Although the gender gap in society is very apparent, I have not heard of too many magazines or articles bringing up the issue of toys possibly affecting the gender misguidance caused by toys. My interest was sparked when I read a brief paragraph about how toys can influence how different sexes learn at young ages. Girls are given play ovens, cosmetic kits and baby strollers whereas boys are given challenging space puzzles, science sets and action figures. Researching this topic on numerous databases and internet search engines, I found The Independent (London), The Sunday Herald, Ascribe Newswire and Newsweek provided the facts and statistics as well as personal accounts from parents with opinions on specific toys.

The first I discovered was The Independent (London), which is a personal account of a researcher studying the outcomes of how toys affect each sex. "Boys get toys which require active problem solving, and they are encouraged to play and explore alone. Girls are kept closer to adults and encouraged to be obedient and conform." The author, Carmen Reid, not only has done extensive research but also has a boy and girl set of twins that she has tried to raise with unisex toys. Through reading about her hope to bridge the gender divide, it made me realize that even from birth, babies are only distinguished through the colors they are wearing. Taking away the gender-specific colors leads people to confusion and unaware of how to react to the newborn. Reid brought up the fact that her children both engaged in the same sports as youngsters as well as played with dolls. This piece helped me to realize the importance of involving the
sexes in both kinds of toys instead of handing them a toy manufactured specifically for their gender.

Another newspaper article in *The Sunday Herald* provided me with an alternate side to the argument stating that not only are the children affected by the parents’ upbringing, but also the toy companies seem to be planning together by making the dividing line that much more apparent. Bridget Morris even brought up that Lego, a company traditionally thought of for producing building toys for boys are now making more curvy, artsy building blocks for little girls to enjoy. Morris also points out how this can improve hand-eye coordination, and this skill was neglected in a lot of other toys produced for little girls. She believes society's expectations play a part and that a child receives messages about his parents' values through the toys they give him. This article made me realize that toy departments are separated by aisles, and you will hardly find a unisex aisle for either gender to walk down and choose freely. This article did a great job of making me realize that if a parent gives their little girl only dolls and play kitchens then you are communicating to her your traditional values about gender, and the same goes for boy-specific toys.

Another article *Ascribe Newswire* argued against the point that boys and girls learn what types of toys they should like based solely on society's expectations. Gerianne Alexander worked with vervet monkeys is challenging the notion. She and her collaborator, Melissa Hines of the University of London, found that the monkeys' toy preferences were consistent along gender lines with those of human children. Though the monkeys had no concept of a "boy" toy and a "girl" toy, they still showed the same gender preferences in playing with the toys, Alexander says. That is, compared to female
monkeys, male monkeys spent more time with "boy" toys, and the female monkeys, compared to their male counterparts, spent more time with "girl" toys. This research brought to my attention that boy and girls may not choose toys based on what society is pushing upon them. This piece seemed to be the only one I found that deals with the nature versus nurture debate. The implication is that what makes a "girl toy" and what makes a "boy toy" is not just human society or stereotypes but rather something instinctive that draws boys and girls to different types of toys. Although being a very informative article, it still kept my interest and made me want to keep reading about different studies she had done and what her conclusions were.

Another article in Newsweek brought up the points that some children will play with certain gender-specific toys until a parent shows concern, and then they reject the toy. This was a very interesting article to read, because it was actual research from a leading toy company, Fisher-Price. According to Kathleen Alfano, manager of the Child Research Department at Fisher-Price, kids will play with everything from train sets to miniature vacuum cleaners until the age of 3 or 4; after that they go straight for the stereotypes. I read that a recent session for 3-year-olds in the testing Playlab, the most sought-after toy of the morning was the fire pumper, a push toy that squirts real water. It’s a toy for both boys and girls, but the parents are only buying it for boys. Similarly, "Fun with Food," a line of kitchen toys including child-size stove, sink, toaster oven and groceries, was a Playlab hit; boys lingered over the stove even longer than girls, but mothers are buying it for their daughters. This article backs up the argument that sometimes children choose toys based on their parents influence, but it actually has interesting information to enhance my reading. The most interesting thing I read was a
research project about when 7-year-olds were testing the nail polish, the observers left it out after the girls were finished and the boys came and played with it and actually took more care and had more patience with the drying process than the little girls had.

In conclusion, all four of these articles provided me with excellent sources of information concerning why and how toys can influence the genders. Three of the four argued that it was solely based on the parents decisions with a tiny research emphasis on biological effects, but the article in Ascribe Newswire dissected the natural behaviors of children before outside sources affect their decision making. I would recommend each of these articles to a reader wanting to know more about how children react to certain toys. I’m not sure which view I hold on the nature versus nurture debate in this point of my research, but all of these articles had excellent points to consider when writing my final paper.