

**AN ANALYSIS OF HOW ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS  
USED IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WASHBANK  
REFLECT SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED GENDER RELATIONS**

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REFLECT SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED GENDER RELATIONS

by

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## DECLARATION

**I wish to declare that this is my original work, except where acknowledged.**

**Signature:**

Signature: 

Date: 30 NOVEMBER 1995

Date: 30 NOVEMBER 1995

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I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the following people, without whose help I may not have been able to complete this dissertation:

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## DEDICATION

To my children, Sphehleh and Nonhlanhla.  
Steam ahead!

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how English Language textbooks used in Washbank Primary Schools reflect socially constructed gender relations.

The investigation is prompted by the belief that socially constructed gender relations exist in society and as schools often serve the interests of the society responsible for their existence, they can be used as a site for reproducing these gender relations through, among others the nature of curriculum materials such as Language textbooks that are either selected or prescribed for use in schools.

The NEW Day by Day English Course prescribed for primary schools in the Washbank area was selected for investigation, in an attempt to uncover gender bias in these texts. The books were analysed in terms of the pictures they contain. Pictures were analysed in terms of number and content. A content analysis of stories and poems with human subjects was also undertaken. Adjectives describing males and females were also analysed in order to determine the female/male valency they have.

Two separate questionnaires administered to teachers and pupils aimed to determine gender attitudes of teachers and pupils who use the sampled texts. Interviews were also held with teachers to find out teacher's views of the pupils they teach regarding their attributes and predictions of careers to be suited.

It was found that the texts sampled are not only overwhelmingly biased in favour of boys, but they also contain some very rigid gender stereotypes of both males and females. It was also found that both teachers and pupils hold very gendered and stereotyped views of their positions in life. Although teachers realise the gendered nature of their lives, most consider it as the norm. This calls for a much more vigorous and conscious effort on the part of the teachers in particular to work towards the deconstruction of these stereotyped gender relations through, among other things, conscious and resourceful use of the gendered materials prescribed for their pupils, so that gender stereotypes are deconstructed rather than perpetuated.

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## CHAPTER 1 : ORIENTATION

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main assumption on which this study is based is that socially constructed gender relations exist in society, and as schools often serve the interests of the societies responsible for their existence, they can be used as a site for reproducing these gender relations. The school has a potential to reproduce these gender relations through, among others, the nature of curriculum materials including language textbooks that are either selected or prescribed for use in schools.

### 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Stanworth (1984:4) observes that

In order to grasp fully the relationship between gender and schooling it is necessary to have a framework in which to locate the place of education in society.

Although no fully satisfactory framework has been devised, a number of useful insights have been generated. These imply that education - far from being, as it was once ironically called, "an equality machine" (Stanworth, 1984:14) - tends to act as a vehicle for the reproduction of patterns of subordination and domination which characterise our society. In one account, schooling is said to "operate within the long shadow of work" (Stanworth, 1984:14). In other words, there is structural similarity or correspondence between the organisation of production in capitalist societies and the nature of schooling. Bowles and Gintis (in Stanworth 1984:14) argue that the education system creates the conditions for the reproduction of inequality in two ways. First, schooling moulds the consciousness of pupils, investing them with the habits of thought and practice which will be required of them in their working lives; those groups for instance who will be expected to perform routine tasks under rigid supervision are denied opportunities in school to exercise discretion or to develop initiative. Second, though not directly creating inequality, education helps to legitimate it - to make it appear natural and acceptable. As long as most people believe that education operates on a meritocratic basis - as long, that is, as privilege and disadvantage are believed to result from fair competition in the educational arena, and "natural" differences in aptitude - then inequality in society seems to be justified by different levels of educational achievement. Subordinate groups are encouraged to personalise their failure, to regard their disadvantage as the inevitable outcome of their own limitations - or their individual lack of intelligence, ambition or effort.

So it is that when girls under-achieve or fail it is believed to be their own laziness or lack of intelligence or ambition. Schooling is supposed to afford them fair and equal opportunities as the boys to achieve well. But does the school really do this? Are the curricular materials used in schools structured in a such a way that no gender is favoured above the other, that way shifting the balance for fair competition between boys and girls?

An alternative view to the theories of reproduction in schools cited above takes into account human agency and the production of meaning and resistance in schools. According to this theory, girls do not always unproblematically accept the gender specific roles that the school assigns them through the kind of gendered school and classroom interaction, gendered curriculum materials (for example reading schemes) and curriculum practices such as streaming pupils into sex specific subjects, like gardening or woodwork for boys and needlework or domestic science for girls. Reproduction theorists tend to project too total and final a vision of domination and oppression of women. Schooling is presented as the imposition of ideology as a relatively smooth and almost mechanical process. This is not always necessarily so. Individual consciousness needs to be taken into consideration as it is likely to present possibilities of resistance. Also, schooling is an active exercise that involves renegotiation of meaning. Kelly and Nihlen (1982), for example, argue that in the United States context girls do continue to higher education (although disproportionately to two-year colleges as opposed to more elite public and private four-year colleges) despite the ideological message of the school curriculum that their place is at home doing domestic work. Instead, Kelly and Nihlen (1982) continue to argue, girls obviously negotiate that knowledge to some extent in the light of their own emotional, intellectual and material needs. This emphasises the need to take into account agency and the production of meaning on the part of girls and women in schools.

Drawing from Bernstein and his theories of the framing and transmission of knowledge, Arnot in Deem (1980) uses the concept of a code to suggest that "one can develop a theory of gender codes which is class based and which can expose the structural and interactional features of gender reproduction and conflict in families, in schools and in workplaces" (1982:80).

Arnot argues that this focus on gender codes would allow us to remain conscious of the different moments and crossing structures of power which are negotiated by individuals in social settings. The emphasis in this argument is on the fact that girls negotiate and construct their own gendered identities through different definitions of what it means to be a woman from their families, their peers, the school, the media, etc., and that this involves

both contradiction and conflict. Arnot further argues that feminist educational theorists by emphasising hegemony, the existence of competing codes of meaning, and the continual process of social relationships, will be able to unravel the complexities and the effects of both capitalism and patriarchy on individual lives without falling into the mechanical functionalism of reproduction theory or the theoretical stance of liberal theory.

According to Gilbert and Taylor (1991:9)

An understanding of the reproduction of gender relations needs to take account of the links between personal lives and social structure.

One can, according to these authors, determine this by viewing certain institutional settings, such as schools, families and the workplace where social practices are gender structured.

This study, therefore, is aimed at viewing the school as such a gender-structured institution. It will focus particularly on the English language textbooks used in Black primary schools in Washbank, primarily to determine if they reflect gender bias and to gather information about teachers' perceptions of these issues. Once the existing situation has been ascertained, tentative suggestions about the possibilities for change to both classroom and linguistic practices will be made. It would be important to attempt to begin effecting change in the classroom setting because language practices occupy an important position as the schools' dealings with popular texts - which are instrumental in transmitting and perpetuating gender relations - take place for the most part in the language classroom. Language practices occupy an important position because the schools' dealings with popular texts - which are instrumental in transmitting and perpetuating gender relations - take place for the most part in the language classroom.

In the last two years there has been a major growth in the study of gender in South Africa, but still the research on sex and gender discrimination in education is in its infancy. The research on women in South Africa focuses on two essential problems. The first proceeds from a concern with economy. Marais and Havenga (in Morrell, 1992) observe that girls in South Africa tend to proceed to gender specific jobs despite the fact that their talents suit them for employment in other sectors of the economy. The second problem that has enjoyed attention concerns discrimination against women in education itself. Cock (in Morrell, 1992) has argued that patriarchal power causes girls to be educated for domesticity.

Measor and Sikes (1992) argue that sex role socialisation means that schools prepare each sex for quite different styles of life and places in life. Feminist writers from all theoretical approaches such as the liberal and the socialist, argue that in schools boys are oriented

towards a lifetime of paid work and girls are oriented towards the home and child rearing, or towards the kind of jobs that are an extension of the nurturing and home-making roles. Girls then leave school unqualified or under-qualified for the labour market. Following on this argument one may add that the sex role socialization process whereby schools prepare pupils for gender specific places in life, may be realised through curricular materials like gendered textbooks. As has been observed, this process may be accidental or it may be a deliberate effort to stratify society in terms of sex, race or class.

Spender (in Spender and Sarah, 1988:22) points out that:

The books and materials used within our schools abound in crude and inaccurate images of women and men and are designed to indoctrinate children in social inequality.

To illustrate this point they cite research by Allen Pace, conducted in Britain in 1988, where in fifty eight of the award-winning books they analysed, only twenty five were found to have a picture of a woman in them, and of those twenty five, all but four had a picture of a woman wearing an apron.

Lobban (1977) tackles the problem from a perspective similar to Pace but her focus is on the stories in the books. Lobban's main argument is that the world as presented in the children's reading schemes is full of gendered distortions and is essentially patriarchal.

In six reading schemes analysed by Lobban in 1977 she found that, out of two hundred and twenty five stories, only two showed women who were not engaged in domestic tasks. Of the two women who were not cooking or cleaning, one was a shop assistant and one was a teacher. This was in stark contrast to the portrayal of male occupations where a rich range of possibilities was presented.

Spender and Sarah (1988) argue that if children are using these images to build and project their future lives, then it is evident that for girls there is little choice. They continue that within the ideology of sexism, the inequality of the sexes is subtly maintained by providing one sex with a few tarnished images with which to make sense of the world and their place within it, and by providing the other sex with a range of glorified images. It is not surprising, the authors maintain, that the two sexes should learn the lesson and develop very different views of the world and different self concepts. Women are portrayed almost exclusively in the home in curriculum materials. Men are frequently portrayed outside the home in the 'real' world, and one of the interesting images which Lobban found was that of boys watching older men in adult occupations. Boys could see themselves in books as learners actively engaged

in a positive role of acquiring important skills. This was not the case for girls. They were just there, in a passive role. Lobban's (1977) analysis of sexism in British curricular materials suggests that the practice of providing few, and inferior, images of women persists virtually unchecked. She gives new materials to illustrate that

rigidly different roles for the sexes are still depicted and that they portray males as superior in everything except the ability to work, dust and smell flowers (Lobban, 1977:105).

When such images are the content of reading schemes, their purpose is not solely to teach children to read, claims Lobban (1977). Such schemes do not mirror real differences between the sexes, they are part of the process whereby artificial divisions are maintained and perpetuated. They convey a subtle and pernicious message that females are inferior, and do untold psychological damage to the self-evaluation of girls particularly (Lobban, 1977).

One important lesson that girls learn from these images is that it is desirable to be small, an image which fits comfortably with the social values in which physical strength is seen as positive and as the prerogative of men. The message is that boys do all the interesting things while girls, when they are not doing household chores, just sit in the background. They are the foil for male endeavour. And once this message has been learnt, the children reproduce social inequality.

Lobban (in Weiner and Arnot, 1987), presents a summary of the results of the analysis of two hundred and twenty five stories in which she looked at the construction of the children's roles. The data reveals a clear distinction between, among other, the toys and pets that the different sexes play with - dolls, dolls' prams and skipping ropes for girls, whereas boys play with boats, cars, aeroplanes and trains. Boys lift or pull heavy objects, play cricket, watch adult males in occupational roles and do heavy gardening. Lobban further classifies her data according to the toys and pets that both sexes play with and the activities that both sexes engage in, and these are: Toys and Pets - book, ball, paints, bucket and spade, dog and cat. Activities include: Playing with pets, writing, reading, shopping, going to the seaside and going on a family outing.

Another interesting category in Lobban's analysis is which sex takes the lead in both sex activities. Girls were found to be taking the lead in hopping, shopping with parents and skipping. Boys were presented as leading in going exploring alone, climbing trees, building things, taking care of pets, sailing boats, flying kites, and washing and polishing Dad's car. In the 'Learning a New Skill' category, girls were restricted to one activity: taking care of younger siblings, whereas boys appeared taking care of pets, making, building, saving or

rescuing people or pets and playing sports. The adult roles presented for girls were: mother, aunt and grandmother. For boys it was: father, uncle, grandfather, postman, farmer, fisherman, builder, bus driver, bus conductor, train driver and railway porter. The only two roles represented by both sexes were those of teacher and shop assistant.

One may conclude from this data that the books coded by Lobban are full of gender distortions. It is clear that these reading schemes divide the sphere of people's activities into two compartments: 'masculine' and 'feminine' with very few common characteristics. Girls are restricted to fewer and typically 'female' roles and they are less active than boys. The boys on the other hand engage in more and typically 'male' and exacting roles than girls. This strengthens the argument about curricular materials promoting patriarchy.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROBLEM**

It is assumed that the language texts used in Washbank Black Primary Schools have the potential to fuel and perpetuate certain gender stereotypes. If the English language textbooks are found to be gender biased, then ways of using them to challenge the gender ideologies perpetuated through them might be sought.

Liberal feminist theory underlies much of the work on sex stereotyping and bias in schools. Theorists working from this perspective have outlined and exposed the sexual bias in curricular materials and school practices. Their focus has been on the reform of both texts and practices and on state policies towards education. Both classroom ethnographies and analyses of textbooks have emerged from this tradition (Weiler, 1988:27). But this approach, argues Weiler, ignores the other social and economic forces that impact on schooling. The nature of the texts for example, according to this argument, does not happen in a vacuum, but is affected by social, economic and political forces as well.

The thrust of this study is on determining the presence of gender bias in selected textbooks rather than determining its origin, its causes, and the reform of texts which is beyond the scope of this study. If the texts should be found to contain any gender stereotypes then tentative suggestions about possible changes to linguistic and classroom practice will be made, but further research will be required to consider the implementation of longer term reform.

This study, following Janks and Ivanic (1992), will include a consideration of the way in which meanings are constructed. The authors argue that 'meaning lies not simply in the text, but

in the social relations in which it is embedded' (1992:307). To illustrate this point they cite an example of how different readers responded differently to President Mandela's first speech after his release from prison in 1990. According to who they were and how they were positioned, they foregrounded and backgrounded different aspects of what he said. Some of the variables that may determine such a position are age or sex or class or race. All students or pupils are themselves gendered, raced or classed. They 'read' texts and classroom social relationships according to those subjectivities. Any text used in the classroom might be handled and reacted to in a similar manner, depending on the existing social relations and teacher/pupil attitudes.

#### **1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main concern of this study is to determine how stereotyping and bias manifests itself in English Language textbooks used in Washbank Primary Schools as a contributing factor in the construction of femininity. It also aims to assess teachers' awareness of gender construction in textbooks. Once these areas have been explored, suggestions for possible changes on curriculum practices will be made.

#### **1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

In her critique of the ANC's Education and Training Policy Framework, Wolpe (1994) observes that gender bias of the curriculum is given due recognition in terms of subject availability and choice, the discouragement of girls from pursuing maths and science, biased texts, privileging of male access to (and success in) sports facilities, the way lessons are taught and the construction of knowledge as a male dominated activity. However, she notes, there is one aspect to which the ANC's Education and Training Policy Framework does not refer: how the education system, through both the overt and hidden curricula, articulates with family formation in a way that reinforces traditional female roles. She emphasises that the education system, and most particularly, the school aspect, plays a significant part in reinforcing the traditional role of women and, indeed, in identifying the paths they should take in adult life. This makes the fact about how sexually biased textbooks which might be used in schools have the potential to perpetuate some traditional female stereotypes, particularly significant.

As a pupil and teacher, the researcher has observed that certain gendered practices exist in classrooms. The researcher believes that such gendered behaviour by teachers towards pupils as distinct groups of girls and boys, and girls and boys towards each other as people

of distinct sexes, the curriculum materials used in the schools, as well as general school practices, may serve to fuel certain gender stereotypes. It is also believed that sexually biased curriculum materials may affect the academic performance of the pupils against whom they are biased quite adversely.

English language textbooks prescribed for use in Washbank black primary schools may be one contributing factor towards girls' possible under achievement and reinforcing and perpetuation of these gendered stereotypes if not used with caution.

Studying prescribed English language textbooks to determine gender bias in them, and then seeking ways of using them consciously and resourcefully might be a beginning towards deconstructing these stereotypes, hence this study.

## **1.6 ELUCIDATION OF CONCEPTS**

Several terms central to this dissertation which serve as points of reference will be elucidated, and they are sex, gender, patriarchy, socialist feminism, feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism and subjectivity.

**1.6.1** Sex is defined as the quality of being male or female; the sum of the biological characteristics which distinguish a person as male or female. It is important to note the fact that sex is strictly biologically determined.

**1.6.2** Gender means identification as feminine or masculine. Whereas sex is strictly determined by the biological make up of a person, which is mainly the set of genitalia a person is born with (Poynton, 1985), gender on the other hand is socially constructed. To be feminine or masculine means more than which sex organs a person has. It also means the right and ability - which is censored by society - to engage in certain activities and not others. This however does not necessarily require biological sex to do successfully. The censorship exercised by society may vary from society to society. Implicit in the concept 'gender' is the socially constructed sex role that a person may assume. Depending on its social values, norms and attitudes, a society may expect certain activities, attitudes and behaviour and not others from the different sexes although (it must be emphasised) biological sex does not determine the ability to fulfil these societal expectations. It is not unusual for a man who is kind and compassionate and shows great skill in caring for young children to be labelled 'feminine'.



Gender only has meaning when the concepts of masculinity and femininity are recognised as a pair which exists in a complementary and antithesis (McDonald, in Gilbert and Taylor, 1991).

1.6.3 Patriarchy is a social structure of power relations in which women's interests are subordinated to the interests of men. These power relations take many forms, from the sexual division of labour and the social organisation of procreation to the internalised forms of femininity by which we live. Patriarchal power rests on the social meanings given to biological sex and difference. In patriarchal discourse, the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male. To say that patriarchal relations are structural is to suggest that they exist in the institutions and social practices of our society and cannot be explained by the intentions, good or bad, of individual women or men (Weedon, 1987:3).

1.6.4 Feminism according to Weedon (1987:6) questions the assumptions about women which social theories pose as true, pointing to their irrelevance to women's experience or highlighting the frequent absence of women from them.

Feminism tries to bring to light how women and the social role of women has been constructed in certain ways which bar them from participating effectively in important social structures such as politics, medicine, religion, education and the economy. Feminism questions the way in which the social structures operate in ways that discriminate against, and oppress women, robbing them of any opportunity to express their true individuality and abilities. The division of labour according to sex role assumptions is one way in which this is done. The exclusion of women from politics, medicine, religion, and education is another way in which women have been oppressed.

Although the debate around gender discrimination in countries like the UK and the USA has been so for quite some time, it is fairly new in the RSA and has hardly had an impact on peoples social attitudes and the views and assumptions they have on the role of women.

The kind of exposure that women get in the media and the textbooks used at schools may serve to perpetuate a certain image of women.

1.6.5 In this study the individual is viewed as a subject, a gendered subject to be more specific. Gendered subjectivity is viewed as constructed and not genetically determined but socially produced. It is produced in a whole range of discursive

practices - economic, social and political - the meanings of which are a constant site of struggle over power.

Weedon (1987) in her discussion of language argues that language is not the expression of unique individuality but it constructs the individual's subjectivity in ways which are socially specific. I want to argue that, in a similar manner, gendered subjectivity is not an expression of unique individuality but is constructed in the economic, social and political context that individuals find themselves in. Gendered subjects may in the extreme be seen as the product of a certain sex ideology. It must be added however that sex ideologies are not definitive in determining gender relations in a society. They may be resisted and contested in a number of different ways. They are an attempt by the dominant groups to maintain and perpetuate the status quo regarding women's oppression. This has been done through social institutions like the church, the political system, the economic system and educational institutions. This study looks at whether these sex-ideologies are perpetuated by the schools via the textbooks used in them.

Because sex-ideologies may vary from society to society it is possible to find varying gender stereotypes. In some traditional African societies for example, polygamy is acceptable. In such societies it is applauded for a man to have extra marital affairs with a view to marriage. On the other hand, in contemporary European societies having an extra marital affair is taboo and infidelity in marriage is highly condemned. In the former society multi relationships construct 'maleness' whereas in the latter society fidelity is considered one of the attributes of true 'maleness'.

In the same regard Weedon (1987) argues that the meaning of gender is both socially produced and variable between different forms of discourse. She cites the example of how pornography and much advertising for example offer us models of femininity in which a particular version of female sexuality is paramount. It is a form of femininity in which women direct themselves totally to the satisfaction of the male, male fantasies and male desires, and gain an arguably masochistic pleasure in doing so. This contrasts with other versions of femininity, which stress women's asexuality, exalting either virginity or motherhood, and which call for different sorts of masochistic feminine behaviour.

Assuming that gender is a form of sex ideology one can argue further following on Althusser (in Belsey, 1980) that ideology is not necessarily a set of deliberate

distortions foisted upon a helpless group of people by another that wants to perpetuate certain existing relations. It does not have creators in that sense since it exists necessarily. Ideological practices, as Althusser puts it, are supported and produced in the institutions of our society which he calls Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs). The phrase distinguishes from one Repressive State Apparatus which works by force (the police, the penal system, the army) those institutions whose existence helps to guarantee consent to the existing mode of production. The central ISA in contemporary capitalism is the educational system which prepares children to act consistently with the values of society by inculcating in them the dominant versions of appropriate behaviour as well as history, social studies and of course literature. Among allies of the educational ISA are the family, the law, the media, and the arts, all helping to represent and reproduce the myths and beliefs necessary to enable people to work within the existing social formation. Althusser (in Belsey, 1980) argues that the ideology is directed at the subject (the individual in society) and that the role of ideology is to construct people as subjects.

## CHAPTER 2 METHODOLOGY

In this study, a combination of research methods were used to investigate/determine gender bias in textbooks prescribed for Black Primary Schools in Washbank. A number of aspects that might reveal gender bias were investigated in the Day by Day Reading Scheme. Those were pictures, the content, ie. stories, paragraphs and sentences, as well as the adjectives used to describe males or females. A questionnaire was administered over a sample of teachers who use this scheme. Another questionnaire was administered over a sample of pupils who use this scheme. Interviews were also held with teachers to determine their awareness of gender related issues, particularly in the books they use to teach English in their schools.

A literature survey was conducted to establish a theoretical framework and to find out about research done on the subject to date.

### 2.1 LITERATURE SURVEY

Literature that deals with gender discrimination in curriculum materials was read. Readings from Lobban (in Weiler, 1988) were found most useful with regard to the analysis of sex roles in reading schemes. Lobban's system of categorization of the sex roles in the British Reading Schemes used in her research was adopted for this study. In her analysis of the sex-roles in the reading schemes, Lobban categorized the construction of the children's roles according to toys and pets, activities, taking the lead in both sex activities, learning a new skill and the adult roles presented in the schemes.

Stanworth (1991) also offers some useful insights regarding gender bias in curriculum materials. She observes how many science textbooks have been apparently written with a male readership in mind. She notes how this comes across in the illustrations in which boys are more likely to hold the test tube or adjust the bunsen burner. Stanworth also shows how this pattern is reinforced by the teachers' expectations and classroom interaction with boys and girls, which confirms them in certain gender stereotypes; for example, boys are believed to be active, aggressive, and extroverted, whereas girls are seen as passive, dependent and introverted. A similar focus was taken in this study in handling both the picture analysis and the content analysis of the English Reading Scheme for Washbank Black Primary Schools.

A Table of Schema for Femininity by Kress and Hodge in Poynton (1985) shows the adjectives used in advertising that have what they call feminine or masculine valency.

**TABLE 1** **SCHEMA FOR FEMININITY**

DEFINING CATEGORY	TYPICAL QUALITIES	FEMININE NOUNS	FEMININE VERBS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Active</li> <li>- Weak</li> <li>+ Obedient</li> <li>+ Pleasing</li> <li>+ Caring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjectives</li> <li>implying</li> <li>one or more</li> <li>defining</li> <li>categories</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nouns with</li> <li>preferred</li> <li>linkages with</li> <li>feminine</li> <li>adjectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verbs</li> <li>with</li> <li>preferred</li> <li>feminine</li> <li>agents</li> </ul>

Source: Kress and Hodge (in Poynton 1985:16).

Another table in Poynton (1985), reveals some oppositions associated with gender in English:

**TABLE 2**

MAN/MALE/MASCULINE	WOMAN/FEMALE/FEMININE
reason	emotion
active	passive
instrumental	expressive
competence	incompetence
action	speech
culture	nature
knowledge	ignorance

Source: Kress and Hodge (in Poynton 1985:18).

Some of the oppositions listed in the foregoing table were used to determine gender bias in the books in terms of adjectives used to describe the different sexes. An attempt was made to determine if words describing activeness/inactiveness, competence/incompetence, knowledge/ignorance etc. were used in the stereotypical fashion presented in the above tables.

Gilbert and Taylor (1991) report on sexism in classroom texts. They maintain that the content of children's curriculum materials, reading textbooks and kits, children's picture books, and award-winning children's literature texts, has been steadily scrutinised in terms of gender portrayals for children. They cite research by Freebody and Baker who detailed the stereotyped nature of adult and child behaviour portrayed in the readers. According to their findings, fathers in these books paint, pump, fix, drive (car), pull, start (car), water (garden), light (fire), milk (cow), shout, hit and keep. On the other hand, mothers bake, dress, hug, kiss (a child), pack, pick (flowers), set (the table) splash and thank. In the same vein, girls love - often and indiscriminately. They love not only humans, but pets and nature and selected objects. By comparison, the only reference Freebody and Baker found to a boy loving anything was in the statement that Jack loved his horse.

Reeder's (1981) Study of the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award Winners from 1950 - 1980 cited in Gilbert and Taylor (1991), focused on the stereotypical pictures in children's literature. She aimed at ascertaining whether sex-role stereotyping in these books was a subject for historical study or was still a matter for contemporary concern. Her conclusions were that the books did not fully represent the social development of the previous thirty years with regard to sex roles. Males were numerically more represented than females. The roles represented were mostly in accordance with traditional role models and occupational and family roles were limited to restrictions based on sex rather than individual differences, abilities or interests.

In this study, picture counts and analysis of the prescribed texts will be done to determine whether the books reflect any gender discrimination.

Measor and Sikes (1992) in their discussion of Reading Schemes regarding curriculum materials and textbooks comment on Lobban's work on Reading Schemes used in British Primary Schools which revealed that the six reading schemes she analysed showed women and men doing very different jobs and leading very different lives. They contend that the significance of Lobban's analysis lies in the fact that children spend a considerable time with their reading scheme books and so the concern is that they are likely to absorb the stereotyped roles and expectations of gender at the same time as they learn to read. Children learn that it is normal for Daddy to go out to work, even if their own experience does not confirm this.

Spender (in Spender and Sarah, 1988:72) comments on the work of Nilsen who coined the phrase 'the cult of the apron' to describe the depiction of women in school books. In fifty-eight award-winning picture books analysed by Nilsen, only twenty-five had a picture of a woman in them, and only four among these showed a woman wearing other than an apron. Spender further comments that such gender biased materials are designed to indoctrinate children in social inequality. It is for this reason that the researcher in this study has chosen to view and analyse the pictures in the prescribed texts, not only in terms of number, but also the gendered meanings and messages constructed through them.

Although a considerable amount of literature dealing with gender discrimination was found and reviewed, the researcher was not able to find much literature on research done in South Africa. It was mentioned earlier that questions of class and race would also be considered in tackling gender discrimination in reading schemes, as these usually intersect. The literature surveyed, however, does not dwell much on questions of race and class.

## 2.2 RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

Qualitative and quantitative techniques were used in conducting the research. A literature survey of books on gender discrimination in curriculum materials was done. Content analysis of the prescribed Reading Scheme in Washbank Black Primary Schools was done. Picture counts were also done in the reading scheme.

One shortcoming that the qualitative measures used (the interviews with teachers in particular) had, is that during the course of the research, at the questionnaire stages, respondents may have had a feel for what the researcher was looking for and therefore responded in ways that might suit the researcher's "requirements." It was not possible therefore to achieve completely objective responses, or to verify them in any way. One had to trust in the integrity of the teachers concerned. It might perhaps have helped to interview a completely different group of teachers than the ones who had already taken part in answering the questionnaire.

Regarding the quantitative measures used, e.g. picture counts, one cannot be completely confident that the discrepancies in the representation of the sexes in the books necessarily reflect sex bias in ways that would affect the way that the content is assimilated by pupils as the quantity of the pictures does not necessarily reflect if and how they are used or what portion of the lessons they occupy.

## 2.3 ANALYSIS OF THE PICTURES

The second method applied in an attempt to determine gender bias in the Dav by Day Reading Scheme prescribed for Black Primary Schools in Washbank was to count the pictures in each book in the scheme. The scheme comprises a reader and a language book for each standard. Readers and language books used in Standard Three, Four and Five were included in the sample, making it a total of six books analysed. Two pictures were selected from the Standard Two reader but the Standard Two books were not analysed in any great detail. Pictures of girls/women and pictures of boys/men were counted in each book. The pictures were also viewed in terms of the gender roles that they represent for each sex. An attempt was made to determine what gender messages are transmitted by the kind of pictures which represent the different sexes in the books. The questionnaire filled out by the pupils included a question where, for example, they were asked to choose two pictures they like the most in their books (see Appendix A, question 1). This was aimed at determining how pupils react to or even identify with stereotypical pictures in the text. The

pictures were further categorized according to the activities that each sex engages in, the toys and pets for each sex, the new skills learnt by each sex, and the adult roles presented for each sex. Initially the category of which sex was represented as mostly taking the lead in both sex activities had been included. It had to be abandoned because the pictures in the books did not show any activities usually played by both sexes, which involved both sexes simultaneously.

## **2.4 CONTENT ANALYSIS**

Content analysis of the prescribed reading scheme for Washbank Black Primary Schools is the third method that was used to determine gender bias in these books. The content of the books was analysed in terms of the construction of sex roles presented in the stories, that is to say, who the stories are about, which gender stereotype the people fall into, what kind of activities they do, what kind of utterances they make, their occupational roles, what words (adjectives) are used to describe them, and whether their role is an active or passive one.

## **2.5 QUESTIONNAIRES**

Two separate questionnaires were administered over a sample of teachers and pupils (see Appendices A and B). The pupils' questionnaire was administered over a sample of three hundred pupils, comprising one hundred and fifty girls and one hundred and fifty boys. Twenty five pupils were randomly selected from each standard, ranging from standard three to standard five in each of the four schools sampled, with about equal representation of both sexes.

All teachers of English in standard three to standard five in the four sampled schools answered the teachers' questionnaire. They totalled twenty eight teachers. The teachers' questionnaire was an attempt to assess the teachers' awareness of gender construction in the reading scheme used in Black Primary Schools in Washbank. The pupils' questionnaire aimed to assess the extent of gendered attitudes and behaviour by pupils. This age group of pupils was chosen particularly because it is about at this stage that young boys and girls begin to see and identify themselves as people of distinct sex groups. They begin to play as separate groups of boys and girls and make friends with children of their own sex. It would therefore be significant what gender attitudes they display.



## **2.5.1 Problems Experienced in the Administration of the Questionnaires**

### **2.5.1.1 Pupils**

Some problems that were experienced in administering the questionnaire were that pupils did not understand all the words used in the questionnaire, so they had to be explained in their mother tongue.

In some open-ended questions (the one word response ones) some pupils did not know the English equivalent of the responses they wanted to make so they were asked to indicate by raising their hands if they had such a problem and they were assisted.

The same problems as the above were experienced with the last question. Considering time constraints, pupils were told to write their responses in their mother tongue if they experienced problems expressing their thoughts in English. These would be translated into English by the researcher at a later stage.

It is also to be noted that in the responses they made to the questions pupils may have been influenced by response options in other questions and they may also have been stifled and restricted by the few response options offered.

### **2.5.1.2 Teachers**

Some teachers had the impression that they had to give accurate answers (as in a test) and asked if they could refer to the texts in question. It was explained to them that that would not be necessary as the research was aimed at assessing their awareness of gender related issues in the texts they use. Some teachers were not happy about this as they felt bad to have to reveal that they did not know much about the books they used or the issues raised.

On the whole, teachers, pupils and principals were very welcoming. After the interviews teachers expressed appreciation on being enlightened about these issues and shared some very interesting information about how they have personally practised gender discrimination without being aware of what they were doing.

## **2.6 INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS**

Finally, interviews were held with teachers of English in order to assess their awareness of gender issues inside and outside the classroom. They were unstructured and included

questions on classroom interaction with girls and boys, gendered behaviour of the pupils inside and outside the classroom, as well as their future expectations of the girls and boys they teach. This follows on the work of Stanworth (1989), in which she looks at the significance of gender in teachers' views of their pupils. In her interviews Stanworth asked teachers to project their pupils' future in five years, to imagine the kind of occupation they might be in and how the teachers would guide their pupils with regard to their future.

Names of pupils to be discussed were randomly selected by the researcher from class registers in order to preclude the possibility of teachers choosing pupils whom they knew would be "suitable" candidates for discussion, as at the time the interviews were held, they had a picture of what the research was about, having learnt it through the pupils and their questionnaire.

## **2.7 STUDY SITE**

The research was conducted in four primary schools in Washbank, a rural community, about 60 kilometres from Ladysmith, Kwa-Zulu Natal. The schools were randomly selected. Choice of this area was motivated by the fact that these schools use a common reading scheme and as a rural community it would be reasonable to predict that they might hold conservative views on gender issues.

## **2.8 STUDY POPULATION**

The study population included male and female teachers of English in standard three, four and five. Pupils in standard three, four and five using the Day by Day Reading Scheme comprised the student population.

## **2.9 SAMPLE**

Teachers of English in standard three to five in four primary schools in the Washbank area were sampled. A total of twenty eight teachers was sampled. Twenty-five pupils were randomly selected from each standard in the four primary schools, making a total of three hundred pupils, with an equal number of boys and girls, ie. one hundred and fifty pupils from each sex group.

## CHAPTER 3 : ANALYSIS OF THE TEXTS

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The major premise underlying the current debate about class and race bias in reading texts is that the content of the schemes influences children's attitudes to the world and themselves. Reading schemes are presumed to be particularly influential because they are usually the child's first introduction to the written word and they are presented within a context of authority, the classroom, and most children read them. They are thus presumed to convey official approval of attitudes the child will have already learnt in the pre-school years from parents, the media and other persons in society. Current knowledge suggests that children's books, and particularly their first readers, do influence children's attitudes. They do this by presenting models like themselves for children to identify with and emulate. In addition they present an official view of the 'real' world and 'proper' attitudes (Lobban (1987) in Weiner and Arnot (eds): 150)

The purpose of the research in this study in analysing the English Reading Scheme prescribed for Black Primary Schools in Washbank is informed by such insights as Lobban describes in the above extract, namely that children's books/reading schemes have the potential to influence and reinforce certain attitudes as a result of the way life is portrayed in the reading schemes. Because of the manner and the content in which they are presented it is almost certain that they will influence children's attitudes.

Gendered and stereotypical representations of girls/women and boys/men in these texts are likely to fuel and reinforce these socially constructed stereotypes.

### 3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE PICTURES IN THE TEXTS

#### 3.2.1 Numerical Analysis of the Pictures

In the six texts analysed it was found that the standard three language book contained seventy pictures of girls/women (females), the standard four language book contained one hundred pictures of females and the standard five language book contained sixty pictures of females. The pictures of females in the readers for each standard were: fifty-one for standard three, ten for standard four, and forty-two in the standard five reader. A total, therefore, of three hundred and thirty-three pictures depicting females were found in the six texts.

Pictures depicting boys/men (males), on the other hand, totalled one thousand one hundred and one in the six texts combined. The standard three language book depicted one hundred and seventy-seven males. The standard four language book depicted two hundred and fifty-six males. There were two hundred and forty-six males shown in the standard five language book. The standard three reader had one hundred and forty-two pictures of males. The standard four reader showed one hundred and forty-two pictures of males, and one hundred and forty-eight pictures of males were found in the standard five reader.

Of the one thousand four hundred and thirty-four pictures found in all the six texts analysed, only three hundred and thirty-three were pictures of females - a mere twenty-three percent - against the one thousand one hundred and one pictures of boys, which constitute seventy-seven percent of the total of pictures in the texts analysed. cf Table 3.

**TABLE 3**

CLASS	NUMBER OF PICTURES IN READERS		NUMBER OF PICTURES IN LANGUAGE BOOKS	
	Females	Males	Females	Males
STD 3	51	142	70	177
STD 4	10	132	100	256
STD 5	43	148	60	246
TOTALS	103	422	230	679

The total number of all the pictures is  $103 + 422 + 230 + 679 = 1434$

The total number of girl/woman pictures is  $103 + 230 = 333$

The total number of boy/man pictures is  $422 + 679 = 1101$

Each set in percentage form, therefore, is: Females =  $\frac{333}{1434} \times \frac{100}{1} = 23.22 = 23\%$

Males =  $\frac{1101}{1434} \times \frac{100}{1} = 76.778 = 77\%$

One can conclude from the numerical data above that the reading scheme is overwhelmingly biased in favour of males in terms of the number of pictures representing the different sexes in the books. The vast discrepancy in which the series are pictorially represented in this reading scheme renders it essentially a 'male' scheme. Males dominate almost every page that has a picture on it in this scheme. The presence of so many males in the books elevates males to a certain status. The numerical dominance of males in the books can transform to common dominance of females by males in the minds of the pupils. Both the females and the males can start seeing the male person as the important person, thus

reinforcing the gender stereotype of man as the dominant person. This could have serious implications on the way pupils perceive and receive or reject these books as the case may be. If one is to look at pictures in books in terms of their ability to motivate, clarify and arouse interest, perhaps it could be correct to speculate that such female-unfriendly books would, to a large extent, serve the interests of male pupils in the learning situation. Besides the fact that these books (because of the larger number of male pictures in them) confirm them as the important and dominant group, the boys are more likely to participate actively in lessons based on books that honour them, thus continuing the stereotype of 'intelligent, active and assertive' males. Girls, on the other hand, may feel marginalised or even excluded (by the absence of females' pictures in the texts). As there may not be much in these books that directly appeals to their interests, they may not feel so zealous to participate in lessons that centre so much around the 'male' terrain which they may not feel so confident to invade. The result is that the gender stereotype of unintelligent, submissive and coy females is confirmed and perpetuated.

This bias reflected in the number of pictures representing each sex can have other shorter term effects besides fuelling certain gender stereotypes. The academic performance and achievement of the girls can be adversely affected by using texts that are biased against them and can thus hardly motivate them to participate actively in lessons that are apparently meant for boys. They may perceive themselves as unimportant participants in the lessons, whose sex and role are not even adequately represented in the books.

It is thus up to the teacher to ensure that all pupils - boys and girls alike - obtain equal and maximum benefit from learning materials used in the classroom. Where such sexually biased texts are used, the teacher may come around the problem by opting to ignore the gender bias in the texts and exercise positive discrimination when using them. For example, s/he may consciously and deliberately urge female pupils to offer input in class, particularly when the content of the lesson is based on male pictures. When doing role-play and in answering questions based on the male pictures, female pupils may be asked to assume male roles or play the roles as females, if only to entrench the idea that it is not who does or says what that is important. Any person, male or female, has the right and ability (except child bearing) to do and say what they want to. Speaking (as is commonly believed) is not a male prerogative. This should not, however, be viewed as an attempt to turn females into males, but rather as a way of making females realise and utilise their full potentialities despite the books' contrary messages.

### **3.2.2 Content analysis of the pictures**

The categories listed on the next page (following Lobban in Weiner and Arnot (1987:151)) will be used in analysing the texts: Toys and Pets; Activities; Learning a New Skill; and adult roles presented for each sex. Table 2 summarises the results of the findings in the analysis of the texts, which was done in terms of the pictures present in the texts. From this analysis it is evident that people's activities are rigidly divided into two compartments: masculine and feminine, with very few common characteristics.

TABLE 4

ROLES THAT OCCUR IN THE PICTURES IN THE SIX LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS AND READERS CODED				
The sex for which the role is prescribed	Toys and Pets	Activities	Learning a New Skill	The Adult Roles Presented
FEMALES ONLY	dolls, cats, tea sets, teddy bears	pick flowers, listen to boys talk, preen themselves in front of mirrors, help mothers with housework, cook, buy pretty clothes, run away from threatening situations, care for younger siblings, have things explained to them, answer boys' questions, write letters, prepare meals, talk, sweep, wash, hang curtains, knit, sleep, climb trees with ladders.	drawing, caring for younger siblings	nurse, teacher, mother, cook, housekeeper, nanny
MALES ONLY	cars, carts, ball, dog, bicycle, scary mask, musical instruments, bow and arrow, tennis racquets, frogs	play ball, lift heavy objects, help fathers/ men do manual work, tell heroic adventures by men, play tricks on young and adult females, ride bicycles, make/build things (carts), do physical exercises, play dangerously (on the road), jump over high fences, cycle on slopes, read the news paper, dig in the garden, fell trees, ask intelligent questions, give intelligent answers, investigate threatening sounds outside at night, go to work, drive trains, cars and busses, save women from danger, initiate discussions, run errands, perform dangerous tasks, read big books, catch bus to work, fix cars, shout, hunt, stalk thieves, borrow things from females	riding a bicycle, playing cricket/ football, reading a map, doing sums, calling crocodiles, driving a car, playing drums, doing puzzles, telling time, building a cart, technical drawing, doing science experiments, playing rugby, making a toy telephone	bus driver, train driver, lorry driver, principal, judge, bag snatcher, shopkeeper, shop assistant, God, working father, men saving women from danger, teacher, sports coach, King (ruler), shoe maker, artisan, mask maker, painter and glazier, petrol pump attendant, mechanic, mailman, doctor, potter, police officer, painter (artist), detective, mine-worker, soldier

### 3.2.2.1 Toys and Pets

The pictures in the six books analysed depict females and males leading quite different life styles. These are, however, very stereotypical.

Looking at the kind of toys and pets that girls play with, as presented in the scheme, it was found that females play with dolls, cats and tea sets. This is in line with an existing stereotype of females as people who have caring and nurturing roles to play in life. Girls play with dolls in preparation for their supposed role as mothers who have the sole responsibility of looking after children in later life. Playing with tea sets reinforces the idea that females are educated for domestication. Teddy bears, which are soft and cuddly, are 'ideal' toys for females which compliment their supposed fragile, loving and caring nature. One can do no more with a teddy bear than cuddle it and sometimes talk to it, which are both typical 'female' traits. It would appear from such pictures of girls that, besides learning to read from these books, girls also learn about their roles as females in a patriarchal society. The only pet identified for girls in all six texts is a cat - perceived by many as a cuddly, docile and lovable creature. Boys, on the other hand, have dogs for pets. If one considers the dog-cat relationship where the dog is a bigger and stronger, fiercer and more aggressive animal, the message is loud and clear: Girls are too weak and fragile to handle anything but a pet as cuddly, docile and lovable as a cat. Boys, because they are supposedly stronger, braver and more adventurous, can handle the power, viciousness and the adventure that comes with owning a dog. A cat can only be fed and cuddled in the same way that a mother does a child, whereas with a dog one can go hunting or take long walks. In addition, keeping a dog is far more exciting and exacting than keeping a cat. Therefore, stereotypically a cat is more 'suitable' for a girl and a dog is the pet to be kept by a boy.

Toys identified for boys are cars, carts, ball, bicycle, scary masks, musical instruments, bows and arrows, and tennis racquets. These typically fall into the 'male' terrain. Cars, carts and bicycles are typically regarded as male gadgets. It's fathers/men who drive carts and cars and ride bicycles. These are heavy and big machines which can only be handled by men because they are considered strong. So, even as they play, children are indoctrinated with the idea that big gadgets are only to be handled by men. One may add that all the toys identified for boys are action toys. Cars and carts are driven, bicycles ridden, musical instruments played, bows and arrows used in hunting, and tennis racquets are used in real tennis games.

It is worth noting that boys' toys are much closer to real life than girls' toys. The possible implications are that men's life is real, important and full of action, whereas women have an idle, passive and insignificant life (just caring and loving). Also to note is the fact that the texts provide a larger variety of toys and pets for boys than



they do for girls. Only four were identified for girls, compared with the twelve that the boys were found to be playing with in the pictures.

### 3.2.2.2 Activities

#### Females' Activities

The activities that females are depicted doing in the pictures are a mere fraction of those which boys engage in. They reflect traditional stereotypes of females and males.

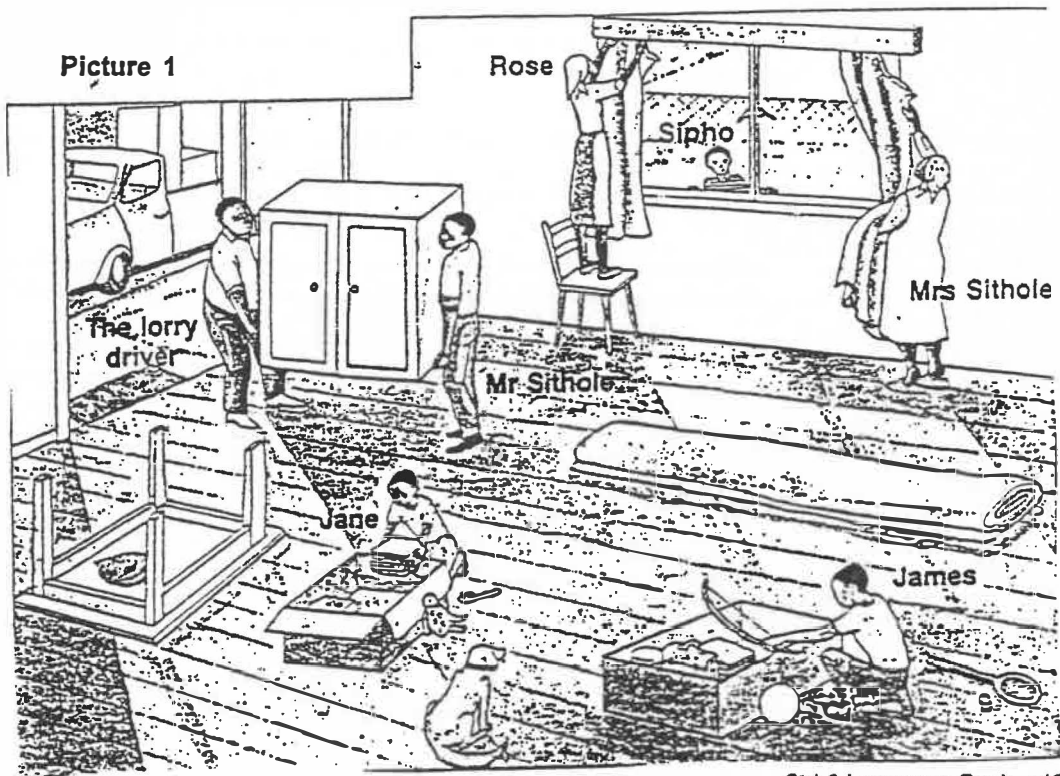
In the pictures females pick flowers, listen to males leading in conversation, preen themselves in front of mirrors, help mothers with housework, cook, buy pretty clothes, run away from threatening situations, care for younger siblings, have things (maths and geography) explained to them by males, answer males' questions, write letters, prepare meals, talk among themselves, sweep, wash, hang curtains, sleep, bake, climb trees (using ladders), and knit.

The females' activities depicted in the pictures can be broadly categorised into two spheres, namely: housekeeping and looking after their physical appearance. Another significant factor here is that the women's activities are limited to the home. The few instances in which females are depicted outside the home are at school teaching or learning and in town shopping for pretty clothes.

The stereotypical housekeeping and nurturing role of women is clearly depicted in the pictures of women doing housework, hanging curtains, preparing meals, baking, sweeping and washing. They are also depicted taking care of the young. Even young girls are depicted caring for younger siblings.

Picture One shows females and males engaged in very gender specific activities. The lorry driver, as prescribed in the passage, is man. He and Mr Sithole are carrying a cupboard into the house. Rose and Mrs Sithole are hanging curtains - a light and typically 'female' housekeeping activity. Jane and James are unpacking their boxes. Jane's possessions include some books, a brush and a doll. These belongings reflect the typical role of a female. They are the kind of toys to keep a girl within the home with minimal physical exertion. She needs to sit at home and read and also play dolls, 'rehearsing' her future role as a mother. James, on the other hand, has some books, a ball, a tennis set, and a bow. These toys are mostly for outdoor sports and they involve exerting physical action. From this picture, pupils

are likely to learn about females' 'proper' place being within the home and that boys should be outdoors building their masculinity - if physical fitness can be accepted as one of the attributes of maleness. The gender message in this picture is that more exerting work and play is for males and females should do lighter work which the picture suggests is housekeeping and mothering. Girls are not supposed to even try, although there is nothing that particularly requires maleness (biological) to play ball, tennis or shoot arrows successfully.



Std 3 Language Book, p12

Picture Two shows a father reading a newspaper, a mother knitting and two children - a boy and a girl - reading. Mothers, even when supposedly relaxing, do something in the line of homekeeping and caring for others. The father on the other hand relaxes by reading a newspaper, an activity which may develop him intellectually and thus boost his stereotypical male ego as it may enable him to participate intelligently in serious 'male' conversation about current world issues. Mothers have to be content with doing handwork as this picture shows.

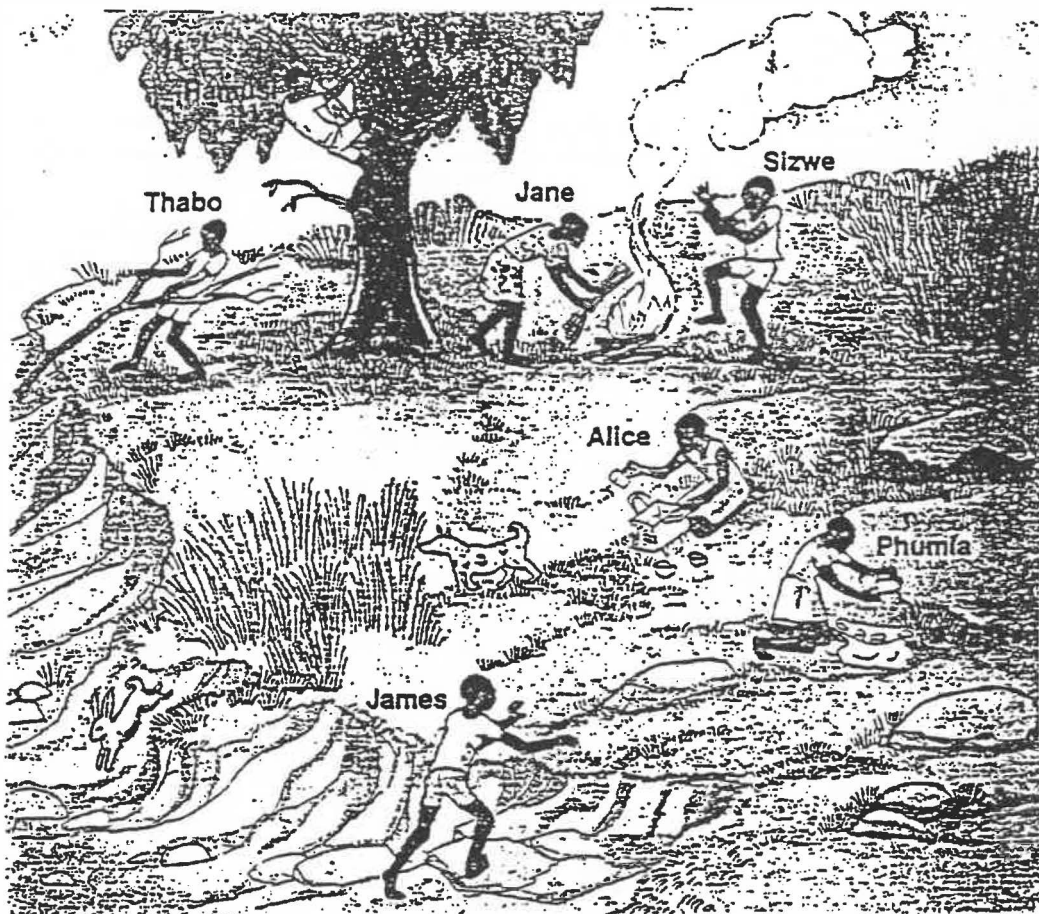
**Picture 2**



Std 3 Language Book, p31

The children in Picture Three engage in stereotypical activities. One girl makes the fire and when a boy tries to help he burns his hand because 'this is not boys' work'. In the African culture starting up a fire for cooking is female work. Another boy climbs a tree while James plays on the slope. Besides the boy who collects wood (a man's job), the rest are playing. The girls on the other hand busy themselves with preparing a meal. Phumla gets out some bread, while Alice gets the cups ready and Jane makes the fire. Even when the children are outside the house by themselves the sex-roles remain clearly defined, and that is what pupils using this reading scheme are likely to learn.

**Picture 3**

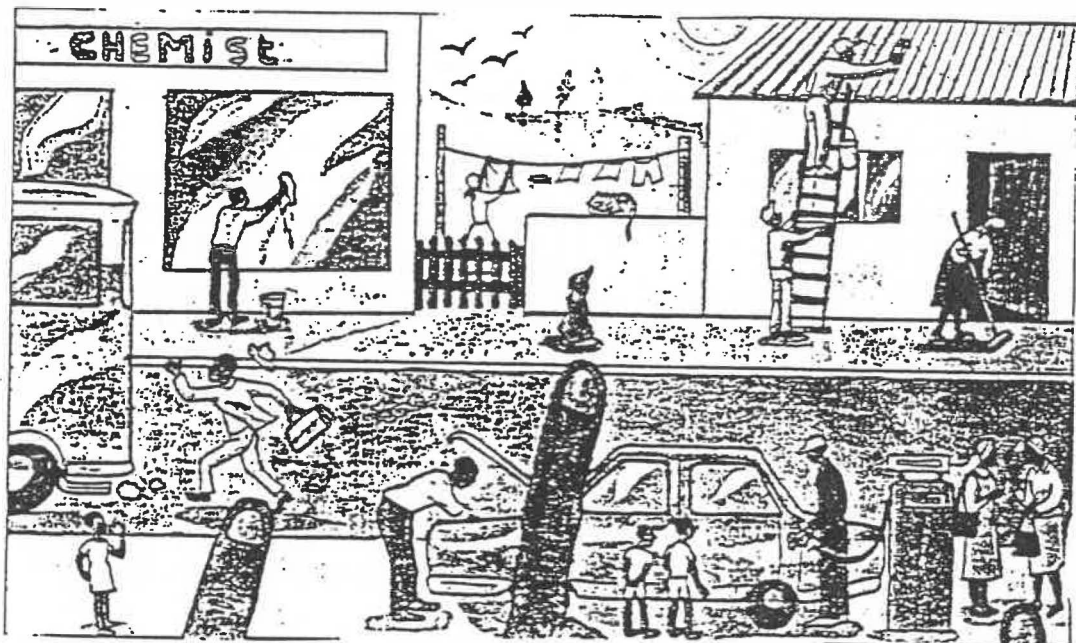


Std 3 Language Book, p39

Picture Four shows a woman hanging clothes, another one sweeping the floor, and two others engaged in conversation. The only male who is doing anything related to housekeeping is the man cleaning a window. But it is a shop window, so he does this as a paid job, so what he is doing is considered a more serious activity than sweeping the floor or cleaning the window of one's own home. The rest of the men in the picture are engaged in typically male activities. One man is dashing after a

bus and is probably going to work (judging by his clothes and the briefcase he is carrying). Two men are painting a roof, one is filling petrol in the car and another is fixing something in the car. Two boys look on as the men carry out their activities. It should be noted that the boys' focus is on the men, probably because the men's activities are important and relevant to them, and are worth learning and knowing about. The only girl in the picture is standing outside eating some icecream, as if all that mattered in the world is that icecream and none of the activities depicted in the picture. This kind of depiction of females may lead pupils to learn that females have this kind of attitude towards life. This picture shows the supposed role and attitudes of each sex quite distinctly.

**Picture 4**

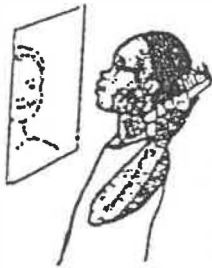


Std 3 Language Book, p5

The second sphere of the activities of women depicted in the texts: caring for their physical appearance, can be evidenced in the pictures of females holding up mirrors and preening themselves in front of them (cf Picture Five), and shopping around town for pretty clothes (cf Picture Six). In one instance a girl is shown day dreaming about a pretty dress she would like to have (cf Picture Seven). This serves to fuel a stereotype about females that they are just there as pretty, passive ornaments to complement men, in whose strength and security they are supposed to depend. According to such assumptions women need not and cannot do anything about their own lives except to make themselves attractive enough to capture men who will take full responsibility for their lives. They pay back by looking after the men's homes and

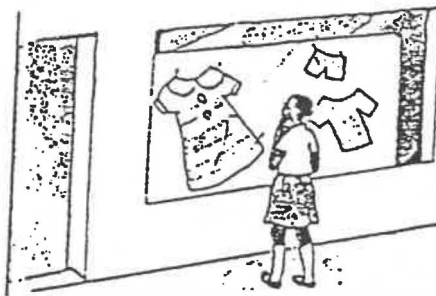
children and try to retain their physical beauty for as long as possible in order to keep their men. So it is that in some societies women who cannot bear children or be good housekeepers soon lose their men, irrespective of whatever other contribution they may make in the home, eg. career women who have demanding and well-paying jobs and thus contribute financially to the home.

Picture 5



Std 5 Language Book, p28

Picture 6



Std 4 Language Book, p32

Picture 7



Std 4 Language Book, p32

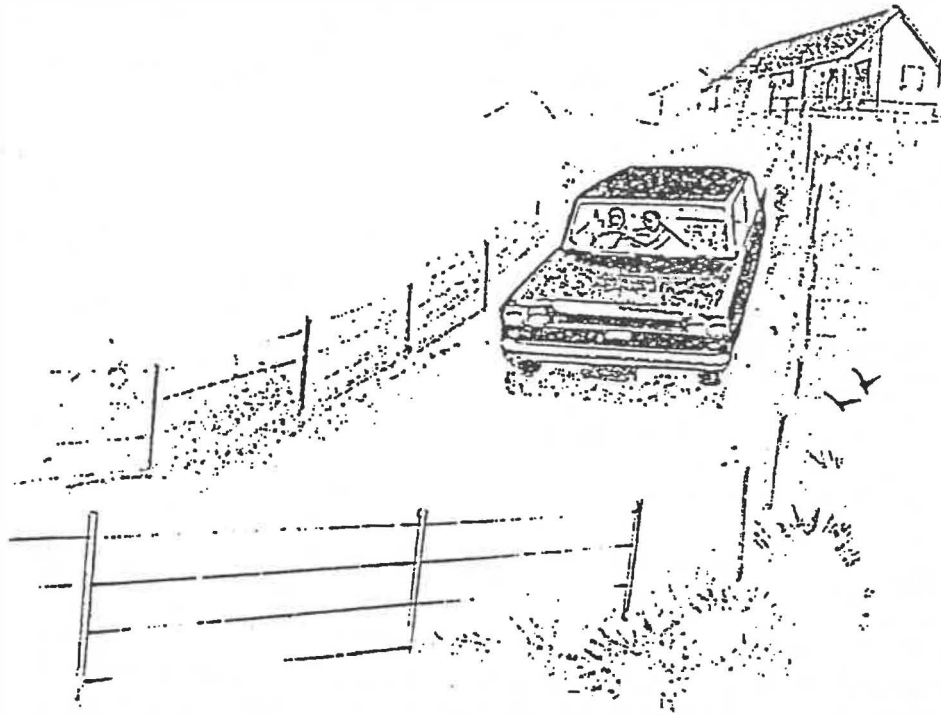
### Males' Activities

Boys in this reading scheme are depicted in a wide range of activities. They appear playing ball, lifting heavy objects, helping men/fathers do manual work, telling heroic adventures by men, playing tricks on young and adult females, riding bicycles, making/building things (carts), doing physical exercises, playing dangerously (on the road), jumping over high fences, cycling on slopes, reading the newspaper, digging in the garden, felling trees, asking intelligent questions, answering intelligently (maths and history), acting bravely (killing a giant snake), going outside to investigate terrifying sounds at night, fighting, going to work, driving trains, busses and cars, racing, herding cattle, rescuing women and other men, initiating discussions, running errands, performing dangerous feats, reading big books, catching busses (to work), fixing cars, shouting, borrowing things from females, and stalking thieves.

Boys in these books have part-time jobs while there is not mention of even a single girl who has a job. This lays more emphasis on the notion that men are the sole custodians of 'their' families - the only people who should and can work for a salary.

As depicted by pictures of males in this reading scheme, they are skilled people. This is portrayed in the wide array of activities they perform. They make things, eg. carts and wire cars. They drive trains, cars and lorries and busses, and they also shoot arrows with absolute precision. Boys look on and marvel as men do these things. Are they hoping that in future they will follow in the footsteps of their role models? Boys sometimes get adventurous and try some of the activities, eg. driving a car (cf Picture Eight).

Picture 8



Std 2 Reader, p43

Males are presented as strong and powerful beings. They do all sorts of heavy manual work like moving furniture and digging in the garden (S5LB, p4).<sup>1</sup> Boys, and not females, usually appear helping fathers/men do these jobs. It is clearly depicted as a man's terrain. In keeping with this idea of the importance of physical strength in men, they are presented as outdoor sports people. Males appear doing more sporting activities than females. They cycle, fence with swords, race (Picture Nine), play soccer, rugby and tennis, and do physical exercise whereas the only physically exerting game the girls play is a ball game.

Males, according to the pictures depicting them in this scheme, are brave and act heroically. Their heroic adventures range from killing giants, giant snakes (cf Picture Ten) and crocodiles, to riding wild horses (S3R, p50), fighting as bands in wars (S3R, p51) or just by themselves, and going on cattle-thieving expeditions. If bravery is the accepted stereotype of maleness, then this reading scheme goes a long way in confirming and perpetuating it.

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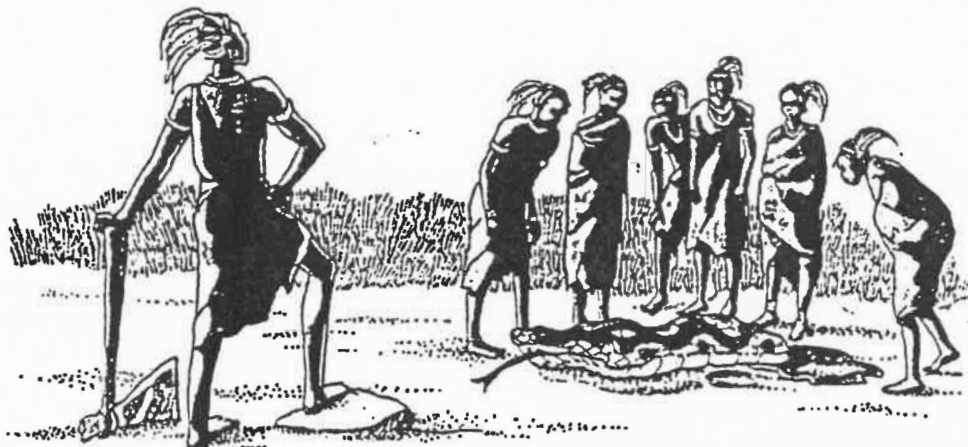
<sup>1</sup> S3LB, S4LB and S5LB represent the Standards three, four and five language books respectively. S3R, S4R and S5R represent the standards three, four and five readers.

Picture Nine



Std 4 Reader, p136

Picture 10



Std 5 Language Book, p101

Another stereotype of maleness evident in this scheme is intelligence and scholarliness. This is evident in the kind of questions males ask, the way they are always explaining things to females, and also the big books they read. The fact that in the whole scheme not one female is presented as reading a newspaper, but only fathers/men are, further testifies to the notion that scholarliness is the male prerogative (cf Picture Eleven).

Picture 11a



Std 3 Language Book, p31

Picture 11b



Std 2 Reader, p98

Men are presented as career people in this scheme. The only occupations presented for women in this scheme are those of nurse and teacher (Pictures 12a and 12b). The occupational roles of men include: principal (S3LB, p95), judge, teacher, doctor, shoe-maker (S5LB, p23), police officer (S3LB, p122), detective (S4R, p59), soldier, butcher, mechanic (S2LB, p45), and geologist. The message that children get is that if women happen to have a career, it can only be in the line of their domestic or 'service' roles, ie. caring and nurturing as in nursing and teaching, whereas men can engage in a wide array of professions. Boys are presented as a naughty group. They play tricks on both young and adult people (Picture Thirteen). It seems to be the accepted norm that they behave this way because, in the passages which the pictures accompany, there is no mention of their being reprimanded for their naughty behaviour. Boys are also presented as untidy and clumsy people - another accepted stereotype of males. The poem entitled "Untidy Sibusiso Mabusiso" (Picture Fourteen) testifies to this. Picture Fourteen also shows clearly how boys refuse to do any housework on the pretext that they are clumsy and should be accepted as such, (Poem Two) which clearly shows that boys believe that females should always tidy up after them simply because they are male.



Picture 12a



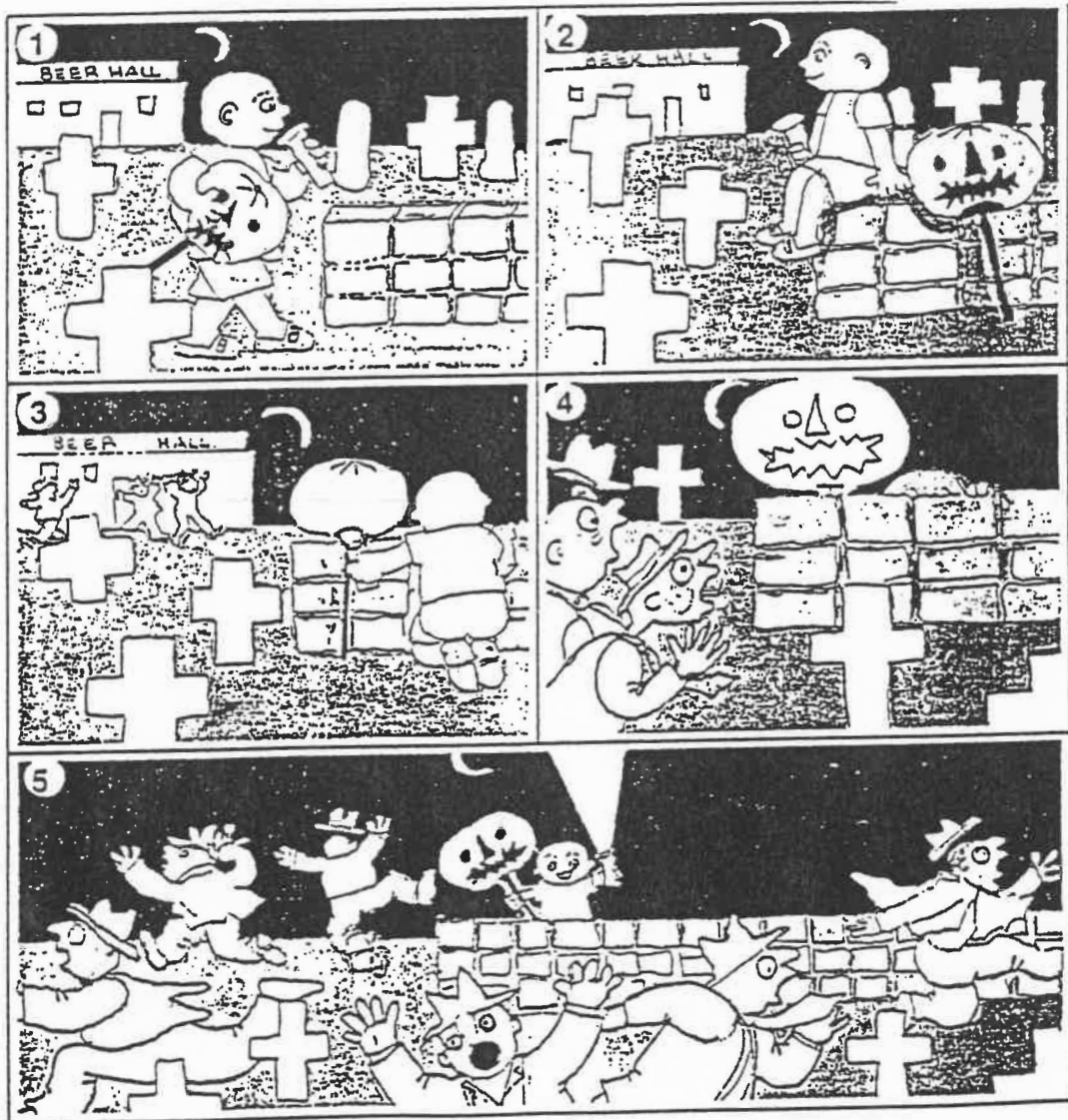
Std 5 Language Book, p45

Picture 12b



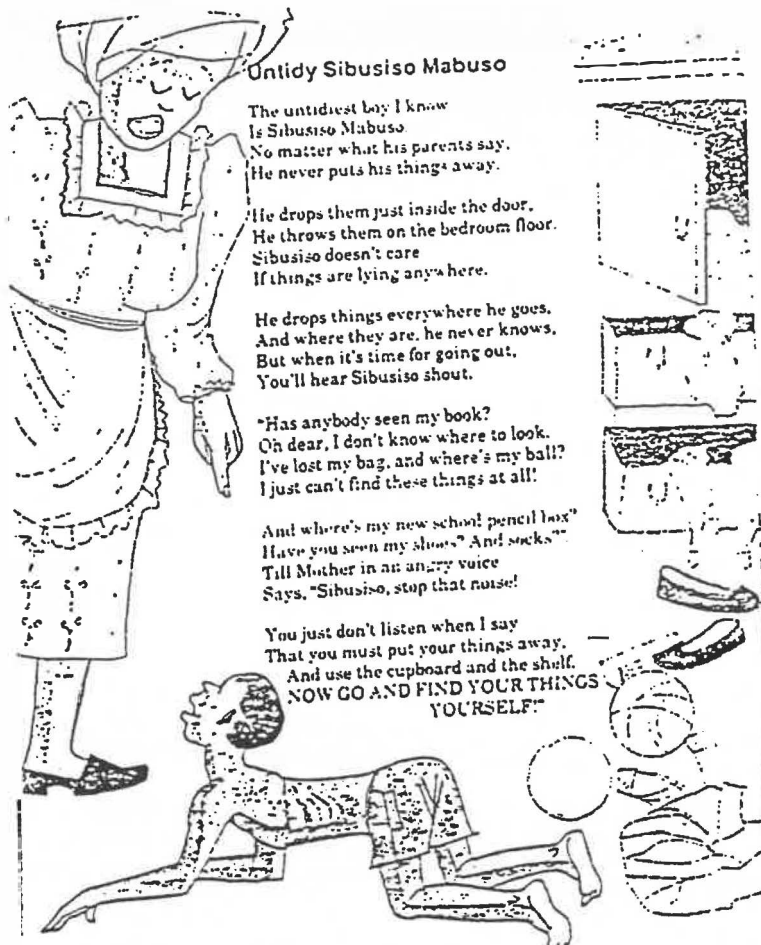
Std 5 Language Book, p38

Picture 13



Std 4 Language Book, p55

Picture 14



### Untidy Sibusiso Mabuso

The untidiest boy I know  
Is Sibusiso Mabuso.  
No matter what his parents say,  
He never puts his things away.

He drops them just inside the door.  
He throws them on the bedroom floor.  
Sibusiso doesn't care  
If things are lying anywhere.

He drops things everywhere he goes.  
And where they are, he never knows.  
But when it's time for going out,  
You'll hear Sibusiso shout.

"Has anybody seen my book?  
Oh dear, I don't know where to look.  
I've lost my bag, and where's my ball?  
I just can't find these things at all!"

And where's my new school pencil box?  
Have you seen my shoes? And socks?"  
Till Mother in an angry voice  
Says, "Sibusiso, stop that noise!

You just don't listen when I say  
That you must put your things away.  
And use the cupboard and the shelf.  
**NOW GO AND FIND YOUR THINGS YOURSELF!"**

Std 3 Reader, p116

Picture 15

### Tony and Carmen

*Two children on the island of Trinidad,  
in the Caribbean, are getting ready to go  
to school.*

Time for school, and Tony isn't ready.  
It isn't the first time,  
It isn't the last.  
His sister Carmen is always ready.  
She is ready at eight o'clock.  
At eight o'clock precisely.

Nicely, nicely.

"Oh, Carmen is always right," said Tony.  
"And I am always wrong."  
"Just wait, just wait," said Tony.  
"Just wait, it won't be long."

You haven't cleaned your teeth, Tony.  
You haven't washed your face.  
You haven't shined your shoes, Tony.  
And your hair is all over the place.

Carmen has done her homework.  
She has taken particular care  
To clean her teeth, and shine her shoes.  
And put ribbons in her hair.

Oh, dear.

"Oh, Carmen is always right," said Tony.  
"And I am always wrong."  
"Just wait, just wait," said Tony.  
"Just wait, it won't be long."

One day, the house  
Will blow away.  
I'll bring it back.  
A fire will start.  
I'll put it out.  
A thief will come in the night.  
I'll give him a terrible fright.

Tell you what...

I'll write a poem and say it.  
Invent a game and play it.  
Think of a song and sing it.  
Make a bell and ring it.  
I'll shoot a film and be in it.  
A war will come and I will win it!

Cheer up, Mother, don't be sad.  
I'll be the King of Trinidad!"

"That's just talk," said Carmen.

Evan Jones

Std 5 Reader, pp126-127



### 3.2.2.3 Learning a new skill

This category intersects with the previous one (Activities) as some of the activities that the children and adults are seen to do in the pictures show them learning new skills. Girls are depicted learning to draw, cook or care for younger siblings. Boys on the other hand learn to ride bicycles, play cricket, rugby and football, read a map, do sums, call crocodiles (as in the story: Calling a Crocodile), drive cars, play drums, do puzzles, tell the time, build carts, do technical drawing, do science experiments and also learn to make toy telephones. As in the previous category, boys engage in a greater variety of activities than girls. Girls' activities are limited to only three, two of which are in the line of home keeping, except drawing which does however tend to keep females within the home and is a less physically exacting, less physically active, and certainly a more "subdued" pastime than for example the sports that the boys are seen to be learning, i.e. playing rugby, football and cricket.

The skills that the boys learn can make them (i) physically fit, (ii) intellectually well-developed, and (iii) skilled in relevant and important manual and intellectual activities. Skills that can develop them intellectually that they are depicted learning are: doing sums, reading maps, doing puzzles, telling the time, and doing science experiments and technical drawing. The latter two are considered highly masculine fields. The manual skills that they are presented as learning in the pictures include driving a car, playing drums, building carts and sailing boats.

The message constructed through these pictures is that it is boys who need to learn a range of skills. One may compare the number of girls and boys learning new skills as well as the number of new skills each sex learns. Girls learn fewer skills than boys and the few skills that they learn are gendered and stereotyped. Boys learn more new skills than girls, but they are also gendered and stereotyped. The fact that boys learn more new skills in the pictures presented confirms an existing stereotype that it is men only who should engage in skilled work, hence the need to prepare and teach boys for such. Boys are also excluded from acquiring the more "female" skills. Women, according to their presentations in the pictures in this series can only be skilled in work that relates to home keeping. Women in this scheme cook and sew and care for the young with great skill.

#### 3.2.2.4 The Adult roles presented

The adult roles presented in the texts for females are: nurse, cook, teacher, mother, housekeeper and nanny (babysitter). The portrayal of women in adult roles in this reading scheme is very limited and full of distortions. In real life many women do much more than keep house, look after children, nurse or teach. The apparent message transmitted by this kind of presentation is that if women do venture outside the home, they can only engage in occupations which relate to their supposed home-keeping and nurturing roles. Such careers are teaching, which is some kind of an extension of the job of caring for and leading and guiding children, and nursing which extends from the caring and nurturing role that most women play in their own homes. From this kind of role presentation, pupils using these books do not see evidence of adult females as judges, or principals or detectives, but can only be mothers completing household chores at home.

Adult males are presented in a number of different roles. Adult males appear in the role of bus driver, train driver, school principal, judge, shop keeper, teacher, career person, king, sports coach, painter and glazier, petrol pump attendant, shoemaker, motor mechanic, mailman, medical doctor, police officer, detective, mine worker, soldier and potter. Most occupations that this reading scheme presents for males are high profile and require special academic and/or manual skills to perform. Such occupations as those of medical doctor, judge and school principal require specialised academic training to qualify for. Are the children using these books then to deduce that these are strictly male occupations and could the reason for the exclusion of females from these occupations be that they require special academic/manual skills? One may speculate that this kind of presentation of female roles, mainly their exclusion from certain roles, is based on a commonly held assumption that females lack the ability and the time to train for and occupy these positions as they are stereotypically too occupied with child-rearing, parenting and keeping house.

The other roles presented in the pictures show men as skilled artisans - mechanics, painters and glaziers, shoemakers etc. The presentation of only males in these roles reinforces the stereotype of men as the only people who should and can do skilled manual work.

Males in this reading scheme are notably excluded from the parenting role. There is not one instance in all the books analysed where a man plays a child rearing,

caring and nurturing role, although there are more than ten pictures of women carrying and caring for babies. The few instances in which men assume a parenting role is where they teach older children (mostly boys) certain skills like making toy aeroplanes and technical drawing. They are presented as 'clever daddies' in their parenting role whereas mothers are plain hardworking and caring. In this way the stereotype of the female as child-rearer is fulfilled.

The parenting role of adult men and women as presented in the schemes analysed mean quite different things. 'Mother' as presented in the scheme analysed connotes child rearing, caring, loving and keeping house, whereas to be a father means to be clever, skilled manually and academically, to be able to solve children's problems (cf how Sarah's father shows her who cuts the cabbages at night in Cutworms and how he teaches his son how to make a toy aeroplane).

The pictures in all the categories coded: Toys and Pets, Activities, Learning a new skill, and the Adult roles presented reflect gender bias in favour of males. Female roles are inadequately presented in the texts and the few roles presented for females are gendered and stereotypical. Males on the other hand are shown in a wide range of roles but most of them are stereotypical male roles where males dominate females in occupations, sport and the academic sphere. So, male roles are gendered and stereotypical and the exclusion of males from certain roles, eg. the parenting role, can serve to fulfil or confirm the female stereotype.

### **3.3 Analysis of the Content of the Texts**

As a starting point, this study looks at who the stories are about in order to determine gender bias in the texts. It also examines gender bias and stereotyping in the presentation of the characters in the stories. For these purposes only the stories that have people as central characters were analysed.

#### **3.3.1 The Standard Three Reader**

The standard three reader contains twenty five stories and eight poems. Out of the twenty five stories, twelve have humans as main subjects of the stories. Six of the poems have human subjects. All the stories except one are about men. The one story is about a girl who decides she wants to marry a crocodile. When the crocodile comes to the village to fetch her, the men of the village come to her rescue, showing

typical heroic and brave male behaviour. The girl comes through as stupid and helpless as the female stereotype would have it.

Following are brief summaries of the other 'male' stories. They are presented here in order to highlight key gender stereotypes.

The Matchbox (p1) is a story about a young man who rescues and frees a princess imprisoned by her father and marries her. The king is stereotypically cruel and powerful. Cruelty is traditionally more acceptable in males than in females. The story reflects a traditional stereotype of men as heroes/rescuers.

Who Cut Down the Cabbages (p12) describes how Sarah's father solves the mystery by taking her outside to her garden and showing her caterpillars eating the stems of her cabbages. This is a stereotype of man, the clever, all-knowing problem solver.

Two gender stereotypes stand opposed in The Shoemaker (p15). Some elves help a poor shoemaker make some shoes. Both the shoemaker and the elves are described and represented as male. The message that a pupil reading this story may get is that males only can make shoes. On the contrary, the shoemaker's wife makes tiny suits of clothes for the elves in order to express gratitude to them for helping out. This is a stereotypical role and occupation for females. From this presentation of woman the reader may also learn that females are courteous, grateful and polite and that they make clothes rather than shoes.

The Magic Pot (p20) has a negative description of male. It is about a greedy king who steals a poor widow's magic pot and suffers the consequences as the pot starts boiling porridge continuously and spills over, messing up his whole palace. What is also to be noted here is the association of woman and pot because cooking (in a pot) is commonly considered as women's work, which is probably why the writer presents the owner of a special pot as a woman. This kind of presentation affirms the woman's stereotypical place as being in the kitchen.

The Cat and the Meat (p27) is actually a story about the exploits of a man who buys meat and asks his wife to cook it (as men typically expect women to). She, however, eats up all the meat and blames it on the cat. The man weighs the cat to find out whether it has actually eaten the one and a half kilograms of meat, but the cat weighs just that much which, to the man, proves that it cannot have eaten the meat.

The first stereotype evident in this story is that of the woman's sex role expectation. She is 'supposed' to cook for her husband. Interestingly she shows her resistance by eating up all the meat, which is quite atypical. Secondly, the man goes out of his way to prove what his wife has done in order to affirm his place as the dominant and clever person.

As the title suggests, The Brave Potter (p44) describes a supposedly brave potter, who accidentally drives a lion home and ties it to a tree in his yard. His wife is cleverer than he is and she decides to make the best out of the situation. This is one of the only two instances where a woman is described as clever, especially cleverer than a man in this scheme.

The potter's wife was a clever woman. She was cleverer than her husband (Dallas, Hartman et al, 1984:46).

The absence of clever women in the scheme perpetuates the stereotype of women as stupid and men as clever. It should also be noted that the woman described in this story acts cunningly rather than cleverly, which is also a female stereotype.

Jason Sithole Goes to Work (p78) shows males in very stereotypical positions. Jason, a boy, finds temporary employment with a grocer, Mr Nxumalo. He runs errands for Mr Nxumalo, sending parcels to different women who are all housewives. Jason, as males stereotypically do, has a job and has very adventurous experiences which culminate in his bravely and heroically catching some burglars and that way saving Mr Nxumalo's business. The male stereotype emerging here is that males live dangerously and their lives are adventurous.

The men in these stories are presented as heroes/rescuers (especially of women), which emphasises a certain stereotype of women as weak and helpless beings. The men are presented as clever/intelligent, skilled, employed, adventurous, cruel, untidy and carefree.

The first poem An Old Woman who Swallowed a Fly presents a woman as very stupid. She ends up swallowing a horse, which kills her. The horse is supposed to kick the dog that won't catch the cat which refuses to catch the spider that won't catch the fly she has swallowed.

In Everything You Do a girl is presented as rather an idle person who can do no more than watch her shadow.

The rest of the poems are about males.

There's Hole in my Bucket (p76) describes how Henry expects Liza to help him mend the hole in his bucket. One wonders if the reason is that Liza is a woman and should supposedly know how to handle kitchen utensils. Henry does not come through as an intelligent character though. This rather unusual negative depiction of a male as stupid leaves one wondering if it is not deliberate, that is to say does society consider it normal for males to act stupidly or to fail in what are traditionally considered as female activities?

Untidy Sibusiso Mabuso (p116) presents a boy as a very untidy person whom mother always has to reprimand for losing things, and boys normally get away with this kind of behaviour. A mother is expected to know where everything is as she is the housekeeper. In the picture she wears an apron which distinguishes her for this role. Interestingly, the poem ends with mother saying 'Now go and find your things yourself'.

The more important message in the poem, however, is that mothers are supposed to know where everything is. She only says these words because she is tired of always reprimanding Sibusiso about his slovenly ways.

Out of the six poems referred to earlier only two have females as main subjects. Three stereotypes of females which emerge from these two poems in the standard three reader are idleness, passivity and stupidity.



### 3.3.2 The Standard Four Reader

The standard four reader in the scheme contains twenty three stories and eleven poems. Seven of the stories have people as central characters and two poems centre around people. One could say that this reader is biased in favour of males because all of these stories are about males. The men in these stories are depicted as brave (cf Kirui and Kiplegat, p10, which is a story about a brave young man who cleverly kills a giant). The Farmer and the Ants also shows men acting very cleverly. A male farmer, his two sons and a male gamekeeper are lost in the woods. They diminish in size and land in an anthill, where the ants plot to kill and eat them. They work out a clever plan for their escape. Once out of the anthill they grow back into their normal size. Besides the two stereotypes of men as clever and brave, a message that comes through is that men are wise, as the story Seventeen Horses (p41) demonstrates. It is about a man who leaves seventeen horses to his three sons, with instructions that after his death the eldest son should take a half of the horses, the second a third of the horses, and the youngest a ninth of the horses. When they experience difficulties sharing the horses in this way they consult a wise man who solves the problem by giving them an additional horse and taking it back afterwards.

In The Moneymaker (p44) a male crook arrives in a small town with the intention to con the naive people of the town. Two boys working at the service station for a male owner (Mr Moroka) become suspicious from the onset. They stalk the conman in detective style and are finally able to catch him redhanded and hand him over to Mr Masinane, a male Detective Sergeant. Seventeen men are saved from losing their money to the crook.

One seldom hears about women crooks and in the analysed reading scheme in particular there are none. So, the male crook stereotype, although negative, serves to confirm women in a certain stereotypical position viz. honesty and consideration for others. These two traits are valued highly in most Black (African) communities. Although not necessarily condoned, slyness, cheating and criminal behaviour is acceptable in men but never in women. For this reason, the crook in the story may be regarded as a stereotype. Furthermore the garage owner and the detective sergeant are male stereotypes.

The Great Gate of Damascus (p139) is a story about a man and his two sons. When he is about to die he tells them that the son whose camel will go last through the Great Gate of Damascus will have all his money. When the old man dies the two sons ride towards Damascus but neither wants to be the first to enter so they rest a kilometre away from the Great Gate until a man solves their problem by telling them to change camels. This story highlights the stereotypical wisdom of men through the father who leaves a puzzling will and the stranger who solves it for the young men. Quite contrary to the clever male stereotype, the sons do not behave so cleverly as they fail to either recognise or solve the mystery of the will.

All the seven stories are about men, strong men, brave men, and clever men. Women only fall into the background with very insignificant (if any) roles to play. They are merely mentioned... 'he had a wife', but they are not involved in any of the action described in the stories.

To pupils using the reader an impression that men are typically strong, brave and clever is likely to be created. The absence of women bearing these traits and characteristics may lead pupils to assume that women are generally not brave or clever or strong, thus fulfilling the stereotype of women as weak, cowardly and stupid or at least more so than men. Excluding or marginalising women from certain roles may impress upon pupils that women's roles are marginal and complimentary to men's, which are depicted as the important roles.

The two poems about people in this book are Lullaby (p9) and An Old Poem (p100). In Lullaby, a mother, in her typical child-rearing and caring role sings a lullaby to her baby boy. In line five she says 'Sleep, tomorrow you will be big, you will be strong'. The connection between boy, big and strong is an obvious male stereotype.

The poem continues in line six 'Sleep, tomorrow you will take the bow and the knife'. This also points to the kind of life that boys are reared for and expected to lead - carrying weapons to protect and fight for themselves and others. Males are stereotypically expected to be strong, brave and protective over those close to them.

An Old Poem (p100) is about the changes that a person goes through as life goes by. It is illustrated with pictures of a male child, a youth and a full-grown man. It is obvious that line six, which reads 'When I became a full grown man' does not refer

to humans in general but to a male person. That can be deduced from the pictures accompanying the poem. So it is a poem about the life of a male.

### 3.3.3 The Standard Five Reader

The standard five reader contains thirty two passages and five poems. None of the poems are about people and seventeen of the passages are about people.

AliBaba and the Forty Thieves (p1) is about a poor man named Ali Baba who discovers a cave where forty thieves hoard their loot. He opens the cave when the thieves have left and helps himself to some of the treasure he finds in there. His jealous brother Cassim, with the help of his cunning wife, discovers how he has become rich and decides to try his luck too. The thieves find and kill him. Ali steals his brother's corpse from the cave and that way the thieves realise that somebody else knows about the cave. They investigate and find out that it is Ali Baba who knows the secret of their cave and they plot to kill him. Morgiana, Ali's clever servant girl, gets the better of the thieves, kills them all and thus saves Ali from certain death. She is rewarded by being married to Ala Baba's nephew and they both will inherit Ali Baba's treasure after his death.

Although this story is essentially about men, it is the one story in this reader which depicts a woman as clever and resourceful. She is however, only a servant girl, which is a stereotypical female occupation. The way she is rewarded for her resourcefulness also reflects a common way of thinking about the role and position of women. Because she is clever, she is rewarded by being caused to marry Ali Baba's nephew. She is being 'acquired' and 'secured' in the same way that a person might a useful commodity such as a tractor, computer or food processor.

The story Let Everyone Do the Work that They're Good At (p19) follows a somewhat similar trend insofar as thinking about the role of women is concerned. The main character, Akaya, refuses to do any housework other than make pots. This annoys her sister Agonza. When Akaya is questioned by her sister Agonza about her 'laziness', Akaya insists that she is busy making pots. Agonza bursts out

"It;s not fair! I must do everything while Akaya just makes pots.  
It's not FAIR!" (Dallas, Hartman et al, 1984:19).

It is to be noted that since Akaya is a girl she is 'supposed' to do other housekeeping chores besides making pots, but no one questions boys who just herd cattle as in the case of Umlowa, Akaya's fiancé.

When Agonza reports the matter of Akaya's 'laziness' to their father, he replies:

"Well, Agonza, I don't know anything about housework. That's woman's work. It's your business not mine. Oh, Agonza there's a hole in my best shirt. If you could just get a needle and mend -"  
(Dallas, Hartman et al, 1984:19).

This statement unequivocally affirms the stereotyped role of females as housekeepers. Akaya's father - a man - cannot have anything to do with what he refers to as 'woman's work'. He seals it off by asking Agonza to mend his best shirt. Any child reading this story should learn where a woman's place is 'supposed' to be, from the way Akaya's father speaks and addresses or does not address the problem.

Agonza goes further and talks to Umlowa - Akaya's fiance about the problem:

"Listen, Umlowa, if you marry Akaya you'll soon get tired of a wife who makes pots all day when she should cook your dinner" (Dallas, Hartman et al, 1984:19).

The stereotype of a woman as housekeeper is so strongly rooted in the mind of this girl that she goes all out to defend it. This kind of presentation can be a very effective way of indoctrinating children about socially constructed gender relations, particularly women's/females' 'supposed' roles.

Three of the stories are about a man called Nasrudin. They are all wise but funny stories. In Nasrudin Has an Accident (p28) Nasrudin falls from his horse and thinks that he has died. He starts imagining the reaction of his family, friends and neighbours when they get news of his death. He gets angry when no one comes by to pick up his corpse and so decides to go home to report his death personally. Stupidly his wife goes on to tell other people about Nasrudin's death and that pitifully he had to come and report his death personally and is by then lying on the road, stone dead. From this kind of presentation of women pupils reading the story may be led to think that women may be that stupid. Nasrudin himself behaves quite stupidly in this story.

In Nasrudin's Wife Needs the Doctor (p86) it is actually Nasrudin who behaves stupidly. His wife wakes him up to tell him that she is sick and needs a doctor. As he dashes out of the gate she shouts after him and tells him that she is feeling better and does not need the doctor anymore. Nasrudin hears this but goes on to tell the doctor that his wife needed him as she was sick but he need not bother anymore because as he went out of the gate she told him that she was feeling better and does not need the doctor anymore. There is a message in this story, even more important than Nasrudin's stupidity in the presentation of a woman as a pushy, neurotic and attention-seeking person. This is a stereotype of a woman that any reader using this book is likely to pick up.

Four of the stories are about famous men in history. They are The Story of Alexander Fleming (p34), Captain Scott and the South Pole (p44), Shaka (p121) and Zwagendoba and the Last Mambo (p124).

All four men described in these stories are famous for one reason or another. The reasons range from military prowess, bravery, great scientific discoveries and explorations. The inclusion of their stories in the readers does a lot to confirm and perpetuate a certain gender stereotype about men as clever, scholarly, brave and strong people. To pupils using this book, the absence of women as heroines may create an impression that none exists.

The rest of the stories are also about men. They present glorified images of men, and if women are mentioned at all they play insignificant and stereotyped roles which are tarnished and distorted as in the stories discussed above.

#### **3.3.4 The Standard Three Language Book**

One could say that the Standard Three Language Book is basically a book about a young boy called James. James features in all but five of the twenty one stories in this book. Even the sentences in the language exercises are about James. It may be concluded from this that the book is biased in favour of boys.

In the first story, Making Masks (p1) James makes a scary mask and uses it to frighten his sister Jane. Although Jane makes her own mask later, she learns how to do it from James, whom the story suggests is better skilled in mask making and moreover Jane's mask does not frighten James the way she was frightened by his. So what a reader may learn from this story is that boys are better skilled than females and that females are easily frightened.

The Storm (p13) and The Giant (p17) also depict females as cowardly, easily frightened people. In The Storm Jane and James wake up when a storm breaks out at night. Jane is frightened and she hides under the bed, but James acts bravely and watches the storm through the window. In The Giant Jane develops a fear for giants after her teacher has told the class a frightening story about a cannibal giant. When Jane meets a rather big man the next day, she is so scared that she trips and falls and she pleads with the man not to eat her. So far, where Jane is mentioned at all, she is in a rather compromising position. First she was frightened by her brother's mask, then the storm and now the 'giant'. The persistent presentation of Jane as a panicky and nervous girl fuels this stereotype about females. The conversation exercise found in the same book also reinforces it:

(Girl)	PHUMULA:	Sipho!
(Boy)	SIPHO:	Yes, Phumula!
	PHUMULA:	I've found a frog on the sofa.
	SIPHO:	Well, remove it.
	PHUMULA:	But I'm frightened of frogs.
	SIPHO:	Oh, very well, I'll move it.
	PHUMULA:	Thank you. That's very brave of you.

(Hartman, Hartshoner et al, 1984:80).

In all the three stories James is presented as very heroic and brave, which is an existing stereotype about males.

The four passages entitled The Map (p30), The Nine Times Table (p66), What Happened at James's School Today (p55), and A Knot (p73) show James and Sipho learning certain skills, as in The Map where James describes a drawing lesson he had at school to his father who ends up teaching him more about maps and drawing. In The Nine Times Table a father teaches his son Sipho an easy way of remembering the nine times table. In A Knot James's father teaches him how to tie a knot on a rope. The three passages referred to here are an example of how the learning of certain skills is set aside as a male prerogative in real life. The passage about what happened at James's school also reflects this attitude. In the passage we hear about how James remains at school and watches men repair the school roof which has been blown off by the wind during the storm the previous night. It is men who repair the roof and it seems proper that a boy (and not a girl) should take interest in this kind of work, perhaps as a possible future occupation. The poem Boys' Work and Females' Work (Appendix C) also reveals this gendered attitude towards work.

Three main gender stereotypes emerge from these stories. Females are depicted as cowardly and boys are presented as brave. Males are also presented as skilled people.

### 3.3.5 The Standard Four Language Book

Eight passages and two poems will be analysed in the Standard Four Language Book as only they have human subjects. In The Rings (p1) Chris observes rings in a tree that his father Mr Mloza and a workman have cut down. He enquires about them and what follows is an elaborate discussion about tree rings. The child couldn't have been a Jane or Sarah because females in this reading scheme are not interested in hard labour that the books in this series usually ascribe to men, and they also do not initiate intelligent and informative discussions. This suggests that females as presented in this series are not as clever and inquisitive as boys are. The stereotypes evident here are that intelligent conversation is for men and that hard labour is for men. The Poor Workman (p24) which is a passage about a poor man who, as he mends the roof of a house falls onto a rich man and kills him, also confirms the stereotype that hard labour is for men. The exclusion of females from fields such as this emphasises the supposed difference (gender) between men and women and thus encourages differential (usually unnecessary) treatment of females and males.

The rest of the stories in the Standard Four Language Book are gendered in their presentation of sex roles. Males are seen in typical male roles like doing hard labour viz. farming in Farming in Ghana and mending roofs of The poor Workman and the Rich Man. The men in this book (wish to) 'acquire' wives (cf Six Wishes (p33) which is a poem about a person who finds a one cent piece which offers to grant them six wishes if it is left alone. It is obvious that the person is male because one of the six wishes he makes is to have a wife). These men buy their wives presents such as mirrors, as in the story Mirrors (p40). The connection between woman and mirror is to be noted. It reflects the stereotype about women's obsession with physical beauty which is raised in the picture analysis.

Stereotypes of females can be seen in their presentation as irrational people. The passage Lucky and Unlucky (p71) is about some superstitions. It is illustrated with pictures of girls and women. The message that a reader can get here is that superstition and the irrationality associated with it is typical of women, whereas men



can also be very superstitious. Women in this book are presented as compulsive shoppers. The story New Shoes (p87) affirms this stereotype about women. In all the books analysed it is only females who go shopping.

In terms of who the stories are about, there is definite bias in favour of boys because, out of the ten chapters analysed, only two are about females and they present women in very stereotypical female roles. Moreover, the eight passages about males present them in typical male roles. This exclusion from certain roles and setting them aside for males affirms women in traditional female stereotypical roles.

### 3.3.6 The Standard Five Language Book

The stories in the Standard Five Language Book are mostly about males. They are Nasrudin and The Fierce Horse (p13), The King and the Shoemaker (p21 and p25), The King who Declared War on the Animals (p33), Nasrudin Preaches to the People (p41), Beginning the Day (p55), When I Was Young (p67), Dumaduma (p97 and p101) and Nasrudin (p122). There are two stories about females. The one story, told by a girl, is the first in the book and is entitled About Me (p4). The other story is entitled Mother (p92) and it describes Mother Lee who is always late for the bus. The story begins:

"Mother never looked at clocks. She was always late. She was always late for buses and usually missed them..."

This is quite a negative stereotype about women. Even if the depiction of this particular woman may be true, it is to be noted that this is the only passage in the whole book that features a woman, and as a result this may be the only impression of a woman that pupils can get from this book in particular. This, to me, seems an effective way of reinforcing a certain stereotype about women.

Three of the other stories are about Nasrudin, a funny but wise male character. Then there are two about a King. One of the two also features a shoemaker. Beginning the Day (p55) and When I Was Young (p67) are stories about the experiences of young boys. Mohammed (p114) is a story about the prophet Mohammed, founder of the Muslim religion. Dumaduma (p97 and p101) is actually Moroka's story about how he killed a giant snake.

These stories, which are all about men, show them in different occupations, eg. the king, the shoemaker, councillors and a herdboys. These men act wisely in their different situations.

The young boy in Beginning the Day is a perfect herdboys and in When I Was Young the boy's big brother uses a clever trick to teach him never to fret again. Nasrudin tells very wise tales and the king and the shoemaker prove very wise as the king tries to find out how ordinary people in his kingdom live, and the shoemaker gives him a riddle which proves very wise when he explains it to one of the king's councillors later. This presentation of these male characters affirms the stereotype that men are wise. A negative stereotype about men as cruel emerges where the king threatens to execute the shoemaker for having divulged the riddle to one councillor although he had promised not to explain it to anyone until he had seen the king's face a thousand times. The shoemaker simply takes out the bag with the one thousand gold coins that the councillor has paid him for the explanation of the riddle and points out to the king that his majesty's face is on each coin. The king is so pleased with this explanation that he gives him another bag of one thousand gold coins.

Dumaduma (p 97 and p101) presents a stereotypical brave and clever man who kills a giant snake by using a clever trick.

- 3.3.7 The six books analysed have been found to be biased in favour of boys if one looks at who the stories are about. The content of the stories also reflects some stereotypical, socially constructed gender relations. Males dominate in most of the actions and interaction described in the stories and passages. Females mostly feature in a complementary role to men's actions and interaction.

### 3.4 ADJECTIVES DESCRIBING MALES AND FEMALES IN THE STORIES

① The words used to describe females and males in the stories do also reflect some socially constructed gender stereotypes. Males are described as naughty, tall, hungry, rich, quick, fat, horrible, wise, angry, fast, untidy, rude, noisy, dangerous, strong, furious, greedy, wicked, loud, brave, straight (of posture), young, lazy and clever.

The females in the stories are mostly described as ugly, pretty, old, angry, sad, asleep, ill, small, happy, little, late, frightened, neat, bent, clever, busy and polite.

(i) More of the male stereotypes reflected in the adjectives used to describe males are negative, cf horrible, untidy, rude, angry, dangerous, furious, greedy, wicked and lazy. Although they may be negative, they serve to confirm males in a certain position where they be regarded with, for example, fear, and more importantly, males usually get away with such behaviour. Where these adjectives are used in the stories and passages, they are presented as acceptable character traits in men.

Words that describe females may be classified according to those that describe females' physical appearance. Words found in this category dominated the list and they were - ugly, pretty, old, bent, small, little and neat. The concern with physical appearance is emphasised by the number of instances it is described and the variety of the adjectives used to describe it. The same goes for emotion, their assumed state of helplessness and frailty as well as their politeness. Words describing females' emotional state were - angry, sad, happy and frightened. the word 'busy' appeared a number of times and in all the cases it was used to describe females doing household chores. Other adjectives describing women referred to a state of helplessness as in ill and frightened. There was only one instance where a woman was described as clever (Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves). Females are also described as polite. All these adjectives reflect existing stereotypes of females.

The findings regarding adjectives used to describe females in the sampled texts link up with the Kress and Hodge Schema for femininity presented in Table 1, p13. According to the schema for femininity by Kress and Hodge, women are usually described as inactive, weak, obedient, pleasing and caring. Women, according to Poynton (1985) (cf Table 2, p13), are also commonly regarded as emotional, passive, expressive, incompetent, ignorant and talkative.

### **3.5 ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES**

#### **3.5.1 The Pupils' Questionnaire (APPENDIX A)**

The pupils' questionnaire was administered in order to determine if the sex roles which appear in the textbooks and readers that pupils use coincide with or relate to the pupils' perceptions of their sex roles. It is hypothesized that the gender stereotypes contained in the reading schemes reinforce and perpetuate an existing sex ideology.

A sample of three hundred pupils responded to the questionnaire. The sample was made up as follows: Twenty five pupils were randomly selected from each standard in each of the

four higher primary schools in the study population. An equal number of girls and boys fell in the sample - one hundred and fifty in each group.

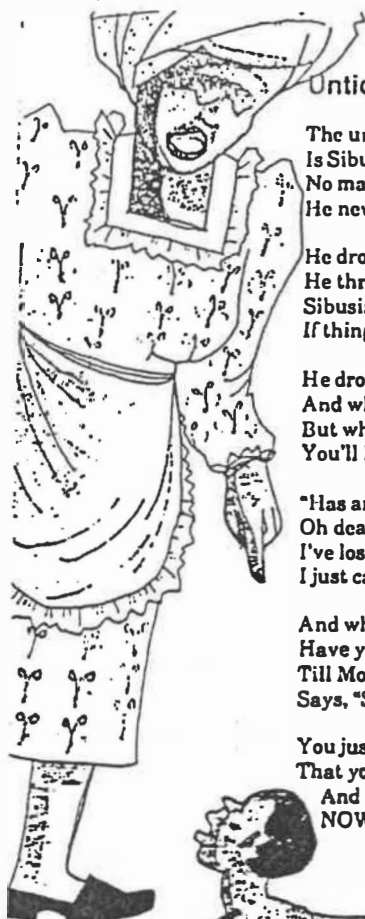
Pupils had to fill out individual questionnaires.

In question one pupils were required to select two pictures from their English textbooks which they found to be most appealing.

It had been hoped that in the choices that the pupils made a kind of pattern would form which would project the females' and the boys' interests and sex role perceptions. The pictures chosen were, however, so many and varied that it was not possible to group or classify them into any gender specific categories. Moreover pupils had not been asked to give reasons for the picture choices they made. It would not be proper to assume that the reasons for the pupils' choices were gender related. In this regard this part of the questionnaire did not yield as conclusive results as might have been desired. The analysis which follows is based on about forty responses out of three hundred. These responses were picked for analysis because these few pictures were chosen by more than three pupils each, and may be considered as the 'most popular' pictures and warrant brief discussion. They are presented below:

## Pictures Chosen by Females

Picture 16



### Untidy Sibusiso Mabuso

The untidiest boy I know  
Is Sibusiso Mabuso.  
No matter what his parents say,  
He never puts his things away.

He drops them just inside the door,  
He throws them on the bedroom floor.  
Sibusiso doesn't care  
If things are lying anywhere.

He drops things everywhere he goes,  
And where they are, he never knows.  
But when it's time for going out,  
You'll hear Sibusiso shout.

"Has anybody seen my book?  
Oh dear, I don't know where to look.  
I've lost my bag, and where's my ball?  
I just can't find these things at all!

And where's my new school pencil box?  
Have you seen my shoes? And socks?"  
Till Mother in an angry voice  
Says, "Sibusiso, stop that noise!

You just don't listen when I say  
That you must put your things away.  
And use the cupboard and the shelf.  
**NOW GO AND FIND YOUR THINGS  
YOURSELF!"**



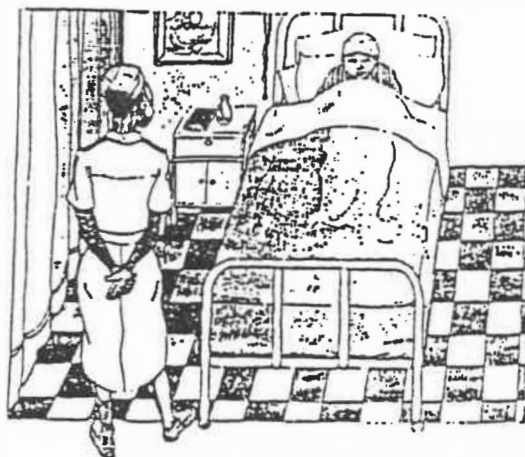
Std 3 Reader, p116

Picture 17



Std 5 Reader, p26

Picture 18



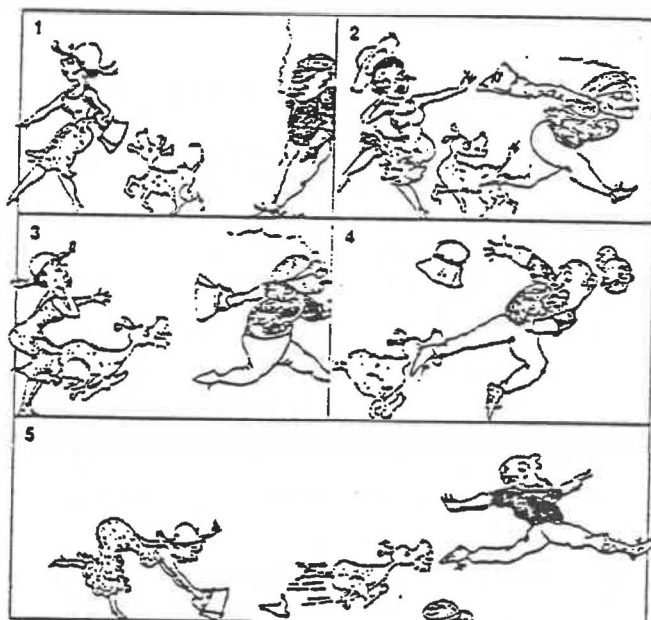
Std 3 Reader, p94

A close look at the pictures chosen by the females reveals that females tend to identify with pictures depicting women and females in stereotypical positions - such as the picture of a mother wearing a pinafore and reprimanding a boy (Sibusiso Mabuso, picture 16) for being untidy.

Pictures of women at work that the females chose include the one with a woman potter (picture 17) and a man watching her do the work. In traditional and contemporary African Society pottery is considered as a female occupation. This picture therefore also presents a traditional stereotype of a woman.

The other picture that the females chose is of a nurse - female (picture 18). This is also commonly considered a female occupation.

**Picture 19**



Std 4 Language Book, p38

The last picture chosen by the females that I will comment on shows a woman in a stereotypically vulnerable and helpless position. A thug snatches her bag and she is saved by a dog which grabs hold of the thug's leg, who in turn drops the bag and flees. Females probably chose this picture because they identify with the situation it presents. It shows the kind of problems that women are faced with from day to day.

In a nutshell, one could say that females tended to choose pictures that depict females in quite stereotypical situations. They seem to identify with and accept these stereotypes of females. It is also possible that these pictures were selected because there were no atypical pictures to choose from. It was shown in the picture analysis how a bulk of the pictures depict males and females in stereotypical gender roles.

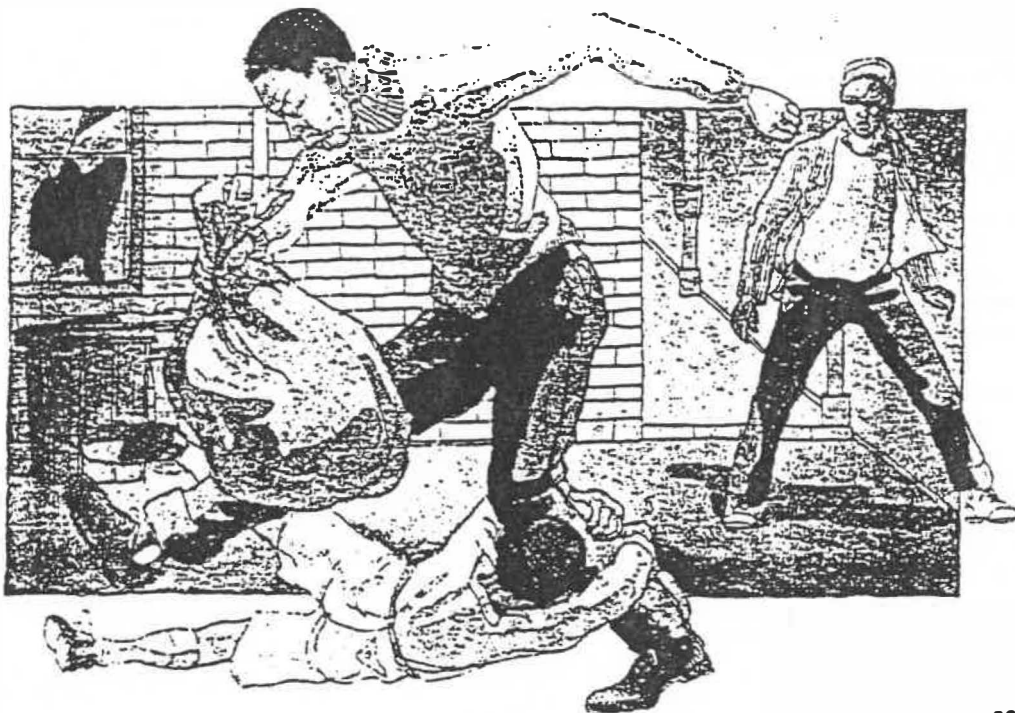
Pictures Chosen by Boys

Picture 20



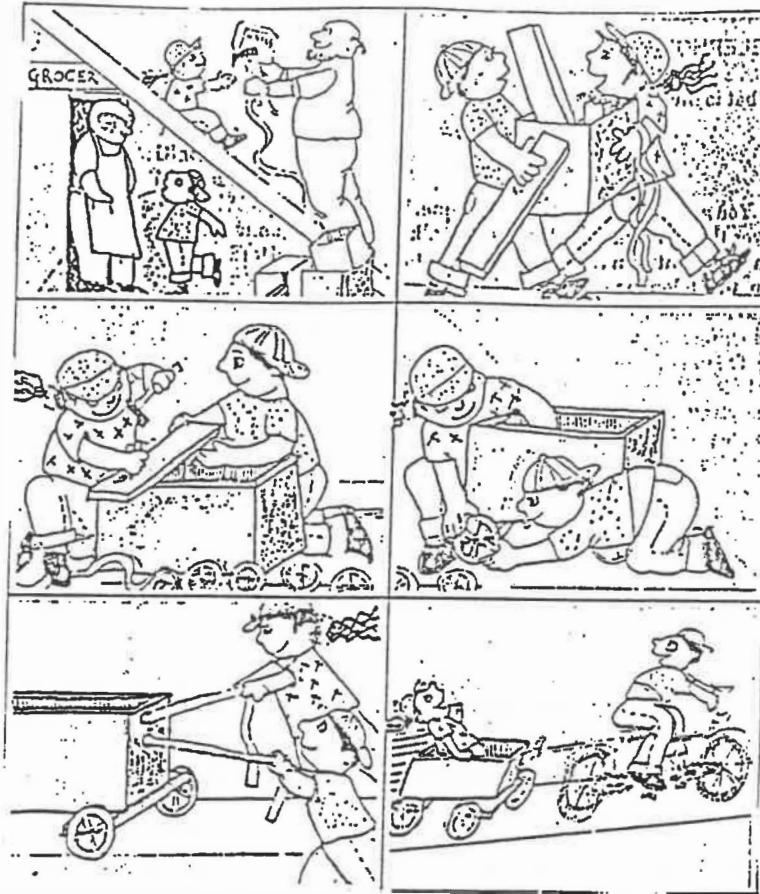
Std 3 Language Book, p87

Picture 21



Std 3 Reader. p93

Picture 22



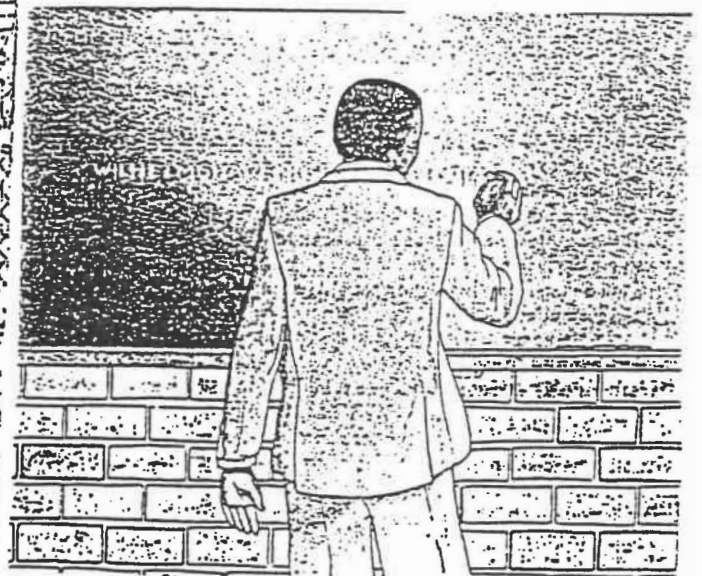
Std 4 Language Book, p113

Picture 23



Std 3 Reader, p86

Picture 24



Std 4 Reader, p102



Boys also tended to choose pictures that depict males in different situations. Pictures of men in occupational roles chosen included a Police Officer, a teacher, a shopkeeper, a bus conductor and a pilot. These are very typical male roles. The fact that these particular pictures impressed the boys may lead one to conclude that they accept these stereotypes.

Because of the diverse nature of the pictures chosen by different pupils only the pictures that were each chosen by more than three pupils were selected for commentary.

Picture 20 shows a boy playing rugby. Picture 21 shows a boy physically catching some male thieves. Picture 22 shows two boys making a cart. All these pictures show men as active, intelligent, brave and strong people, which may be the reason why they were chosen by the boys. That may be how they see, or would like to think of themselves.

The two men presented in occupational roles (Pictures 23 and 24), viz a police officer and a teacher, also have some attributes commonly considered as male. Police officers are typically strong and brave. Teachers are essentially intelligent people. It would seem that the boys are also picking up on the trend.

Table 5 presented hereafter is a summary of pupils' responses to questions two to six.

TABLE 5

SUMMARY OF PUPILS' RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE				
	GIRLS		BOYS	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>QUESTION 2</b>				
Social Worker	10	6.7	-	-
Doctor	9	6.0	31	20.6
Paramedic	1	0.6	-	-
Clerk	2	1.3	2	1.3
Actor/Actress	1	0.6	-	-
School Principal	1	0.6	2	1.3
Computer Programmer	1	0.6	-	-
Security Person	1	0.6	1	0.6
Marketing Manager	1	0.6	-	-
Police Officer	5	3.3	55	36.6
Pilot	-	-	2	3.0
Teacher	43	28.6	37	24.6
Nurse	72	48.0	1	0.6
Traffic Officer	-	-	1	0.6
Mechanic	-	-	1	0.6
Soldier	-	-	4	2.6
Driver	-	-	2	1.3
Dentist	-	-	2	1.3
Radio Announcer	-	-	1	0.6
Electrical Engineer	-	-	-	-
<b>QUESTION 3</b>				
Pilot	6	4.0	13	8.6
Dentist	8	5.3	17	11.3
Nurse	50	33.3	-	-
Sports Commentator	6	4.0	5	3.3
Police Officer	5	3.3	41	27.3
Jockey	1	0.6	16	10.6
Teacher	41	27.3	32	21.3
Lawyer	10	6.66	14	9.3
School Principal	17	11.3	9	6.0
Housekeeper	6	4.0	3	2.0
<b>QUESTION 4</b>				
A Learn Fashion Modelling	33	22.0	4	2.6
B Learn to Bake	27	18.0	4	2.6
C Work in the Garden	4	2.6	32	21.3
D Learn to Drive a Car	34	22.7	100	66.7
E Clean the House	52	34.7	10	6.6
<b>QUESTION 5</b>				
A Marbles	-	-	27	18.0
B Making Wire Cars	-	-	51	38.0
C Cycling	24	16.0	64	42.6
D Playing House	52	34.6	7	4.7
E Making Dolls' Clothes	74	49.0	1	0.66
<b>QUESTION 6</b>				
A Nomsa	28	19.0	14	9.3
B Bongani	122	81.0	136	90.7

Question two was an open-ended question which required pupils to project into the future and imagine their future occupations. It was hoped that, with an open ended question pupils would not feel obliged to respond in any particular manner and thus it would be possible to get a wide range of responses. Unfortunately the responses to this question seem to have been influenced by question three. Five of the response categories which emerged in question two, were response options to question three. A total of twenty categories emerged from the pupils' responses to this question. (A summary of the pupils' responses is reflected in Table 5.) Stereotypically female occupations which were recorded include those of social worker, clerk/secretary and nurse. Those commonly regarded as male occupations recorded by the pupils were: doctor, school principal, electrical engineer, security person, marketing manager/ess, police officer, pilot, lawyer, traffic officer, mechanic, soldier, driver, dentist and radio announcer. Unisex occupations recorded were those of paramedic, actor/actress, computer programmer and teacher.

Pupils' perceptions of their sex roles as evidenced in the data collected in question two are very stereotyped. The pupils' perceptions of their sex roles coincide with the sex roles presented in the text books. Pupils see themselves in quite stereotypical positions in the future. Thirty one (20.6%) boys compared with only ten (6.7%) girls would like to be doctors. Two (1.3%) girls would like to become clerks. Fifty five (36.6%) boys would like to be police officers and only five (3.3%) girls see themselves in that position in the future. On the other hand, seventy two (48%) girls want to become nurses. Ten (6.7%) girls but none of the boys want to be social workers. One occupation which is more commonly regarded as unisexual is that of teacher. In this category forty three (29%) of the girls against thirty seven (25%) of the boys expressed a wish to become teachers. The 4% discrepancy is interesting when one notes that teacher role models at primary schools are mostly female. It is then possible for pupils at this level of schooling to conceive of a teacher as a female person.

Typical occupations recorded by boys only were those of traffic officer, mechanic, soldier, driver, dentist, pilot and radio announcer.

Question three sought to determine which adult occupational roles the pupils identify with. They were required to choose a character they would opt to act in a school play. They had to choose from among ten characters which were roughly divided into typically male roles, viz. pilot, jockey, lawyer, sports commentator, dentist and police officer. Typically female roles were nurse and housekeeper. The third category - unisexual roles - included the roles of teacher and school principal. These occupational roles were drawn from the English texts being analysed in this thesis. These roles were also selected because they are considered the most commonly presented in the lives of children in Washbank through real life experience, the media, namely the radio, television, newspapers and magazines in the form of radio plays, pictures and stories in magazines and newspapers and television drama.

One hundred and six boys chose the typically male roles. There were thirteen (8.6%) for pilot, seventeen (11.3%) for dentist, five 3.3% for sports commentator, forty one (27.3%) for police officer, one (0.6%) jockey and fourteen (9.3%) lawyers. Fifty six girls chose the typically female roles. Fifty (33.3%) chose to act as nurses and six (4%) chose to act housekeepers. Only three (2%) boys chose to act the stereotypically female roles and that was the role of housekeeper.

In the typically unisexual category fifty eight girls made their choices, distributed thus: Forty one (27.3%) teachers and seventeen (11.3%) school principals. Forty one boys chose from this category. Thirty two (21.3%) chose to act the part of teacher and nine (6%) chose the part of school principal.

The data suggest that pupils see themselves in very stereotypical positions in life. Girls would rather be nurses - 33% of the girls chose this role, or teachers - 21% of the girls chose this role. Coincidentally, the children's schemes analysed portray only these two roles of women in occupational positions.

Twenty seven percent of the boys, on the other hand, chose the role of police officer - a common male occupational role found in the reading scheme analysed. One may conclude from this that, to some extent, the books analysed do reflect the pupils' own role perceptions.

It is to be noted that as question three was a closed question pupils may have felt obliged to respond in a certain manner, that is to fill the gender stereotypes suggested in the response options.

Question four was intended to establish what sort of activities would interest pupils. These were also roughly divided according to stereotypically male and female activities. Pupils had to choose one activity they would like to do from among: learning fashion modelling, learning to bake, working in the garden, learning to drive a car and cleaning the house. One hundred and twelve (74%) of the girls chose activities from the typically female category. Thirty three (22%) girls chose to learn fashion modelling, twenty seven (18%) chose to learn to bake and fifty two (34.7%) chose to clean the house. Interestingly, thirty four (22.7%) girls chose to learn to drive a car; which activity is commonly regarded as 'male', or at least that is how the schemes analysed portray it. Only four (2.6%) girls chose to work in the garden.

One hundred and thirty two (88%) boys chose activities in the stereotypically male category. One Hundred (66.7%) boys chose to learn to drive a car, and thirty two (21.3%) chose to work in the garden. There were ten (6.6%) who opted for cleaning the house, four (2.6%) who chose to learn fashion modelling and four (2.6%) for learning to bake. This also coincided with the stereotypes of girls/women and boys/men presented in the English text

books used by the pupils. Girls/women preen themselves in front of mirrors and do domestic chores, whereas boys/men do hard work, eg. working in the garden, and they drive or operate big machines like cars, trains and tractors.

Question five aimed to establish whether the activities that the pupils play are stereotypical or not. There were five activities to choose from - which might be divided into male, female and unisexual activities. For girls the categories were: playing house and making dolls' clothes, For boys there were playing marbles and making wire cars. Cycling was listed as the unisexual activity. Seventy four (49%) girls chose making dolls' clothes and only one (0.6%) boy made this choice. Fifty two (34%) girls chose playing house and only seven (4.6%) boys chose this category of play. None of the girls chose either playing marbles or making wire cars. Twenty seven (18%) boys chose playing marbles and fifty one (33%) chose making wire cars. The stereotypically unisexual activity listed as cycling in the questionnaire was chosen by sixty four (42%) boys and twenty four (16%) girls. It may be concluded from these figures that pupils still regard cycling as an essentially male activity

The categories used in this question and the stereotypes as described above were drawn from the pupils' English schemes. The relationship between the pupils' responses and the stereotypes presented in the books lead one to conclude that the stereotypes in the books reflect children's assumptions about their gender roles.

Question six required the pupils to decide who should carry the money and tickets between Nomsa (girl) and Bongani (boy) who are twins and are going on a train journey to visit their grandmother. Twenty eight (19%) girls answered that Nomsa should carry the money and the tickets compared with fourteen (9.3%) boys who chose Nomsa. One hundred and twenty two (81%) girls thought that Bongani should carry the money and the tickets and a hundred and thirty six (90.6%) boys responded that Bongani should carry the money and the tickets.

Pupils were also required to state their reasons for the choices they made.

**Girls' reasons for Choice A (Nomsa):**

Girls' reasons for choosing Nomsa to carry the money and the tickets were that girls were caring and careful. One girl went so far as to explain how they come to be that way, stating that:

FR029<sup>2</sup> Ngoba abantu besifazane bayanakekela ibona alagcina amakhaya emahle ngoba bayanakekela kakhulu.  
(Because female people are caring and they keep their homes beautiful because they care so much.)

Other girls responded:

FR028 Imali ayiphatwe nguNomsa ngoba amantombazane ayaqikelela kunabafana. Abafana bayakhohlwa balibale ukudlala.  
(The money must be kept by Nomsa because girls are more caring and careful than boys. Boys are forgetful and playful.)

The girls also reasoned that boys like to spend money on unimportant things like sweets, playing game machines, buying things for girlfriends and also buying liquor.

FR019 Because Bongani is going to buy his friends some sweet things.

FR020 Because Bongani loves toise and machines the money will be finished by playing machines and buying toise. And I hope Nomsa will be stell. And boys like food too much than girls.

FR023 Yingoba uNomsa ngeke athenge izinto akazinthandayo. uBongani uzofuna ukuthi ngela igirlfriend yakhe.  
(Because Nomsa will not spend it on things she likes. Bongani will want to buy things for his girlfriend with it.)

FR018 Ngoba uBongani uzophuza ngayo utshwala.  
(Because Bongani will spend it on liquor.)

Some girls thought that boys should not be trusted with money as in the case of this girl who responded:

FR022 Because Nomsa will never eat the money. But I thought Bongani will eat a money because he is a boy. Boys steal money sometimes, and Bongani will never give his grandmother a change. That's why I choose Nomsa.

For some girls it was a good enough reason that Nomsa is a girl like them,

FR014 I choose Nomsa because she is a girl and I am a girl.

Another reason that girls gave for choosing Nomsa is that girls are cleverer than boys. It is to be noted however that only three out of the twenty eight girls who chose Nomsa gave this reason.

FR031 Because she is a clever girl and the girl is clever than boy.

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FR001-150 stands for Female Respondents 1-150.

### **Boys' reasons for choice A (Nomsa):**

A total of fourteen out of one hundred and fifty boys chose A (Nomsa). For the most part, the reasons that the boys who chose Nomsa gave for their choice were similar to the girls', the main one being that girls are more careful than boys, and they are less playful. One boy responded:

MR048<sup>3</sup>            Because boy is norty like to play.

And another boy said:

MR051            because boy like to play

The third boy wrote:

MR052            because Girls can take care of money.

Boy number four also wrote:

MR053            Because girls can take care of things.

Four boys thought that Nomsa should carry the money because girls are cleverer than boys.

MR057            Yingoba uNomusa angeke bamphuce imali uyakwazi ukubeka  
imali futhi uhlakamphile.  
(Because they won't take the money from Nomsa. She can keep  
it safely and she is clever.)

MR050            Because Nomsa is a clever she is a girl.

MR043            Because Nomsa is clever she is a girl.

MR055            Nomsa is a clever in Bongani.

Although comparatively fewer (14%) boys and girls together chose Nomsa, it is worth noting that their reasons for the choice they made reflect very stereotypical perceptions of the nature and role of females. According to the pupils' responses to the last question, females care and are honest, whereas it is put very explicitly in these responses that boys are careless, carefree, playful, naughty and altogether more active than girls, which according to the pupils in the sample disqualifies them from such a responsibility as keeping money and train tickets.

### **Girls' reasons for choice B (Bongani):**

Out of the one hundred and fifty girls sampled, one hundred decided on choice B, which is that Bongani should carry the money and the tickets. The most common reason given for this choice was that since Bongani is a boy and boys are stronger and braver than girls

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<sup>3</sup> MR001-150 stands for Male Respondents 1-150.

(according to these girls), he should be able to protect the money and the tickets as well as Nomsa in case they are attacked by thieves and pickpockets while they are on their journey. Here the stereotype of the protective, physically strong and brave male emerges again. This is an image of a man which tallies well with the way males are presented in the sampled reading scheme. Forty five percent of the girls made this kind of response to the last question. Some of their responses follow below:

- FR130            Because the Boys are stronger than the Girls.
- FR131            Because Nomsa is a girl she will lost it and if the thieves want to take the money Bongani will try to fight with the thieves.
- FR128            Because Bongani is boy. The boy has many energy and he is brave. The boys are clever than the girls.
- FR134            Becase Bongani is a boy he is stronger than Nomsa. When the thives come they will catch easy money to Nomsa.

The other reason that girls gave for choosing Bongani is that boys are clever. Out of the one hundred and twenty two girls who made this choice, thirty two gave this as a reason. Some examples are:

- FR081            Because Bongani is boy. Boy is clever than Nomsa.
- FR082            Because Bongani is a boy he is clever.
- FR078            Because Bongani is a clever boy.

#### **Boys' reasons for choice B (Bongani):**

One hundred and thirty six boys (90.66% of the sample) decided that Bongani should carry the money and the tickets. Out of these boys, forty (29.33%) reasoned that Bongani should take this responsibility because boys are clever. Some examples are:

- MR093            Because Bongani is a boy and boys are clever an he would protect them against the enemies.
- MR097            Because the boy is clever and stronger.
- MR099            Because Bongani is clever that Nomsa.
- MR095            Because a boy is clever thant agirl. A girl will not look after the money and tickets.
- MR098            Because it was a boy the boy is clever than girl.

This was the most widely presented reason for choice B. Two hundred and thirty six girls and boys chose B, and seventy two (30.5%) of them gave this reason for their choice. It may therefore be concluded from this data that, to these pupils, to be male necessarily implies cleverness. This is an existing stereotype of the male person and as was shown in



the picture and content analyses of the sampled reading scheme in which males are presented as clever if not cleverer than women. So this stereotype of men that the reading scheme presents does also seem to be a kind that the pupils hold. The way males are presented in these books may only perpetuate it.

Another reason that the boys gave for choosing item B was that boys are strong and brave and should therefore be able to protect Nomsa, the tickets and the money from thieves and pickpockets. Fifty one (37.5%) out of one hundred and thirty six boys who chose item B gave this as a reason. Ninety six (70.5%) girls and boys together gave this reason.

The following responses from boys point to the importance that a large number of boys attribute to bravery and physical strength as perhaps opposed to, for example, caring, which was cited by some boys as a reason for choosing item A (Nomsa):

- MR097            Because the boy is stronger and clever
- MR101            Because Bongani is brave
- MR094            Because Bongane is clever and older than Nomsa. He can do something if thieves attack them. Perhaps he can run away.
- MR103            Ngoba uBongane umfana futhi uhlakaniphile angavedana alithathe alifake ekhukhwe ni ngoba angeke alilahla akafani ne ntombazane intombazane ihlala ithukile.  
(Because Bongani is a boy and he is clever he can just hide the money in his trouser pockets. he is not like a girl who is always scared.)

These kinds of responses confirm males in certain stereotypical positions as fighters, protectors and brave, physically fit human beings. The fact that none of these attributes are in any way linked with choice A (Nomsa) in the pupils' responses leads one to conclude that if item B is chosen so overwhelmingly for the above reason, then A must lack these attributes (in the respondent's mind). Instead the female person is viewed as frail and scared which is a stereotype of women also present in the sampled reading scheme. In the picture and content analyses of this scheme it was brought out how men are usually presented as strong and brave protectors of women, whereas women are usually shown to be frail, scared and ever fleeing from threatening situations (Picture 19). In this regard, one may say that the gender stereotypes found in the prescribed language texts samples do in fact coincide with those held by the pupils.

Another reason cited by the boys for choice B was that boys have many pockets on their clothes - especially trousers - where they can put the money and the tickets. This is a fact which highlights another stereotype about gender roles. It is usually assumed that men carry important items on their person most of the time. Therefore, when their clothes are

designed, provision is usually made for pens, bank books, wallets, diaries, address books etc. in the form of a number of jacket pockets and trouser pockets. The conclusion that can be drawn from this is that men are assumed to have a more orderly and more important role to play in life than women. Here are some examples of responses in this regard:

- MR039            Ngithi uBongani ngoba ungumfana, futhi unamaphakethe.  
                      (I choose Bongani because he is a boy, and he has pockets.)
- MR025            Because the boy a packet of money and the girl a dress is no  
                      packet of money.

For the most part the responses of both the female and male pupils to the last question reflected stereotyped perceptions of the roles and attributes of females and males. Many of the gender stereotypes that came through in the pupils' responses were also found in the language textbooks prescribed for these pupils, the most dominant ones being that male people are cleverer, strong and braver than female people, who are on the other hand presented as less clever, weak and cowardly.

### **3.5.2 The Teachers' Questionnaire (APPENDIX B)**

The questionnaire which was administered to the teachers aimed at establishing whether teachers of English at primary schools in Washbank are aware of the nature and content of the books they use for teaching English. It also aimed to assess teachers' awareness of the gendered nature of the content of the books as well as to assess teachers' awareness of the gendered behaviour sometimes displayed by their pupils. It was hoped that the extent to which teachers are aware of certain gender specific issues inside and outside the classroom could be established through this questionnaire.

Twenty eight teachers of English from four different primary schools responded to the questionnaire. The respondents taught different classes, from sub-standard A to standard five. There were ten male teachers and eighteen female teachers in the sample.

The questionnaire was made up of twelve open-ended questions (see Appendix B). Although eight of these questions required specific information based on the content of the texts, respondents were requested not to peruse the texts concerned because the aim was to assess the extent to which they are aware of gender related issues in these texts (see questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10). Three of the remaining questions (6, 7 and 12) required the respondents to mention the pupils' interests in order to establish whether they reflect any gender inclinations. Question 11 required the respondents to offer suggestions about how to address the problem of how boys and girls are presented in the textbooks, if it is seen to be a problem. In the last question (12) teachers were asked if the way male and female pupils respond to the questions differs and to describe the ways in which it differs.

In the first question the teachers were asked to express how girls and boys are presented in the textbooks. This was done for two purposes. First, to find out how familiar the teachers are with the content of the textbooks they use and, secondly, to establish if they are conscious of the gender stereotypes present in the textbooks. Their responses to this question showed that they understand the gender inclined content of the books they use for teaching English.

Besides a few vague responses such as:

MTR09<sup>4</sup> Boys are presented according to what they usually do, and the girls too.

other responses were quite precise, eg.

FTR03<sup>5</sup> Boys are always presented as clever people whereas girls are doing girlish things.

MTR06 Boys are shown working and the girls are just resting.

MTR01 (a) Boys are presented doing the manual work, ie. driving a truck or bus, working in the garden, etc.  
(b) Girls are presented doing the housework, ie. fetching water from the well, fetching wood, idling, etc.

MTR03 They are presented as heroes. They are also presented as people who are clever, more especially boys. In most cases girls are kind and sympathetic.

These responses and others given show the respondents' awareness of gender differences in the presentation of the sexes in the sampled reading scheme.

Statements such as the first one in the example given above - 'Boys are presented according to what they usually do, and the girls too.' - sum up the respondents' perception of the manner in which boys and girls are presented in the sampled texts, ie. a certain line of activities exists which is strictly set aside for boys. Girls also have their own peculiar activities. In summary, the respondents see the presentation of boys and girls in these books as according to socially constructed roles.

The second question required teachers to enumerate the kind of activities that girls are typically seen to be involved in, in the sampled books. The activities cited in the teachers' responses were cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes, playing netball, singing, looking after younger children, playing at being mothers, shopping, playing with dolls, making tea, sewing, and preening themselves in front of mirrors.

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<sup>4</sup> MTR01-10 stands for Male Teacher Respondents 1-10.

<sup>5</sup> FTR01-18 stands for Female Teacher Respondents 1-18.

This data shows the teachers' awareness of the gendered nature of the presentation of girls in these textbooks.

Question three enquired about activities that boys are typically seen to be involved in. According to the teachers' responses boys in these books 'do activities done by boys', manual work, drive cars, build houses, play soccer, climb trees, saw wood, do gardening, draw, fight, have challenging careers such as that of bank manager, shopkeeper, community leader, etc. They are seen to be learning new things, herding cattle and hunting. Some of the work done by boys is manual labour. From this, one may conclude that the teachers are aware of the kind of activities that are done by the boys. It may further be concluded that the teachers are aware of the gendered nature of the activities from responses such as 'boys do activities suitable for boys'.

In response to the fourth question, toys and pets that were recorded by teachers as those common in the sampled books included dolls, cats, eating utensils, balls, books, dishes, birds, handbags, tea sets, flowers, shawls, swing, sewing machines etc. Some teachers simply responded 'Toys suitable for girls'. This statement summarises the gendered nature of the toys and pets that girls play with in these books, as the teachers perceive them.

According to the teachers, boys in these books play with aeroplanes, bicycles, dogs and cats, balls, cars, bows and arrows, and apparently teachers think that such toys and pets are suitable for boys. It may be concluded that some teachers hold very stereotyped attitudes about the kind of toys and pets that boys may play with.

The purpose of the questions was to find out if teachers are aware of the nature of presentation of boys and girls, their activities and the toys they play with in the texts. It may be concluded from the kind of responses made that they have very clear perceptions about the nature of presentation of the boys and girls in the texts. What the teachers present tallies with the researcher's findings on analysing the texts.

In question six the respondents were supposed to state any particular interests that their male pupils might have. It was hoped that it could be determined from the responses whether pupils' interests were stereotyped or otherwise.

Boys' interests mentioned included the following: detecting, driving, drawing pictures, supervising/leading, making/building things, hunting, horse riding, gardening, making grass mats, making objects from clay, bricklaying, washing teachers' cars, studying and playing tug of war. Except, perhaps, for making grass mats, all the boys' interests mentioned were typically male. This conclusion is based on social attitudes held in Washbank where the research was carried out.

Girls' interests listed in response to question seven were: cleaning the house, scrubbing, caring for the sick, washing clothes, cooking, baking, tidying up the teacher's table, caring for younger children, decorating the classroom, doing crotchet work, sewing, social work, reading and acting. This list reflects very stereotyped activities of females, most of which are domestic. They may be broadly classified as domestic chores, caring for others and caring for their physical appearance. These are typically female activities.

Questions eight and nine enquired about what adult roles are common for females and males in the prescribed English textbooks respectively.

The female adult roles cited as the most common were those of housewife or housekeeper. Females were presented almost exclusively in a parenting role. Respondents also remarked on the females' subordinate role where they are presented as always taking instructions from males. The occupational roles for females were listed as those of nurse, teacher and seamstress. Male adult roles presented were in the most part occupational roles. Different occupations like those of doctor, teacher, miner, banker, butcher, driver, carpenter and school master were cited.

This kind of role presentation reflects stereotyping in respect of what roles an adult may play. Female adult roles are mainly domestic, caring and nurturing roles. Males on the other hand engage in a wide spectrum of occupations which are not only challenging but also give them the power to lead.

The responses given to questions 1,2,3,4,5,8 & 9, which relate to the content of the sampled books, indicate that not only are the teachers aware of the gender stereotyping in the books, but are also sensitive to it. Although it may seem from responses to these questions that this kind of stereotyping is normal, in the sense that roles in real life are as presented in the books, responses to question ten: "Do you think that the way in which boys and girls are presented in the books is a problem?" indicate the teachers' sensitivity to this stereotyping. Out of the twenty eight respondents, twenty one (75%) answered that it is indeed a problem and went on to explain why they see it as a problem.

Some of the reasons given were that it causes boys to think that they are cleverer than girls and girls are made to feel stupid; it does not expose girls to as many career opportunities as it does with boys through the biased content and pictures in the texts; it makes boys feel superior to girls and girls feel inferior; it can influence them to make choices of future careers and occupations which are based on stereotyped adult roles presented and learnt in these books.

Respondents were further asked (in question eleven) to suggest ways of addressing the problem if the way that girls and boys are presented in the books is seen as a problem. It appeared from their responses that their main concerns were the gender inequalities revealed in the presentation of girls and boys as well as adult females and males, which seemed to favour boys. They were mainly concerned with ways of dealing with the texts in a way that would de-emphasise the gender bias which favoured boys. They further suggested that girls should be encouraged to take up careers and do the work that the books tend to set aside for men and boys, as the following extracts from the teachers' answers suggest:

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| MTR03 | Pupils must be told about different careers. They must also know about the qualification that is required for each career.  |
| FTR03 | I'll emphasise the point that we are all human beings, we can do whatever we wish to do.  |
| MTR02 | I urge the book writers to eliminate their habits of promoting sexual prejudice. As a schoolmaster, I wish to make the children know that they can do anything regardless of their sex.             |
| MTR06 | Different people or both sexes should be encouraged to participate in any work done.  |
| FTR07 | The book must have pictures where pupils work say for instance at home girls do the washing and digging of gardens.   |
| FTR08 | Pupils can be taken out to some places and be shown that not only this career can be done by one gender, ie. both genders can do it.  |
| MTR01 | We can tell them that the work nowadays is open to everyone or anybody. What is important is to stick to the work what the school is preparing for them and be patient to their work and schooling. |

Some examples of teachers' responses to question 12 - "Do boys and girls in your class respond differently to these textbooks? If so, in what ways?" - are:

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| FTR07 | Yes. Boys become more active when they learn the lesson is about cars.  |
| MTR05 | Yes. Boys are not willing to do the work that they know is done by females. Girls do not like to be leaders of groups because they think it is suitable for boys.                                 |
| MTR06 | Yes they do. Girls wish to take the role taken by females and the boys do the same thing.   |
| FTR08 | Yes they respond differently. Boys respond positively, they act as the ones on top while girls are negative because they are always ..., not considered.  |
| MTR01 | Yes. The girls are usually fast learners approximately three quarters of the class or 75%. Boys are sometimes stubborn even though they know the answers. Approximately a quarter or 25% do this. |

MTR04            Boys are seen to be cruel by their girls. Boys are seen to be the only pupils to be educated.

In the last question (12) the respondents were asked if the boys and girls respond differently to the sampled book. Twenty one (75%) of them responded that they do and gave explanations such as that boys are more fascinated by pictures than girls, and as the pictures are mostly action pictures about boys and men, boys become more actively involved in lessons. Others stated that the pupils react to the content and pictures in the books as if it were the norm, so that boys and girls identify with the male and female stereotypes according to which sex they are. Respondents pointed out that this perpetuates gender stereotyping. As one respondent pointed out - 'Girls do not want to be leaders in groups, boys are always active'. This possibly emanates from the fact that the role of females as presented in the sampled books is for the most part an inactive and subordinate one. It was also pointed out that boys feel important and superior to girls for the most part, and girls on the other hand feel inferior and unimportant. While this may facilitate boys' learning, it may be a great hindrance to girls' learning.

A view that would contradict the above point came up from one of the respondents, that girls are fast learners, but boys are stubborn and will not raise their hands to answer in class even when they know the answers. As the questionnaires were answered anonymously this argument could not be pursued with the respondent, therefore one could only speculate about it.

### **3.6 INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS**

Interviews with teachers were also held for the same reason as the questionnaires, viz to assess the teachers' awareness of gender related issues inside and outside the classroom. The interviews were also meant to establish whether or not teachers held gendered and stereotyped perceptions about their pupils. The interviews were impromptu and unstructured. Teachers were interviewed in groups averaging six teachers at a time. The discussions included questions on interaction with girls and boys inside and outside the classroom, what future expectations teachers had of the girls and boys they teach, as well as their reasons for their projections.

Six edited transcripts of the interviews held with teachers follow below. They were in response to questions like - "What kind of a person is girl/boy A? What are his/her most outstanding character traits? What do you think s/he will be doing in six to eight years?" The interviews were tape recorded and as some of the responses were made in Zulu, they were translated and edited.

#### **3.6.1 Teacher 1**

Boy A is very helpful. He likes to clean teachers' cars. He sometimes helps with small jobs like changing tyres. He can even drive but I never let him drive my car. He works part-time as a conductor for taxis. He does not do badly at school. I just think that he is usually too busy doing his part-time job or helping his uncle fix his cars. His uncle owns two taxis. He may end up driving taxis or he will become a motor mechanic. I hope he studies for this at a vocational school or technical college and gets a certificate. I think it's his destination in life.

#### **3.6.2 Teacher 2**

Girl A is such a lady. She is so neat and orderly. Her books are always neatly kept - even her handwriting is very neat and beautiful. Although the class has a monitor, she is usually asked to distribute and collect books before and after lessons. She is an average pupil but she works very hard. She will probably work in an office, keeping books and records. She will be very good at it.

#### **3.6.3 Teacher 3**

I started teaching Boy B last year, in standard four. This is my second year with him. I thought he was very rude at first. You see, he always interrupted with questions and counter-arguments. He wants to give all the answers. I've come to accept him now I realise that he is simply assertive, maybe a bit aggressive too. He should make a very good lawyer.

#### **3.6.4 Teacher 4**

Girl B is a nice little girl. She is still very childish though. Although she is in standard four now, she still brings her dolls to school to play house with a group of friends during breaks. I think this is an indication of how much she likes children. She is a caring person. She may become a nurse or teacher. She does well in all her subjects.

#### **3.6.5 Teacher 5**

Boy C is reserved. He never says much in class. He is very strict. It is his no-nonsense attitude that makes me think that he will become a policeman. Somebody tore a book last week and wouldn't own up. He just stood up, faced the pupil and told him to own up



that he had done it. That was very brave and honest of him. Yes, he can be a good law enforcer.

#### 3.6.6 Teacher 6

Girl C is kind and sympathetic. She is a bit older than the other pupils in the class. Maybe that's why she tends to always look out for them. When other pupils quarrel she always tries to resolve their quarrels. She is a peace-loving pupil and always tries to maintain peace and order in class. I think she can make a good social worker. She is not so clever but I think she has the heart for this kind of work.

It became evident from the interviews that teachers see their pupils as gendered subjects. In more than 75% of the cases discussed the teachers described the boys as - assertive, manually skilled, strict, physically fit, argumentative, intelligent and generally active. Girls on the other hand were described as kind, sympathetic, neat, orderly, nice, ladylike and caring.

The future occupations, teachers could project about their pupils, for boys ranged from motor mechanics, law enforcement officers, lawyers, doctors to actors. For girls they predicted occupations such as nursing, office work (as secretaries), social work, teaching and parenting. One may conclude that the teachers' perceptions of their pupils are gendered.

The occupations projected for the pupils reflect gender stereotypes. The description of the pupils itself confirms them in certain gender stereotypes.

## CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS

### 4.1 THE PICTURES IN THE TEXTS

It was found that the English Reading Scheme which is prescribed for Black Primary School in Washbank is gendered and biased in favour of males in terms of the pictures displayed in the texts. Numerically, the pictures of males far outnumber the pictures of girls/women, with one thousand one hundred and one pictures of boys/men against three hundred and thirty three pictures of females (cf Table 1).

The content of the pictures was found to reflect gendered stereotypes of females and males. These stereotypes were reflected in the kind of toys and pets that boys and girls are depicted playing with in the texts. They are stereotypically gendered toys and pets. Moreover, boys have a wider variety of toys and pets than girls. This fact also confirms boys in a male stereotype of an active, more interesting, exacting and challenging life than girls.

In the pictures that depict each sex group learning a new skill, males appeared more times than females, and they are depicted learning gender specific skills. It was also found that in pictures where children watch adults at work, it is usually boys watching older men perform certain skills and helping out. Girls are usually depicted as passive bystanders, unless it is some kind of apron chores that are being performed.

The adult roles depicted in the pictures reflect gender stereotypes and males appear more than females in the pictures (cf Table 4: 6 female adult roles against 30 male roles presented).

### 4.2 THE CONTENT OF THE TEXTS

The content of the texts was found to be overwhelmingly gendered and biased in favour of males. To begin with, most stories are told by males. Secondly, a large percentage of the stories has males as central characters. In most cases females (where they do feature) feature in a complementary role to men. Thirdly, the stories present stereotypically glorified images of the male person, who is brave, intelligent, strong, assertive, active, competent, confident, knowledgeable and cultured, whereas female people, in the few instances that they are featured, are presented as inactive/passive, emotional, incompetent, unmotivated, talkative, ignorant, weak, vain, cowardly and submissive.

#### 4.3 THE PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Through the questionnaire which was administered to a sample of pupils in Black Primary Schools in Washbank it was found that pupils hold some gendered attitudes.

In their choice of pictures, pupils tended to select those that depict people of their own sex in gender specific situations.

Regarding careers, pupils saw themselves in gender specific occupations in the future. For example, seventy two girls and only one boy responded that they would like to be nurses in the future, which may be compared to fifty one boys against five girls who saw their future occupations as police officers (see Table 5).

Where they were asked to select acting roles, pupils also showed gendered inclinations. The roles they chose were gender stereotypes. The role of a nurse, for example, was chosen by girls only - fifty altogether - whereas sixteen boys and only one girl chose the role of a jockey (see Table 5).

The pupils' interests were also found to be stereotyped and gender specific, as revealed by responses to question 4 of the pupils' questionnaire. For example, fifty two girls and only ten boys showed an interest in cleaning the house whereas a hundred boys against thirty four girls responded that they would like to learn to drive a car (see Table 5).

The games that pupils play were found to be gender specific. For example, boys only responded that they play marbles and only one boy against seventy four girls responded that he has an interest in making dolls' clothes.

In the last question, where the pupils were indirectly asked to decide who is more responsible between a boy and a girl, 86% of the pupils decided that the boy is more responsible. The reasons given for this choice revealed the gendered perceptions of and attitudes towards the male person that pupils apparently hold. They gave reasons such as that boys are cleverer, stronger, braver and can offer much more and better security than girls. Even the reasons given by the pupils who did not choose the boy revealed stereotyped perceptions of boys/men. They answered that a boy would lose the money because boys are more playful/active than girls, or that boys would spend the money on useless things like liquor and games.

From the findings recorded above, it was concluded that Primary School Pupils in Black Schools in the Washbank area hold gendered attitudes and behave in a gendered manner.

The gendered behaviour and attitude of these pupils was found to coincide with the gender stereotypes found in the English Reading Scheme that they use.

#### 4.4 THE TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Through this questionnaire it was hoped to find out, and to assess, to what extent teachers of English in Black Primary School in the Washbank area are familiar with the English Reading Scheme they use. The questionnaire also aimed to establish if they are aware of the gender stereotypes contained in these books; to gather information about pupils' behaviour and interests in order to assess if or to what extent they are gendered, and also to gather information on how to address the problem of the gendered nature of the books they have to use, and the gendered behaviour and attitude of the pupils.

The data collected revealed that teachers of English in Washbank Primary Schools are familiar with the content of the English Reading Scheme they use and they are also aware of the gender stereotypes contained therein. The data collected suggest that pupils are seen by teachers to behave in a gendered manner.

Twenty out of twenty eight (71%) of the teachers agreed that the way in which boys and girls are presented in the books is a problem and that boys and girls respond differently to these textbooks. Teachers mainly recommended that, despite what the books suggest, an attempt should be made to change the pupils' gendered attitudes by encouraging them to engage in any activity regardless of what sex it is normally ascribed for. Some teachers suggested that pupils be made gender sensitive, eg. 'We must teach them that we are all the same'. Others suggested that pupils be exposed to situations where both sex groups occupy the same kind of occupational positions, so that pupils may learn that biological sex does not necessarily determine which occupation is suitable for which person.

It was also suggested that in giving pupils daily chores, they should not be divided along gender lines. It should be emphasised that boys and girls can do the same kind of work.

Some teachers also suggested that they should be invited to select the texts they may use at school so that they may be in a position to select books that are less gendered than those they presently use.

It was also suggested that teachers should take extra care to discourage pupils from certain gendered practices which may have been learnt from or censored or encouraged by the gendered presentation of the books they use.

Another suggestion from one of the teachers was that they should adapt and supplement the content of the books by providing less gendered materials such as pictures, sentence strips, etc. One teacher suggested that teachers who use these books should eliminate or disregard all that reflects sexual prejudice in the books for teaching purposes.

#### **4.5 INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHERS**

On interviewing teachers it was found that they have gendered and stereotyped views of the pupils they teach. Girls were described as neat, little, caring, orderly, kind and sympathetic. These character traits, as revealed in the analysis of the texts, are common perceptions of females. Even the occupations projected for girls by the teachers are gendered and stereotyped. Teachers saw their female pupils in occupations such as nursing, social work, teaching and secretarial work.

Boys, on the other hand, were described as manually skilled, assertive, aggressive, brave, reserved, strict and honest. These are also common perceptions of males. These are also evident in the future occupations that teachers predicted for male pupils viz. motor mechanic, law enforcement officers, lawyers, doctors, actors and taxi drivers.

## CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher sees these gendered behaviours described in the ensuing chapters as promoting a patriarchal gender order - a single overarching structure of domination of women by men (Gilbert and Taylor, 1991). It is felt by the researcher that rather than reproduce and perpetuate them, the school should work towards the deconstruction of the negative and now unacceptable gender stereotypes that society has created.

This study has investigated a small strand of educational practice in the South African context which has clearly revealed a need for a much more conscious attempt to transform gender relations in the society. It has been shown through this study how curriculum materials used in schools can reflect a patriarchal gender ideology and how this kind of structuring of curriculum materials has the potential to fuel and perpetuate patriarchal gender relations in society. It has also come to light that both pupils and teachers who use the materials that were investigated had gendered attitudes. Although most teachers showed awareness of the gendered nature of the curriculum materials in question, it became evident, however, that they deal with their texts unquestioningly, as if it were the norm - hence the need to take a more deliberate and conscious effort to make gender bias in these materials transparent and reconstruct meanings in ways that de-emphasise the patriarchal relations constructed through the curriculum materials used. It also calls for an attempt to establish more direct links between gender bias evident in the textbooks and gender relations in the broader society, as schools often serve the interests of the societies responsible for their existence. Teachers should attempt to ensure maximum benefits from these materials for all pupils, regardless of their sex. There is a need for changed and gender conscious and resourceful classroom practice, updated teacher education (pre-service and in-service through workshops) and further research.

Regarding classroom practice a number of suggestions which were made by teachers in the questionnaire have already been noted. In addition classroom activities which may facilitate this process would include: focused discussion and critique of gender biased stories and illustrations. Questions that might be asked in this regard could be:

- (a) Why do you think boys are always shown involved in exciting activities and undertaking brave deeds?
- (b) Do you agree that only boys can perform brave deeds? Why?
- (c) Are the activities that boys are shown doing really more exciting and brave than those done by girls?

Questions such as these should aim at making the male bias in the books transparent.

Another way of beginning to change classroom practice could be the use of supplementary curriculum and teaching aids that deliberately undermine and disregard traditional gendered

stereotypes. This could be done in two ways: the teacher might provide teaching aids in the form of pictures, drawings, friezes, and sentence strips, or pupils could be asked to re-illustrate the stories and then discussions of the stories would centre around pupils' illustrations. Here an attempt would be made to reconstruct meanings and to make male bias transparent.

Regarding the stories, pupils might be asked to imagine the story with a different ending, and then it would be discussed, drawing the pupils' attention to gender bias in the original story. Alternatively, the same story could be used, but questions that expose bias and gender stereotyping should be asked, eg. Why does father not start preparing breakfast instead of reading the newspaper because mother has to finish her essay and hand it in before nine o'clock?

Another way of facilitating change regarding the gendered construction of meaning in schools could be through teacher training. Women's studies could be made compulsory in all teacher training curricula. In order not only to conscientise teachers about patriarchal relations that exist in society which are also reflected in curricular materials but also to arm them with skills of deconstructing these and promoting a more feminist attitude and approach to teaching. Presently not all teacher training colleges have women studies as a compulsory component in their syllabuses.

In-service workshops for teachers could be held, in which teachers would be conscientised about gender bias. Ways of using the biased textbooks in an effective and resourceful way to benefit all pupils could also be explored in such workshops. Small groups could also be established to develop materials. The groups could change or develop existing materials to counteract the gender bias they may reflect.

Finally, further research still needs to be carried out. More recently published textbooks could be analysed to determine if they reflect any links with the text books already analysed regarding gender bias. In the same vein, talks could be held with current textbook writers to ascertain the extent to which they are gender conscious.

It is hoped that these suggestions if tried out might be a small, but hopefully significant step towards the improvement of gender relations in South Africa.

## PUPILS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of School:.....

Class:..... Age:..... Sex:.....

1. Choose the two pictures that you like the most in your book. On which pages are they found?

.....

.....

.....

2. What would you like to be when you finish school?

.....

.....

.....

3. If you were to act in a school play, which one among the following characters would you choose to play:

A	Pilot	F	Jockey
B	Dentist	G	Teacher
C	Nurse	H	Lawyer
D	Sports Commentator	I	School Principal
E	Police Officer	J	Housekeeper

4. What would you like to do during the school holidays? Choose from the list below.

- A Learn fashion modelling
- B Learn to bake
- C Work in the garden
- D Learn to drive a car
- E Clean the house

5. Choose one activity from the list below that you would like to play.

- |   |                  |   |                       |
|---|------------------|---|-----------------------|
| A | Marbles          | D | Playing House         |
| B | Making Wire Cars | E | Making Dolls' Clothes |
| C | Cycling          |   |                       |

6. Nomsa and Bongani are twins and they are visiting their grandmother by train. Who should carry the money and the tickets?

- |   |       |   |         |
|---|-------|---|---------|
| A | Nomsa | B | Bongani |
|---|-------|---|---------|



## TEACHERS' QUESTIONNAIRE

Name of School:.....

Class Taught:..... Sex:.....

1. How are the boys and girls presented in your textbooks?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. What kinds of activities are the girls typically seen to be involved in?

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. What kinds of activities are the boys typically seen to be involved in?

.....

.....

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4. What sorts of pets and toys do girls play with in the books?

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5. What sorts of pets and toys do boys play with in the books?

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6. Do boys in your class have any particular interests? Name those interests.

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7. Do girls in your class have any particular interests? Name those interests.

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8. What adult roles are common for females in the books?

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9. What adult roles are common for males in the books?

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10. Do you think that the way in which boys and girls are presented in the books is a problem?

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11. If so, what can you do to address the problem?

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12. Do boys and girls in your class respond differently to these textbooks? If so, in what ways?

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