

University of North Carolina at Asheville

The Picutre Books of Women's Liberation:
Lollipop Power Press' Contribution to a Social Movement

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Employing the energy for social change which had been brought about by the civil rights and anti-war movements, American feminists introduced their agenda for gender equality to the public beginning in the late 1960s. All participants of the “second-wave”¹ movement fought to gain equal status and opportunity for women, who had traditionally been treated as “naturally docile, domestic and subordinate” beings.² Despite the inclusive agenda, historians frequently analyze the movement as a divided effort that consisted of a liberal and radical constituency. The distinction is based on the different tactical approaches employed by the various groups, the methods by which they organized themselves, and the goals prioritized by the group members. For some women and their supporters, the primary goal was to affect the status of women in the professional atmosphere to the point where men and women could coexist in an equal partnership in which each individual had equal opportunities.³ But for others, traditionally deemed the “radical feminists,” what was pivotal to improving the status of women was making historically private issues a matter of public dialogue.

Among the participants in the second-wave of radical feminism was a group of women who, in Chapel Hill, NC in 1969, united around the radical goal of fighting against sex-role stereotyping where it was first cultivated: the intimate space of the home. Eventually calling themselves Lollipop Power, this group of determined women began publishing children’s literature that explored themes of family structures and perceptions of gender and self-empowerment in the hope of encouraging children, boys and girls alike, to believe that they

¹ The feminist movement that emerged in the late 1960s is often referred to as the “second-wave” of feminism. This title has to do with this movement in relation to the women’s movement of the early 20th century when women sought to gain the right to vote.

² Sarah Evans, *Tidal Wave: How Women Changed America at the Century’s End* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 23.

³ Rosaline Rosenburg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 191.

could construct a life based on what they wanted rather than on what society expected, at least as far as gender roles were concerned. In the eyes of Lollipop Power, the existing system of gender dualism had limited the lives of American citizens because it insisted on who and what one ought to be based on assumptions made about the sexes. By writing children's literature which sat in stark contrast to the status quo, Lollipop Power hoped that children would become skeptical of gender stereotypes, which suggested that "only men are aggressive; that all women are nurturant; that it's unladylike to climb trees or unmasculine to cry."⁴ The evolution of Lollipop Power and the activist agenda the group's members pursued exemplifies the radical aspect of second-wave feminism, as the women prioritized the private sphere by focusing on redefining gender roles that had, for generations, limited the individual experience. Over time the member's of Lollipop Power recognized that gender expectations were no the only limiting social factor that influenced child-rearing and thus began to incorporate discussions on race and class into their publications.

While Lollipop Power advanced their radical agenda, a complementary movement simultaneously emerged, which is referred to as liberal feminism. The focus of this constituency of the women's movement was to advocate for women's rights in the public sphere rather than to provoke a radical rethinking of the private sphere, the roles of its occupants, and their relationship to the social system. The National Organization for Women (NOW) is an organization that embodies this segment of the feminist movement. Founded in 1966, the members of NOW were most committed to strengthening and implementing federal laws that dealt with gender discrimination in public life.⁵ Members of NOW and other liberal feminist organizations believed that altering the societal position of women required a change in the

⁴ Pam Scullen, "Tentative, Informal Statement of Purpose of Lollipop Power" 1970, Boyte Family Papers: Box 4, Subj. File "Lollipop Power," Sallie Bingham Center.

⁵ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 23.

structuring of the nation's laws and institutions in order that a woman's role in the workplace, the political arena, or the professional world could be independent from the stereotypical American idea of what a woman ought to be.⁶

A noteworthy example of liberal feminists using the legal institutions of the United States for the purpose of gender equality was the battle to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Introduced into Congress in 1923, ERA sought to negate all legal distinctions that were made between men and women that affected property rights, political participation, and employment opportunities.⁷ In the first several decades following ERA's proposal, the primary supporting group was the National Women's Party, comprised of elderly, affluent, and politically conservative women whose influence was far greater than their actual numbers.⁸ However, within a year of NOW's creation in 1966, the group's agenda grew to include the amendment, which greatly revived the struggle for gender equality in the public sphere.⁹ At this juncture, the women's organizations that supported the ratification of ERA boasted the membership of several million people.¹⁰

Coinciding with the reassertion of ERA's popularity was the birth of radical feminism, which went beyond calls for political change and called for a completely renewed social system. The historical roots of radical feminism are its most distinguishing characteristic and the cause of the radical/liberal divide that existed during the second wave of the women's movement. The rise of radical feminist activism was a result of a series of failures and frustrations experienced by women who were directly involved in other social movements, most notably the civil rights movement and the social fight against the Vietnam War. Civil rights groups like the Student

⁶ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 22.

⁷ Rosenberg, 79.

⁸ Rosenberg, 180.

⁹ Rosenberg, 191.

¹⁰ Rosenberg, 180.

Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), responsible for organizing lunch counter sit-ins in the southern states, claimed to operate without a sex bias.¹¹ However, in practice, men held the majority of leadership positions and women were often forced to take low-profile jobs. White women in particular were required to fill secretarial and office positions because the group's leaders claimed that putting a white woman in a prominent role would bring unwanted attention to the group. However, further evidence suggests that sex bias was primarily responsible for these job designations. During interviews women's looks were judged and out-spoken tendencies were considered a flaw.¹² Historian Flora Davis suggests, in her book *Moving the Mountain*, that the activities of SNCC were complicated by a "sexual double standard" that was an undesirable byproduct of the 1960s sexual revolution which had freed men to employ women, sexually or professionally, in any way they pleased.¹³

Similarly, the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a New Left organization that rallied against the military draft, national wealth distribution, and racial policies, also served as a catalyst for the rise of feminist activism. Like SNCC, the public voices of the SDS were predominantly male. However, women did have successes, most notably, in community organizing.¹⁴ The experiences of this success positively influenced the energy of SDS women and provided them with the opportunity to understand and believe in their effectiveness despite their marginalized group status. In 1966 several SDS workshops were held on "the women question" in which female SDS members discussed the unjust gendered hierarchy that characterized the organization. Despite the women's efforts to advocate for themselves within the framework of the SDS, a self-proclaimed progressive organization, the results were

¹¹ Flora Davis, *Moving the Mountain: The Women's Movement in America Since 1960* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 73.

¹² Davis, 73.

¹³ Davis, 74.

¹⁴ Davis, 76-77.

discouraging. Consequently, the radical women's movement separated itself from existing social movements beginning in 1967, when a small group of women in Chicago gathered to record their demands for sexual equality to be presented at the National Conference for a New Politics (NCNP).¹⁵

The evolution of Group 22, soon to become Lollipop Power, illustrates particularly well the influence that the women's involvement in previous historical movements events could have on the formation of radical feminist groups and the precise articulation of their struggle. In her book *Personal Politics*, Sarah Evans writes that, "For women the [Civil Rights] movement became more alienating, more massive, competitive, and sexually exploitative. At the same time it also opened up the process of radicalization to thousands and sharpened the ideology women eventually would use to describe their own oppression."¹⁶ Evans was not the only initial member of Lollipop Power who had been involved in the Civil Rights movement but her individual transition into the feminist movement is best documented.¹⁷

It is apparent that geographical location affected the growth of the feminist movement as well. In the south, where Lollipop Power formed, the battle for gender equality faced a unique set of obstacles due to regional traditions. A southern women's movement did exist. It had begun in the last decade of the 19th century, a time of rapid political, economic, and social change when many feared that "Southern Civilization" was bound to end.¹⁸ One of the key elements that many intended to preserve, regardless of other social turmoil, was the dualistic temperaments and roles of women and men. The "Southern Lady," who was indirectly

¹⁵ Davis, 77.

¹⁶ Evans, *Personal Politics: The Roots of the Women's Liberation in the Civil Rights Movement and the New Left*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 170.

¹⁷ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 10.

¹⁸ Marjorie Spruill Wheeler, "Marching Through Time: North Carolina Women from Suffrage to Civil Rights," Nov. 13, 1995 Keynote Address at the North Carolina Museum of History. Duke University Library.

influential but also trapped by social expectations of virtuousness and delicacy, was an integral aspect of southern gender duality. The southern woman did have some public role, however their self-definition remained inextricably linked to the idea of “nurturing mother,”¹⁹ and their public voice was controlled by the mediation of men. The power that gender identity had in the south, particularly its relationship to women’s roles, influenced Lollipop Power by drawing attention to particular ramifications of gender inequality.

For Lollipop Power, the strength that gender identity had in the south influenced the formation of its liberation goals. The radical women’s choice of social concerns to battle with their activism is distinctly connected to the sexual duality that had been prominent in the southern region’s history. In the case of Lollipop Power, the traditional image of the southern woman played a part in influencing their choice of focus: liberating both boys and girls from social expectations that were innately limiting would eventually cause the extinction of the notion of the southern woman as a submissive and delicate specimen to be protected by men. However, it is important to additionally highlight that many of the women initially involved in Lollipop Power had young children and thus were directly confronting the impact that sex-role socialization could have on youth.²⁰ The personal stake that these women had in altering sex-role stereotypes does not invalidate their work, but it is an important aspect of Lollipop Power’s choice of social issues to battle.

On August 11, 1969 the Chapel Hill-Durham area radical feminist groups published the first issue of the “Research Triangle Women's Liberation Newsletter”, which after only two issues became the “Female Liberation Newsletter of Durham-Chapel Hill” in October of 1969.

¹⁹ Heather Hadlock, “The Shattered Language of a Partial Vision: Social and Political Reform Activities of North Carolina Women in the 1920’s.” Honors paper, Duke University, 1988. Duke University Library.

²⁰ Lollipop Power Inc., “Lollipop Power to Publish this Summer” 1971, Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. File “Early Descriptive Material/Membership Lists,” Sallie Bingham Center.

The newsletter sold for five cents and served to inform interested individuals about the happenings of both the local and national feminist movement, what could be done to promote the radical cause, and how to become an informed member of the movement.²¹ Each issue contained updates on the activities of the regional groups, a calendar of upcoming community events, and often a reading list consisting of recently published articles that elaborated on various aspects of the movement. “Female Liberation” provides valuable information about the structure of the movement in the North Carolina region and proves that Lollipop Power, which was initially called Group 22, was not the only organization striving to transform the social structure. Group 11, which was particularly active on the Duke University campus,²² Group Zero, which focused on attracting single women or married women without children,²³ and Group 27 were all groups that consistently contributed to the publication of the “Newsletter” and to the community outreach effort, with which Group 22 was involved.

Characteristically, radical women of the movement formed single-issue groups that intended to make historically private issues a matter of public dialogue. Rape, domestic violence, child-rearing, and marriage were all topics that were introduced for reconsideration under the precept that, encompassed in many of these issues, these were problems that could be understood as part of a prominent cultural power structure, in which men maintained dominance.²⁴ For Lollipop Power the upheaval of social norms that was called for by radical feminism necessitated the use of atypical strategies because any established institution, like the

²¹ Most of the issues of the *Female Liberation Newsletter* included a reading list that primarily consisted of journal articles. For instance on December 14, 1969 the *Newsletter* suggested “Grand Cooley Dam” by Marge Piercy, which offered “an excellent statement of the continuing condition of women in the movement.” In general the articles selected presented opinions from other radical feminists but also opinions of those who opposed the movement. Typically each item included on the list was followed by a brief commentary.

²² Linda Pannill, ed, *Female Liberation*, 1, no. 5, November 2, 1969, Sallie Bingham Center.

²³ Lannie Mayo, ed, “News from the Groups”, *Female Liberation*, 1 no. 7, Nov. 23, 1969, Sallie Bingham Center.

²⁴ Rosenberg, 195.

law, had, in their minds, been impacted by gender differentiation and was thus not a just system. The notion that tactical creativity was necessary was central to the evolution of Lollipop Power.

Group 22 is mentioned in “Female Liberation” for the first time on October 12, 1969. However, it had gasped into existence in 1968 as the first women’s liberation group in North Carolina when a number of women were brought together by friendship, their academic careers, and professional work. Many were veterans of the civil rights movement and had participated in the student struggle exemplified by the work of the SDS.²⁵ The group was originally formed without a name but, as Sarah Evans recalls in her autobiography, *Tidal Wave*, as new groups formed in the area, extensions from the initial organization, each acquired a clumsy name like the “single women’s group”. Soon a number system became a convenient and non-hierarchical way of naming. “22” pleased the women who joined with Evans and thus it became their title. Referenced in “Group News,” the group is described as “primarily a discussion group”²⁶ by the newsletter, but Evans writes that “we experimented with tactics: skits in Laundromats and at subway stops (known as guerrilla theater), leaflets, caucuses within community organizations and unions, and special women’s workshops,”²⁷ suggesting that the group’s role in the Durham-Chapel Hill community was more diverse than suggested by the Newsletter.

It was not until the publication off the eighth issue of “Female Liberation” on December 7, 1969 that Group 22 began to grapple with the notion of publishing children’s literature as a means of “expand[ing] the child’s concept of the occupations and life styles open to both men and women by showing males participating in household routines and females working outside

²⁵ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 10.

²⁶ “Group News”, *Female Liberation*, 1, no. 2, Oct.12, 1969, Sallie Bingham Center.

²⁷ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 10.

the home in exciting and important jobs.”²⁸ The members of Group 22 believed that the books then available to children presented a bland world with little choice because significant authority was assigned to traditional sex-role stereotypes.²⁹ Parenting, raising children in a gender-neutral manner, and fighting against the traditionally rigid definition of “family” were the issues that initially united the members of Group 22. Evan’s attributes this focus to the fact that most of the group members had or were near to having children.³⁰ Additionally, I will suggest that Group 22’s focus was in part due to the power of gender dualism in southern society, where the woman claimed an influential social role that was, nonetheless, narrowly defined. The group’s creative mode of combat soon became the writing, illustrating, and production of children’s literature, which attempted to avoid the pitfalls of sexual stereotyping in order to present to children a less constricted perception of identity and to cultivate a sense of self-empowerment.

The women of Lollipop Power remained important to the feminist action that continued in the Durham-Chapel Hill area, attending local workshops and traveling to national conventions of the women’s liberation movement.³¹ However, a growing emphasis was placed on the women’s mission as publishers of children’s books following their declaration of purpose. During the years of 1970 and 1971, Lollipop Power’s members dedicated much thought to formally defining their goals and their strategy. Sarah Boyte³² emphasized the group’s concern about “reinforcing images portrayed in books and on television” and argued that Lollipop

²⁸ Betty Lou Beck and Pam Cabarga, eds, “News From the Groups,” *Female Liberation*, 1, no. 8, Dec. 7, 1969, Sallie Bingham Center.

²⁹ Lollipop Power, “Dear...” July 1970, Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. file “Early Descriptive Material/Membership List”, Sallie Bingham Center.

³⁰ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 11.

³¹ In issues of *Female Liberation Newsletter* mention is made of Lollipop Power members joining other individuals from other regional groups to travel to rallies and conferences that dealt with national strategies for the women’s liberation movement. On a more local level, Lollipop Power supported self-defense workshops, helped bring guest speakers to the community, and helped organize The Safeplace, a house dedicated to women and their needs.

³² Sarah Boyte and Sarah Evans are the same woman. During the early years of Lollipop Power Sarah was married to Harry C. Boyte whom she eventually divorced, thus returning to her maiden name, Sarah Evans.

Power's publications could "provide children with alternative modes of thinking about themselves and their world."³³ Pam Scullen, also an original group member, worked to define the group's audience, who "at least at first...[are] those individuals, families and counter-institutions who identify with the women's liberation movement and its goals".³⁴ Scullen believed, at the time of this publication in 1970, that it was not the group's priority to convince individuals who did not believe in the necessity of fighting for gender equality that the sexual hierarchy that organized the public and private spheres of American life was an unjust system. Rather, Lollipop Power's role, according to Scullen and her colleagues, was simply to provide an alternative to those who already recognized gender inequality and its negative ramifications.

The early discussion on Lollipop Power's mission included another important aspect: the logistical organization of the group itself and its funding. As a non-profit, the group agreed to have its initial expenses paid via loans and gifts from friends and family. Contributors received a letter from Lollipop Power thanking the donor for the financial contributions. Included in this letter was an update on Lollipop Power's work as well as national news regarding "changes in the books which give direction to the fantasies, aspirations and early assessments of reality of the children that read them."³⁵ The work of printing and assembling the books was completed by volunteer hours contributed by group members and supporters. Revenues from book sales would be used to help expand the publication operation, not to put members of the press on salary.³⁶

Lollipop Power encouraged cooperative involvement, particular when it came to script writing and book illustration. Individuals could pursue topics that had been proposed by the

³³ Sara Boyte, "Thoughts on the purpose of Lollipop Power" 1970, Boyte Family Papers: Box 4, Subj. File "Lollipop Power," Sallie Bingham Center.

³⁴ Pam Scullen, "Tentative, Informal Statement of Purpose for Lollipop Power" 1970, Boyte Family Papers: Box 4, Subj. File "Lollipop Power," Sallie Bingham Center.

³⁵ Lollipop Power, Inc., "Letter in Response to Contributors" 1970, Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. File "Early Descriptive Materials/Membership Lists," Sallie Bingham Center.

³⁶ Lollipop Power, Inc., "Self-Description from January, 1971" Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. File "Descriptive Material/Membership Lists," Sallie Bingham Center.

group itself in their “Unclaimed non-Sexist Script Ideas for Lollipop Power Fans with More Time than Money,” in which twenty four possible story lines are outlined.³⁷ Or contributors could select an issue that was relevant. The members of the group could opt to accept, reject or to request that changes be made to any of the submitted material, however the script remained the property of the writer who maintained the right to make all final decisions regarding his or her work. The lack of an absolute authoritarian figure permitted the relationship between the press and the script submitter to be equal, much as members of Lollipop Power hoped societal gender relations would eventually become.³⁸ Another contributing factor to the group’s emphasis on creating a collective atmosphere may have been individual experiences with the civil rights movement, which as mentioned previously, had often ostracized white women rather than focused on unification of the movement for racial equality.

A sample of writing from November of 1970 demonstrates the community effort that was committed to Lollipop Power’s publications. *Dragon in Distress*, a script by Jane Truitt Brooks and Judi Connor Thomas, tells the story of a young girl who fights to protect the local forest (home to her dragon monster companion) from a bulldozer that has come to make way for the construction of a new neighborhood playground. The final page of the text provides an outline of the author’s objectives, a list that included portraying a “heroic heroine” and the hope to “make ecological issues salient to a young child.”³⁹ It is likely that this list provided a guideline for feedback for the Lollipop Power group members, who were asked to revise the text and

³⁷ Lollipop Power, Inc., “Unclaimed Non-Sexist Script Ideas from July 5, 1970” Boyte Family Papers: Box 4, Subj. file “Lollipop Power,” Sallie Bingham Center. This list of twenty four topics includes everything from a discussion of a “[n]uclear family with mother out of town for a while” to “[k]ids coping with a mother who is out to women’ lib meetings a lot” and illustrates quite clearly the variety of social issues Lollipop Power sought to bring up even in its earliest years of existence.

³⁸ Lollipop Power, Inc., “The Book Process: Writing, Design, Illustration” Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. file “Early Descriptive Material/Membership List,” Sallie Bingham Center.

³⁹ Jane Truitt Brooks, “Dragon in Distress,” 6, Boyte Family Papers: Box 4, Subj. File “Lollipop Power 1970-1974,” Sallie Bingham Center.

provide suggestions to the authors. The copy of “Dragon in Distress” that remains available for research purposes is littered with commentary and questions. While the editor of this copy of the script is unknown, the specimen shows clearly that the authors were not solely responsible for the formulation of a successful book. On December 1, 1970 the organization had plans to come together and discuss future plans for “Dragon in Distress.”⁴⁰

The first set of scripts, each only several hundred words, were ready to be viewed by potential illustrators in 1970 and, at the same point, five others were nearing completion.⁴¹ On June 6, 1971 a letter was sent out that happily announced “LOLLIPOP POWER TO PUBLISH BOOKS THIS SUMMER!”⁴² Along with this exciting announcement, the members of Lollipop Power developed a more decisive definition of the purpose of their books which, in 1971, were to accomplish the following:

- (1) Combat sex stereotyping in the child’s notion of what male and female people can do and do do; show characters struggling with discriminatory practices against females;
- (2) Include people from low income groups and racial, ethnic and cultural minorities portrayed with dignity and respect;
- (3) Delegitimate traditional standards of success and failure, suggest new ones;
- (4) Reaffirm child’s sense of his/her worth;
- (5) Portray non-nuclear families;
- (6) Reinforce constructive anti-authoritarian behavior;
- (7) Support independence and initiative in children of both sexes;
- (8) Encourage openness in the expression of emotions by persons of both sexes;
- (9) Recognize the reality of the problems children have in growing up;
- (10) Meet high standards of artistic and literary excellence.⁴³

⁴⁰ Brooks, 6. The writing that indicates that December the first was the date planned for the meeting is in the side margins of the text along with other comments from the editor.

⁴¹ Lannie Mayo ed, “News form the Groups”, *Female Liberation*, vol. II no. 12, Feb. 8, 1970, Sallie Bingham Center.

⁴² Lollipop Power Inc. “Lollipop Power to Publish Books this Summer,” 1971. Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 7, Subj. File “Early Descriptive Material/Membership Lists,” Sallie Bingham Center.

⁴³ Lollipop Power, Inc., “Lollipop Power to Publish this Summer”.

While most of the issues mentioned in this list focus on gender inequality, family structure, and associated issues, it is also evident that the group had already, in 1971, expanded their vision to incorporate discussions of race and economic discrimination.

The earliest books produced by Lollipop Power were bound in colorful paper with only black text and illustrations. Writing was often freehand, playful, and oversized, making the books easy to read. The scripts are simple but the messages, divergent from tradition, are clearly conveyed. Despite the book's playful appearance, the group's mission remained at the forefront in these publications. On the back of each book a "Lollipop Power, Inc." stamp was made along side their brief statement: "Lollipop Power is a women's liberation collective that works for the liberation of young children from sex stereotyped behavior and role models."⁴⁴ A brief discussion of a select few scripts illustrates that Lollipop Power's ambitions extended beyond deconstructing a sexist society, as the list of goals published in 1971 suggested.

Jenny's Secret Place tells the story of a young girl's "secret place," a doorway that is concealed behind her mother's desk, where she is able to experience being in a magic land where "no grown-ups would tell her she was going too high and must come down."⁴⁵ When she is young, Jenny uses the secret place as a source of empowerment. The book encourages the idea that young girls, as well as boys, are curious about the world and have an innate desire to explore it thoroughly. It is society's responsibility to cultivate curiosity rather than diminish it with rules and expectations. Lollipop Power's appreciation for childhood curiosity extended to young boys as well as to characters like Jenny. In *Did You Ever*, the narrator asks the reader, "What

⁴⁴ This insignia can be found on the back cover of the four books examined in this essay. For the entire period of Lollipop Power's existence as an independent cooperative (before the group merged with Carolina Wren Press) the insignia remained the same.

⁴⁵ Sara Evan Boyte, *Jenny's Secret Place* (Chapel Hill: Lollipop Power, Inc. 1970), 4.

can you do? What will you try? The choice is up to you,”⁴⁶ suggesting that what is important is fulfilling the dreams of the individual and not those that have been pre-established by the social system. The text expresses the idea of self-fulfillment even more concretely with images of boys baking bread and of girls fixing flat tires – both roles normally assigned to the opposite sex.

Exactly Like Me, published in 1972, deals primarily with a female character and her defiance of social expectations. Taking on a slightly sassy tone, the girl remarks:

[s]o whenever they ask ‘What do you want to be?’ I never say what they are expecting from me...I never say...’Teacher’ or ‘Stewardess’ or ‘Nurse.’ I always say something...that’s much much worse! And they say: What is the matter with you!’⁴⁷

The selected passage not only deals with a girl struggling to express herself freely but also implies that the response she receives from adults is confusion with a hint of disapproval. This book goes further and aims not only to deconstruct the ideas about what professions are appropriate for women but also what constitutes appropriate private behavior. The included illustration depicts the girl as she is, unaffected by the snide remarks of individuals who imagine girls and young women to be neat, dainty, and interested only by careers traditionally pursued by women. The accompanying text describes the assumptions made about her, which conflict with her self-identity.

⁴⁶ Paula Goldsmid, *Did You Ever* (Chapel Hill: Lollipop Power, Inc., 1971),

⁴⁷ Lynn Philips, *Exactly Like Me* (Chapel Hill: Lollipop Power, Inc. 1972), 13-20.

They say girls are sweet. They say girls are neat. They say, ‘Girls just don’t like to get on their feet.’ They say ‘Girls are soft,’ But I’m tough as a wall. They say girls are dainty, but I’m not at all!⁴⁸

Exactly Like Me promotes the notion that the individual’s desires - concerning occupation, play and dress – should be prioritized over social expectations despite the possibility for public scoffing.

A book that aptly illustrates the breadth of Lollipop Power’s concern is *Martin’s Father*, a story about a single father and his son. The attentive single father occupies his day with all the tasks the mother typically attended to: laundry, cooking breakfast, and making sandwiches at lunchtime. The selected illustration depicts father and son in the kitchen together, awaiting the completion of their sunny-side-up egg breakfast.

⁴⁸ Philips, 6-7.

“In the morning, father would cook eggs and toast and they would eat breakfast.”⁴⁹

Martin's Father attempts to prove that non-traditional family structures could provide a supportive environment for children.⁵⁰ Additionally, this text in particular demonstrates that it was not simply the stereotypes about girls that concerned the women of Lollipop Power, but the assumptions made about family and childrearing in general. Lollipop Power hoped to provide more options for children, by self-empowerment and the deconstruction of stereotypes, and to demand flexibility in the definition of family. The aim of this text was to illustrate that there existed other ways of raising children and that, while the physical makeup of the family-unit was different, the various experiences of family-life could be equally supportive and nurturing.

The trend, to encompass a more varied selection of themes, continued to progress and transform in the early years of Lollipop Power's existence. It is increasingly apparent, in texts and from meeting minutes recorded during the groups weekly gatherings, that focusing on the social issues that were the result of a gender unequal society led to a broader discussion and a broader social fight. Lollipop Power continued to use strategic literature but began to combat

⁴⁹ Margarit Eichler, *Martin's Father* (Chapel Hill: Lollipop Power, Inc., 1971), 7-8.

⁵⁰ The concept of “traditional family structure” is understood to be a married mother and father who raise their children (typically in this era two children) together in a shared home.

other dichotomies – most notably those of race and economic discrimination. In a group meeting held in 1974, there was a discussion over the illustration of a character, “Amy,” who some members “never imagined...as black” or who asked, “Is it realistic for a black girl to be talking to a white old man?”⁵¹ The note taker, who also appears to have mediated the discussion, asked the group, “If we do not want to limit our perspective of what girls and women can do or be, then why are we willing to limit what other people eg. Third world, fat, etc., can do or be?”⁵² The fact that Lollipop Power had this conversation is indicative of their increased concern for social issues outside the sphere of gender inequality. In part this was due to the natural expansion of interests but even more so, the organization of the group – so heavily dependent on input from the community – made Lollipop Power a product determined by its contributors. The communal cooperation influenced broader awareness, which is expressed in the subject matter of the published literature, because there was no designated leader who directed the group’s decisions or determined the social issues to be confronted in the group’s books. As much as the physical process of writing books was a community effort, so also was the choice of social issues that would be addressed in the literature and discussed by the group members.

While the number of members in Lollipop Power remained relatively consistent, fluctuating only by three to four people each year,⁵³ the attention the group received in the media increased. In regional papers, including the *Daily Tar Heel* and the *Greensboro Daily News*, Lollipop Power was celebrated for their efforts “to create a world in which each person, boy or girl, may choose from the entire range of occupations and lifestyle.”⁵⁴ However, public

⁵¹ “Lollipop Power Meeting Minutes, 1974” Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 19, Subj. file “Notes 1974,” Sallie Bingham Center.

⁵² “Lollipop Power Meeting Minutes, 1974.”

⁵³ “People involved in Lollipop Power Press as of 5/2/70” Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. file “Early Descriptive Materials/Membership List,” Sallie Bingham Center.

⁵⁴ Harriet Sugar, “Lollipop Books Stress Child Liberation” from *The Daily Tarheel*, Nov. 29, 1972. Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 16, Subj. file “Clippings: Lollipop,” Sallie Bingham Center.

recognition of the group reached far beyond the geographical scope of the southeast. In a January 1974 *New York Times* article, “U.N. Reports on Sexist Attitudes Around the World,” Lollipop Power was mentioned as having been “singled out” by the United States for its effort “to produce books without sexist or class images.”⁵⁵ Additionally, quoted in their own product catalogue were reviews from the newspapers in Arizona and Boston claiming such things as the press’ ability to fill “an important gap in children’s literature.”⁵⁶ Not only is the *New York Times*’ mention of Lollipop Power astounding and the national awareness of the group slightly shocking, but such media attention proves that there existed public interest in their efforts.

Similar public interest, and additional proof of Lollipop Power’s growth and popularity, can be derived from a study of the mailing list and the number of retailers who had begun to keep Lollipop Power Press books as part of their inventory.⁵⁷ Between 1971 and 1972, Lollipop Power’s mailing list increased from 800 people to nearly 2,700. Nothing specific was asked of these people, simply that they support the cause of women’s liberation. It is evident that bookstores were also learning of Lollipop Power’s literary contributions. The addresses of nearly 100 alternative and feminist bookstores that had, or intended, to place orders with Lollipop Power can be found printed on self-adhesive mailing labels. The addresses included local bookstores like Freedom Books in Raleigh, NC but also shops as far from NC as the Lioness Book in Sacramento, CA and the Feminist Bookshop in Lilyfield, Australia.⁵⁸ The sheer quantity of participating bookstores illustrates the interest and the social need for the alternative

⁵⁵ Kathleen Teltsch, “U.N. Reports on Sexist Attitudes Around the World” from *The New York Times*, Jan. 31, 1974. Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 16, Subj. file “Clippings: Lollipop,” Sallie Bingham Center.

⁵⁶ Lollipop Power Inc., *Illustrated Book Pamphlet*, Carolina Wren Press Records, Box 18, Subj. File “Miscellaneous,” Sallie Bingham Center.

⁵⁷ Both retailers and individuals on the mailing list were sent pamphlets, which included information about recent publications and group activity. Individuals were also invited to contribute to the press’ production by sending in scripts of their own.

⁵⁸ “Three Sheets of Address Labels,” 1973-1986, Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj. file “Feminist and Alternative Bookstore Mailing List,” Sallie Bingham Center. Unfortunately, no specific date can be found for this series of addresses, however it is certain that they were printed during the range of dates cited above.

literature Lollipop Power provided. If the retailers had not found interested customers it is unlikely that the group would have seen such success in their own region, nation, and in the world.

Lollipop Power self-reported a great deal of interest in their books stating that “we have received several thousand inquiries from people all over the world...from parents who are desperately looking for books which will illustrate a new, freer life for children.”⁵⁹ As expected, when their publications became more abundant and better known an increasing number of people were referred to their services by other women’s liberation organizations, schools, and libraries. Additionally, in 1972 Lollipop Power began to donate books to daycare centers in low-income areas.⁶⁰ This strategy of distributing their message is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, by donating to low-income populations the message of women’s liberation could be seen by people who were less conscious of the movement, as it predominantly involved women who were college-educated thus potentially reaching individuals who had inadvertently been excluded from the radical cause.⁶¹ Secondly, the act of donation resists the strength of economic discrimination, an injustice that Lollipop Power incorporated into their literature and group discussions.

There were, however, people who encountered Lollipop Power’s revolutionary social message and were unsatisfied with the suggestions it embodied. One such instance is documented in the *Durham Morning Herald* of April 16, 1974. The article focuses on “Dr. Valerie Quinney, who has done special studies on women and their changing roles and

⁵⁹ Lollipop Power, Inc., “Lollipop Power is Now Selling Books!” 1972, Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 17, Subj, File “Early Descriptive Material/Membership Lists,” Sallie Bingham Center.

⁶⁰ Lollipop Power, Inc., “Lollipop Power is Now Selling Books!”

⁶¹ Evans, *Tidal Wave*, 10.

images.”⁶² Dr. Quinney reportedly found that the women’s liberation movement had threatened the traditional roles of women, at which they had done “a very good job,” and had confused men because it asked them to be “loving and show their feelings,” tasks which socialization had not prepared them to do. Regardless of the social discomforts that Dr. Quinney suggested had been a result of the women’s liberation movement, she was willing to concede that positive outcomes had been derived from the work of women’s liberation groups. While no direct reference is made to Lollipop Power in this article, the author suggests, “With a change in images will come a change in lifestyle – changes brought by choice and not sex.”⁶³ This notion lies at the crux of Lollipop Power’s strategy to provoke social change. The literature that the cooperative produced was a mode by which to introduce the population to alternative ideas of gender roles, family structure, and individual choice.

Despite some criticism, like that of Dr. Quinney’s, Lollipop Power pushed on as an independent cooperative publishing over a dozen books.⁶⁴ In June of 1986, after several years of decreased group participation and book sales, Lollipop Power merged with a nearby non-profit publisher, Carolina Wren Press, located in Carrboro, NC.⁶⁵ After the merger with the larger press, Lollipop Power remained focused on their initial goals and maintained some continuity as a group, signing a lease of their own in 1986 in the Carrboro area.⁶⁶ The lease document merely outlines the dimensions and cost of the space being leased but it is significant because it shows

⁶² Jessica Gammon, “Women’s Movement Causes ‘Dilemma of Generations’”, *Durham Morning Herald*, April 16, 1974 (Carolina Wren Press Records: Box 16, Subj. file “Clippings: Lollipop”).

⁶³ Gammon, 1.

⁶⁴ Lollipop Power Inc., *Illustrated Book Pamphlet*, Carolina Wren Press Records, Box 18, Subj. File “Miscellaneous,” Sallie Bingham Center. This pamphlet contains 17 book titles.

⁶⁵ “Historical Note for Lollipop Power Records,” in the Manuscripts Department Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/inv/l/Lollipop_Power,Inc.html

⁶⁶ “Lease in Carrboro, NC to Lollipop Power, Inc.” November 17, 1986. Carolina Wren Press Records, Box 18: Subj. File “Spratt, Roy/the moved lease,” Sallie Bingham Center.

that, although a part of a bigger cooperative, Lollipop Power remained a separate entity and continued to fight for social equality through the publication of children's literature.

While it is rare to come across one of the colorful, playfully illustrated books of Lollipop Power, what this North Carolina group of women did was to help initiate a dialogue on what it means to be a family and how every individual can fit, regardless of their self-expression, into this structure, so long as its boundaries are health and happiness for all persons involved. Instead of living by strict definitions of gender, age, class, and race, Lollipop Power encouraged people to live for themselves in a way that promoted the well being of the individual and the community in which he or she thrived. The operation of Lollipop Power's cooperative served as a model for society, each member having a voice and being recognized for the valid opinions. Lollipop Power deconstructed family life, a traditionally private subject, in their books and exposed the topic to public debate. It is this tactic, making the private public, that unmistakably proves Lollipop Power's radical ambitions.

Lollipop Power remains a publisher of children's literature, under the umbrella of the Carolina Wren Press, and continues to specialize "in multicultural, nonsexist, and nontraditional content."⁶⁷ The unique press remains in existence because the dialogue on gender and family has not come to a close despite the social progress that has been made, due to the efforts of second-wave feminists and other powerful activists and social movements, with regards to gender stereotyping.

⁶⁷ "Carolina Wren Press," <http://www.carolinawrenpress.org/>

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