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Socialization, Interaction, and Group Influence

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Writing Children's Books

Peter Kaufman, State University of
New York at New Paltz

Rationale

Most of us grew up reading children's books. In addition to aiding in our literacy development, these books also taught us many social, cultural, moral, and even political values. When we read these books as children (and even as adults), we may not be aware of the embedded and oftentimes subtle messages that are being conveyed to us. By thinking sociologically about children's literature, we are more likely to realize that these books are not merely innocent stories that entertain us; rather, they are important components of our social, cultural, moral, and political socialization.

This exercise is intended to get us thinking about how knowledge is constructed through children's books. As you go through the exercise you will be challenged to consider what content is appropriate for what age groups and how such content should be conveyed. You will also need to think about the implicit and explicit themes that are contained within children's book. By understanding children's books from a more critical and sociological framework, you will gain insight into one of the mechanisms through which we are socialized to accept the prevailing norms and values of society.

Instructions

The class will be broken up into groups of 3–4 students. Each group will write the text of a children's book based on the issue that is assigned to your group. You should discuss what information about this issue you want to include, as well as how you want to convey this information to the readers. In determining what the content of your book will be, you should identify the age group for which your book is being written. You do not have to draw pictures (although you can if you want). After each group has written their book, we will read the books out loud and each group will explain the content and style of their story. Please have someone in the group write the story on the back of one of the worksheets to hand in at the end of class.

Grading

See your instructor for details concerning how this assignment will be graded.

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Writing Children's Books

Worksheet

Your name: _____

Names of Group Members: _____

Your group will be assigned a number that corresponds to one of the issues below. Your task is to write the text of a children's book based on this issue. Circle your assigned issue.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Slavery in the United States | 6. Non-heterosexual family structure |
| 2. The events of September 11, 2001 | 7. Global poverty |
| 3. War | 8. Poverty in the United States |
| 4. Sexism | 9. Immigration |
| 5. Racism | 10. Aging and death |

A. To what age group will your book be directed?

- ___ Pre School Years (Ages 3–5)
- ___ Early School Years (Ages 6–8)
- ___ Older Children (Ages 9–12)

B. Explain why you chose this age group.

C. List 7–10 possible topics related to this issue that you *might* include in the text of your book.

D. On the back of this sheet, or on another piece of paper, write the text of your children's book.

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Gender Socialization

Betsy Lucal, Indiana University South Bend

Rationale

The purpose of this exercise is to give you a chance to analyze how children learn about gender. This exercise will help you put what you have learned about socialization and/or gender into practice. It will give you a sense of how social structures and institutions are organized, created, and maintained in society. It will help you understand how children learn to “do gender” (in other words, to behave and present themselves in ways that make them easily viewed as a boy or as a girl). By analyzing how children’s toys and/or clothes are “gendered” (in other words, organized into categories appropriate for boys or girls), you will have a chance to see how gender and socialization work in the real world.

Instructions

1. In preparation for the group portion of the assignment, you will need to visit a department, children’s clothing, or toy store so that you can observe the items offered for sale.
2. While you are at the store, pay attention to how clothing and/or toys are organized. How do you know which items are intended for boys/girls? Make a list on the worksheet of the kinds of items intended for boys/girls. Are there any gender-neutral or non-gendered items (that is, items that would be appropriate for both girls and boys)? Make a list of them. (Refer to the worksheet for more information about what to look for when you observe.)
3. Come to class ready to participate in a group discussion about your observations.
4. With your group, answer the following questions. Each member of the group should take a turn writing down an answer to the question.
 - A. Compare group members’ findings from their observations. What patterns do you see? Did anyone find anything unusual or unexpected?
 - B. What kinds of things do you think clothes and toys teach children about gender? How do they teach them to be a boy or a girl? Think

about the kinds of clothes and toys your group determined to be appropriate for each gender and how the clothes might affect, for example, a child's movements or how the toys might affect, for example, a child's interests.

- C. Based on your group findings with respect to clothing and toys, what does it mean to be a boy or a girl? What kinds of messages do clothes and toys provide children about what it means to be a boy or a girl? In other words, what do boys and girls look like, act like, enjoy doing, and so forth?
 - D. Are there any ways in which toys and clothing encourage girls and boys to be similar to each other? Explain.
 - E. Spend some time talking about how group members decided which toys/clothes were appropriate for boys versus girls and which ones were gender-neutral. What does this tell you about your own gender socialization?
 - F. If we are being sociologically mindful, then these findings must be taken a step farther. We cannot stop with the patterns. We have to think about what they mean and how these patterns connect with other aspects of the social world. On one hand, these observations show that we use gender as a way to organize the social world. Discuss what this concept means. On the other hand, gender is not just a matter of differences between groups of people. Gender, in our society, is a basis for inequality—for assigning people different roles, rewards, responsibilities, and so forth. Discuss how children's toys and clothing can perpetuate (maintain) this form of inequality.
5. After class, write a reaction paper. What did you learn from this group exercise? How much of an impact do you think children's clothes and toys have on gender socialization and the perpetuation of gender inequality? Do you think parents realize what kinds of effects the toys and clothes they buy for their children can have on them? Will the findings from this activity influence the toys and clothes you buy for the children in your life?
 6. Turn in your worksheet, the notes from your group discussion (only one copy of these needs to be turned in from each group), and your reaction paper.

Grading

You will likely be graded on the thoroughness of your worksheet notes, on the quality of your group's responses to these questions, and on the thoughtfulness of your reaction paper. Please see your instructor for details on grading.

Gender Socialization

Worksheet

Name: _____

Name of the store where you observed:

I observed (circle one) TOYS CLOTHING BOTH

How can you tell which toys/clothes are for girls versus boys?

If you're observing clothes, pay attention to and describe . . .

The items of clothing offered for

BOYS

GIRLS

BOTH

The fabrics/clothing textures used for

BOYS

GIRLS

BOTH

The patterns/decorations used for

BOYS

GIRLS

BOTH

Other differences between clothes for

BOYS

GIRLS

Are there any gender-neutral clothes (in other words, clothes that appear to be for either a boy or a girl)? Describe them.

If you're observing toys, pay attention to and describe . . .

The kinds of toys offered for

GIRLS

BOYS

BOTH

The colors, designs, and so on for

GIRLS

BOYS

BOTH

Any other differences between toys for

GIRLS

BOYS

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Leadership, Gender, and the Invisible Ceiling

Survey Activity

Keith A. Roberts, Hanover College (adapted from an unknown author)

Rationale

This is a survey exercise in which you gather data from about 25 students—male and female—that allow us to reflect on social conceptions of masculinity and femininity and our society’s definitions of leadership. Understanding that our definitions of “leadership characteristics” tend to correspond very highly to our society’s definitions of masculinity can help us understand forces that help to create the *invisible ceiling*.

Instructions

1. On the following page you will find a “Characteristics of Leaders” sheet.
2. Photocopy this sheet (make 25 copies).
3. Ask 25 men and women (roughly an equal number of each, if possible) to fill out your sheet. Ask them to follow the instructions on the sheet, explaining that this is a survey for a class and that the results will be anonymous (do not ask for names on the sheet). Do *not* tell them that this is a study of gender or of the invisible ceiling. If they ask, tell them it is a survey on the qualities that Americans look for in leaders—which is true.
4. When all sheets have been completed, shuffle them so you will not know who might have filled out each sheet. Then add up the number of answers for each category of response.
5. Divide the number of answers for each item by the total number of sheets that were completed (probably 25). This will give you the percentage of respondents who felt the characteristic was a leadership quality.

6. Place the percentage figure for each trait in the appropriate blank on the worksheet and bring the sheet to class. The scores for Masculinity and Femininity were developed by having several hundred college students at a liberal arts college complete a form that looked identical to the sheet you have photocopied, with one exception. The instructions at the top looked like this:

Masculinity and Femininity

Mark each characteristic with an "M" or an "F" depending on whether you think it is generally defined by society as a masculine or feminine characteristic.

In my experience, the list of gender characteristics generated by using this survey is highly correlated to the list of preferred leadership qualities that you are likely to have found from your surveys regarding leadership. I usually find around 12 to 14 "direct correlations" between masculinity and leadership. I usually find 3 to 5 "inverse correlations" (masculinity high and leadership low or masculinity low and leadership high; as a benchmark, use "above 57%" as a "high" score and "below 43%" as a "low" score). For example, if 93% of your respondents thought "achiever" is a leadership quality and 71% of those already surveyed think it is a masculine quality that would be a positive correlation to leadership. If 11% of your sample thought that "devious" is a leadership quality and 73% think it was masculine, then there is an inverse or negative correlation between masculinity and leadership.

The interesting question is how the correlation of "masculinity" and "leadership" might unwittingly cause a woman to be overlooked for promotion on the job or poorly evaluated if she is in a leadership position. If a woman is "masculine," it often makes people uncomfortable with her. On the other hand, if she is not "masculine" (as our society thinks of it), she may be thought of as a person lacking leadership qualities.

Grading

See your instructor for details on grading. If your instructor asks for a written paper, you will write an essay (two to three double-spaced typed pages, plus the data summary sheet) in which you will explain the patterns you found in your data and what they mean. If, indeed, the qualities we define as "leadership" qualities correspond to the qualities that our society happens to define as "masculine," you should discuss how that might impact women in the workplace. How might that help to explain why women encounter an *invisible ceiling* (an unconscious or unwitting form of sexism)? How might your findings from your survey indicate a pattern that leads to the statistics in the table entitled "Income by Educational Level and Sex"?

Include as an appendix to your paper your sheet that shows the scores. The audience for this paper should be other college students who do not know anything about the concept of an "invisible ceiling."

Criteria for grading will be (1) ability to interpret the data from the survey in a clear manner, (2) ability to explain the concept of the invisible ceiling, (3) ability to explain and illustrate concrete ways in which our definitions of leadership and of masculinity may disadvantage women, often without awareness of the bias by any of the people making the decisions, and (4) control of the conventions of good writing so as not to jeopardize your credibility with the reader.

Income by Educational Level and Sex

<i>Education</i>	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Not a High School Graduate	\$28,345	\$16,075
High School Graduates	40,119	23,143
Some College; No Degree	48,812	26,720
College Graduate (Bachelor's)	71,140	40,200
Masters Degree	85,700	48,535
Doctorate	105,928	73,516
Professional Degree	148,611	72,592

Source: From Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2005

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Characteristics of Leaders

Mark an "X" by the 10 characteristics that you think are the essential qualities for a **leadership** position in a complex organization (business, government, etc)

- achiever
- aggressive
- analytical
- caring
- confident
- dynamic
- deferential (defers to others; yields with courtesy)
- devious
- intuitive
- loving
- manipulative
- nurturing
- organized
- passive
- a planner
- powerful
- sensitive
- strong
- relationship-oriented (makes decisions based on how others will *feel*)
- rule oriented (makes decisions based on *abstract procedural rules*)

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Leadership, Gender, and the Invisible Ceiling: Survey Activity

Worksheet

Name: _____

	<i>Leadership Trait</i>	<i>Masculine Trait</i>	<i>Feminine Trait</i>
Achiever	-%	71%	29%
Aggressive	-%	99%	1%
Analytical	-%	58%	42%
Caring	-%	1%	99%
Confident	-%	96%	4%
Dynamic	-%	69%	31%
Deferential (defers to others; yields with courtesy)	-%	7%	93%
Devious	-%	73%	27%
Intuitive	-%	12%	88%
Loving	-%	3%	97%
Manipulative	-%	65%	35%
Nurturing	-%	1%	99%
Organized	-%	12%	88%
Passive	-%	0%	100%
A Planner	-%	27%	73%
Powerful	-%	99%	1%
Sensitive	-%	3%	97%
Strong	-%	96%	4%
Relationship-oriented (decisions based on how others will <i>feel</i>)	-%	3%	97%
Rule oriented (decisions based on <i>abstract procedural rules</i>)	-%	87%	13%
Total: Direct Correlations with Leadership			
Total: Inverse Correlations with Leadership			

<increase underlining, see p. 81 for example size of line>

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NASA

Understanding Social Interaction

Heather M. Griffiths, Fayetteville State University

Rationale

This exercise will introduce you to sociological concepts related to society and social interaction. You will pretend that you are an astronaut, one member of a crew that has crash-landed 200 miles away from your original landing point on the light side of the moon. In order to survive, you must rank the fifteen items not damaged in the crash in order of most important (1) to least important (15). The survival of the crew depends on your ability to decide successfully which items are the most important and indispensable for your 200-mile journey, and which you might safely discard in order to lighten your load.

Instructions

This is a two-part exercise. First, you will receive up to 15 minutes to rank the 15 items listed on your individual exercise sheet. When this task is complete, four to six students will volunteer for further participation. These students will leave the room and read their instructions while the rest of the class receives further instructions from the professor. Following these separate instructions, the class volunteers return to the classroom and conduct part two of the exercise.

In part two, the student volunteers will work together to create a master list ranking the supplies in order of importance. To begin this part, the student volunteers will introduce themselves to the class. These students must reach a consensus on a final list; they may only vote on their final list three times. Your professor will then match this final list against the official answers. When the group rankings are different from the official rankings, the professor will note the difference, ignoring whether the difference is plus or minus. Finally, your professor will add the differences in ranking to determine your final score.

Grading

See your instructor for details on scoring and grading. One way to do this follows. If the student volunteers are within 25 points of the correct answers, they succeed and the entire class gets full credit for the exercise. If the

volunteers are within 50 points of the correct answers, the entire class will receive half credit. If the volunteers score more poorly than that, no one will receive any credit for the assignment.

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NASA: Understanding Social Interaction

Individual Worksheet

You are a member of a space crew originally scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship on the lighted surface of the moon. Due to mechanical difficulties, however, your ship was forced to land at a spot some 200 miles from the rendezvous point. During landing, much of the equipment aboard was damaged; and since survival depends on reaching the mother ship, the most critical items available must be chosen for the 200-mile trip. Below are listed the 15 items left intact and undamaged after landing. Your task is to rank order them in terms of their importance to your crew in allowing them to reach the rendezvous point.

Place the number 1 by the most important item, the number 2 by the second most important, and so on, through number 15, the least important. You have 15 minutes to complete this phase of the exercise.

- Box of matches
- Food concentrate
- Fifty feet of nylon rope
- Parachute silk
- Portable heating unit
- Two .45 caliber pistols
- One box of dehydrated milk
- Two 100 lb. tanks of oxygen
- Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)
- Life raft
- Magnetic compass
- Five gallons of water
- Signal flares
- First aid kit containing injection needles
- Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter

NASA Group Instructions

Please leave the room while I give the rest of the class their instructions. Do not talk to each other while outside of the room.

Your group must reach a consensus on what is most important. You will come to this consensus in front of the class. When you have finished, you will write your final answer on the Master NASA sheet. You must come to a consensus by discussing your choices. You can make up to three votes before choosing your final list.

Your answer is then scored against the NASA approved Master List, and if you score below 25 points on the Master List, you and each of your classmates will receive full credit for this assignment. If you score between 25 and 50 points, you all receive half credit.

If you do score 51 or more points, no one will receive credit for this exercise.

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NASA

Understanding Social Interaction

Master Worksheet

You are a member of a space crew originally scheduled to rendezvous with a mother ship on the lighted surface of the moon. Due to mechanical difficulties, however, your ship was forced to land at a spot some 200 miles from the rendezvous point. During landing, much of the equipment aboard was damaged; and since survival depends on reaching the mother ship, the most critical items available must be chosen for the 200-mile trip. Below are listed the 15 items left intact and undamaged after landing. Your task is to rank order them in terms of their importance to your crew in allowing them to reach the rendezvous point.

Place the number 1 by the most important item, the number 2 by the second most important, and so on, through number 15, the least important. You have 15 minutes to complete this phase of the exercise.

- Box of matches
- Food concentrate
- Fifty feet of nylon rope
- Parachute silk
- Portable heating unit
- Two .45 caliber pistols
- One box of dehydrated milk
- Two 100 lb. tanks of oxygen
- Stellar map (of the moon's constellation)
- Life raft
- Magnetic compass
- Five gallons of water
- Signal flares
- First aid kit containing injection needles
- Solar-powered FM receiver-transmitter

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Group Decision Making

Judy L. Singleton, College of Mount St. Joseph

Rationale

This exercise was developed to help you in your sociology courses to experience the processes that people encounter in group decision-making situations rather than merely to read about them. The assignment will also help you to apply sociological concepts and give you the opportunity to discuss decision-making issues in a group format.

Instructions

Your instructor will assist you with forming groups. The groups are likely to be the same as one or more of your previous group exercises.

1. A recorder is to be selected before beginning the discussion and written analysis.
2. Based upon your previous experiences doing work in the groups, each group will discuss, analyze, and answer the questions on the worksheet provided. All group member names are to be listed on the top of the worksheet.
3. Each member *individually* is to answer on the separate worksheet why he or she would rather do class work within a group structure or why he or she would prefer not to do class work within a group structure. What are the benefits versus the disadvantages of group work? This section is to be submitted individually on the separate worksheet by each group member with that group member's name written on the top of the sheet. This section is not to be submitted on the group answer sheet.

Grading

See your instructor for details regarding how this exercise will be graded.

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Group Decision Making

Worksheet

Group Members' Names:

Discuss and answer the following questions as a group.

1. How were roles assigned to members in the group projects? Be specific as to the type of roles in each group and why people elected to participate in those roles.
 - A. Who emerged as the leader during each project? Why?
 - B. What type of leaders did your group have?
 - C. Discuss why others permitted individuals to accept certain roles.
 - D. Did different people assume different roles in different group projects? Discuss why this situation might or might not have occurred.
2. What affected the participation of members? Did everyone participate equally?
 - A. How did the size of the group affect decision making?
 - B. How did knowing or not knowing other group members impact the group decision-making process?
 - C. Consider the composition of the group. How heterogeneous or homogeneous was your group? Did this situation impact decision making in any way? Explain.
3. How was a group decision made? Were there concerns about conforming, expressing different opinions and ideas, being subject to "groupthink," and so on? Explain why.

(Use extra paper as needed, and append your paper to the worksheet.)

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Group Decision Making

Worksheet—Individual Assessment of Group Decision Making

Name: _____

Individually answer the following questions (use the back of the page as needed):

1. Would you rather do class work within a group structure, or would you prefer not to do class work within a group structure? Indicate which you prefer and why.
2. What are the benefits versus the disadvantages of group work?
3. Reflect here on what you have gained from analyzing group decision making as a social process in this group decision-making exercise.

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