 1*2*3 PlaySmart workshops and have been able to utilize them for other collaborations.

Of course, all libraries dealt with ripples caused by the pandemic and being closed to the public for a time. In a testament to the power of libraries creating a sense of community through programs, a patron shared a wonderful anecdote with us recently.

One of the moms attending our most recent 1*2*3 PlaySmart with her second child shared the story of attending the workshop in 2020 with her first child, right before the pandemic caused the library and the rest of the world to shut down. She described how eight families who met for the first time at Bee Cave's Family Place workshop formed a "pod" that got them through the whole pandemic together. The families are still in touch to this day, some even becoming best friends. We love this example of us fulfilling one of our missions to be a place of connection and community building.

Speaking of the pandemic, after we reopened in 2021, we noticed that a lot of our program attendees skewed younger than it had before. Our all-ages programs are now often attended mostly by toddlers and their caregivers. Both our Family Place workshops and play area help to meet the needs of having even more very young patrons through our doors.

At the end of the day, what we value most about being a Family Place Library are the experiences we are able to provide for our patrons that they take with them beyond our walls and into their homes. Workshop attendee Danny Browne, parent of twins, shared, "Before this workshop, I thought I was playing with my kids at home, but I really wasn't. This workshop has shown me that just being near them while they are playing isn't the same thing as actually playing with them."

Linnea Hopper has attended the workshop with two of her children and looks forward to bringing her youngest child soon. She said, "One of my favorite things as a parent attending the program was being able to play with my child away from home where I didn't have the typical distractions to pull me away such as laundry and dishes. I was able to see which interests my littles gravitated towards the most. I feel so blessed to have been able to access a program like this in my own neighborhood. It's hard to believe that a program of its caliber is offered at no cost! Such is the beauty of local libraries! I will always cherish the enriching time we spent together at 1*2*3 PlaySmart."

Planning for a New Library

We have our eye on plans for a new library with more space. As we discuss our hopes and dreams, we keep the philosophy of Family Place in mind as we design our children's spaces and services. One thing is definite—Bee Cave Public Library will always be buzzing with Family Place spaces, programs, and approaches to librarianship. We encourage more libraries to consider joining the Family Place Libraries coalition, too. &

For more information about Bee Cave Public Library, visit www .beecavelibrary.com and check out our social media on Instagram, @beecavelibrary. For more information about Family Place Libraries, visit www.familyplacelibraries.org.

How Far…or Not…Have We Come?

Gender Portrayals in Award-Winning Children's Picture Books: 2018–2022

JESSICA HALE

Stories have always been a means for perpetuating the fundamental cultural values and myths. Stories have also been a stimulus for fantasy imagination and achievement. Books could develop this latter quality to encourage the imagination and creativity of all children. This would provide an important implementation of the growing demand for both girls and boys to have a real opportunity to fulfill their human potential.[1]

This quote from the end of the hallmark study *Sex-Role Socialization in Picture Books for Preschool Children* (1972) was an assertion of the power of stories on the lives of children and a call for different stories—ones with fair representation for women and the eradication of harmfully rigid gender stereotypes. More than fifty years have passed since the publication of this seminal work, and it is now widely acknowledged that "children's books reflect cultural values and are an important instrument for persuading children to accept those values."[2]

Picture books are of particular concern because they are most popular with children who are in the initial stages of gender identity formation. According to researchers Gooden and Gooden, "Around age five, children start to model the behaviors of adults, becoming more independent and develop their identities."[3] As such, picture books play a key role in gender socialization. Gender itself is a social construct which has historically been depicted as a binary concept in the United States—differentiating what is feminine from what is masculine. However, there is increasing recognition that gender is more fluid and that gender nonconforming identities exist.[4] Picture books are uniquely poised to reflect gender presentations in society because not only do they incorporate verbal textual clues, but also visual clues that

indicate sex characteristics as well as clothing and other physical identifiers that are considered feminine or masculine. These multifaceted presentations of gender are potent for the reader, but have historically been rife with stereotypes and inequity.
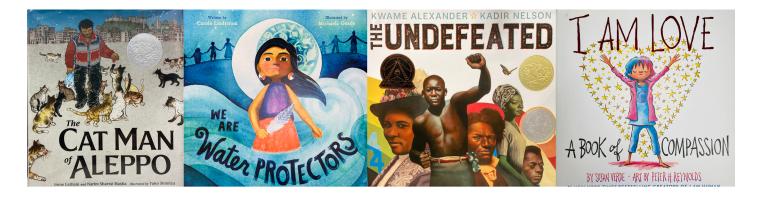
Gender Roles and Traits

In Weitzman et al.'s aforementioned hallmark study, researchers found meaningful differences in how often males and females were presented in children's books, as well as differences in how they were portrayed. Males were more likely to be featured in titles and illustrations as well as appear in central roles as the subject of stories.[5]

Weitzman et al. also noted that males were more likely to be shown in the public sphere (outdoors) engaged in leadership or rescuing activities. Females, on the other hand, were more often presented indoors, in the private sphere, where they are "pleasing and helping"[6] rather than engaging in activities that require

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"intellectual or creative success" or "independence and self-confidence."[7]

When they examined traits in adults, these differences were even more profound. Females were presented almost exclusively in service roles: in fact, they found that "in most stories, the sole adult woman is identified only as a mother or wife."[8] Adult males, on the other hand, were depicted in a wide variety of roles and in occupations. These differences were true across all book series they reviewed (Caldecott winners and honorees, Newbery award winners, Little Golden Books, and etiquette books).

Weitzman et al. concluded that these gendered portrayals of service and leadership were harmful to the identity development of both boys and girls and portend "disappointment and discontent" when it comes to expectations of marriage, parenting, and aspirations. While little attention was given to characters with indeterminate gender, Weitzman et al. did highlight the idea that children may have an easier time identifying with role models that are "less differentiated and less stereotypical."[9]

In the fifty years since Weitzman et al.'s study was published, many researchers have added to our knowledge of how gender is portrayed in children's picture books. Some of the more recent and relevant work for this study came from Gooden and Gooden, who demonstrated continued gender disparity in terms of occupation and role;[10] Clark et al., who found fluctuations in gender trait stereotyping from the 1930s-1960s;[11] and Hamilton et al., who found continued inequities in gender portrayals in the 1980s and 1990s.[12]

In 2001, Gooden and Gooden set out to assess improvements in gender equity in children's picture books. Comparing their findings with those of LaDow,[13] researchers examined female stereotyping, not only in central characters, but also illustrations. While they found improvement (gender equity) in regards to central characters, males were still illustrated more frequently than females and in a wider range of roles. Despite being published almost two decades after Weitzman's study, adult females were still most frequently pictured in roles like "mother, grandmother, washer-woman, etc."[14] Further, they noted that "males were seldom seen caring for the children or grocery shopping and never seen doing household chores."[15] No analysis of the roles of gender "neutral" characters was provided, although they were included in the illustration totals.

In their study, Clark et al. examined Caldecott winners and honorees from the 1930s to the 1960s for patterns in gender representation and stereotyping. Building on the idea that gender portrayal in picture books is related to larger cultural trends in American society, the researchers sought to determine if changes in representation and traits across decades would reflect increased visibility and less stereotyping of women.

Researchers hypothesized that female characters would be depicted as more dependent, cooperative, submissive, imitative, nurturant, emotional, and passive than male characters, who would be more likely to be depicted as independent, competitive, directive, persistent, explorative, creative, aggressive, and active. While they did observe "a long-term trend toward the increasing visibility of female characters and decreasing gender stereotypes," there were still traits more commonly associated with females and males.[16] In the 1930s, thirteen of fifteen traits were presented in stereotypical ways. In the 1940s, twelve of the fifteen traits were presented in stereotypical ways. In the 1950s, nine of the fifteen traits were presented in stereotypical ways, and in the 1960s, five presented in stereotypical ways.[17]

The difference between males and females for some traits rose to statistical significance in different decades, including dependent and nurturant behaviors in females as well as persistent and explorative behaviors in males. In the conclusion of their study, Clark et al. noted that the variations in gender stereotyping observed may reflect the relative status of women in each decade. There was no mention of characters whose gender was not discernable or non-gender conforming in the analysis.

In a later study, Hamilton et al. analyzed gender representation and characters' behaviors (occupation and activity), setting (indoor/outdoor), and personality portrayal in award-winning and popular books from 1995 to 2001 and compared their findings to trends spotted in 1980s and 1990s. Once again, they found that females were pictured more frequently than males in nurturing or caring roles and indoors.

Across book series, female characters were "significantly more likely to show no evidence of an occupation outside the home" and if they were pictured outside the home, it was in a traditional occupation (teacher, stewardess, librarian, maid, nanny, nurse, dancer, etc.).[18] When they compared their findings to studies done in the 1980s, they noted that unlike other traits, which seemed to be

leveling out, stereotypes around female nurturing behaviors were increasing. Characters determined to be "gender-neutral" characters were excluded from analysis because "there were so few."[19]

The Societal Effects of Gendering Nurturing and Leadership Behaviors

As indicated by Gooden and Gooden, in the conclusion of their study, "Children's choices of what they want to become or accomplish is limited by stereotypes."[20] Internalized stereotypes related to nurturing and leadership may be particularly harmful because they limit the ways in which people show up in the public sphere. Children who grow up with these perceptions may end up perpetuating a cycle of inequity.

In society at large, gender disparities related to nurturing play out in the American workforce. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, women's participation in the labor force is less than men's (56.2 percent and 67.7 percent, respectively) and this difference is attributed in part to having young children. While having children affects the labor participation rate for both males and females, the participation rate for mothers varied considerably by the age of her children.[21] This suggests that more women than men are staying home, out of the workforce, to take on more parental duties, especially when children are young. A Pew Research Center report focused on perceptions of "who shoulders more of the burden" reported that women believed they carried a "much heavier burden than their spouse or partners," for both childcare and housework.[22]

These internalized beliefs about nurturing are reflected in occupations women select. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that in 2020, women accounted for more than half of all workers in education and health services (74.6 percent), "other" services* (52.6 percent), and leisure and hospitality (50.4 percent). Women are 97.4 percent of registered nurses and 79.6 percent of elementary and middle school teachers, but only 29.3 percent of chief executives and 37.4 percent of lawyers. These numbers indicate that women are also disproportionally represented in career sectors related to nurturing.

In terms of leadership roles, in both corporations and politics, males still vastly outnumber females. A recent study by McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.org, which surveyed 40,000 employees from 333 organizations collectively responsible for employing over 12 million people, found that "only one in four C-suite executives is a woman" and that for "every 100 men promoted from entry level to manager, only eighty-seven women are promoted."[23]

In politics, women leaders are also still underrepresented. For example, as of January 2023, women will make up 28 percent of all the US Congress members—a historic high.[24] Further, for the first time since our nation's birth, a female vice-president of the United States, Kamala Harris, was elected into office and began her term in 2021.[25] Historically, there has been very little visibility for nonbinary and trans people in politics as well.[26]

The unequal representation of females and non-gender conforming individuals in leadership, almost certainly plays a role in the continued privilege of males when it comes to societal rights. Despite ongoing public support,[27] the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), which would "end the legal distinctions between men and women in terms of divorce, property, employment, and other matters," has yet to be ratified.[28]

Further, in June 2022, the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade, ending nearly a half-century of federally ensured reproductive rights for women that enabled women to make decisions about their family, relationship, and bodily autonomy.[29] According to a report from the Pew Research Center, 57 percent of Americans "disapprove of the court's sweeping decision."[30] Public support for the rights of gender nonconforming individuals,[31] also seems at odds with the legislative measures initiated by lawmakers in several states to restrict their access to sports teams, bathrooms that align with their gender identify as well as limiting access to gender affirming medical care.[32] This dearth of representative leadership is a problem that needs to be addressed.

The Current Study

Despite improvements, societal gender inequities still exist. Women continue to be stereotyped and underrepresented, while

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* Including as private households, personal and laundry services, membership associations and organizations, repair and maintenance services.

nonbinary and transgender persons are often erased (a problem made more complex by the fact the tools traditionally used as societal indicators do not account for gender in favor of biological sex). For equity-minded individuals, the question remains: Are children still being socialized to believe that nurturing is a female quality? Do messages that reinforce the idea that leadership is a masculine trait still exist? Are occupations still being depicted as gendered?

The focus of the current study will be to assess gender depictions (traits and occupations) in award-winning books and runners-up from 2018 to 2022 to better understand the landscape of gender depictions in our current societal context. Caldecott winners and honorees, as well as Kids' Book Choice winners and finalists will be examined. This selection will highlight any differences between books chosen by adults and those chosen (in part) by children.

In general, book awards were set up to improve quality in children's publishing.[33] While these standards have historically been disproportionately filled with "white privilege and heteronormativity," there is recognition that awards are responding to "pressures of pluralism and fair social representation."[34] Among this pool of books are the stories that feature people of color and historic socio/political events, like the civil rights movement, the Black Lives Matters movement, the Tulsa Race Massacre, the Standing Rock Water Protectors, increased LGBTAQ+ visibility, and even the Vietnam War. These stories signify an important shift toward inclusion and honor increasingly diverse stories, ones in which characters' identities are multifaceted—including aspects of class, race/ethnicity, gender, nationality, and/or sexuality. However, despite this progress, gender stereotypes should not be ignored, and will be the focus of this study.

In terms of gender depictions, are stereotypes, which can limit a person's engagement with the public sphere, still at play in these picture books? Specific research questions include the following:

1. Are nurturing behaviors more commonly observed in protagonists of one gender than another?

2. Are leadership behaviors more commonly observed in protagonists of one gender than another?

3. Are there gender inequities in the portrayals of adults in occupations (i.e., for those who work outside of the home), and in what field do they work?

Method

This study will review both Caldecott and Kids' Book Choice winners (Kindergarten-Second Grade Book of the Year) and runners-up (twenty-four and twenty-nine books, respectively) from 2018 to 2022. The Caldecott Award is one of the most coveted prizes in illustrated children's books, and the selected texts are featured widely in classrooms, libraries, and bestseller lists. The annual winners and honorees are decided upon by a committee of Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) members who are believed to be both experienced in textual evaluation as well as responsive to larger social trends.[35]

Winners and finalists of the Kids' Book Choice Awards, on the other hand, are selected by children via a voting process.[36] The Children's Book Council, in partnership with the International Library Association, works with teachers and librarians throughout the US to incorporate new trade-publications into classroom activities.[37] Children vote on which texts they like best in a range of categories, including Book of the Year for kindergarten to second grade, which was used in this study. As a result, this award is more likely than any other to reflect children's values, adult involvement notwithstanding.

Four books appeared on both lists: *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom and illustrated by Michaela Goade (Roaring Brook, 2020), *Watercress* by Andrea Wang and illustrated by Jason Chin (Holiday House, 2021), *Bear Came Along* by Richard Morris and illustrated by LeUyen Pham (Little, Brown, 2019), and *Mel Fell* by Corey Tabor (Balzer + Bray/HarperCollins, 2021). As a result, the total number of books is listed as forty-nine when comparing across series (so as not to double count any titles). When comparing book series, books that fell into both categories were counted in each of their respective categories.

Coding Gender

Pronouns, verbal clues, and clues related to clothing and sex characteristics (e.g., body shape and facial features) were used to identify gender. However, in cases of ambiguity, author's notes and publisher information were also consulted to provide gender clues. Gender was coded as female, male, gender nonconforming, or indeterminate. While other researchers excluded some animal characters from analysis based on context, all animal characters were included in the following analysis.

Gender Trait Portrayal

Both nurturing behaviors and leadership behaviors may shape how citizens behave socially in the workforce, corporate and political leadership roles, and the media. As such, this study sought to examine current nurturing and leadership behaviors, as portrayed by the protagonist, for evidence of gender inequities. Books in which a single character protagonist did not exist (in text or illustration) and participatory books (in which the reader is the protagonist) were excluded. When it was difficult to identify the protagonist, the protagonist was determined to be the character from whose perspective the story was told or where the action in the story originated, e.g., *Wonder Walkers* by Micha Archer (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2021) and *The Perfect Sofa* by Fifi Kuo (Little Bee, 2019).

Nurturing

For the purposes of this study, nurturing behaviors are defined using the definition of "nurturant" employed by Clark et al. from Albert Davis. Specifically, "Giving physical or emotional aid, support, or comfort to another; demonstrating affection or compassion for another."[38] The text and illustrations were analyzed for evidence of the protagonist engaging in nurturing behaviors. If these behaviors were observed, protagonists were coded "Yes" for the variable "Nurturing." If not, they were coded "No."

Leadership

This study defined leadership behaviors as "guiding, leading, impelling others toward an action or goal; controlling behaviors of others," the definition of "directive" behaviors identified by Davis[39] and used by Clark et al. Text and illustrations were analyzed for evidence of the protagonist engaging in these behaviors. If leadership behaviors were observed, protagonists were coded "yes" for the variable "leadership." If not, they were coded "no."

Adult Role Models: Occupation

In their study, Weitzman et al. noted the importance of "adult role models" who function to demonstrate to children "what will be expected of them when they grow older."[40] Building on the work done by Hamilton et al., this study analyzed the spaces held by the adult role models in terms of occupation. Occupation was defined as any work for pay outside the home and specific occupational fields were tracked to analyze any gender related patterns. Any book featuring an adult character who appeared in text, illustration, or storyline was included in the analysis. Each book was coded to indicate if any adult characters had an occupation outside of the home ("Yes"/"No") and if so, the gender of that character was recorded (female, male, gender nonconforming, and indeterminate). Then, the researcher noted the occupational roles of the characters and made general observations about the variety of occupations and alignment with traditional vs. nontraditional gender depictions.

Results

For each research question, frequency data was calculated and reported. Ratios and percentages were also presented, where appropriate, to aid in comparison or reader conceptualization. Differences between book series were also reported in table form.

Question 1

The first research question explored gendered depictions of nurturing. Results showed that in the forty-one books with single character protagonists, females were more often pictured in nurturing behaviors than in any other gender category (male, gender nonconforming, indeterminate). While female protagonists engaged in nurturing behaviors in fourteen books, males were depicted as nurturing in ten books (a 1.4:1 ratio). Protagonists with indeterminate gender were featured nurturing in two books and there were no examples of gender nonconforming protagonists engaged in nurturing. Female protagonists engaged in nurturing behaviors were presented more frequently in Caldecott books than books from the Kids' Choice series, but males were also more likely to be nurturing in Caldecott winners and honorees (see table 1).

Question 2

The second research question explored gendered depictions of leadership. Results showed that in the forty-one books with single character protagonists, males were more often pictured in leadership behaviors than in any other gender category (female, gender nonconforming, indeterminate). Whereas male protagonists engaged in leadership behaviors in nine books, females were depicted in leadership behaviors in eight books (a 1.13:1 ratio). Protagonists with indeterminate gender were featured in three books and there were no examples of gender nonconforming protagonists engaged in leadership. While male protagonists were more likely exhibit leadership behaviors in Kids' Choice books, female protagonists were more often depicted engaged in leadership behaviors in Caldecott books (see table 2).

Question 3

The third research question sought to uncover gender inequalities in the portrayals of adults in occupations (i.e., who work outside of the home and in what field). Results showed that twenty-one books included depictions of adults in occupations (approximately 43 percent of the forty-nine books examined). Males were most often featured in occupations (eighteen books), followed by females (fourteen books), gender nonconforming adults (one book), and indeterminate adults (one book). Males were depicted with a wider variety of occupations than females (e.g., farmer, educator, police officer, businessman, sailor, fisherman, barber, janitor, soldier, lawyer, philanthropist, doctor, pilot, construction worker, postman, vendor, athlete, artist, academic, lighthouse keeper, driver, and musician) and more often in leadership roles (e.g., politician, president, judge, minister, captain, governor, civil rights leader). In twelve of the fifteen books in which women were depicted in occupations, at least one female was presented in a traditional career (teacher, maid, dancer, singer, hairdresser, seamstress, caregiver, sales person, retail worker, and baker/cook). However, some books also pictured females in non-traditional careers such as astronaut, anthropologist, athlete, pilot, police officer, doctor, poet, and artist. In two instances, adult women were presented in leadership roles (minister and mayor). Both the gender nonconforming adult and the indeterminate gendered adult are shown working in shops/retail. In terms of occupations by series and gender, Caldecott books were more likely to present adults in occupations than Kids' Choice books, and both series were more likely to present males than any other gender category (see table 3).

Discussion

The results of this study show continued inequalities in gender trait portrayals across book series. Gendered stereotypes around nurturing and leadership were still present and women still appear to be overrepresented in traditional occupational fields. However, the findings in this study are limited because they cannot be directly compared to previous works due to methodological differences and insufficient coding details. Further, the small sample size negated the use of inferential statistics. Finally, as a single researcher, it was impossible to establish interrater reliability, the results of which would have lent additional strength to findings.

Like previous research on gender trait portrayals, this study showed female protagonists were most frequently presented engaging in nurturing behaviors. Books like *Wolf in the Snow* by Matthew Cordell (Feiwel and Friends/Macmillan, 2017), in which a girl rescues a wolf cub and returns it to its family, and *Thank You, Omu!* by Oge Mora (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers/Hachette, 2018), in which an older woman feeds her community from her own soup pot, typify female nurturing behaviors.

However, there are also several books that provide examples of males engaged in nurturing. In *A Different Pond* by Bao Phi and illustrated by Thi Bui (Capstone Young Readers/Capstone, 2017), the protagonist helps his father catch a fish and then helps his mother prepare it so that the family will have food for dinner. In *The Cat Man of Aleppo* by Irene Latham and Karim Shamsi-Basha and illustrated by Yuko Shimizu (Putnam, 2020), the protagonist is not only an ambulance driver who stays in Aleppo to help save lives, but also nurtures the cats left homeless and starving in the wake of the bombing and goes on to care for other animals as well as his community at large.

In *Hello Lighthouse!* by Sophie Blackall (Little, Brown, 2018), the lighthouse keeper comforts his wife as she delivers their baby and is pictured holding the infant and gazing at her lovingly while his wife rests and recovers. In *The Rough Patch* by Brian Lies (Greenwillow/HarperCollins, 2018), the protagonist not only demonstrates affection for his dog, but is also depicted comforting him as he dies. So, while Hamilton et al. found that female main characters were three times more likely to be performing nurturing behaviors, the gender disparity was smaller in this study (a female to male ration of 1.4:1), suggesting improvement.

Also of note is that the books children chose for themselves (Kids' Choice Award winners and runners-up) depicted female protagonists in nurturing roles less frequently and with more parity between males and females, than Caldecott books (six protagonists compared to ten; a female to male ratio of 1.5:1 versus 1.67:1). This might suggest that children are attracted to stories with less bias when it comes to nurturing, identifying with both females and males in nurturing roles. There is evidence that there is an increase in the number of "stay-at-home" dads in the United States[41] and this phenomenon may also explain, in part, why children were attracted to books that depicted more equitable nurturing behaviors—they are living that reality at home.

Table 1. Nurturing Behaviors in Protagonists by Gender and Book Series

Protagonist Nurturing Behavior	Caldecott Books Winners and Honorees (n=22)	Kids' Choice Books Winners and Runners-Up (n=23)
Male	6	4
Female	10	6
Gender Nonconforming	0	0
Gender Indeterminate	1	1

Table 2. Leadership Behaviors in Protagonists by Gender and Book Series

Protagonist Leadership Behavior	Caldecott Books Winners and Honorees (n=11)	Kids' Choice Books Winners and Runners-Up (n=11)
Male	4	5
Female	6	4
Gender Nonconforming	0	0
Gender Indeterminate	1	2

Table 3. Depictions of Adults in Occupations by Gender and Book Series

Depictions of Adults in Occupations	Caldecott Books Winners and Honorees (n= 12)	Kids' Choice Books Winners and Runners-Up (n=9)
Male	11	7
Female	8	6
Gender Nonconforming	0	1
Gender Indeterminate	0	1

*Note: Several books depicted multiple genders in occupations.

In this study, males were depicted in leadership behaviors more often than any other gender category. *The Cat Man of Aleppo* by Irene Latham and Karim Shamsi-Basha and illustrated by Yuko Shimizu (Putnam, 2020) is a prime example of a text with a male protagonist engaged in leadership behaviors—he organizes his community (neighbors and volunteers) in support of the cats as well as other causes. In an example, *Day at the Beach* by Tom Booth (Aladdin, 2018), Gideon, a young boy learns an important lesson, when he tries to control the behavior of his little sister, excluding her from building their annual sand castle. He discovers that while his goal of "the most stupendous sand castle" was realized, the act of doing it "together" is more valuable.

However, when compared to Weitzman et al.'s Caldecott data from 1967 to 1972, which reported the ratio of males to females in leadership functions as 3:2 (i.e., 1.5:1) for children and 5:0 for adults, the ratio found in this study (1.13:1) signifies significant progress.

While the number of females and males engaged in leadership behaviors was very close in both book series, it is worthy to note that Caldecott winners and honorees were more likely to show females in leadership than any other gender group. Books exemplifying female protagonists engaged in leadership behaviors include *We Are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom and illustrated by Michaela Goade (Roaring Brook, 2020), in which the protagonist leads her community to activism to protect the planet, *Mel Fell* by Corey Tabor (Balzer + Bray, 2021), in which Mel, a young Kingfisher, is the first of her siblings to leave the nest and try to fly, and the young female protagonist

in *Over the Shop* by JonArno Lawson and illustrated by Qin Leng (Candlewick, 2021), who shows leadership by advocating on behalf of an LGBTAQ+ couple after they are unfairly discriminated against by her grandparent.

This study made clear that occupational stereotyping has not disappeared. Adult males were more frequently shown in occupations than any other gender category. This was true for both book series. Males were also depicted in a wider range of roles, whereas women were more likely to appear in traditional career fields. For example, females were depicted as teachers in a number of texts (*Nina* by Traci N. Todd and illustrated by Christian Robinson (Putnam, 2021); *Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut* by Derrick Barnes and illustrated by Gordon C. James (Agate/Bolden, 2017); *Double Bass Blues* by Andrea J. Loney and illustrated by Rudy Gutierrez (Knopf, 2019); and *Going Down Home with Daddy* by Kelly Starling Lyons and illustrated by Daniel Minter (Peachtree, 2019). This occupational disparity, however, somewhat mirrors the current distribution of women in the workforce.

To see more gender equity in the workforce and occupations, children will need to be able to "see" themselves in those roles. It's clear that women no longer solely exist in children's picture books as simply "a mother or a wife" as Weitzman et al. originally observed, but it's also clear that there is much work to be done if we want to see equity in occupation portrayals. This study did find a few instances in which adult women were depicted in nontraditional gender roles, and two stand-out examples include *The Undefeated* by Kwame Alexander and illustrated by Kadir Nelson (Versify, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2019), which features black women in occupations such as anthropologist, professional athlete, Olympian, and poet, as well as *A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart* by Zetta Elliott and illustrated by Noa Denmon (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2020), that features Mae Carol Jemison, the first black astronaut, and Maya Angelou, poet, scholar, and civil rights activist. While these depictions are only in illustration, the appearance of women in these nontraditional roles is an indicator that we are moving, albeit slowly, in a more equitable direction.

Unfortunately, the sample in this study provided very limited presentations of gender nonconforming and indeterminate characters, so no meaningful conclusions can be made about gender trait portrayal for these groups. However, these texts are significant in that they highlight a space ignored in previous similar studies—a non-binary view of gender. *Julián Is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love (Candlewick, 2018) tells the story of a young boy who comes out to his abeula as gender nonconforming. While Julián (the protagonist) doesn't engage in nurturing or leadership behaviors, this story is a beautiful example of a child with the awareness that gender isn't binary. In *I Am Love: A Book of Compassion,* by Susan Verde and illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds (Abrams, 2019), the protagonist is gender indeterminate, illustrated with medium length blue and pink hair, no clear sex characteristics, and gender-neutral clothing. This character presents nurturing through acts of compassion, tenderness, listening, and physical affection, among others.

In *Big Cat, Little Cat* by Elisha Cooper (Roaring Brook, 2017), the gender indeterminate protagonist (the cat whose lifespan is followed in the text) is depicted in nurturing behaviors, e.g., showing a new kitten, "When to eat, when to drink, where to go, how to be, when to rest." In *I Am a Tiger* by Karl Newson and illustrated by Ross Collins (Scholastic, 2019), the protagonist, a gender indeterminate mouse, asserts its own identity (as a tiger and then a crocodile), and compels others to accept it as well. The final example worth noting is *Over the Shop* by JonArno Lawson and illustrated by Qin Leng (Candlewick, 2021). While the protagonist of this book presented as female, her guardian presents with a gender nonconforming identity and is shown in a retail occupation as well as in the capacity of a landlord.

Overall, this study confirms, and builds upon, previous studies showing that inequities in gender depictions still exist in picture books. As these books are tools of socialization, the underrepresentation of females and gender nonconforming individuals, and stereotypical gender depictions, are harmful and legitimize gender inequality.

Tsao reviewed existing literature to summarize both the current state of gender bias and stereotypes in children's literature as well as trends relating to how men and women were represented in pictures, titles, and central characters.[42] Tsao highlighted the fact that while researchers know gender portrayals in children's picture books influence their audiences, "the magnitude and generalization of this influence and its impact on behavior are not completely understood."[43] Tsao noted that "a negative portrayal of a child's own gender may affect a child's self-identity and self-esteem," but went on to present studies that suggest these negative effects can be ameliorated.[44] Highlighting work done Narahara[45] and Trepanier-Street and Romantowski,[46] Tsao identified evidence that "sustained, focused, and intensive" interventions (like exposure to non-sexist books, books that push back on gender discrimination, and books that promote gender-neutral attitudes) could reduce gender-role stereotypes, rigid adherence to gender roles, and result in fewer stereotypical attitudes about jobs.[47] Tsao's analysis ended with a call for teachers, authors, and publishers to "provide children with literature that more closely parallels the roles males and females play in contemporary society."[48]

The interventions Tsao highlights are important for educators at all levels. While some of the effects of the gendered messaging children receive throughout their K-12 education may be apparent early on, other effects may not present until these emerging adults must make decisions about continuing their education or pursuing careers. The effects of rigid gender roles and stereotypical attitudes about jobs are likely to emerge at this time, making this an issue of particular importance for higher education.

The books explored in this study will, in some part, direct the attitudes and behavior of college students more than ten years from now. If more work isn't done to reduce rigid gender roles and address underrepresentation, these books may contribute to another generation of women who do not pursue nontraditional careers.

Future researchers should continue to look for evidence of inequities in gender depictions in other book series. Caldecott and Kids' Choice winners and runners-up are only a small subsection of the books available for children. Further, a trend analysis or gendered traits spanning the last two decades would bring the work done by Hamilton et al. up to date and clarify the pattern of social conflict as it relates to gender portrayals. More research also needs to be done to better understand where trait equity is being achieved in children's books and where gaps still exist. The storylines of these texts should also undergo content analysis to identify larger gendered themes. Researchers should seek to examine how often modern children's books show males and females in non-traditional occupations and what interventions can be done at the college level to address career related gender bias and stereotypes. Finally, research into how class and race intersect with gender roles should also be explored.

In conclusion, recent children's picture books continue to include some stereotypical portrayals of males and females in regards to nurturing, leadership, and occupations. These depictions connect to larger, problematic societal trends, which also need to be addressed. That said, there does appear to be more parity in how genders are depicted when it comes to nurturing and leadership than in the past. As these traits play a role in how individuals choose to engage in the public sphere (i.e. workforce), it is important that we continue to show females as leaders and males as nurturers. As children's books play an important role in gender socialization, it is imperative that increased equality is visible for this generation, or the problems we see today will continue to exist decades into the future. &

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