

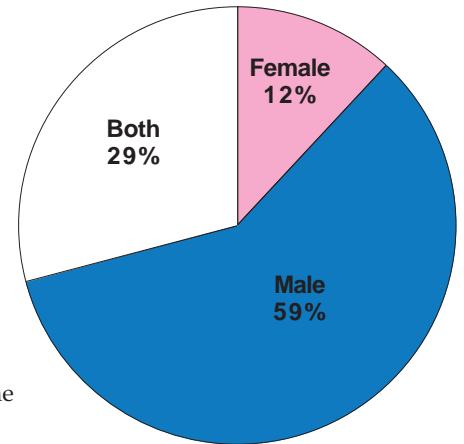
The Annual Gender Survey— The Same Old Story



Every year at this time, we conduct our annual gender roles in children’s interactive media (GRIIMS) survey. We’re ever-hopeful that we’ll discover a new era for equal representation for girls in interactive media— that perhaps this will be the year where stereotypes will be broken, and strong female leads will take center stage in children’s software.

Sorry. Another year goes by and the story remains the same. We examined 400 products rolled out in 2002, and of those, there were only 30 that featured a female main character. Compare that to the 148 products in which the main character was male, and you get the picture. Fortunately, 73 programs had both male and female leads; while 149 titles had no lead character at all.

New media doesn't necessarily mean new thinking when it comes to gender roles



TOP GRAPH: Gender of Lead Characters
Of 400 titles considered, 148 featured male lead characters, vs 30 female. 73 programs had both male and female leads



Venturing into more subjective coding, we took a stab at the gender “appeal” of products, in other words, how many might you find in the “pink” aisles of the retail stores. vs . If you’ve spent anytime at all looking at children’s software, you know that there are some products clearly designed and marketed for girls, and others for boys. Of the 400 products we considered, we felt that the majority (some 277) were gender neutral— both boys and girls would want to play with them. Of the rest, 23 were definitely “pink”— programs featuring Britney Spears, Barbie, Mary-Kate and Ashley and so on. Contrast that little group to the whopping 114 that we felt appealed more to boys— programs with war and battle themes, cars and trucks, male-dominated sports titles and so on. The emphasis in interactive media production is still heavily on the boys, which leaves the girls coming up short time and again.

BOTTOM GRAPH: Gender Appeal
Of the 123 titles designed to appeal to a particular gender, 144 (or 83%) are designed for boys, verses . N = 178

Gender Stereotyping

We also examined gender stereotypes. Here, the news is pretty good. We found no evidence of gender stereotyping in 358 of the 400 programs. Nineteen products actually “broke” stereotypes in that they featured females doing things like rescuing male characters, driving big rigs or playing hockey. These types of programs send important messages to both boys and girls, namely that girls are just as competent and capable as their male counterparts. We sure would like to see more of these! ☺

STEREOTYPE BUSTERS

- Barbie Explorer**—Barbie’s loses her bubblehead mannerisms in this well designed adventure game.
- Backyard Hockey**-- the girls are just as good and sometimes better than the boys in this fun simulation.
- WTA Tour Tennis**-- tennis stars like Martina Hingas and Jennifer Capriati show their awesome power and talent in this center court game.
- Sports Illustrated for Kids**-- another excellent venue for learning about the famous and not-so-famous women athletes of out times.
- Rescue Heroes Lava Landslide**-- both boys and girls will enjoy this fun game that offers a female as one of its Rescue Heroes.
- The Powerpuff Girls Mojo Jojo's Clone Zone**-- girls use brain power to save the day in this edutainment title.

