PART V

CONSUMER AND PRODUCT

Part V CONSUMER AND PRODUCT

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Introduction

(Model continued)

5) Ideological advantages of purchase	4) Consumers' ideology/requirements/needs relative to the toy	6) Personal advantages of purchase

8) The product's socio-psychological significance	7) Consumers' utility maximising of the toy	9) The product's individual appeal
Social values / Values associated with the situation / Individual values		Social symbol and utility values / Social and concept oriented values / Subjective and eco-social values

10) The loyal consumer (and the values and utility of the toy)	11) Hybrid (and the values and utility of the toy)	12) The casual consumer (and the values and utility of the toy)

13) Relative to the social aspect	14) Relative to the situation aspect	15) Relative to the individual aspect

Chapter 17 describes consumer ideology about and his requirements of and needs for toys. The description is split into two sections:

First, the ideological benefits of toy purchase. We examine purposes for toys, play and games (5). Then, we examine the personal benefits of purchase, split into five areas: the family, pedagogical environment, technology, marketing/advertising and Art (6).

Chapter 18 describes utility maximisation (7).

Utility maximisation is described both in relation to the social psychological significance of the product (8) and to its individual appeal (9).

The toy's social psychological significance (8) is manifested as social, situation and individual values connected to "meaning".

The product's individual appeal (9) is expressed via social symbol and utility values, social and conceptual values and subjective and eco-social values.

Chapter 19 is a detailed examination of consumers' toy collections, children's and parents' favourite toys, criteria relevant to their toy purchases, how their choice of toys can be conditional on the family's attitude to the future, etc.

Finally, **chapter 20** includes a survey showing which parents, *on the basis of their education*, can be termed loyal (10) or casual (12). The "hybrid" consumer (11) is also mentioned, although only in passing.

This survey takes the form of a close study into which types of toys children - whose parents belong to certain groups (sorted according to their education) - select or reject. Evident deviations are listed here.

It is true to say that parents tend generally to connect certain values to certain groups of toys.

The social values (13), positional and dimensional values (14) and individual values (15) connected to different groups of toys are listed in an index. Evident deviations are commented on.

CHAPTER 17 CONSUMER IDEOLOGY, REQUIREMENTS AND NEEDS

4

CONSUMER IDEOLOGY - NEEDS - REQUIREMENTS VIS-À-VIS THE TOY
* feels he "lacks" the toy
* converts the need into a "wish" for the product(s)
* expresses the will to acquire the toy

IDEOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES OF PURCHASE		
The toy's ideological case relations	The play ideological case relations	The ideological case relations of the game

PERSONAL ADVANTAGES OF PURCHASE				
Family	Tech-nology	Peda-gogy	Market/ adverti-sing	Art

The fundamental human *condition* is subject to several *needs*! The need to acquire a given thing results from the need for a) *social ideological benefits* and b) *general personal benefits*. A large group of people can thus feel that they lack something. This feeling may mean that the group focuses attention on some specific item which they acquire for themselves. This item could well be a specific toy.

The classical way of classifying needs is, like Maslov, to formulate a hypothesis that needs form a hierarchy. The motivation for the hierarchy of needs is that needs at a lower level have to be fulfilled before needs at a higher level become apparent.

Where the needs of a large group of people are concerned, they are described as *the demand* for a certain product. Where it is possible to describe a consumer group so precisely, we can see how this group is differentiated from other groups. We call this consumer segmentation.

Where it is possible to establish which specific characteristics of the product appeal to the consumer group's need to acquire it, we have "benefit segmentation".

However, as mentioned, consumers want to acquire both:

A. ideological benefits of purchase and
B. personal benefits of purchase.

These are described in the following.

A. The ideological benefits (of purchase)

Ideology is most often described as *a system of attitudes* which is expressed *within a certain area or within a certain group of people.* In the current context, this means that a consumer group can achieve satisfaction and confirmation of their attitudes through the purchase of a certain toy. The consumers buy ideological confirmation and satisfaction which can either be positive or negative.

Not surprisingly, Sutton-Smith (1986:217-240) was the first to describe this phenomenon in relation to toys (in his book "Toys as Culture").

He believes that social revolutions from the Renaissance through the French, American and Industrial Revolutions all used ideological and idealistic phrases which were intended to reach a higher aim.

The principal aim was intellectual and ideological freedom and individual freedom of expression. This naturally included the opportunity to satisfy social and individual needs connected to acquiring consumer goods.

Sutton-Smith says that, where toys were concerned, by the end of the 18th Century society had discovered that these small copies of real objects were an eminently suitable means by which - *through play and a variety of games with them* - to manifest and make reference to the advantages and disadvantages of everyday life and the grimness of reality and to illustrate and demystify society's complexities.

Toys, small copies of the implements of the "real world", were brought in to serve the pedagogical purposes of the people!

Toys, play and games thus became *objects with an inherent ideological purpose* which was to confirm or refute the consumers', person-at-play's or players' desires, needs and aims. The consumer acquired visible, desired benefits when he allowed his children to practise for the future with the help of toys. Toys continue to play this same role today.

The significance of toys was brought to the attention of adult consumers in particular and was brought in to serve the purposes of work and fairy tales/play.

If we bring this up to date, this doesn't actually mean that all consumer groups focus on the same benefits when they use the same types of toys. On the contrary, the same toys can be utilised in order to provide a benefit from several extremely different ideological motivations - which means, according to Sutton-Smith, that the significance and value of toys are *relative*!

5

IDEOLOGICAL ADVANTAGES OF PURCHASE		
* IRRATIONAL * USEFUL * CHILDISH * ADOPTING A ROLE/POSITION * IMAGINATION * IDEALISATION * INFORMATION * IDENTIFICATION		
The toy's ideological case relations	The play ideological case relations	The ideological case relations of the game

Sutton-Smith names eight instances which are general, primary characteristics of:

the ideological benefits gained by the consumer when he either acquires or purchases toys. With his purchase, the benefits *may be connected to concepts such as irrationality, utility, childishness, adoption of a role or position, imagination, idealisation, information and identification*.

These eight benefits will be described in further detail. I wish to emphasise that the description will not be of Sutton-Smith's (1986:217-240) serious literary work on the eight benefits but rather *my own brief summary and interpretation of them*.

In addition, toys, play and games each have their own inherent benefits on the basis of general purposes connected to them. Only brief reference to these will be given here as they are described in chapters 2, 3 and 4 and elucidated further in Part II - Toys and Part III - Play.

Sutton-Smith's eight benefits

Benefits connected to the irrational
The motivation for a sudden toy purchase is often irrational and spontaneous. Parents' spontaneous, impulse buys of toy products are often motivated by a desire to achieve benefits "here and now". The short-term aim is fulfilled as such purchases are often intended to keep the child quiet and get a bit of peace.

The irrational benefits obtained by the child getting the toy (or pestering the life out of his parents in order to get it) are naturally also short-term. No particular consumer group is especially predisposed to making impulse buys.

Impulse purchases are determined by the situation and direct stimuli which the consumer encounters at random.

Benefits connected to utility
Benefits here are connected in some way to utility/gain or usage. Utility also means that the object is practical, sensible and useful. There is often the requirement that the object (toy) is clean and washable, that it is easy to deal with, easy to transport, etc.

Utility is also an expression of logic and visibility in the form of a good design and, possibly, decorativeness. In this connection, parents often state that a toy "suits" the child (see Steenhold (1993,d)) because the toy is used to support values and characteristics which they like to see their child possess.

Benefits connected to childhood
These are benefits the parents gain when they play with toys because the toys legitimise childish behaviour. Adults are permitted to become children again. Some toys almost invite the adult-at-play to behave in a childlike way: in fact a few of them even come close to demanding that kind of behaviour.

Children can see the benefits of getting their parents or other adults into a "childlike" position. But, just as often, children are embarrassed when they find their parents (most often Dad) behaving childishly.

On the other hand, some parents try to keep the child a child for as long as possible by underestimating the child's development in relation to the toys they acquire for him. The opposite can also occur - that parents believe that their child can accomplish far more than he in fact can and buy toys for him which are intended for much older children.

Benefits connected to adopting a role/position
Being able to adopt correct roles and positions is central for us all. We can learn this in childhood with the aid of good props/good toys. Sutton-Smith (1986:227) refers in this connection to several interesting works (from the Renaissance to the present day) on roles and props associated with them - i.e. toys.

Adopting roles and positions is not restricted to play. Within the last three centuries, *work* has developed into a central parameter for Western civilisation. The ability to instil children with the right roles and positions using small, useful and correctly designed "anthropometric" implements is therefore advantageous.

Benefits connected to imagination
Singer (1973) proves beyond doubt that children who spend a great deal of time playing play more imaginatively and creatively than children who play less often. The ability to imagine is developed through both solitary and social play.

Trienies, Einsiedler & Bosch (1986) have proven that 3-6 year olds' ability to imagine in play is affected more by how lifelike a toy is than by its complexity. Complexity does, however, become significant for and attractive to children over the age of six.

The majority of very conscientious parents who want to buy creative toys for their children (toys which do not necessarily have to be complex and difficult to play with) recognise these conclusions intuitively and evaluate toys on their creative merits.

Benefits connected to idealisation
Sutton-Smith (1986:230) calls the "academic play theories" - theories developed by professionals who work with children in pre-school institutions, in therapy or in special laboratories - as theories for and by *the rich*! Sutton-Smith says that all such theories preach that, where play is organised and planned socially for children in the form of definitive play/games controlled by adults, the children are better prepared for life because, through play with toys, they have the opportunity to test out precise modes of behaviour which adults have selected and find suitable.

Whether these "academic" theories can actually be said to have been developed exclusively for the rich depends presumably on how we choose to define the term "rich". However, there is all good reason to point out that these theories are patented and marketed to particularly socially critical consumer groups by political idealists. In turn, the consumer groups convert questions and answers into ideologies.

But ideals tend to be fragile - which could explain why "new" pedagogical theories which are almost identical "recycled" versions of existing theories - replace the old ones from time to time.

Benefits connected to information
In this book I have repeatedly claimed and argued that toys are communicative objects which play a beneficial role for some consumers as concrete sources of information and as diffuse or abstract metaphors. Furthermore, I have often stated that toys support play and games when they function as forms of "simulated reality" (as Aristotle called it).

I have also mentioned that many modern toys developed after World War II function as trivial objects marketed to children in an uncultivated or tasteless way (a belief widely held by puritanical and socially-committed, "green" consumer groups).

However, the same toys also function as implements which encourage creative and pioneering ideas and thoughts which other consumer groups are capable of putting to very good use.

Benefits connected to identification
Identification is deep emotion which occurs when a person plays that he/she is the object itself - or at least as part of it. There are many benefits in this

because the dream or imaginary state becomes extremely intimate. Opportunities for the person-at-play to identify himself with the toy have naturally become greater with the expansion of the toy industry over the past 30-40 years.

In the psychological context, identification presents the person-at-play with the opportunity to project feelings and conflicts with the help of the situations and themes of play. Identification objects are most often dolls, characters and functional figures and soft toys. Less frequently the identification object is an implement, e.g. a weapon.

In this way, the toys gain secret power which can develop into fear of power - the fear some people have of machines. At the same time, however, it gives the person-at-play the opportunity to experiment with both power and fear.

When adults see benefits in giving a child a certain toy, they are playing or experimenting with both fear and power because they want the child to learn to master both. Through this, the parents believe that the child will become more independent. In some cases, however, the child becomes less independent, i.e. dependent on the adults.

The purposes of toys, play and games

These purposes are also included in the descriptions of toys, play and games in chapters 3 and 4.

As the observant reader will already have noticed, these models are identical with those in chapters 3 and 4.

**PURPOSE OF TOY
IDEOLOGIES**

– STYLE
– PRACTICAL USE
– MOTIVE
– STATEMENT
– EXPRESSION/DESIGN
– COMPLEXITY
– SIGNAL
– PLAY
– UNDERSTANDING
– CODES

PURPOSE OF PLAY IDEOLOGIES

– RECOGNITION
– CONFLICT
– PASSION
– COMPETITION
– MASTERY
– ORDER/ANARCHY
– PRODUCTION/DEMONSTRATION
– DISCIPLINE
– FORMS
– TIME/SPACE

PURPOSE OF GAME IDEOLOGIES

– RATIONALITY/IRRATIONALITY
– USEFUL/NOT USEFUL
– CHILDISH/ADULT
– ADOPT A ROLE/REFUSE TO ADOPT A ROLE
– SIMULATE PARTICIPATION/PARTICIPATE
– IDEALISM/NEGATION
– PREDICTABLE OUTCOME/UNPREDICTABLE OUTCOME
– ORGANISATION/DISORGANISATION
– HUMAN INTERRELATION/HUMAN DISTANCING

B. The personal benefits (of purchase)

The consumer seeks to manifest the different personal benefits of purchase or acquisition of toys within five principal areas - *the family, the pedagogical environment, the technological environment, the market (advertising) and Art.*

6.

> **PERSONAL ADVANTAGES OF PURCHASE:**
>
> – of toys within the family unit
> – of toys within the pedagogical environment
> – of toys within technological environment
> – of toys and the market/advertising
> – of toys in Art

In his book "Toys and Culture", Sutton-Smith (1986:242-244) gives a brief description of four of these spheres where the benefits are obvious and visible to the consumer. I have chosen to include an additional fifth sphere, Art, in which the consumer is able to fulfil all his most fantastic, creative dreams - if, that is, his imagination extends that far!

Toys within the family unit

Within the family unit toys create intimacy and a sense of belonging between the giver and the recipient.

> **TOYS WITHIN THE FAMILY UNIT**
>
> **Toys as:**
> | | |
> |---|---|
> | gifts | ties |
> | exchange | consolation |
> | on special occasions | community |
> | loneliness | adoration |
> | obligation | separation |
> | debt of gratitude | isolation |
>
> **Summary:**
> Toys create intimacy and a sense of belonging between giver and recipient
>
> **Play ideologies used:**
> - childishness
> - human connection

According to Sutton-Smith, the function of the toy as a gift given on a special occasion is beneficial and is a means by which to achieve different effects:

- to strengthen the bond between child and parents
- to get the child accustomed to solitary play, isolation and separation
- to bind the family via the toy's values

Expressed in a paradoxical way, we can state that:

"We are giving you this toy to tie you to us, be thankful and go away and play on your own - so we can enjoy a bit of peace and quiet!"

In line with, amongst others, Turner (1969) and Abrahams (1986), the theory is based on social anthropological attitudes to conflict within the family unit.

On the one hand, parents want to bind their children to them and, on the other hand, they are irritated by the pivotal position of the child within the family as representative of the youngest (privileged, spoiled) generation which is in focus or adopts the central role at family gatherings and on special occasions. The toy (gift) plays an important role as it deflects attention from two pressures in a situation in which a conflict solution needs to be found with (where possible!) creative participation of child(children), parents and sometimes also grandparents.

Sutton-Smith employs irony to distance himself from all this gift-giving but the ideology behind the custom of giving gifts is nevertheless clear:

The child may continue to be a child (preferably for years to come), to develop through the toy on his parents' conditions and to feel that he belongs to the family unit.

Toys within the pedagogical environment

According to Sutton-Smith, the benefits and position of toys within education are deeply ambivalent:

"Within education and development, toys are beneficial aids to progress. In the teaching situation, however, toys are in the way, they disrupt and repudiate."

There are, however, many parents, teachers and pedagogues who believe that toys play an important role as aids in the learning process by contributing to the child's development.

TOYS IN EDUCATION

Toys as:

learning	perform
thought	carry out/act out
stimulation	progress
work	success
exploitation/advantage	perseverance
mastery	endurance
performance	concentration

Summary:
Toys create development and are an aid to progress

Play ideologies used:
- useful/ not useful
- idealisation
- adopt a role or position

We can express the paradox thus:

"We are investing in you and give you this (expensive) toy so that you can have fun with it - learn something useful through it - and become a clever boy/girl."

As mentioned in Chapter 5, *The Toy as an Object*, especially thoughtful and well-educated parents and specialists, like psychologists and pedagogues who work with small children, acquire stimulating toys for the children in their care. These people have adopted the positive side of the theory. By contrast, many schoolteachers have an ambivalent attitude to toys. Some believe that toys only disrupt the teaching process, that they are not suitable for use in schools, etc. Such attitudes unfortunately obstruct the introduction of new and alternative teaching methods.

The theory about the formidable opportunities inherent in toys outlined above is also promoted and presented by toy manufacturers and applied to their products. They use and explain the theory in detail in folders and user instructions which they supply with the toys.

The psychological and pedagogical arguments for developmental and educational aspects used by toy manufacturers vary greatly:

- "the toy allows the child to carry out sensory motor and symbolic actions through manipulation and play, through which the child consolidates his knowledge and powers of recognition." - in accordance with Piaget (1951).

- " the toy stimulates the user's/child's inquisitive sense and introduces the user/child to something new and exciting. Curiosity sharpens the child's

interest in new things, thus promoting and stimulating development of the child's personal characteristics and abilities". - in accordance with Berlyne (1960).

- "the child's concentration on the toy will have great significance later on for his understanding of the everyday rituals of adult life in connection e.g with church, family, rules and laws, theatre, school, politics or marriage." - in accordance with Erikson (1977).

- "the toy functions as the child's first abstraction and permits him to detach himself from the meaning and context of habitual actions. For example, when the child discovers that "the doll" is "a baby" which is treated differently than how the child himself is treated as a baby by other people. Interpreted in this way, the child's play with the toy is a projection of the child's simulated knowledge and capacities." - in accordance with Vygotskji (1978).

The examples show that concepts concerned with the stimulating or educational functions of toys vary and include:

- the attempt to predict a response expressed by the toy's ability to stimulate and
- observation of the toy's capacity for producing "sudden discoveries".

Toys within the technological environment

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<u>TOYS WITHIN TECHNOLOGY</u>

Toys as:

a machine	rationality
determinism	cosmos
self-control	variables
autonomy	complexity/composition
organism	environment
computer	miniaturised/model
video game	
implement	
variables	

Summary:
The toy contributes to creating control over uncertainty, control over Fate

Play ideologies used:
- irrationality
- newness

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According to Sutton-Smith, the toy contributes to creating control over uncertainty - control over "Fate".

As described in the section concerning *the toy as an object*, the hypothesis is motivated by 17th century philosophy's ideas about toys and technology, i.e. the idea that an automatic machine is a model for Man's autonomy, individuality and development. At the same time, the machine represents a threat to Man's liberty because it is stronger and more powerful than he is.

At the end of the 20th century, the electronic and technical aspect of modern toys (both electromechanical and purely mechanical) is fast becoming extremely sophisticated.

Toys are being filled with signal and control functions which are meant to echo reality. In addition, many toys can be remote-controlled either by means of a hand-held control unit or via a personal computer. Children take all this for granted while many adults, failing to understand these developments, view the situation with horror.

Electronics is no longer merely an element which streamlines and simplifies the use of these implements. No, it is purely and simply for entertainment!

Sutton-Smith calls this "the Frankenstein paradox" which has worried childhood romantics for more than two hundred years.

Socially-engaged and well-educated parents and the experts continue to play the role of childhood romantics when they protest against the latest products, the newest examples of determinism.

They claim that children's play and their imaginations are threatened by mechanical and electronic toys, certain TV programmes, video games and guardian dolls. These toys also enrich children's play and imagination with new and imaginative opportunities.

In my opinion, some published works, such as Phillips (1986) *Turmoil in the Toy Box* and West (1988) *Children, Culture and Controversy,* Dixon (1990) *Playing Them False,* Stern & Schoenhaus (1990) *Toyland* and partly also Kline (1993) *Out of the Garden,* have cultivated public fear. In fact, to some extent, these books have formed a pessimist crusade against electronic toys, video games and large sectors of the rest of the toy industry.

Toys in marketing/advertising

TOYS AND THE TOY MARKET

Toys as:

performance	exploitation/profit
possession	power
consumption	marketing
capitalism	mass production
economics	idealisation
advertising	

Summary:
The toy creates power for the owner of the toy. New toys create ideology in the form of systems for certain views, concepts and ideas expressed by various social groups.

Most frequently used play ideologies:
- adopt a role or position
- newness/confusion

Toys give power to the person in possession of them: power of newness and power of possession - because the toy creates ideology.

The toy market with its superabundance of toys and toy advertising gets the child accustomed to his future life within consumer society.

This paradox can be expressed as follows:

"Both toys in the toy stores and children within the family have become more and more expensive to "acquire" and "maintain" and, at the same time, they have become less and less useful."

Zelizzer (1985) tackles the problems inherent in the children's situation thus:

Firstly, parents' historical ideals concerning the family, philosophy and the dream of community and intimacy between parents and children and the efforts they make to maintain them.

Secondly, parents' stark realistic recognition of the fact that the everyday career race, separation and consumerism have developed into a parody of family life, costing enormous human sacrifice which hits the children first.

In this deterministic hypothesis, toys become the "moral economic hostages" of childhood, which, on the basis of a philosophy of "fulfilling individual

dreams", are particularly suitable as a means by which to turn children into willing consumers.

Zelizzer's argument is part of the horror scenario in both the American and European middle class' attitudes to the future. Discussion of this scenario over the last few years has become part of the socialist and environmental political parties' manifestos and in particular taken up by socially-engaged groups within the population.

Toys and Art

TOYS AND ART

Toys as:

freedom	symbols
spontaneity	sensing
fantasy	intuition
imagined feeling	reflection
experimentation	mastery
dreams	confrontation
collapsed code systems	

Summary:
Toys are delimiting, innovative and free relative to truth and reality.

Play ideologies used:
All possible permutations

The benefits of toys within Art are incredible:

Toys communicate fiction, dreams, imagination and new, alternative ideas and messages.

Many celebrated and well-established artists have used toys as a source of inspiration for their work. Many artists have pointed out that experience tells them that functionalism challenges the toy universe. For the creative person-at-play, toys, implements, piles of otherwise worthless materials, junk and scrap can be used advantageously in order to recycle, reform and construct something out of nothing, to manipulate preconceived images and random thoughts and ideas.

This has not only formed and produced Art and individual works of Art which have contributed to the development of new ideas and schools of thought. It has also produced Art which has broken the mould of tradition for critical, ethical and aesthetic thought which in turn has helped to bring about new perspectives and philosophies on life. The work of sculptors like Joan Miro and Robert Jacobsen are fine examples. The common denominator for experimental Art and imaginative toys is, among many other aspects, that

they question the concept of "good taste" and "tradition". The expression "mental pollution" has often been hurled at Modern Art, regardless of when this was produced or whether it in fact has been described as "modern".

Viewing Art as an implement for use in a variety of connections is nothing new. Similarly, different types of toys can be regarded as good, new implements. However, the use of certain implements has certain consequences for the user. As with Art in its communicative form, play with new or unfamiliar toys involves all the paradoxes which are inevitably connected with the unfamiliar, strange or dangerous - i.e. both sympathetic magic and realistic consequences.

Art (in the form of poetry, literature, painted images or sculptured figures and objects) communicates alternative concepts. So do toys. The reader or beholder adds his own experiences and dreams to the concept of the work of Art in the same way as the child complements the concept of the toy with his own experiences and dreams for the future.

Art trivia helps people abstract from their everyday lives. Trivial toys, e.g. Barbie, help children to abstract from their everyday lives, the child day care centre and school. In the same way as Art creates a synthetic or symbolic imaginary universe or an absurd or symbolic debate, certain toys with a synthetic or symbolic concept motivate children to synthetic or symbolic play.

Just as true Art bears a message, so do good toys. How they are received will always be dependent on the responsiveness of the artist or of the recipient - or indeed of the child, his childhood environment and opportunities available to him for life and play.

CHAPTER 18 CONSUMER TOY UTILITY MAXIMISATION

7

**CONSUMER
UTILITY MAXIMISATION
OF THE TOY**

* adapts consumption to level of income
* regulates budget in accordance with marginal utility
* evaluates marginal utility relative to preferred benefits

ADAPTED, REGULATED, EVALUATED AND
UTILISED RELATIVE TO:

- the socio-psychologcal significance of the product
- the individual appeal of the product

**PRODUCT'S
SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL
SIGNIFICANCE**

**PRODUCT'S
INDIVIDUAL APPEAL**

Utility maximisation

As a general rule, the constant aim of the person-at-play - in fact, any user of toys - is to get the most out of his toy products, to get most "utility" out of them.

Experience and pleasure derived from playing with a particular toy the person-at-play has asked for or bought for himself/herself is called "utility value" and can in many ways be equated with the experienced satisfaction of a need.

The consumer, whether adult or child, has invested in exactly those benefits and qualities he believes the toy possesses at a cost which he believes is reasonable relative to his income and to other toys he chose not to buy. This is the toy's "marginal utility".

According to Crawford's (1987) and Poulsen's (1988) definitions of utility maximisation in general terms, *a family's utility maximisation of a toy* is:

– *how the individual family carefully adapts, evaluates and utilises consumption and acquisition of the "usefulness" of a new toy to the family budget"*

– *the family regulates the family budget in accordance with "marginal utility" because the things the family buys must seem reasonable relative to other*

purchases of toys (toys' "utility values") and relative to all other more or less necessary consumer items.

Consumers would not acquire a product or a toy if it had:
neither
A: socio-psychological significance
nor
B: individual appeal (appeal to the individual consumer).

These two phenomena will be discussed in the following.

A. Socio-psychological significance of the product

Values

8

THE PRODUCT'S SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

SET OF ATTRIBUTES	SET OF ATTRIBUTES
Consumer understanding INTANGIBLE "SUBJECTIVE"	Consumer understanding TANGIBLE "OBJECTIVE"
Personal taste	Price, size, colour
LEVEL OF PERCEPTION MOTIVATED BY CONCEPT	LEVEL OF PERCEPTION MOTIVATED BY DATA
Individual interpretation of sensory impressions (cognitive associations and abstractions)	SENSORY IMPRESSIONS: 5 senses + intuition
THE TOY'S SEMIOTICS: texts codes signals expression	THE TOY'S: degree of realism degree of complexity stage of development production form materials classification

SOCIAL VALUES **SITUATION VALUES** **INDIVIDUAL VALUES**

This overview illustrates the socio-psychological significance of toys and is motivated by the belief that certain *attributes* are associated with any toy (in fact any product) you care to mention. For examples, *see the section on "girls' and boys' attributes".*

In general, attributes are the characteristics, qualities or properties which (according to Crawford (1985)) are used to describe, identify or characterise

the product in question. Any toy can therefore be seen as the bearer of a small or indeed a large collection of particular attributes. Advertising alludes to these attributes when it emphasises the characteristics of the toy.

Toys gain social psychological significance on the strength of two types of sets of attributes:

1. *Intangible and subjective sets of attributes*
2. *Tangible and objective sets of attributes*
– *and the values associated with these.*

"The product (the toy) gains social psychological significance on the strength of consumer perception via both tangible and intangible sets of attributes."
Friedmann & Lessig (1987)

Where values are concerned, these sets of attributes are associated with certain social, situation and individual values which the individual consumer *feels connected to* and sees as useful.

Returning to the two types of sets of attributes:

1. The intangible and subjective sets of attributes
In the vast majority of cases these depend on individual, personal taste and attention paid to the toy. To a certain extent, however, they also depend on curiosity and the search for what a given product has to offer. Attention paid to the product can be described both as *consumer perception* of the product and also as *cognitive association and abstraction* relative to the attributes of the toy.

Cognitive psychology describes human behaviour as the processes by which human beings handle information, how the human being uses an accumulation of experience of environment a) to promote his understanding or interpretation of incoming information and b) to formulate questions about the environment in order to undertake specific actions.

These processes involve handling and assimilating information about the environment. This information is then used partly in understanding or interpreting new information and partly in questioning one's immediate environment. Dialogues and questions pertaining to characteristics and knowledge in the interpretation mean, of course, that the individual makes active, subjective choices, takes action and engages in experiments. (This theme was introduced to the reader in Chapter 1: **Dialogics and communication**).

This cognitive approach to consumer behaviour describes buying behaviour as a process for dealing with information in which making a choice between a variety of different products presupposes that the consumer possesses information about these products.

Qualitative and cognitive selection of one toy concept in preference to another is therefore the result of knowledge and perception about the similarities and differences between the products and depends on the consumer's being able to identify the attributes and utility value of individual toy products.

The scientific explanation for the individual consumer's interpretation of the attributes of any given toy also includes the toy's text, codes, signals and expression. *Semiotics/suitable semiotic models are therefore the strongest - and in fact the only - means by which we can characterise the attribute set of the individual toy product.*

When marketing toys (and many other types of products), the experts claim that it is possible - with the aid of multi-attribute models - to predict which consumer groups will prefer certain types of toys which have particular attributes, more than other groups.

The question is, however: Does the individual or collective consumer understanding of a given toy correlate to the sum of general understanding of the attributes of that same toy?

Where the general theoretical background for the use of the so-called multi-attribute models for consumer behaviour are concerned, the models presuppose that information about toys (given by the advertising media) is accessible in the form of attributes. It is then possible to explain how, as part of consumer behaviour, consumers turn conclusions about the attributes of a certain toy into a general evaluation of the toy itself. This general evaluation of the toy forms the basis for the consumer's ability to see the individual benefits of acquiring any given toy in preference to another.

However, the consumer group (most of them children) have widely varying individual, social and experience-based backgrounds (as described in the model for understanding the consumer). They only rarely interpret a product or toy on the basis of its individual attributes. There is good reason to believe that, regardless of his age and stage of development, the consumer views the toy as a unit, remembers it in its entirety or perceives it as a structured entity compared to other toys. And this explains why children very often utilise a toy in a completely different way than its set of attributes suggest it should be used.

2. The tangible and objective sets of attributes
The objective sets of attributes are more tangible in the literal sense of the word. They are concerned with such specific aspects as price, size and colour. These aspects represent concrete treatment of data and information concerning the toy which human beings endowed with normal senses can register and perceive.

The intangible and subjective sets of attributes of a toy can be characterised by means of semiotics. This also applies to the tangible and objective sets of attributes, which are interpreted in very specific terms, e.g. the degree of

reality, the degree of complexity, the degree of development, the production form of the toy, the materials used to make it and its classification.

Values
A toy gains social psychological significance for the consumers on the strength of the values associated with its set of attributes which the individual consumer can "bend" to suit his purpose.

As mentioned earlier, my argument is that the youngest consumers in particular see a toy as an entirety. This does not, however, mean that they see the complex of values - which can be listed for any toy product - as an entirety. The child "picks out" strong values which are suitable and useful to his purpose - and pieces them together to form a whole.

Three strong sets of values are particularly significant - the social, the situation-based and the individual value sets and these more or less coincide.

The social values of a toy are the positive benefits and experiences the consumer can get out of a toy when he/she plays with others.

SOCIAL VALUES
(different lifestyles/the social aspect)

The toy is used by the person-at-play relative to:

1. himself and his close family
2. immediate surroundings, local environment and close personal ties
3. natural environment
4. power structures and systems
5. the universe and universal perspectives

eeling of belonging to his/her family and family identity -

6. as social reference to a certain group
7. directional perspective for progress though life
8. security, enjoyment, peace and tranquillity, intimacy

Toys create value for the person-at-play:

– Through being together with close family (e.g. parents, siblings, friends and playmates) because they help to stimulate the benefits of closeness. The participants can be together voluntarily on each other's terms.

– Through the immediate surroundings/the local environment where the toy gains meaning "at the local level".

– When used out in the natural environment.

– In connection with power structures and systems where play with the toy facilitates experimentation with social experiences and games.

– Through universal perspectives, i.e. dreams whose content represents insight, the toy liberates understanding because many toys are universal.

In addition, there are the values which can communicate family intimacy and identity via reference to certain, selected groups, particular desires for the children's futures and education - and, of course, restorative values like security and enjoyment.

Secondly, *the situation-based values* are associated with the differences in experiences connected with daily routines, parties, relationships, encounters and establishing valuable new relationships.

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<u>INDIVIDUAL VALUES</u>
(**personal differences/the individual aspect**)

The toy is used relative to:

Individual identity -
1. social reference to a certain group
2. existential perspective/understanding
3. directional perspective for progress through life
4. independence and self-reliance
5. common sense
6. mastery and control over objects

</div>

Finally, there are the individual values associated with the toy's sets of attributes. There are six characteristics which appeal to and stimulate the needs and identity of the individual.

1. The toy can create a social reference to a certain group by indicating values which the group identifies as their own.

2. Through its values a toy can be synonymous with the consumer or be seen as part of the consumer's identity.

3. The toy can be influential or stimulate the directional perspective of a child's progress through life, relative to his education and life cycle.

4. A toy can support development of the consumer's independence and self-reliance.

5. A toy can stimulate the consumer's common sense.

6. Lastly, a toy can contribute to the user's learning how to master and gain control over the toy as an object.

B. The individual appeal of the product

Values

9

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         ╭───────────────────────╮           │
│         │   THE PRODUCT'S       │           │
│         │   INDIVIDUAL APPEAL   │           │
│         ╰───────────────────────╯           │
│   ┌──────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────┐ │
│   │ Targeted at: │   │ Targeted at:        │ │
│   │              │   │                     │ │
│   │ - LIFE       │   │ - FANTASY           │ │
│   │   PATTERN    │   │ - IMAGINATIVE       │ │
│   │ - LIFESTYLE  │   │   CAPABILITY        │ │
│   │              │   │ - IMPULSE TO SEEK   │ │
│   │              │   │   SENSATION         │ │
│   └──────────────┘   └─────────────────────┘ │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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SOCIAL SYMBOLIC AND UTILITY VALUES OF THE TOY	SOCIAL AND CONCEPT-ORIENTED VALUES OF THE TOY	SUBJECTIVE AND ECO-SOCIAL VALUES OF THE TOY
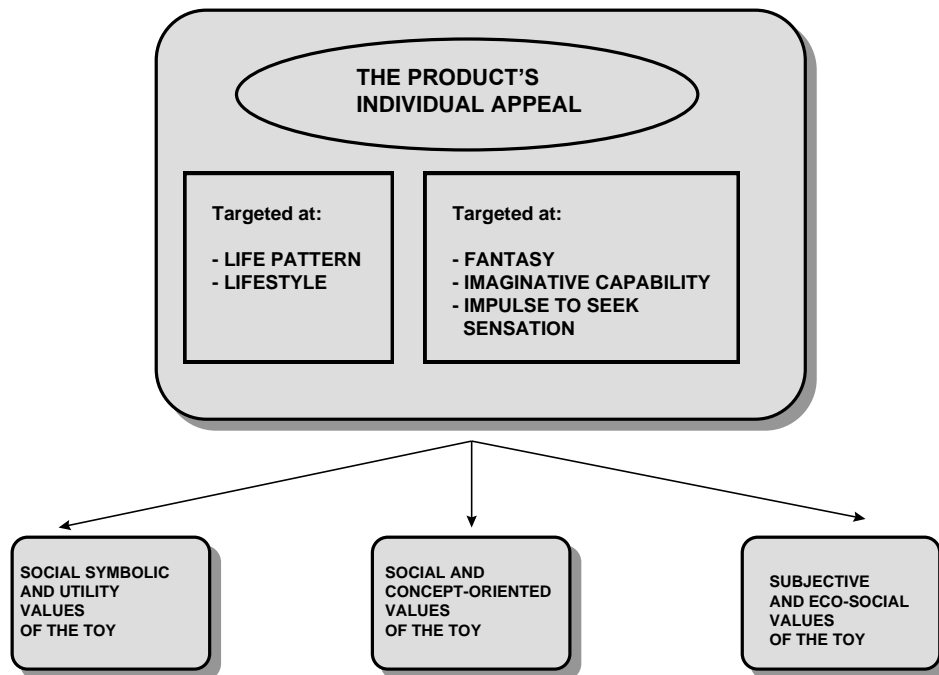
The individual appeal of a toy is directed towards two spheres which, in a way, have already been described in various connections in this book. We are concerned here with the way a toy appeals to the consumer's:

1. *Life pattern and lifestyle*

2. His *fantasy, imaginative powers, his urge to seek individual sensation* and experiences and *the values associated with these.*

Where life pattern and lifestyle are concerned, the sphere has been covered in the description of the consumer representative in Part IV (Chapter 13).

The remaining spheres have also already been described - particularly in Part II.

We now turn our attention to *values.*

Social symbol and utility values of toys - with particular reference to communication.
The communicative role and position of any toy is an important part of its social symbolic and utility values. How far "the toy attracts the user and vice versa" is part of the dialogic constellation between toy and user. As earlier mentioned (Chapter 10), Buydendijk hypothesised that the user and the toy play reciprocally, i.e. with each other.

Is this just plain nonsense? Can inanimate objects play with living human beings? It has been established that "it" or a living being can play with inanimate and animate things. When a thing has communicative value, an inherent basis for interpretation exists. This is the reasoning behind utility maximisation.

The toy's
SOCIAL SYMBOL AND UTILITY VALUES

THE TOY'S COMMUNICATIVE ROLE/POSITION RE:

– dialogic constellation
– motivation for contact/communication
– behavioural patterns
– behavioural ideals
– behavioural aims
– play patterns and intentions

Utility maximisation is an important part of the foundation of behavioural patterns which the user may adopt with the toy for himself and relative to others. The behavioural patterns a user adopts "for himself" occur because, when the user plays with the toy, he is "a different person" from the person he is without the toy. The toy adds qualitative value to the user himself.

Social and concept-oriented values of the toy
The position of toys within the home environment and the significance of toys (especially expensive or particularly attractive toys) for communication between the child and his parents (see also Chapter 15) is often valuable and significant as inventory.

By inventory we mean toys/products for "putting on display" and functional products, the use of which may or may not be subject to strict regulations. These are naturally prestigious toys - and *prestige is a value*. New toys which gain utility value as "cool" (fashionable) perform the same function as expensive toys. The purchase of such toys is not only motivated by a desire to play with them. They are also purchased with the intention of being displayed as objects for the admiration of visitors to the home.

Very expensive toys also often have utility value as objects from which children can experience something. They contribute to the learning process - learning through play.

The toy's
SOCIAL AND CONCEPT-ORIENTED VALUES

THE TOY'S POSITION IN THE HOME AS:

– inventory - exclusively "for show"
– functional object
– objects controlled by/connected to a strict set of rules

THE TOY IS USED IN THE FAMILY AS:

– play pure and simple
– acquisition of experience

Subjective and eco-social values of the toy
The eco-social values are discussed elsewhere in this book (see Chapter 14).

On the basis of Sutton Smith's hypothesis about the relativist significance of the toy to the consumer (Chapter 11), the role and position of the toy in relation to the subject's own personal universe, whether open or private, is determined by relative factors.

The toy's
SUBJECTIVE AND ECO-SOCIAL VALUES

THE TOY'S ROLE/POSITION RELATIVE TO:

– the subject, the person-at-play's own private, subjective universe
– the subject, emphasises the individual sovereignty of the person-at-play
– the immediate surroundings, the sociotype, the micro-system
– the environment, the biotype, the meso-system
– the material structures, urbanity, the exo-system
– the immaterial structures, the macro-system

CHAPTER 19 CONSUMER TOY COLLECTIONS

Children's toy collections

Table 5.6.1. shows how many toys children own, including their favourite toys. (all figures = percentages)

No. of children	Total 400	Boys		Girls	
per age group		85 3-5 yrs	119 6-10 yrs	73 3-5 yrs	123 6-10 yrs
How many toys do you have?					
Not many	3	1	3	4	6
Many	67	73	63	71	65
A great many	29	26	36	25	29

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

The description "not many toys" is used to describe a quantity of toys which can be stored on an ordinary shelf or in a box. The description "many toys" represents a bookcase full of toys or the contents of several boxes. The description "a great many toys" represents several bookcases or boxes full of toys.

Children who don't have many toys often have certain things they play with a great deal. The parents of these children often have a definite opinion as to why their children don't have many toys. Their attitude can be that toys represent consumerism and consumption is best restricted to a minimum. Some parents feel that toys are frivolous things while other parents believe the opposite, i.e. that toys are things children must learn to look after and treat with respect. In the survey, the parents to only 14 children expressed such opinions, corresponding to 3.5% of the total number of families.

Even though children generally have many toys of a certain kind, this is in itself no guarantee for them actually playing with them. Conversely, even though some children don't have many toys doesn't mean that they don't play very much! They use everything and often supplement one another.

Many of the children have a diverse collection of toys, some of which they rarely or never play with.

Such toys were acquired either as "pacifiers" (to get the child to be quiet) or bought on impulse, i.e. unplanned purchases. The majority of these toys are made in poor materials and form the bulk of children's toy collections. Toy retailers estimate that spontaneous impulse toy purchases account for 10-15% of turnover and busy, stressed parents are most prone to making such purchases. These purchases are almost always made in the last hour before closing time.

Criteria for acquisition/purchase

On which occasions do children receive toys?

Children receive toys on a great variety of occasions. Special occasions for giving toys as presents are principally Christmas and birthdays. Christmas time is a special occasion which "demands" that the family throws itself into an orgy of present-giving, the same applies at least partly to birthdays.

Grandparents tend to give presents on special occasions but also spontaneous gifts at other times. Guests and friends of the children also give presents when they come to visit.

Children also save their pocket money up to buy toys (how much depends on the age of the child). In the majority of cases they decide what they are going to buy far in advance of their purchase. Eight occasions on which children receive toys were listed in the survey and parents were asked to indicate on which occasions their children receive toys.

On which occasions do your children receive toys? (all figures = percentages)

Total number of children: 401					
	Total	86 boys 3-5 yrs	119 boys 6-10 yrs	73 girls 3-5 yrs	123 girls 6-10 yrs
Occasion:					
Christmas	99	99	99	99	99
Birthday	99	99	99	99	99
When they are well-behaved	30	42	28	14	34
When they are home alone	2	2	1	1	2
From grandparents	46	58	37	47	45
From visitors	33	37	29	41	28
When they ask for a toy	16	29	16	11	14
Buys toys with pocket money savings	87	82	97	72	89

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

There are significant age and gender specific differences. The younger Danish boys receive toys from their grandparents more often than younger girls and older children. They receive toys more often from their parents if they are well-behaved - or when they ask for them.

The tendency for the 3-5 year old boys to receive more toys than girls and older boys is confirmed by retail chain store consumer surveys (Jørgen Bruhn, 1990:99-108), which show that 65% of retail turnover is given to boys.

However, there has never been much correlation between results of surveys of retail toy purchases in different countries. That boys' consumption of toys exceeds girls' is, nevertheless, a consistent pattern in the majority of surveys.

According to comparative German studies (cited by Bruhn, 1990), 64% of toy consumption goes to boys. This covers 75% of toy turnover. In one American study (cited by Bruhn, 1990), the girls' share of toy turnover is only 40%.

The question is whether the boys' extra toy consumption is in fact mythical. What constitutes a toy? - for a girl? for a boy? Toys don't necessarily have to be the things we buy in a toy store. Where girls are concerned, toys include ornaments and fancy goods which can be bought elsewhere.

Children's and parents' criteria for choosing toys
There are many market analytical surveys which attempt to uncover the reasons why children acquire certain toy products, e.g. LEGO products, Barbie, etc. These analyses are usually carried out by or for companies who want to know exactly why, how and when children and adults generally acquire certain toys.

Being motivated by advertising is, however, not the only reason for acquiring toys. Specific or non-specific, overt or covert reasons can lie behind a toy purchase. An unsystematic survey carried out among 52 4-10 year old children and their parents by Steenhold (1991) is a meagre supplement to a well-organised, thorough Flemish survey carried out among 3000 children aged 4-12 years by de Bens (1992). There is nothing to indicate any vast differences between the culture or market conditions in Holland and Flemish-speaking areas of Belgium and those in Denmark.

De Bens (1992:Table 7.1.):

CRITERIA	Very important	Quite important	Unimpor-tant
The child saw the toy in a store	22%	57%	21%
A friend/playmate has the toy	30%	47%	23%
Seen on TV/advertising/TV spot	14%	47%	38%
Seen it in a brochure	39%	49%	12%
Seen it in a magazine	11%	36%	53%
Seen it on a poster	4%	22%	74%
Other criteria	27%	9%	64%

It is interesting to note how little influence the children attribute to TV advertising while repeated exposure in a brochure, booklet or poster represents a greater influence. TV as a "flickering" communicator loses influence when faced with brochures, catalogues and booklets which children can carry around with them, refocus on and use as a means by which to relate to the concrete object with the help of conversation and dialogue.

De Bens' research suggests that parents listen to children or are particularly receptive when children express a desire to have a certain toy. However, for parents too, brochures are a very significant incitement to toy acquisition.

De Bens (1992:Table 7.2).

CRITERIA	Very important	Quite important	Unimpor- tant
The child asked for the toy	60%	38%	4%
Seen on TV/ad/news item	4%	22%	74%
Seen it in a brochure	12%	54%	34%
Recommended by the store	10%	34%	56%
Seen it in a magazine	3%	29%	68%
Seen it on a poster	2%	11%	87%
Other criteria	45%	7%	48%

The toy market is worth many millions of dollars. Manufacturers and suppliers do everything they can to help consumers with their toy wishes: TV ads, brochures, in-store displays and shows. These create needs - or did these needs already exist?

On the one hand, there are people who argue that needs materialise instantly when the consumer flicks through catalogues or watches TV ads. These needs materialise with the help of intensive marketing aimed at children who naturally and voluntarily respond.

On the other hand, there are people who argue that the children have these needs already because they are developing and because they possess natural human curiosity. When they advertise in print and on TV, manufacturers and suppliers simply inspire the children to make choices between the different products.

Where this second line of thought is concerned:

1. Children themselves create needs for certain toys because they are prestigious. Alternatively, children themselves exercise peer pressure, act on the herd instinct or promote a sudden "trend" or "craze" within their own ranks.
2. Children are aware of the toys due to in-store exposure.
3. Children see toys in catalogues and print ads in comic books

4. Children watch TV ads (the significance and influence of which is from time to time questionable, especially where the advertising is idiotic - as De Bens' research indicates).

As users and consumers, the children and adults of today are equal partners and regard the four media as good or bad entertainment and information. They evaluate the quality and format (often critically). Children slowly learn the art of critical consumer behaviour. They evaluate and gradually learn how to see the failings of poor advertising, poor products. Children rarely allow themselves to be cheated - and never more than twice!

However, toy catalogues are regarded and utilised by children not only as toy advertising. At the mental level, children *play* with the toys in the catalogues, put crosses against interesting items, colour them in and cut them out.

A catalogue often has a lifetime of several months and is included in the source material for children's discussions and dialogues - in the same way as brochures and information material inspire parents.

Toys and children's ages
(based on Steenhold (1993,d))

4-10 year olds

Children own far more toys than they and their parents say they do. Many children and their parents say, for example, that baby toys and old toys which are no longer in use have been stored away. But they don't always know exactly what they have stored away or how much.

Furthermore, children regard many of these "miscellaneous toys" as useless. Other toys lose their value for a variety of reasons.

For the project's survey, the children and their parents were asked to list maximum 15 toys which the child played with at the time of the survey. However, many children wrote down only 6-12 toys. The toys from the children's toy collections which are registered in the survey are the toys which have some kind of value and significance for the child. By this we mean the toys which are significant "here and now", at the age the child was at the time of the survey. They are also registered because they are the toys the child played with at the time of the survey. They are not necessarily the child's favourite toys but some of them may be favourites. (See Chapter 6, Favourite toys.)

Table 5.7.1. is not immediately surprising. However, where toys for the 4-10 year old children are concerned, the subgroup Weapons is notably under-represented in both this table and the following tables. This is not because the children do not own many weapons but that toy weapons are apparently not especially "top of mind".

Table 5.7.1. 4-10 Year Old Children's Toys - distributed by main groups and subgroups (1% or more)

The children were asked to list up to 15 toys which they played with at the time of the survey.

Main/subgroups	No.	Pct (%)
Implements	2165	61.7
props/accessories	726	20.7
transport/machinery	362	10.3
drawing/collecting	359	10.2
inventory	211	6.0
listen and learn	209	6.0
tools/implements	106	3.0
weapons	94	2.7
music	47	1.3
Systems	474	13.5
LEGO/DUPLO products	327	9.3
Playmobil	111	3.2
People	443	12.6
dolls	266	7.6
guardian dolls	88	2.5
war dolls	56	1.6
Animals	248	7.1
symbolic animals	150	4.3
animal figures	53	1.5
Nature	179	5.1
natural materials/play	110	3.0
wood	43	1.2

The subgroup Props/accessories includes games (6.4%), jumping, rolling, playing hopscotch (2.8%), dressing-up (2.4%) and all playground equipment for athletics/sports.

Source: Steenhold (1993,d).

Wegener-Spöhring (1986:797-810) reach the same conclusion. We have to differentiate between toy weapons and war machines (war toys) because the survey defines weapons as "hand guns". Wegener-Spöhring defines war toys as "toys which present an image of war and with which children play war games".

Toy weapons are only rarely used in play: only on specific occasions when children playing certain roles have to act out/demonstrate aggression, power, courage and strength. Otherwise toy weapons are only used now and again in games like "cops and robbers" and "cowboys and Indians". Furthermore, the acquisition of a toy weapon occurs in many cases as an impulse buy.

Toys 4-5 year olds play with

The survey included 159 four and five year olds' toy collections, distributed by main and subgroups (only those which accounted for 4% or more of toy collections) plus the 12 most frequently listed.

Table 5.7.2.1. 82 Four year olds' toy collections by main and subgroups (figures are percentages)

50 boys		32 girls	
Implements	66%	Implements	63%
transport/machinery	20.6	props/accessories	21.0
props/accessories	16.3	drawing/collecting	16.1
tools/implements	6.0	inventory	14.2
drawing/collecting	6.0	listen and learn	4.8
listen and learn	5.8		
inventory	4.2	People	15%
weapons	4.0	doll	12.9
Systems	17%	Systems	10%
LEGO/DUPLO products	12.3	LEGO/DUPLO products	8.7
Animals	7%	Nature	6%
symbolic animals	4.6	natural materials/play	5.5
Nature	5%	Animals	5%
		symbolic animals	4.5
People	3%		

No. of choices individual toys	
Boys, 496 choices	Girls, 310 choices
cars	drawing/cutting out/sticking
games	games
LEGO products	doll
toolbox	adult female doll
farming	household implements
books	bicycle
DUPLO products	dressing up
drawing/cutting out/sticking	doll/doll's pushchair
bicycle	teddy bear
Playmobil	jumping/rolling/hopscotch
castle/fort/station	LEGO products
teddy bear	books

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

Dolls are absolutely not attractive toys for small boys. They don't even rate guardian dolls. Symbolic animals and soft toys (the teddy bear being the most prevalent type) have no great priority in small boys' consciousness. Small boys are interested in transport/machinery and props/accessories in the form

of cars, LEGO/DUPLO products, tools and agricultural machinery for use on the farm. Games and drawing materials are of secondary importance.

Where small girls are concerned, "handicraft" toys - i.e. the materials necessary for drawing, painting and collecting - and the accessories needed for play with dolls and doll accessories are the toys most often chosen. The smaller girls also choose natural materials and sandbox equipment for playing shops and Daddy-Mummy-Baby games.

Adding up the total number of items, People (including dolls) has a significant position in the toy collections of the smaller girls. The different types of dolls (both Barbie and the classic doll types) are important elements included at the same priority level as other accessories. Dolls take up most space on the shelves and are undoubtedly the smaller girls' favourite toys.

Table 5.7.2.2. 77 Five year olds' toy collections by main and subgroups (figures are percentages)

36 boys		41 girls	
Implements	61%	Implements	61%
props/accessories	18.4	props/accessories	19.0
transport/machinery	18.1	drawing/collecting	14.6
weapons	6.4	inventory	12.6
drawing/collecting	5.8	listen and learn	6.0
listen and learn	5.8		
		People	16%
		doll	13.7
Systems	17%		
LEGO/DUPLO products	11.4	Systems	8%
Playmobil	4.2	LEGO/DUPLO products	6.0
Nature	7%	Animals	7%
natural materials/play	5		
		Nature	6%
People	7%	natural materials/play	5.2
Animals	6%		

No. of choices individual toys	
Boys, 359 choices	Girls, 365 choices
cars	drawing/cutting out/sticking
games	adult female doll
LEGO products	games
books	bicycle
bicycle	LEGO products
Playmobil	rag doll
farming	dolls' house/furniture
drawing/cutting out/sticking	doll/doll's pushchair
teddy bear	household implements
pistol	cars
DUPLO products	books
toolbox	doll

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

In general terms, where the four and five year olds are concerned Implements (objects and props/accessories) and partly also Systems are the groups which dominate the children's toy collections. However, girls and boys own different types of implements and systems.

In the case of the boys, their collections include transport (small/large toy cars), copies of machines, tools and implements which can be used with items from the Systems group (especially LEGO/DUPLO products and Playmobil). Weapons, which did not appear in the collections of the smaller children, now account for 6.4% of the toy collections. These are ordinary types of weapon used in play where the children "go hunting" (after each other

- or objects which represent animals in the game) and in play which includes fighting and shooting. These weapons include pistols, rifles, swords, bows and arrows, etc.

The 36 boys' war toys included eight pistols, four Action Force dolls, four daggers/knives (used in connection with a fishing rod or net), four bows and arrows and one cowboys-and-Indians figure.

The girls did not own any weapons, except for a dagger/knife (in connection with a fishing rod/net). Where the girls' Implements are concerned, they use a great variety of play and handicraft materials including dolls' house furniture and accessories, drawing/collecting things, ornaments. Within the Systems group, the girls owned LEGO/DUPLO products and Playmobil. In their play with dolls, the adult female doll (Barbie type) has overtaken the lead from the classical doll types.

Toys 6-10 year olds play with

The research included 242 six to nine/ten year olds' toy collections split into main and selected subgroups. Only those subgroups which represented more than 4% of the toy collections and the 12 most frequently chosen individual toys are listed.

Around the age of five to seven years there is a general change in both girls' and boys' toy collections in terms of the Implements the children own.

The importance of equipment associated with physical activities in children's play increases and focus on these implements in the children's everyday lives also increases as the children become more independent and self-sufficient. Roller skates/roller blades, hopscotch stones and skipping ropes are particularly important for the girls while the boys take an interest in soccer. In fact, the boys' interest in the Implements group is more or less unchanged. They continue to be interested in transport, machinery, outdoor play equipment and balls.

In the Systems group, LEGO/DUPLO products and Playmobil continue to be heavily represented. However, new interests appear in the form of guardian dolls, tools, special implements, dressing up clothes and drawing/colouring/collecting. The children collect all kinds of things and small objects/ornaments in whatever form the current "craze" dictates.

At this stage, the girls' "collecting and swapping" play includes beads, stationery, coloured stickers, stones, pressed flowers and leaves. The girls' outdoor play equipment includes bicycles, balls, roller skates/roller blades, skipping ropes, etc.

Six year olds' toy collections

Table 5.7.3.1. 69 Six Year Olds' Toy Collections by Main and Subgroups (figures are percentages)

35 boys		34 girls	
Implements	60%	Implements	62%
props/accessories	17.1	props/accessories	23.5
transport/machinery	16.0	drawing/collecting	16.1
drawing/collecting	8.4	listen and learn	12.6
listen and learn	7.6		
weapons	4.0	People	16%
		doll	13.8
Systems	21%		
LEGO/DUPLO products	13.5	Systems	8%
Playmobil	6.9	LEGO/DUPLO products	6.0
People	8%	Animals	7%
guardian dolls	4.7		
		Nature	6%
Animals	5%	natural materials/play	4.4
Nature	4%		

No. of choices individual toys	
Boys, 275 choices	Girls, 310 choices
cars	adult female doll
games	games
LEGO products	drawing/cutting out/sticking
games	books
drawing/cutting out/sticking	jumping/rolling/hopscotch
Playmobil	beads
bicycle	dressing up
books	LEGO products
Action Force	bicycle
toolbox	doll
LEGO/DUPLO products	teddy bear
tape cassette player	sewing/weaving/knitting
guardian doll	

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

Seven year olds' toy collections

Table 5.7.3.2. 48 Seven year olds' toy collections by main and subgroups (figures are percentages)

22 boys		26 girls	
Implements	60%	Implements	59%
props/accessories	18.5	props/accessories	26.4
transport/machinery	16.2	drawing/collecting	13.4
drawing/collecting	6.9	inventory	9.1
listen and learn	4.6		
weapons	6.5	People	19%
		doll	15.0
Systems	17%		
LEGO/DUPLO products	11.1	Animals	7%
Playmobil	4.6	symbolic animals	5.1
People	12%	Systems	6%
guardian dolls	5.6	LEGO/DUPLO products	5.1
war dolls	4.6		
		Nature	4%
Nature	3%	natural materials/play	4.7

No. of choices individual toys	
Boys, 216 choices	Girls, 254 choices
cars	adult female doll
LEGO products	drawing/cutting out/sticking
games	games
drawing/cutting out/sticking	jumping/rolling/hopscotch
Action Force	doll
farming	LEGO products
Playmobil	teddy bear
weapons	bicycle
dressing up	dressing up
guardian dolls	rag doll
Transformers	dolls' house/furniture
toolbox	doll/doll's pushchair

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

There is a clear pattern in the girls' and boys' choices of toys within the two main groups People and Systems. The boys own more in the main group Systems than in the main group People. The opposite is true of the girls.

Where the People group is concerned, the boys mostly have guardian dolls and the girls Barbie.

At the ages of 7-8 years the boys' ownership of doll types is at its peak - 12% of their toy collections.

Smaller boys start with about 3% ordinary dolls and for 9-10 year old boys 8% of their collections are war dolls. Girls' collections of doll types remains constant at 15-20% regardless of age.

As for the main group Systems, in the case of boys (regardless of age) LEGO/DUPLO products and Playmobil are favourites. For girls, the favourite is LEGO/DUPLO products only.

Playmobil toys are almost impossible to register for girls. Despite the fact that the product concepts of the LEGO Group and Playmobil are in many ways almost identical - design being the only difference - Playmobil products appeal to boys but almost never to girls. Similarly, the LEGO TECHNIC System toys are distinctly boys' toys. The boys get these toys from about 7-8 years. None of the girls in this research owned LEGO TECHNIC.

Dressing-up is most apparent for boys around seven years. The reason for this is common boys'/girls' "let's pretend"-play (dressing-up and role play).

Where girls are concerned, dressing-up is registered in particular for the 5-9 year olds.

Eight year olds' toy collections

Boys have fewer symbolic animals than girls. Symbolic animals include an infinite variety of soft, textile animals which many children use as "bedtime pals", the most popular being the teddy bear. In fact symbolic animals are registered only for the very small boys in this research. However, a closer look at the boys' lists of toys reveals that all boys - regardless of age - do, in fact, own a teddy bear or similar symbolic animal.

The explanation for why girls of this age in particular obtain so many symbolic animals is possibly that their parents - often the mothers - either covertly or openly make greater demands on girls to show independence than they do of boys.

According to Winnicot's theory, a symbolic animal is a distinct surrogate or compensation toy, compensating for security, comfort and intimacy. The child will often identify with the symbolic animal, humanise it or give it a particular role. Children give their symbolic animals names and it is not unusual for a child to carry on long conversations about things/problems with symbolic animals.

As mentioned, teddy bear is the favourite, followed by panda, dog, seal, monkey and rabbit.

Table 5.7.3.3. 51 Eight year olds' toy collections by main and subgroups (figures are percentages)

26 boys		25 girls	
Implements	60%	Implements	59%
transport/machinery	20.3	props/accessories	24.3
props/accessories	19.6	drawing/collecting	11.4
listen and learn	8.5	inventory	7.6
drawing/collecting	4.6	listen/learn	4.3
		music	5.2
Systems	21%		
LEGO/DUPLO products	13.7	People	19%
Playmobil	7.8	doll	14.8
People	12%	Animals	9%
guardian dolls	6.1	symbolic animals	7.1
war dolls	5.9		
		Systems	8%
Nature	1%	LEGO/DUPLO products	7.1
		Nature	4%
		natural materials/play	4.8

No. of choices individual toys	
Boys, 253 choices	Girls, 211 choices
cars	adult female doll
LEGO products	jumping/rolling/hopscotch
games	drawing/cutting out/sticking
Playmobil	games
Action Force	dressing-up
guardian dolls	teddy
Transformers	rag doll
drawing/cutting out/sticking	books
cassette tape recorder	sewing/weaving/knitting
bicycle	doll/doll's pushchair
football game	writing paper
ball/balls	ball/balls

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

Nine to ten year olds' toy collections

Table 5.7.3.3. 74 Nine to ten year olds' toy collections by main and subgroups (figures are percentages)

36 boys		38 girls	
Implements	61%	Implements	58%
props/accessories	19.1	props/accessories	29.1
transport/machinery	14.8	drawing/collecting	12.1
listen and learn	6.6	listen/learn	6.1
weapons	6.2		
drawing/collecting	6.2	People	21%
		doll	17.3
Systems	22%		
LEGO/DUPLO products	15.2	Animals	11%
		symbolic animals	7.7
People	8%		
war dolls	8.2	Systems	6%
Animals	4%	Nature	2%
Nature	3%		

No. of choices individual toys	
Boys, 256 choices	Girls, 313 choices
cars	adult female doll
LEGO products	games
games	drawing/cutting out/sticking
Playmobil	jumping/rolling/hopscotch
Action Force	ball/balls
drawing/cutting out/sticking	LEGO products
football game	books
computer/PC	teddy
toolbox	writing paper
farming	doll
books	symbolic animals
magazines/comics	bicycle

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

At 7-8 years boys' choice of doll types peaks at 12% of which half are guardian dolls.

For many of the small boys their choice begins with 3% ordinary dolls and ends at 9-10 years with 8% war dolls which are principally used in play with Action Force.

The 9-10 year olds also have a good portion of Action Force support toys included in the transport/machinery subgroup in the form of war machines, tanks, etc.

In the listen/learn group, books are the most prevalent for girls, magazines/comics for boys.

Many children have a walkman and/or tape cassette player (or they use their parents'). These are not only used to play music but are used just as often for listening to taped children's stories and books. Girls are generally more likely to use Listen/learn and more often listen to taped stories and books than boys. Drawing/painting/cutting out are examples of creative activities which both boys and girls engage in from a very young age - although girls draw/paint and cut out far more often than boys.

Children's favourite toys

Table 7.1.1.

399 Four to ten year olds' favourite toys by main and subgroups		
Main/subgroups	Number	Percent
Implements	168	42.1
props/accessories	54	13.5
transport/machinery	42	10.5
tools/implements	18	4.5
drawing/collecting	17	4.3
inventory	12	3.0
listen/learn	10	2.5
weapons	6	1.5
special implements	5	1.3
music	3	0.8
care	1	0.3
People	104	26.1
doll	85	21.3
war doll	10	2.5
guardian doll	8	2.0
doll support	1	0.3
Systems	69	17.3
LEGO/DUPLO products	55	13.8
Playmobil	10	2.5
recycling	3	0.8
construction	1	0.3
Animals	51	12.8
symbolic animals	46	11.5
live animals	2	0.5
animal series	2	0.5
animal figures	1	0.3
Nature	7	1.8
natural materials/play	4	1.0
Nature - outdoors play	2	0.5
wood	1	0.3

Subgroup props/accessories includes:	
games	5%
jumping/rolling/hopscotch	3%
dressing-up	2%
all play equipment and props/accessories for sport/athletics	3%
Missing	2

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

A favourite toy is a toy which is particularly well-liked by the child and which has a special position in the child's play and toy environment.

Favourite toys act as a natural part of the child's natural development. They are a sine qua non for the child's development.

A child's favourite toy can change according to season and current events but the most influential factors for choice of favourite toys are *age, gender* and *experience* in the context of the child's immediate environment.

There are very few references in relevant literature to why children choose certain types of toys. These are outlined in the following:

According to Almqvist (1989) and Downs (1983), in situations where children have *total freedom to choose* their toys, they prefer toys which are not associated with gender. These children will be interested in their pastimes and extremely curious about anything new (novelty interest) and this in itself motivates the child's choice of toy. Furthermore, these children are subject to more strict norms and regulations in their home environment than other children.

When asked what they prefer from a selection of specially selected *gender-specific toys,* boys' preference is for boys' toys and girls' for girls' toys (see Eisenberg et al (1985), Almqvist (1989) and Steenhold (1993,b).

By the age of 3-4 years, children are already starting to distinguish between gender-specific and "gender-neutral" toys. In the US children demonstrate this age specific phenomenon as early as at three years old (see Weinraub et al (1984), Fein et al (1985) and Caldara et al (1989). According to Shell & Eisenberg (1990), this type of age and gender group imprint is decisive for the child's understanding of gender significance and values which he/she will later apply to toys.

This is why children aged 4-5 years call a toy as "a boys' toy" if they have previous experience (have observed) that mostly boys play with it and "a girls' toy" is they have seem mostly girls play with that type of toy.

In keeping with the subject of this book, favourite toys are registered statistically and seen in relation to socio-cultural and eco-social relationships, the home environment and the families' life patterns and lifestyles.

System toys and construction toys, in particular LEGO/DUPLO products, weigh heavily in the play of boys of this age while the girls only rarely use them.

The girls own many symbolic animals (soft toy animals and "bedtime pals") which they play with and to which they assign personality and character. Boys own a more limited collection of symbolic animals. Where dolls are concerned, girls mostly choose adult dolls and much less often baby dolls.

Four-five year old boys play with implements (cars, miscellaneous accessories and tools) whilst girls of the same age play with dolls, symbolic animals and props/accessories.

6-10 year olds' favourite toys

Six-ten year old boys' play is filled with cars, props/accessories and LEGO/DUPLO products (system and construction toys), together with war dolls and guardian dolls. Adult dolls (Barbie, less often Sindy and copy "fashion doll" products) are by far the most popular toys with girls, followed by miscellaneous props/accessories and drawing/cutting out/sticking. The girls' favourite symbolic animal is the teddy bear.

Re traditional toys and "five minute wonder" toys as favourite toys
In more than 90% of cases children's favourite toys are traditional toys.

For the boys, "five minute wonder" toys account for 5% of favourites (this figure is constant) and are certain war and guardian dolls (e.g. Turtles) with limited play concepts and "value" which enjoy short-term sales success in the wake of short-lived TV success.

For the girls, specific traditional implements and props/accessories become "cool" according to season (skipping, rolling "jacks", hopscotch) and outdoor play with dolls and props/accessories.

"Five minute wonder" toys for girls are items such as collection pieces which gain significance in a wider perspective, ornaments or "new exciting crayons/felt pens".

Parents' favourite toys

Table 7.5.1., Steenhold (1993,d) shows the parent generation's favourite toys. Parents were asked to name up to two toys which they could remember as having had special significance in their own childhood - toys which they remembered particularly well.

The parents' favourite toys belonged to the 1960s and 1970s, predating the IT explosion and the electronic revolution on labour markets in the early 1990s.

The parents' choices are - by contrast to many of their children's choices - conventional and more or less reminiscent of the toys today's children's grandparents had when they were children. The parents could remember some of today's trademarks from their own childhood and pass on their experiences of these to their children.

There is, of course, some common ground between the mothers' and the fathers' toys. The most popular are bicycles, LEGO/DUPLO products, teddy bears, balls, Nature/outdoors play with relevant equipment. Parents of both sexes also mentioned cars and toolboxes, although less frequently. Toys are otherwise gender-specific and this is in spite of the fact that at that time the trend in the Western hemisphere was for unisex products - regardless of whether these were toys or clothes!

The mothers played with dolls, especially baby dolls. However, they also played with Barbie dolls despite the controversies surrounding Barbie's position in relation to the women's liberation movement. They also played with implements, especially anything to do with household chores.

The fathers' toys represented a wider variety of different types of toys. Cars were the fathers' favourite playthings, followed by system and construction toys like LEGO/DUPLO products and to some extent also the classical Tekno and Bilofix products. As one would expect, typical boys' types of play (electric train sets and football) are high on the fathers' list. The fathers also have clear memories of toy weapons in social "good guys versus bad guys" games.

Weapons were almost exclusively remembered by fathers. Some of the mothers mentioned having liked drawing/cutting out/sticking or reading. Both mothers and fathers indicated that the best games were segregated games where boys ands girls did not interfere in each others' play. The fathers often indicated (three times as often as the mothers) that group play with 4-8 boys participating was significant and valuable while the mothers stressed the importance of play with (girl)friends (five times as often as the fathers).

Girls' and mothers' favourite toys					
10 most frequently mentioned toys					
Toys	357 mothers		73 3-5 year olds		123 6-10 year olds	
	number	% rating	number	% rating	number	% rating
doll	98	28	7	9	8	6
dolls' clothes	61	17				
dolls' house	22	6				
doll's pram	22	6				
girl doll	16	5	5	6		
adult female doll	15	5	11	15	38	31
teddy bear	14	4	4	5	13	10
baby doll	8	2	3	4	4	3
boy doll	6	2	3	4	2	1
dressing-up doll	6	2				
tape cassette player			4	5		
bicycle			4	5		
dog			2	2	4	3
mouse			2	2	4	3
drawing/cutting/ sticking					9	7
games					4	3
jumping/rolling/ hopscotch					4	3

Table 7.5.1. Parents' favourite toys

Toys	275 fathers		357 mothers	
Parents' favourite toys when they were children Registration based on 2 toys - * indicates coincidence				
	number	% rating	number	% rating
dolls			98	28
doll-related toys			61	17
* cars	56	20	3	
* bicycle	23	8	2	
dolls' house			22	6
dolls' pram			22	6
* LEGO/DUPLO products	22	8	5	1
farming	21	8		
electric train	20	7		
girl doll			16	5
football	16	6		
Tekno	16	6		
adult female doll			15	5
baby doll			8	2
train set	7	3		
gun/air rifle	6	2		
Bilofix	6	2		
boy doll			6	2
dressing-up doll			6	2
doll in national costume			5	1
household implements			5	4
*teddy bear	5	2	14	
fishing rod/net	5	2		
tricycle	5	2		
soldiers/cowboys	4	2		
symbolic animals - unspecified			4	
rag doll			3	
hand puppets	3	1	3	
pet dog (live)				
pet rodent (live)	3	1	3	
ships/boats				
drawing/cutting			3	
out/sticking			3	
books			3	
jumping/rolling/hopscotch	3	1	3	
*ball(s)	2		3	
* Nature/outdoor play			2	
horse (live)	2			
animal figures	2			
monkey	2		2	
*toolbox	2			
spade/bucket/broom			2	
dressing-up	2			
horse-drawn carriage	2			
games	2			
go-cart/car				

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

Parents' and children's favourite toys

This overview lists the ten toys most often selected as favourites (by mothers/daughters and fathers/sons respectively).

One way we can contribute to mapping toy market development over a couple of decades is by comparing today's favourite toys with the toys parents state were *their* favourites (1993). This research was in fact undertaken before the explosion within the PC games, video film and CD-ROM market.

To add further information to this comparison we include 6-11 year olds' favourite toys at Christmas 1996 (Source: KIDTRENDS TM/December 1996).

(This source is from one of the many market research institutes which register and analyse consumer wishes and purchases on the toy market. It is of course not strictly accurate to compare the Christmas wishes of American children with those of Danish children. There are cultural differences - even though toys are generally marketed simultaneously all over the world.)

The girls' and the mothers' favourite toys
High on the mothers' list are dolls (baby, girl and boy dolls) along with dolls' clothes, dolls' house and dolls' pram.

For their daughters, the favourite doll is adult female doll (Barbie and copy products). Other favourites within soft toys are teddy bears.

One toy the girls have which their mothers didn't is the cassette tape player.

The boys' and the fathers' favourite toys
The fathers' and sons' choices of toys are more or less the same. They own more or less the same types of toys and the same toys are favourites.

Differences are to be found in that the boys have action figures (guardian dolls) and, of course, personal computers.

At Christmas 1996 (source: KIDTRENDS TM/December 1996) the research concerned favourite wishes:

Girls: 20% video games, 10% selected Barbie items, 9% dolls generally, 8% drawing/cutting out materials, 8% books, 8% video games and 8% soft toys.

Boys: 47% selected video games, 12% action figures (guardian dolls)

Boys' and fathers' favourite toys 10 most frequently mentioned toys						
Toys	275 fathers		86 3-5 year olds		119 6-10 year olds	
	number	% rating	number	% rating	number	% rating
cars	56	20	11	13	15	12
bicycle	23	8	4	4	3	2
LEGO/DUPLO products	22	8	10	12	33	27
farming	21	8	3	3	4	3
football	16	6			7	5
Tekno	16	6				
train set	7	3				
gun/air rifle	6	2				
Bilofix	6	2				
teddy bear	5	2	3	3	2	1
toolbox			5	5	4	3
castle/station/fort			3	3		
Playmobil			3	3		
electric keyboard			2	2		
tape cassette player			2	2		
Action Force					9	7
computer/PC					5	4
skateboard					2	1

Source: Steenhold (1993,d)

Distinctions between girls' and boys' world of toys

There is a general split in girls' and boys' games and the toys they play with from 5-6 years when the traditional gender differences in society associated with certain types of individual toys become clearer.

Differences and similarities
Similarities in <u>the toys boys and girls play with</u> from the age of six years include:

− LEGO/DUPLO products, games, drawing/painting/cutting out, ball, bicycle and books. Less specific similarities and differences can also be registered but for the present we will look just at generalities.

From the age of 6, it is true to state generally that only boys play with:

− cars, Playmobil, Action Force, guardian dolls, computer/PC, toolbox, farming (farm/farm animals), magazines/comic books, Transformers/He Man and football games.

Generally speaking, from the age of six only girls play with:

- adult female doll (Barbie), dolls/dolls' pram, jumping/rolling/hopscotch, dressing-up, teddy bear, soft toy, symbolic animal, writing paper (drawing/collecting) and partly sewing/weaving/knitting.

An increasing dissimilarity between the girls' and boys' worlds manifests itself in the list of individual toys with which girls and boys respectively play has been described by Gilligan (1982) and from the Danish perspective by Fasting (1989).

The majority of studies dealing with psychological theories about gender specific socialisation through toys - e.g. Blomberg (1981), Eisenberg et al (1982, 1984), Liss (1983), Robinson (1985) and Dines Andersen (1989) to name but a few - mention:

- construction toys, cars, tools and machines as typical boys' toys and
- dolls, dressing-up clothes, jumping/rolling/hopscotch and games as typical girls' toys.

Boys and girls alike draw/paint/cut out and play hide-and-seek. To a certain extent, boys and girls both play with LEGO/DUPLO products although this applies only to the youngest children.

When many parents and educators mention that the cleft between the boys' and girls' worlds is widening, they do so in tune with the same pessimist rhetoric as social-ecologically oriented researchers, e.g. Retter (1987), Spanhel (1991) and Winnicot:

- socialisation and adaptation to solitude and separation
- individuality is the price we pay for socialisation
- emotional loss is compensated by other new human or material alternatives
- and particularly in conflict situations and transition from one stage of development to the next on human, social and ecological levels
- increasingly many new criteria for freedom, especially for girls.

According to Fasting (1989, 1992 chapter 16), as soon as gender consciousness develops, girls have little or no use for boys in daily life. They neither associate socially nor engage with them in emotional exchange. This is due to changes in the concepts of the masculine and feminine "ideals", bringing about a new type of pursuit of both masculine and feminine ideals. This in turn necessitates revision of ethical standards and emotional value norms which create new and different intimate, group and family patterns.

As earlier mentioned, certain implements are universal and have not developed to any significant extent during the course of the history of Mankind. However, change creates new implements and, because toys are copies of the adults' implements on all levels (material as well as symbolic), toys will change and new toys will evolve.

Toys children don't like
There are no international accounts of or research into toys children don't like or simply hate. However, children's different attitudes to certain types of toys and why they feel the way they do are extremely subjective.

In my research the children were asked: "Toys you hate! Do you own a toy you don't like? Who gave you the toy? On what occasion did you receive it? Where is the toy now?"

80 children - 44 girls and 36 boys (out of a total 401 respondents) - said that they had a toy they hated. 52 of their responses were distributed in the following way:

14 dolls	8 girls - 6 boys
9 guardian dolls	4 girls - 4 boys
4 war dolls	1 girl - 3 boys
9 symbolic animals	3 girls - 6 boys

28 of the responses related to a variety of things: specific references included four books, three games, two Playmobil, two dolls' houses and two inventory items.

In several cases, the children describe the toys they don't like as "bad", "keeps breaking", "ugly" or "cheap plastic garbage".

That some children don't like a certain story or game they always lose seems obvious. However, almost half the toys the children didn't like were some kind of doll or symbolic animal and much of it could be described as "diffuse". By "diffuse" we mean unrealistic toys which mix things and objects from different places and times. The children either find it difficult to identify or simply cannot see the logic or realism in this kind of toy. Toys of this kind don't fit into the picture the children have of toys as copies of something real and familiar.

According to about the transitional phenomenon and the transitional object, the object disappoints the child. The toy lacks the qualities the child imagines or needs in the circumstances for which it was purchased. The object has insufficient compensation value - or is simply a lousy product, poorly designed and shoddily manufactured.

In any case, the toy has failed to add value and quality to the child's play. The toy has not enabled the child to create creative imaginative images, to experiment or to move into the "third room" which is Winnicot's description of the particular mental area the child is in when he plays - a place between imagination and reality, between the inner world of the imagination and the external reality of the world around him.

CHAPTER 20 CONSUMER SEGMENTS AND TOY VALUES

Chapter 20 concludes the description of the socio-cultural factors which make up the decoding process in consumer utilisation of toys. This chapter covers the relationship between socio-cultural factors and the value norms inherent in toys within the contexts of socialisation and communication.

Toys and play will be explained here relative to socio-cultural consumer processes. Consumers can therefore be segmented as either **loyal or disloyal by education** (10 and 12 in the model for understanding the consumer) - depending on which types of toys they select or reject. The consumers can be segmented according to the values they have already attributed to the toy and to play with it (13, 14 and 15 in the model).

The dividing lines between the various lifestyles - in fact, the dividing lines through the entire cultural lifestyles sphere - bring much influence to bear on the coding and decoding process. One of these dividing lines is the cleft segregating genuine toy consumers who rate toys as valuable and significant from less consistent toy consumers who rate toys as less valuable and less significant. However, another cleft lies between so-called elitist culture on the one hand and the concept of mass culture and other clearer distinctions underlying it on the other.

All these factors are important in product planning and development on the toy market where strategies are related to target groups and cultural segments are defined on the basis of material and abstract consumer conventions, education, gender, etc. Such strategies have been "borrowed" from advertising and campaign theories.

As previously described, social and cultural tastes and consumption are one result of socialisation and of social, financial and - most significantly - **educational factors.**

And this is why, here too, it is important to emphasise the term "habitat".

Bourdieu (1986) describes a form of "generative formula" using the term "habitat". Bourdieu believes that the generative formula is the reason why people select differently in cultural terms in different situations. Hansen (1995) principally covers the same ground in his Danish generation research.

According to Bourdieu, the fact that people choose differently in cultural terms in different situations is due partly to an inveterate and inherited stable core and identity formed over a long period of time and partly also due to a number of continuous changes affecting habitat - either in the immediate environment or as a result of changes in the socio-cultural environment.

We conclude therefore that what represents cultural quality for some people does not necessarily represent cultural quality for others and

that cultural quality is in no way a static value for groups or for individuals.

The rationale behind this conclusion seems therefore only to be based on aesthetic distinctions in taste and consumption. However, both taste and consumption incorporate *symbolic economy* which is manifested on different levels as incongruity and contradiction between very different forms of *cultural capital.*

Incongruity and contradiction lead directly to the formation of intellectual, cultural and educational norms and movements which in turn form the distinctions between what Bourdieu in particular calls legitimate culture (pure or correct taste) and its contradiction, illegitimate taste (comprising popular, barbaric and vulgar - implicitly: bad - taste).

Toys are subject to incongruity and contradiction as consumer groups do find it possible to define toys as legitimate because they are a cultural phenomenon, possessing cultural value and significance. Selecting or rejecting certain types of toys is in itself an expression of taste and consumption. Consumer groups can therefore be segmented using these parameters.

***

As part of this conclusion to the description of the model for understanding the consumer, I feel I ought to mention that I think Bourdieu's general analyses are incomplete because they contain no significant comment on the objects (or their texts) which are part of this socio-cultural process.

Bourdieu supplies us only with a static record, stating that something is more distinctive for some than for others. Consequentially, his analyses state that objects and tastes are not particularly significant while consumers' or recipients' attitudes and "cultural capital" are the most important factors.

Worse still, his theories can easily be interpreted as supporting the belief that cultural taste is typical for the intellectual consumer who is in a position to use his critical capacities to suppress other people's poor (implicitly: bad) cultural taste.

There are, of course, different norms of taste motivated by qualitative values which consumer groups apply e.g. to different types of toys. The norms of taste must be respected and comprehended which is not the same as saying that there are no qualitative distinctions.

We must also allow for the fact that only a fortunate few have conscious access to the cultural orbit and that this is dependent on geography but also on the fact that an individual in possession of broad horizons and wide knowledge is more free than an individual who lacks these advantages. And

these advantages are, after all, dependent on education. And for children on the threshold of life and existence, these are serious considerations!

Qualitative toy values index
See APPENDIX 2

The index of qualitative toy and play values is numbered 13, 14 and 15 in the model for understanding the consumer.

An overview of the qualitative values appears in APPENDIX 2, based on Steenhold (1993,d).

Before turning our attention to the educational groups in relation to loyal and disloyal consumers' selection and rejection of toys, we will take a closer look at these qualitative values.

The significance of these values, which form the basis of consumers' cultural taste in toys, has previously been described in detail in PART IV's chapters 14, 15 and 16.

Parents associate qualitative values to toys and to play with them.

Regardless of the level of parents' education, all parents generally agree on the values and significance which can attributed to certain types of toys and play - but they do not agree on which types of toys and play are best for their children. This is the juncture at which consensus stops - the point at which parents are distinguishable either as loyal or as disloyal to the toys. This is where we begin to see differences in selection and rejection.

∗ *(13) SOCIAL VALUES (lifestyle differences/the social aspect)*

Social values are values connected with toys and play which are significant to social interaction, the immediate environment and family identity. They are also significant for the development and identity of the individual.

The PEOPLE - PLAY WITH FORMS OF INTERACTION category:
Social values associated to toys of this kind (dolls, etc.) are inspired by the immediate environment and principally motivated by a desire for intimacy and qualities such as security, comfort, peace, balance and positive references to the group to which one belongs.

The ANIMALS - PLAY WITH/ABOUT ANIMALS category:
The same applies naturally to animals. For symbolic animals (soft toys and cuddly animals) there is an added "universal tinge" because they have a quasi-cult status as fetishes, a special value.

The IMPLEMENTS - PLAY WITH IMPLEMENTS category:
The same factors apply here too, although many parents attribute further value and significance to some implements because play with them points children in a certain direction for their future.

E.g. if a child is able to concentrate on looking/listening and learning objects from an early age, many parents assume he/she will be clever at school.

The SYSTEM - PLAY WITH SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES category:
The values attributed to play with systems toys originate in the immediate environment. The same applies to play with construction toys as with looking/listening/learning toys. They are attributed intellectual value and significance - and high status.

The NATURE - PLAY IN/ABOUT NATURE category:
Unfortunately, the value and significance of nature escapes many adults. Interesting nature films are seen as valuable while many parents associate excursions and trips outdoors with difficulties and conflict. Some groups attribute high value to play with natural materials. Preparing food/baking (parents and children together) is also given high priority.

* *(14) POSITION AND DIMENSION VALUES (different experiences/the situation aspect)*

The value dimensions closely resemble sociological and pedagogical models for rearing children within the family unit. These value dimensions naturally motivate adults' and children's contact and communication with each other. They are the preconditions for the family's reciprocal relationships and positions.

The values attributed to toys and play in this connection (as stated at the end of Chapter 16) differ according to whether the family has social-oriented or concept-oriented ideals and aims. (See Bonfadelli's (1981:283) model of communicative complex within the family unit and family topologies.)

The PEOPLE - PLAY WITH FORMS OF INTERACTION category:
Dolls are part of children's role play and therefore reflect experiences with the roles, positions and forms of intervention children experience in their daily lives. Depending on the role of the doll, children play and experiment with values inherent in situations and experiences. By contrast, war dolls are attributed concept-oriented values and their significance and utility value in play vary.

In the many games which explore the possibilities for experimenting with interaction, there are always discussions concerning to what extent rules and norms, roles and principles are correct.

Care, nursing and baby sitting play (with toys from the Implements category) are attributed particular significance and value, i.e. the socially-oriented dimension.

The ANIMALS - PLAY WITH/ABOUT ANIMALS category:
Animals are either reduced to objects having limited or no significance and value in relation to the person-at-play or given a variable utility and symbolic value, thus emphasising social-oriented and concept-oriented dimensions.

Animals which are reduced to objects, implying animal figures, are seen by many children as a form of implement.

Many children see live animals and family pets (cat, dog, etc.) as "members of the family" and attribute them values and significance in accordance with this kind of status.

The IMPLEMENTS - PLAY WITH IMPLEMENTS category:
The huge quantities of toys within the Implements category are given different position and dimension values. Inventory and toy copies of machinery, cars, etc. and certain special implements have value simply as aids.

More personal tools/toys like weapons, aids to intellectual pursuits and personal implements (e.g. roller skates) are attributed a concept-oriented dimension. Meanwhile, musical instruments and personal implements connected to skill and experience are not always categorised as toys.

The SYSTEMS - PLAY WITH SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES category:
Systems toys and play with systems, etc. emphasise both social-oriented and concept-oriented dimensions. Many parents criticise the more extensive mass-produced toy systems which have a uniform overall design for being impersonal, unoriginal, too "finished" and bland. If this is so, such toy systems risk losing their value and significance to children.

System toys which are also construction toys are attributed great value as material which can give many opportunities for gaining skill and experience.

The NATURE - PLAY IN/ABOUT NATURE category:
As previously mentioned under the social values for this category, attitudes and values associated with Nature are ambivalent.

The individual experiences of the individual child must then be both social-oriented and concept-oriented, depending on the situation/type of episode concerned.

∗ *(15) INDIVIDUAL VALUES (personal differences/the individual aspect)*

These are concerned with values associated with toys and play which are significant for the development and identity of the person-at-play as an individual.

Some limited spheres which are regarded as social values also appear here on the strength of the idea that what is good for the primary group or family unit is also good for the individual member. There are therefore little grounds

for further comment because consumers attribute more or less all the values in this category to toys and play. Consumers see values and significance associated to toys and play as equally good and useful for the social-oriented and the concept-oriented dimensions. There is, however, no guarantee that the consumers prioritise these values in the same way.

The PEOPLE - PLAY WITH INTERACTION category:
The doll as a toy confirms the identity of the person-at-play and presents an opportunity for reference to a certain group. The person-at-play's evaluation of the doll's situation facilitates reflections concerning independence and self-reliance.

Users do not attribute play with dolls any form of value or significance in relation to developing practical sense.

The ANIMALS - PLAY WITH/ABOUT ANIMALS category:
Playing with and caring for live animals is attributed great value. These activities gain significance because they promote a concept of identity. Some parents (especially farmers) point out that these activities can give direction for children's futures.

The IMPLEMENTS - PLAY WITH IMPLEMENTS category:
Here too we find almost unlimited values associated with play with implements. Play as interaction in relation to the toys used in caring, doctors/nurses, hospital, etc. and listen/learn and intellectual activities are most highly valued.

The SYSTEM - PLAY WITH SYSTEMS AND STRATEGIES category:
Again unlimited values associated with this category, despite the fact that many families have reservations about construction toys, the more complex of which can give a child a feeling of defeat rather than of satisfaction.

A clear contradiction lies in the fact that many (e.g. construction toys) are intended to add values like independence, self-reliance, practical sense and mastery/control over the models but fail to add these values because the product is excessively complex.

The NATURE - PLAY IN/WITH NATURE category:
Children's own individual opportunities for play in the natural environment and for using natural objects is given high priority.

Children usually gain more from these types of play and activities if parents allow them to explore the possibilities for themselves.

Unfortunately parents and children do not prioritise knowledge about Nature and the ability to survive in a natural environment as high as other activities.

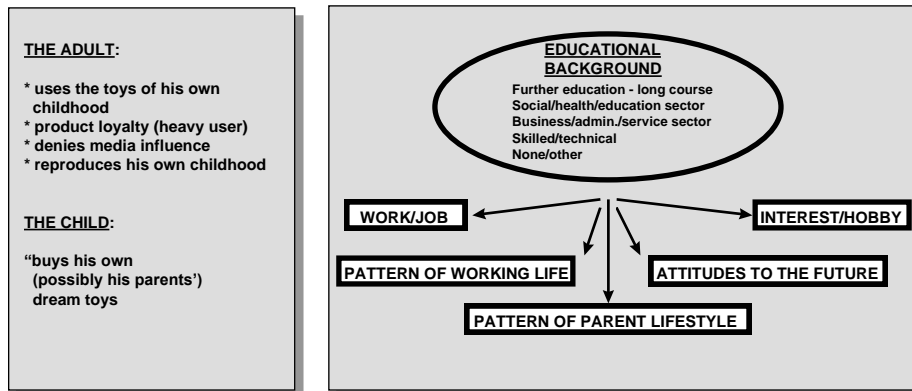**The loyal and the disloyal (casual) consumer**

A loyal or a disloyal consumer can be either a child or an adult.

The loyal consumer selects and is interested in certain types of toys and can in fact be described as disloyal in his rejection of other types of toys.

The toys are given a specific value and significance which can either be positive or negative, depending on whether the consumer can see advantages or disadvantages in owning them.

10

THE LOYAL CONSUMER

THE ADULT:

* uses the toys of his own
  childhood
* product loyalty (heavy user)
* denies media influence
* reproduces his own childhood

THE CHILD:

"buys his own
  (possibly his parents')
  dream toys

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
Further education - long course
Social/health/education sector
Business/admin./service sector
Skilled/technical
None/other

WORK/JOB ← **INTEREST/HOBBY**

PATTERN OF WORKING LIFE **ATTITUDES TO THE FUTURE**

PATTERN OF PARENT LIFESTYLE

The loyal *adult* consumer who is also a parent naturally looks back to the toys he was interested in and fascinated by as a child. All adults are loyal to toy products which they enjoyed playing with in childhood. They want to pass on positive experiences to their children, thus recreating their own childhood experiences.

This would seem to indicate that parents' attitudes, interests and understanding in connection with toys rub off on their children as a form of tradition passing from father to son or from mother to daughter. This is, however, not necessarily the case! Modern fathers and mothers do in fact inspire their sons and daughters - with no thought for gender and across the boundaries of the traditional roles.

The reason for this is that the toys the parents played with were generally far less sophisticated than the toys children play with today - and that parents fortunately also allow themselves to be inspired by modern toys.

If, however, there is any "rubbing off" between parents' and children's toys, it only applies to toys which are traditional or fundamental toys which all children play with.

As mentioned, parents' education can be the reason why children are stimulated to buy their parents' dream toys - and this being so, it is possible to find a causal connection between children's and their parents' interest in a specific toy.

However, the customer is indeed King!

Toy production (and demand for the production factor) are determined by the consumers' needs and the demand for certain products. This means that users as consumers are a force to be reckoned with when manufacturers have to decide which toy products to produce (and indirectly for which production factors there is a demand).
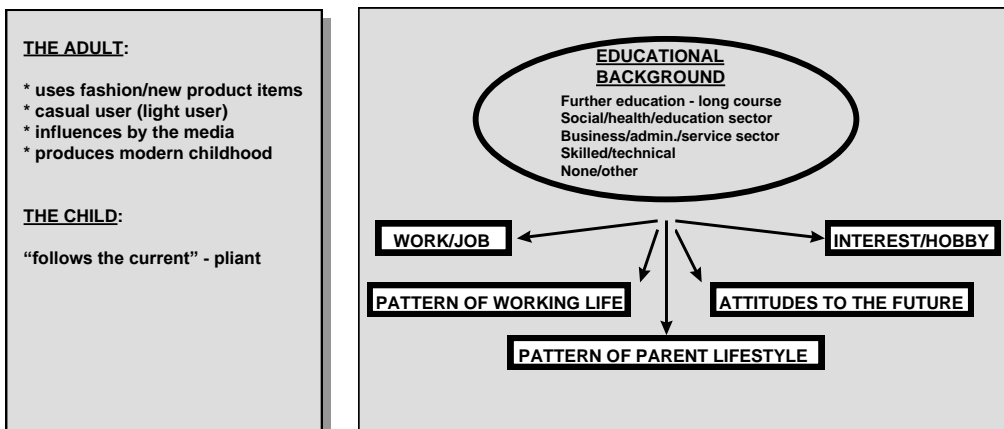
The sovereignty of the consumer originates from the idea that the key to any toy manufacturer's achieving his aims lies in continual observation and analysis of the wishes and needs of the consumers within certain target markets and in adapting the toy company's functions so that the company can deliver the types/forms of toys the consumer wants more effectively than its competitors. This means that consumer orientation is vital for any toy manufacturer.

But how much clout does the user really have? Is it not more likely that clever manufacturers contribute to developing a need for certain types of toys which they later produce in order to satisfy the user?

As we concluded earlier, as a result of undergoing the socialisation process, all children need to play with certain basic and fundamental forms of toys. This is in fact seen as a sine qua non for the child's development into a complete, social and sovereign person in modern society.

12

THE DISLOYAL CONSUMER

THE ADULT:

* uses fashion/new product items
* casual user (light user)
* influences by the media
* produces modern childhood

THE CHILD:

"follows the current" - pliant

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND
Further education - long course
Social/health/education sector
Business/admin./service sector
Skilled/technical
None/other

WORK/JOB

INTEREST/HOBBY

PATTERN OF WORKING LIFE

ATTITUDES TO THE FUTURE

PATTERN OF PARENT LIFESTYLE

If children cannot get hold of proper toys or good copies of real objects, they use symbolic objects (stones, throw-away packaging) instead.

This means that it makes good sense to distinguish between "real" and "artificial" needs for toys where real needs apply to indispensable and basic forms of toys while artificial needs apply to "five minute wonder toys" in any shape or form.

"Five minute wonder" toys are specially targeted at the casual user. They are marketed most often on TV and children are persuaded to buy. The casual user/consumer is unreliable, "flows with the current" and is easily won over.

Segment overview
See APPENDIX 3

Analyses of this type facilitate making connections between selection and de-selection of toys (and play) on the one hand and certain typical patterns of thought and behaviour found within a certain lifestyle on the other.

There are several possible interpretations which explain the similarities and differences in human beings' behaviour and thought - but all are based solely on combinations of theory and empiricism.

We have already mentioned several times that there are limits to the legitimacy of interpreting any description of reality because "reality" in a relativistic context can never be classified.

Even so, describing reality can produce inspiring results if the description is classified and analysed as if it were classifiable!

Children's selection of toys in relation to

∗ <u>**Mothers' educational backgrounds:**</u>
- rejection, + selection

∗ *Further education - long course (7% of the mothers)*

	<u>WORK/JOB</u>
- of these	4% decision-makers

	<u>WORKING LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these	5% wage-earners

	<u>PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these	7% shared responsibility

	<u>ATTITUDE TO THE FUTURE</u>
- of these	2% day-to-day family life pattern
	1% socially engaged family life pattern
	4% enterprising family life pattern

+ main group Nature
+ LEGO products
+ teddy bear - chosen especially by girls (4-5 years)

∗ *Social/health/teaching (36% of the mothers)*

	<u>WORK/JOB</u>
- of these	32% contact/communication/service

	<u>WORKING LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these	32% wage-earners

	<u>PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these	28% shared responsibility

	<u>ATTITUDE TO THE FUTURE</u>
- of these	20% day-to-day family life pattern
	11% socially engaged family life pattern
	4% enterprising family life pattern

+ main group People
+ dolls generally
+ Barbie chosen by girls (4-5 years)
+ main group Animals
+ inventory
- Transport (cars) especially rejected by girls generally
+ music
+ listen/learn
- main group System/Construction
+ LEGO products selected by boys
- LEGO products especially rejected by girls generally
+ main group Nature

* *Commerce/administration (31% of the mothers)*

	WORK/JOB
- of these	19% routine
	6% contact/communication/service

	WORKING LIFE PATTERN
- of these	28% wage-earners

	PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN
- of these	28% shared responsibility

	ATTITUDE TO THE FUTURE
- of these	25% day-to-day family life pattern
	3% socially engaged family life pattern
	1% enterprising family life pattern

- dolls
+ war dolls (in the case of boys)
- main group Animals
- pet animals
- tools
- inventory
- weapons
- aggressive toys, by boys (6-10 years)
+ music
+ listen/learn
+ main group Systems/Construction generally
- LEGO products (preference for other toys (Playmobil))
- main group Nature

* *None and other (19% of the mothers)*

	WORK/JOB
- of these	7% none/other
	7% contact/communication/service

	WORKING LIFE PATTERN
- of these	17% wage-earners

	PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN
- of these	12% shared responsibility

	ATTITUDE TO THE FUTURE
- of these	15% day-to-day family life pattern
	3% social engaged family life pattern
	1% enterprising family life pattern

- listen/learn
- drawing/cutting out/sticking
- main group Nature
- natural materials

Children's choice of toys in relation to

<u>Fathers' educational backgrounds:</u>
- rejection, + selection

∗ *Further education - long course (19% of the fathers)*

<u>WORK/JOB</u>
- of these   8% decision-makers
10% contact/communication/service

<u>WORKING LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these   2% career-oriented
5% wage-earners

<u>PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these   19% shared responsibility

<u>ATTITUDE TO THE FUTURE</u>
- of these   6% day-to-day family life pattern
8% socially engaged family life pattern
5% enterprising family life pattern

+ listen/learn

∗ *Commerce/administration/service (12% of the fathers)*

<u>WORK/JOB</u>
- of these   6% routine and
5% contact/communication/service

<u>WORKING LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these   8% wage-earners and
3% career-oriented

<u>PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these   11% shared responsibility

<u>ATTITUDE TO THE FUTURE</u>
- of these   9% day-to-day family life pattern
3% socially engaged family life pattern

- drawing/cutting out
- props

∗ *Skilled/technical (154 of 315 fathers = 48%)*

<u>WORK/JOB</u>
- of these   35% skilled/technical
6% routine

<u>WORKING LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these   36% wage-earners
9% self-employed

<u>PARENTAL LIFE PATTERN</u>
- of these   47% shared responsibility

- of these   36% day-to-day family life pattern
                  7% socially engaged family life pattern
                  6% enterprising family life pattern

\+ main group Systems/Construction
\+ tools
\- weapons
\+ Transport (cars, etc.)
\- listen/learn, especially in the case of boys
\- drawing/cutting out, especially in the case of boys

∗ ***Further education - long course***
Here the children are consistently socialised via the concept-oriented
dimension. There is a consistent selection of toys within the category
Listen/learn and LEGO products which have qualitative values concerned with
logical thinking and strategic analysis.

Using Nature and natural materials is a matter of course. Values associated
with these products emphasise concept-orientation.

∗ ***Social/health/educational sector***
Within these educational fields users emphasise the social-oriented
dimensions of socialisation and particularly strongly by women/mothers who
dominate these fields.

Dolls are clear selections because they represent the human element. There
is a similarly clear tendency to select the merits of play and behaviour
attached to toy products within the *listen/learn* and *music* categories. As one
would expect, the toy categories *Transport (cars)* and *LEGO products*
are rejected by girls who see these things as boring.

∗ ***Commerce/administration***
This is a very broad and not particularly homogenous group.

Within this group there are several toy products which are dominant rejections
- and it is difficult to find any logical, theoretical explanation for this.

It is interesting to note that LEGO products are rejected and Playmobil
selected instead. This is explained by the fact that Playmobil products are
more quickly and simply built and allow the person-at-play to get to grips
sooner with the most important factor, i.e. play.

∗ ***Skilled/technical***
There is naturally a clearer tendency for selection of *tools, Implements* and
the entire main group *Systems/Construction* by this group. *Transport (cars)* is
also given higher priority than most other groups.

Where especially boys are concerned, this group rejects *listen/learn* and
drawing/cutting out.

∗ *None/other*
There are no significant rejections/selections in this group, except a weak rejection of *listen/learn*, *drawing/cutting out* and *Nature.*

Toys, play and attitudes to the future

Children's selection of toys in relation to family members'

∗ <u>**Common attitude to the future**</u>
- rejection, + selection

∗ *Day-to-day family life pattern*
+ main group People
+ adult dolls (Barbie)
- guardian dolls
+ implements
- tools
+ transport
- aggressive toys generally rejected by the boys
- LEGO products (preference for Playmobil)
- Nature generally
- natural materials

∗ *Socially engaged family life pattern*
+ main group People
+ guardian dolls
- transport
+ aggressive toys (generally in the case of the boys)

∗ *Enterprising family life pattern*
- main group People
+ LEGO products
+ main group Nature
+ natural materials and excursions

In the section "Attitudes to the Future", it was stated that the different families' attitudes to life are differentiated by the different ways in which they see their opportunities for the future. Bearing this in mind, it was possible to classify the families according to three different attitudes which were expressed as three different ways of life and lifestyles, i.e.:

– Day-to-day family life pattern
– Socially engaged family life pattern
– Enterprising family life pattern.

The families' attitudes to the future in general and their wishes for their children's futures are also demonstrated by the types of toys and play they can normally accept/permit in the family.

Specific and "ordinary" toys and play can be accepted by more or less all families, regardless of their attitude to the future. Other types of toys and play are consciously or unconsciously rejected or ignored - and sometimes even banned from the house!

Despite the fact that ordinary and traditional types of toys and play will be found in more or less all families, the families still make certain significant selections or rejections. This is because, while people's attitudes to the future are incredibly complex, they also tend to make some kind of logical sense.

Where *the main groups of toys* are concerned, study of deviations revealed that:

− Children from day-to-day life pattern families owned most toys in the main groups IMPLEMENTS and PEOPLE.

− Children from the socially engaged life pattern families mostly owned toys in the PEOPLE, ANIMALS and NATURE groups, and

− children from the enterprising life pattern families owned most toys in the IMPLEMENTS and ANIMAL groups while toys from the main group PEOPLE were relatively poorly represented.

Table 8.4.1. (Steenhold (1993,d) gives a more detailed picture. The table shows 399 4-10 year old children's favourite toys relative to their family's attitude to the future. The children from day-to-day life pattern families are more likely to use toys such as props, dolls and cars than children from the other two types of family.

We cannot state that any given type of toy has any one specific communicative form for the concept of play with it. An interpretation of this kind would be too one-sided and limited. However, toys which can be attributed both a social-oriented and a concept-oriented communication (e.g. drawing/cutting out/sticking, listen/learn, play with guardian dolls and toy weapons) are owned more often by children from the socially-engaged families than from the other two types of family.

Where *the main groups of play types* are concerned, study of the deviations reveals that:

− Children from the day-to day family life pattern families are the most frequent users of play in the group SYSTEMS (especially athletics, sport and similar activities).

− Children from the socially engaged family life pattern families are most likely to play games from the INTERACTION group and

− Children from the enterprising family life pattern families are most likely to play IMPLEMENT types of play.

Table 8.4.2. (Steenhold (1993,d)) presents the information in more detail. The table shows 399 4-10 year olds' play relative to their parents' attitude to the future. Athletics and sports activities are dominant play activities for the day-to day family life pattern families but activities which encourage interaction, intimacy and physical/mental contact are also frequent. Meanwhile, the socially engaged family life pattern families tend to encourage productive play, construction play, games and performance more than the other families.

It is remarkable to find such significant deviations especially between the different family types' attitude to the future and their children's favourite toys and the ways they play.