Gender role stereotyping in occupational choices

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GENDER ROLE STEREOTYPING IN OCCUPATIONAL CHOICES

by
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A Thesis

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Approved by

Professor

Date Approved
ABSTRACT

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Gender Role Stereotyping in Occupational Choices

Spring 2000

Dr. Roberta Dihoff
School Psychology

The purpose of this study was to see if students’ occupational career choices were gender role stereotyped. The subjects making up this study were from a middle/upper class suburban area located in southern New Jersey. 192 subjects in fifth grade, 201 subjects in eighth grade, and 280 subjects in twelfth grade participated in this study. The percentage of males and females for each grade was close to a 50% split. This study was conducted using a survey, which asked the subjects what their choice for a career was at that present time. Choices were compared to a listing of careers from the Statistical Abstract of the United States. Any occupation that had 70% or higher of one sex making up its workforce was considered stereotyped for that sex. Three types of non-parametric tests were used; a Binomial test, a 2-Independent samples t-test, and a K-Independent samples t-test, to determine significance among choice, gender, and grade level. Findings of this study suggested that there was no significance among overall choice and grade level, but that there was significance among gender.
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The following thesis is dedicated to the people in my life who have made a difference in my career occupational choice. To the principal, Mrs. Zycinsky, and the entire staff at Birches Elementary School who have shaped and nurtured me in the skills of teaching and the educational field. To Dr. Dihoff and Dr. Klanderman for taking a chance on me, and my forgettable GPA in undergraduate school, in the School Psychology program two years ago when all other doors were closing. I hope my graduate GPA and studies have made up for that.

Your endless support, guidance, caring and assistance has brought me to where I am today and has put into focus a career path that was as cloudy as the day was during which I wrote this. Thank you.
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CHAPTER 1

NEEDS

Males and females are different. Not only do they have different physical characteristics, but also they often behave in different ways and play different roles in society. While some of these differences are linked to biology, many are the results of socialization. A variety of socializing agents, including parents, teachers, peers, and the media, consistently and subtly reinforce gender role stereotypes, especially within the field of career occupations, which this study focused on. This first study, in a series of four, was needed to determine if there is a relationship between a person’s gender and occupational career choice. The need for this particular type of study can be seen better as a whole picture rather than separate parts. If this first study yields positive results, and suggests that people are directed towards career choices that are gender role stereotyped, then the next study can begin. It will research to see if this causes problems, whether it is in a person’s private life or throughout the world. Of course not all jobs, if found to be gender role stereotyped, would be seen as causing problems. Some jobs may benefit from gender role stereotyping. A distinction between the two must be established and it must be determined which stereotyped jobs cause problems and which ones do not. If it is determined that certain careers do pose problems, the next study would be to see what influences a person to choose these paths. From determining these influences the final study needs to determine how to redirect these influences into a positive direction.
The overall study, which in actuality is a combination of four smaller studies, the first of which was done here, is one where you must have success at the lower studies before you can move on. Research must begin at the bottom and lend support to the study before it can move on to the next study. This ensures that it needs to be studied. If research suggests that people are not choosing career opportunities that are stereotyped towards their gender than the rest of the studies need not be researched and the overall study can thus come to an end.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to examine the strength of the connection between gender role stereotyping and occupational choice. The research examined if a person was more apt to choose occupations that are considered gender role appropriate for his or her own gender. Gender role appropriateness is brought on by society, since much of what we consider masculine or feminine is shaped by our culture (Williams, 1983). The research also examined if there was a significant difference between the percentage of occupations that males choose that are gender role appropriate for males and the percentage of occupations that females choose that are gender role appropriate for females.

HYPOTHESIS

1. Students' occupational choices will be stereotyped towards their gender.

2. Male students will be more gender role stereotyped in their occupational choices than females.
3. The lower the grade level, the stronger the occupational choices will be gender role stereotyped.

**THEORY**

Gender role stereotypes, and for this study, the linkage to occupations, begins in the Social Learning Theories and ends in ones that are an extension of those, the Social Cognitive Learning Theories. Both of these theories have areas of interest when it comes to gender roles, stereotyping, and other various subjects linked with them. In Social Learning Theory, one that stands out is operant conditioning. The process of operant conditioning is such that if a behavior is followed by a better or more satisfying state of affairs, the behavior is more likely to be done again later on in a similar situation. If a behavior is followed by a worse or less satisfying state of affairs, the behavior is less likely to be done again later. Operant conditioning uses the terms positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment to describe the state of affairs, with punishment being referred to the less satisfying one, and both positive and negative reinforcements referring to the more satisfying ones. Shaping is another concept under these theories. With shaping, reinforcement is first given for rough approximations of a desired behavior, which then begins to occur more often. Gradually, reinforcement is only given as closer and closer approximations are met. Eventually, the entire desired behavior has been shaped and is elicited.

With Social Cognitive Learning Theories, greater emphasis is placed on the mental events of the person, rather than entirely on the social aspects. However, since they do still take the contributions of the social aspects on the individual they are called
both social, and cognitive, learning theories in one title to show a union of importance. These theories use concepts such as social reinforcers, some of which are smiles, hugs, praise, approval, and interest elicited from people. Self-reinforcement is another. With self-reinforcement, people react to their own actions with approval or disapproval, much as you react to someone else's behavior. Another type of reinforcement is called vicarious reinforcement. This is described as someone observing someone else doing something that is followed by reinforcement. They will then become more likely to do the same thing themselves. Another concept is expectancies. Expectancies are implicit judgments about how likely a given behavior is to result in attainment of certain goals. And finally, observational learning plays a vital role. This takes place when one person performs an action, another person observes, and the observer thereby acquires the ability to repeat the act. This act usually is one that is new to the observer and these observations can take place as early as the first years of life. The observer is required to pay attention and retain what is observed, whether through imaginal coding or verbal coding, two aspects of the cognitive learning theory. The fact that two people are needed for this activity relates to the social aspect of the theory.

What does all this mean? Well, considering that gender roles are learned through society, many of these concepts are what people use throughout their childhood to create the gender roles and their stereotypes. All of these concepts lead to this development, whether they are following behaviors that lead to reinforcements rather than punishments, being reinforced and shaped to follow certain behaviors, using observational learning to watch and repeat what people of importance do such as parents or popular personalities, searching expectancies to see what behaviors will be praised and rewarded and lead a
person to a goal, or social reinforcers being applied when a person does something that society deems acceptable to that gender. They are all a part of the Social Learning Theories or Cognitive Social Learning Theories and they all play the important and vital part of developing gender roles and stereotypes within a person.

DEFINITIONS

Gender – A psychological phenomenon referring to learned, sex-related behaviors and attitudes of males and females.

Gender identity – One’s sense of ‘maleness’ or ‘femaleness’; usually includes awareness and acceptance of one’s biological sex.

Gender role – Set of behaviors and attitudes associated by society with being male or female and expressed publicly by the individual.

Gender role socialization – Teaching or learning the behaviors that make up the gender roles associated with being male or female.

Sex – Biologically based characteristics that distinguish males from females.

Stereotype – A standardized conception or image invested with special meaning and held common by members of a group.

ASSUMPTIONS

It was assumed that an accurate random selection of subjects was used. All subjects were within the same socioeconomic background to ensure that none had a more dramatic or other traumatic societal experience or monetary difference. Since the major influence of gender role acquisition is from social parameters, it was assumed that it is
not necessary to account for any chance encounters within the society or family structures. It was assumed that subjects were appropriately answering the actual occupational career choices that they see themselves doing, and not answering what they would wish for themselves (ex. Famous movie star, top professional athlete, etc.). In relation to answering the occupational choice, it was also assumed that subjects accurately answered what or who has influenced them the most in their top choice and have thought about this at a deep level, not just giving a surface answer.

LIMITATIONS

One limitation to the overall study was that it could only be done within a small population. It is limited to subjects at all school levels within a certain socioeconomic area. This study would need multiple small studies for each social and environmental area. This study was also limited in determining when the actual influencing factor of the top choice came into play. This information was not exactly necessary to complete this study, but it will be necessary when this study progresses to further steps in the overall study.

OVERVIEW

Social factors, whether they are the school system, the family, peers, teachers, or another area, can and do have a direct impact on the acquisition of gender roles and the part they play in how a person decides what career is right for him/herself. Whether or not this causes a problem for the person or with society has yet to be determined. Chapter two reviews the historical literature that has been profoundly studied through the decades.
There is research and literature that spans through occupations and the workforce giving insight into why and how males and females decide on certain jobs. Chapter three breaks down and deciphers the design of the study. The analysis of the results is found within chapter four. In chapter five, an in-depth conclusion of the study and a discussion about future implications of the study are presented.
CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

Broken into five parts, the following material presents a look into material on stereotypes. Part one deals with research that has a main focus on subjects’ occupational choices and how stereotyped they are based on either jobs being dominated by one gender or Holland’s Codes. Part two deals with research that asks subjects to determine which gender would perform certain occupations or activities based on certain approaches, stories, and attributes set up by the experimenter. Part three deals with research that has subjects determine particular attributes that belong to either males or females. Part four deals with females’ outlooks and perceptions for their lives and males’ opinions of them. Following these four parts is a brief summary bringing together all of the studies, their results, and their contributions.

FOCUSING ON OCCUPATIONAL ASPIRATIONS

One study (Reyes, Kobus, & Gillock, 1999) explained that the gender distribution of jobs remain vastly disproportionate, especially among minority groups. They concentrated the study on the Mexican American female population, interviewing 162 (100 female, 62 male) tenth grade students to find out what their career aspirations were.

Female choices occupied both extremes, in which they chose both male- and female-dominated jobs. 87% of the females and 92% of the males chose occupations
where at least 51% of the employees were male. Approximately 38% of the total subjects chose occupations that were considered strongly male-dominated. Only 15% of the total subjects chose occupations that were considered strongly female-dominated. The results for Mexican American females were considered against the norm, as it was common from previous studies to choose gender-stereotyped occupations.

Another study (Helwig, 1998) was longitudinal, performed on subjects at three points in time, which was when they were in second, fourth, and sixth grade, to find out what their career occupational choices were.

The study used 208 participants in second grade. The subjects were predominantly white (86%) and the majority of non-white subjects were mostly Hispanic. The mean age for second grade was seven and increased by two years for each increased grade level studied. Every subject did not complete the study however. In fourth grade the 208 subjects were reduced to 160, and in sixth grade the subjects were reduced to 130. The subjects who dropped out moved out of the area. The ratio at the beginning of the study was nearly fifty percent at 110 boys and 98 girls.

Subjects were asked to answer the question, 'As an adult, if you could have any job you wanted, what job would that be?' The boys in second grade had a proportion of .83 as indicating male-dominated occupations and this ratio rose to .93 in sixth grade. For females, in second grade they had a proportion of .56 indicating female-dominated occupations. However, by sixth grade their proportion had sunk to .30.

A slightly different edge for this topic was a study (Trice, Hughes, Odom, & Woods, 1995) conducted to determine if occupational aspirations for 949 subjects in grades K-6 had any significance within Holland’s (1985) listing of occupations. Subjects
were asked what their first and second choices for occupations would be. They were then given thirteen occupations selected from the Holland (1985) codes and asked whether they would like each occupation or not.

Of the 949 subjects, 114 of them gave no realistic occupations for their first or second choice. Boys listed 93 different occupations whereas girls listed 110 different occupations. Only 11 of 471 girls gave mother/housewife as their occupation. The authors divided occupational choice into six categories according to Holland’s listing of occupations. They were Realistic (trades), Investigative (scientific occupations), Artistic, Social (helping professions), Enterprising (person-oriented business professions), and Conventional (data-oriented business professions). Scores within these fields for each gender were not significant as they were dispersed evenly between categories and gender. Males selected 23%, 18%, 11%, 28%, 11%, and 9% respectively. Females selected 19%, 19%, 12%, 28%, 10%, and 12% respectively.

WHICH GENDER WOULD PERFORM CERTAIN ACTIVITIES AND JOBS

This study (St. Pierre, Herendeen, Moore, & Nagle, 1994) had subjects rate occupations. 113 undergraduate students were given nine occupations taken from the U.S. Department of Labor (1991) and asked to rate them using a forced-response scale, which ranged from only male, mostly male, male and female, mostly female, and only female. Subjects rated the occupations, which were three male-dominant, three female-dominant, and three neutral, based on opinions of which gender had the capabilities needed to perform the occupation.

Eight of the nine occupations were rated as either male-typed or neutral. Only one of the nine occupations was rated as female-typed. Stereotyped views are still persistent
in the subjects’ eyes with a slight change in occupations as they start to fall towards neutral. The fall is from female to neutral, as only one occupation was rated as strictly female-typed. Males still had their fair share in occupations that were rated solely for them.

The purpose of this next study (Gatton, DuBois, & Faley, 1999) was to rate occupations by gender. 182 undergraduate subjects used a seven-point bi-polar scale to rate eight gender-neutral occupations. A rating of 1 was masculine, 4 was neutral, and 7 was feminine. Subjects were divided into two experimental groups and one control group. One experimental group was read a masculine-type organizational description for each occupation before rating it. Another experimental group was read a feminine-type organizational description for each occupation before rating it. The control group was not read anything.

The experimental group who was read the feminine-type description significantly rated the gender-neutral occupations more feminine than the control group. The experimental group who was read the masculine-type description, however, did not rate the gender-neutral occupations with any significance in relation to the control group. The mean scores were 3.93 and 3.73 for the experimental groups and 3.66 for the control group.

Another study (Pallett, 1994) examined grade and gender differences for 638 students in grades K-12 in stereotyping physical activities as either male, female, or neutral. The subjects filled out the Physical Activity Stereotyping Index (PASI). The Index consisted of twenty-four ambiguous stick figure items representative of eight
female, eight male, and eight gender-neutral physical activities. The greater the gender-role stereotyping of the traditional male and female activities, the higher the score.

The analysis of the total scores yielded significance for gender and grade but not for an interaction between the two. Boys scored higher than girls and scores dropped as grade levels increased, showing that attitudes towards stereotyping decreased as grade level increased. One comment worthy of noting is that physical education teachers were interviewed along with the structure of their courses and it was found that at lower grade levels gender segregating and stereotyping was vastly present. This did not occur at the high school level as genders were mixed in class and students were able to choose which activities to participate in. The choices of gender neutral activities increased as well at this level taking additional pressure off of the feeling to conform to stereotypes.

The basic premise of this study (Gibbons, Lynn, & Stiles, 1997) was to have subjects between 14 and 16 years of age list all free-time activities they could think of and then to check the ones they would consider for themselves. The idea behind this study was that free-time activity choices by adolescents was important because it may best express their own preferences, could reflect different socialization practices for males and females and also be reflected later in life in occupational choices.

There were 904 participants in this study ranging from four countries, of which 352 were from the U.S. (Saint Louis, Missouri). The subjects had to fill out a questionnaire that was developed by Sunberg and Tyler (1970) and included the instructions to “list all the free-time activities you can think of and then check those you would consider for yourself.” All of the free-time activities that were checked by the participants as possibilities for themselves were divided two ways. First, they were
divided into either ‘Sport’ or ‘Non-Sport’ with Sport being described as an athletic game or physical activity engaged in for pleasure. The second way they were divided was by ‘Group’ or ‘Non-Group’ with Group activities being described as those that necessarily or generally involve at least one other person.

More boys checked the ‘sports’ type activities than the girls did. On the reverse side, more girls checked the ‘non-group’ activities than the boys did. These types of activities were typically dance, gymnastics, and swimming, although the line was hard to draw sometimes as a ‘non-group’ as many of these choices have competitive meets in which the individuals participate as a team against another team.

This study (Albert & Porter, 1983) for this group commented on sex-role stereotypes that still begin early in age despite the efforts of the women’s movement and other female advances. Sex-role stereotypes have been basically stable over the past few decades. Males are viewed as active, aggressive, independent, fearless, stronger, and more dominant, while females are viewed as more expressive and having nurturing qualities.

The subjects totaled 1,292 students from 4 to 6 years old. Subjects were interviewed separately in a room that contained dolls and dollhouse equipment. The interviewer read two stories. One story was about a day at home and one about a day at school. During critical points in the story the subject was asked to select a doll that was most likely to be engaging in the activities in the story, and the subject would choose either a male or female doll.

A majority of both males and females chose the male doll when attributes being described were aggression, active, independent, strong, fearless, dominant, and
disobedient behavior. A majority of both males and females chose the female doll when attributes being described were passivity, dependence, non-aggression, expressiveness, nurturing behavior, instrumental incompetence, and concern with physical appearance.

This next study (Durkin & Nugent, 1998) focused on forty eight 4- and 5-year-old Australian children applying stereotyped beliefs and expectations to television characters in commercials. Subjects were asked if a male, a female, or both would perform the task that the commercial set up.

It was revealed that subjects had strong traditional stereotyping with respect to both male and female roles. Male activities tended to have stronger stereotyped responses among the subjects but the responses were not that much higher in relation to female activities to be significant. Female subjects tended to have strong male activity stereotypes. Male subjects did not totally label female activities strictly for females.

This study (Miller & Budd, 1999) examined the views of 594 children from three age-groups, 8-, 12-, and 16-years old, on which sex should perform certain occupations and then asked how much they themselves would like to have that occupation.

The younger the age group the more stereotyped the responses were for which sex should perform certain occupations. However, when the data is inspected at a closer range it is evident that this decrease of stereotyping with age increase is due largely in part to the female subjects. Male subjects remained at about the same level of stereotyping even as age increased. Females, however, did not. As age increased, female subjects decreased in levels of stereotyping with more choices switching from either 'male' or 'female' to 'both male and female', thus reducing overall stereotyped levels.
This final study (Bonett, 1994) for this group asked 214 subjects in college to rate their ability to perform nine traditionally male and nine traditionally female occupations using a Likert-type scale.

Males rated themselves more capable of performing their own male-dominated occupations, and females did the same for themselves. This resulted in significance for gender difference. Marital status was also examined and was found to be not significant. Reasons for these results were given that females feel they are not able to actually do male occupations leading them to feel they are more capable at their own gender occupations. Males feel that female occupations will not benefit them emotionally, make them happy, or be rewarding enough, therefore leading them to choose their own gender occupations.

ATTRIBUTES OF MALES AND FEMALES

This first study (Ignico, 1998) for this group was done to develop an instrument to measure the extent that people label physical activities according to gender. 270 subjects rated forty-five physical activities according to the extent they possessed certain physical activity characteristics.

There were fourteen characteristics used of which nine were male-oriented and five were female-oriented. Subjects were parents, teachers, and students (4-7 years of age). The forty-five physical activities were divided into three equal categories of fifteen each for male, female, and neutral.

There appeared to be strong stereotyping for each occupation, in that most subjects linked together the male characteristics with the male physical activities, the
female characteristics with the female activities, and a combination of male and female characteristics with the neutral activities.

This following study (Govier & Feldman, 1999) set out to show that occupational choice was a function of abilities and interests and therefore followed characteristic types of brain organization. The study sought to test the link between occupation and cognition by investigating the patterns of spatial and verbal abilities in males and females in both male-dominated and female-dominated occupations.

1,125 subjects ranging from under 20 to 60 years of age participated in this study. Two tests were used. The first was a synonym generation task based on Hines (1990), which consisted of six stimulus words that had at least twenty-five synonyms listed in the Reader’s Digest Wordfinder (1993). The second test was a spatial test based on the type of stimuli used by Uecker & Obrzut (1993).

Results show that males and females in female-dominated occupations outperformed their counterparts in male-dominated occupations in verbal tasks, whereas males and females in male-dominated occupations outperformed their counterparts in female-dominated occupations in spatial tasks. These results suggest that male-dominated occupations utilize spatial task abilities, and female-dominated occupations utilize verbal tasks. Males also outperformed females in spatial tasks and females outperformed males in verbal tasks. All of these measures proved to be significant.

The next study (Yoder & Schleicher, 1996) focused on 230 undergraduate students writing open-ended stories and rating a stimulus person, Anne or John, who was described as the top of his or her class in one of five male- or female-dominated fields. The fields were medicine, nursing, day care, electrical engineering, or electrician.
When males and females wrote stories where Anne or John was presented in an occupation that was viewed as gender appropriate the stories written were only positive. The interesting material came from when males and females wrote stories where Anne or John was presented in an occupation that deviated from gender-appropriateness. John received almost the same positive attitude from subjects in stories where he had one of the female-stereotyped occupations, either child-care or nursing. The stories related John to being expressive and feminine. These were seen as being attractive traits to females and thus, a positive one for John, and for men in general. When females were presented in one of the three occupations that deviated from female-appropriateness, they were seen in a negative light. Males saw this as being negative for Anne and for women in general, and said that they would not want to date or marry women who succeeded in the male-dominated occupations. The fact that this study incorporated undergraduates into the study did not limit the results but in fact enhanced them, since they are the population about to enter the job market and their opinions would best express the current viewpoint being studied.

This study (Green & Ashmore, 1998) presented 67 college students (46 female, 21 male) with the question, “What does the stereotypical <blank> look like?” In the blank went one of eight major gender types, half of which were male and half of which were female. The eight types were ‘housewife’, ‘whore’, ‘career woman’, ‘feminist’, ‘business executive’, ‘ladies’ man’, ‘homosexual’, and ‘nerd.’ Subjects recalled images in their minds to describe these gender types. From the subjects’ answers the authors investigated the matching physical stereotypes brought about by mental images from the subjects of the eight major gender types.
In a clear-cut example of gender-role stereotyping, a majority of participants listed attributes that were stereotypical for each type. A major portion of subjects imagined mental pictures that utilized gender-role stereotypes, clearly demonstrating a shared stereotypical image for each of the eight types.

This study (Cejka & Eagly, 1999) examined the role of gender stereotypes in employment. It attempted to look at the extent to which people believed that success in occupations dominated by one sex were successful because of those characteristics that are unique to that particular sex. Such beliefs would have promoted the segregation of sexes in the workforce and therefore promoted stereotyping.

The subjects in this study consisted of 189 (81 male, 108 female) introductory psychology students who filled out a questionnaire on perceptions of occupations. These subjects rated occupations on gender-stereotyped attributes, and then also rated the typical male and female on the same attributes. The occupations that were used fell between extremely male dominant to extremely female dominant.

It was believed that success in male-dominated occupations was linked to having attributes associated with males, such as being competitive, dominant, and aggressive. It was also believed that success in female-dominated occupations was linked to having attributes associated with females, such as being gentle, kind, cooperative, and supportive. The linking of male- and female-dominated occupations to attributes of their gender lent a defensive standpoint to gender stereotyping in occupations.

This final study (Browne, 1998) in this group researched the questions of stereotyping in commercials on children. She stated that commercials have been forever
stalled in presenting males and females in a stereotypical way and, contrary to anyone’s beliefs, they are not changing anytime soon.

Traits and behaviors of these commercials were rated on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 7, low to high respectively. A sample of traits and behaviors used were aggression, loudness, shyness, snuggling, nurturing behavior, and dominance.

The results that were found yielded nothing different from previous research. Commercials were still dominated by male actors, rather than female. Elementary school children percentages were 43% female and 57% male. Teenagers yielded even more significant results at 29% female and 71% males. Finally, adults yielded results much like teenagers at 38% female and 62% male. Voice-overs were also mostly male. More than 64%, or 189 commercials, used males for the voice-overs. Topic of commercials did not even play a factor in the sex of the voice-over speaker. Keeping along these lines, males were more often the actors to demonstrate or explain the product at 61%. And finally, the most significant result was that 79% of the roles witnessed in the commercials were typically male tradition roles, such as sports, professional, and worker. Males appeared in greater numbers, assumed more roles, were more active and physical, and engaged in dominant behavior. Females demonstrated more shyness, giggling, head and eye aversion, face covering, and unlikely to assert control.

IS CHANGING STEREOTYPED PERCEPTIONS POSSIBLE

This study (Kahn & Richardson, 1983) was done to find out if subjects who participated in a ‘Sex Roles’ class would elicit different or changed attitudes about some stereotypical questions.
The class on sex roles was given to subjects in tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades in three high schools in British Columbia, Canada. There were 69 subjects in the experimental group and 59 subjects in the control group. The experimental classes were predominantly female whereas the control classes were equally male and female. There were three classes of each type. Each class was given a battery of pre- and post-tests to measure the students' self-reported sex-role attributes and to determine the students' attitudes, either liberal or traditional. Tests included the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1974) and the short form of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS; Spence and Helmreich, 1972).

Pre-test scores had shown no significant difference between any groups. Post-test scores had shown that there was a significant difference between the experimental groups and the control groups for schools 1 and 2 but not for school 3. The experimental groups for schools 1 and 2 exhibited a more androgynous attitude towards males and females than the control groups. The reverse was true for school 3 where both groups exhibited stereotypical attitudes and the experimental group actually exhibited more stereotypical attitudes than the control group. Of importance is that in school 3, the experimental group, was naturally assembled. In the other two schools students electing to take the course formed the experimental groups.

The other study (Bailey & Nihlen, 1990) in this group exposed Hispanic and Anglo-American subjects between the ages of 6 and 11 to twenty people each representing a non-traditional occupation. Pre- and post-test scores were evaluated to see if this exposure to persons representing non-traditional occupations reduced stereotyped thoughts about who could perform certain occupations.
Subjects first took the BAN Gender Stick Figure Test (Bailey & Nihlen, 1983) to assess their perceptions of what occupations each gender could hold. They rated thirty occupations this way. Next, the subjects were asked to rank in order the top three choices they would choose for occupations from the thirty occupations they previously rated. The thirty occupations were divided into three classes of male only, neutral, and female only. Finally, the subjects were exposed to twenty non-traditional workers during school hours over an eight-month period. Examples of workers included female firefighters and male nurses. After eight months passed subjects were asked to perform post-tests on the BAN Gender Stick Figure Test and their three top choices.

Pre-test scores showed significant results across age and gender. Older subjects were less stereotypical than younger subjects in their choices, and Anglo-American subjects were less stereotypical than Hispanic subjects in their choices. Female subjects were also more inclined to be less stereotypical about which sex could perform the occupations. After the subjects were exposed to the occupations over an eight-month period they took a post-test. Post-test scores indicated no significant change in subjects’ attitudes.

PERCEPTIONS OF WOMENS’ ATTRIBUTES

This study (Davey, 1998) examined the expectations of fifty-four 15-20 year old women for family and occupational roles. Subjects completed a survey on these topics and then repeated the survey four years later if they were willing.

Subjects answered the first question using a Likert-type scale that focused on their preference for working and family values. The scale was based on the subjects answering
to ‘Leave work before first child is born’, ‘work until first child is born and go back after the child reaches a certain age’, or ‘work continuously, taking maternity leave when needed.’ Subjects also completed a second question that dealt with their preference for lifestyle where they combined two lifestyle attributes together to form their preference. One choice dealt with either having children or no children and the other dealt with being a homemaker, unmarried career person, or married career person. Together, these two choices were said to form the subject’s lifestyle preference.

The results showed that, in high school, subjects preferred to either ‘work until first child is born and go back after child reaches a certain age’ (41%) or to ‘Work continuously, taking maternity leave when needed’ (54%). Four years later results remained stable, as the percentages were 50% and 46% respectively. These results were important as they showed female’s emerging independence from male support and their ability to enter the workforce. Lifestyle preferences from forming combinations of two attributes showed that, in high school, subjects preferred to be a ‘Married career person, with children’ (78%). The next closest choice was ‘Married career person, with no children’ (9%), which was a dramatic percentage decrease. Four years later percentages remained relatively stable again. The top choice was the same (74%) as was the next closest (11%). Of importance was that the typical choice in relation to gender-role stereotypes for this type of study, ‘Homemaker, with children’ ranked at 2% in high school and 6% four years later, signifying the change in women’s preferences in the recent years.

The other study (Mueller & Yoder, 1997) in this group measured several crossing patterns of women with family size, employment, and occupation. 400 college
psychology subjects, between the ages of 18-49, rated the females' social and personality characteristics based on these crossing patterns. Family size varied between child free, one, two, or eight. Employment varied between full-time, part-time, or no job. Occupation varied between gender-appropriate or gender-inappropriate.

Attitudes about family size, employment, and occupation suggested normative views and were consistent across subjects. Family sizes of one and two children were viewed more acceptable and therefore favorable, as was the female being employed, whether it was part or full time. However, gender-appropriate occupations for females were seen as more favorable. Subjects rated women with the more favorable areas more acceptable than women with least favorable areas.

**SUMMARY**

An overwhelming majority of research that has been presented here suggests that stereotyping, in any topic, is prominent. It has been evident in occupational choice, in relating attributes to males and females, in extracurricular activities, and in sports, among many others. It has been suggested that trying to change stereotyped attitudes, whether it be with a 'Sex Roles' class or introducing gender-atypical models in occupations, is futile in that it may affect opinions mildly for short periods of time, but overall will have no definite long-term impact. In conclusion, stereotypes, whether they are in origin from nature or nurture, are strongly ingrained into the subjects that were studied and this suggests that it will remain for the time being.
CHAPTER 3

SAMPLE

The sample population was from a township located in southern New Jersey, which is a middle to upper class socioeconomic area. Subjects were school-aged students in the local elementary, middle, and high schools. Subjects were utilized from the fifth, eighth, and twelfth grades at each of these school levels. Age ranges for students in fifth grade were from 9 to 10, in eighth grade were from 12 to 13, and in twelfth grade were from 17 to 18. Both male and female students were used. The total number of subjects was 192 for fifth grade, 201 for eighth grade, and 280 for twelfth grade.

MEASURES

The device used to measure occupational choices of the subjects was a non-standardized survey. Simple in nature, it asked students their age, gender, and the occupational choice they see themselves having or would like to have as a career. An additional question is added at the end, which asked the students whom or what were the influences on their choice. This question is not structured into the research, as it is included for interest only.

The statistical abstract used for this research was the Statistical Abstract of the United States (1998). This abstract lists female and male worker percentages for occupations. The listing of occupations was used to determine which occupations were
considered to be gender role stereotyped. Occupations that had over 70% of one gender making up its workers were considered gender role stereotyped.

DESIGN

Students from fifth, eight, and twelfth grades were given the non-standardized survey on occupational choice. The survey was distributed in homeroom period to all subjects and was administered by the homeroom teacher under guidelines outlined along with the survey. Students were asked to answer the survey in a quiet environment, undisturbed by any surrounding students. No discussion was allowed before the survey was taken until after all surveys were collected in each homeroom. If students were found to discussed answers prior to completion their survey were rendered useless. Students were told to list only one occupation that they would like to do. Afterward, some teachers informed that a discussion did take place as a class after the survey was completed, although these discussions were mostly at the fifth grade level, with some extension into the eighth grade level. This discussion after the survey had no relevant positive or negative effects on the outcome or the research.

TESTABLE HYPOTHESES

Null hypothesis: Students’ occupational choices will be stereotyped towards their gender.
Alternate hypothesis: Students’ occupational choices will bear no regards to stereotyping.

Null hypothesis: Male students will be more gender role stereotyped in their occupational choices than females.
Alternate hypothesis: There will be no difference between male and female occupational choices in regards to stereotyping.
Null hypothesis: The lower the grade level, the stronger the occupational choices will be gender role stereotyped.
Alternate hypothesis: There will be no difference between grade levels in regards to stereotyping of occupational choice.

ANALYSIS

All hypotheses used a non-parametric test to analyze the data. A non-parametric form was needed since the data was not actual scores. Choices were assigned a numerical value of either 1, if the choice was gender role stereotyped, or 2, if the choice was not gender role stereotyped. Hypothesis one was descriptive. All variables were collapsed since all subjects were viewed together in their respective occupational choices. This hypothesis utilized a Binomial test, since the data attempted to look at the choices overall as being either gender role stereotyped or not, and had no independent variables. For hypothesis two the model used was the 2-Independent samples t-test. It was appropriate to utilize this test because the design for hypothesis two had two sample groups, which were male and female. It also had one independent variable, which was gender type, on two levels, which were male and female. The dependent variable for this hypothesis was occupational choice. Since the subjects received only one level of the independent variable, and not both, this hypothesis dealt with a between-subjects design. Hypothesis three utilized the K-Independent samples t-test. This was particular useful for this hypothesis because there were three sample groups used, which were fifth grade, eighth grade, and twelfth grade. There was one independent variable, which was grade level, on three levels, which were fifth, eighth, and twelfth grades. The dependent variable for this hypothesis was occupational choice. Since subjects received only one level of the
independent variable, and not all three, this hypothesis dealt with a between-subjects design.

SUMMARY

Simply stated, I am used a non-standardized survey to determine fifth, eighth, and twelfth grade students’ occupational choice for their career. I used the statistical abstract and classified all occupations that had one gender at a level of 70% or higher making up the workers as gender role stereotyped. I categorized the students’ choices into either a stereotyped or non-stereotyped choice for their particular gender. With these statistics, I had a descriptive hypothesis, which looked to see if it appears that all students overall are more stereotypical in their choices. I also had two experimental hypotheses, which looked to see if there appeared to be any significance with the independent variables, which were gender and grade level, on gender role stereotyping.
CHAPTER 4

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to see if students’ career choices were stereotypical for their gender. Students surveyed were in fifth, eighth, and twelfth grade and were asked what their choice for a career occupation would be. Occupations were considered stereotyped for females if, according to the 1998 Statistical Abstract of the United States, females occupied at least 70% of the population for a particular occupation. The same was said for males.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis looked at the choices as an overall unit and divided them only by either being stereotypical or non-stereotypical. The hypothesis was stated as ‘Students’ occupational choices will be stereotyped towards their gender.’ For this hypothesis a Binomial test was used. The total number of subjects surveyed was 673. Of this number there was a perfect split between stereotyped and non-stereotyped choices with the extra choice spilling into the stereotyped group making the final totals 337 for stereotyped choices and 336 for non-stereotyped choices. No variables played a part in this hypothesis such as gender or grade level. All independent variables were collapsed and data was looked at as either a choice that was stereotyped or non-stereotyped. Therefore, the final percentages were 50% for stereotyped choices and 50% for non-stereotyped choices (Graph 4.1). As seen in table 4.1 test proportions show a .50, or 50%,
Career choice

Graph 4-1
data split between group 1, stereotyped choices, and group 2, non-stereotyped choices. Observed proportions were equal at .50 also, being that the total number of stereotyped to non-stereotyped choices only differed by one. Based on Z approximation the significance was 1.000. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binomial Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>choice Group 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1

**Hypothesis 2**

The second hypothesis stated that ‘Male occupational choices will be more stereotypical than female occupational choices.’ For this hypothesis the Mann-Whitney Test, a 2-Independent Samples test, was used. The independent variable for this hypothesis was gender. The number of males that were surveyed was 333 and the number of females that was surveyed was 340. Of the 333 males, 230 chose occupations that were stereotyped for their gender. This came out to 69% for stereotyped choices among males. Of the 340 females, only 107 chose occupations that were stereotyped for their gender. This came out to 31% for stereotyped choices among females, considerable less than the males (Graph 4.2).
Career choices by gender

![Graph 4-2]

Key:
- Gender stereotyped choice
- Neutral choice (Non-stereotyped)
- Opposite-gender stereotyped choice
Male and female groups were assigned a rank number based on the number of stereotyped choices in each group. Table 4.2 shows that mean rank for males was slightly over 273 and for females was just under 400, an obvious difference. The sum of the rankings for male subjects was just under 91,000 and for females was just under 136,000, another obvious difference between the groups.

### Mann-Whitney Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
<th>Sum of Ranks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>273.08</td>
<td>90938.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>399.60</td>
<td>135864.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>673</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2

Table 4.3 shows that the Z score was found to be -9.746 and the significance was .000, which is a valuable significant score enabling the null hypothesis to be accepted and the alternate hypothesis to be rejected.

### Test Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>choice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mann-Whitney U</td>
<td>35325.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcoxon W</td>
<td>90936.500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Z</td>
<td>-9.746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Grouping Variable: Gender

Table 4.3
Hypothesis 3

The third and final hypothesis was that ‘The lower the grade level the more stronger the level of stereotyping of occupational choices.’ This hypothesis used the Kruskal-Wallis Test, a K-Independent Samples Test, since there were more than two levels of the independent variable. The total number of fifth grade elementary school subjects surveyed was 192. Eighth grade middle school tallied 201 subjects. And twelfth grade high school subjects totaled 280 subjects. Of the 192 eighth grade subjects, 106 chose occupations that were stereotyped for their gender which was a 55% total. In eighth grade, 47% of the subjects chose stereotyped occupations, which was 8% lower than the fifth grade subjects. Twelfth grade subjects, however, did not continue to decrease in the number of stereotyped choices as 137 subjects chose stereotyped occupations, a 49% total, which was actually higher than the eighth grade subjects (Graph 4.3).

As with hypothesis two, hypothesis three used a mean rank score for groups depending on the number of stereotyped choices in each grade level. The lower the mean rank, the more stereotyped the choices were for that particular group. Table 4.4 shows that the fifth grade elementary school class scored a mean rank of 319.72 which was the lowest mean rank of the three groups meaning that their groups’ choices were the most stereotyped. The eighth grade middle school class scored a mean rank of 348.13 which was fairly above the fifth grade class. The twelfth grade high school class scored a mean rank of 340.86 which was slightly under the eighth grade class meaning that their choices were the second most stereotyped after the fifth grade class. This meant that the eighth grade class had the least stereotyped choices.
Career choices by grade level

Graph 4-3
Kruskal-Wallis Test

Table 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>319.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>348.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>340.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>673</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5 shows the Chi-square and also the significance that was .218 meaning that the null hypothesis was easily rejected and the alternate hypothesis was accepted.

Test Statistics\(^{a,b}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>choice</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square</td>
<td>3.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>df</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asymp. Sig.</td>
<td>.218</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{a}\) Kruskal Wallis Test

\(^{b}\) Grouping Variable: Grade

Table 4.5

STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE

There is no significance for hypothesis one, which dealt with looking at all of the choices as either stereotyped or non-stereotyped and had no independent variable. For hypothesis two there was significance. This hypothesis dealt with gender as the independent variable. Hypothesis three, which dealt with grade level as the independent variable, followed hypothesis one and was not significant.
SUMMARY

With surveyed collected, data computed, and results finalized, one hypothesis has been found significant while two other hypotheses have not. For the one hypothesis that was, hypothesis two, it was shown to have a high significance. This hypothesis dealt with the gender of the subject in contrast to occupational choice. An overwhelming 69% of males chose careers that were considered stereotyped for their gender, while only 31% of females chose careers that were considered stereotyped for their gender. The total number of males that chose stereotyped careers was more than doubled that of females. For the first hypothesis, it dealt with looking at the choices overall as either stereotyped or non-stereotyped. There was no significance as the number of subjects that chose stereotyped careers was 50% and the number of subjects that chose non-stereotyped careers was also 50%. For the third hypothesis, which dealt with grade level and said that the lower the grade level the higher level of stereotyping, there was also no significance. Fifth grade subjects chose careers that were 55% stereotyped for their gender. Eighth grade subjects sank to 47%. However, twelfth grade subjects rose to 49% instead of following the hypothesized action of continuing to choose less stereotyped careers and decreasing in percentage. This led the hypothesis to not being significant.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY

This paper began with the attempt to see if students in various grade levels chose careers that were considered stereotyped for their gender. The subjects utilized in this study were from fifth, eighth, and twelfth grade, one from each different school level. Each subject was given a survey to complete which asked for their grade level, age, sex, and what occupation they want or see themselves doing in the future. Afterwards, surveys were separated by grade level and by gender to determine what results lay ahead.

Three hypotheses were given for this study to determine various avenues of stereotyping within occupational choices. The first had no independent variables as it stated that overall choices would be more stereotyped than non-stereotyped. The second hypothesis looked at gender and stated that males would be more stereotypical in their choice than females. And the third hypothesis looked at grade level and stated that the lower the grade-level the higher the level of stereotyping.

Data numbers were tallied and a test was ascribed to each hypothesis to determine the results. All three hypotheses used a non-parametric test since there were no actual test scores but, rather, a numeric value was given to each type of choice. A value of 1 was given if the choice was stereotypical and a value of 2 was given if the choice was non-stereotypical. Hypothesis one used a Binomial test to look at the overall choices. Hypothesis two used a 2-Independent samples t-test to look at the choices dependant upon the independent variable, gender. And the third hypothesis used a K-Independent
samples t-test to look at the choices dependent upon the independent variable, grade level.

The result of the Binomial test for hypothesis one was not significant, as the significance level was 1.000. The second hypothesis was significant, as the significance level was .000. And the third hypothesis was not significant, as the significance level was .218. In conclusion, hypotheses one and three were insignificant leaving only number two as significant.

CONCLUSIONS

From this research it can be seen that, when it comes to the overall selection of occupational choices, there is no relationship to gender role stereotyping. An equal amount of subjects, exactly 50%, chose careers that were stereotyped for their sex and the same percentage chose careers that were not stereotyped for their sex. People therefore do not tend to choose careers that are gender role stereotyped. The same can be said when you look at the occupational choices in relation to grade level. There is not a specific pattern evident among the grade levels in relation to gender role stereotyping of occupational choices. Twelfth grade high school subjects chose more stereotypical careers than did eighth grade middle school subjects, and, overall, there was not much difference in the percentages of stereotyped choices between each grade level. Therefore the younger subjects were not more stereotypical among choosing careers than the older subjects were. There is, however, a significant connection among the sex of a person and occupational choice in relation to gender role stereotyping. It appears that the male population, regardless of their age, was much more stereotypical than females when it
came to choosing a career. The percentage of male choices that were stereotyped was more than double that of the females’ choices. And to show just how strong male choices were in being stereotyped, seven out of every ten males chose a career that was stereotyped towards their sex. Females were only three out of every ten. This led to a highly significant difference among the sexes of the subjects.

DISCUSSION

According to Social Learning Theory people will learn what the roles are for each person in relation to what society has deemed acceptable. Therefore, when it comes to choosing a career many people will enter occupations that are considered appropriate for their sex and that fit into their gender role. The one variation that is playing its part on this theory is the women’s movement. With women entering college more now than in the past it is said that many more women are entering fields that were before unreachable. Instead of being limited to occupations that do not require college degrees, such as secretarial work and beauticians, women are now able to select which path they would like to take in college. In response to this, many occupations have created what is termed the ‘glass ceiling’, which limits a woman’s ability to rise in the corporate world. Taking these theories and perspectives into consideration this study focused on the ideas that males would be very stereotypical in their career choices, while females would stray somewhat from the stereotypes. To cover the male subjects first, they supported this idea. They were extremely stereotypical in all choices over all grade levels. They never sank lower than 60% for any grade level in stereotyped choices, and mainly stayed above 70% for two out of the three grade levels. When the males did not select stereotyped career
choices, they chose ones that were considered neutral (not having 70% of one particular sex making up the workforce). It was extremely rare when a male chose a female-stereotyped career. It occurred in only 1% of the total males, or two out of three hundred thirty-three males surveyed.

Within the females that were surveyed there can be seen a pattern of selection also, but one must look very closely and carefully to see it. And while it can’t be interpreted to strongly, it can be useful to build future research upon. With the prior theory of social learning being described and including the advances of the women’s movement, females in this study should have been highly stereotypical in career choices at the lowest grade level surveyed. There could have been some choices among the male-stereotyped occupations, although not a high percentage, and also many choices among the neutral careers. As females got older in age choices should have decreased in the female-stereotyped areas, and increased among both the neutral and male-stereotyped areas. Higher percentages should be in the neutral area, since women are feeling comfortable in choosing non-female-stereotyped careers but are aware of the glass ceiling hindering them from most male-stereotyped careers. With this being said, females in fifth grade supported this thinking by following the pattern described. 35% of the females chose female-stereotyped careers, with 41% choosing neutral careers, and 24% choosing male-stereotyped careers. Eighth grade females continued the trend described by dropping to 18% choosing female-stereotyped careers. Both neutral and male-stereotyped choices rose among eighth grade females also as also described. Neutral choices rose to 54% and male-stereotyped choices rose to 28%. The trend for the eighth grade to the twelfth grade females should have had the same pattern as from the fifth to the eighth
grade females. However, the percentage of choices for female-stereotyped careers in twelfth grade was the highest overall. It rose to 38% higher than either the fifth or the eighth grade females. Neutral choices stayed around the same at 48%. The noticeable change was among choices in male-stereotyped careers. Twelfth grade females chose only 14% of these, a severe difference among the trend.

This change could be attributed to the Social Learning theory and to society itself. High school females, being more aware and reality oriented than fifth and eighth grade females, may realize that their chances of succeeding in the male-stereotyped careers could be reduced due to several reasons, among them which include pregnancy, child-care, the glass ceiling, and more skilled/experienced males. Also, it is still uncertain how strong the ties are in society with women staying in the female-stereotyped careers. Women are not looked upon as they once were when they would enter male-stereotyped careers, but they are still not accepted as widely as they hope they would be when entering them.

The argument on the male side is more simplistic and easier. Males rarely leave the male-stereotyped careers for the female-stereotyped careers. First off, they are looked at as less accepting in the eyes of society. They pay less. They are considered less prestigious. And finally there are not many female-stereotyped careers that enable a male to support a family, a gender role of society. Many of the statistics have supported social learning theory with the one exception of the twelfth grade females. From this the subject content of social learning theory is still going strong and playing an important role in what society deems acceptable among its people.
IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

It does not appear that future research will deviate from the normal rules of social learning theory in respects to occupational career choices. However, taking into account that I expected this and had two hypotheses result with insignificance there is much that future research can take into account.

First, the crucial error in this study was that the sex of the subject was not taken into account for two of the three hypotheses. They were, with no real surprise, the two hypotheses that were not significant. The only hypothesis to have significance was when the sex of the person was also the independent variable, which again was no surprise. Looking at the grade level is very important but in addition to the grade level being the independent variable the sex should also have been another independent variable for that particular hypothesis. This would have separated the boundaries one-step further, a vital step if there can be any chance at evaluating the data correctly.

Another important addition to future research should be the addition of separating career choices into three categories rather than the two that I used, which were either gender role stereotyped or non-gender role stereotyped. The categories should be gender role stereotyped, neutral, and opposite-gender role stereotyped, which refers to a subject choosing a career that is stereotyped towards the other sex. This will clear up the cloudiness that occurs when a subject, whether male or female, leaves the boundaries of social learning theory and chooses a career acceptable only for a particular sex.

If future research takes these few, but vital, steps in the study of stereotyping among occupational choices then not only will the research be more complete, but it will
be apparent that the strength of social learning theory itself is continuing to dominate society.
REFERENCES


