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AN ANALYSIS OF GENDER REPRESENTATION IN ESL TEXTBOOKS FOR ADULTS AT THE WAUKEGAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

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This study investigates how gender is represented in English as a Second Language (ESL) textbooks for adults. Using four different ESL textbooks for adults found on the shelves at the Waukegan Public Library in Waukegan, IL, I argue that while overt sexism is no longer present, there still remain examples of covert sexism throughout all four textbooks. This research is significant because unlike a traditional classroom textbook, a textbook found on the shelves at a public library offers no teacher assistance, outside sources, or cultural context; a student will read the book by themselves and take it verbatim. Because of this, how men and women are presented in the ESL textbooks takes on additional importance.

The methodology for this study involved examining four ESL textbooks for adults, all of which were from different series, and compiling an analysis of the following:

- How many times male and female images appeared and what they looked like
- How many times men and women spoke
- The topics that men and women spoke about
- How men and women interact together

The projected results show that there is a larger number of male images, as well as more instances of men speaking when men and women are pictured together. Additionally, there are still stereotypes of men and women that are pictured; while there are images of female doctors and male nurses, it is almost always the women who go shopping and the men who go to work wearing business attire with no women in their offices. This contradicts previous research done on ESL textbooks - these studies overwhelmingly show more obvious sexism than the four textbooks used for this study.