

# Toy Commercials Influence Children's Sex Role Behavior

By: Janet Malin

Television toy commercials show boys and girls in stereotyped sex roles. Carol Edelman, instructor in social psychology at the University of Delaware, told a small group of students in the "Women and the Media" class here.

### "Incidental Learning"

Edelman, who has completed a study to determine if sex role behavior is influenced by television, said "incidental learning" or "learning without seeking information" takes place as a child watches television.

Some people believe sex roles are determined by biology and some believe they are learned behavior, affected by the society we live in, she said.

### Conservative Argument

Those who believe sex roles are determined by biology feel the genes control masculine and feminine behavior.

"This kind of argument is a very conservative one", she said. "It's a very good one to use if you don't want change."

She believes children learn what behavior is expected for each role while very young.

"This behavior is never really spelled out but we all seem to learn sex roles through associations with friends and through education, parents and the media".

Edelman feels boys are forced into more rigid roles than girls.

"Girls or females are given a wider latitude than boys when they are young. Society allows girls to be tomboys, but doesn't allow boys to be feminine".

### Male Role More Important

She feels this may be because children are told the male role is the more important one in society.

"The males in this society have a higher status and the male

role is the preferred one. Little girls who become tomboys would like to be boys because it is the preferred status", she said.

### Toy Classifications

In order to determine if sex roles were transmitted to children through toy commercials, Edelman classified the toys as those intended for females, such as home-centered toys, those intended for males, such as skill and occupation related toys and neutral toys such as games, designed for girls and boys to play together.

Edelman found the commercials for female toys used all female actors, those for male toys used all male actors and neutral toys used actors of both sexes.

She also found boys never played with girls toys and girls never played with boys toys in the commercials. In commercials for neutral toys, sometimes there would be all male actors, but there were never all female actors.

The background voices used in the commercials were mostly male.

Female background voices were used only for female toys. Male voices were sometimes used in female toy commercials.

### Toy Attraction

When studying toy attraction, Edelman found when both sexes were together, the boys were more active than the girls. When there was an extra actor in the commercial who was not using the toy, it was twice as likely for the actor to be a girl.

Edelman classified the toys advertised in one of six categories: adventure, fun-loving, competition, other skill and attraction.

The adventure toys featured danger, where bravery was called for. The actors were all male.

The fun-loving games were

those created for pure entertainment. Most of the actors were female.

In the competition games, there were no girls shown where skill was required. Girls only appeared where the winning was faded, by luck or by chance.

In the other category, adults showed how to use toys. The idea was to play the game to please another.

The skill toys showed how to do things which would be useful to the child in later life. The actors were mostly female and girls were shown only "female" skills.

Attraction games used all female actors and centered on applying makeup and styling hair.

### Conclusion

Edelman feels her findings are proof that advertisers try to sell toys "according to sex role stereotypes".

### P.I.R.G. Program

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### Involved Students Benefit

Ultimately, Penn P.I.R.G. will not only serve as a consumer protection group but will also directly help the students involved. For example, the students participating on the local board will become well trained in handling problems as well as in community relations. They will also aid the professionals in independent research. Students will investigate and report on local problems as well as do various studies (or papers) on topics as needed. Initially each project will require the approval of the State Board of Directors of Penn P.I.R.G. and each research team is required to keep in contact with them via periodic progress reports. The final report must meet the Boards' approval before being released to the general public. These reports, in most cases, can be used for academic credit as well.

# SPORTS

## DelCo Ice Hockey Club Defeats U. Park Intramural All-Stars

By: Joe Lanciano

For the second-straight year the Delaware County Campus ice-hockey club traveled to University Park and defeated a team composed of intra-mural all-stars, 5-3. Last year the branch campus won, 9-2.

Eleven players made the four hour, 200 mile journey to the main campus for the March 15th game.

The all-stars had eight former DelCo players in the lineup. One of them, Ed Rafter, gave the home team a quick 1-0 lead in the opening minutes of play. Defenseman Mark "Air Head"

Hendrexson tied the score for DelCo with his third goal of the season late in the first period.

In the second period, the All-Stars beat goalie Joe Miller twice and had a seemingly insurmountable 3-1 lead.

But the Lions, who finished the regular season with a 2-15-1 record, scored four unanswered goals in the final stanza to win, 5-3.

Hendrexson tallied twice while Joe Milligan, Earle Jewell, and Bob Worrell added single markers for DelCo.

## Sports Injury Data Bank Established

University Park--A unique data bank, to be crammed with more information about sports injuries than any source anywhere, has been established at The Pennsylvania State University.

And the impact of NAIRS (National Athletic Injury/Illness Reporting System) promises to be felt in athletic circles for a long time.

### Aids in Safety Decisions

"For the first time, nationally representative, meaningful information about athletic injuries and illnesses can be instantly available to persons responsible for decisions affecting athletic safety for review and analysis," says NAIRS director, Dr. Kenneth S. Clarke, head of the Dept. of Health Education. "After our project is far enough along, for example, when a rules committee is thinking about a possible safety-oriented rule change, NAIRS will have the capability for displaying the necessary data about injuries relating directly to that particular phase of the game."

Until now, Dr. Clarke points out, information about sports injuries has been far from relevant to decision making and has been limited by design costs to episodic regional studies which often are obsolete by the time they get reported.

### Not Limited to Football

"I want to emphasize that we are by no means limiting our system to football. We are collecting data on various men's and women's sports on a voluntary basis."

The data collecting began last Fall after an interorganizational advisory committee reviewed and approved the concept at a meeting funded by the NCAA. Data from nearly 40 football teams, including most teams from the Big Ten and Pacific Eight Conferences, plus high school teams from Pennsylvania, Texas, and Arizona are already in hand awaiting analysis. The Schutt grant inaugurates the computerization phase. Further funds are anticipated to train key athletic trainers throughout the country as "cluster coordinators." NAIRS coordinator, Sayers Miller, is the former head trainer at the University of Washington. According to Dr. Clarke, NAIRS will be ready to issue periodic detailed reports by the 1975-76 school year.

### Trainer's Cooperate

"NAIRS is designed around

athletic trainers and epidemiological principles to obtain comprehensive nationally representative information immediately," says Dr. Clarke, with emphasis on the "Immediately".

"The cooperation and encouragement of the National Athletic Trainers Assoc., the ones who do the hard work like filling our forms very conscientiously, is most gratifying. Without their support, we could not use this system. Sports injury patterns vary considerably between teams and certain detail is necessary to look for common causative factors. These details can only be observable via a nationally uniform system that asks the right questions and can render up to date answers. Further, this system must operate inexpensively to enable continuous use."

### How it Works

Here's a situation in which NAIRS might be used:

During the football season, injury and illness reports on NAIRS forms come in weekly from around the country. At season's end, the NCAA football rules committee meets to review a recent rule change prohibiting below-the-waist blocking on kicking plays. The committee wants to know if knee injuries have been reduced and if head and neck injuries have been increased due to this rule. NAIRS could deliver, within a day, an analysis of the number and type of injuries suffered on plays affected by this rule, the severity of these injuries, the position and activity of the players hurt, the player's playing experience, the nature and condition of the playing surfaces, the shoes worn by the players, etc. Further information could include the results as compared to previous seasons.

Other people who will use this data include individual teams who want to see at mid-season if their injury experience to date is the same as the average of all teams contributing data. And equipment manufacturers will learn if their products are associated more with non-injured or injured athletes.

"We are especially encouraged by the response from the equipment manufacturers," says Dr. Clarke. "For this pilot year, the National Sporting Goods Association printed our forms at no charge and we have a recent grant from Schutt Manufacturing Company to prepare the computer for our system."

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- ... Hawaii?
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