

Crit Sum: (Bio 22 pg. 23 CCC)
Children's use of Public Space

Karsten, Lia. (2003) Children's use of Public Space: The gendered world of the Playground. *Childhood*, 10(4): 457-473.

Lia Karsten is a part-time lecturer at the University of Amsterdam. "Children's Use of Public Space: The Gendered World of the Playground" contains the research and analysis of data collected by Karsten and her associates with regards to the gendered dichotomies of public spaces of children in the public playground setting.

The study was based on the behavioral activities of children in several Amsterdam neighborhoods with relation to eight public playgrounds near those neighborhoods. The researchers compared the children of Amsterdam to one another using categories of ethnicity and gender. They also compared the playgrounds using the following categories: size, number of play objects, the quality of the playground, and the social context in which the playground was found. These comparisons were created in order to form a standard by which the different playgrounds might be ranked. Comparisons were also created in order to compare children's use of this public area based upon their culture and gender. The experiment demonstrated a playground design which favored a specific gender more than the other. Karsten and her associates sought to discover the playground layout which favored both genders equally and promoted equal development among the children.

The study argues that currently the layout of many playgrounds favors the male gender more than their female counterparts. This may hinder the males and the females' future public interactions by creating subdivisions amongst the groups. The researchers concluded that we should seek to "pay more attention to the seemingly trivial issue of children's leisure and the quality of the public playgrounds." They suggested that we need to create playgrounds that best utilize playground space and play equipment that will favor

males and females equally. During the observational studies and interviews conducted with the children, they seemed to show that males used the majority of the playground space and were more likely to frequent the playground for longer periods of time than the females.

(This summary was taken from a paper written by Ryan Jackman a student at USU)