

Promotion of Gender Roles Before Adolescence

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Jennifer Scanlon analyzes four popular board games for preteen girls in her essay, "Boys-R-Us: Board Games and the Socialization of Young Adolescent Girls." She describes the attributes of each game in great detail and concludes, "these sex-stereotyped games promote damaging stereotypes, passive rather than active play, and skills that fall short of girls' cognitive abilities" (480). The characters in each of the games are portrayed in limited [gender](#)-specific roles and promote male, race, wealth, and heterosexual privilege in our society. Based on the fact that the objective in the majority of these games is to get a boyfriend, Scanlon suggests that young girls are being taught subservience to men and forming a personal identity based on relationships with men. She concludes by stating, "these board games...frame a world of limited possibilities for girls" (480).

I agree with most of Scanlon's arguments in her essay about the dangers of gender-specific games during the formative years of female [adolescence](#). Games such as these seem innocent to parents and even cool to their intended audience. But the messages that sex-stereotyped games are sending can be damaging to the self and gender-perception of adolescent girls. Gender specific stereotypes can become rooted in a maturing, young

girl's mind and have a negative affect on her sense of self worth and personal abilities. The portion of Scanlon's essay that I disagree with is the statement, "the least gender-specific toys and games in the stores are, arguably, those in the baby and toddler section" (472). My theory is that children are taught appropriate gender role behaviors through play long bef...

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...y. And if we start this process at such a young age, we will have molded our children into stereotypical citizens very well by the time they are adolescents. The board games that Jennifer Scanlon writes about will only serve to reinforce the gender perceptions children have already learned. In order to raise caring men and assertive women the practice of labeling toys for gender-specific play needs to stop. But as long as babies are wearing their pink or blue booties, that day will probably never come.

Works Cited

Scanlon, Jennifer. Boys-R-Us: Board Games and the Socialization of Young Adolescent Girls. Signs of Life in the USA: Readings on Popular Culture for Writers. Maasik, Sonia, and Jack Solomon. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000. 472-480.

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