

Gender Stereotypes and Adult Expectations for Infants:

A Content Analysis of Birth Congratulations Cards

Purpose: This is a partial replication of a study conducted by Judith Bridges (1993). It is designed to examine gender stereotypes of infants as represented in greeting cards.

Instructions: Research has consistently shown that gender socialization begins in infancy. Adults' expectations about gender-typed interests, attributes, and attitudes as well as gender-role stereotypes may be communicated in many ways.

For this project you will need to visit a store that sells congratulations cards for parents of newborns. Try to identify a location that carries a large selection of cards (for example, a well-stocked grocery store, a specialty card store in a mall, or a discount department store). Aim for a location that serves a diverse group of shoppers. Try to locate at least 20 cards.

Decide whether each card is to be sent to the parents of a boy or a girl. Using the data sheet on the following page, analyze the color, layout, and text of the cards according to the coding system outlined below. Indicate the number of cards for girls and boys that can be represented by each category.

Color of Card: Code the predominant color of the card. If you were to characterize the card by choosing one color, what would it be?

Images of Toys: What is on the cover of the card? If toys are depicted on the cover, code the type of toy. Code as sports equipment toys such as balls and bats. Action toys include pull toys, vehicles, shovels, etc. Infant toys include things that are specific to newborns such as rattles, pacifiers, and bottles.

Clothing decorations: Assess whether the cover of the card include images of decorate clothing items that are characterized by such things as ribbons, bows, lace (i.e. frilliness), or hearts. Also indicate whether clothing is decorated with more functional patterns such as geometric patterns, stripes or plaids.

Description of infant's attributes: Read the text of the card. If it refers to the infant as sweet, precious, or cute, code these variables.

After collecting your data, summarize your results in your paper by responding to the questions that follow.

1. Bridges concluded that she identified a significant difference in stereotypes of infants. Boys' cards were more likely to be blue and depict physical activity and functional clothing. Girls' cards were more likely to be pink, depict frilly clothing, and refer to the infant's feminine personality attributes. Compare and contrast your results with these findings.
2. Consider the research in your text and other readings about the role that stereotypes play in socialization infants and children to gender roles. What beliefs are communicated in these cards?

Congratulations Card Coding Sheet

	Girls	Boys
Color		
Pink		
Blue		
Mixed/Other		
Images of Toys		
Stuffed Animal		
Sports Equipment		
Action Toy		
Infant Toy		
Clothing Decorations		
Frilliness		
Flowers		
Hearts		
Plaids/Stripes		
Geometric Shapes		
Description of infants' attributes		
Sweet		
Precious		
Cute		
Other		