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JASON DUNNINGTON

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BY

Dr. Ann Beutel, chair

Dr. Craig St. John

Dr. Susan Sharp

Dr. Trina Hope

Dr. David Moxley

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Abstract

Little research has been done on religious gender socialization, that is, gender socialization that is unique to a religious organization. This study used content analysis of Sunday school curricula, non-participant observation of Sunday school classes for preschool aged children, and in-depth interviews with children's pastors to examine religious gender socialization at one Southern Baptist Church and one United Methodist Church. This study identified gender socialization that was unique to religious organizations. It also identified gender socialization that was not unique to religious organizations (e.g., socialization processes that likely occur at preschools or daycares too). The findings indicate that techniques used to facilitate religious gender socialization were less affected by what curriculum a church selected than by the way the curriculum was taught (i.e., followed closely or disregarded altogether). The findings also indicate how significant structure and organization are to religious gender socialization. Finally, the findings from this study indicate that Cornerstone Southern Baptist teaches traditional gender roles while Life United Methodist teaches some traditional gender roles and some progressive and gender neutral roles.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Children learn at a very early age what it means to be a boy or a girl in our society. More specifically, as children grow up they are exposed to gender specific behaviors that they adopt and recreate. Through activities, opportunities, encouragements, discouragements, overt behaviors, and covert suggestions, children experience gender socialization (Witt 1997). In this project I studied the gender socialization of young children; however, I examined an agent of gender socialization that has been largely ignored in previous studies.

Research on the gender socialization of young children in religious settings is limited. This project examined the extent to which gender socialization takes place within religious organizations – that is, gender socialization that is unique to a religious setting as opposed to other settings. In this way, this research departs from previous work on gender socialization, which usually focuses on such agents of gender socialization as the family, schools, and the media. Concentrating on religious gender socialization will therefore add to our understanding of gender socialization.

Specifically, this project aimed to better understand the extent to which, if at all, gender socialization takes place at Sunday School programs in Protestant churches. Through non-participant observation, content analysis of Sunday school curriculum, and face-to-face interviews, I explored whether

and how church is an agent of preschool children's gender socialization. The specific objectives of this project were to:

- 1) Identify gender socialization that is unique to religious organizations.
- 2) Uncover the various techniques used to facilitate any religious gender socialization at a Southern Baptist Church and a United Methodist Church.
- 3) Determine if and what might be variations in religious gender socialization between the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist denominations.

The outline of this dissertation is as follows: in Chapter Two I present the theoretical framework, that is, the theoretical perspectives potentially important to this research, which include Bandura's social learning theory, social development theory, and situated learning theory. Chapter Three discusses how religion, particularly Christianity, perpetuates traditional gender roles and gender inequality in the church and society at large. Chapter Four provides a brief history of Christianity, Sunday schools, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the United Methodist denomination. Chapter Five describes the research sites, the research design and the methods used in the study. Chapter Six outlines the major themes and patterns found from conducting a content analysis of the Sunday school

curricula used by the churches in this study. Chapter Seven outlines the major themes and patterns found from the non-participant observation of Sunday school classrooms for preschool aged children at one Southern Baptist church and one United Methodist church. Finally, Chapter Eight gives a summary of the study findings, a discussion of theoretical implications and some of the difficulties experienced in conducting the study, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2: Gender Socialization

Theories of Gender Socialization

Long before children learn about the nature of religious groups, occupations, or school they learn about what it is to be a boy or a girl in their social environment. From the moment they are born, gender expectations influence the way boys and girls are treated. Parents and grandparents might, for example, select blue clothing and trucks for boys and pink clothing and dolls for girls. Based upon this early gendering, and the ways parents and others reinforce gender stereotypes throughout childhood, children learn early on that there are two distinct gender groups in society, male and female. This understanding of gender helps children develop a gender identity and behave in ways considered appropriate for their gender. In addition, the stereotypical gender conceptions that people may adopt may have lasting effects on how they perceive and process social information and how they use their learned capabilities (Bandura 1986; Bem 1981; Betz and Hackett 1981; Spence and Helmreich 1980).

Because of the nature-nurture controversy, scholars have found it increasingly important to distinguish those aspects of males and females that can be attributed to biology and those that can be attributed to social influences (Beal 1994). The term "sex" denotes the actual physical makeup of individuals that locate them as male or female. A person's sex is determined by genetic makeup, internal reproductive organs, the organization of the

brain (such as in the control of hormone production), and external genitalia. Alternatively, the behavior of individuals (i.e., masculine and feminine behavior), and the types of roles they assume are a part of “gender”. A person's gender can be expressed through things such as clothing, behavior, choice of profession, and behavior in personal relationships. For example, in American society, females are expected to be nurturing and are generally thought to be better equipped to care for children while males are expected to be aggressive and to make decisions. By distinguishing biological sex from gender it is easier to show that behavior associated with gender is socially learned.

Since this project consists of looking at the ways gender socialization (i.e., the process by which one learns gender-related behaviors) takes place in Sunday school classrooms, I believe that a review of social learning theory, social development theory, and situated learning theory will be useful.

Social Learning Theory

One theory used to explain how children develop gender specific attitudes and behaviors is social learning theory. Social learning theory is especially useful in this study because of its focus on early childhood gender socialization. West and Zimmerman (1987), known for their definition of “doing gender,” believe social learning plays a strategic part in the way children are taught gender. Social learning theory focuses on how learning

takes place within a social context. Context is important to this study on how gender is learned at Sunday schools.

Social learning theory deals with social and socially determined behavior involving stimuli provided by people (Gewitz 1969). One of the most important principles of this theory is that behavior is shaped by how a person is rewarded or punished for a particular behavior (Mischel 1966). This means that depending upon what reward (positive reinforcement) or punishment (negative reinforcement) a person received for imitating a particular behavior, he or she may or may not repeat that specific behavior. For example, if a young girl is praised as being a good helper for picking up crayons after her class finished coloring, she will likely find other ways to become a helper to continue receiving positive reinforcement.

Modeling supported by reinforcement is paramount to social learning theory (Mischel 1966; Bandura 1977). According to Bandura, modeling is one of the most pervasive and powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought behavior (Bandura 1986; Rosenthal and Zimmerman 1978). Modeling is not just a practice of response mimicry as commonly believed. That is, modeling as defined by Bandura is much more complex than merely rote copying of a person's behavior and actions. In watching models, the rules and structures of behavior (e.g., norms) are made tangible to the observer, which is essential for reproducing behavior. Once observers

extract the rules and structure underlying the modeled activities they can produce patterns of behavior that obey the rules and structural properties they have seen or heard (Bandura 1986).

Bandura (1986) believes that learning from models may take varied forms, including new behavior patterns, judgmental standards, cognitive skills, and rules for creating new types of behavior. Through such learning experiences, people acquire attitudes, values, and even emotional dispositions toward persons, places, and things (Bandura 1977). In sum, Bandura (1986) believes that modeling influences can serve as instructors, motivators, inhibitors, disinhibitors, and emotion arousers to the acquisition of behaviors as well as such things as norms, values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Bandura's social learning theory is governed by four component processes within the observer that are influenced by exposure to modeled behavior: 1) attentional processes, 2) retention processes, 3) production processes, and 4) motivation processes. Bandura's four-component conceptual scheme is paramount to the framework of his social learning theory.

Attentional Processes. The first component is attention. Attentional processes determine what is selectively observed in the abundance of modeled activities and what information is obtained from continuing modeled events. Models (i.e., parents, teachers, other related adults) can

embody activities considered appropriate for the two sexes. Thus, children can learn things such as gender stereotypes from observing the degree of difference in the behaviors and actions of male and female models. However, to be effective the observers must perceive the modeled behavior accurately enough to acquire the information necessary to initiate the model's behavior (Schultz and Schultz 1998). But, given comparable access, both boys and girls learn male and female stereotypes from observing models (Bussey and Bandura 1986). Bandura (1986) also makes it clear that people with whom a subject regularly associates, such as a parent, demarcate the behavior patterns that will be repeatedly observed. Therefore, persons with whom a subject interacts on a regular basis are the one whose behaviors the subject will learn most thoroughly.

Retention Processes. The second component of Bandura's observational learning theory is retention. If an individual is to be influenced by observed behaviors, he or she needs to retain information linked to the activities that were modeled. According to Bandura (1977), humans store the behaviors they observe in the form of mental images (symbols) or verbal descriptions, and are then able to recall the image or description later to reproduce the activity in their own behavior. Bandura believes that individuals store what they observe in the form of symbols because the full content of the modeled activities subjects are exposed to is far too much

information for them to retain (Bandura 1986). He goes on to theorize that after a given behavior pattern has been repeatedly performed, it eventually becomes so routinized that it can be acted out smoothly and automatically without requiring symbolic guidance.

Production Processes. The third component, reproduction processes, involves converting mental images (i.e., symbolic representations) into evident behavior. This is accomplished through a concept matching process where thoughts guide the construction and implementation of behavior and the adequacy of the behavior is judged through one's own responses in accordance with the modeled pattern (Bandura 1986). However, this practice of modeling can only occur through rehearsal. As Bandura (1986) discusses, even though we may have attended to, retained, and rehearsed symbolic representations of a model's behavior, we still may not be able to perform the behavior correctly.

Motivation Processes. The final component is motivation. Bandura (1986) distinguishes between acquisition and performance because people do not perform everything they learn. As an example, Bandura states that boys learn a lot about the homemaking role through repeated maternal modeling but rarely adopt such activities in their everyday life. To imitate a behavior, the person must have some motivation or incentive for doing so. Bandura defines incentives as what the subjects observing the behavior expect to

obtain once they perform the behavior (Bandura 1986). Bandura thought that when incentives are available observation is more quickly translated into action (Bandura 1986). Additionally, children are motivated by the success of others who are similar to themselves, and are discouraged from pursuing courses of behavior they have seen result in negative consequences or responses.

Complementary Theories to Social Learning Theory

The theories of Vygotsky (1978) and Lave (1988) also emphasize the role social learning plays in children's development. Social development theory is the work of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a primary role in the development of cognition. In contrast to Jean Piaget's understanding of childhood development (Piaget felt development necessarily precedes learning), Vygotsky (1978) felt social learning precedes development stating:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals (p. 57).

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is that the potential for cognitive development depends upon what he called the "zone of proximal development" (ZPD). The ZPD is a level of development attained when

children engage in social behavior. According to Vygotsky (1978), full development of the ZPD depends upon full social interaction. Thus, the range of any particular “skill” that can be developed with adult guidance or peer cooperation would exceed what can be attained alone. Vygotsky's social development theory is an attempt to explain awareness as the end product of socialization. For example, when a child is learning to speak, his or her first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication but once mastered they become internalized and allow "inner speech" (Crawford 1996).

Another theory complementary to Bandura’s (1977) social learning theory is Jean Lave’s (1988) situated learning theory. Lave argues that learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs (i.e., it is situated). Social interaction is then a critical component of situated learning because learners become involved in what Lave (1988) terms a "community of practice" which embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired. More specifically, as a new learner or outsider moves from the periphery of this “new community” to its center, the learner becomes more active and engaged within the culture and eventually assumes the role of an “expert” along with those previously engaged in the community.

In sum, children learn values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behavior through observing and interacting with others in various social settings. Bandura (1977) provides the framework for this assertion by insisting the highest level of observational learning is achieved by repeated exposure to modeled behavior. Bandura also claims the actions of models can serve as social prompts for previously learned behavior. In addition, the process of observational learning is augmented by positive or negative reinforcement, which results in a person's greater retention abilities. Vygotsky's (1978) theory adds the notion that full cognitive development requires social interaction. That is, subjects only fully develop their reasoning processes by interacting with others. Finally, Lave (1988) adds that knowledge requires social interaction and collaboration.

Criticisms of social learning theory suggest there is a better way to organize information on the basis of gender categories. For example, critics imply the theory does not incorporate the role of the children's understanding of the gendered world around them enough (Stockard 1999; Maccoby 1992), or stated another way, adults receive too much credit for the outcome of children's gendered behaviors. While social learning theory incorporates an understanding of the active role of the child and the importance of cognitive processing, it has been critiqued for not identifying gendered behaviors at very early stages in a child's life (Martin 1993; Stockard

and Johnson 1992). In response to these criticisms, a more recent approach calls for the use of gender schemas. Theorists using this approach (Martin 1993; Martin and Halvorson 1987) suggest that children develop increasingly elaborate gender schemas as they expand their gender identity and their understanding of gender roles. Thus, gender schemas are both complex and multidimensional. Because the data collected for this study do not lend themselves to examining the gender schema approach and because social learning theory has been shown to be adequate in understanding how children learn and recreate gendered behaviors (Fagot 1994; Lave and Wenger 1990; Bandura 1986; Vygotsky 1978; Bandura 1977; DiRenzo 1977; Rotter 1972; Mischel 1970; Doland and Adelberg 1967), a social learning approach appears more relevant to this research.

Learning Gender

The social learning paradigm, including social development and situated learning, assumes that attributes such as gender stereotypes, gendered behavior, and gendered norms in children are learned by the same kinds of mechanisms that apply to all types of social behavior. Gendered behaviors and characteristics are therefore transmitted to the child through operant conditioning (i.e., reinforcements) and observational learning (i.e., modeling), key components of social learning theory (Albert and Porter 1988).

Children internalize messages regarding gender (e.g. behaviors and stereotypes) at a very early age, with children as young as two years old

aware of gender differences in adults (Weinraub et al. 1984). Studies have found that children age two and a half use gender stereotypes in negotiating their world and that children most likely generalize these gender stereotypes to a variety of activities, objects, and occupations (Fagot, Leinbach, and O'Boyle 1992; Cowan and Hoffman 1986). On the whole, gender role stereotypes and gender norms are well established by early childhood. As a result, even when children are exposed to different attitudes and experiences, they may revert to stereotyped choices (Haslett, Geis, and Carter 1992). Consequently, it appears difficult for a child to progress to adulthood without internalizing and using some form of gender role expectations. However, some studies have shown that the ability to think flexibly about gender roles may increase or decrease during middle childhood and adolescence (Levy 1989).

Agents of Gender Socialization

Every society contains key agents of socialization, including gender socialization. Families, especially parents, are often seen as a primary source of gender socialization (Risman 1998). From an early age, parent-child interactions, parental role modeling, and parental reinforcement of behaviors teach children gender and gender norms (Santrock 1994). Parents also send subtle messages regarding gender and what is acceptable for male and female children. The gendered messages sent by parents are then internalized and subsequently used by the child (Arliss 1991). As children grow older,

friendships with peers and school reinforce many of the ideas and beliefs regarding gender that were learned at home. A further reinforcement of appropriate gendered behaviors comes from the media, in particular, television and books. As individuals develop into adolescents and adults, gender stereotypes and gender roles may become firmly established beliefs and thus remain a part of the individual. The next section will discuss these agents of early childhood gender socialization in more detail.

Parents. While some studies suggest that parents have little impact on a child's gender role development (Lytton and Romney 1991; Maccoby and Jacklin 1980) other research suggests that parents are the primary influence on gender role development during the early years of life (e.g., Santrock 1994; Berryman-Fink, Ballard-Reisch, and Newman 1993; Kaplan 1991). The latter group of studies claim that a child's initial understanding of what it means to be male or female comes primarily from his or her parents (Lauer and Lauer 1994; Santrock 1994; Kaplan 1991). From the time children are babies, parents may treat boys and girls differently, dressing infants in gender-specific colors, and generally expecting different behavior from boys and girls (Maccoby 1992; Hargreaves and Colley 1986; Snow, Jacklin, and Maccoby 1983; Power 1981; Maccoby and Jacklin 1980). Rubin, Provenzano, and Luria (1974) found that parents have differing expectations of sons and daughters as early as 24 hours after birth. Parents in their study described their boys as strong, big,

active, and alert, while they described their girls as small, soft, fine-featured, and inattentive even though the baby girls were matched to the boys on size, weight, and activity level.

Parents encourage their sons and daughters to play with gender-typed toys and to participate in gender-typed activities, such as doll playing and engaging in housekeeping activities for girls and playing with trucks or engaging in sports activities for boys (Eccles, Jacobs, and Harold 1990). A child's toy preference has been found to be significantly related to parental gender socialization practices (Etaugh and Liss 1992; Henshaw, Kelly, and Gratton 1992; Peretti and Sydney 1984). Since it is the parents who select and purchase toys early in their child's life, it is argued that parental toy choice determines the child's toy preference. Therefore, parents' selection and purchase of "gender appropriate" toys is a means of passing "appropriate" gender roles on to children (Peretti and Sydney 1984). Given this body of research, it is not surprising that a study of children's rooms has shown that little girls' rooms have more pink, dolls, and domestic-oriented toys such as kitchen replicas, toy vacuum cleaners, and tea sets whereas little boys' rooms have more blue, sports equipment, tools, and vehicles (Pomerleau et al. 1990).

Interestingly, a recent study by Kane (2006) finds parents are more open to boys playing with domestic items like baby dolls and toy kitchen sets now than in the past. However, Kane's study found certain toys such as

Barbie dolls were still seen as off limits to boys. This research suggests that parents are more relaxed about their children's choice of toys than they used to be but still intervene when it comes to certain toys for boys.

Parents also gender socialize children through the household tasks they assign to boys versus girls. Past research indicates boys are more likely to have maintenance chores around the house, such as painting, washing the car, or mowing the lawn, while girls are likely to have domestic chores such as cooking, washing dishes, or doing the laundry (Basow 1992; Etaugh and Liss 1992). In this way parents may influence children's career aspirations. In a study done by Etaugh and Liss (1992), girls and boys who were assigned traditionally masculine chores were more likely to have masculine career aspirations, whereas those girls who were given feminine chores had traditionally feminine occupational preferences. Thus, the assignment of household tasks by gender may lead children to link certain types of paid work with gender.

Schools. In addition to parents, schools are powerful sites for the early construction and reinforcement of gender appropriate behavior (Martin 1998; Adler, Kless, and Adler 1992). According to Marshall (1997):

The socialization of gender is reinforced at school because classrooms are microcosms of society, mirroring society's strengths and ills alike, it follows that the normal socialization patterns of young children that often lead to distorted perceptions of gender roles are reflected in the classrooms (p. 24).

Teachers are one way schools gender socialize children. Teachers not only tend to give more negative sanctions to boys for misbehaving than to girls, but also provide boys with more praise, response opportunities, and work-related contacts (e.g., Marshall 1997; Sadker and Sadker 1994; Etaugh and Liss 1992). The reinforcement from teachers teaches boys to take more initiative in classroom settings and provides them with more opportunities for adult interaction, peer recognition, and leadership opportunities than girls.

Research on teacher expectations done by Sadker and Sadker (1994) found four types of teacher responses to students: 1) teacher praise which includes providing positive feedback for a response, 2) teacher remediation which includes encouraging a student to correct or expand his or her answer, 3) teacher criticism which includes explicitly stating that the answer is incorrect, and 4) teacher acceptance which includes acknowledging that a student has responded to a verbal request. The Sadkers (1994) found boys were far more likely to receive praise or remediation from a teacher than were girls. Girls, on the other hand, were most likely to receive an acknowledgement response from their teacher. These findings corroborate a 1990 study by Good and Brophy (cited in Marshall and Reihartz 1997) that found teachers give boys greater opportunity to expand ideas and be animated than they do girls and that teachers reinforce boys' general

responses to questions more than they do for girls (Good and Brophy 1990 cited in Marshall and Reihartz 1997).

Additionally, research by Martin (1998) found that children's bodies are gendered in preschool. In a study of preschool classrooms at both a religious school and a non-religious school, Martin revealed how children's bodies become gendered through a variety of practices. Examples in Martin's study (1998) were such things as: the clothes and other adornments parents send their children to school wearing, children playing "dress-up" at school using available props, formal and relaxed behaviors (e.g., raising your hand, sitting on "your bottom", no running around, sorting themselves into activities in class), controlling one's voice, physical interactions between students and teachers, and physical interactions among children. Martin's (1998) research demonstrates the many ways gendering practices in preschools facilitate children's acquisition of gendered behaviors. This research calls attention to the subtle ways preschool children become gendered and the role institutions such as preschools have in this process. Martin adds that families, formal schooling, and other institutions (e.g., churches, hospitals, and workplaces) also gender children's bodies.

Children also learn about gender, both directly and indirectly, through instructional material at school (Baslow 1992). Texts that omit the contributions of women decrease the value of women's experiences and

stereotype gender roles. This type of gender bias is part of the “hidden curriculum” taught in school (Baslow 1992). Until the second wave of the Women’s Movement in the early 1970’s, the curriculum used in the education system in the United States was a strong socializing agent for continued male dominance in society. The second wave of the Women’s Movement challenged this gender curriculum. New laws banned unequal educational opportunities and practices. In addition, new non-sexist materials were developed that promoted gender equity.

However, even with access to new non-sexist material, many schools continued the practice of using materials where males’ contributions to society are more recognized. For example, in a study of books used in elementary schools, Purcell and Stewart (1990) found that even though the ratio of male to female human characters in stories was relatively equal, the majority of animal characters and story illustrations were male. In addition, Bailey (1992) reports similar results:

Researchers at a 1990 conference reported that even texts designed to fit within the current California guidelines on gender and race equity for textbook adoption showed subtle language bias, neglect of scholarship on women, omission of women as developers of history and initiators of events, and absence of women from accounts of technological developments (p. 124).

Media. From books to television shows to music, media in the United States is gender stereotyped. On television in both children’s shows and adults’ shows, male characters are more aggressive, more constructive, and

more direct. By contrast, females are often depicted as indifferent towards others or using things such as helplessness or seductiveness to manipulate others for their gain. While some studies claim television is the most influential source of media shaping children's gender roles (Lauer and Lauer 1994), I will focus primarily on the influences of print media, such as books and written curriculum, because they are more relevant to my study.

Among young children, gender socialization can occur through picture illustrated books, that is, books where the pictures tell the "story" as much as the words in the book (Davis 1984). Books such as this are a vehicle for presenting societal values to young children. Researchers such as Patterson and Lach (1990) have shown that for a long time children's books have included traits associated with masculine and feminine roles.

In addition, a number of studies have found gender stereotypes in the portrayal of males and females in children's literature (Agee 1993; Purcell and Stewart 1990; Tetenbaum and Pearson 1989; Kingston and Lovelace 1978; *Women on Words and Images* 1975; Hillman 1974; Jacklin and Mischel 1973; Weitzman et al. 1972). Generally, in children's literature males are portrayed as competent and achievement-oriented, while females are limited in what they do and are shown as less competent than boys.

In a well-known study, Weitzman et al. (1972) reviewed hundreds of books that received the Caldecott Medal (a prize awarded by the Children's

Service Committee of the American Library Association to the most distinguished picture books of the year) from 1922 through the 1960's. The study found that females were greatly underrepresented in book titles, lead characters' roles, and illustrations. Female characters most often reinforced traditional gender role stereotypes. The books portrayed boys as active and girls as passive. Many of the books portrayed boys as leaders and as rescuing girls in peril and girls as followers or serving others. Adult men and women were also stereotyped, with men engaging in a wide variety of occupations while women were only presented as wives and mothers.

More recently, an assessment of Caldecott books from the 1970's to the 1980's by Collins et al. (1984) found the books exhibited a greater gender balance and more gender equality than in the past. They found more inclusion of females in book titles, lead character roles, and illustrations. Collins et al. suggested this change in female representation was a reflection of women's changing roles in society as a whole. Kortenhuis and Demarest (1993) strengthen this position by finding greater gender equality in children's literature in the early nineties. Continued research is needed to determine the extent to which gender stereotyping takes place in more recent children's books.

To summarize, a social learning perspective on gender socialization is relevant to this research. That is, children learn gender appropriate behaviors

by imitating the beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior of others with which they are in contact (models). Social learning theory states boys learn how to behave as boys from observing and imitating beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors considered appropriate for males and girls learn how to behave as girls from observing and imitating beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors considered appropriate for females. Social learning theory also stresses the importance of reinforcement and the process of having one's own behaviors rewarded or punished. Gender socialization from parents, the schools, and the media are important and have been well-studied. But little attention has been paid to how gender socialization may occur through religious education, more specifically, through Sunday school programs. The next chapter reviews how religious organizations may impact gendered behavior and discusses possible variation in gendering practices, if any, among religious organizations.

Chapter 3: Religion and Gender

We live in a society where religion plays a distinctive role in the lives of most people. For the majority of Americans, religion and religious activity take place within churches associated with one of many Protestant denominations or with the Catholic Church. Religious practice has been shown to benefit not only individuals, but also communities (Johnson et al. 2002). In a study by Johnson et al., religiously active men and women were often more sensitive to others, more likely to serve and give to those in need, and more likely to be productive members of their communities. Furthermore, research shows that religion significantly and positively affects the level of an individual's happiness and overall sense of well-being (Wilcox 2004; Johnson et al. 2002; Rodgers et al. 1999; Barr and Chadwick 1985). More frequent religious practice also is associated with having greater hope, a greater sense of purpose in life, and better overall health (Wilcox 2004; Rodgers et al. 1999). Finally, researchers have shown that to the extent individuals are involved in a church or religious belief system, a socializing influence (formal instruction, reciprocal interaction, and religious transmission) is exerted upon them (Ellison and Gay 1990; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Washington and Beasley 1988; Smith 1985).

With respect to religion and gender, a large body of research has considered the role of religions, most notably Christianity, in perpetuating

traditional gender roles and gender inequality within religions and society as a whole (Dhruvarajan 1988; Richardson 1988; Stover and Hope 1984).

Research has also examined women's roles within religious organizations, especially gender bias in leadership positions (Ebaugh, Lorence, and Chafetz 1996; Ammerman 1990; Carroll, Hargrove, and Lummis 1983). However, little attention has been paid to early childhood gender socialization within religious organizations, such as the teaching of gender roles in Sunday school. Children's participation in church-related activities such as Sunday school could act as a socializing agent in the acquisition or development of gender roles, gender stereotypes, and a gendered understanding of God and the role men and women play in church.

The Place of Women in Christian Tradition

The participation of women in most religious organizations represents a paradox. Studies have shown women of all ages are more religious than males (Cornwall 1989), and with age the gap in religiosity widens (Benson 1991). Women are more likely to describe themselves as religious, be affiliated with a church, pray more frequently, feel closer to God, and report a positive view of the church they attend (Ozorak 1996; Felty and Poloma 1991; Cornwall 1989; De Vaus and McAllister 1987). However, most religions, Christianity in particular, are patriarchal in their beliefs, sacred images, language and practices.

A large body of feminist literature explores patriarchal tendencies within the Christian tradition (Brown 1994; Schmidt 1989; Curb and Manahan 1985; Reuther and Keller 1981; Mollenkott 1977; Clark and Richardson 1977; Daly 1973). Two themes that emerge from this literature are the prominence of masculine God imagery and doctrines dictating female submission to male authority within the family, church, and other social settings. For example, within Christian theological tradition God created humans “in the image of him” and is referred to as “God the Father” thus revealing its male perspective. Therefore, Christianity evokes male imagery when conceptualizing God and in turn such images are used to support the subordination of women. The relationship between male-God imagery and female submission is best characterized by Reuther (1983) when she stated:

Wives, along with children and servants, represent those ruled over and owned by the patriarchal class. They relate to man as he related to God. A symbolic hierarchy is set up: god-male-female. Women no longer stand in direct relation to God; they are connected to God secondarily, through the male... Women, children, and servants are referred to indirectly through their duties and property relations to the patriarch. In the New Testament this hierarchical order appears as cosmic principle (p. 53).

Many feminists reject male-God imagery (Brown 1994; Schmidt 1989; and Daly 1973) because it reinforces patriarchy. Daly (1973) examines this in her classic work *Beyond God the Father*. In it she claims, “the symbol of the Father God has made the mechanisms for the oppression of women appear right and fitting” (p. 13). Supporting this, studies have shown conservative Protestants,

including Southern Baptists, are more likely than other Americans to prefer primarily or exclusively male-God imagery (Ellison 1991) and traditional childbearing and homemaking roles for women (Peek, Lowe, and Williams 1991; Hertel and Hughes 1987).

Gender Roles and the Bible

Gender stereotypes and attitudes in Christian culture have, as Roberts (1990) stated, “a long history of sex bias”. At the core of gender bias in Christianity is the Bible. In general, the Bible portrays men as leaders and women as followers and in traditional family roles, meaning women are the ones who care for home and family (Neville 1974; Wilson 1973). While there are female characters in the Bible that have typically male-typed characteristics such as leadership, organization, and courage, they are generally the exception to the rule.

Religious organizations like the Southern Baptist Convention often draw upon a number of passages from the Bible and how they appear to relate to gender. First, an explanation of how God created men and women to be different is found in the book of Genesis. Second are biblical scriptures related to women’s inferiority in the New Testament. And third are biblical scriptures related to men’s position of dominance. The following biblical passages have been seen as examples of these three ideas.

Men and Women from the Beginning

1. Genesis 2:18-25

1. Eve was made for man. According to scripture, Adam's role was to be Eve's master.
2. Eve was made from the man (a rib taken from him while he slept). He was the reason for her being and her source.
3. Eve was brought to the man. Eve was a present to Adam, not the other way around. New Testament scripture reiterates this claim from the Old Testament, "For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake" (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).
4. Eve was given her name by man. The authority to name was of extreme importance. It was an acceptance of responsibility.
5. Man is the head; he is responsible for the woman.

2. Exodus 20 & 21

1. A number of verses describe a woman as the property of her father. At marriage, her ownership was transferred to her new husband.
2. A man could simultaneously keep numerous concubines. These were sexual partners of an even lower status than a wife.

3. Numbers 27:8-11

1. Moses describes the rules of inheritance that God has stated. If a man dies, his son inherits the estate; his daughter gets nothing. Only if there is no son will his daughter inherit. If there are no children, then the estate is given to the man's brothers; his sister(s) get nothing. If he had no brother, the estate goes to his nearest male relative.

4. Deuteronomy 22:13-21

1. Requires that a woman be a virgin when she is married. If she has had sexual relations while single in her father's house, then she would be stoned to death. There were no similar virginity requirements for men.

5. Deuteronomy 24:1

1. Describes the procedure for obtaining a divorce, which can only be initiated by the husband, not by the wife.

Women's Inferiority in New Testament Scripture

1. Women need to be cherished.

1. "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).

2. "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way" (1 Peter 3:7).
2. Women need security.
 1. "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).
3. Women need to be treated with tenderness and gentleness.
 1. "You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman" (1 Peter 3:7).
4. Women should be submissive to men.
 1. "Christ is the head of every man, and a husband the head of his wife, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3).
 2. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says, If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).
 3. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife...wives should submit to their husbands in everything" (Ephesians 5:22-24).
 4. "You wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior" (1 Peter 3:1-2).

Men's Position of Authority

1. Men should be respected and supported.
 1. "Wives, submit to your husbands" (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:1).
 2. "And let the wife see to it that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).
2. Men are in position of leadership.
 1. God gave Adam the right to name the animals and even to name woman (Genesis 2:23; 3:20).
 2. "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2: 11-12).

3. Paul insisted that women were not to be ordained to the office of elder because Eve was deceived in the Garden of Eden (1 Timothy 2:13-14).

The debate over biblical teaching on gender roles has focused primarily on the exegetical details of a handful of controversial texts, some of which I just cited, with neither Christian traditionalists nor gender egalitarian camps able to answer completely every objection or difficulty with their position. Moreover, there are some groups, including feminist scholars and liberation theologians, that disagree with using these interpretations in a twenty-first century context altogether. After many decades, it seems clear that a resolution concerning women's role according to the Bible is not close at hand. Finally, it should be noted that not only is a male orientation evident in the Bible but it can also be found in the work of many influential theologians such as Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Paul Tillich (Daly 1973).

Variation in Gender Roles across Protestant Religions

In addition to a male orientation in biblical and theological literature, studies have shown negative attitudes toward women clergy (Lehman 1987). Overall, female ministers are relatively scarce, and those who exist are mainly located in ministries with less power and authority such as ministry to children or youth (Lehman 1987). According to Murphy (1998), the number of female clergy across all Protestant traditions is small. Evidence of this is

found in data that reveal women were only 12.8% of all clergy in the United States in 2006 (U.S. Census Bureau 2008).

In addition, whether they come from theologically liberal denominations or conservative ones, black churches or white, women in the clergy still bump against what many call the stained-glass ceiling – longstanding limits, preferences and prejudices within their denominations that keep them from pastoring bigger congregations and having the opportunity to shape the faith of more people. Studies reveal that in the first decade after ordination, men and women usually hold similar positions (Carroll 2006). However, in their second decade in ordained ministry, 70 percent of men have moved on to medium-sized and large congregations. By comparison, only 37 percent of women have led medium and large congregations. Additionally, Carroll (2006) found that in mainline Protestant denominations women made up 20 percent of lead or solo pastors. And of all the pastors at the top of the pay scale, largely those who lead big congregations, only 3 percent are women (Carroll 2006).

Most of the occupational gains made by women clergy have occurred over the past 30 years, although there are some historically overlooked exceptions (Kroeger 1993). Ward (1991) reports that in the late 1800's, many denominations authorized the ordination of women, including some prominent churches such as the American Baptist Churches (1893), Disciples

of Christ (1888), Christian Congregation (1887), Church of God (1880), Salvation Army (1880), and the Wesleyan Church. The next wave of churches allowing female ordination came in the 1970's. Since the 1980's, half of all Protestant churches have allowed the ordination of women, although the Roman Catholic Church and large evangelical Protestant denominations such as the Southern Baptists have not. Indeed, the Southern Baptist Convention embraces patriarchal gender roles and opposes the ordination of women as pastors because women are believed to be "first in sin and last in creation."

Even with the recent gains for women clergy, some disapproval remains about women pastors, priests, or leaders. Ekhardt and Goldsmith (1984) put it into perspective by saying:

The ordination of women to the pastoral ministry represents, perhaps, the most radical social and theological change to affect American Christians in this century. The controversy over women ministers has split denominations and congregations (p. 109).

Within some individual denominations (predominantly evangelical denominations), as well as individual churches (particularly non-denominational churches), there is intense conflict regarding the ordination of women (Nason-Clark 1987). In particular, an individual's sexism (Lehman 1987), dogmatism (Mangis, 1993), and the political and religious fundamentalism of the denomination are often determinants of a churchgoer's attitude toward female clergy. Some clergy members have said there is still a disconnect, with people in the pews not accepting women in the

pulpit. "It's still difficult for many in this culture to see women as figures of religious authority," said the Rev. Cynthia M. Campbell, president of McCormick Theological Seminary, a Presbyterian seminary in Chicago (Banerjee 2006). Interestingly, research shows that after female clergy begin to work in a church, attitudes toward female clergy become more favorable (Dudley 1994; Lehman 1987).

Possible discomfort with women in church leadership roles may be due in part to cultural expectations for women to be nurturing, supportive, and positive (Hall 1997), and not in positions of leadership, authority, or judgment. More feminine attributes are often thought of as not compatible with a lead clergy role (Hall 1997). Bolstering this idea is research finding that females in authority positions (e.g., police officers, professors, politicians) who are portrayed as reprimanding someone inside or outside their profession are rated less favorably than males who reprimand others (Jacobson et al. 1977). Such discomfort with female authority may be particularly prevalent in Protestant denominations not willing to ordain women.

As an example of this discomfort, consider the effort by the Episcopal Church in August of 2000 to enforce church-wide acceptance of the ordination of women. Several dioceses were judged to be dragging their feet on accepting female candidates for ordination, and in August 2000 the

church's General Convention decided to force those churches into compliance. Gender stereotyping and the expectations of behavior for those who become clergy may have been reasons why some individual Episcopal churches were slow to accept female ordination.

Religious Gender Socialization

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, to the extent that individuals are involved in a church or religious belief system, a socializing influence is exerted upon them (Ellison and Gay 1990; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Washington and Beasley 1988; Smith 1985). More specifically, the process of interacting with others at church as well as exposure to religious scriptures, rituals, and fellowship activities serve to influence the formation of values, attitudes, and behaviors that may influence individuals not only in a church setting but also in secular activities (Brown and Gary 1991). For example, in a study conducted on the socializing forces of sermons, Benn (1982) found the sermon can play a role in the socialization of teenagers and young adults by offering an alternative to destructive or harmful behaviors. Therefore, we might also assume the gender roles congregations or denominations endorse (i.e., traditional or egalitarian) could serve as a strong reinforcement of gender roles and stereotypes.

In general, religious socialization can be associated with a number of outcomes such as an individual's moral behavior, biblical understanding, or belief in religious traditions. For young children, two of the principal intents

for church programs such as Sunday school are increased biblical knowledge (i.e., awareness of biblical themes and characters) and moral development. Sunday school classes focus on indoctrinating children with biblical values and habits becoming of those whom call themselves not only Christian but more specifically Southern Baptist, Methodist, etc. However, other socializing functions ranging from the development of social skills to the reaffirmation of self and group identity can take place at Sunday school (Brown and Gary 1991; Hopson and Hopson 1990).

Specific research linking gender socialization with Sunday school education has not been conducted; however, church-related activities such as Sunday school could act as a socializing agent in the acquisition or development of gender roles (at church, home and work) and gender stereotypes. Variation in particular Christian denominations' beliefs about gender could contribute to the variation in how children are socialized with respect to gender.

For the purpose of this study, religious gender socialization refers to the process by which an individual learns and internalizes gendered attitudes, values, and behaviors within the context of a religious system. Religious gender socialization takes place at two distinct levels. The first is the individual level. As individual boys and girls develop a greater understanding of religion, they learn how to evaluate their behavior with

respect to gender and relate it to others from that religious perspective (Brown and Gary 1991). This socialization takes place through observational modeling. The second level is more focused on the group or society. It examines the process through which social and cultural forces concerning religious gender stereotypes and roles are attained through participation in the life of religious organizations (Brown and Gary 1991). This form of gender socialization takes place by being involved (e.g., attending Sunday school on a regular basis) in a religious group or church.

The central objective of this project is to examine the extent to which gender socialization takes place within the religious institution – that is, gender socialization that is unique to a religious organization as opposed to other agents of socialization. Thus this research is a departure from previous work on gender socialization, which is generally focused on such agents as the family, schools, and the media. Concentrating on gender socialization through religion will therefore add to our understanding of gender socialization in general, and gender socialization through religion in particular.

Chapter 4: Background and History

Before discussing particular characteristics of the churches participating in the study and the curriculum being analyzed, and in order to provide more context to this project, a brief history concerning Christianity and Sunday school will be given. In addition, a general description of the United Methodist Church and Southern Baptist Convention will be provided.

Brief History of Christianity

For the first one thousand years of Christian history, there were no denominations within the Christian church (i.e., recognized autonomous branches in the Christian Church) as there are today. Various auxiliary groups undoubtedly existed, but they were considered heresies (opinions contrary to Christian belief) and not part of the Christian church. Most groups were small and, until the sixteenth century, were never very influential. From the beginnings of Christianity (around 70 AD) through the Middle Ages, there was only one catholic (universal) church. During this time period, if you did not belong to the Catholic Church, you were not considered a Christian.

The first division within Christendom came in 1054 and is known as the "Great Schism" between the Western Church and the Eastern Church. From the year 1054 forward there existed two large branches of Christianity, which were known as the Catholic Church (in the West) and the Orthodox Church (in the East).

The second major division, and the most recent affecting the Christian church as a whole, occurred in the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation. The Reformation started when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses in 1517, which were used to display his displeasure with the Catholic Church's sale of indulgences. With the emphasis on individual interpretation of scripture and a measure of religious freedom, the Reformation marked not only the beginning of Protestantism and a break from Catholicism, but the beginning of denominationalism. From this point, each new denomination that was formed was created by groups of people who disagreed with other groups over various biblical interpretations, social actions and positions, and adherences to special rules such as alcohol and tobacco use, or the role women were allowed to play in the church. The two Christian denominations focused on in this study have distinct positions concerning the place (e.g., positions of authority) of women in the church.

United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church shares a common history and heritage with other Methodist and Wesleyan bodies and represents the union of three streams of religious tradition: Methodism, the Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and The Evangelical Association. The United Methodist Church was created in 1968, with approximately 11 million members, making it one of the largest Protestant churches in the world. Since its inception, United Methodism has experienced a number of changes in its practice and structure.

It has become increasingly aware of itself as a global church with members and conferences in Africa, Asia, and Europe, as well as the United States. While its membership in Europe and the United States has declined noticeably since 1968, membership in Africa and Asia has grown significantly (United Methodist Church 2007).

As part of its history and important to the present study, Methodists adhere to a publication entitled *The Book of Discipline*, which outlines rules and organization that local churches must follow. Absent from this set of rules is any particular distinction limiting women from participating in all levels of church organization. Because of this, an increasing number of women have been admitted to the ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church. They have been appointed as district superintendents, elected to positions of denominational leadership, and consecrated as bishops. In 1980, Marjorie Matthews was the first woman elected to the United Methodist Church's episcopacy (government of a church by bishops). The United Methodist Church has endeavored to become a community in which all persons, regardless of gender, racial or ethnic background, can participate in every level of its ministry and hierarchical structure.

Over the past few decades, United Methodism has struggled with a number of critical issues. Because of that, and in order to remain relevant to a twenty-first century audience, it has created and refined its theological and

mission statements. It has discussed and acted on matters of social importance such as gender, nuclear power and world peace, human sexuality, the environment, abortion, AIDS, evangelism, and world mission. Because of these actions and the fact that the United Methodist Church ordains women, the church is viewed as taking a more progressive and gender neutral approach to social issues.

Southern Baptist Convention

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) was organized in 1845 in Augusta, Georgia as a result of the discontent of Baptists in the South with Baptists in the North over the issue of slavery (Shurden 1995). While its formation was controversial, the Southern Baptist Convention has since grown to over 16 million members who worship in more than 42,000 churches in the United States (Southern Baptist Convention 2007), making it the largest Protestant group in America. Additionally, Southern Baptists sponsor about 5,000 home missionaries serving the United States, Canada, Guam and the Caribbean, as well as sponsoring more than 5,000 foreign missionaries in 153 nations of the world (Southern Baptist Convention 2007).

The term "Southern Baptist Convention" refers to both the denomination and its annual meeting. The annual SBC meeting consists of representatives, or "messengers," as they are called, from cooperating churches, who gather to confer and determine the programs, policies, and budget of the Convention. Each church in the U.S. may be represented by up

to 10 messengers, ensuring equal accessibility to the convention for small and large congregations alike.

The Southern Baptists have a prepared statement of convictions called *The Baptist Faith and Message (BFM)*. It serves as a guide to understanding who they are and what they believe. It is within the *BFM* that one finds a traditional patriarchal approach to women's position in Southern Baptist churches. For example, even though the Southern Baptist Church has traditionally been conservative with respect to gender, an even more restrictive view of the role women may play in the church was adopted in the *BFM 2000*. In section VI on "The Church", the *BFM 2000* states, "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture." This is the first time a Southern Baptist statement of faith has expressed such a limited interpretation on gender and pastoral ministry.

Also included in *BFM 2000* is an amendment on the family adopted by the SBC in 1998. The amendment clarifies the role men and women should play within households, with men being the head of households. Critics of the new statement say that it is based on deficient biblical interpretation, adding some words not in the Scriptures, and selectively omitting other biblical teachings on the same subject (Dilday 2002). Critics also see it as a faulty expression of a one-sided male authoritarian role in marriage that is

not biblically based. Thus, because of its history and its recent actions further excluding women from pastoral ministry, the Southern Baptist Convention can be viewed as maintaining and espousing traditional patriarchal gender roles for its congregants.

Sunday School

Traditionally, one of the primary methods for teaching young people about the Bible and Christian practice has been Sunday school. The beginning of Sunday schools (approximately 1780) is most commonly associated with the work of Robert Raikes, editor of the *Gloucester Journal*, who saw Sunday school as a way to prevent children in the slums of England from descending into crime. By 1831, Sunday school in Great Britain was ministering weekly to thousands of children, and had become an institution of learning for the working class in England (Southerland 1990). Sunday schools first appeared in American cities in the 1790's. Following the example of British reformers, American organizers hoped to provide basic literacy training to poor children and adults on their one free day from work. By the 1850's a new style of Sunday school arose, taught by volunteer teachers (a majority of them women). This new form of Sunday school focused primarily on a specific evangelical Protestant curriculum (authority of the Bible, personal conversion, and salvation) rather than a more general education.

In the twenty-first century Protestant church, Sunday school often takes the form of a one-hour or longer Bible study which can occur before, during, or after a church service. While many Protestant denominations use their Sunday school hour to provide biblical instruction for children, adult Sunday school classes are also popular and widespread.

In most Protestant denominations, Sunday school teachers are generally lay people who are selected because of their teaching ability and knowledge of the Bible. Few denominations provide any formal training in religious education, though many Sunday school teachers have a background in education as a result of their occupations. However in some cases, such as some Baptist churches, the church will allow volunteers to teach Sunday school regardless of whether or not they have any formal teaching background. In these cases, a profession of faith and a desire to teach are the only requirements. In general, Sunday school has had a profound impact on the Christian education of countless numbers of Protestant children in the United States.

In sum, this brief examination of Christianity, United Methodism, Southern Baptists, and Sunday school help provide a context in which to better explore the extent to which gender socialization takes place within the religious organizations. However, it is important to note that like other organizations, religious organizations are not homogeneous organizations.

Research within the sociology of religion shows that religious organizations often become the sites for social conflicts and variations in biblical interpretation (Bartkowski 2001; Becker 1999; Ammerman 1997; Stocks 1997). Therefore, while the United Methodist Church and Southern Baptist Convention each posit a set of rules, ideology, theology, and practices, it is imperative to remember that individuals within religious organizations such as these have been found to interpret things differently from official church positions. Sunday school teachers may vary in the extent to which they adhere to official church teachings (e.g., a Southern Baptist Sunday school teacher might be less traditional in her/his teaching of gender than the SBC would call for).

Chapter 5: Methods and Research Sites

Because qualitative research has special value for investigating complex and sensitive issues such as religion and gender, I thought a qualitative approach would be the best fit for researching gender socialization unique to religious organizations. I used multiple qualitative methods. The data for this study come from a content analysis of Sunday school curricula, non-participant observation of Sunday school classes, and a face-to-face in-depth interview with the children's pastor at each study site (i.e., one Southern Baptist church and one United Methodist church). Additionally, this research was inductive in its design. That is, I did not have a set of specific analytical questions that guided my study. Instead, I let the data speak for itself.

Research Plan

The content analysis of Sunday school curricula used one continuous year of material. Curriculum materials were acquired from both the Southern Baptist church and the United Methodist church. Materials were limited to a teacher's manual (a detailed guide concerning how to set up a room, craft ideas for each Sunday, and detailed Bible lessons for each Sunday).

Using Strauss's (1987) basic guidelines for qualitative analysis, the Sunday school curricula were analyzed by asking a consistent set of questions about the data. The following are the general questions I asked of the Sunday

school curriculum used by each church: What is the gender of the Bible characters focused on in each Sunday school lesson? How are those characters and their actions described? Are there any blatant illustrations or activities that could be considered as supporting traditional male/female gender roles or egalitarian gender roles in the lessons? How is God described throughout the curriculum? Does the structure of the curriculum lend itself to teaching children about gender?

After answering these questions the next step was to separate the information using Strauss and Corbin's (1998) technique of developing categories. According to Strauss and Corbin, developing categories entails giving a category specificity by defining its particular characteristics. This qualifying of a category by specifying its particular properties and dimensions is vital because we can then begin to detect patterns in the material. Ultimately, the purpose of these steps was to reduce the Sunday school curricula to smaller pieces of data that revealed gendered themes. As I discuss in chapter 6, I uncovered four categories relevant to this study: structure and organization of the curriculum, gender of primary characters, gendered pictures, and gendered activities. Each category helped to reveal the extent of religious gender socialization through each Sunday school curriculum.

After completing the content analysis, I observed Sunday school classes for preschool aged children at a Southern Baptist church and a United Methodist church for twelve weeks. I observed at the Southern Baptist church from 9:15-10:30 and then drove to the United Methodist church where I observed from 10:50-12:05. I observed four different classes at each church three times each. The observations lasted approximately one hour and fifteen minutes for each Sunday school class (which is the length of the classes). I limited my observations to one class at each church per Sunday. I recorded in a notebook such observations as interactions between students and the teacher, interactions between students, students' play, students' dress, number and gender of the students, gender of the teacher, structured activities (Bible story, crafts, snack, etc.), unstructured free time, props or stations in rooms for children to play at, and other events if they were seen as relevant. Each Sunday I wrote up a detailed summary of my observations.

I analyzed my observations using Lofland and Lofland's (1995) emergent analysis. Lofland and Lofland describe emergent analysis within the context of field studies as open-ended in terms of analysis. They believe that intellectually and operationally, analysis emerges from the interaction of gathering data and then focusing on that data. The purpose of this process was to achieve analyses that are in sync with aspects of human life, portray aspects of that life, and provide perspectives on that life that were simply not

available through other methods of research (Lofland and Lofland 1995). This process also included stages of analytic coding (Straus and Corbin 1998). The two stages of coding that I used were initial coding (looking for what can be discovered and defined in the data) and focused coding (the process of winnowing initial coding in order to focus on a selected number of codes to apply to the data). Finally, I used Lofland and Lofland's (1995) techniques of memoing (a write-up concerning ideas about codes and their relationships) to bring together the information that came from the non-participant observations.

The face-to-face in-depth interviews took place at the end of the twelfth week of non-participant observation. The face-to-face in-depth interviews were used as a method of clarifying and further illuminating the findings from the content analysis and non-participant observation. My interview subjects were the children's pastors at each church. The interviews took place at the churches and lasted around 30-45 minutes in length. The following are the interview questions I used: What criteria do you use when selecting Sunday school teachers? Is there any training they have to do to teach at your church? How many teachers do you currently have and is it enough? What are your expectations for your Sunday school teachers? What criteria did you use when selecting the Sunday school curriculum you use

and why? How closely do you have teachers follow the Sunday school curriculum?

A tape recording device was used during each interview. On occasion I also took notes to highlight the main points addressed by the interviewee, particularly if the pastor discussed something I had not thought about prior to the interview. I transcribed the interview data immediately after each interview.

Finally, while the in-depth interviews were important to this study there were difficulties in conducting them. Due to difficulties at the United Methodist church (e.g., the pastor rescheduled the interview a number of times and when the interview finally took place the pastor let me know upfront she only had 30 minutes for it because of another appointment), the interview with the children's pastor was shorter than I would have liked. I explored the possibility of formally interviewing Sunday school teachers as well but there was some opposition to this from the church leadership. Therefore, I did not conduct formal interviews with the teachers but I did informally ask them a few questions.

Research Sites and Curriculum

Each research site represented an interesting setting in which to study religious gender socialization. The reason I chose the churches I did was based on: ease of access to the research sites (because of personal connections at both sites) and comparability in the size of their congregations and their

standing within their respective denominations (i.e., because of their size and background, these churches are seen as leaders within their denomination by the surrounding churches). The real names of the churches in this study are not used in order to protect the identity of those organizations. Finally, it should be noted that the Sunday school curricula analyzed in this study were chosen specifically because they were the ones used at each of the two research sites.

Cornerstone Baptist

Cornerstone Baptist Church is a large (i.e., 2500-3000 person Sunday service attendance), suburban, predominantly white, lower middle class and higher Southern Baptist church in a south central U.S. city. The church has existed at its current location for over sixty years, consists of multiple buildings, and offers multiple Sunday morning worship times. Cornerstone Baptist Church ministers to an average of seventy preschool aged children during the Sunday school hour. Cornerstone has eight classes designated for preschool children on Sunday mornings. Each class has an average of 7-8 students. Much like the public school system, Cornerstone Baptist church places children in a specific class where they remain from the fall until the beginning of summer. Visiting children are placed in classes based upon the number of children present on any given Sunday morning. On average, there are two teachers (one lead and one assistant) in each classroom every Sunday. Cornerstone Baptist church employs one full-time children's pastor for

preschool aged children. The children's pastor at Cornerstone Baptist is a female.

Life United Methodist

Life United Methodist Church is a large, suburban, predominantly white, middle to upper middle class church in a south central U.S. city (the same city where Cornerstone Baptist Church is located). The church relocated to its present site from an urban location many years ago (the actual date is not mentioned to protect anonymity). Life offers a number of different services, programs, and educational classes on Sunday mornings. It ministers to an average of 70 preschool aged children during the Sunday school hour. Life United Methodist has six classes designated for preschool children on Sunday mornings. Each class at Life has an average of 10-12 students. There are on average two teachers in each Sunday school class at Life (one lead teacher and one assistant). Life United Methodist church employs one full time children's pastor for preschool aged children. The children's pastor at Life Methodist is a female.

Sunday School Curriculum

Neither Life United Methodist nor Cornerstone Baptist Church writes its own Sunday School curriculum. Both churches purchase the curriculum they use from publishing companies. Cornerstone Baptist uses a curriculum purchased from the LifeWay Publishing House, a Southern Baptist publishing company. The name of the curriculum is *Bible Teaching for Kids*.

Life United Methodist uses a curriculum purchased from Group Publishing, a non-denominational publishing company. The name of the curriculum is *FaithWeaver*. Both sets of curricula are character driven (focusing on a different character of the Bible each week), and outline activities and crafts for preschool children to complete on a Sunday morning.

Methodological Limitations

Because I chose to analyze Sunday school curriculum from only two companies and observe preschool Sunday school classes at only two churches, each from a different denomination, my research findings are automatically limited to the practices of those curricula and religious denominations. One also has to question how “representative” the Sunday school teachers, children’s pastors, and children at the two churches were of Southern Baptists and United Methodists in general. People may go to Cornerstone Baptist or Life United Methodist Church because they like the lead pastor, or they like the programs offered for different age levels, or for reasons as simple as it is the closest church to where they live. Thus, individuals who attend Cornerstone Baptist or Life United Methodist could be different in a number of ways from those who attend Southern Baptist or United Methodist churches elsewhere in the south central United States or the rest of the country.

Methodological Strengths

Although some might translate this study's lack of generalizability into being less scientific or relevant, I argue that the techniques used were appropriate and allowed for a fuller and richer interpretation of religious gender socialization than quantitative techniques would have. Due to the methods used (content analysis, non-participant observation, and face-to-face in-depth interviews) I was able to carefully analyze: the curriculum materials, the settings in which the materials were being used, how the materials impacted the children attending Sunday school, how Sunday school teachers delivered curriculum materials and whether this differed between the two churches, and the children's pastors' reasons for how Sunday school teachers and curricula were chosen and what their expectations for both were. These insights would not have been uncovered had I used quantitative methods. For example, I was able to witness and uncover through the non-participant observation how Sunday school teachers became the final authority on what kind of information concerning God and the Bible was taught. Thus, immersing myself in these environments and conducting a content analysis allowed me as researcher to better understand the extent to which gender socialization takes place within religious settings.

Chapter 6: Sunday School Curriculum Findings

In this chapter I examine the Sunday school curriculum (i.e., the written material used to teach participants about God and Christianity) used by Cornerstone Baptist Church and Life United Methodist Church. More specifically, the intent of this chapter is to reveal any gendered patterns or themes that emerged from the content analysis of the Sunday school curriculum. Analyzing the written material meant that the most salient and relevant features, including concepts, characters, or images, came forth. Findings were then woven together into a cohesive and coherent format so that ultimately, a “picture” of religious gender socialization through curricular materials was constructed.

Using Strauss and Corbin’s (1998) technique of developing categories, I uncovered four categories relevant to this study in the Sunday school curriculum: structure and organization of curriculum, gender of primary characters, gendered pictures, and gendered activities. Each category helped to reveal the extent of religious gender socialization through Sunday school curriculum.

In the first category I discuss the extent to which the Sunday school curriculum from each church is structured and organized. I found the structure and organization of the Sunday school curriculum (i.e., the extent to which the curriculum is ordered and extensive) to be of great importance

because it provides a plan for Sunday school teachers to follow. Using a highly structured and organized curriculum would seemingly provide the teacher the most detailed and thorough information to consciously or unconsciously teach any gender stereotypes and behavior that might be present in the curriculum materials. The more structured and organized the curriculum, the less likely it may be that teachers will bring in “outside” (e.g., their own) material, that may or may not teach about gender in ways prescribed by the church. A less structured curriculum might provide more of an opportunity to teach information concerning gender in the ways the teacher sees fit.

Second, and perhaps the most explicit way children learn about gender at church, is through the focus on specific Bible characters. In this category I discuss how the Sunday school curriculum’s focus on male characters, the description of those characters, and the subordinating roles relegated to women characters shapes boys’ and girls’ understanding of gender roles within the context of church and possibly society at large.

Third, even though only available in the Southern Baptist curriculum, I found viewing gendered pictures of biblical characters as another powerful way in which children learn about gender at church. Pictures of biblical characters provide visual evidence of what children are otherwise only

listening to. Thus, illustrations used to augment Bible stories each week are relevant to an understanding of religious gender socialization.

The fourth category is the gendered nature of the organized activities recommended in the Sunday school curriculum. Activities suggested in the curriculum are meant to enhance a Bible lesson, thus, providing a reinforcement of what the children are learning about God. With this category I discuss how the activities provided in the Southern Baptist and United Methodist curricula can teach children about gender.

Southern Baptist Curriculum

The curriculum used by Cornerstone Baptist church is written and printed by LifeWay Christian Resources. LifeWay was established in Nashville, Tennessee in 1891 by the Southern Baptist Convention and is today one of the world's largest providers of Christian products and services, including Bibles, church literature, books, music, audio and video recordings, church supplies, and Internet services through LifeWay.com. The company also owns and operates 146 LifeWay Christian Stores across the nation, as well as two of the largest Christian conference centers in the United States. An entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, LifeWay is a religious nonprofit organization that receives no funding from the denomination and reinvests income above operating expenses in mission work and other ministries around the world.

The particular LifeWay curriculum I analyzed is titled *Bible Teaching for Kids: 3's-Pre-K*. The *Bible Teaching for Kids* curriculum comes in a ready-to-use resource packet with a teacher manual, games, and biblical illustrations. Each resource packet has weekly Bible lessons and activities for three months at a time. LifeWay packages and sells the curriculum quarterly: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer. The curriculum for each week is character driven, focusing on the “life” and “work” of both individuals (33 lessons for the year I analyzed) and groups (19 lessons for the year I analyzed) of biblical characters and is written in a way that is easy to use.¹ In fact, the company’s website suggests, “by following the simple 4-step teaching plan, leaders can help preschoolers understand how to apply the Bible lesson to their own lives”(www.lifeway.com). In this study, I only analyzed the teacher manuals spanning one continuous year, beginning in the Winter quarter of 2006 and ending in the Fall quarter of 2007.

Structure

When examining the LifeWay curriculum, I found the teacher manual to be highly structured in both presentation and directives. Included in the teacher manual are a detailed write-up concerning the “set-up” of the classroom, weekly Bible studies, and corresponding activities. These instructions are written out plainly. For each week, there are 7-8 pages of

¹ Lessons involving one or more characters but with a clear emphasis on one character were counted as “individuals”. Lessons involving more than one character with an emphasis on multiple characters were counted as “groups”.

instructions, activities, Bible lessons, Bible verses, and teaching applications. In the front of the manual there are several pages explaining how to use the manual. Also at the front of each manual is a detailed diagram displaying the best way to “create a learning environment”. The diagram illustrates how many inches high countertops should be and where tables should be placed, activity areas should be located, rugs laid out, and the group time area placed, among other things (see the diagram in Appendix A). In addition, for each new unit in the curriculum, which takes approximately a month, there is a brief overview in the manual of the unit themes and how they relate to preschoolers, a chart to review the month’s Bible stories, Bible truths, and life application statements (how the Bible truths apply to the lives of preschoolers), leadership tips to guide teacher planning meetings, resources needed to provide Bible teaching for the month, and a weekly session schedule.

As mentioned before, a highly structured and organized curriculum likely leaves less room for individual latitude in planning and teaching a class. In the LifeWay curriculum sample, I found the detail so specific that it leaves little room for the teachers to bring their own ideas to the classroom. Thus, as important themes concerning gender arise from the LifeWay curriculum, such as the gender of primary characters, gendered pictures, and gendered activities I found the structure and organization of the curriculum

extremely relevant. But, I acknowledge that I assume teachers will follow the manual closely. It is because of this assumption that conducting non-participant observations of Sunday school classrooms was important to this study.

Gender of Primary Characters

In the LifeWay curriculum I examined, a total of 44 lessons or 85 percent of the Sundays in the sample focused on male Bible characters. The male characters presented in the curriculum included Yahweh (God), Adam, Kings, and Prophets in the Old Testament and Disciples, Apostles, and Jesus in the New Testament. For example, the lessons for March 2007 are the following: God Made the World, God Made the Animals, God Made People, and Adam Took Care of God's World. In all the lessons God is referred to as male. For example, in the lesson concerning God making people, the manual describes Adam and Eve in the following way:

God wanted to make something more important than anything He had made. He wanted people to live in the world He had made. First, God made a man. God named the man Adam. Adam lived in a beautiful garden, and he took care of it. Then God made a woman to be a special helper for Adam. Adam named her Eve. Adam and Eve were the first family. God loved Adam and Eve (McAnally, 2007, p. 30).

The way Adam and Eve are described in this account supports the Southern Baptist belief that the Bible, and more importantly God, has given men authority over women.

Other examples of Sunday school lessons from the LifeWay curriculum that focus on male characters can be found in the Winter 2007 teacher manual. The lessons for one month are: Jesus Chose Helpers, Jesus Helped 10 Men, Jesus Fed the People, and Jesus and the Storm. In these lessons, Jesus is portrayed using masculine qualities such as a leader, healer, powerful, independent, active, a teacher, someone to be recognized, and fearless. Furthermore, the focus on male characters in this month goes beyond Jesus as evidenced in the following lesson on Jesus choosing helpers (i.e., disciples):

One day while Jesus was walking beside a lake called the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers fishing. Their names were Simon Peter and Andrew. They were throwing a net into the lake, trying to catch fish. Jesus said to the brothers, "Come. Follow Me." Simon Peter and Andrew stopped fishing and followed Jesus. Jesus walked on beside the lake. He saw two brothers in a boat fishing with their father. They were James and John. Jesus said to them, "Come. Follow Me." And they did. Four fishermen followed Jesus to be His special helpers. Jesus kept choosing men until He had twelve special helpers (Driskell, 2007, p. 80).

By highlighting that Jesus chose only males to be his special helpers, the curriculum is reinforcing common gender stereotypes that men are better suited for the most "important" work. Although there are stories in the Bible where female characters are shown in positive and central roles, such as the stories of Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother), Mary Magdalene and Martha, Naomi, and Esther, none of these female characters are introduced in the LifeWay curriculum.

Of the remaining 8 lessons, only 4 or about 7.5 percent of the 52 lessons focus on a female character (woman at the well, Mary, Miriam, and Ruth) while the other 4 lessons focus on generic subjects such as “People at Church Read the Bible” and “People at Church Work Together”. Whereas the lessons that focus on male characters in the manual highlight traditionally masculine characteristics such as strength, leadership, and power, those focused on women highlight traditionally feminine characteristics. For example, two of the four instances in which a female character is the focus of the lesson appear in the month of May (perhaps by coincidence this is also the month in which Mother’s Day is celebrated). The unit for that month is titled “Families Love”. The third lesson of the month deals with how Miriam loved her family and states:

Everyone in Miriam’s family loved the new baby boy. Miriam helped care for him. The family had to hide the baby to keep him safe from the king. Miriam’s mother placed the baby in the basket and put it in the grass near the edge of the river. Miriam stayed nearby to watch. The King’s daughter found the basket and saw the baby crying. Miriam asked the King’s daughter, “Do you want me to get someone to take care of the baby for you?” “Yes”, the King’s daughter replied. Miriam ran to get her mother. Miriam’s mother was happy to take care of her baby. The King’s daughter named the boy Moses (Cavitt, 2007, p. 92).

This story, like many stories in the Bible that reference women characters, depicts women’s main responsibility as caring for children.

Interestingly, in the 4 lessons without a central character each one generally refers to males and shows masculine behaviors and stereotypes

such as manual labor, public speaking, and leadership. For example, in the lesson titled “The People Sang to God” the lesson dealt with King David’s preparation to build a temple to God and King Solomon’s eventual building of that temple. The lesson goes on to discuss how after the temple was built (presumably by men) the people celebrated by singing to God. In another lesson titled “A Church Helped”, the lesson discusses how Paul and Barnabas were preaching in a church in Antioch and took an offering of food and supplies to believers in Jerusalem. So even in the lessons that do not focus explicitly on a male character, the characters referred to are generally male.

The character with the most exposure in the LifeWay curriculum is Jesus. Twenty lessons or 38 percent of all Sundays in the year focus on him. The next character with the most exposure is God, the focus of 12 weeks or 23 percent of all Sundays in the year. God is referred to in the masculine declension throughout the LifeWay curriculum. This finding is particularly interesting when considering the focus Bandura (1977) places on models for children to emulate aside from their parents. With such a high percentage of the curriculum focused on male characters and masculine characteristics, children have a limited understanding of the role women play in biblical stories. This is problematic for two reasons. First, the lack of exposure to female characters can lead children to believe that most if not all important things that happen in the Bible do so because of men. Second, when female

characters are referenced in the Bible, they are generally depicted in subordinate roles, thus reinforcing a patriarchal status quo. These points are supported with findings from the LifeWay curriculum that describe males in ways such as teaching, reading, writing, making rules, working, creating, strong, courageous, powerful, preaching, persevering, problem solving, leading, and patient. In contrast, female characters in the curriculum are portrayed as helping, hosting, trusting, faithful, loving, poor, thankful, obedient, and submissive. In this way both genders are depicted in stereotyped ways in the LifeWay curriculum.

Gendered Pictures

The pictures included in the LifeWay curriculum are shown to children before and sometimes while the teacher is teaching the Bible lesson. The curriculum supplies wall hangings depicting the biblical characters discussed in each week's lesson. The wall hanging illustrations are the same as the illustrations in the teaching manual. However, not all of the teachers at Cornerstone Baptist put the wall hangings up in their classrooms.

In the 52 pictures found in the LifeWay curriculum teaching manuals (one for each weekly lesson), 96 percent of the illustrations include male characters while only 62 percent of the illustrations include female characters. Two of the illustrations contain no male or female characters at all. There are 20 illustrations of males only compared to a mere 2 illustrations of females only. Thus, 30 illustrations or 58 percent of the sample include both males

and females. Of those 30 illustrations, 21 or 70 percent of all the pictures display female characters in traditionally gender stereotyped ways. For example, there is an illustration in which Mary is listening to “good news” from an angel (depicted as a male) while she is standing over a table making bread. In another example, men and women are gathering food and money to distribute to another community of believers. In this illustration women are shown holding babies and bringing food while men are shown bringing livestock and money. Interestingly, 18 of the 21 illustrations containing female gender stereotypes show women biblical characters caring for children in some way or another.

I used a method similar to the one Davis (1984) and Williams (1987) used when coding gendered pictures in the LifeWay teacher manuals. That is, I viewed each picture and determined if the characters in the picture fit into a particular variable category concerning gender. In order to be consistent with their studies I used the set of variable traits they created (found in Appendix B) as a guide. However, unlike Davis and Williams, instead of categorizing the pictures by determining one variable trait for each picture I looked to find how many variable traits applied to each picture. For example, in a picture depicting Paul telling Lydia about Jesus I found the following variable traits: cooperative, submissive, and passively active.

My findings from this particular analysis supported other findings of this study that both genders are depicted in gender stereotyped ways in the LifeWay curriculum. I observed pictures of female Bible characters as dependent, cooperative, submissive, nurturant, emotional, and passively active, traits considered to be feminine. The female characters were also less independent, explorative, aggressive, and active, traits considered masculine, than male Bible characters in the pictures. Additionally, most of the female characters represented in the illustrations are not “named” characters whereas most of the male characters are. For example, of the 58 percent of illustrations that include women only six women are named in the captions below the image: Mary, Lydia, Priscilla, Miriam, Ruth, and Eve.

Gendered Activities

The LifeWay curriculum distinguishes five different activity categories: Art, Blocks, Homeliving, Nature, and Puzzles. Art activities include things such as making finger paint pictures, paper plate animals, postcards, leaf pictures, and other crafts. Block activities include things such as build and find Bible phrases, build with alphabet blocks, build a chariot, build a Bible times town, and play with food blocks. Homeliving activities include things such as get dolls ready for bed, get dolls ready for church, make breakfast, make and decorate cookies, and Bible character dress-up. Nature activities include things such as make a paper chain, make pie pan cymbals, draw in the sand, make Christmas card collages, use musical

instruments, and plant seeds. Puzzle activities include things such as Bible and me puzzle time, learn about Jesus puzzle, learn about church puzzle, match family pictures, and puzzles about church. Teachers decide on a weekly basis how many and what particular activities suggested in the week's curriculum they will use in Sunday school class to supplement the Bible lesson.

I analyzed the activities described in the curriculum in the following two ways. First, I looked to see if the content of the activity in and of itself supported a gender stereotype or behavior. Second, I examined whether the focus of the activity (e.g., the Bible character focused on in the activity) incorporated stereotypical portrayals of males and females. It should be noted that while the activities I discuss often appear gendered in their design, the curriculum does not specify that only one gender should participate in the activity. This makes it necessary to observe preschool Sunday school classes to better understand the way Sunday school curriculum is delivered to boys and girls.

Based upon my analysis of the activities in the LifeWay curriculum, Homeliving is the most gendered activity. This proved to be one of the most interesting findings from the LifeWay curriculum. In the sample, 42 of the 52 Homeliving activities given in the teacher manual or 81 percent of all Homeliving activities for the year focus on traditional female gender roles.

For example, the activity “Get the Dolls Ready for Church” centers on the Bible story of Mary and Joseph taking Jesus to the synagogue. The activity suggests the teacher ask if anyone wants to help get the babies ready for church by packing a diaper bag, putting clothes on the baby, selecting a baby blanket, and putting the baby in a stroller. Another example is an activity organized around dressing up and playing out a Bible story. The instructions in the teacher manual state:

Show preschoolers the Bible story picture on the Bible and Me page (it is a picture of Joseph and Mary holding Jesus at church with Simeon and Anna looking on). Point out how the people are dressed. Help the boys and girls dress like Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna in the picture. Make sure someone swaddles baby Jesus and holds him. Narrate the Bible story as children role-play the characters’ actions (Butterworth, 2006, p. 34).

The activity “Pretending to Be a Teacher” is also telling. Because most preschool Sunday school teachers, not to mention most preschool and daycare workers in general, are women pretending to be a teacher indirectly suggests women should work with children. The activity in the teacher manual states:

Invite the children to put on the adult clothing and pretend they are the teachers at church. Encourage them to use the Bible and other materials to pretend they are Sunday school teachers. Ask the children to name specific people at church who teach them about Jesus (McAnally, 2007, p. 72).

In both of these examples, children are exposed to traditional gender roles through the curriculum. By role-playing the traditional behaviors suggested in the LifeWay curriculum, children’s beliefs about gender roles are acted out

and reinforced. Thus, children are learning about traditional gender roles in the context of Sunday school.

In addition to the explicit gender roles taught through Homeliving activities, I observed gender stereotypes in the activity categories of Art and Blocks. Even though the Art activities and Blocks activities attempt to avoid gender stereotyping by not dictating different projects for boys and for girls, the focus of each activity was primarily on male characters and male accomplishments. Out of the 104 Art activities and Block activities listed in LifeWay curriculum spanning Winter 2006 to Fall 2007, 73 or about 70 percent of the activities, focus on God (who is referred to as male in the curriculum) or other male characters in the Bible. For example, Art activities and Block activities included painting pictures of Paul teaching, coloring pictures of Jesus, cutting out stand up figures of the 12 disciples (all males), building houses or towns out of blocks, or making a yarn picture to represent the curtains King Solomon had made for the temple. This is important because the activities in the curriculum are central to developing children's understanding of Bible stories and characters.

The final two categories of activities I analyzed were Nature and Puzzles. The teacher manual recommends that churches equip Sunday school classes with puzzles related to the areas of God, Jesus, Bible, church, creation, self, family, and community/world. In view of the fact that the

curriculum merely suggests the purchase of any puzzles related to certain areas or characters of the Bible but does not suggest specific puzzles, it is difficult to say whether or not the puzzles focused on gender stereotypical themes. Therefore, I found the construction of activities related to puzzles in the curriculum to be gender neutral. However, it should be noted that depending upon the puzzles a particular church selects for preschool Sunday school rooms, the puzzles could contain images or themes related to gender stereotypes.

A similar pattern to the one described concerning Art activities and Block activities (i.e., activities focused primarily on male characters and male accomplishments) emerged when analyzing Nature activities in the curriculum. In a review of all the Nature activities, I found 41 of the 52 Nature activities or 79 percent focused on topics concerning male characters, for example, making a special star to find Jesus, weaving Bible verses about Ezra together, or playing with toy boats and learning about Jesus calling the disciples to be fishers of men.

United Methodist Curriculum

The curriculum used by Life United Methodist Church is written and printed by Group Publishing Inc. Group Publishing was established in the early 1970's by Tom Schultz as a non-denominational Christian publishing house that offers a wide range of resources and materials for children's ministry, youth ministry, adult small groups, women's ministry, pastoral

ministry, and more. The mission of Group Publishing is “To equip churches to help children, youth and adults grow in their relationship with Jesus” (www.grouppublishing.com). Group uses what they call the REAL approach to learning. The acronym stands for relational, experiential, applicable, and learning based. Group is a religious for profit institution that annually gives ten percent of its profits to domestic and international ministries.

The particular Group curriculum I analyzed is titled FaithWeaver Resources. The FaithWeaver curriculum is unique because children, teens, and adults study the same Bible story, in age-appropriate ways, each week. The curriculum comes in a resource packet with a teacher manual and student books. The curriculum is put together in three-month increments across four quarters: Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall. Two major differences between the FaithWeaver and LifeWay curricula analyzed for this study are: 1) the FaithWeaver curriculum is produced by a non-denominational Christian publishing group whereas the LifeWay curriculum is produced by the Southern Baptist Convention’s publishing house, and 2) the children’s pastor (a female) at Life United Methodist church reduces the size and scope of the FaithWeaver curriculum into a smaller and more succinct teacher manual that is given to the preschool teachers. The rationale given by the children’s pastor at Life United Methodist for providing the teachers with a more succinct version was that it created less preparation

work for the teachers so that teaching Sunday school did not become burdensome. Because the downsized teacher manual is the one given to teachers and used for Sunday school, I chose to analyze it instead of the original FaithWeaver teacher manual. Accordingly, from here on when I use “FaithWeaver” I am referring to the curriculum Life United Methodist downsized from the original FaithWeaver curriculum.

Unlike Cornerstone Baptist church, where teachers were responsible for pulling materials from a resource room for the lesson and activities suggested in the teacher manual (and often spent upwards of two hours a week doing so), at Life United Methodist there was a resource basket in the classroom containing everything a teacher would need for the lesson given in the teacher manual for that Sunday morning. The resource basket was put together each week by the children’s pastor and some of her staff. In it were 1-2 crafts and supplies, all the necessary items to be used for the snack, the Bible story, and any additional information for teachers to tell their children. Much like teachers at Cornerstone, teachers at Life had their own copy of the teacher manual in order to plan from week to week. The major difference is that teachers at Life only used their manuals to read the Bible stories because everything else was done for them via the resource basket. I analyzed four teacher manuals (i.e., the downsized manuals produced by Life) spanning one continuous year beginning in the summer quarter of 2006 and ending in

the spring quarter of 2007. It should be noted that the FaithWeaver curriculum did not have lessons for the Sunday closest to Christmas or for Easter Sunday.

The curriculum as outlined in the downsized teacher manual is character driven, focusing on the “life” and “work” of both individuals (38 lessons for the year I analyzed) and groups (12 lessons for the year I analyzed) of biblical characters each week. In contrast to the Baptist curriculum, the Methodist curriculum often spends more than one week in succession discussing the same biblical character (e.g., Jesus, or Abraham, or King David). Each element in the weekly curriculum is intricately tied to a “biblical message of the week”. For example, the children may sing songs about Jesus’ love, then hear a Bible lesson about how Jesus loved the disciples, then participate in making a craft that deals with loving others. While the curriculum used by Life does not include pictures (the original FaithWeaver curriculum did not include pictures either), I analyzed the curriculum using all of the other categories I used to analyze the LifeWay curriculum. Doing so allows me to compare and contrast the Sunday school curriculum of both churches at the end of this chapter.

Structure

As I discussed earlier, regardless of the content, curriculum that is more organized and detailed may leave less room for varying delivery. When exploring the downsized curriculum Life United Methodist Church

uses, I found the teacher manual to be less structured in both presentation (length) and directives. Each lesson in the downsized curriculum averages between 2-3 pages that contain the Bible lesson and craft instructions (condensed from 5-6 pages in the original manual), which is less than what is provided in the LifeWay curriculum (7-8 pages per lesson). The instructions in the downsized version are short and to the point, including a phrase that appears at the top of every new lesson that says, “welcome each child by name and recognize any newcomers.” There is no explanation about how to set up one’s room, no teaching application advice, no overview of lessons to be taught in the future, and no pages at the beginning discussing how to use the teacher’s manual. There is a brief letter from the children’s pastor at the beginning of each teacher’s manual that welcomes the teachers to a new Sunday school quarter. The letter encourages teachers to look through the manual and thanks them for their commitment to children’s ministry. It states the following:

As you prepare each week for teaching, please read the Bible Background for Teachers, read the lesson’s scripture and pray that God would reveal the “gift” within each lesson. It is this “gift” that you give to the children in your class each week. They are learning about God and Jesus, as well as building their Faith with the help of your teaching. You are a BIG deal, a very IMPORTANT piece of our Children’s Ministry purpose!

This paragraph suggests that teachers should pray to receive the “gift” that lies within each lesson rather than teachers relying entirely upon the

curriculum materials which happens at Cornerstone. This reliance upon a teacher's ability to both receive the "gift" and know how to teach about it is very different from what I found in the LifeWay curriculum, which leaves little room for self-interpretation. The letter can be seen as reinforcing the idea that the less structured or organized curriculum of Life gives teachers more freedom to interpret the Bible lesson than a more highly structured and organized curriculum.

Additionally, at the front of every manual is a page that outlines expectations for Sunday school teachers. Issues that are highlighted on this page are such things as: arrive on time, learn the lesson before you teach it, make children your top priority, contact children in your class as often as possible, and make your own worship and Bible study a priority. Beyond this and the letter there is no additional information for teachers concerning the curriculum or how to plan on a week-to-week basis other than what is provided for in the lesson for each week, whereas the LifeWay curriculum had an entire section detailing the use of and overall plan for the Sunday school material in addition to the individual lessons.

Gender of Primary Characters

As I mentioned earlier, one of the most overt ways that children can learn about gender at church is through the focus on specific Bible characters. In the sample of downsized FaithWeaver curriculum, 44 lessons or 88 percent of the Sundays in the sample focused on male Bible characters. Examples of

male characters presented in the curriculum included Yahweh (God), Moses, Balaam, and Joshua in the Old Testament and Jesus, Paul, and John in the New Testament. For example, the lessons for June/July 2006 are the following: Moses Grows Up, God Calls Moses to Help His People, God Parts the Red Sea, God Gives the Ten Commandments, God Wants to be First in Our Lives, and God Gave Us Rules on How to Love Others. In each of the lessons, God is discussed in the masculine form (he, him, his). For example, in the lesson Moses Grows Up, not only is the chief character (Moses) male but God is referred to in the masculine form five different times:

God was faithful to his promise to build Abraham's descendants into a great nation, complete with their own land. But God had earlier prophesied that they would linger in Egypt until the time was right for the Amorites (inhabitants of the Promise Land) to be destroyed. God chose Moses to lead his people out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Just as God used miracles to confirm to the Israelite leaders (and eventually Pharaoh) that Moses was his servant, he would use signs and wonders to confirm the authority of his Messiah and the promise of salvation (Simpson 2006, p. 15).²

Although God is referred to in the masculine form in most Bibles, it is still important to recognize the significance that it has on children's understanding of God's gender. If God is not referred to in the feminine then why would children ever assume anything different?

Other examples of Sunday school lessons that focus on male characters can be found in one unit from the Spring 2007 downsized teacher manual.

² Even though the FaithWeaver curriculum is downsized by the Children's pastor at Life church, all references concerning the FaithWeaver curriculum remain listed under the original author.

The following lessons all focus on Jesus: Jesus Teaches About the Good Fruit, Moses and Elijah Appear with Jesus, Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Son, Jesus Washes the Disciples' Feet, and Jesus is Tried and Crucified. In each of the lessons on Jesus, Jesus is portrayed in traditionally masculine ways such as being a leader, showing independence, being active, someone to be recognized, a worker, and a man with power. Absent from the lessons focused on Jesus are stories that might be considered examples of more feminine behavior such as Jesus weeping and Jesus spending time with Mary and Martha. Furthermore, the focus on male characters in this unit goes beyond Jesus, as evidenced in the following passage from the teacher manual concerning Jesus appearing with Moses and Elijah:

Jesus took only three of his disciples, Peter, James, and John with him up the mountain. Jesus wanted these disciples to experience what he knew was to come so that they could describe it later (an account was considered to be reliable if established by two or three witnesses). These same three had been chosen as witnesses earlier and would be chosen again at a later date. Why were Moses and Elijah the ones to appear with Jesus? Commentators suggest various explanations, but a likely one is that Moses represented the law and Elijah represented the prophets. In this way God demonstrated to the bewildered disciples that the coming death of Jesus fit perfectly with the other major elements of the Old Testament (Castaneda and Weaver, 2007, p. 18).

By highlighting that Jesus chose only males to be his reliable witnesses, and that male characters represented such crucial elements such as law and prophecy, the curriculum is reinforcing gender stereotypes that men are the most important and dependable characters in the Bible.

All of the remaining 8 lessons, or about 16 percent of Sundays in the downsized FaithWeaver curriculum focus on a female character. Examples of female characters focused on in the curriculum are Miriam, Moses' mother, and Esther in the Old Testament and Mary and Lydia in the New Testament. For example, in August of 2006 three of the four lessons in the month focused on Esther: Esther is Chosen to Be Queen, Esther Learns of Haman's Plans, and Esther Reveals Haman's Plot. Despite the fact that some of the material focused on female characters, the curriculum nevertheless supports traditional female gender stereotypes. For example a passage from the downsized Summer 2006 teaching manual states:

Esther, who was taken from her home and made to join a pagan King's harem, would no longer be free to marry a Godly Jewish man and have a family. She would be subject to the whims of a person powerful enough to kill her should she displease him in any way (Simpson, 2006, p. 48).

This passage portrays Esther as powerless and at the mercy and beckoning of a man, to the extent that disobeying him could cost her life. But the curriculum also breaks gender stereotypes by presenting females in traditionally masculine forms as well. For example:

Esther was made Queen for a purpose. She was encouraged to be brave in the face of difficult circumstances, reminded that one couldn't be made Queen by fate, but rather by a powerful God. Esther responded by working to bring about change in the kingdom using her royal influence. Esther's bravery was a key element in how things turned out (Simpson, 2006, p. 53).

This passage highlights Esther's bravery, work ethic, and her position of power in the kingdom. In doing so the FaithWeaver curriculum provides some evidence for children that women are important characters in the Bible who may act in "masculine ways" as well. In my opinion, this finding is strengthened by the FaithWeaver curriculum spending so much time (three consecutive weeks) on Esther, which may help to show that women can be important and powerful too.

The characters with the most exposure in the curriculum are split between Jesus and God, each with 16 lessons or 32 percent of all the Sunday lessons in the year. It should be noted that God is referred to in the masculine declension throughout the FaithWeaver curriculum.

Gendered Activities

The FaithWeaver curriculum utilizes activities to enhance the Bible lesson as the LifeWay curriculum does. Unlike the LifeWay curriculum, which uses five activity categories, the FaithWeaver curriculum uses only "craft" activities. Since there are no categorical variations separating specific activities, I analyzed the activities in the FaithWeaver curriculum in the following two ways. First, I looked to see if the activity/craft (e.g., coloring, building something, decorating, etc.) in and of itself was supporting a gender stereotype or behavior. Second, I observed whether the focus of the activity/craft (e.g., Jesus, God, Mary) included stereotypical portrayals of

males and females, including whether more activities focused on male vs. female characters.

I found the activities suggested in the FaithWeaver curriculum to be mostly gender neutral. Examples of activities include: making crowns out of aluminum foil, making bracelets out of yarn and pasta, coloring pictures related to biblical themes or characters, decorating paper hearts, making cards, and making collages. Interestingly, there were a few activities that broke traditional gender stereotypes such as this one:

As you hand out craft papers, talk to the kids about helping their parents out at home. Ask older kids the specific things they can do to help prepare for visitors to come to their house. Instruct the kids to color their face, hair and arm on the page. Then have them tear off a piece of paper towel to glue into the hand of the child on the page. As we clean our house, we need to keep our hearts clean too. We can share what we have and forgive others (Simpson, 2006, p. 10).

The activity promotes children helping their parents clean their home. What is significant about this activity is that it suggests both parents clean at home and instructs both boys and girls to help. In this way the activity transcends traditional gender stereotypes about mothers and daughters being solely responsible for taking care of the home.

While the activities in the FaithWeaver curriculum were found to be mostly gender neutral, the focus of the activities (e.g. Jesus, God, Mary) was not. Out of the 90 activities listed in the FaithWeaver curriculum spanning Summer of 2006 to Spring 2007, 75 or 83 percent of all activities focus on a

male character in the Bible. This finding is important because the curriculum is very intentional about bridging children's understanding of Bible stories with corresponding crafts. Consequently, even though the craft itself is gender neutral, children are still receiving a disproportionate level of exposure to male Bible characters and their accomplishments. This further socializes children to believe that mostly males do "important" things in the Bible. For example, when teaching the lesson Jesus Grows Up the following activity is suggested:

At the end of the Bible lesson on Jesus growing up, take the picture of a balloon and show the kids how it reflects in a large mirror. Tell the children that what we learn about Jesus, we learn about God. Just as the image of balloon didn't change in the mirror, neither does God when we look at Jesus. Then have the kids decorate their balloon picture (Castaneda and Weaver, 2007, p. 16).

In this lesson, the children are decorating a picture of a balloon (gender neutral) but at the same time learning Jesus and God (both male) are the same entity. Another example is the lesson titled Prophets Foretell About Jesus' Coming. In it the craft is as follows:

Give each child two paper cups and one length of string. Help them thread the string into each cup and tie a double knot on the inside. Let them decorate their cups with stickers. Show them how to stand apart from each other while one holds a cup to their ear and the other to their mouth. Have the kids take turns spreading the good news about Jesus' coming (Castaneda and Weaver, 2007, p. 3).

This craft in the FaithWeaver curriculum shows again how the construction of the craft is gender neutral but the lesson learned focuses on a male character (Jesus) and his future accomplishments.

Discussion and Conclusions

This chapter explored the gendered patterns and themes that emerged from an analysis of the curriculum used at Cornerstone Baptist and Life United Methodist Church. More specifically, I investigated how the LifeWay and FaithWeaver curricula painted a “picture” of religious gender socialization. I wanted to determine if and what might be variations in the Sunday school curricula and in turn the religious gender socialization between the two church organizations.

The United Methodist Church has worked towards becoming a community in which all persons, regardless of gender, racial or ethnic background, can participate in every level of its ministry (e.g., teaching Sunday school, singing in the choir, being a greeter at main doors, etc.) and hierarchical structure (e.g., pastoral staff, church executive board, bishops). Because of these positions and the fact that the United Methodist Church ordains women, the church is viewed as taking a more progressive and gender neutral approach to social issues. Therefore, one might expect to find the FaithWeaver curriculum used by Life United Methodist church to be progressive and gender neutral as well.

The Southern Baptist Convention has traditionally been conservative with respect to gender, most recently by adopting an even more restrictive view of the role women play in the church (SBC 2000). Thus, because of its history and its recent actions further excluding women from pastoral ministry, the Southern Baptist Convention can be viewed as maintaining and espousing traditional gender roles for its congregants. As a result, one might expect to find the LifeWay curriculum used by Cornerstone Baptist Church to advocate more traditional gender roles.

The LifeWay curriculum and the FaithWeaver curriculum have several things in common: curriculum is character driven, curriculum focuses predominantly on male characters in the Bible, and curriculum uses activities that could be seen as supporting gendered stereotypes.

That both curricula use formats that focus on one or two Bible characters a week is not necessarily an issue with regard to gender socialization. But FaithWeaver and LifeWay both focus on male Bible characters. Approximately eighty-five percent of the Sunday lessons in a year focused on male Bible characters in both the LifeWay and the FaithWeaver curricula. Additionally, male Bible characters in both curricula tended to be portrayed in stereotypically masculine ways. Similarly, studies have found gender stereotypes in the portrayal of males and females in children's literature (Agee 1993; Purcell and Stewart 1990; Tetenbaum and Pearson 1989;

Kingston and Lovelace 1978; *Women on Words and Images* 1975; Hillman 1974; Jacklin and Mischel 1973; Weitzman et al. 1972). Generally, males are portrayed as competent and achievement oriented, while females are limited in what they do and are shown as less competent than males.

My findings also support Roberts' (1990) position that gender stereotypes and attitudes in Christian culture have, "a long history of sex bias". Roberts found the core of gender bias in Christianity is the Bible. Neville (1974) and Wilson (1973) add to this by showing the Bible portrays men as leaders and women as followers and in traditional family roles, meaning women are the ones who care for home and family. Finally, much like the findings of feminists who have explored patriarchal tendencies within the Christian tradition (Brown 1994; Schmidt 1989; Curb and Manahan 1985; Reuther and Keller 1981; Clark and Richardson 1977; Mollenkott 1977; Daly 1973), I found the portrayal of men and women in the LifeWay and the FaithWeaver curricula did not differ from the findings of feminists.

The results suggest that while the LifeWay curriculum is well within the set of beliefs about gender in the Southern Baptist Church, the FaithWeaver curriculum falls short of the ideals concerning gender neutrality espoused by the United Methodist Church. However, the FaithWeaver curriculum does have twice as many lessons (8) as the LifeWay curriculum (4) that focus predominantly on a female character. While this number might

seem arbitrary considering the high number of lessons focused on males in the FaithWeaver curriculum, I believe it reflects somewhat on the United Methodist Church's commitment to become more inclusive of all persons. One could make an argument that because there are more male Bible characters there is more attention paid to male characters in the two curricula. In other words, the representation of men and women in both curricula is somewhat proportionate to the representation of men and women in the Bible. But, the Life Church/FaithWeaver curriculum could be viewed as trying to increase women's visibility by, for example, spending a large amount of time (disproportionate to her representation in the Bible) on Esther.

Another thing the LifeWay and FaithWeaver curricula have in common is a focus on gendered activities. The effect gendered activities have on children is well documented (e.g., Martin 1998; Thorne 1993; Maccoby 1988). To find both curricula use activities that are gender stereotyped either in creation or focus contributes to the "picture" of religious gender socialization. Despite the fact the LifeWay and FaithWeaver curricula went about assembling Sunday school activities in different ways (i.e., LifeWay had different categories of activities while FaithWeaver had crafts only), both curricula reinforced gender stereotypes. Based upon the activity by itself (and further evidence from non-participant observation), I found the

Homeliving activities in the LifeWay curriculum to be the most gendered of all activities in either curriculum. This finding is not surprising, because as Peek, Lowe, and Williams (1991) and Hertel and Hughes (1987) found, Southern Baptists are more likely than other Americans to prefer traditional childbearing and homemaking roles for women. However, it should be noted again that while the Homeliving activities appear gendered in their design, the curriculum does not specify only one gender should participate in the activity. That gendered themes and patterns are also found in the focus of the activities given in the FaithWeaver curriculum suggests again the curriculum does not reach the ideals concerning gender neutrality espoused by the United Methodist Church. This could be due in part to the curriculum being non-denominational Christian rather than specifically United Methodist.

While there are similarities in the FaithWeaver and LifeWay curricula it is also the case that there are differences, namely, in the structure of the curricula and the use of gendered illustrations. The LifeWay curriculum is more structured, organized, and ordered in both presentation (layout and details in all written materials) and directives to teachers than the FaithWeaver curriculum, and I believe this structure limits Southern Baptist Sunday school teachers from deviating from the written curriculum. The less structured downsized FaithWeaver curriculum used by Life United Methodist seems to leave space for teachers to interpret biblical messages

concerned with issues of gender on an individual basis. When asked by what criteria the curriculum was chosen and the extent to which the pastor desires her teachers to stick to it, the children's pastor at Life answered in this way:

The reason I chose this curriculum is that it matches the curriculum we use in early Sunday school and what we use on Wednesday nights. But, honestly if you were a teacher here before I started and you still teach, the curriculum would seem the same as before, because we have been condensing it into *Cliff Note* like lessons for some time. Because it is about ten pages and to me if you're in a room with 3 and 4 year olds you can't be attempting to decipher the lesson, you can't be reading out of a book. So what I do for them is, let's say it's lesson 10, I'll go through and I kind of make *Cliff Notes*. And I say what the story is, what the Bible verse is, where it's from and then I'll list out (ugh), um the craft and then what the craft is. So its kind of like *Cliff Notes* but gives them the information they need to be successful. As far as sticking right to it, if a child says something that kind of takes them onto a different tangent I think that is totally fine. They know this is the Bible passage, this is the craft, this is the snack but as far as the timing or the interpretation I leave that up to them because they were chosen for a reason to teach Sunday school and I trust them.

In the opposite way, the more structured, ordered, and lengthy LifeWay curriculum is so detailed that a specific teacher would have less need or opportunity to supplement or interpret a lesson with additional information. When asked by what criteria the curriculum was chosen and the extent to which the pastor desires her teachers to stick to it, the children's pastor at Cornerstone answered in this way:

Okay, I am Baptist to the bone so that is the first criteria (laughing). I have studied a lot of curriculum and I have looked at a lot of reasons I would choose particular curriculums but that is at the top. (Um), I think the teaching resource books are so thorough, they have stories, pictures, great directions, room set-up, (um, um) things you really need for a lesson are all right there. It's colorful, it's bright, it has great teaching tips in it. If the teachers follow the materials the kids get a

great Sunday school lesson. But, even if they don't follow it exactly there is so much there they can still work from. That is something else I like about this curriculum, there is so much there. Even if our teachers wanted to they couldn't get to everything on a Sunday morning. As far as sticking to it, I would hope they would use the suggested Bible story. Also, I think it is important that Sunday school is a total teaching time, that you are using Bible thoughts, Bible phrases, and what the Bible story is about that day during the class. That you aren't waiting until you have them in a semi-circle and your sitting there to tell them the Bible story. I like to see the whole session hinge on what the Bible lesson is talking about that day. What does it tell us about being in Homeliving, what does it teach us about sharing with your friends, what does it say about arts and crafts, you know. And, I am sitting here thinking about how I haven't verbalized that to all my teachers. Maybe I need to have a meeting to tell them this.

Based upon what I observed in this study and the comments from the children's pastor at Life, I believe that because teachers at Life United Methodist are given freedom to further interpret the Bible lessons and because they are not bound to a dense and structured curriculum, it allowed them to emphasize the role of women in the Bible if they wanted to even when the text (i.e., the Bible) often downplays women's contributions.

Although the teachers at Cornerstone Baptist are given a thoroughly Baptist curriculum, the children's pastor is unsure whether they are meeting some of her expectations for Sunday school teachers. But I still believe teachers at Cornerstone Baptist are given a dense and structured curriculum to make their own interpretation of the curriculum less necessary. As a result, stereotyping gender roles and downplaying the role of women in the

Bible, which are in line with the official position of women in the Southern Baptist Church, are likely to occur.

Teachers at Life United Methodist Church who take seriously the denomination's goal of gender neutrality would seem to have more opportunities to teach Sunday school in gender neutral ways than teachers at Cornerstone Baptist Church, given the limited presentation (layout and details of all written materials) and directives to teachers in the curriculum used at Life. However, it should be noted that some may view the downsizing of the original FaithWeaver curriculum and the use of a "resource basket" provided by the children's pastor on Sunday mornings as providing a high level of structure to Sunday school that may limit teachers' ability to include their own beliefs and values.

The other major difference between the FaithWeaver and LifeWay curricula is the use of gendered pictures in the LifeWay curriculum, which the FaithWeaver curriculum does not have. As Weitzman et al. (1972) and then Clark et al. (1993) stated, pictures in books play an important role in early gender role socialization because they are a vehicle for presenting what society values to young children. In addition, illustrations provide children with images of role models displaying what children can and should be like when they grow up (Clark et al. 1993; Weitzman et al. 1972). Much like the study by Weitzman et al. (1972), which found females were greatly

underrepresented in book illustrations, the LifeWay pictures limit children's exposure to female characters and reinforce female gender stereotypes. Just as many of the pictures in the books used in Weitzman et al.'s study portray boys as leaders and rescuing girls in peril, many of the pictures in the LifeWay curriculum portray female characters as followers and submissive to male characters. This finding is important because it shows one additional way the Southern Baptist curriculum helps children to discover and internalize gendered attitudes, values, and behaviors. Based upon the pictures in the LifeWay curriculum, boys and girls seeing the pictures would learn girls grow up being submissive to boys and want to have and care for children, and boys grow up being dominant and want to be leaders and providers for their families.

In sum, the gendered patterns and themes that emerged from the analysis of the curriculum from both the Southern Baptist and United Methodist churches clearly exhibit female gender stereotypes. By providing a highly structured lesson plan, focusing the majority of lessons on male Bible characters, displaying illustrations that show gendered stereotypes and behaviors, and devising activities that uphold the lessons taught about male Bible characters as leaders and women as caretakers and homemakers, the LifeWay curriculum provides religious gender socialization. This is what one might expect from the curriculum used at Cornerstone Baptist Church. By

focusing the majority of lessons on male Bible characters, and devising activities that emphasize male characters and accomplishments, the FaithWeaver curriculum also provides religious gender socialization. The FaithWeaver curriculum is in some ways less gendered than the LifeWay curriculum, which is what one might expect of a more progressive and gender neutral church like Life United Methodist Church.

Finally, it is important to mention the curricula examined for this study can be viewed as “typical” for a year (i.e., there was nothing anomalous about the particular years I examined) at both Cornerstone Baptist and Life United Methodist. While the exact content of the Sunday school curriculum used by each church does change from year to year, those changes are primarily limited to using different Bible characters and Bible stories. Some characters (e.g., Jesus, God, Paul) are used every year.

Chapter 7: Sunday School Observation Findings

In this chapter I discuss my observations of Sunday school classes at Cornerstone Baptist Church and Life United Methodist Church. More specifically, the intent of this chapter is to uncover any gendered patterns and themes that emerged via the non-participant observation of Sunday school classes. Similar to the previous chapter, interpreting the material meant the most salient and relevant features of the classes, including the Sunday school lesson, the teachers' and children's actions, dress, and set-up of the classroom came forth. Findings were then weaved together into a consistent and coherent format so that ultimately, a "picture" of religious gender socialization within Sunday school classrooms was formed.

I observed preschool Sunday school classes at Cornerstone Baptist and Life United Methodist church for approximately twelve weeks. Each week I wrote detailed notes concerning any events relevant to religious gender socialization that took place in the Sunday school classrooms. Generally, I stayed in one or two different places in each classroom so as to not disrupt normal Sunday behaviors and actions. While I aimed to be as unobtrusive as possible, on occasion students would approach me and ask what I was doing. My standard response was that I was there to watch how much fun they had in Sunday school, which seemed okay with them.

Using Lofland and Lofland's (1995) emergent analysis, I discovered four distinct patterns and themes (categories) relevant to religious gender socialization: structure/non-structure, dress of children, teacher/student interaction, and student/student interaction. Using Straus and Corbin's (1990) initial and focused coding, I discovered sub-categories. The sub-categories related to structure/non-structure were Bible lesson, free play, snack time, and interruptions. The sub-categories related to dress/adornment were clothes and shoes. The sub-categories related to teacher/student interaction were reinforcement and commands. Finally, the sub-category related to student/student interactions was gendered play.

First, by structure I mean the number of formal activities and interactions during Sunday school classes, and the extent to which a plan for Sunday school is executed. More structure may increase the likelihood that students will receive religious instruction (e.g., about biblical characters and biblical stories), including gendered religious instruction, important to their awareness of gender within their denomination. And, as Brown and Gary (1991) suggest, as an individual boy or girl develops a greater understanding of religious concepts, he or she learns how to evaluate his or her behavior and relate it to others from that religious perspective. During my observations at Cornerstone Baptist, I witnessed teachers spending very little time on and waiting until the end of class to teach a Bible lesson, with children spending

the majority of their time in free-play. In contrast, I witnessed teachers at Life United Methodist spending a significant amount of time teaching the Bible lesson at the beginning of class and children spending the majority of their time in organized activities or crafts.

Second, the way in which children are dressed for church is important to this study because it represents how parents gender their children through clothes (Martin 1998). Martin (1998) found in her study on becoming a gendered body that clothes, particularly their color, signify a child's gender. This was certainly the case at both Cornerstone Baptist and Life United Methodist. In addition, the clothes in which parents send children to church help shape the child's experience at church and teaches him or her something about what is appropriate attire for church. I observed girls wearing much more dressy clothing (i.e., dresses, hose, fancy shoes, etc.) than boys (who wore jeans, t-shirts, tennis shoes, etc.) at both Cornerstone and Life.

Third, the interactions between teachers and students at Sunday school are important because previous studies have shown teachers are one way schools gender socialize children (Marshall 1997; Sadker and Sadker 1994; Etaugh and Liss 1992). During my observations in four different preschool classrooms at Cornerstone Baptist and Life United Methodist, I witnessed numerous interactions between teachers and students where teachers were socializing children with respect to gender.

Fourth, studies have found peer interactions help children to create and recreate gender (Thorne 1993). Thorne's (1993) research on this was unique because it showed how children actively come together to help create and sometimes challenge gender structures. While Thorne's study primarily focused on interactions between children at public school, I believe the same things occur during children's peer interactions at Sunday school. That is, group settings allow girls and boys to teach each other about gender. At Cornerstone Baptist Church and Life United Methodist Church, I witnessed interactions between children that were instances of religious gender socialization.

I analyzed the field data from the Southern Baptist and United Methodist churches at the same time for consistency; however, I mostly discuss the results for each church separately before comparing and contrasting the results. In doing so, I endeavor to present the most important messages regarding religious gender socialization uncovered during the non-participant observation.

Cornerstone Baptist Church

Cornerstone Baptist Church has eight preschool Sunday school classes (for ages 3-5) on Sunday mornings. The Sunday school classrooms I observed at Cornerstone Baptist averaged around 7-8 children (across the twelve weeks they were ninety-one percent white and nine percent Hispanic, fifty-five percent female and forty-five percent male) and 1 lead teacher and 1 teaching

assistant. The teachers and assistants I observed at Cornerstone (ninety percent were female and ninety-two percent were white) were assigned a specific classroom for the entire year. Therefore, children and teachers were provided some sense of continuity on a week-to-week basis. Sunday school classes lasted, on average, one hour and fifteen minutes. I observed in four of the eight preschool classrooms at Cornerstone Baptist. I observed three times in a row in each classroom before moving to another room.

Structure/Non-structure

In coding the observational data from Cornerstone Baptist Church, one of the more striking findings I made is the often overwhelming lack of structure and organization in the classrooms. Interestingly, I learned from asking Sunday school teachers that, on average, teachers at Cornerstone spent 3-4 hours or more per week preparing Sunday school lessons while teachers at Life, on average, spent less than one hour. When I asked, "How much time do you spend preparing the lesson each week?", one Sunday school teacher at Cornerstone Baptist who had been teaching Sunday school for 30 years said:

Hum, I'll say six hours a week. I usually come on Thursdays for 2 or 3 hours to set up the room. You know the activities and crafts and things. Sometimes they're easier to set up than others. I start on Monday for that week. Try to pick crafts or activities that go with the lesson. It's hard sometimes but I think it's important that things go with the Bible lesson. I would rather have too much than not enough. I read the Bible story a few times during the week and then spend a couple of hours on Saturday making sure I know my stuff. I get to

church on Sunday mornings an hour before Sunday school to do any last minute things.

Whereas, when I asked the same question of one of the teachers at Life United Methodist, she replied:

Oh! Well. I don't spend as much time as I should (laughs). I guess I spend, well, I usually look at it on Saturday nights for around 30 minutes to an hour. I try to read the Bible point and then look at what the craft is going to be. Sometimes if I think it won't take the kids long then I bring an extra craft with me. So yeah, probably an hour or less. Am I in trouble now? (laughs)

Interestingly, even though teachers spend more time in preparation at Cornerstone Baptist than at Life United Methodist, their classrooms are much less organized overall. The lack of structure shows itself in many different ways, but perhaps none as important to this study as the lack of structure during the Bible lesson. Additionally, the overall lack of structure throughout the entire class period provides important insight into the religious gendering practices at Cornerstone.

Bible Lesson. Bible lesson refers to the part of Sunday school where the teacher reads a story from the Bible and then talks about it with the children. Some of the key findings that emerged from my observations of Bible lessons are: the placement of the Bible lesson during the course of the class, the pace with which the lesson is taught, the length of time spent on the Bible lesson, the gender of the teacher teaching the lesson, the gender assigned to God in the Bible lesson, and the amount of detail provided in any

explanation of the Bible lesson. Because I discussed the importance of the gender of biblical characters in the previous chapter, I focus more on the delivery of the Bible lesson in this chapter.

The Bible lesson at Cornerstone Baptist always took place at the end of the class period (within the final 10 minutes) and left teachers hastening (i.e., reading fast, skipping some details, and leaving little to no time for questions) to finish. I witnessed one class where the teacher ran out of time and did not read a Bible lesson at all. These practices made it difficult for teachers to provide any meaningful explanation of the Bible stories and made it less likely children would learn anything (new) concerning the Bible story other than what was originally read. Because the teachers had an hour and fifteen minutes with the preschool children every Sunday morning, they could have spent much more time on the Bible lesson. Additionally, by the end of class both boys and girls were usually much more active and less likely to pay full attention than at the beginning of class. It was common to observe teachers scrambling to gather children into one place in the room to teach the Bible lesson before they ran out of time. For example, I made this note while observing in week two:

There are ten minutes left and the teacher is trying to get the children to come and sit down for the Bible story. The children are not very responsive (2 boys playing with blocks not even listening, 1 boy working on craft; 2 girls in homeliving area playing with dolls, 2 girls working on craft). With five minutes left the teacher still does not have everyone in the circle. She starts anyway while the teacher assistant

gets the final kids in circle. One of the boys turns on the radio sitting next to the teacher. She turns it off and moves it behind her. Most of the kids are talking. The teacher asks them repeatedly to be quiet and listen. One boy ask multiple questions (not related to the story) and interjects opinions. The other two boys are pinching and touching each other (not paying attention). She tells the story about Jesus and the woman at the well. She gives no background information about the woman. She says Jesus asked the woman to get him some water and then told her about God. Even though children are restless the teacher stays calm but never finishes story. The whole lesson took less than three minutes.

Another example of this in a different class at Cornerstone is from week

seven:

There are about 15 minutes left until the end of class. The assistant (female) has all the kids help clean up the room. She starts counting from 20 down and the kids race around picking things up. Two boys are squealing "faster, faster". When they finish the kids lazily begin sitting in a circle in the middle of the classroom. Of the nine, five kids go straight to the circle (4 girls, 1 boy). The other four are still playing (3 boys, 1 girl). The teacher calls them over again. All but one (a boy) comes and sits down. The assistant brings the final boy over. By this time the children in the circle are all talking. They are very loud and squirming around. By the time the teacher gets the kids quiet to listen there are only six minutes left in class. The assistant reminds the teacher of this because she was setting out a snack for the kids to eat after the story. The teacher then quickly (in under two minutes) tells the story of Jesus healing a woman who couldn't stand up straight. With four minutes to go and not allowing for any questions she prays, "Father God, thank you for this snack and your presence in our lives, Amen".

The atmosphere described in both of these observations was common at Cornerstone Baptist Church. I witnessed on many occasions (at least 10 weeks) teachers hurriedly gathering children to squeeze in the Bible lesson before the class ended. In each of these instances children had no time to

inquire about the characters in the Bible stories nor did teachers have time to offer any additional detail about the stories. Consequently, in the lesson I described concerning the woman at the well, instead of children learning that the woman became a leader in her community and that Jesus broke gender stereotypes in his day in order to speak to her (men in that time and place would have never spoken with a woman who was not a relative, and would have chastised her for being in public without a man), the children only learned that she gave Jesus water and he told her about God. Because teachers waited until the end of class to read the Bible lesson they left no time to formally teach about gender with regard to biblical characters.

Another interesting observation had to do with the gender of the teacher who taught or read the Bible lesson. On every occasion I witnessed an adult male (three weeks out of twelve) in the classroom (two of the four classrooms), the male always taught or read the lesson. What is interesting is that none of the adult males were “lead” teachers at Cornerstone; they were all considered teaching assistants. In the classrooms without male assistant teachers, the female “lead” teacher taught or read the lesson eight out of the nine weeks I observed. This finding is in line with the stated beliefs concerning men’s and women’s positions and authority (especially concerning the dissemination of Scripture) in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Finally, I observed both male and female teachers at Cornerstone Baptist always referred to God in the masculine form (i.e., he, his, him) when teaching or reading the Bible lesson. This finding is important because it adds to the picture of religious gender socialization at Cornerstone, but it was not surprising based upon the position the Southern Baptist Church takes on gender.

Free Play. Based on the amount of material provided in the curriculum used at Cornerstone Baptist Church, it would be easy to assume that children would not have any free time during Sunday school. According to my observations, this assumption is wrong. Instead, in the twelve weeks I observed Sunday school classes at Cornerstone Baptist I found children spent the majority of their time on a Sunday morning (at least one hour, on average, of the hour and fifteen minute class) in semi-supervised free play (i.e., play among children in which adults only occasionally intervene).

While my observation of Sunday school classes at Cornerstone revealed far less structure than I anticipated, the layout of the Sunday school classrooms was exactly like the diagrams provided in the curriculum. That is, there were distinct areas of the room designated for activities such as blocks, art, homeliving, puzzles, and nature. There were also tables for the children to sit at and a rug in the middle of the room for children to sit on (as suggested by the curriculum) during the Bible lesson. However, beyond the

room being set up as the curriculum suggested, there was no order in the way children moved and played and spent their time in the room. For example, I made this note concerning activities:

Sunday school started 30 minutes ago, however the teacher has yet to get all the children together to do a group activity. The children are moving around the class by their own will doing different things (crafts, art, playing alone with cars, puzzles). They have yet to talk about or discuss anything to do with the Bible or biblical characters. If a stranger came in and did not know this was a church they might think this was daycare. The two teachers are interacting well with the children but with relatively no structure (no organized flow or direction for the class as a whole). At present 2 boys are playing with toy cars on the floor, the other boy is building something with blocks. One of the girls is coloring at a table with the teacher, one is on the floor playing with the boy building with blocks. The other two girls are holding babies and playing in the homeliving area.

This example shows how teachers at Cornerstone did not follow the LifeWay curriculum's suggestion to conduct two or three organized activities over the course of the classroom period with all the children. I witnessed behavior such as this in all four of the classrooms I visited. On many occasions teachers or teaching assistants would work on an activity such as coloring a picture or working on a puzzle with one or two children but rarely did they gather everyone at once to work on one specific activity or even require everyone to participate in any of the activities (Bible lesson and snack time were exceptions). Observations from one class at Cornerstone revealed this:

This is the third class I have visited at the Baptist church and I am observing similar things. While the curriculum is very structured and organized the classroom is more like a free-for-all. As far as delivery is

concerned, I haven't seen much. Other than the one craft the children did at the beginning of the class there have not been any other organized activities for them to do. The kids have just been able to do what they want for the most part. They are all over the room playing with different things and carrying on without any structure.

Overall I was surprised by how little structure and organization was present in the Sunday school classes at Cornerstone given how structured and organized the LifeWay curriculum was. I surmise that because children were given the freedom to do what they wanted for most of the class period with a quick Bible lesson at the end (i.e., they could choose crafts, playing with blocks, chasing each other, playing with dolls, etc.), the gender socialization I observed was likely already taking place at home and/or in childcare. That is, boys and girls at Cornerstone did not seem to be learning any new gendered behavior. Rather, they seemed to rely on previously learned gender behaviors. Had the planned activities been delivered in the way suggested by the curriculum, I might have seen more religious gender socialization.

Snack Time. Snack time at Cornerstone Baptist was disorganized in that I never knew if or when the kids would have a snack. On five different occasions the teachers ran out of time and skipped snack time completely. Because of the lack of structure and organization during Sunday school, snack time at Cornerstone was used in a very different way than snack time at Life United Methodist. At Cornerstone Baptist, snack time carried with it

no meaning or purpose other than providing the children with something to eat (when they actually had it). However, while the teachers did not use snack time as an additional way to teach the Bible lesson or to teach about religion more generally, I witnessed important interactions during snack time that I found relevant to this study. For example:

The children are getting ready to have a snack. The teacher asks two girls to set the table for everyone so they can eat. One of the girls puts plates down and napkins. The other girl gets glasses and fills them with water for everyone. While this is happening the other children continue to play.

Another teacher in a different classroom handled snack time in this way:

It was time for a snack (less than 10 minutes left of class), and to get ready the teacher went across the room, walking past a group of boys playing on the floor with blocks and puzzles to two girls in the homeliving area dressing babies. She asked if the girls would like to help her clean off the table and set out some napkins for the snacks. The girls were excited and set their babies down and followed her back to the table.

Finally, an example concerning the end of the snack:

After the children had finished their snack she (the teacher) turned to the two girls sitting next to her and asked them if they would please help her clean up the table. The girls nodded yes. The other children all got up quickly and ran off to play in other parts of the room. While cleaning off the table one of the girls said, "I'm a good little helper". The teacher acknowledged her and said, "Both of you are good helpers".

Each of these examples of girls helping the female teachers with female-typed tasks teach or reinforce gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles. In this environment, that is both Southern Baptist and low structure, the

teachers often relied on traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes. Studies indicate modeling of particular behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, or values supported by reinforcement is paramount to social learning theory (Bandura 1977; Mischel 1966). Thus, by modeling female teachers' behaviors and being asked to help with female-typed tasks, girls at Cornerstone were learning gender roles.

In addition to the gendered behaviors found in setting up for snack time, I also observed gender influencing the nature of the prayer given before the snack. All of the teachers at Cornerstone referred to God as masculine in their prayers. For instance, one teacher prayed, "Dear heavenly Father, thank you for letting your son Jesus die for our sins. Thank you for letting us learn about you this morning. And thank you for this food. In Jesus' name. Amen". Because the children at the Baptist church have little organized exposure to biblical and religious themes, things such as prayer are important ways in which they learn about gender at church. By using only masculine forms of God in prayer, the teachers reinforce the children's understanding of God as male.

In another class the teacher asked if any children wanted to pray and both a boy and girl raised their hand. The teacher chose the boy and he, while looking at all the other children, very loudly and energetically, said, "God, thank you for this food, let's eat". The other children in the class laugh

with him at his prayer. The teacher quiets everyone down and stops them from eating and instructs the girl who wanted to pray to go ahead. The girl reverently bows her head and in an almost inaudible tone prays, “Dear God, thank you for letting us come to church today. Thank you for our teacher. Thank you for this snack. Amen”. While these actions do not provide us with additional information about religious gender socialization, they do support the point I made earlier concerning the lack of structure allowing for children to rely on earlier learned gender behaviors (i.e., those they learned from home, daycare, or preschool). In this case, the boy was acting in a very loud and energetic way while the girl was much more reserved and quiet.

Interruptions. The final sub-category related to structure and non-structure at Cornerstone Baptist Church I witnessed during my observations has to do with interruptions (i.e., anything disrupting the attention of the teachers on the children) during the Sunday school class. The reason interruptions became important to this study had to do with the number and regularity of interruptions on an average Sunday morning. Also, interruptions kept teachers from engaging with the children and transmitting ideas about God, gender, and church to the children. The main interruption I witnessed was children coming to Sunday school late. When children arrived at Sunday school, they waited at a desk while someone signed them in. Teachers would then write their names on bracelets and place them on their

wrists, as well as clip numbers corresponding with their names onto the backs of their outfits. This was part of a process to ensure Sunday school teachers knew which children were in their class and to make sure they could only be picked up by the person who dropped them off. This process usually took at least a couple of minutes and required at least one teacher in the room to help.

Arriving to Sunday school late was very common at Cornerstone Baptist. During the twelve weeks I observed, I witnessed at least two children arriving late to class each week. More commonly, three to five children would arrive late, some as late as one hour. Because each time a child entered late one teacher was required to help him or her sign in, the frequency and regularity of these interruptions often decreased the quantity of time teachers would spend engaged with children at Sunday school. Again, because the overall level of structure and organization was already low at Cornerstone, any further decrease in involvement between teachers and children seemed to limit the amount of religious gender socialization in particular and religious instruction more generally, to which children were exposed.

Dress and Adornment of Children

The initial coding of my observation notes revealed a theme or pattern concerning the dress of preschool children at Sunday school. The variation in dress and adornment between boys and girls at Cornerstone Baptist was

particularly interesting. The two sub-categories that emerged through the process of focused coding were clothing and shoes. While these may seem like obvious sub-categories, they are relevant to this study. Both represent ways in which parents gender their children and how clothing affects the activities children can do. While I acknowledge preschool children might have some input into what they wear, because of the age of the children observed in this study, I believe outfits mostly reflect parent's decisions about clothing for their children on Sunday mornings.

Clothes. The findings of Martin's (1998) study of preschool children show how the color of clothing a child wears signifies a child's gender. Across the twelve weeks of observation at Cornerstone Baptist Church, about 69% of the girls wore pink clothing to Sunday school (percentage calculated by dividing the total number of girls wearing pink by the total number of girls in all classrooms observed, see Table 1 in Appendix C). Boys, on the other hand, were much more likely to wear brown, black, blue, or other primary colors.

In addition to wearing pink, most girls at Cornerstone Baptist (82% across the twelve weeks) wore dresses to church every week as well (see Table 1 in Appendix C). Wearing a dress to church restricted girls' ability to participate in all of the activities boys did. For instance:

Some of the boys (3) are crawling around on the floor and growling like they are animals. They are having a good time. They all start

crawling and chasing one of the girls. They say, "We're going to eat you". A different girl sees what they are doing and comes over to join them. She gets on her hands and knees to crawl around with the boys. Almost immediately a female teacher comes over and picks her up. She says quietly to her, "Remember that you are a little lady and with your dress on you need to be modest". She seems okay with this instruction and returns to play with two girls in the homeliving area.

I observed many occasions such as this where girls seemed willing to participate in activities but were either cognizant they were wearing clothing that would not allow it or were not supposed to participate in a particular activity while wearing a dress. An example from another class notes:

While some of the girls were playing on the floor with blocks and toy animals a female teacher in the room said from across the room, "Girls cover your legs or at least cross them". The girls seemed a little puzzled at first but then complied. The teacher walked over to them and told them that "girls sit differently than boys".

These findings parallel those of Martin (1998); however, in Martin's study, which only observed in preschools, the percentage of girls wearing dresses was significantly lower. I think this is because parents are much more particular about dressing their daughters up for church as opposed to preschool.

The boys at Cornerstone Baptist were less dressed up (i.e., in shorts, t-shirts, un-tucked clothing, non-matching outfits, etc.) than the girls. While it was common to find girls in dresses or skirts and dressy tops, it was just as common to find boys in jeans and a t-shirt. There were some boys who were more dressed up, wearing slacks and a button-down shirt with a collar.

However, the average boy at Cornerstone was not dressed as nicely as the average girl.

Where I believe clothing plays a part in children's religious gender socialization is the location (i.e., a Southern Baptist church) dictates for parents a certain level of adornment. Because parents know they are taking their children to church they dress them a certain way. And, because Southern Baptists follow a more traditional approach to gender, children (especially girls) are dressed accordingly. For this reason, I believe girls at Cornerstone are more dressed up than boys because parents of children at Cornerstone adhere to traditional gender norms that expect girls to be more dressed up than boys, in general, and at church, in particular.

Shoes. Like the color of clothes or wearing a dress, I found the particular kind of shoes a child wore to Sunday school to be interesting. While Martin's (1998) study did not consider shoes, I found observing a child's shoes to be a unique addition to this study. Overall, 88% of the girls in classrooms at Cornerstone Baptist wore dressy shoes (i.e., shoes with buckles, and shoes that were shiny, pretty, and non-athletic, see Table 1 in Appendix C). Wearing dressy shoes did not limit a girl's physicality in the classroom like wearing a dress did. But, shoes helped to signify that the way girls were dressed for church at Cornerstone Baptist was not for functional purposes as much as it was for them to look pretty and more formal. This was not the

case for boys, who were often wearing athletic-type shoes. This made it easier for them to be involved in any kind of play they desired. It signified boys were dressed more for functional purposes than to look dressed up like the girls were.

I believe shoes play a part in children's religious gender socialization in a similar way as clothes did. Parents can play an important role in selecting shoes to go with preschool children's outfits. Knowing that parents are dressing little boys or girls for church says something about a parent's own understanding of what is deemed appropriate attire for boys or girls in that setting. Therefore, the shoes boys and girls wear to church at Cornerstone Baptist reflect the traditional gender roles to which Southern Baptist parents tend to adhere.

Teacher and Student Interaction

When coding interactions between teachers and children at Cornerstone Baptist, an interaction was coded as positive reinforcement if the teacher provided a student with praise during lessons or playtime. It was coded as a command if the teacher was disciplining, being assertive with, or redirecting the child. The gender of the teacher and the gender of the child were also recorded and add to the interpretation of specific interactions. Some of the interactions were very brief and others took place during large spans of time. The findings described in this section call attention to the

subtle and not so subtle ways preschool children become gendered and the role Sunday school teachers have in this process.

Positive Reinforcement. The positive reinforcement I witnessed at Cornerstone Baptist took place when children were in groups and when they spent one on one time with teachers. Most of the interactions I coded as positive reinforcement mirrored the gendered patterns found in other studies (Martin 1998; Marshall 1997; Adler et al. 1992), such as reinforcing masculine behaviors in boys and feminine behaviors in girls. For instance, the following is a field note from week four, about the interaction between a female teacher and three students (1 boy, 2 girls):

Three kids approach a table with craft materials. The female teaching assistant watches them and then moves to the table and asks if they want to make a kite. All three children seem excited and sit in chairs (the two girls sit on one side of the table, the boy on the other). The boy wants to make his own and does not request the help of the teacher at all. On a few occasions the teacher intervenes because he seems lost. He lets her but then works on his own again. The two girls let the teacher help them every step as they make their kites. While making their kite both girls ask the teacher a number of times if they are doing it right. She says yes and continues to help them. When they were about finished the teacher looked at the boy and praised him specifically for doing it on his own and what a good kite he made. She then told the girls they were doing well and how beautiful their kites were.

This example shows in a subtle way how the female teacher reinforced gendered behaviors, specifically, independent behavior in boys and dependent behavior in girls. In another example:

The rest of the children, 4 girls and 2 boys, were playing in the homeliving area. The girls had all of the clothes out and were taking

turns trying things on, as well as playing with dolls. A male teacher who was sitting in the corner with them asked them "Do you think we should feed the babies some breakfast?" The girls all said yes. He then asked them, "Should you set the table and make breakfast in the kitchen?" (He was referring to the play kitchen in the room.) The girls started gathering plates and pots to serve breakfast. Meanwhile, the entire time the 2 boys had been "sword fighting" with wooden spoons and hiding from each other under the table and behind the box of clothes. When the girls started "preparing breakfast", the teacher said to the boys, "What else could you boys do right now so these young ladies can set up breakfast for everyone?". The little girls seemed happy about this.

This example also reveals the subtle positive reinforcement the girls received from the teacher for playing in the homeliving area and following along with the gendered tasks the teacher suggested. In another way, the teacher also reinforced the boys' behavior by allowing them to continue rough play in an area of the classroom designed for homeliving activities. Furthermore, it was only when the boys' behavior became more disruptive that the teacher asked them to find something else to do so the girls could continue their gendered play.

Another place I observed positive reinforcement was the Bible lesson, especially when the teacher asked children questions at the end, if there was enough time left in class. Typically, this would involve the children raising their hands to be called upon, but in some cases, when no one raised his or her hand, the teacher would pick someone. Generally, I observed all children regardless of gender being positively reinforced for the answers they provided.

Commands. While positive reinforcements centered on teachers “praising” a child’s actions, I witnessed commands as directed statements aimed at eliciting a response from the child. The most common commands I witnessed for boys dealt with behavior, such as: stop running, stop chasing other kids, no rough housing, do not throw things, and be more quiet. For girls the most common commands dealt with helping, such as: set the table for snack, clean up after snack, get a paper towel for the teacher, and hand things out. These observations reveal in some way how Sunday school teachers aid in the construction of what Thorne (1993) calls “different cultures”. Thorne discusses different cultures as a way of examining the social relations in which multiple differences are constructed and given meaning. That is, different cultures create categories in which we define differences between what boys and girls do in society. At Cornerstone Baptist boys are engaging in more rough-and-tumble play and girls are engaged in more cooperative kinds of play and activities, aided by teachers’ reinforcements and commands, which fits each gender’s different culture.

Other commands used redirection to reinforce a particular idea. On a number of different occasions I witnessed interactions such as the following:

There is a little boy playing in the homeliving area by himself. He seems happy and is enjoying playing with the different cooking pots and pans. He is putting things on the stove-top and in the oven and searching the cabinets for other things to play with. The male assistant teacher in the class walked over to him and asked him if he wanted to play with something else. The teacher went to a locked cabinet,

unlocked it and asked the boy if there was anything in there he wanted to play with. The boy got out a firetruck that made noises and took it to the middle of the room to play with on the floor.

The redirection in this example sent the message that boys do not play with girls' toys. While the teacher did not say this outright, it seems obvious by his redirection of the boy's play that he thought the little boy should be playing with toys more "suited" for little boys. But, there were many occasions where boys would play in the homeliving area and not be redirected by a male or female teacher. However, I never witnessed any boys being praised (i.e., positively reinforced) for playing in the homeliving area. Boys were either redirected to another activity or received no attention. In contrast, it was very common for male and female teachers to praise little girls for playing in the homeliving area, even encouraging them while they played there. So, in this way Sunday school reinforced or further taught traditional gender roles.

Student and Student Interaction

Children at Cornerstone Baptist interacted with each other in numerous ways, such as same-sex play, cross-sex play, and verbal interaction. However, because there were multiple children in each classroom, and the classroom setting provided little structure, verbal interaction was difficult to record. Same- sex play interactions were coded boys' play when they involved only boys and girls' play when they involved only girls. When there was mixed play in the classroom it typically centered on non-

spontaneous activities (e.g., a craft provided for the children, a game played, or a snack) and, thus, seemed orchestrated more by teachers than by students themselves. Outside of these activities I rarely witnessed cross-sex play in the Sunday classrooms at Cornerstone.

Gendered Play. Studies (e.g., Martin 1998; Thorne 1993) have shown boys are more likely to be involved in rough and competitive play, whereas girls are likely to play in groups and be more affectionate with one another. Similarly, boys I observed at Cornerstone Baptist Church often interacted with each other in rough and competitive ways. This kind of activity would take place until a teacher would intervene and then stop for awhile before it would begin all over again. The following interactions are taken from the same week of notes:

One of the boys was repeatedly climbing into a chair and then pushing it until it fell and riding it to the floor. Once the teacher noticed she told him to stop. Another one of the boys saw him doing this and started trying to do it himself in a different chair. Both boys were playing in the chairs until the teacher came over to that part of the room and told them to stop and then moved the chairs.

After this the teacher left to get more supplies, leaving the teaching assistant alone with the ten kids in the room. The following then took place:

A new boy enters with mom. He comes in very rambunctiously, going over to where another boy is building something with blocks and knocks them all over. His mother yells at him. The two boys that got in trouble for playing in chairs return to the chairs. They start riding the chairs again until the teaching assistant stops them. Three girls started building with the blocks and the boy who had previously knocked them over strolled over to where they were, aiming to

knock over the blocks again before he was called down by the teaching assistant. Two boys got very rowdy in the corner. They were throwing toy cars at each other and knocking blocks off of a table. The teacher went over and asked them to play with other things and not together.

Each of these examples represent the kind of rough and competitive behavior I witnessed from boys on a regular basis at Cornerstone.

While it was common for boys to roughhouse, it was equally common for girls to play together in groups and interact with each other on a more interpersonal level. For example:

The girls (4) are putting clothes on the babies in the homeliving area. They are talking about what outfit looks good on each baby. They are sharing the baby dolls and the clothes to put on the dolls.

In another class:

There are five girls in the homeliving area. They have gotten out all of the 'big' clothes from a box to try on. They are putting on high heels and women's hats and talking about how they should all get dressed for a (make-believe) trip that they have to take. Each girl gets dressed in an outfit. They move from this discussion to one about whose house they will be going to.

And, one more example from a different class:

There are six girls at a table working on a craft. They are making cards for their moms. While they are working, they ask each other to pass markers, glue, glitter, etc. They also ask each other to look at their card. For the most part they are relatively quiet. The teacher asked everyone if they wanted to make a card for their mom. So far only these six girls have come over to the table to work on one.

In these examples and others, I witnessed girls at Cornerstone Baptist playing and communicating with each other in more meaningful ways than boys did.

Girls spoke directly to each other, maintained steady communication, and

seemed supportive of one another. It should be noted, there were some instances of girls playing rough and boys interacting on a more interpersonal level, but the aforementioned examples were more common. I believe that since children were largely engaged in “free time” during Sunday school, that things such as child to child interactions become important lessons concerning appropriate gender behaviors. In this way I think children at Cornerstone Baptist are learning about gender in much the same way as they would if they were at preschool or daycare, meaning, as Thorne (1993) also finds, they helped to socialize each other with respect to gender.

Life United Methodist Church

Life United Methodist Church has six preschool Sunday school classes (for ages 3-5) on Sunday mornings. The Sunday school classrooms I observed at Life United Methodist Church averaged around 10-12 children (across the twelve weeks ninety-eight percent were white, two percent were other races, fifty-six percent were male, and forty-four percent were female) and generally 1 teacher and 1 assistant (eighty-eight percent were female and one hundred percent were white). Children and teachers were assigned a specific classroom for the entire year. In this way, children and teachers were provided with some sense of continuity on a week-to-week basis. Before children go to their class on a Sunday morning, all children pre-K through Kindergarten and their teachers spend time together in a big open room. During this time the children and teachers sing songs, give an offering, and

pray. When group time is finished the children are dismissed to their various classrooms. Sunday school classes last one hour and fifteen minutes.

I observed in four of the six preschool classrooms at Life United Methodist. I spent three consecutive weeks in each of the four classes. Because teachers at Life kept students together (all in the same part of a room) during the class period, unlike teachers at Cornerstone who let children roam freely, I was able to stay in one place instead of moving around the classroom. The following is my interpretation of what I observed in the preschool Sunday school classes at Life United Methodist Church.

Structure/Non-structure

When coding the observational data from Life United Methodist Church, one of the most surprising findings was the amount of structure and organization in the classrooms. Based on the curriculum used, I thought preschool classes at the Methodist church would be more laid back and less structured and organized than at Cornerstone Baptist Church. This high structure at Life took place in many different ways and was maintained from the time children entered the classroom until their parents picked them up. Interestingly, at the Methodist church everything from the Bible lesson to the crafts to the snack are planned and coordinated by the children's pastor and her staff. Accordingly, each week teachers find everything they need for Sunday school in a resource basket in their room. I believe this structure

provides important insight into the religious gendering practices at Life United Methodist Church.

Earlier in this chapter I discussed how teachers from Cornerstone spent an average of 3-4 hours a week in prep time as opposed to teachers at Life who spent less than one hour. Interestingly, even though teachers spent more time in preparation at Cornerstone Baptist than at Life United Methodist, the classrooms at Life were much more organized. The structure and organization took shape in many different ways, beginning with the Bible lesson.

Bible Lesson. In contrast to Cornerstone Baptist, the overall structure provided by the Bible lesson helps in my understanding of religious gender socialization at Life United Methodist Church. In discussing the Bible lesson at Life United Methodist, I will use categories similar to the ones used when discussing Cornerstone Baptist. Some of the key findings from my observations at Life are: the placement of the Bible lesson during the course of the class, the amount of time spent on the Bible lesson, the gender assigned to God in the Bible lesson, and the act of engaging children in the lesson by providing biblical context and asking children questions about the Bible story. I found in my observations of classes at Life United Methodist that learning gender at church has as much or more to do with the delivery of the Bible lesson than the Bible lesson itself.

The Bible lesson at Life United Methodist entailed reading a story from the Bible and always took place at the beginning of the class period (this was the case in 12/12 weeks of observation). Once the children were separated into their individual classes (from the large group in the open area), teachers had them sit on the floor in a circle to start class. The teacher teaching the Bible lesson was always very cognizant of keeping the children quiet and still at least until he/she was finished reading the lesson. Unlike the Baptist church, which had male teaching assistants teach the Bible lesson when they were in a classroom, the Methodist church had no male teaching assistants. The only males I observed at the Methodist Church were lead teachers, and they taught the Bible lesson in their classrooms. Thus, regardless of gender, the lead teacher always taught the Bible lesson at Life Church. In addition, I witnessed the teacher stopping and asking children by name to stop talking or sit still on numerous occasions during the Bible lesson. In three different instances, I observed a teacher asking a disruptive child (2 boys, 1 girl) to move next to him/her.

In addition to maintaining order during the lesson, the teacher would ask the children questions about the story as they went along or at the end. For instance, the following note describes when a teacher at Life taught about Jesus and showed the class a picture in her Bible:

While teaching the story the teacher shows the children a picture of a man standing in front of lots of people. She asks the children who is in

the picture; they answer, Jesus. She says, "That's right it is Jesus". She asks them, "What is Jesus doing"? They answer that he is talking to those people. The teacher says, "You're right but Jesus is doing more than just talking he is teaching". She asks them, "How many of you know a teacher"? They all raise their hands. She asks them, "Who is the best teacher we know"? One of the kids (a boy) catches on and quickly says Jesus. "That's right" the teacher says, "Jesus is the best teacher ever".

In some cases, the teacher would even ask children about the story they learned the previous week, before teaching the new lesson. For example:

The teacher (female) tells the children the Bible point for this week is "God wants us to care for others". She tells the children they are going to learn the story of the good Samaritan. She asks the children if anyone remembers what they talked about last week. Some kids raise their hands. She calls on a girl. The girl says they learned about Jesus and the woman at the well. "Very good" the teacher said to the little girl. "Does anyone remember anything about the woman?" she asks. No one raises his or her hand. The teacher reminds the children the woman was a Samaritan just like the man they are going to learn about this week.

This back and forth interaction was common at Life United Methodist Church and important because it seemed to aid in drawing children into the Bible lesson. Instead of simply being taught a lesson from the Bible, the children were actively participating in the lesson.

In contrast to Bible lessons at Cornerstone, which were often completed in less than five minutes, Bible lessons at Life lasted on average between 8-14 minutes. The actual time depended on the length of the story, the explanation provided, and how much the teacher questioned the students concerning the story. It is the explanation of the Bible story where I believe

the delivery of information concerning Bible characters is done differently at Life than at Cornerstone. While teachers at Cornerstone Baptist provided the simplest explanation of a story (they lacked the time to do anything else), teachers at Life United Methodist provided more explanation.

A good example of this practice is the story of Jesus and the woman at the well, which was taught at both churches during the time I observed. At Cornerstone, the story was read and the teacher's explanation of what took place was simply, "Jesus was thirsty and a woman gave him water and he told her about God". The entire process of reading the story and providing an explanation took less than three minutes. At Life, the teacher explained the lesson in this way:

The teacher tells the children they are going to learn about Jesus bringing life. She tells them the story of Jesus and the woman at the well. After reading the story she tells the children that the woman at the well was a Samaritan and that women were not allowed to talk to men they were not related to back then. She goes on to talk about how after Jesus talked to the woman that she went back to her tribe and told everyone about Jesus. The teacher said the woman was brave. She told the children the woman became a disciple, and someone who told others about Jesus.

This particular Bible lesson and explanation at Life lasted around twelve minutes. By explaining the lesson in greater detail and providing more background, the teacher at Life United Methodist was able to highlight the importance of gender to this story. Instead of it being just another story about Jesus, the teacher draws attention to the female character and the role

she played in her community. This is important because it shows that even when the Sunday school curriculum emphasizes men, the way a Bible lesson is delivered can lessen these emphases. This was certainly not the case at Cornerstone Baptist.

Another observation at Life United Methodist linked to the Bible lesson concerns the time children spent working on crafts. The crafts (on average two craft activities per class period) used in Sunday school at Life were strategically incorporated into the Bible lesson of the day. For example, children planted flower seeds in a cup and poured water on them as part of learning that “Jesus brings us new life”. Or, children made friendship bracelets with leather straps and colored beads during the class on “Jesus is our friend”, children made cards for dads and moms during the class on “We are Jesus’ helper”, and children cut out pictures of a heart and glued Skittles on it during the class on “Jesus is in your heart”. Often, the craft selection at Life United Methodist was something Martin (1998) would have coded as girls’ activities in her research. Even though a craft activity might have appeared to be feminine, the church did not define it as such because all the children participated in it. The same was true of more masculine craft activities, which included things such as coloring pictures of Jesus and Lazarus and gluing them onto Popsicle sticks, making a tomb where Lazarus was buried out of paper and Popsicle sticks, and cutting out and taping an

image of Jesus to a picture of the disciples and Jesus' followers watching Jesus ascend to heaven. In this sense, Life United Methodist was being intentional about exposing boys and girls to both masculine and feminine activities in the course of learning about the Bible.

A final observation concerning the Bible lesson at Life United Methodist church has to do with the gender assigned to God in the stories taught by the Sunday school teachers. In much the same way as the teachers from Cornerstone did, the teachers at Life consistently referred to God in the masculine form. This finding is not surprising given how the Bible portrays God, but, because the Methodist church aims for the equality of all persons, I thought teachers might try to be more gender inclusive or even gender neutral when speaking about God.

Free Play. Based on the material provided in the downsized FaithWeaver curriculum used at Life United Methodist Church, I assumed children would be given considerable free time during Sunday school. According to my observations, this assumption is wrong. In the twelve weeks I observed Sunday school classes at Life United Methodist, I found children spent the majority of their time on a Sunday morning (at least one hour) in some kind of organized and supervised activity (e.g., Bible lesson, craft, snack, or an organized game in which everyone participated). However, on days weather permitted, Sunday school teachers would take

children outside to play for 5-10 minutes. Thus, major differences between the two churches were the children at Cornerstone never went outside to play and the children at Life were rarely given time for free play while indoors.

Overall, I observed fairly consistent gendered ways of play by children at Life United Methodist. During group games led by a teacher, such as Duck-Duck-Goose or Red-Light-Green-Light, it was very common to see most of the boys energetically and rambunctiously run around or squirm anxiously in their position waiting to burst into a dash. In contrast, the girls generally were much more reserved during these games; they would delicately touch other children on the head or move together in groups across the room instead of alone and in a sprint. However, it should be noted there were a number of boys who played quietly and orderly as well as some girls who played loudly and with lots of energy.

While the children's play inside was always a game a teacher chose, when the children went outside it was truly "free time". Some of the behaviors I observed when the children went outside were boys flocked to such toys as tricycles, Big Wheels, and balls. Often, boys playing by themselves (that is in the same vicinity as other boys but not necessarily engaged with one another) would immediately begin riding the tricycles and Big Wheels around in a circle or start kicking and throwing bouncy balls across the playground. Their behavior was lively, action oriented, and

spontaneous. Girls, on the other hand, generally stayed in groups of at least two and played in a much more orderly and restricted way. Girls would, eventually, ride the tricycles and Big Wheels or bounce balls around after the boys had moved on to other activities on the playground. All in all, free play at Life United Methodist was similar to the patterns of play found in other studies of gender socialization (Martin 1998; Thorne 1993).

Snack Time. Snack time at Life United Methodist, unlike at Cornerstone Baptist, was used to further teach the Bible lesson of the day. The children's pastor at Life asked teachers to use this time in class as another opportunity to teach children about whatever biblical character or theme they had been discussing already. For example, one week the Bible lesson was "Jesus is the salt of the earth". The snack that morning was crackers and cheese. The teacher gave all of the children an unsalted cracker and had them eat it. Then she gave everyone a salted cracker and had them eat it next. She asked the kids why the crackers tasted different and then reminded them "Jesus is like the salt on the second cracker, because he brings flavor and richness into our lives". In another example, after the children at Life learned in a Bible lesson that "Jesus is love" they proceeded to eat a snack together that required them to place gum drops in an order that spelled the word love before eating them.

Another characteristic of snack time in which the two churches differed was the prayers teachers had children say before eating. While teachers at Cornerstone often, but not always, asked children to say or lead the prayer, teachers at Life often asked children to participate in community prayers (prayers said aloud by everyone) as well as having individual children say or lead the prayer. The following are examples of community prayers from three different classes at Life:

“God our Father, God our Father, Once again, Once again, We will ask your Blessing, We will ask your Blessing, Amen, Amen.”

“God our Father, God our Father, Bless this Food, Bless this Food, Thank you for your Goodness, Thank you for your Goodness, Amen, Amen.”

“Thank you Lord for giving us food, Thank you Lord for giving us food, For the friends we meet and the food we eat, Thank you Lord, Thank you Lord.”

The third example listed above was called the Superman Prayer (following the Superman theme song) and was accompanied with arm movements (such as putting arms in the air one at a time like Superman). It should also be noted the prayers remind children of the perceived masculine gender of God.

Interruptions. Interruptions in the classrooms at Life United Methodist were infrequent and handled quickly. Unlike Cornerstone Baptist where it was common to have children join Sunday school as much as 45 minutes late, I never witnessed a child come late to Sunday school at Life. Perhaps tardiness was not as noticeable to me because Life United Methodist

had a community time (during which late arriving children could join the larger group without being noticed as much) prior to entering individual classes. Also, the check-in system used at Cornerstone (which Life did not use) made tardiness very visible. Nonetheless, tardiness was never a problem at Life in the classrooms.

The only interruptions I witnessed at Life United Methodist involved children in classes talking without raising their hand, children getting out of their seat without permission, and children not all lining up to come back inside once they had been out to play. These kinds of interruptions were not as noticeable at Cornerstone because the children were rarely required to all be in the same place at the same time. When there was an interruption to the class, teachers at Life were very diligent about keeping everyone “in line” and ending interruptions as quickly as possible. This allowed for the teacher to maintain a strong sense of control in the classroom and provided an organized learning environment. This added to the overall structure I witnessed in classes at Life United Methodist. I believe the category concerning interruptions at Life church is relevant to religious gender socialization because teachers were able to increase the quantity of time spent on teaching about religion and gender due to the limited number of interruptions they faced.

Dress and Adornment of Children

The variation in dress and adornment between boys and girls at Life United Methodist was interesting, and different in some ways from the gender variation in dress and adornment at Cornerstone Baptist. The main differences between the two churches were that girls at Life United Methodist wore pink and dresses less often than did girls at Cornerstone and boys at Life United Methodist were usually dressed nicer than boys at Cornerstone Baptist. Girls at Life did wear dressier shoes than boys at nearly the same rate as girls at Cornerstone.

Clothes. Across the twelve weeks of observation, about 47% of the girls wore pink clothing to Sunday school at Life (see Table 2 in Appendix C). This is 22% less than girls at Cornerstone Baptist. Girls at Life United Methodist wore a number of other colors such as reds, greens, yellows, and white. Boys, on the other hand, much like those at the Baptist church, wore brown, black, blue, or other primary colors. However, boys at Life were much more likely to be dressed up (wearing slacks, button-down shirts with collars, shirts tucked into their pants, etc.) than boys at Cornerstone (who often wore jeans, shorts, t-shirts, shirts that went un-tucked, etc.).

In addition, 54% of girls at Life wore dresses to church (see Table 2 in Appendix C). This is 28% less than girls at Cornerstone Baptist. Wearing a dress to church was less restrictive for girls at Life than it was at Cornerstone. I witnessed girls at Life participating in most of the same activities as boys

even if they wore dresses. For instance, most of the Bible lessons involved all the children sitting on the floor in a circle, and when outside girls rode bikes, Big Wheels, and played tag. Unlike what I observed at Cornerstone Baptist, I did not witness any situations at Life United Methodist where teachers asked girls to change their behavior because they were wearing a dress.

I think the denominational approaches United Methodists and Southern Baptists take on issues of gender affect how each church thinks children and adults should be dressed on a Sunday morning. Because United Methodists follow a more progressive and neutral approach to gender, whereas Southern Baptists follow a more conservative patriarchal approach, children, especially girls, are dressed accordingly (i.e., girls are less likely to wear pink and dresses at Life). Additionally, I believe the fact that boys are more dressed up at Life than at Cornerstone has mostly to do with the socio-economic background of the two church populations. Life United Methodist is located in a much more affluent part of the city, whereas Cornerstone Baptist is located in a much more middle and working class part of the city.

Shoes. Even though fewer girls wore dresses or pink clothing to Life church on Sunday mornings, 82% of the girls wore dressy shoes (i.e., shoes with buckles, and shoes that were shiny, pretty, and non-athletic, see Table 2 in Appendix C). This is only 6% less than girls at Cornerstone Baptist. Wearing dressy shoes did not limit girls' physicality in the classroom, or on

the playground. But, I believe wearing dressy shoes did help shape girls' experiences in gendered ways. In much the same way it did for girls at Cornerstone, shoes completed outfits for girls at Life. This helps signify the way girls are dressed at Life was not merely for functional purposes as much as it is was for them to look "pretty" (i.e., feminine). This was not the situation for boys at Life, who were in many cases just as dressed up as girls but often wearing shoes that could have been worn with a wide range of outfits. This finding for girls is surprising given the United Methodist stance on gender.

Teacher and Student Interaction

I coded interactions between teachers and children at Life United Methodist in much the same way I did with Cornerstone Baptist. Unlike Cornerstone Baptist where teachers spent longer periods of time with a single student, one-on-one interactions were brief at Life due to the fact teachers were busier maintaining control over all the children for nearly the entire class period. This section calls attention to the subtle and not so subtle ways preschool children become gendered and the role Sunday school teachers have in this process.

Positive Reinforcement. The positive reinforcement I witnessed at Life United Methodist took place throughout the class period. Because children at Life were not given large blocks of free time they were constantly under the guidance and direction of teachers. Consequently, this provided teachers

with many more opportunities to interact with and provide positive reinforcements to the children as a group rather than individually. For example, during the Bible lesson the teachers would often give positive praise to everyone for being such good listeners and participating during the Bible lesson.

According to my observations at Life, the teachers provided positive feedback to boys and girls equally. I did find in the one class taught by a man the teacher allowed more students in the class to answer questions about the story. He was very good about calling them by name and soliciting a response from multiple students concerning the story. The female teachers also asked children questions but seemed less intentional about involving all the children.

Another place I observed positive reinforcement, this time concerning gender stereotypes and behaviors, took place while the children worked on crafts. In most of the classes at Life the children sat at tables and teachers would move around the room from child to child according to who needed help. This was different than at Cornerstone where it was the children who moved around freely. Interestingly, I witnessed both male and female teachers at Life encouraging boys to complete things on their own (i.e., reinforcing masculine behavior). For example:

While children are working on friendship bracelets I have watched as three boys have told the teacher they didn't know how to make their

bracelet. Instead of simply helping them put the bracelet together the teacher (male) told them, "You can do it, you know how". This encouragement seemed to work as all three commenced to make their bracelet.

In contrast, I observed both male and female teachers at Life were more inclined to physically help girls finish crafts with which they were having a difficult time, reinforcing the idea girls need to be helped or are more dependent. For example:

The teacher moves to the table with mostly girls. He is helping them put beads onto their bracelets. He reminds them that the beads are to represent their friends and encourages them to pick out the "right" colors to represent their friends. He asks them who their friends are.

While the teacher in this example encouraged the boys to make their bracelets on their own and provided no physical help, he then proceeded to help the girls and to engage them in a conversation about their friends.

Another example of this kind of reinforcement took place in a different class when the children were asked to make cards for their parents. The teacher (female) laid out on tables a number of different materials (construction paper, scissors, glue sticks, markers, glitter, stickers, etc.) and told the children to pick out things with which they wanted to make their card. Once they began I witnessed the following interactions:

There are three boys in class this morning and they immediately started grabbing craft materials. The teacher even had to remind them to share with everyone. Two of the boys pick pieces of blue construction paper to make their card with and the other boy chose yellow. It wasn't long before one of the boys asked the teacher what

he should put in his card. She told him whatever he wanted, it was his card.

The girls started much slower than the boys. They seemed more particular about the materials they wanted in their cards. Of the five girls in class, four chose to use pink construction paper for their card and the fifth chose red. The teacher gave the girls a lot of praise for how pretty their cards looked. Two girls asked the teacher what they should put in their cards. The teacher got in between them and helped them outline things in glue and then had them sprinkle other material on the glue.

Again, the teacher was more actively helping the girls in class complete crafts while simultaneously encouraging the boys to work on their own. Teachers at Life were also much more likely to tell girls their craft was “pretty” or “nice” and did not often comment on the boys’ crafts. This kind of gendered reinforcement concerning independent and dependent behavior is found in other studies as well (Martin 1998; Marshall 1997; Adler et al. 1992).

Other than the gendered teaching of independent and dependent behaviors through the completion of crafts, I found that teachers at Life United Methodist were fairly similar in their treatment of boys and girls. In contrast to Cornerstone, teachers at Life equally called upon boys and girls during the Bible lesson, equally involved boys and girls when soliciting help (such as cleaning up or preparing a snack), and equally requested a change in behavior from boys and girls when they became disruptive. In other words, while I did witness some teaching of gendered behavior at Life United

Methodist, overall this was not the norm. This is what one might have expected to find at a United Methodist church.

Commands. Commands at Life United Methodist came early and often. This kind of instruction was one of the centerpieces in maintaining control and providing structure for children in Sunday school at Life. In contrast to Cornerstone, once children entered a classroom with their teacher, boys and girls were given commands, such as sit down, be quiet, listen, line up, and sit still. While at Cornerstone children were allowed to roam the classroom freely, children were not allowed to leave their table at Life without asking permission. Children at Life would have to ask to get a drink, wash their hands, or go to the bathroom but not at Cornerstone. Children did have to ask to go to the bathroom at Cornerstone because the door was kept closed. Teachers in all the classes at Life would generally let only one child leave the group at a time. The most common commands I witnessed at Life United Methodist for boys were to sit still, be quiet, and pay attention. For girls, the most common commands I witnessed were to be quiet and pay attention. One of the major differences concerning commands between the two churches was that boys and girls generally received similar commands at Life whereas boys mostly received commands related to behavior and girls usually received commands related to helping at Cornerstone.

When finishing one activity in class, it was common for teachers at Life to have all the children sit quietly before moving to the next activity. In two of the classes I observed, teachers called on the children one by one to leave the circle in which they were sitting on the floor to move to tables for craft time. Students sitting still and being quiet were the first to be called on. Also, it was the norm for teachers at Life to ask children to raise their hands before being called on to respond. As far as commands were concerned, at Life all children, regardless of gender, were equally likely to be given commands. These observations leave the impression that, unlike at Cornerstone Baptist, the interactions between children and teachers at Life United Methodist are generally not influenced by the gender of the child, with crafts as an exception.

Student and Student Interaction

At Life United Methodist, children spent time in a large group (all classes of children together) at the beginning of Sunday school time, small groups (i.e., in a class of 10-12) for Bible lessons, and even smaller groups (5-6 children) for crafts and snack time (based on seating capacity at tables). Children at Life were not provided with the same amount of space and time to interact freely as children at Cornerstone, who usually roamed freely from one play station to another. During activities such as crafts, organized games, and the occasional trip outside to the playground, children at Life did interact with one another. Because of the differences between the two Sunday

schools, I chose to code interactions between students at Life United Methodist in two categories instead of the one used for Cornerstone Baptist. The two categories are same-sex interaction and cross-sex interaction.

Cross-Sex Interaction. Cross-sex interaction was the most common type of peer interaction at Life United Methodist. This is most likely due to teachers making sure boys and girls sat together during crafts and snack time (the two structured activities where children were allowed to interact with each other). Teachers at Cornerstone Baptist did not make the same effort to have boys and girls sit together. An example of cross-sex interaction during craft time I observed was a table of four girls and three boys having a conversation about Band-Aids. The Bible lesson that day was about the Good Samaritan who helped the man who had been robbed and beaten. The children were working on a craft that required them to place Band-Aids on a picture of an injured man. The following is an account of the conversation the children had:

Sitting at a table working on a craft are three boys and four girls. The table is U-shaped. Three girls are sitting side by side (the end of the table on one side and a boy on the other), and then two boys and a girl and a boy. If the arrangement were a straight line it would be gggbbgb. The children each have a picture of the Good Samaritan helping the injured man on the road. They are coloring the picture and putting Band-Aids on it where necessary. On the table is a box of Band-Aids of all different sizes. While they are working, one of the boys starts talking about Band-Aids and some of the other kids join in. He says something about his Mom gets Band-Aids for him. Another boy asks if they have anything on them. He says no. One of the girls says her Band-Aids at home have Barbie on them. She seems proud of

this fact. A boy adds that his little sister never gets hurt, perhaps to insinuate that girls don't need Band-Aids. A conversation then started about who at the table wore the most Band-Aids. Two of the girls didn't seem that interested but everyone else was "bragging" about how many Band-Aids they had to wear in the last week or so.

This kind of cross-sex interaction was typical at Life. That is, conversations between boys and girls would often lead to verbal contests about random subjects. Another example deals with a conversation about the Superman prayer the kids say before eating their snack:

There is a table of three girls and three boys sitting together for a snack. The teacher handed out giant marshmallows, graham crackers, and chocolate chips. She made everyone wait until all had snacks and then they said the Superman prayer. Once they were done the kids started eating. Two of the boys immediately started eating their marshmallows, while the other boy and three girls kind of separated out (organized) their snack to eat. One of the girls told the other kids that boys don't know the prayer. One of the boys said he did. Another girls said she could say the whole prayer. She started to say it. Two of the boys started saying it with her. They kept missing words. The girl who brought up that boys didn't know the prayer smirked and said "see". One of the boys stopped and seemed upset saying, "I know it". "No, you don't" said another girl.

These kinds of interactions support the findings of Martin (1998) that cross-gender interactions are more likely to be spirited, controlling, or even angry. Thus, children at Life United Methodist appeared to be showing the kinds of gendered behavior found in previous studies, and in the case of the Superman prayer, doing it in the context of religion.

Same-Sex Interaction. The interactions between same-sex peers were similar to what I observed at Cornerstone. Boys at Life, especially on the

playground, often interacted with each other in rough and competitive ways, whereas girls at Life were much more likely to interact on a more relational level. For example, boys immediately ran to the many tricycles and Big Wheels available on the playground and would race each other around a concrete circle. Or, they would race each other to the top of the hill on the playground and back down. Girls on the other hand would move more slowly onto the playground in groups of twos or threes. Girls would have conversations with each other and engage in inclusive-oriented games.

Research has shown that children learn gender from one another (Martin 1998; Thorne 1993). I believe the controlled environment at Life United Methodist limited but did not change the gendered interactions among the children. Because of this, I think children at Life United Methodist are learning about and doing gender in much the same way as they would if they were at preschool or daycare. However, children at church also could teach each other about religion in gendered ways, such as in the “contest” over knowing the Superman prayer at Life United Methodist. It is also at least possible an underlying message here is that girls know more prayers or are better at prayers than boys. If this were the case then, perhaps, cross-sex interaction at Life does reveal something about religious gender socialization. That is, girls’ greater knowledge of such things as prayers or Bible lessons

gives them an opportunity to shape their peers' beliefs about gender and religion.

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter aimed to explore the gendered patterns and themes that emerged from an analysis of field notes taken during non-participant observation of Sunday school classes at Cornerstone Baptist and Life United Methodist churches. Specifically, I sought to determine if and what might be variations in religious gender socialization between the two church organizations.

As I have previously stated, the United Methodist Church has worked diligently towards being a community in which all persons, regardless of gender, racial or ethnic background, can participate in every level of its ministry and hierarchical structure. The United Methodist Church is often viewed as more progressive and gender neutral concerning social issues because of these positions and the fact it ordains women pastors. Therefore, one might have expected to find Sunday school classes at Life United Methodist church to be progressive and gender neutral.

In contrast, the Southern Baptist Convention has been conservative with respect to gender. Because of its past and its recent history (e.g., its adoption of a much more stringent set of rules concerning women's role in the church), the Southern Baptist Convention can be viewed as maintaining and espousing traditional gender roles for its congregants. As a result, one

might have expected to find Sunday school classes at Cornerstone Baptist church to advocate more traditional gender roles.

My findings indicate that while there are some similarities between the Sunday school classes at both churches (i.e., Bible lessons, crafts, snacks, etc.), Life United Methodist seems to take a more progressive, gender neutral approach to religious gender socialization, whereas Cornerstone maintains a more traditional gendered approach. Examples of a more progressive approach at Life include teachers' positive emphasis on women's roles in Bible stories, non-gendered reinforcement of boys' and girls' behavior, and non-gendered behavioral expectations in the classroom. Examples of a traditional approach at Cornerstone include teachers' limited discussion of women's roles in the Bible, gendered reinforcement of boys' and girls' behavior, and gendered behavioral expectations in the classroom.

In my opinion, the most important factor behind these differences is the structure and organization in the classroom. As I have discussed throughout this chapter, Cornerstone Baptist's Sunday school classes lack structure and organization whereas Life United Methodist's Sunday school classes are highly structured and organized. Based on the review of literature concerning learning, I believe structure and organization in the classroom provide a forum where teachers' modeling, supported by reinforcement, (Bandura 1977; Mischel 1966) can be used effectively to teach children about

God. The level of structure and organization seems to highly affect the extent to which children learn and retain information about religion and gender in the classroom. What is interesting is the relationship is the opposite of what one might expect. That is, the low structure and organization found in the preschool Sunday school classes at Cornerstone contributed to more traditional gender socialization, whereas the high structure and organization found in classes at Life contributed to less traditional gender socialization. In other words, in less structured contexts people seemed to fall back on traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

I also believe religious gender socialization relies on the extent to which children are made to pay attention. Previous studies (Bandura 1977; Mischel 1966) found learning will not occur unless the subject pays attention. According to Bandura (1986), simply being exposed to someone modeling behavior, attitudes, or beliefs does not guarantee the subject will be attentive to the relevant cues and stimulus events, or even perceive the stimulus situation accurately. In my opinion, because teachers at Life made children pay attention to messages about the Bible and religion more throughout the Sunday school period, the children had a greater opportunity to learn something "different" about gender and religion, that is, the gender neutral message teachers might give instead of traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The higher level of structure and organization at Life probably

facilitated this. In contrast, the teachers at Cornerstone were less likely to make children pay attention to messages about the Bible and religion during the Sunday school period, which seemed to result in children maintaining already held beliefs concerning gender and religion.

In the same way that the literature concerning Bandura's social learning theory supports my belief about the importance of structure and organization to learning "new" information at Life United Methodist (i.e., gender neutral information about God and the Bible), I think Lave's (1988) situated learning theory reveals something about traditional religious gender socialization at Cornerstone Baptist. Lave argues learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs (i.e., it is situated). Social interaction is then a critical component of situated learning because learners become involved in what Lave (1988) terms a "community of practice" that embodies certain beliefs and behaviors to be acquired. Thus, because preschool classes at Cornerstone Baptist uniformly approach Sunday school with low structure and gendered interactions between teachers and children, the "community of practice" embodies the traditional gender roles espoused by the Southern Baptist Convention. Likewise, Lave's theory also helps us understand the "community of practice" at Life United Methodist, which seems to embody a more progressive belief system.

In sum, the literature suggests children learn behaviors and norms through observing and interacting with others in various social settings. Based upon my observations of preschool children at Life United Methodist and Cornerstone Baptist, I found the same. At Cornerstone Baptist, I witnessed more traditional gender roles in Bible lessons, activities, teacher and student interactions, and student-to-student interactions. This is what one might have expected to find. At Life United Methodist, I witnessed a more progressive and gender neutral approach to teaching children about God and the Bible, teacher and student interactions, and activities. This is also what one might have expected to find. Finally, the results from chapters six and seven highlight an important distinction between Sunday school curriculum and how it is delivered. That is, regardless of what curriculum a church selects, the way it is taught (i.e., followed closely or disregarded altogether) is paramount to what children ultimately learn. I will discuss this further in the final chapter.

Chapter Eight: Discussion and Conclusions

Summary of Findings

This study attempted to highlight ways in which gender socialization takes place within religious organizations. More specifically, the objectives of this project were to: identify gender socialization that is unique to religious organizations, uncover the various techniques used to facilitate any religious gender socialization at the Southern Baptist church and the United Methodist church, and determine if and what might be variations in religious gender socialization between the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist denominations. My study identified gender socialization that is unique to religious organizations. It also identified gender socialization that is not unique to religious organizations (e.g., socialization processes that likely occur at preschools or daycares too). Also, my findings indicate that the techniques used to facilitate religious gender socialization were less affected by what curriculum a church selected than by the way the curriculum was taught (i.e., followed closely or disregarded altogether). That is, regardless of the detail or structure provided in the curriculum, or even the children's pastors' expectations for classes, the Sunday school teachers got the last word. Finally, my findings indicate Cornerstone Southern Baptist teaches traditional gender roles while Life United Methodist teaches some traditional gender roles and some progressive and gender neutral roles.

Religious Gender Socialization. Brown and Gary (1991) state the process of interacting with others at church as well as exposure to religious scriptures, rituals, and fellowship activities serve to influence the formation of values, attitudes, and behaviors that may influence individuals at church and in secular activities. Understanding how attitudes, values, and behaviors are formed through exposure to biblical characters and biblical stories adds to our understanding of religious gender socialization. Findings from the content analysis of curricula indicate regardless of the denomination of the church (United Methodist or Southern Baptist), approximately eighty-five percent of the Sunday school lessons in a year focused on male Bible characters. Additionally, male Bible characters within both the Southern Baptist and United Methodist organizations tended to be portrayed in stereotypically masculine ways. Similarly, previous studies have found gender stereotypes in the portrayal of males and females in children's literature (Agee 1993; Purcell and Stewart 1990; Tetenbaum and Pearson 1989; Kingston and Lovelace 1978; *Women on Words and Images* 1975; Hillman 1974; Jacklin and Mischel 1973; Weitzman et al. 1972). These studies showed males are portrayed as competent and achievement oriented, while females are limited in what they do and are shown as less competent. Roberts (1990) adds to this by illustrating the position gender stereotypes and attitudes in Christian culture exist when he states "Christianity has a long history of sex

bias". More specifically, Roberts' study finds the core of gender bias in Christianity comes from the Bible.

My findings indicate biblical characters and stories from the curricula taught in Sunday school classrooms are significant to understanding gender socialization unique to a religious setting. The focus on male characters, the description of those characters, and the subordinate roles relegated to women characters help to shape boys' and girls' understanding of gender roles. With such a large portion of the curriculum and teaching at both churches focused on male characters and masculine characteristics, children have little understanding of the role women play in biblical stories. Even when they are exposed to female biblical characters, women's roles in many Bible stories are limited and stereotypical. The stereotypical gender conceptions people learn and adopt may have lasting effects on how people perceive and process social information and how they use their learned capabilities (Bandura 1986; Bem 1981; Betz and Hackett 1981; Spence and Helmreich 1980). I believe the gendered messages children receive concerning characters in the Bible influence the way they understand both religion and gender.

My findings regarding the portrayal of men and women in the Sunday school curricula support findings of feminists who have found a patriarchal representation of men and women within the Christian tradition (Brown 1994; Schmidt 1989; Curb and Manahan 1985; Reuther and Keller 1981; Clark

and Richardson 1977; Mollenkott 1977; Daly 1973). However, teachers did not necessarily teach about biblical characters in the exact way they were portrayed in the curricula. That difference will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

The debate over biblical teaching on gender roles has focused primarily on the exegesis of a handful of controversial biblical texts, some of which I cited in chapter three, with neither Christian traditionalists nor gender egalitarian Christians able to answer completely every objection to or difficulty with their position. I believe one of the contributions of this research is how it demonstrates that more than the exegesis of particular biblical passages concerning gender roles, there is a consistent and pervasive exposure to male Bible characters at Sunday school and it helps to shape boys' and girls' ideas about religion and gender. This exposure helps children to develop a religiously specific gender identity and behave in ways considered appropriate within a particular religious organization (e.g., Southern Baptist or United Methodist).

Techniques Used to Facilitate Religious Gender Socialization. The second objective of this study was to uncover the techniques (e.g., structure and organization) used to facilitate religious gender socialization by Southern Baptists and United Methodists. I found regardless of how the curriculum a church selects is taught (e.g., followed closely or disregarded altogether), the

environment in which it is taught is paramount to what children ultimately learn about gender and religion.

I found the level of structure and organization in Sunday school classrooms to greatly influence how much religious gender socialization occurs. That is, gender socialization unique to a religious organization seemed most likely to occur when structure and organization existed in the classroom. Thus, because of the lack of structure in classrooms at the Southern Baptist church, the traditional gender socialization that occurred was similar to the traditional gender socialization one might find in other areas of society (e.g., preschools, daycare, from parents, etc.) and was not unique to the religious organization.

In contrast, the use of structure and organization in classrooms at the United Methodist church allowed teachers to teach gender socialization that was unique to a religious organization. The structured classrooms at the Methodist church provided children with an environment more conducive to learning and retaining new information. It gave children the opportunity to learn lessons about God they may or may not have already known, and based on the nature of the structure and organization (i.e., order in the classroom, attention given to details in Bible lesson, and ways in which the craft and snack times reinforced the Bible lesson) they were more likely to retain it. I believe the pastoral staff at the United Methodist church deserves some of the

credit for the structured classroom environment. When asked by what criteria teachers were chosen and what expectations she has of Sunday school teachers, the children's pastor at Life answered in this way:

On the preschool side, it is mainly parents who are teaching. And most of them have come up and said I have an interest or I have called them and said, "Hey we've got an opening would you like to teach in your child's room" or I'll move some teachers around so they won't be in their child's room. Um, as far as criteria goes, we ask them to commit to teaching for a full year and quarterly training four times a year. Our biggest training time is in the fall, before the fall semester starts. We have a big dinner and we really (ugh), we kind of roll up our sleeves and talk about the logistics of safety, time, when you come in, how you deal with kids that need special attention, organization, and general teaching ideas. We also cover check in, check out and all the logistics because a lot of the times you will have new teachers that will start. As far as what I expect, I tell them their primary job--and this may sound cheesy--but their primary job in my opinion is to be Christ to those kids because we get them for one hour, sometimes two and then maybe on Wednesday nights. But, I always remind the teachers that don't think of it as, you know, oh they'll get the lesson from somewhere else. Think of it as this is the only hour all week they have to hear about God and make sure to make a connection with each child in your classroom before they leave.

Based upon this statement and what I observed in classrooms at Life United Methodist, I believe the intentional structure and control required by the children's pastor through the materials provided for the classes (e.g., the downsized curriculum and the resource basket) and the teacher training put children in a much better position to learn and retain ideas regarding gender and religion from the more gender neutral perspective advocated by the United Methodist Church.

In contrast, the less structured classroom environment at Cornerstone Baptist provided few opportunities for teachers to actually teach Bible lessons. Children were doing their own thing for most of the class period and teachers facilitated this free-for-all by not taking control of the classrooms. When I asked by what criteria teachers were chosen and what expectations she has of Sunday school teachers, the children's pastor at Cornerstone answered in this way:

Warm body (laughs) no, but it is increasingly difficult to find people to teach Sunday school. My expectations for my teachers, well I have always said this, okay. Well, number one I expect them to be on time and you know that is one of the hardest things for some of my teachers to do, is be on time. Being a preschool teacher and being on time for a 9:15 class is not getting here at 9:15. At the very latest 9:00 and I really need them to be here at 8:45, because they're going to have to run down to the resource room and pick up materials to do whatever. It is important that you be on time and that you have things planned, you have more than enough things planned because an activity you think is going to take five minutes may take two. All those things, but more than that I expect my teachers to care about their kids. If you have a child that hasn't been there in a couple or three weeks, call them, and find out why they are not there and see if there is anything they need. Ask them if they are in some situation where you can pray for them.

Based upon this statement and what I witnessed in classrooms at Cornerstone Baptist, I believe the overall lack of structure and control had to do with the children's pastor's low expectations for the teachers and the inability of the teachers to adequately deal with preschool children. The Baptist teachers did spend a considerable amount of time preparing for class (e.g., reading the curriculum materials and getting craft items) but were

unable to put their plans into action in the classroom. The teachers did not execute the curriculum in the classroom very well.

There are a number of possible reasons for these differences between Life and Cornerstone teachers. The teachers at Cornerstone may lack basic teaching skills, which the Methodist teachers might get in the teacher training they receive. The teachers at Cornerstone do not receive any formal teaching training. It is also possible that socio-economic status plays a role in the level of teaching at Cornerstone Baptist, in that teachers from the Southern Baptist church generally come from a lower socio-economic status than the teachers at Life and may have less teaching ability. As I mentioned in chapter seven, Life United Methodist is located in a much more affluent part of the city, whereas Cornerstone Baptist is located in a much more middle and working class part of the city. Ultimately, the combination of low expectations and lack of ability or skills resulted in a much more laid back environment at Cornerstone, where the children learned and had reinforced traditional gender stereotypes that could be found elsewhere instead of learning new messages regarding gender that were unique to a religious organization.

Lastly, an interesting piece of evidence that Cornerstone students learn less about religion or religion and gender than students at Life can be found in my field notes. Around the fifth week of observation, I noticed at pick-up time children at Life would excitedly tell their parents about what they

learned that morning. On the Sunday morning when the lesson was about Jesus and the woman at the well, I overheard at least three children explaining to their parents (to some degree) how important the woman was in the story. After seeing this parent-child interaction at Life, I started looking for it at Cornerstone. I never witnessed children at Cornerstone telling their parents what they had learned in Sunday school.

Denominational Variation in Religious Gender Socialization. In spite of some similarities in religious gender socialization (e.g., both religious organizations modeled traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes), I witnessed a number of variations between the Southern Baptists and United Methodists with regard to gender socialization at Sunday school. As already discussed, the major differences between the Southern Baptists and United Methodists were the use of structure and organization in the classroom. Other important differences were the placement of and time spent on Bible lessons, teachers' delivery of religious content, and teacher to student interactions. Because of the related nature of these differences it is important to note that some of them "overlap".

First, the difference between the Southern Baptists and United Methodists regarding the use of structure and organization has two parts: the classroom (discussed in the previous section) and curriculum. The LifeWay curriculum used by Cornerstone Baptist is very structured in both the

presentation (the extensive layout and details in the written materials) and directives to teachers (things to say to children and detailed directions concerning every aspect of the lesson in the teacher manual). In contrast, the FaithWeaver curriculum used by Life United Methodist is much less structured in that it provides fewer details with regard to the Bible lessons and few directives for the teachers. In addition, the children's pastor at Life church downsized the FaithWeaver curriculum. I believe the difference in structure between the curricula is a reflection of the kind of curriculum each church's children's pastor wanted for her preschool program. The children's pastor at the Southern Baptist church wanted a detailed and exhaustive curriculum so as to provide teachers with more than enough teachable material for Sunday mornings. The pastor at the United Methodist church, however, was concerned with reducing the size and scope of the curriculum, so as to create less preparation work for her teachers.

While the amount of structure in the curriculum was greater for the Southern Baptist church than for the United Methodist church, the teachers at Cornerstone did not appear to closely follow the presentation suggestions or the directives in the LifeWay curriculum. Children at Cornerstone spent the majority of their time on a Sunday morning in "free time". But at Life United Methodist, the teachers seemed to closely follow the downsized FaithWeaver curriculum even though the children's pastor seems to trust her teachers'

abilities (according to the interview excerpt in chapter 6). Children at Life spent the majority of their time on a Sunday morning (at least one hour) in organized and supervised activities (e.g., Bible lesson, craft, snack, or an organized game in which everyone participated). I believe the difference in classroom structure between the churches was the result of teachers at the Methodist church exerting control over the children and following closely the curriculum they were given. Whereas, teachers at the Baptist church allowed children to do what they wanted and in the process failed to follow much of the curriculum they were given.

The second major difference between the two churches has to do with the Bible lesson. At Life United Methodist, the Bible lesson always took place at the beginning of class and averaged between 8-14 minutes. In contrast to Bible lessons at Life, Bible lessons at Cornerstone almost always took place at the end of class and were often completed in less than five minutes. I believe these differences are directly related to the structure and organization of the classrooms. That is, teachers at Life spent more time on and taught the Bible lesson at the beginning of class because of the structure they provided in the classroom, while teachers at Cornerstone spent less time on and taught the Bible lesson at the end of class because of the lack of structure they provided in the classroom.

The third major difference deals with the teachers' delivery of religious content. Teachers at Life United Methodist spent a much longer time teaching, explaining, fielding questions, making sure children paid attention, and including a positive emphasis on women's roles above and beyond what was in the curriculum. In this sense the teachers did not "follow" the curriculum but went beyond it. In contrast, teachers at Cornerstone Baptist spent very little time teaching, explaining, or allowing for questions; had a difficult time getting children to pay attention; and stuck to the more traditional gender stereotypes found in the LifeWay curriculum. I believe these findings are also related to the structure or lack thereof in the classrooms at each church.

The fourth major difference deals with the teacher to student interaction during Sunday school. At Life United Methodist, teachers generally applied non-gendered positive reinforcement of boys' and girls' behavior, and had non-gendered behavioral expectations in the classroom for boys and girls. For example, teachers at Life equally called upon boys and girls during the Bible lesson, equally involved boys and girls when soliciting help (such as cleaning up or preparing a snack), and equally requested a change in behavior from boys and girls when they became disruptive. In contrast, teachers at Cornerstone applied a more traditional gendered approach to reinforcement of boys' and girls' behavior and had gendered

behavioral expectations in the classroom for boys and girls. For example, teachers at Cornerstone generally asked girls for help cleaning up and praised them when they were playing in the homeliving area, whereas boys were generally singled out for disruptive behavior and praised when playing in areas of the room other than the homeliving area.

I believe the differences between the way teachers interacted with students at Life and Cornerstone churches are related to the way each denomination deals with gender. The non-gendered positive reinforcement of boys' and girls' behavior and non-gendered behavioral expectations of boys and girls at Life fit well within the United Methodists' desire to be inclusive of all persons regardless of gender and racial or ethnic background. Likewise, the application of a more traditional gendered approach to reinforcement of boys' and girls' behavior and gendered behavioral expectations for boys and girls at Cornerstone fits well within the Southern Baptist Convention's desire to maintain and espouse traditional gender roles.

Theoretical Implications

There are some important theoretical implications to this study. First, the findings in this study seem to support Bandura's social learning theory, especially its modeling component. According to Bandura, modeling is one of the most pervasive and powerful means of transmitting patterns of thought and behavior (Bandura 1986; Rosenthal and Zimmerman 1978). As a result of direct observation or modeling, we acquire information associated

with particular actions and instructions (Bandura 1977). Additionally, Bandura's (1986) modeling influences can help in instructing, encouraging, restricting, or stimulating the acquisition of such things as values, attitudes, and beliefs. This is especially true of children at Life United Methodist who obtained valuable information about gender and religion as a result of attending Sunday school and learning from models (i.e., the Sunday school teachers and other children). For example, as I mentioned earlier in this chapter, I observed children at Life explaining to their parents the importance of the woman in the Bible story about Jesus and the woman at the well.

Bandura (1986) also stated that through modeling, the rules and structures of behavior are made tangible to the observer, which is essential for reproducing such things as beliefs, values, and attitudes. While specific examples of this were not identified at Cornerstone, children at Life telling their parents about what they learned concerning women in the Bible supports Bandura's theory.

Findings from this study support the theory of Lave more than the theory of Vygotsky. It was impossible in this study to gauge the level of cognition (zone of proximal development) that Vygotsky (1978) believed children attained through social interaction. But the findings from the non-participant observation in this study can be explained by Lave's (1988) situated learning theory which argues that learning as it normally occurs is a function of the activity, context, and culture in which it occurs (i.e., it is

situated). Therefore, certain beliefs and behaviors could be acquired at Life because the learners (students) there became involved in what Lave (1988) terms a "community of practice".

The gender socialization I witnessed that was not unique to a religious organization (e.g., gender socialization that could occur at daycare or preschool as well) is important too and seems to best fit West and Zimmerman's (1987), "doing gender". West and Zimmerman claim that gender is embedded in aspects of everyday interactions, simultaneously producing and reproducing social meanings of gender. The fact gender socialization characteristic of other social settings was present at both churches indicates that, in addition to any religious gendering that was taking place, children were also producing and reproducing widely-held social meanings of gender.

Finally, organizational theories might also be helpful in explaining my findings. That is, the structure or nature of an organization may influence the extent to which beliefs, values, and attitudes are transmitted to people in the organization (in this study, the children in Sunday school). Of the two religious organizations in this study, Life United Methodist appears to be much more rationalized (i.e., having an organizational structure that meets organizational goals efficiently) than Cornerstone Baptist. Being in a more rationalized organization may have facilitated learning about religion and

gender at Life. In addition, Weber's (1947) organizational theory may also be useful. It states authority is principally exemplified within organizations by the process of control. Authority in an organization was defined by Weber as any relationship within which one person could impose his or her will, regardless of any resistance from the other. Preschool Sunday school classes certainly represent a place where one person (i.e., a Sunday school teacher) could impose his or her will and/or beliefs. Evidence from this study shows that because the teachers at Life United Methodist maintained control in their classrooms they were in a better position to impose their will and beliefs on the children. In sum, organizational theories may be helpful because they strengthen the point that regardless of what curriculum a church selects, the way it is taught and the level of structure and organization provided by teachers is paramount to what children will ultimately learn. Future work should consider more carefully how a blending of social learning theories and organizational theories might help our understanding of religious gender socialization.

Limitations and Difficulties of the Research Study

As mentioned briefly in chapter five, there were drawbacks and limitations to my study in terms of the number of curricula analyzed and the number of denominations observed. Because my sample included only two Sunday school curricula and two churches, one from the Southern Baptist Convention and one from the United Methodist Church (both located in the

south central United States), it cannot represent all Protestant Sunday school curricula or churches, or even those of the Southern Baptists and United Methodists in particular. In addition, my study only included data collected from one year of Sunday school curricula and twelve visits to each church. But, it is important to state again the Sunday school curricula I analyzed were typical of a year's worth of curriculum at each church.

Several questions come to mind regarding the two denominations and two churches in my study sample: Was the gender socialization I witnessed at the two churches somehow different from the gender socialization that takes place at religious organizations outside of the Southern Baptist Convention and United Methodist Church? How representative are my findings of all Southern Baptist and United Methodist churches in the U.S.? Were the teachers at the two churches I observed representative of the kinds of people who teach Sunday school at other churches? Did the fact the churches I observed were located in the south central United States affect my results? Would my findings have been different if I had observed churches in the Northeast or on the West Coast? Are the gendered messages I uncovered in the LifeWay and FaithWeaver curricula representative of messages concerning men and women in other Sunday school curricula? Do messages regarding men and women in Sunday school curricula vary by age (i.e., preschool to elementary to adolescent to adult curricula) and if so how?

I encountered a number of difficulties in collecting the data. Working with religious organizations turned out to be more complicated than I had anticipated. Initially my project was treated with much fear and apprehension, especially at Life United Methodist Church. At Life, the lead administrative pastor did not want parishioners to know I was there conducting a study, and the pastoral staff as a whole indicated an uneasiness with my “uncovering” anything to do with gender at their church. I learned later the staff was confusing the study of gender with the study of sexuality. It was explained to me that some people on the staff were afraid my study would condone homosexuality within the United Methodist Church and Life United Methodist Church in particular. Obviously this was not the intent of my study, but this is an example of the fear from which religious organizations may operate in order to protect their beliefs and reputations. In addition, the interview with the children’s pastor at Life was difficult to conduct and in the end was cut short, leaving me with less information than I desired. Also, when I asked to interview Sunday school teachers at Life, the staff told me they could not expect their teachers to commit that kind of time and they would prefer that I not formally interview the teachers.

While I did not encounter the same kind of apprehension at Cornerstone, I did find the staff to be somewhat unreliable and at times difficult to get in touch with. For example, when I asked the children’s pastor

at Cornerstone for one year of continuous Sunday school curriculum, I did not receive it for over a month and when I picked it up it was for kindergarten instead of preschool. I had to have them replace it and even then I had to ask several times in order to obtain all of the necessary materials.

Another difficulty I encountered was the overwhelming number of things taking place at one time in the classroom. At times this made recording field notes a very demanding process. While being a non-participant observer was an incredible way to gain perspective and see what was actually taking place in preschool Sunday school classrooms, writing down everything I observed was nearly impossible. I learned quickly how to jot notes down in a chronological order with enough detail so later I could write up a much fuller account of what took place. This practice took time to adjust to and was more difficult than I had anticipated. But this study was more rewarding than any other research I have conducted. In spite of the methodological limitations and difficulties I had in conducting the research, I believe my content analysis of Sunday school curricula and observations of Sunday school teachers and preschool children helps us to understand gender socialization that takes place within religious organizations.

Future Research

As mentioned previously, a major limitation of my research had to do with the fact I was only able to analyze the content of two different Sunday

school curricula and observe in two churches, each one from a different denomination. Analyzing Sunday school curricula over longer periods of time as well as observing children in other religious denominations will significantly add to the findings I have already uncovered. For example, it would be interesting to compare my findings to those from a study that included a Catholic church, an Episcopal church, a Lutheran church, a Pentecostal church, a non-denominational Christian church, and a United Church of Christ. It would be equally interesting to observe the differences in religious gender socialization among other religions such as Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Mormonism, and Buddhism.

In conclusion, my findings that preschool Sunday school curricula and preschool Sunday school classes are sources of religious gender socialization are significant because research on gender socialization in religious settings is still so limited. Despite the fact this study only looked at Southern Baptists and United Methodists, my results demonstrate that family, school, media, and peers are not the only important agents of gender socialization. Knowing this, and knowing the importance of religion in the United States remains high, I believe conducting future studies on religious gender socialization will not only be interesting but imperative.

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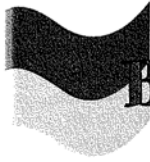
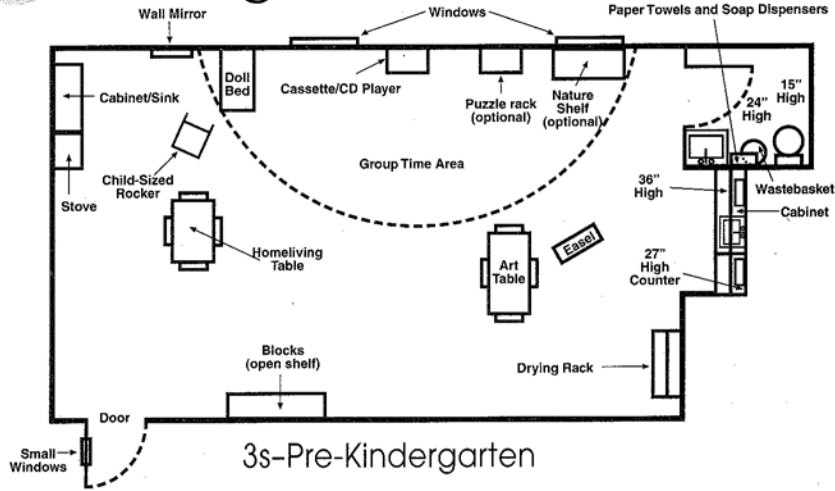
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Appendix A



Creating the Learning Environment



Basic Resources

for Teaching 3s-Pre-K

- beanbags
- Bibles; Read to Me Bible for Kids (Holman CSB®)
- binder rings
- books related to the areas of God, Jesus, Bible, Church, Creation, Self, Family, Community/World
- boxes (different sizes)
- cardboard tubes
- CD/cassette player
- child-sized scissors
- clear contact plastic
- collage items
- construction paper, drawing paper, poster board, plain index cards
- craft sticks
- crayons, washable felt-tip markers, chalk
- dress-up clothes (Bible times and present-day)
- empty food boxes
- magazines and catalogs
- magnet boards (or cookie sheets)
- magnetic strip
- masking tape, wide transparent tape
- muffin pans
- nature items (various)
- newspaper
- paintbrushes, paint containers, smocks
- plastic dishes, pots, and pans
- plastic or wooden animal figures
- plastic or wooden people figures
- play dough, play dough or modeling clay tools
- puzzles related to the areas of God, Jesus, Bible, Church, Creation, Self, Family, Community/World
- rhythm instruments
- tempera paint, watercolors
- toy cars, trucks, and boats
- toy telephones
- washable plastic dolls with molded features, baby-care items, doll clothes
- white school glue, glue sticks
- wooden blocks
- zip-lock bags (different sizes)

Appendix B

Behavioral Definitions from Davis (1984, p.6)

Dependent: seeking or relying on others for help, protection, or reassurance; maintaining close physical proximity to others.

Independent: self-initiated and self-sustained behavior, autonomous functioning, resistance to externally imposed constraints.

Cooperative: working together or joint effort toward a common goal, complementary division of labor in a given activity.

Competitive: striving against another in an activity or game for a particular goal, position, or reward; desire to be first, best, winner.

Directive: guiding, leading, impelling others toward an action or goal; controlling behaviors of others.

Submissive: yielding to the direction of others; deference to wishes of others.

Persistent: maintenance of goal-directed activity despite obstacles, setbacks, or adverse conditions.

Explorative: seeking knowledge or information through careful examination or investigation; inquisitive and curious.

Creative: producing novel idea or product; unique solution to a problem; engaging in fantasy or imaginative play.

Imitative: duplicating, mimicking, or modeling behavior (activity or verbalization) of others.

Nurturant: giving physical or emotional aid, support, or comfort to another; demonstrating affection or compassion for another.

Aggressive: physically or emotionally hurting someone; verbal aggression; destroying property.

Emotional: affective display of feelings; manifestation of pleasure, fear, anger, sorrow, etc., via laughing, cowering, crying, frowning, violent outbursts, etc.

Active: gross motor (large muscle) physical activity, work, play.

Passively active: fine motor (small muscle) activity; alert, attentive, activity, but with minimal or no physical movement (e.g., reading, talking, thinking, daydreaming).

Appendix C

Table 1. Observations of Girls Wearing Dresses and the Color Pink to Sunday

School at Cornerstone Baptist Church

Observation	N	Percent
Number of Observations (Girls)	62	100%
Girls Wearing Something Pink	43	69%
Girls Wearing Dresses	51	82%
Girls Wearing Dressy Shoes (non-athletic)	55	88%

*The data in Table 1 come from coded field notes of 12 observation sessions.

Table 2. Observations of Girls Wearing Dresses and the Color Pink to Sunday

School at Life United Methodist Church

Observation	N	Percent
Number of Observations (Girls)	74	100%
Girls Wearing Something Pink	35	47%
Girls Wearing Dresses	40	54%
Girls Wearing Dressy Shoes (non-athletic)	61	82%

*The data in Table 2 come from coded field notes of 12 observation sessions.