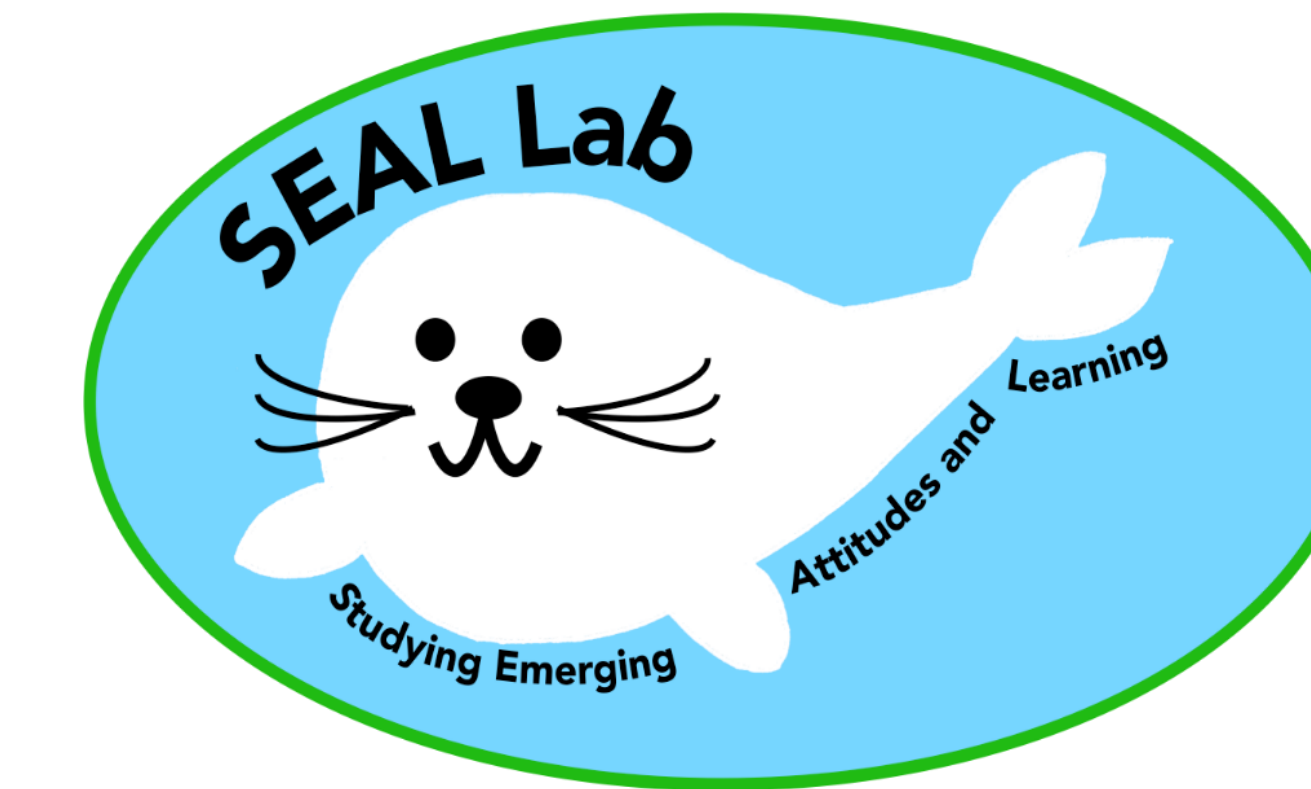# Filtering by gender: The effects of website filters on children's toy preferences

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Background

- Availability of online retailers changed family shopping habits (Dennis et al., 2009), kids shopped online during COVID-19 pandemic (Ecola et al., 2020)
- Children make consumer decisions based on visual criteria like color (Yeh et al., 2019)
- Gendered marketing may shape skill development & gender attitudes in children (Martin et al., 2012)
- Filters reinforce gender attitudes via explicit or implicit gendered cues (Auster & Mansbach, 2012)

Research Questions

- How do website filters affect children's toy preferences in an online toy shopping experience?
- Can Zoom be leveraged to study children in an ecologically valid manner?

Method

Participants
- N = 92 children (40 boys, 50 girls), M age = 8 y/o

Virtual Study
- Random assignment to toy website filter condition (Control/Implicit gendered/Explicit gendered)
- Zoom meeting w/ child, screenshare & give child control over mouse
- Child navigates toy store site, selects toys, narrows wish list to 5

Control

Size
- [ ] Mid-Size
- [ ] Large
- [ ] Small

Type of Play
- [ ] Play with Others!
- [ ] Play By Yourself!

Implicit

Type of Toy
- [ ] Building
- [ ] Outdoor Toys
- [ ] Games
- [ ] Vehicles
- [ ] Dolls, Dress Up, & Pretend Play
- [ ] Arts & Crafts

Explicit

Gender
- [ ] Boys' Toys
- [ ] Girls' Toys
- [ ] Boys' & Girls' Toys

Type of Toy
- [ ] Building
- [ ] Outdoor Toys
- [ ] Games
- [ ] Vehicles
- [ ] Dolls, Dress Up, & Pretend Play
- [ ] Arts & Crafts

Toy Store Example: Control using "Large" filter

Donut Delivery Scooter $0.00 | Toy Crane $0.00 | Flower Stand Cart $0.00 | Ride On Bumper Car $0.00
Barbie RV Set $0.00 | Tire Swing $0.00 | Sandbox $0.00 | Garden Cart $0.00
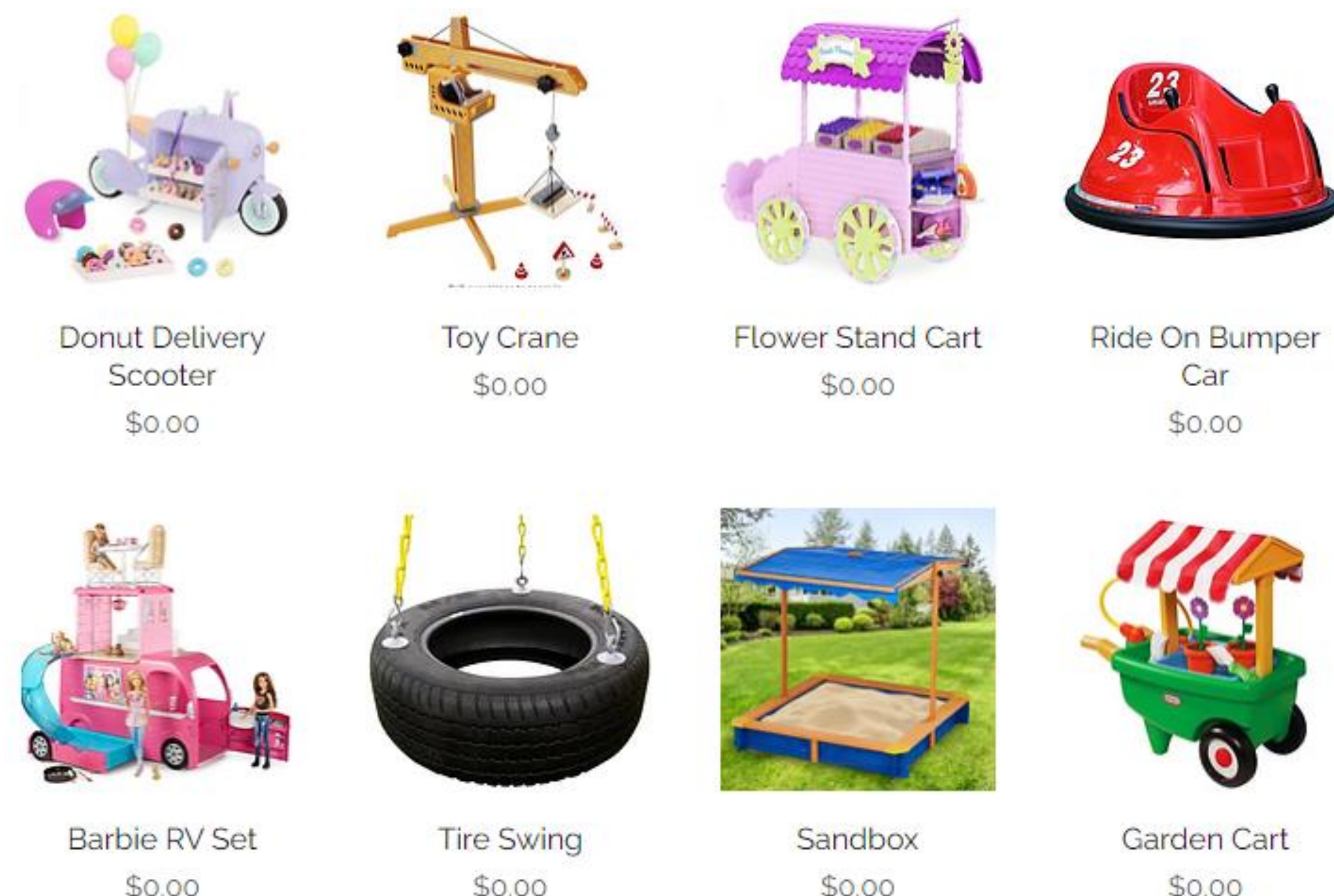
Toy Store Example: Implicit using "Vehicles" filter

LEGO Friends Friendship Bus $0.00 | Donut Delivery Scooter $0.00 | Toy Crane $0.00 | Ice Cream Truck Playhouse
Flower Stand Cart $0.00 | Playmobil Fire Rescue Boat $0.00 | Ride On Bumper Car $0.00 | Play Raceway $0.00
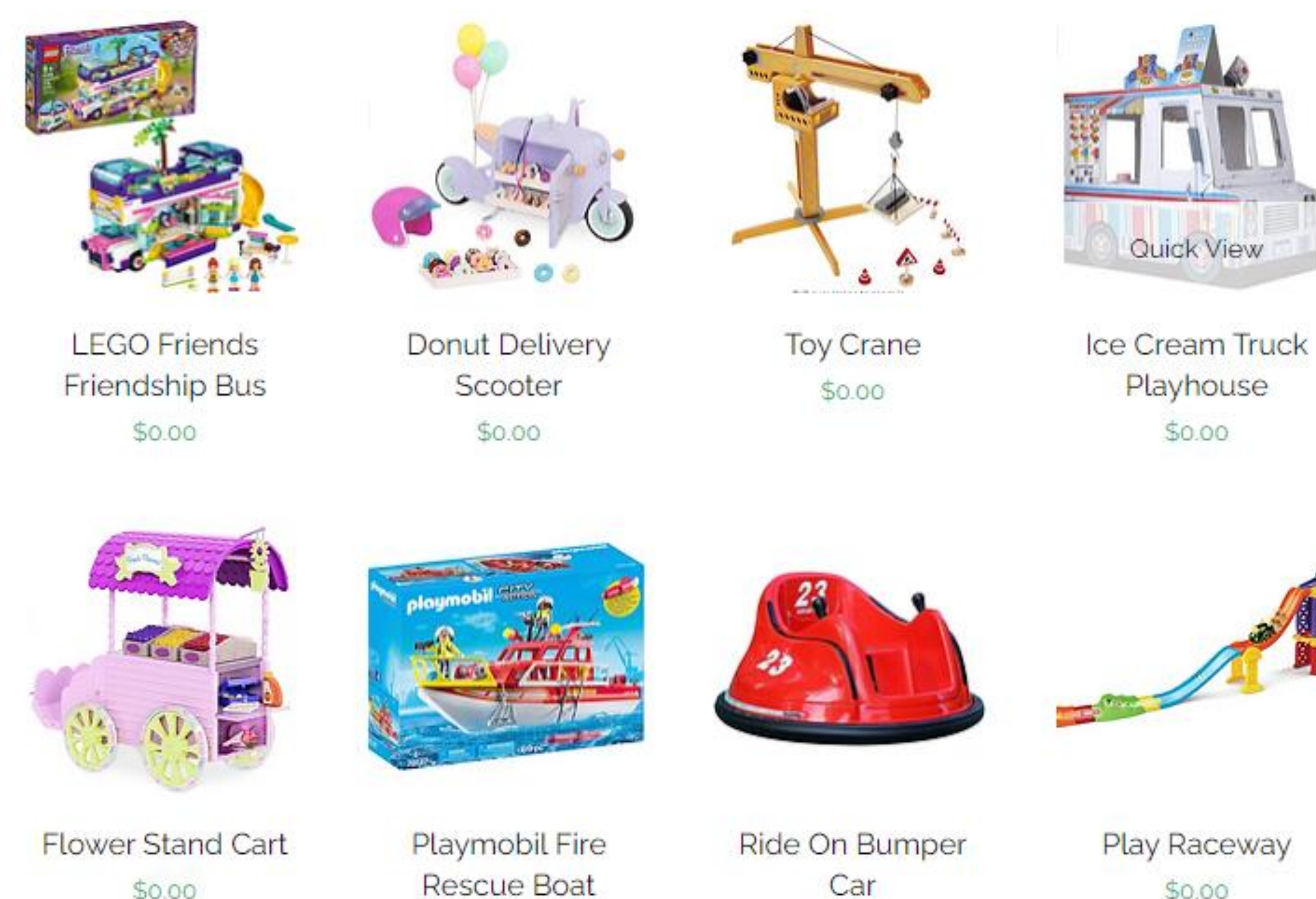
Toy Store Example: Explicit using "Boys' Toys" filter

Toy Crane $0.00 | Monster Jam Truck $0.00 | Military Helicopter $0.00 | Hot Wheels Cars $0.00
Firetruck $0.00 | Toy Football Post $0.00 | Toy Golf Set $0.00 | Pogostick $0.00
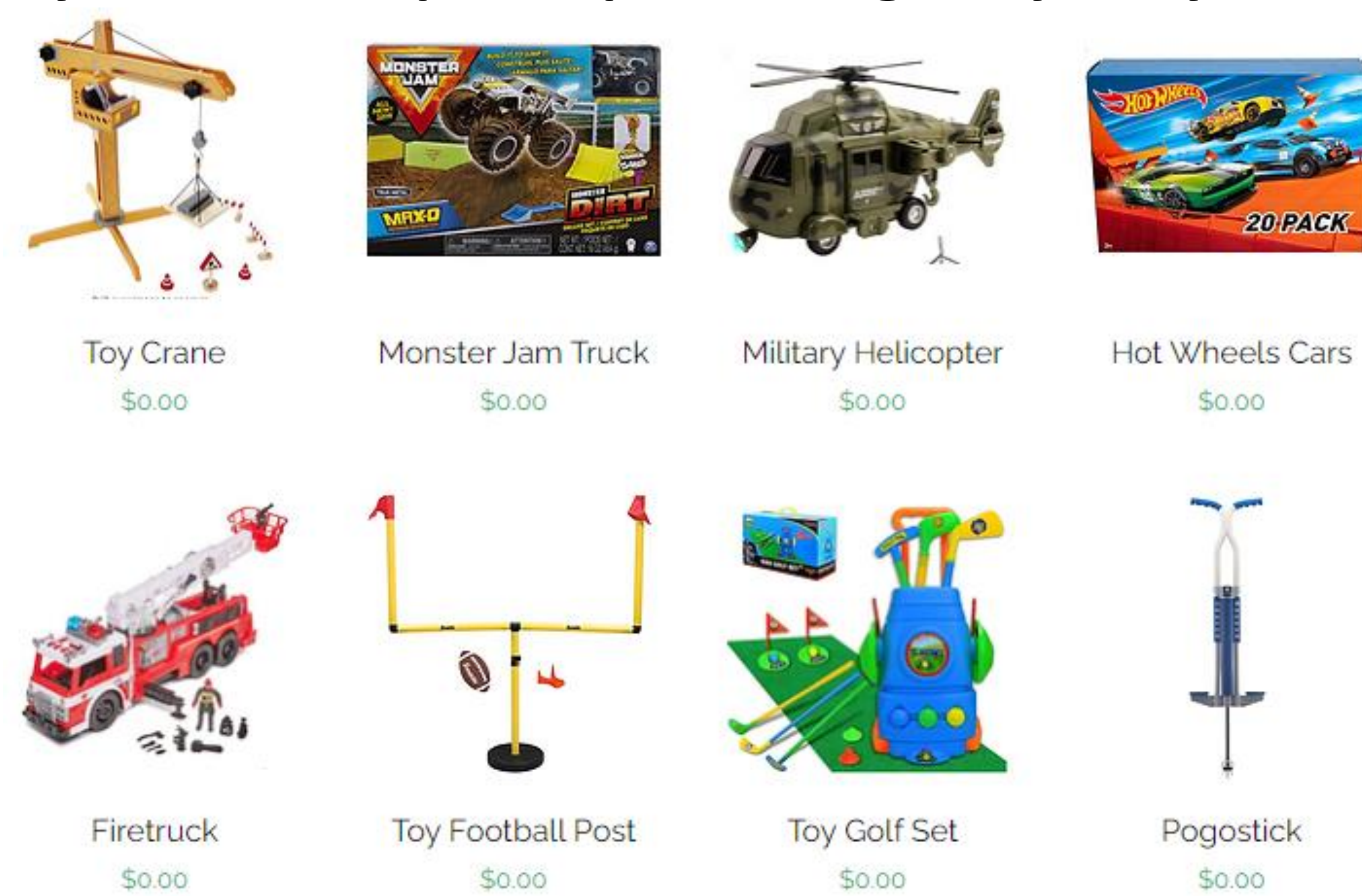
Filters had no impact on interest, wish lists were stereotypically gendered in all conds.
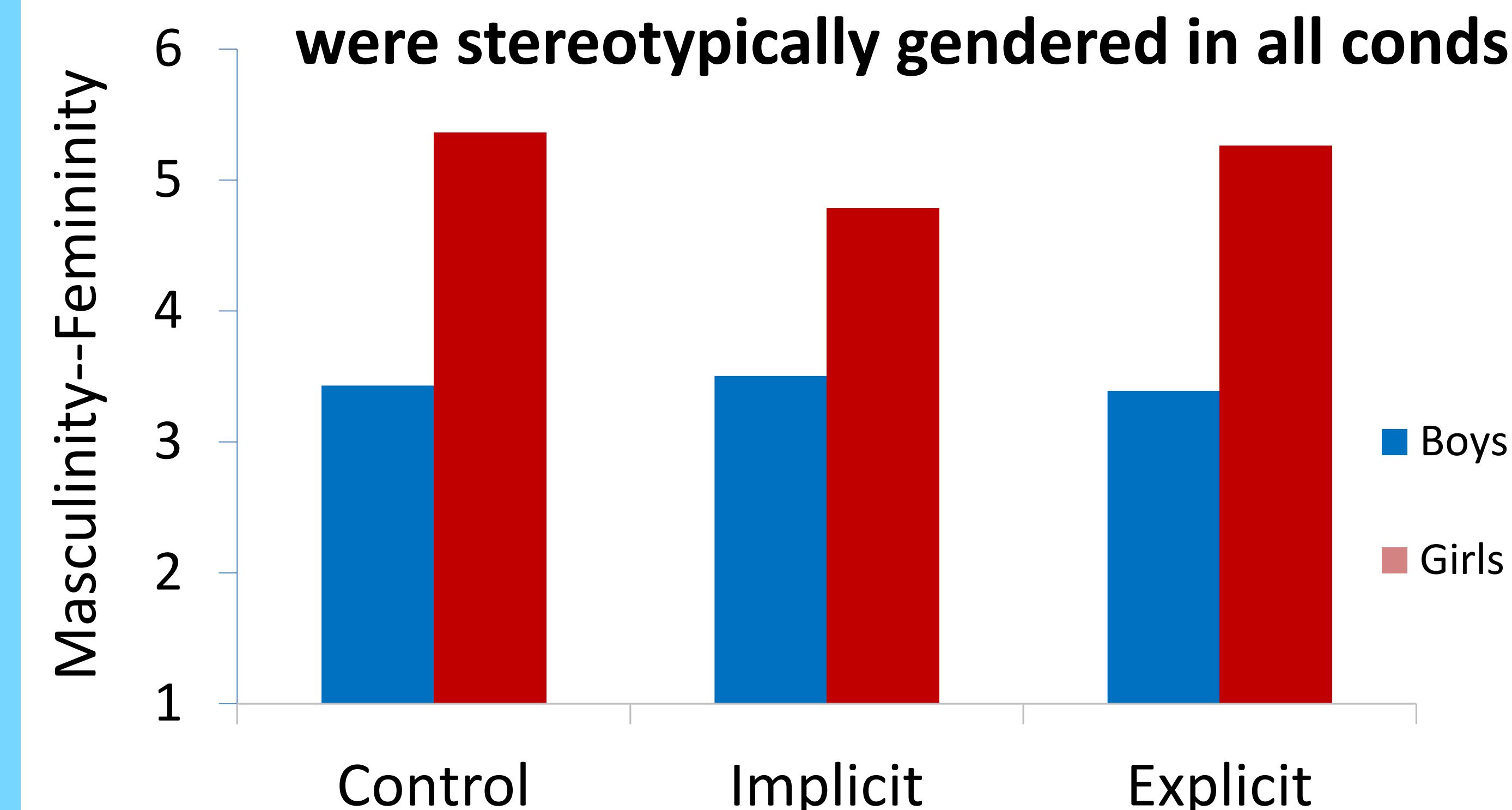
Main effect of child gender: $F(1,97) = 159.98$, $p < .001$

- Older girls were less stereotyped than younger girls, $F(1, 91) = 10.02$, $p = .002$

Preliminary Conclusions

- Children chose stereotypically gendered toys, regardless of toy store condition, though the effect lessened with age for girls

Methodology Lessons Learned

Zoom was a valid method for performing remote data collection with child participants
- Low cost to implement compared to in-person
- Permits future analysis of video recordings

Enhances accessibility for broader demographic of potential participant families
- Lower barrier to participation – less cost and time (e.g., transportation, sibling childcare, time off work)
- Larger, potentially more diverse participant pool without restriction on location or time zone