THE GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS OF EXPECTANT FIRST-TIME MOTHERS: A QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION

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A Thesis

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Qualitative Examination

BY

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Abstract

This study explored gender role socialization from the perspectives of expectant, first-time mothers. As mothers are often primary caregivers, and have a unique emotional bond with their children, they have an important influence on the gender role socialization of their children. Using semi-structured interviewing, 13 participants were asked about their gender role socialization ideas and experiences. Three questions framed the organization of each interview: (1) How do first-time expectant mothers plan to socialize their children for gender roles; (2) how do these mothers account for their approach to gender role socialization; and (3) do these mothers see their approach to gender role socialization as similar to or different from their partners? A qualitative content analysis was used to answer the research questions. Eight themes appeared consistently across interviews. (1) Participants discussed the intention to raise their sons and daughters equally, and (2) to give them the opportunities to pursue their own interests. (3) Participants also discussed the intention to provide children with opportunities to explore different gender roles, but there was indication to suggest that this would be accepted (4) mainly if they were girls. Furthermore, (5) a fear for girls' safety and well-being was discussed. (6) Parents were the most salient first influences on gender role development, but (7) they were not seen as the only influence. Finally, (8) participants discussed the various conception and pregnancy myths that hinted at the sex of their unborn children. Participants held liberal views about equality and parenting, but felt social pressures to keep gender roles in place. There seemed to be a higher value in certain reference groups in adhering to the definitions of masculinity and femininity, rather than in freedom of expression.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Every human being has experienced gender role socialization. It occurs initially within the family of origin, and as a child grows, additional forces make an impression. Children are socialized to have characteristics that help them function effectively in society. Most are characterized along continua. The gender role socialization process involves all of a child's caregivers, although one caregiver in particular may exert more of an influence than another. However, parental or caregiver influence declines as children age, and the influences of peers, the media, and the education system come into play.

Furthermore, the socialization experience for children does not prove to be the same for each child, and differences along gender lines are often uncovered as they grow older. Examining the origins of gender roles in our society may help explain how systemic discrimination and injustice are maintained.

As mothers are often primary caregivers, and have a special emotional bond with their children, they have an important influence on the gender role socialization of their children. But where do mothers learn about gender role socialization? From whom do they learn about it? How do the gender role socialization experiences of first-time expectant mothers affect their attitudes and beliefs about raising their own children?

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine gender roles and gender role socialization from the perspectives of first-time expectant mothers. Three questions framed the organization of each interview: (1) How do first-time expectant mothers plan to socialize their children for gender roles; (2) how do these mothers account for their approach to

gender role socialization; and (3) do these mothers see their approach to gender role

socialization as similar to or different from their partners'?

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following section reviews the pertinent literature relating to gender role socialization. The concept of gender is examined. Gender role socialization, as well as the influence of parents and additional environmental influences, is discussed. Anticipatory socialization and pregnancy "myths" are also described. Finally, theoretical literature relevant to this project is reviewed.

What is Gender?

The term 'gender' was adopted by John Money in 1955 as an umbrella concept to distinguish the continuum of femininity and masculinity from male or female biological sex. Money believed that gender involved "somatic and behavioural criteria, for example, whether one is masculine or feminine and how one conducts oneself personally and socially, and how one is regarded legally" (Bullough, 1994, p. 211).

Gender is both a biological category and a social category (Golombok & Fivush, 1994). The first category is essentially physical. Human beings are separated into groups based on chromosomes, hormones, and overall physical construction. More specifically, "males remain males and females remain females because of some underlying biological difference, and one of the manifestations of this difference is genitalia" (Golombok & Fivush, 1994, p. 93). The second category, however, separates individuals into groups based on varying degrees of personal characteristics or behaviours, such as assertiveness or passivity. It is important to note that the roots of the social category are contained in the biological category. In our society, gender is seen as the most prominent standard of social categorization (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989).

Research has not determined whether gender is inherently biological, or primarily

influenced by social factors (Nelson & Robinson, 1999). Clearly, both nature and nurture influence gender development.

Furthermore, gender plays out at a structural level, an interactional level, and an individual level. Firstly, gender is an ever-changing system of "social relationships" that infuses and informs "the organization of society's institutions" (Murray, 1996, p. 370). At this level, gender interacts with and influences societal institutions, such as family and religion. It is a "property of our social organization" rooted in "widely held cultural beliefs" (Walzer, 1998, p. 7). Basically, the composition of families and other institutions is directed in large part by our sex and gender. Second, gender is an "accomplishment" (Murray, 1996, p. 370); it is how we conduct ourselves in relation to the socially expected attitudes and activities for women and men (Murray, 1996). Essentially, gender is something that we 'do', and it is a manner in which we relate to one another (Walzer, 1998). We 'do' gender by behaving in ways that our society sets out for how men and women should behave. Finally, we link certain aspects of ourselves with being female or male, such that gender is an "attribute of individuals" (Murray, 1996, p. 370) and 'doing gender' occurs in interaction with others.

Some research suggests the reason that we 'do' gender is because of the existence of social power inequalities between women and men (Murray, 1996). For example, 'mother' and 'father' are social categories that have specific meanings attached to them, not only for individuals, but also in society as a whole. These meanings are "socializing influences on new parents", and are "institutionalized in cultural imagery associated with motherhood and fatherhood" (Walzer, 1998, p. 7). Moreover, these institutions influence and control human behaviour "by setting up predefined patterns of conduct", which

channel it in one direction "as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 55). However, Walzer (1998) argued that if parents recognized the manner in which gender differentiation and inequality existed in relationships, specifically between men and women, they would have the opportunity to redefine motherhood, fatherhood, and parenthood.

Gender Roles

To understand gender role socialization, it is necessary to understand the concept of gender roles. Gender roles are patterns of behaviour that all female and males engaged in, based on social and cultural expectations associated with their sex and gender (Andersen, 1997). They are the "behaviours, attitudes, and personality traits that a society designates as masculine or feminine", that are "more 'appropriate' or typical for the male or female social role" (Bailey & Zucker, 1995, p. 43). They are also "shared norms applied to the occupants of social positions", and "systems of meaning" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p. 147) that allow role occupants and others with whom they interact to predict future behaviours and maintain stability in their social interactions (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993).

More specifically, gender roles reveal our status as woman, boy, girl or man (Bailey & Zucker, 1995). Each society defines the details of gender roles for males and females. Clothing and body decoration, such as jewellery and make-up, are symbols of sex and gender, and allow us recognition and identification of the gender roles of others (Bullough, 1994). One's gender role emerges between the ages of two and four, but actual gender role development begins the moment a newborn infant is wrapped in a pink or blue blanket (Lindsey, 1990). These two colours are the first signs used in some

cultures to differentiate female from male (Lindsey, 1990).

A classic study by Money, Hampson, and Hampson (1957) suggested that the socially designated sex and the sex of rearing were more precise indicators of gender roles than any biological factor. They also argued that gender roles were the result of imprinting, and that if a child was exposed to a person of one particular sex or gender in the first two or three years, s/he would identify with that sex or gender as an adult. It is important to note that Money's research had been criticized as controversial, specifically his work with hermaphrodites: individuals born with both male and female sex organs, but no clearly distinguishable genetalia. Diamond (1965) accused Money of placing too much emphasis on nurture, while under-emphasizing biology or nature. Much of this controversy arose from the John/Joan case, where the sex-reassignment of an infant boy after accidental castration helped to pave the way for more emphasis of the social influence on gender identity (Bullough, 2003).

Bullough (1994) argued that Money helped to develop the idea of critical periods, which were "periods at various stages in development from the embryo through early childhood during which crucial gender decisions could be influenced" (p. 224). After 18 months, any change or 're-announcement' of sex would cause difficulties in the child's gender self-identification (Bullough, 1994). However, recent research has shown that gender roles change over time with transitions into various stages of life, such as parenthood. Research by Cowan and Cowan (1992) and Belsky and Kelly (1994) suggested that as the roles of 'life mates' or 'partners' developed into 'mother and father' or 'parents', males and females gradually became more dissimilar to one another. They became "differentiated in their work and parenting arrangements" (Walzer, 1998, p. 4),

where typically women began to focus more on caretaking and men began to focus more on breadwinning. It is important to note that this differentiation does not hold true for all men and for all women, but it is predominant in many cultures.

Belsky, Gilstrap, and Rovine (1984), Sanchez and Thomson (1997), and Walzer (1998), reported that after the birth of a child, women's paid labour often decreased while men's paid labour increased, and women's domestic work often increased while men's decreased. According to this same research, these trends occurred regardless of women's employment status, education level, or the couples' pre-existing gender attitudes or division of labour (Belsky et al., 1984; Sanchez & Thomson, 1997; Walzer, 1998). It is interesting to note that in lesbian families, this division of labour is not as distinct. Research by Dunne (2000) and Kurdek (1994) suggested that the lesbian parents in their studies had a more equal distribution of household responsibilities, and participants from Dunne's study attempted to integrate childrearing and breadwinning. In addition, they found the couples had a "mutual recognition of a woman's right to an identity beyond the home" (Dunne, 2000, p. 31).

Stereotypes

Before two years of age, gender labelling and stereotyping are displayed by sex differences in behaviour and toy choice (Fagot, Leinbach, & O'Boyle, 1992). To explain further, stereotypes are:

> standardized beliefs about an identifiable group. They can function as schemata about group members that can be activated by an encounter with any member of the group or, presumably, anything associated with members of the group. (Fagot et al., 1992, p. 225)

In many cultures, these stereotypes are applied to the roles and daily experiences of men and women. For example, the stereotypes accorded to female parents often involve images of a primary caregiver who has given up employment to become a stay-at-home mother, while stereotypical images of male parents often involves secondary caregiver status, working full-time away from the home to financially support the family.

Moreover, stereotypes of men are often more rigidly defined than stereotypes of women. For example, research has shown that people react more negatively to a male displaying characteristics or traits that are considered 'feminine', such as boys playing with Barbie dolls, than to females displaying characteristics or traits which are considered 'masculine', such as playing video games (Hort, Fagot, & Leinbach, 1990).

Gender Role Socialization

Socialization is defined as the "process of change that a person undergoes as a result of social influences" (LaRossa & Reitzes, 1993, p. 148). In particular, gender role socialization is the "process by which individuals acquire a gender identity as well as the ways of acting, feeling, and thinking that are appropriate to the gender expectations of their society" (Robinson & Salamon, 1987, p. 123). Social interaction and social relationships are necessary to "'construct' the ongoing social practices that divide men and women and create in them a sense of gender identity" (Fox, 2001, p. 376). Socialization takes place among family members or between peers, and occurs through modelling of another person's behaviour or direct instruction of gender role expectations. For example, many pregnant and new mothers take note of others' responses to them as new parents, such as suggestions for techniques on breastfeeding or discipline, and this observation helps to shape their identity as mothers (Walzer, 1998).

Furthermore, Fagot and Hagan (1991) suggested that gender role socialization was greatest at periods of change or transitions when the child was learning new ways of behaving, "for once children have adopted traditional sex-typed behaviours, many mechanisms within society maintain this choice" (p. 628). These mechanisms included family, peers, the media, as well as the education system.

Gender role socialization also influences personality development and assists in learning the rules and regulations of a society (Lindsey, 1990). It is important to note that while gender roles are common within many cultures, such as in North America and parts of Europe, the particular behaviours are not. Acceptable behaviours of a female or a male in one society are completely different in another. For example, in some parts of the Ukraine, it is customary for women to prepare entire meals and serve them to their husbands before they are allowed to begin their own meal, a practice that is not common in North America (S. Andrushko, personal communication, January 7, 2000).

Social processes influence the transition to parenthood. For example, in Canada, the federal government established a parental leave benefits program that was accessible to both parents (Government of Canada, 2004). As long as both partners had accumulated 600 hours of paid work each in the past year, they were eligible to share 52 weeks of parental leave benefits after the birth or adoption of a child. The government provided 55% of each person's salary, and some employers offered benefit top-ups nearly equal or equal to their regular wages (Government of Canada, 2004). This type of program offered parents, particularly fathers, the chance to benefit from their child's first few months at home, without having to be concerned about breadwinning.

Government programs vary from place to place. For example, while the parental

leave program in Canada is helpful to new parents, it is still a long way from places such as Norway, which has one of the leading parental leave policies in the world. For example, maternity leave is covered at eighty percent for fifty-two weeks, or at one hundred percent for forty-two weeks. Parents may also qualify for two-and-a-half years under a government-funded program (Baker & Tippin, 1999).

Moreover, gender role socialization processes are affected by differential exposure. Children are differentially socialized depending on with whom they interact. For example, a number of studies suggest that mothers are more supportive than fathers of their children 'trying on' different gender roles, while peers and fathers are more likely than mothers to negatively reinforce (e.g. teasing) this 'trying on' of different gender roles (Crick, 1997; Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Langlois & Downs, 1980; Leve & Fagot, 1997; Ruble, 1988).

Socio-economic status also plays a role in socialization. A study by Hoffman and Kloska (1995) found parents who were lower in socio-economic status and were less educated were more likely to hold stereotypical views of women and men. Fathers and full-time housewives were prominent in this category. Other research suggests that girls from working-class families are more often socialized to fit the stereotypical female gender role and have greater gender role restrictions placed upon them than boys from working-class families (Lips, 1988). For example, these girls are often expected to find employment until they marry and have children, but once that occurs, it is assumed that they will stop paid employment to become full-time, stay-at-home mothers.

Gender role socialization processes are also influenced by social power. In a classic study by Freedman (1963), it was suggested that the larger society controlled our

behaviour through norms, or rules of behaviour. Society regulated individuals to conform to norms in such a way that behaviours which benefit others were rewarded, while "detrimental behaviours" were punished (Wu & Baer, 1996, p. 438). Men and women are biologically and socially similar, but because of a patriarchal desire for social power, they have been made to seem as opposites. In order to further individual or group goals, differences are constructed:

> The fundamental question is how the illusion of a gender dichotomy is constructed and maintained in the face of between-sex similarity and within-sex difference, and the answer is found in the constant and contentious process of engendering behaviour as separate and unequal. (Ferree, 1990, p. 868)

Therefore, in order to maintain imbalance in social power, males and females have been socialized to be different. Men are socialized to fit characteristics along one end of a continuum, while women are socialized to fit characteristics at the other end. As a result, females and males experience the world differently. Clearly, "the male-female distinction is extraordinarily important, that it has…intensive and extensive relevance to virtually every aspect of human experience" (Bem, 1993, p. 146).

For example, responsibilities of parenthood are "gendered and privatized" (Fox, 2001, p. 388). "Parenting arrangements are linked not only to the social construction of gender difference, but to gender inequality as well" (Walzer, 1998, p. 14). There is an assumption that women care for children, while men earn a paid living to provide for their families: "Perhaps more than any other aspect of gender, mothering is perceived as 'natural, universal and unchanging'" (Walzer, 1998, p. 48). Ultimately, the assumption for heterosexual couples is that child care is primarily the mother's responsibility, while

the father is expected to 'help', suggesting that fathers are doing a favour when they care for their children (Walzer, 1998; McMahon, 1995). As suggested by Lind and Prentice (1991), the 'natural' assumption that women would bear and care for children was part of their oppression.

It is important to note that the roles for parents are changing, with more men participating in child care, more women participating in the labour force, more single parents, and more same-sex couples having children. These changes to family dynamics have important implications for parents. For example, Coltrane (1996) argued that in cultures where men shared more equally in parenting, women had more social and economic power. In addition, within the last few decades, another issue has arisen for women; specifically, the assumption that they are "generous self-sacrificing mothers" as well as "dedicated professionals" (Coltrane, 1996, p. 26). Research by Walzer (1998) suggested that many women felt they were expected to be employed in the paid labour force, but did not have any corresponding changes in their child rearing and domestic responsibilities. This could prove detrimental to the health of women who tried to 'do it all'. It also represented a "cultural ambivalence about how mothers should behave" (Hays, 1996, p. 132).

Anticipatory Socialization and Pregnancy Myths

Gender role socialization begins before birth when prospective parents, family and friends speculate about the sex or gender of the unborn child. This 'anticipatory socialization' may be associated with various pregnancy 'myths', which are used as indicators of the sex or gender of the child (Robinson & Salamon, 1987). For example, according to these myths, the greater the amount of physical activity (e.g. kicking) on the

part of the fetus during pregnancy, the more the child is perceived to be a boy (Robinson & Salamon, 1987). As well, if the baby's heart rate is high, the mother is thought to be carrying a girl (Engelgau, 2002). Pregnancy myths also consider the position of the baby while in utero. Prenatal position is seen as an indicator of fetal sex: Boys are carried high in the abdomen, while girls are carried low (Robinson & Salamon, 1987).

While exploring options for this research project, I initiated a brief and informal survey of early childhood educators and pregnant women at a daycare in Winnipeg, Manitoba. I was looking for information about gender role socialization during pregnancy. I discovered that all of the participants made reference to pregnancy myths. A variety of myths were noted:

1. Fast heartbeat = girl
2. Carrying all the weight in front = boy
3. Heartburn = boy
4. Heartburn = baby will have lots of hair at birth
5. Carrying low = boy
6. Fetus is very active = boy
7. Continuous morning-sickness = girl
8. Difficult pregnancy = girl
9. Combine number of last day of menstruation and birth date, if both even or both odd = girl
10. Combine number of last day of menstruation and birth date, if one number odd and one even = boy
11. No waist, weight distributed all over = girl
12. Count numbers of male and female family members
13. Rub a pink baby sweater on your belly everyday = girl

During this same informal survey, the early childhood educators and pregnant women were asked about the origins of the myths. Several sources were suggested, including a Chinese conception chart, family history, comparing previous pregnancies, comparing pregnancies of family and friends, information from doctors, and intuition. Walker and Conner (1993) encountered similar results in an earlier study. Participants believed they

could tell the sex of their unborn child by instinct or intuition, through a dream, gambler's fallacy, family history, luck, fetal heartbeat, or a friend's beliefs (Walker & Conner, 1993).

How are pregnancy myths related to societal norms? To begin with, assumptions about infant size and weight are indicated in these myths, with the idea that males are generally larger than females. Ideas about activity level are also implied, by the assumption that boys are more active than girls. Next, ideas about physical appearance are indicated, with the idea that girls are typically more concerned with outward appearance. Finally, ideas about health are suggested, with the idea of pregnancy as a 'wonderful' experience. This relates to the idea that women 'glow' when they are pregnant. All of these assumptions relate to expectations about male and female gender roles.

Parental Influence

Parents play an important role in influencing social and cognitive growth in their children. This is related to gender role development (Witt, 1997; Lewis, 1987), and to gender role stereotyping (Wood, Desmarais, & Gugula, 2002; Campenni, 1999). This influence is most pronounced in the child's early years, before peers and other environmental influences have an effect, and it remains a powerful force as the child grows older.

Parenting ideas and attitudes tend to be significant factors in parental behaviour (Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, & Melby, 1990). Ex and Janssens (1998) found that the gender role ideas and parenting style of mothers had a significant impact on the gender role attitude and ideas of daughters. Other research has shown that many mothers have a

different "parental consciousness" than fathers, which may play a role in the gendered division of child care (Walzer, 1998, p. 17). For example, mothers from these studies were usually more involved in the daily care and supervision of children than were fathers (Belsky et al., 1984; Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Demo & Acock, 1993; Ehrensaft, 1983; Lamb, 1996; Parke, 1981; Renk, Roberts, Roddenberry, Luick, Hillhouse, Meeham, et al., 2003). As such, they may have had more of an influence on a child's gender role development, if only because they spent more time with their children.

Some research has shown that fathers and adult males perpetuate gender role differentiation more than mothers or other female caregivers (Langlois & Downs, 1980; Leve & Fagot, 1997; Ruble, 1988). For example, research by Fagot (1978), Langlois and Downs (1980), and Wood et al. (2002) suggested that fathers were often more concerned than mothers about their children behaving in a gender-appropriate manner, such as playing with gender-appropriate toys. This was especially true for sons. Kiecolt and Acock (1988) suggested that fathers were important for encouraging specific gender-role orientations because, compared to mothers, they varied their behaviour by sex of child and urged "greater conformity to traditional gender roles" (p. 710).

Additionally, Weinraub, Clements, Sockloff, Ethridge, Gracely, and Myers (1984), and Fagot and Leinbach (1995) found that a father's personality, traditionality, attitudes towards women, and gendered activities at home were correlated to some aspects of their child's gender role development. Other research found that fathers' daily involvement in child care could lead to higher cognitive or intellectual skills in their children (Nugent, 1991; Radin, 1994), as evidenced in better school adjustment (Harris, Furstenberg, & Marmer, 1998), and better social skills and psychological adjustment (Phares, 1999).

Lewis (1987) suggested several reasons why parents interacted with male and female children in particular ways. Mothers and fathers may have dissimilar child rearing goals in mind. Fathers may also have different perceptions of their children, and resorted to stereotypic responses when they were unsure of how to respond to a child's behaviour (Fagot & Hagan, 1991; Lewis, 1987). In addition, "men may be demonstrating their lack of experience when they resort to stereotypical interaction patterns with their children" (Lewis, 1987, p. 101). Finally, mothers and fathers may have been influenced by second-order effects, which were the influences of a third person on the interaction between two others; parents and infants often interacted less and talked less with each other when the other parent was present (Lewis, 1987).

Gender role socialization processes are influenced by family structure and parent or caregiver sex. Children watch their parents and caregivers to see which behaviours their mother engages in most often, and which behaviours their father engages in most often. For children with only one parent, or with two parents of the same sex, the child may also observe a significant adult outside of the immediate family, such as an uncle or an aunt, to see which behaviours they most often engage in.

Single-parent families and mothers often engage in less traditional gender role socialization (Leve & Fagot, 1997), while divorced women often hold less traditional gender role attitudes (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). Consequently, male and female children from single-parent families are more likely to have non-traditional gender roles, and more likely to adopt more flexible gender role behaviour (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). As well, Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Somers, Stevens, et al. (2003) suggested that children of lesbian mothers held more flexible ideas about what was acceptable

behaviour for women and men.

Additional research has shown that education and employment, particularly the mother's, plays a part in gender role socialization processes. Research by Snyder and colleagues found that involvement in employment or post-secondary education contributed to less stereotypic gender role attitudes among women (Snyder, Velasquez, Clark, & Means-Christensen, 1997). In particular, a mother's education and employment assisted in the development of more flexible gender roles, not only for herself, but also for her children and her partner (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). Her employment also permitted significantly more role restructuring within the family, which often led to more egalitarian gender role beliefs. For example, husbands' appreciation of feminist positions tended to increase with wives' employment (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988).

Kiecolt and Acock (1988) suggested that the mother's or female caregiver's employment influenced the gender role attitudes of male children more than female children. They found this was especially true of males from families headed by divorced or widowed mothers (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). However, Ex and Janssens (1998) found that daughters of more educated, employed mothers had less traditional gender role ideas than daughters of less educated or unemployed mothers.

Ex and Janssens (1998) found that maternal education level had an indirect effect on daughter's gender role ideas, such that more education was related to mother's more liberal gender role ideas. The result was daughters who also had less traditional gender role ideas. Kiecolt and Acock (1988) suggested that the education level of a mother or female caregiver was more of an influence on gender role socialization than employment. For instance, more highly educated mothers, who held less traditional gender role

attitudes, and who were more likely to hold higher-status jobs, passed on these attitudes to their children (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). Kelly and Worell (1976) encountered similar results a decade earlier. They found that women who exhibited less traditional or less gender-typical behaviours or characteristics, such as pursuing a post-secondary education, had mothers who exhibited the same behaviours or characteristics. Furthermore, these less traditional college women received high levels of maternal encouragement for achievement and intellectual or cognitive development (Kelly & Worell, 1976).

Parental Reactions and Responses

At birth, the knowledge of a child's sex or gender elicits "a set of expectations consistent with beliefs about gender role-appropriate traits" from parents (Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999, p. 250). Each parent's perception is different for sons compared to daughters. Parents socialize sons and daughters differently, such that they interact with them in a different manner (Fagot & Hagan, 1991; Lewis, 1987; Lindsey, Mize, & Pettit, 1997).

In three classic studies by Fagot (1978; 1974), and Fagot and Hagan (1991), parents interacted differently with sons and daughters, and gave more positive reactions to girls involved in female-typed toy play and boys involved in male-typed toy play (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989). For example, parents rewarded boys with positive responses when they played with blocks or other male-typical toys, and parents rewarded girls in the same manner when they played with dolls. Parents also gave negative responses when girls manipulated objects, or engaged in large motor behaviour (e.g. running, jumping, climbing), and fathers gave more negative responses to boys when they played with dolls

or other soft toys. Moreover, Fagot discovered that parents talked more to girls and allowed boys more independence (Fagot, 1974; Fagot, 1978; Lips, 1988). For example, boys were left alone to play more often (Fagot 1974; 1978). In the later study by Fagot and Hagan (1991), boys were also rewarded for negative, assertive behaviours.

More recent research suggests that toy play, specifically for girls, is beginning to change. Wood and associates (2002) suggested that parents allowed greater flexibility for girls than boys to play with non-traditional toys or toys not appropriate for their sex or gender. Girls also had more exposure to a broader set of toys (Wood et al., 2002). O'Brien and colleagues (O'Brien, Peyton, Mistry, Hruda, Jacobs, Caldera, et al., 2000), argued that there was "less clarity within our culture" regarding the boundaries of what was "appropriate for girls and women to be and do" (p. 1009) than there was regarding male roles. Other research suggests that boys' 'trying on' different gender roles are evaluated more negatively than girls (Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995; O'Brien et al., 2000; Zucker, Wilson-Smith, Kurita, & Stern, 1995). Owen Blakemore (2003) offered two rationales for why certain gender role violations were devalued while others were not. She suggested that:

> When gender norms seem related to basic gender identity (e.g. parents roles and clothing that is very distinctly gendered), violations of these norms are seen as very undesirable…on the other hand, if the gender norms are either valued in themselves (e.g.: being a doctor or a nurse), or not essential to gender identity (e.g. playing with a toy kitchen), violations seem not to be as troubling. (Owen Blakemore, 2003, p. 419)

Overall, there are more differences than similarities between the ways heterosexual

parents interact with their children. Four main differences have been observed. First, the type of interaction or activity with children was different for mothers and fathers; specifically, mothers more often engaged in caregiver and play activities with children while fathers most often engaged in play situations (Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; Clarke-Stewart, 1978; Dickie, 1987; Lamb, 1996). In fact, Laflamme, Pomerleau, and Malcuit (2002) and Renk et al. (2003) found that both parents generally agreed that mothers carried the majority of the responsibility of child care and child-related activities. Several research studies point to the fact that the play fathers engage in with their children is more 'stereotypical'. Research by Bradley and Gobbart (1989) and Roopnarine and Mounts (1987) found that fathers with traditional gender role orientations offered more gender-specific toys to their children when involved in toy play. As well, research by Parke (1979), Lips (1988), and Lindsey et al. (1997) found that fathers were more likely to engage in rough-and-tumble play with their sons, but tended to play more gently with their daughters. Other researchers found contradictory results. For example, Fagot and Hagan contradicted these findings in their 1991 study, where they found that fathers gave more positive responses to large motor behaviours of both male and female children. It is important to also consider the initiatives of children toward their parents. For example, a study by Kotelchuck (1972) found that boys more often sought out their fathers to engage in roughhousing and display attachment behaviours towards them, while Spelke, Zelazo, Kagan, and Kotelchuck (1973) and Lewis (1987) found that girls more often sought out and talked more to their mothers.

Verbal exchanges with children are different for each parent. For example, mothers are found to be more repetitive, use more requests, make greater use of directives

(statements to encourage the child to act in a specific manner), and often use verbal exchanges to explain (Fagot & Hagan, 1991; Laflamme et al., 2002; McLaughlin, 1983; Pedersen, Anderson, & Cain, 1980). Other research found that fathers use less instruction and less initiation with male children (Leve & Fagot 1997). This difference in verbal exchanges is also supported in research which suggests that mothers vocalize with their children more than fathers overall, specifically with infants (Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Field, Vega-Lahr, Goldstein, & Scafidi, 1987; Landerholm & Scriven, 1981; Laflamme et al., 2002; Pecheux et al., 1993). Fathers' use of vocalizations and directions increase as their children get older (Laflamme et al., 2002).

Some research suggests that fathers are less tolerant of children's dependent behaviours, such as clinging, especially when the child is male (Lytton & Romney, 1991; Russell & Russell, 1987). It is important to note, however, that fathers' differential treatment of children by sex or gender may be more pronounced during play activities (Levy-Shiff & Israelashvili, 1988) and with older children (Pleck, 1997).

Additional research points to the fact that men tend to be more involved in child rearing if they feel it would make an important difference in the life of their child (Simons, et al., 1990); if they value the role of 'father' (Beitel & Parke, 1998; Levant, Slattery, & Loiselle, 1987); if child rearing and nurturing are a part of their self-identity (LaRossa, 1997; Rane & McBride, 2000); if they feel competent as fathers (Russell, 1982); and if there is a great need for childcare and they are more available than their partners (Deutsch, Lussier, & Servis, 1993; Tamis-LeMonda & Cabera, 1999). Bonney et al. (1999) also suggested that men who had more liberal gender role ideas held more modern views of paternal roles.

As well, the child's age, sex and gender appear to influence father's involvement in child rearing (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998). However, what seems to be an increasing trend is their partners' support of father's participation; specifically, fathers are more involved in raising their children if their partners allow them to participate. This phenomenon has been described as 'gatekeeping' (Allen & Hawkins, 1999; De Luccie, 1995). Research by Walzer (1998) reported that gatekeeping was also found in the delegation of parenting tasks, such as changing diapers. Coltrane (1996) argued that some aspects of this phenomenon were due to mothers' desire for control, while Walzer (1998) suggested that "the desire of mothers to be perceived as good mothers" was quite powerful, and "this may be what they feel when they are trading off if they are not the primary caregivers" (p. 44). Waldron and Routh (1981) and Blumberg and Coleman (1989) suggested that some mothers would rather take on the extra tasks than train their partners, but having sole or primary responsibility for caregiving "may disempower women in relation to their husbands – leading to greater, rather than less, dependence and losses in interpersonal and economic power" (Walzer, 1998, p. 45). Consequently, restricting men's access to childcare and nurturing responsibilities helps to bind the responsibility to women, not only in the home, but also in other nurturing occupations, such as day care and nursing (Murray, 1996).

While parental reaction and response is significant for gender role socialization, the amount of time the parent interacts with the child also has an influence. Several research studies indicate that fathers typically spend less time than mothers in child care (Deutsch et al., 1993; McBride & Mills, 1993; Renk et al., 2003). In fact, research by Aldous, Mulligan, and Bjarnason (1998) suggested that fathers spent approximately 2.3 hours

daily caring for young children, as compared to 5.9 hours for mothers. As well, research by Laflamme et al. (2002) determined that fathers spent less time in total interaction accessibility, caregiving, play and outings than did their partners. Laflamme and associates (2002) also found noticeable differences between American and Canadian fathers, where fathers in Quebec took a more active parental role than American fathers. Nonetheless, time difference can often be rationalized by the fact that fathers typically work more hours outside of the home than mothers, and fathers' involvement in childrearing varies according to both parent's work hours (Aldous et al., 1998; Bonney, Kelley, & Levant, 1999; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2000).

To summarize, research has shown that parents treat sons and daughters differently, and parental gender role expectancies are expressed through opportunities for children to act in 'gender-appropriate' ways. For example, parents provide sons with tools and workbenches, while girls are provided with tea sets and dress-up clothes. Research has also shown that this differential treatment is most likely a result of each parent's own gendered beliefs and those of the dominant society:

> Parents communicate overtly and covertly their own gender stereotyped attitudes that affect their children's self-concepts, motivations, and behaviour. The roles each parent enacts are gender specific and thus lead to differences in the self-concepts and behaviours that boys and girls take on, and that parents communicate overtly and covertly their own gender stereotyped attitudes that affect their children's self-concepts, motivations, and behaviour. (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995, p. 274)

Additional Environmental Influences

Children not only experience direct socializing influences from their family of origin, but from a variety of other sources, such as friends and the media, including television, movies, and books. Research suggests that the media helps to perpetuate gender role differences and gender stereotypes. For example, both children's books (Golombok & Fivush, 1994) and children's television programs have been found to be "heavily male-oriented", and depict "sex roles that are often stereotyped and distorted" (Luecke-Aleska, Anderson, & Collins, 1995, p. 774).

Family and friends select toys for children before they can make the choices for themselves, which ultimately encourages a specific type of play (Pomerleau, Bolduc, Malcuit, & Cossette, 1990). Bradbard (1985) found that male and female infants received different Christmas presents: Boys received automobiles and stackable blocks, while girls received domestic items, such as miniature kitchen sets. Wood et al. (2002) found that adult's perceptions of the desirability of toys were dependant on a child's sex or gender.

Rheingold and Cook's (1975) classic study about gender differentiation in a child's immediate environment suggested that families were also indirectly socializing their daughters and sons through clothes and room furnishings. Boys' rooms had sports toys and equipment, motor vehicles, military toys, spatial-temporal toys (e.g. magnets), art materials, tools, toy animals, and pets (e.g. hamsters). The rooms were also frequently decorated with animal patterns. Girls' rooms had dolls and dollhouses, toy household items (e.g. dishwashers), and had lace curtains and flowers on the walls (Rheingold & Cook, 1975). Boys' toys were found to encourage invention, manipulation, and

understanding of the physical world, while girls' toys encouraged imitation, physical closeness to the caretaker, and understanding of the interpersonal and social world (Golombok & Fivush, 1994).

As a result of this differential socialization, the choices in children's play may be affected. Children who are encouraged to play with dolls and toy furniture, or sports equipment and tools are more likely to choose these items when they are given a choice: "They are familiar with these objects and they know what can be done with them" (Pomerleau et al., 1990, p. 366). As well, repetitive play with certain objects is "likely to promote the development of specific skills, abilities and behaviours in male and female children" (Pomerleau et al., 1990, p. 366).

Overall, research suggests that toys encourage different competencies in boys and girls. Golombok and Fivush (1994) argued that 'male' toys typically required few questions, little instruction, and independence, while 'female' toys required more questions, comments, and more dependence on the caregiver. Extended family and friends also displayed specific affective differences in their reactions and responses to children's choices of gender-typical behaviours (Fagot & Leinbach, 1989).

Theoretical Perspectives

Two perspectives were helpful in formulating research questions and determining an appropriate approach: Feminist social constructivism and social learning theory. Feminist social constructivism was useful because of its emphasis on the social construction of gender. Feminists suggest that the concept of gender provides an "overarching rubric for looking at historical, cultural, and situational variability in definitions of womanhood and manhood" (Glenn, 1999, p. 5). Social learning theory was

valuable to understand social behaviour (Huston & Levinger, 1978; Nye, 1982), including cognitive factors (Roopnarine & Mounts, 1987). Together, these perspectives influenced the decision to use a qualitative approach to understand the construction of gender from the perspectives of first-time expectant mothers, as well as the internal, or cognitive, influences on their anticipated behaviour.

Feminist scholars point out that gender is a socially constructed, ongoing, unavoidable, basic organizing concept and social process (Bordo, 1997; Lorber, 1994; Osmond & Thorne, 1993). It is constructed at all levels of family and social life (Thompson & Walker, 1995), and organizes "every aspect of family life, including roles, everyday practices, images, and power" (Baca Zinn, 2000, p. 46). Thompson and Walker (1995) suggested that in order to effectively examine the social construction of gender, we had to move past the idea of gender as an individual characteristic, and realize that it influenced all levels of social life. Kimball (1995) suggested that in order to analyze gender, we had to ask two questions: (1) How were gender differences constructed; and (2) why were gender differences constructed? To study the construction of gender from the perspectives of first-time expectant mothers, a qualitative approach seemed necessary. Qualitative approaches, in general, are appropriate for analysis of experiences, such as gender, that are socially constructed.

Social learning is also useful in understanding gender role socialization (Bandura, 1977; Mischel, 1966). Research suggests that because gender is a social phenomenon, it is learned (Andersen, 1997). Social learning theorists propose that children acquire gender roles by reinforcement of behaviours deemed socially appropriate, and through modelling the behaviours of peers, parents, teachers, and other significant adults

(Golombok & Fivush, 1994). This perspective also suggests that differences in parenting practices are a result of different socialization experiences (Simons et al., 1990). For example, women in certain reference groups in Western cultures are socialized for motherhood (Simons et al., 1990).

Both the feminist social constructivist and social learning perspectives were invaluable for formulating the research questions and the overall approach for this project. From the literature on a feminist social constructivist perspective, I took the idea that gender was constructed. I therefore selected a qualitative method to explore the issue. Feminist social constructivism examined the 'what' of gender and gender roles, and social learning the 'how' of gender and gender roles. These two perspectives fuelled my interest in gender role socialization: What it was and how it was learned.

From the literature review, many different studies on social learning indicated a significant influence of mothers on the gender role socialization of their children, particularly their daughters. One reason for this was that women were often the primary caregivers of children, and therefore children had exposure to their mothers. If children learned through modelling the behaviour of significant adults and through reinforcement, they would learn a great deal about gender roles from their mothers, simply because they have more exposure to them.

The next chapter describes the methodology used in this study, focusing on the use of content analysis for the analysis of these data.

CHAPTER III: METHOD

This section reviews the methodological components of this research project. To begin, the criteria for participation, the participant profile, and the participant recruitment are highlighted. A discussion on the use of qualitative interviewing techniques follows, accompanied by a section on the ethical considerations. The methodological approach chosen for this study, content analysis, is discussed. This section begins with a brief description of this approach, and is followed by a focus on the history, types of content analysis, process of content analysis, trustworthiness, and finally, strengths of content analysis as related to my study.

Participants

For this research project, participants were first-time, expectant mothers, who were beyond the first trimester in their pregnancy. I chose participants past the first trimester because there was less concern for miscarriage past the first three months (and therefore parents could start thinking about and making preparations for the baby), because sometimes women did not realize they were pregnant until several months into their pregnancy, and because I wanted the participants to have had some time to think about being pregnant and becoming parents.

It is important to note that fathers and relationship partners were not directly involved in this study. Research has shown that mothers are often the primary caregivers of children, therefore mothers spend more time overall with young children (Belsky et al., 1984; Clarke-Stewart, 1980; Ehrensaft, 1983; Lamb, 1996; Parke, 1981). This research primarily supports the influence of mothers on preschool age children, but this does not discount the influence of fathers or relationship partners.

13 participants were recruited for this thesis project. The expectant first-time mothers ranged in age, from 24 to 36 years, and in pregnancy status, from 15 to 37 weeks. All of the women were sharing the pregnancy with a partner, and 11 of the women were married. Seven of the expectant mothers resided in the city of Winnipeg, while the remaining six resided in other areas in Manitoba. The education levels of the women varied: Three had completed high school, one had completed technical college, eight had Bachelor degrees, and one had completed a Masters degree. Nine of the women were employed in full-time positions, three were full-time university students, and one was a part-time student and part-time employee. The occupations of the participants included an actuary, two teachers, a librarian, a residential assistant, an occupational therapist, an office administrator, a licensed family daycare provider, an educational assistant, and a compensation advisor. The nationality or ethnicity of the participants also varied, as the participants identified themselves as Japanese, Ukrainian, English, German, Mennonite, British, or Italian Canadians.

Recruitment

Two approaches were used to enlist the participants. The first method was through poster displays. The posters described the research project, the participant eligibility requirements, and the interviewing details (such as duration). My name and phone number were included on the poster, and the opportunity for an honorarium was mentioned (See Appendix A for a copy of the poster).

The posters were placed on the bulletin boards at Assiniboine Clinic, St. James Street Medical Clinic, Charleswood Medical Clinic, Manitoba Clinic, and Klinic Community Health Centre. Several posters were also placed on bulletin boards around the University

of Manitoba Fort Garry and Bannatyne campuses, the University of Winnipeg campus, and Red River Community College. All were in the city of Winnipeg.

The second method was by 'word of mouth'. I asked friends, relatives, co-workers, and other students if they themselves were pregnant for the first time, or if they knew of any first-time expectant mothers. In addition, several participants knew of friends or relatives who were first-time expectant mothers and enlisted them in this research project. Initially, another of my acquaintances agreed to be interviewed, thereby allowing me to have fourteen participants, but she was too far along in her pregnancy and gave birth before we could arrange an interview time.

Before each interview, the participants were given an information form, which included both my contact numbers and the contact numbers of my advisor. The participants were asked to read the forms, and were encouraged to ask questions about the interview itself or about my thesis research (See Appendix B). The length of each interview ranged between thirty minutes and two hours and thirty minutes, and the participant decided upon the location and time of the interview. Ten interviews were conducted in participants' homes, two were conducted at the University of Manitoba, and one was conducted at a local coffee shop.

I made contact with 13 participants through the poster displays and through 'word of mouth. After ten interviews, I began to notice that the responses were becoming more and more similar. For example, several of the participants mentioned the same types of pregnancy myths. More specifically, the data were becoming saturated and I was not uncovering any new information. Mayan (2001) suggested that the data may be saturated when "no new or relevant data emerge, when all avenues or leads have been followed,

and when the story or theory is complete" (p. 10).

Interviewing

Semi-structured interviewing techniques were used to generate data, to explore perspectives of gender role socialization, and to allow the participants to speak more freely. Mayan (2001) suggested this type of interviewing was useful when the interviewer knew something about the area of interest, in this case from a literature review of gender roles, but not enough to "know the answers to the questions that are to be asked" (p. 15). Walzer (1998) also stated that a semi-structured method of interviewing was useful for "generating theoretical material because they provide an open and flexible forum for new information to emerge and for the complex ways in which people view their lives to be described" (p. 11).

Basic questions were prepared in advance, but additional questions were introduced during the interview. The predetermined questions were asked in a specific order, but this type of interview allowed me some freedom to probe further into the participants' responses. I had five broad questions and supplemental probe questions. I asked the participants each question, and allowed them as much time as needed for a response (See Appendix C for the Topical Guideline). I paraphrased their responses or returned to previous statements if I required clarification or elaboration. I also posed supplemental probe questions or scenarios in order to obtain additional information. These probe questions were developed during each interview session. For example, upon a few participants mentioning that they would like to treat their children equally, regardless of gender, I posed a hypothetical scenario. I asked them to imagine a day in the future, where they were shopping with their two young children, a son and a daughter. I asked

them to imagine that both the girl and the boy noticed toys that they would like to put on their Christmas lists; the girl would like a truck and the boy would like a Barbie doll. I then requested the participants to tell me how they would respond to each child.

I felt it was extremely important for the interviewing sessions to be informal and relaxed. Essentially, I wanted the interviews to proceed like a conversation. "The goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (Oakley, 1981, p. 41). To help make the relationships more balanced during the interview, I told the participants about myself, what areas I was studying in the graduate program, why I was interested in this area of research, and what it was like to be a graduate student. I also explained to each participant that they were the 'expert' in this situation, and that I wanted to learn from them.

Furthermore, to assist in making the participants feel relaxed and comfortable enough to open up about their personal information, I allowed each participant to pick the location of the session. Another method of trying to decrease any possible feelings of interview anxiety was to talk to the participants for a few minutes before the interview about the status of their pregnancy, or their preparations for the baby. Several of the expectant mothers showed me the current state of the baby's room, or showed me things they had bought for the baby, such as toys and clothes.

Next, each interview was tape recorded, and transcription of the information took place after the interview was completed. I completed the transcription of the data myself. Within the transcribed information, names were left blank, followed by a descriptor of

the relationship with the person (e.g. _____ [mother]). I used parentheses (-) to indicate the addition of a missing word or phrase by the participant, and three periods -...- to indicate a pause in the participant's speech. Laughter, crying, expletives, and other forms of expression were included in the transcribed data, indicated by a brace (e.g. {laughs}). After the information had been recorded, I double-checked the information for accuracy by re-reading the information while listening to the taped interview session. I then printed a hard copy, and any comments or notes that I made were entered directly onto the printed pages (See Appendix D).

I jotted down ideas after the interviews took place. I did not take notes during the interviews, as I wanted the participants to have my full attention. Often the notes concerned possible ideas that seemed to dominate a particular interview, or showed similarities to other interviews.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, and to move forward with this research project, ethics approval was necessary. As per ethics protocol for the Office of Research Services at the University of Manitoba, the expectant mothers were made aware of their voluntary participation, and informed written consent for their involvement was obtained on a consent form (See Appendix E). The participants were made aware that they could withdraw their participation at any time without consequence, and I explained that they were free not to answer specific questions or to ask for more clarification.

Participants were made aware that the information they divulged was to be used only for thesis research purposes. The participants' identities were not revealed in written reports of this research, nor were participants identified by position or social situation. In

making reference to their personal narrative in the written work, I addressed them by pseudonym and by participant number.

At the conclusion of each interview, I offered participants an opportunity to debrief. In addition, a twenty-five dollar honorarium was provided to the participants, in the form of a gift certificate, keepsake box, or photo album. The participants were also informed that a summary of the research findings could be made available to them at the end of the thesis project.

Content Analysis

Content analysis shares its history with sociology, journalism, political science, and social psychology (Tesch, 1990). According to Krippendorff (1980), the first documented occurrence of a qualitative analysis of printed material was in Sweden during the eighteenth century. A collection of 90 hymns called the *Songs of Zion* caused controversy in the church over whether or not the songs carried messages harbouring "dangerous ideas" (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 13). Other historically noted uses of content analysis included biblical interpretations, early newspaper analysis, and dream analysis by Sigmund Freud (Mayring, 2000).

Content analysis allows researchers to use an author's words to understand the viewpoints of individuals and groups in our society. It also helped to bring about a meaning in text through the construction of themes (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002). Holsti (1968), Tesch (1990), and Berg (2001) supported using content analyses. Berg (2001) suggested this type of examination of text could allow researchers to grasp how the authors of the text saw their social reality. For example, if a participant mentioned that she would be supportive of her young son playing with dolls, we could come to two

possible conclusions from this statement. First, we could see from her actual words that she would be accepting of children 'trying on' different gender roles. But, by using the word 'young' we could also interpret this to mean that she would be more accepting of this behaviour in young children, which may imply that this type of behaviour was accepted in children because they did not yet know the social rules for their gender role.

Types and Forms of Content Analysis

There are two main types of content analysis: latent and manifest. Manifest content analysis is a more clear-cut type of analysis, where the investigator searches for particular words, ideas or themes (Ahuva, 2001). These are used to generate information on the data content. This method highlights information found in the surface structure of the text. This method does not provide as much richness or depth to the research (Mayan, 2001). For example, if a participant were to say that she wanted to raise her children equally, with similar chores and rules, we would take this at face-value and not look for any hidden or underlying meanings.

On the other hand, latent content analysis is the process of finding, coding, and sorting out the main patterns in the data (Mayan, 2001). Here, the meanings of words or parts of the text are examined within the context of all the data, the subtle meanings are pulled out, and the section of the text is placed in an appropriate category (Ahuva, 2001). This method allows the researcher to look at the text in more depth, providing information on the deeper structure. Using the same example as above, if the participant was to say that she wanted to raise her children equally, with similar chores and rules, we would include the results of the manifest analysis, but we would also go deeper into the meanings of her words. We may interpret this to mean that she wanted her children to be able to 'try on'

different gender roles and not have behaviour restricted by sex or gender.

Strengths of Content Analysis

Content analysis is quite useful for many different research purposes, but three main strengths are relative to my research. The first is the flexibility of being able to perform the content analysis myself, the second is being able to examine interview transcripts, and the third is that content analysis provides a means by which to study human experience (Babbie, 1998). In my study, I was able to examine gender socialization from the perspectives of women who were planning the initial gender socialization of their own children. These women were able to provide their views about gender in society, and were able to tell me how they thought gender socialization had changed over the years. For example, one participant discussed how the current trend was for mothers to paint their son's fingernails and allow them to play 'dress up'. She also discussed how this was not the case when she and her brother were growing up, offering her perspective on how gender roles for men were becoming more flexible in her family.

Performing Content Analysis

Content analysis is achieved by setting up clear rules or "criteria of selection" (Berg, 2001, p. 240) that involves coding participants' "open-ended talk into closed categories", (Wilkinson, 2003, p. 196) which summarize and organize the data.

According to Berg (2001), content analysis follows several steps:

1. The data were collected and changed into text
2. The codes were developed
3. The codes were applied to the data
4. The codes were structured around ideas or categories
5. The coded data were separated by category ("Categorization")
6. The meaning was taken out of the analyzed text ("Conceptualizing")

In the following paragraphs, the seven steps used to conduct the content analysis are

described.

Step 1 - The data were collected and changed into text

For this project, I collected the data from 13 participants through audio taped interviews. After the interviews were completed, I transcribed this information into text using my personal computer and the Microsoft Word program. It was these data that I used to conduct the content analysis.

Step 2 - The codes were developed

For this second step, I asked three questions to decide upon the most appropriate and effective coding (Holsti, 1968), and to help determine the coding rules. First, how were my research questions defined in terms of categories? For example, one category was labelled 'personal experience'. It included statements concerning the participant's own gender socialization experiences, including references to their own upbringing. Next, what specific parts of the data would be used to determine the codes? For my purposes, I examined words, sentences, and paragraphs in the whole text, with the intention of locating overarching themes. Finally, what system did I use to track codes? For this, I established the coding rules. A detailed list of the categories and coding rules are located in Appendix F and Appendix G.

For this research project, the coding was developed after all of the interviews had been completed, and after all of the taped conversations had been transcribed. Most simply explained, codes were labels applied to the data, which assisted in the collection of information of interest (Morse & Richards, 2002).

Before I began coding, I read over all of the transcribed interviews several times, and looked for common words or ideas. I highlighted words or sections of the data that

'stood out' to me, and I wrote any comments or ideas in the margins. I highlighted similarities across responses with the same coloured marker. I made note of my overall impressions, points of interest, and anything unusual or anything that stood out from the rest of the surrounding text, such as any inconsistencies or contradictions. This gave me ideas for possible codes, and I then attached the labels or codes to pieces of data that answered my research questions.

Step 3 - The codes were applied to the data

With this step, I kept a running tab of the labels or codes across interviews. At least 100 codes or labels were identified. Some of these codes included:

1. Intuition
2. Multiple influences
3. Shared parenting
4. Ok for girls
5. Equal treatment
6. Gender/sex of child as 'investment'
7. Family important
8. Father's fear
9. Dad equals play
10. Mom equals parent

I then went back to each interview to see how the codes fit. For example, several of the codes were relevant for participant one, but some were not. Codes such as 'differential treatment' and 'different from partner' were not relevant, but codes such as 'myths' and 'equal opportunities' were seen in the data for this participant and for several others.

The codes that I developed were related to my three major research questions. For the first question, "How do first-time expectant mothers plan to socialize their children for gender roles", some of the codes I used involved words such as 'differential treatment', 'equal opportunities', and 'girls need protection'. For the second question, "How do these mothers account for their approach to gender role socialization", codes included

'environmental learning', 'social learning', and 'parents as influence'. Finally, for the third question, "Do these mothers see their approach to gender role socialization as similar to or different from their partners", I used codes such as 'same as partner', and 'different from partner'.

Step 4 - The codes were structured around ideas or categories

The next step in content analysis was categorizing. Categories were produced and developed during the coding process, each having similar statements, patterns, relationships, and discrepancies (Berg, 2001). In order to categorize the data, I needed to make links among coded data that appeared similar, and group those similar pieces into categories. Membership into a particular category required some element of 'sameness'. For example, the category labelled 'pregnancy myths' included discussions from several participants about how boys and girls were carried in utero, how much activity each was expected to produce in utero, or how much nausea was experienced when a woman was expecting either a boy or a girl. As well, a common term linking the text to this category could have been 'myths'.

When developing the categories, it was important to note that some had been prepared in advance of data analysis and some developed during the analysis. Several ideas about themes or categories, such as those pertaining to myths, arose during the literature review and during the interview process, and it was crucial to keep these preliminary ideas in mind for the data analysis. However, it was important to note that some of these initial ideas were discarded once I had completed my analysis. For instance, one initial category was 'age of parent as influence', but I discovered that evidence for this category was weak. Therefore, it was discarded.

For the categorization process, I began from a broad perspective. I first read each interview looking for the 'big picture', which I then followed by the location of the key codes and any key categories. This perspective was similar to the notion of a concept map, where the main idea was in the centre, and the supplementary ideas were built around it. My first few readings of the transcribed data offered a "fresh perspective" (Grise-Owens, 2002, p. 152), and I found certain ideas in the text stood out more than others. The more I read the interviews, the more patterns started to emerge across interviews.

Coding for themes often requires the researcher to produce and reflect on personal reactions to the interviews. For my project, these data were apparent in the notes I had written in the margins of the transcribed text. Essentially, the notes were my personal reaction to each interview, and ideas and questions that had arisen while the interviews took place. These notes were taken on a note pad immediately after the interviews occurred, while the ideas and information were still fresh in my mind, and were then transferred onto the transcribed interview text. This reflection involved taking the data, finding common words or ideas across interviews, and seeing how the pieces fit general categories that were rooted in the data (Morse & Richards, 2002). For instance, several participants mentioned their reactions to sons and daughters 'trying on' different gender roles; specifically, they stated that they were accepting of this behaviour in female children. This made me wonder whether the acceptance of this behaviour was due to the age or the gender of the child. It was this type of thinking that assisted with the development of coding rules, codes and categories. It also helped to locate important themes within the data.

Step 5 - The coded data were separated by category ('Categorization')

After several readings, I began to list the categories that emerged from the data. The labels for the categories were key words used by the participants, or ideas from the data, based on my previous experience or from the literature review. For example, the category, 'learning from experience', was based on ideas from literature on modelling.

I did not limit the number of categories per participant, but instead added on to the list as new categories emerged. However, I needed to decide whether the categories were to be mutually exclusive and how broad or narrow the categories would be (Weber, 1990). I found certain preliminary categories were getting too large and too general, so I examined them to see if they could be broken down into categories that were more specific. For example, a category labelled 'myths' became too large, so I separated the items into 'pregnancy myths' and 'conception myths'.

In some cases, negative data arose, which meant that certain words or phrases were different from what most of the other participants were reporting (Mayan, 2001). When this occurred, I needed to examine the rest of the interviews for similar statements or information (Mayan, 2001). If no similar occurrences were found, then the first case was considered an anomaly, but if similar cases were found, then a new category was established (Mayan, 2001). For example, one participant described how women were socialized to 'do it all', where they were expected to have both careers and families. This idea was not uncovered in any of the other interviews; therefore, it was considered an anomaly.

It was important that the categories were consistent with the research questions and the methodological requirements. For instance, a broad category labelled 'education as

influence' was consistent with the research question focused on how participants accounted for their approach to gender role socialization. The category included a discussion focused on the participant's own education and how that had influenced her gender role ideas, the educational experiences of her parents and how that shaped their gender role ideas, as well as any mention of the educational experiences of friends and co-workers. On the other hand, a narrow category labelled 'dreams as influence' included only references to the dreams of the participant and the impact on gender role ideas.

At the end of this round of categorization, each participant had approximately 20 to 25 different preliminary categories. Some of these categories were:

1. Education as influence
2. Environmental influence
3. Family/friends as influence
4. Learning from experience and observation
5. 'Practicing' parenting
6. 'Biology is destiny'
7. Lack of control over parenting and/or gender role socialization
8. Knowing what to expect
9. 'Seeing is believing'
10. Mother's intuition

Unfortunately, this large number was not helpful for analysis, and further reading of the data was necessary to narrow down this group of categories. I re-read each interview and each group of categories and looked for common topics where each would fit. The labels for these common topics were ideas that I found in the data, based on my previous experience, or from the literature review. At this point, only nine categories remained. These categories included:

1. Breaking away from traditional roles
2. Sticking with traditional roles
3. Okay for girls, not okay for boys

4. Environmental influence on parenting and gender role socialization
5. Personal experience as influence on parenting and gender role socialization
6. Lack of control (over pregnancy, parenting, or gender role socialization)
7. Control (over pregnancy, parenting, or gender role socialization)
8. Similar to partner's ideas
9. Different from partner's ideas

However, because of the uniqueness of each participant, not all nine categories were used for each person. For example, some participants had information that fit only seven or eight of the categories. Only after all the relevant sections of text were separated into categories did I begin to think about possible themes.

To ensure categorization was complete, all of the relevant data was represented in the categories, and a brief summary was written for each (Mayan, 2001):

1. Breaking away from traditional roles

Participants discussed their ideas on the construction of gender. They mentioned how they wanted to raise their sons and daughters equally, regardless of sex or gender, and wanted them to be able to 'try on' different gender roles. Several participants stated that they had been raised in a family where there was a division of labour between male and female family members, but stated that they wanted to 'break away' from the traditional roles and expectations they had experienced. Many also stated that they were aware of the gender differences in society, and indicated a desire for things to be more equal between the males and females in their own families. Specifically, they wanted their children to have the opportunity to pursue their own interests when it came to gender roles.

2. Sticking with traditional roles

Participants discussed how they were going to raise their sons and daughters differently. This included having different rules, toys and activities. They suggested that gender differences were expected and that they were a part of a normally functioning society. These participants suggested that gender differences were linked to biology, such as physical characteristics, which separated the roles of males and females. As well, some of these participants stated that it was their duty to protect their daughters, but suggested that their sons could be more independent and take care of themselves.

3. Okay for girls, not okay for boys

Participants discussed how they were accepting of girls 'trying on' different gender roles, but this acceptance did not extend to boys. They suggested that gender roles for women were becoming more flexible, and that it was also more accepted in society to be a 'tomboy' rather than a 'sissy'. They suggested that

there were negative consequences for boys to want to 'try on' stereotypically female roles, such as ridicule and being ostracized from peers.

4. Environmental influence on parenting and gender role socialization

Participants mentioned having an 'outside influence' on their parenting and gender role ideas. These were influences that were not directly experienced by the participant or were not directly control by the participant. This included the child's personality, the media, and choices of child's toys.

5. Personal experience as influence on parenting and gender role socialization

Participants discussed how their personal experiences had some effect on their parenting and gender role ideas. These experiences happened directly to the participant and they were experiences the participant had some control over (for example, the choice of attending university or college). Some of these experiences included their own upbringing as an influence, or the influence of friends, siblings, religion, and education on these ideas. The participants also stated that these experiences could have taken place during their childhood, adolescence, or adulthood, and helped shape them into the people they were today.

6. Lack of control (over pregnancy, parenting, or gender role socialization)

Participants described feeling a lack of control over their pregnancy or parenting situation, or gender role socialization. This contributed to their ideas about parenting and gender role ideas. This included a sense that pregnancy myths would not work to predict the sex of the baby because 'biology is destiny'; that socializing children for gender roles was not permanent, because they could be influenced by peers, the media, or the education system; or that feeling a sense of powerlessness over their situation during pregnancy could lead them to use myths, dreams or intuition (which helped to return some of the control back to the participant).

7. Control (over pregnancy, parenting, or gender role socialization)

Participants discussed using myths, dreams or intuition to help predict the sex of their babies. The idea here was that they were trying to exert control over an uncontrollable situation. Ultimately, their myths, dreams, or intuition should indicate underlying ideas about gender roles.

8. Similar to partner's ideas

Participants described how their parenting and gender role ideas were similar to those of their partner's. These ideas were both non-traditional and traditional.

9. Different from partner's ideas

Participants described how their parenting and gender role ideas were different from those of their partner's. Several of these participants suggested that the differences were due to their partner's holding more stereotypical ideas about gender roles.

Step 6 - The meaning was taken out of the analyzed text ('Conceptualizing')

While categorizing involved the shape of the data and the ideas that were represented, conceptualizing involved moving to "more general, higher-level, and more abstract constructs" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 133). Essentially, once the research had moved from categories to concepts, it had moved from "description to analysis" (Morse & Richards, 2002, p. 133). This step involved combining the categories in order to find relationships among them and to uncover the 'big picture' (Mayan, 2001), which was ultimately the themes that were used to answer the research questions.

For this project, the codes and categories helped me to locate themes across all 13 interviews. Themes were common ideas or concepts that ran through the data (Miller, 1997; Morse & Richards, 2002). They were also more persistent than a topic or a category (Morse & Richards, 2002), mainly because they were found consistently across interviews or data. Each theme was made up of words, sentences, paragraphs, and so on, which had similar meanings or relationships (Weber, 1990).

In order to help organize the categories into themes, I returned to the interviews and grouped information into the original codes and categories. For example, excerpts from participants one through ten may have fit under the category, 'okay for girls, not okay for boys'. These excerpts were then printed off, cut out, and pasted onto poster board. I used this technique for all nine categories. I was then able to get a visual picture of the emerging themes. These themes developed from a combination of the nine categories. For example, the category labelled, 'personal experience as influence on parenting and gender role socialization', was divided into two themes, 'primary caregivers as first influence on gender role ideas' and 'secondary influences on gender role development'.

Trustworthiness in Content Analysis

Some authors argue that the terms 'validity' and 'reliability' are not appropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather, the term 'trustworthiness' is used to support the credibility, transferability, and consistency of research results (Morse & Richards, 2002). There are four aspects of trustworthiness (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). The first is *truth value*, or the credibility of the research inquiry. Here, the investigator represents the experience of the participant as accurately as possible (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). One way that this can be accomplished is by using the participant's exact words or ideas.

The second aspect, *applicability,* or the transferability of research findings to another context, allows the investigator to apply the research findings from one group of participants to another group, i.e. women from another Canadian university. This may occur after the research project has been concluded. For this aspect, one asks, 'How transferable and applicable are the findings to another environment or another group of people'? This transferability allows other researchers to examine the data and be able to come up with the same or a similar interpretation. This can occur at different times, and it is not limited to the same research project.

With *consistency*, or the dependability of research findings, it is important to ask how one could get similar results if the research was conducted with the same participants in a similar context over time. However, it is important to consider that the social world is constantly changing. For example, the expectations for mothers to work and be the primary caregivers for children has changed in the last few decades; some mothers have both a career *and* a family, not just one or the other.

Finally, *confirmability* is the ability of the data to confirm the findings and lead to implications (Morse & Richards, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Two questions are asked here. First, 'Could the findings of the present study be confirmed by another similar study'? Second, 'How can we be sure the findings are reflective of the participants and the research inquiry itself, rather than a creation of the researcher's biases'?

I attempted to make my project as trustworthy as possible. By following the above suggestions; by consistently applying the coding rules; by using parts of the data that were directly taken from participant interviews; by asking 'Do the categories reflect the ideas or themes they claim to reflect?' and 'Is there evidence that can confirm what is being reported in the analysis?' (Haggarty, 1996); I believe that I have been able to provide evidence of trustworthiness. It is important to note, however, that I did not go back to the participants after transcription and analysis to confirm the findings.

The next chapter examines the results. The following section discusses the eight themes that emerged from the data, and highlights supporting examples from each of the participant's interviews.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The analysis revealed nine categories, and from these categories emerged eight

themes. Evidence of these themes was found consistently across interviews. These

themes were:

1. Equal treatment and opportunities for girls and boys
2. Personality of child as influence on parenting and gender role socialization
3. 'Trying on' different gender roles
4. Girls need protection, boys can take care of themselves
5. Acceptance of girls 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, but not vice versa
6. Primary caregivers as first influence on gender role ideas
7. Secondary influences on gender role development
8. Trying myths...but just for fun

For each theme, excerpts from participant interviews were provided. These quotes

helped to support my reasoning behind the development of each theme.

Themes

Theme 1 - Equal treatment and opportunities for girls and boys

Within this theme, participants discussed how they wanted to raise their children

equally, regardless of sex or gender. The participants defined their notions of equality by

measures of similar rules, chores, and expectations for their sons and daughters:

Participant #2
> P: But, uh, I think if I have a girl, um, I'm just gonna...or a boy, I'm gonna teach them both that you have to respect the rules, there's gonna be rules that are gonna be put forward. Um, even if I have another child in the future, it's gonna be equal. I'm not gonna treat them differently.

Participant #6
> P: But I think, I mean that's how we would like to raise our kids. Just there is no, no, no sex is superior to the other.

Participant #3
> P: We'll aim for this, for equal treatment.

Equality for the participants was also demonstrated in ideas about children having

responsibility for household tasks that were not stereotypically associated with their sex

or gender. For example, several participants mentioned wanting their sons *and* daughters

to do the vacuuming around the house, and the work around the yard:

Participant #6

> P: And so I, I think, be it boy, be it girl, if I'm doing laundry, 'Hey help mum sort' or 'Let's make the bed'. Like let's, this is what needs to be done. It doesn't matter who's doing it. It's just gonna get done. And so that sort of thing.

Participant #8

> P:...like chores and duties and responsibilities, I guess. I, I don't think, if I hadn't known it was a girl, I don't think I would have treated them any differently, like specific things.

Participant #12

> P:...I think that chores and stuff around the house should be shared, um, with both boys and girls. I think a girl should learn how to mow the lawn. And, you know, talking to a guy friend at work, I mean his mum taught him to sew, and how to do this and that, and I mean, you know, like I think that's, that's very valid. At least learn how to sew on a button or something like that.

Participant #4

> P: ...it will be what you do for one, you do for them all, kind of thing. Hard to say though {laughs}. I think. Well, ideally that's what you want. I don't want to be, 'Well you're a boy, so...'. Boys can get in more trouble {laughs}.

> I: Don't want to cause a lot of sibling rivalry either.

> P: No. I think they'll be the same, like as far as all that kind of stuff goes, and chores and stuff goes. Like, 'These are your chores, these are your chores', like you have four chores each or whatever. I don't necessarily know like how you would divide them, but whatever.

> I: But as long as they're equal you're fine with that?

> P: Yeah, or yeah (...).

Participant #9

> I: Do you have any ideas about, um, if you'd like to do things differently if it's a boy or a girl, or the same?

> P: Probably the same. Yeah I can't see, um, especially the way things have been changing now with roles in the home either. I don't think I would specifically say the girl would be learning how to do dishes, and the boy would be doing (...). No

(…) just yeah, saying regardless of (…).

Several participants also discussed equality between sons and daughters in terms of toys and activities. Specifically, the participants mentioned wanting to give their children the opportunity to engage in activities that were not stereotypical of their sex or gender, such as hockey for girls or gymnastics for boys; or the opportunity to play with toys that were not stereotypical of their sex or gender, such as trucks for girls and dolls for boys:

Participant #6

I: But if you had, say you had a boy and a girl, um, and they shared each other's toys. Like the girl was playing with trucks and the boy was playing with dolls, you would be fine with that?

P: I would be fine with that. Yeah…kids'll do whatever. And it also fits in with I don't necessarily want our kids to feel like, 'Oh I'm a girl, therefore I must, you know, I'm restricted to these things'. Yeah.

Participant #4

P: …Like the kids, it doesn't really matter. I don't think either way it's gonna be…well, we're both into sports a lot. So either way, girl or boy, they're probably gonna play, like you know, encouraged to play sports. I'm sure. Most kids seem to be into that. Now, maybe it just depends on the sport maybe if it's girl or boy. I don't know. But, it seems like girls and boys play all the same sports anyways, so they'll…I don't know.

As well, the participants discussed how their personal experiences helped to influence their ideas about equal treatment for their own children. For example, participants discussed their education, how their parents gave them equal treatment and opportunities to their siblings, or how they were raised in a home without sex- or gender-specific activities:

Participant #7

I: What about discipline or rules or chores? How do you think you'd like to do things (…) for a boy or girl or both?

P: Really, I don't know, I, well at this point I don't think I would do any different, either or. Um, you know, I would, I would, um, still ask my young boy to come and help me with dishes, you know, or, or do a little bit of vacuuming, dusting,

um, and that's...I was taught at a fairly young age how to drive the lawn mower {laughs}. So, that's another bonus of being in the country...yeah, I mean, I don't know in that sense like chores wise if I would do anything different for a boy or a girl, um...

Participant #3

P: I guess in the younger years whether it's a boy or girl (...), they'll be out fishing and boating, and I don't know about hunt...what _____'s (husband) gonna do about hunting. I don't know if I want my daughter out there {laughs}. But I guess I was. My dad did take me a few times when I was little...I don't think it's gonna matter if it's a boy or girl, they'll be out there, yeah, just doing the same thing. Yeah. I've always been more of a tomboy than most, I guess.

Participant #1

P: Um, but there are a lot of things that I didn't try growing up because, you know, if you weren't taught it at home and that kind of thing. Like I wish I had done more sports, but by the time people were doing sports, a lot of kids had done them at home already. And when you're going in, you're like a 'newbie', you know, a starter and everyone else has been doing this for years already, so. Um, I guess I want my children, regardless of gender, to enjoy those kind of activities and to enjoy them at home already. That's where my husband will play a good part too, 'cause he's very athletic and just enjoys that kind of thing, and really more outdoorsy things, and, and again equally with boys and girls. When I look at his family, he has a brother and his sister and his sister is very much that she can do anything that the guys can do. And probably pushes harder to do just as good if not better than them, you know, maybe that's overkill at some points, you know (...). But just having those kind of opportunities, and just, yeah, challenging them equally, and like you say, I mean either, either gender can grow up to do whatever they want and shouldn't feel impacted by gender and (...) for that.

Furthermore, the participants discussed how their ideas about equal treatment were similar to or different from their partners. Although several of the participants did not say they had different opinions than their partners, there was evidence within these data to suggest this:

Participant #6

P: Like I think, I think our ideas are the same in that he would like to see that as well. I mean be it boy, or be it girl, they will be out fishing, and he will try to get them hunting {laughs} (...). Ah, fishing for sure, 'cause I'll come fishing. So it's girl or boy, 'You gotta come. Sorry, there's nobody staying home'.

Participant #10

P: He would probably tell or teach them how to help me out or I would do the

same. Um, whether it's, say we have another child, and 'Could you please get me this', and, or 'Can you help mummy do this'. Like something very light.

I: So nothing, it's more, you know, 'You are our child so it's your responsibility to help whether you're boy or girl'. Is that sort of his perspective?

P: Yeah, equal. Equal.

Theme 2 - Personality of child as influence on parenting and gender role socialization

The next theme focused on the idea of allowing children to make their own choices in all aspects of life, such as activities and toy choices, and not restricting them by sex or gender. Specifically, did the personality of the child influence parenting practices and gender role socialization, or vice versa? This theme included the idea of the child pursuing stereotypical roles or non-traditional roles:

Participant #11

P: But there's also some kids that, I have a girlfriend, who does have a girl and a boy. And she tried not to socialize them into the typical girl and boy route. But yet her daughter is very, wants to wear dresses and the frillier the better. And her son is, he is like, he's a man's man at five years old. Um, and yet she just said, 'I tried not to do that'. She said, 'But that's just who they are'...that's their personality. So that's actually another interesting conversation that we had is, you may not try to do that but sometimes that's just who they are...yeah. And you just accept it and say, 'Okay. Let's deal with this'. I mean, you know, they may not want to learn how to do plumbing and electrical. My girlfriend does that. She can do plumbing and electrical and all that other stuff. But yet her daughter wants nothing to do with it. You know, so it depends on the personality of the child and also just being able to accept them.

Participant #5

P: Of course it's, it's surprising because I, I have a very good friend who pretty, pretty much has the similar beliefs and she has one boy and one girl. And of course the girl has turned out to {laughs} wear nothing but dresses {laughs}. And you know, she, you know which is fine. That's what she wants to do. Goodness knows she never got that kind of influence from her mom. You know it's just something that came, um, she just developed all on her own, you know.

I: Really?

P: Yeah, yeah. She, she's got a very strong personality and wearing dresses is...

I: Is what she wants.

P: Is what she wants, and by golly she does it. So she just turned 7, and yeah, yeah. So I think that's funny 'cause we can have all the intentions and whatever that we want, but this is still a whole other person. So you sort of have to take your cues from what they want too, right {laughs}?

Participant #1

P: I think every child reacts differently, and you have to look at the child rather than based on gender or what have you.

Participant #5

P: Um, they could, you know, I suppose there could be some, uh, if there if, if they are perceived as a little different from their peers, there could probably be a little bit of, yeah, you know. I mean, I, I, that's really sad, I think, you know, and I hate to think about that. But I would rather try to raise a child to be comfortable as who ever they are, than to see the need to fit into a particular pack.

Participant #8

P: Um, I think if anything our ideas will just make them more well-rounded. You know, trying to see like 10 or 15 years into the future is hard trying to determine how we're going to, you know, discipline them or kind of restrictions or things we're gonna place on them. I think it depends a lot on their personality. You know, um, I think that plays a stronger role than their gender. How responsible are they. I don't know. It's a tough one {laughs}.

Participant #11

P: But I'm also hoping to…not only like let them be okay with being who they are. Like, 'Who you are is okay. Um, and you can do anything and I believe in you', and I want my kids to know that. But at the same time, I know when they are around other kids in school that sometimes there are kids, there are gonna be girls who are very frilly girly-girls, and, um, there are gonna be boys who are gonna say, 'Oh you're wearing a light blue shirt. You must be a fag'. Um, I think, I don't know if those are necessarily the norms, but I think you're always gonna encounter at least one. You're gonna always encounter one frilly person and one person, like one of the extreme opposite. Um, and I hopefully, I want my kids to know that its' okay to be who you are…like about 8 to 15, you're starting to figure out sort of who you're, like your personality is really developed, and you are who you are, and it's just a matter of being okay with who you are and not letting anyone else dictate, 'Oh well, you're a girl and you shouldn't do that because girls don't do that'.

Participant #5

P: Um, you know, I don't really think when raising a boy or a girl, I don't really think in terms of, you know, sports or hobbies or, you know, other stuff like that. Like it's, I really think of it more as, um, supporting whatever interests they're

gonna have.

I: Right. Whether it's a boy or a girl?

P: Yeah. Whether it's a boy or a girl. And so many of these things have come together almost, you know, much more co-ed than they were when, when, when I was growing up. So you know, if a girl's interested in soccer, great. If a boy's interested in dance, great. Like you know, there's no, no need to either push in one direction or worry about, I think the direction that they want to take…um, you know, um, just being courteous and just all those kinds of things, rather than the straight gender.

As well, the participants discussed their own experiences and their partner's experiences with gender roles and children pursuing their own interests. Specifically, they discussed these ideas with regards to the influence on their own gender role ideas:

Participant #5

P: Well you know, my mom tried to encourage me to go to {laughs} ballet, and baton, and gymnastics, and you know, totally not fitting with, you know, with, with me. So that, that was frustrating, you know. Um, I think she uh, she seemed to have her own idea bout what a little girl should do, because she already had um, her older sister already had two little girls, my cousins who are older than me. So I think sometimes my mom found it a little frustrating that I didn't follow those similar things, you know. But, yeah.

I: But she didn't restrict you in any way?

P: No, no. I mean, um, not as far as relating to gender, I would say.

Participant #8

P: I'm sure most of his ideas, a lot of ideas come from his parents, but I think majority of his ideas just come from himself, his own personal ideas and thoughts. Um, I mean nobody in his house was ever telling him to vacuum. He did it because he liked things clean, so that was his own personal choice, and he doesn't see a problem in doing that. So I think a lot of things that he does and he'll do with our children are based just on his own beliefs.

I: So he never really had any restrictions placed on him as to activities? So, for example, like you were saying no one would tell him about vacuuming. He just did it. Was there ever anything that you know of in his house that, 'Okay, you know, you should be doing this because you're a guy'?

P: I know that he had said he had to do a lot of outside type things whereas his sister didn't. He has said things like that. Um, and I think he always questioned it,

'Why? Why is she inside and I'm outside'? You know, because he's got a very open-minded, you know, 'She's older, she's just as strong as I am. She can do the same thing', kind of thing. So, yeah I think he always questioned it.

Participant #13

P: But, yeah I think he'll be open to doing whatever. If they wanna do, if that's what their interests are, then let them do it. If his daughter is gonna be a little girly-girl, and wanna wear pink princess dresses, then, you know, go to ballet class, that's fine. Don't have to be a, you know a hockey player, a tough girl if she doesn't want to be.

I: He's looking more like personality?

P: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

Finally, the participants discussed the similarities and differences in ideas between themselves and their partners:

Participant #1

P: Um, I would say with the gender thing that he would be very similar to me, both women can do, girls can do anything that boys can do and he would encourage them to pursue what they want to. And not, again not overkill, that 'oh they have to be involved in every sport or everything', but that they have opportunities to pursue what they want to...yeah, I mean, just again, if you look at his sister growing up a few years older than him, when you know, he saw that, he saw, um, you know, women doing anything. And that was a positive thing too.

Participant #5

P: Yeah, I think what I've seen sometimes too I, it doesn't seem to really happen with women, but it kinda, it seems to happen with the husband or the male partner, where they become very alarmed when they see boys engaged in certain activities. And yeah, a friend of mine {laughs}, her husband had a fit because {laughs} one summer day they were doing toe-nail painting. And of course, you know, the little boy, why not? Why does he have to be left out? So, well, you know, that did not go over very well when dad came home so that had to stop. But, you know, my husband I have kind of talked about this and he just laughs, he says, 'So what'? Like he's not, he's not worried about, you know, 'Look at those. You know what's gonna happen now, right'? Not that there's anything wrong with that {laughs}. I, you know, I don't see that. I think we'll, you know, we'll whatever they want. We'll be, you know, it'll be, you know, if it's dolls for boys, trucks for girls, it doesn't really matter, you know...It's about giving them choice. Letting them decide what they want what they like, and really I think not, realizing that it probably doesn't {laughs} make a lot of difference when it comes right down to it, you know, they're gonna...

I: Discover what they enjoy doing.

P: Yeah. And I think, well if you want to talk about toys and play, like I think the, um, there's value in you know, playing house or families or dolls for boys, you know, more nurturing and role-playing and stuff like that. And for girls, like I loved playing with Lego, and building truck things, you know. I love that kind of stuff and, you know, I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

Participant #6

P: He would be very egalitarian, and I, and I think he will be accepting and loving of the child no matter what. But when we kind of discuss it 'cause I ask him sometimes, 'What if, what if our boy wants to be a ballet dancer'? 'Cause I'd have no problem with that, 'cause you know there's a lot of male dancers, I mean it's kind of a crazy world to get into with other perspectives {laughs}. But you know, from the idea of that I find male dancers very masculine, very, you know, lot of strength, lot of whatever. Whereas he grew up...football. Whereas I'm a little more nervous about the football, because like the whole locker room thing, the whole peer pressure from that perspective. So it'll, so the way we kind of resolved that is, we say, 'Well, we'll see what our child's interested in', and then try and encourage them in that way, instead of necessarily putting them in one sport over the other.

Theme 3 - 'Trying on' different gender roles

The theme focused on participants' ideas about letting their children 'try on' different gender roles rather than restricting their activities or behaviour based on sex or gender. This included ideas about boys playing with dolls, girls playing with trucks, and attitudes about children being responsible for chores that were not stereotypically associated with their sex or gender:

Participant #5

I: I'm interested in what you have been thinking about parenting when it comes to what you would like to do if it's a boy or a girl. How would you like to raise a boy as opposed to a girl?

P: I have to say I haven't clearly identified the different, different things, like split it like that. But then of course, you know, being a woman, there's obviously certain things about growing up as a girl that I would be able to relate to and maybe put more conscious thought into than, than maybe a boy. Um, I guess for, well, for raising a girl, I would things like self-esteem would be very important, awareness of the changes they're going to go through, right, as they mature. I guess a confidence, you know, that they can, you know, do many different things

in life and whatever it is. Um, for a boy, I think, let's see, I have two brothers who turned out really well {laughs}. I'm trying to think. You know, I've (sigh), really about the only thing, I mean, if, if, if we had a boy, if he, if he saw his father as a role model, I'd be really happy with that. Um, and because I guess some of those qualities would be, um, willing, willingness, um, to, uh, express your opinions despite peer, um, right, which I think is important for either gender. Um, but, specifically for a male, um, you know, well you know, you can talk about some of the common things like involvement in household tasks, for instance, right. Not splitting, um, work along the traditional gender lines. Okay, for instance my husband does all the cooking. So I think that could be a very, you know, beneficial model for a boy. Um, respect for, you know, women. I'm still appalled at the amount of, um, uh, abuse and uh, denigration of women in society that surround us all, all the way. So, you know, one of the big concerns raising a boy would be to steer him away from that. You know, to show him and model what, what attitudes towards the other gender should be.

Participant #10

I: Let's say they were at school, kindergarten or something like that. From my understanding of kindergarten, everything's like free play. You know, so they can play with whatever. What would you think if say your little boy, you came to pick him up one day and he was, and you know two of his little boy friends and a couple little girls were playing house so they were all dressed up. So…

P: That's fine.

I: That's fine? You have no problems with that?

P: Dress up, no, 'cause they'd probably wear costumes and that there. Now if it's in a girl's clothing, I mean, still they're young, so I probably wouldn't think anything of it.

Participant #9

P: Mmm. Yeah, I don't, I don't think it matters what kind of toys they play with. I don't think it's going to lead to homosexuality at some point. A lot of the gay people I know, knew they were right from the start, and you know, it didn't make a difference that they played with dolls and {laughs} you know. So I don't see that, and I don't think it's gonna be a big deal if they did become homosexual {laughs}. So, yeah, I yeah, I think just whatever's around them, not just gonna buy trucks for a boy. But I'm not really gonna go out and buy Barbie dolls for a boy either. But if you know if there's a group of kids playing together and, you know, I see my son playing with a doll or something, than that's fine.

Participant #8

I: There's a lot of ideas about how to raise boys and girls. So some people think that it's okay for boys to play dress-up, and dress in dresses, or whatever and play house. And many people think it's okay for girls to play with G.I. Joes and climb

trees, or vice. What, what are your ideas on that?

P: Being a kindergarten teacher (…), I'm very open to all of that. You know, I've got boys who play in the house corner and I, you know promote it. Yeah, no I have no problems with that. Yeah.

Participant #6
P: I think if it's a boy especially, I don't want to pussyfoot around, 'Oh he doesn't have to help with the dishes. Oh, he doesn't have to…'. I don't want there to be the roles in that, 'Oh the boys do this, and the girls to that'.

Participant #12
P: But I mean, you know, I, I don't think that there's anything wrong with having, with a little boy having a doll, you know, because it teaches them things…and if it's something that they enjoy and find comfort in. And I don't think there's anything wrong with little girls playing with trucks or Lego or, you know, whatever…yeah, I mean, you know, there's nothing wrong with that at all…but no, like I'm not opposed to that.

Participant #2
P: …But yeah, that…yeah, I would allow whatever toys they wanted, if they want. Like, if they want, if they, well, wanted me to buy a specific toy, I guess I would. Um…

I: You wouldn't place restrictions just because they were a certain gender?

P: Oh no, no. Like if the boy wanted, I don't know, like let's say one of those mock kitchen sets, whatever, cooking, like hey that's great. You know a lot more guys that cook out there now {laughs} so, you know, hey great, like that's good. Um, I would like to see them more in the home, homemaker role. So yeah, like I wouldn't be very picky (…) girl (…). I think girls now, I think it's tolerated more that girls play with firemen trucks, and (…) boys are seen playing with feminine toys, it's like, 'Oh, get away from there'. I don't know now, but I'm sure some parents have, you know, have that idea like they ought to be playing with this and that. But, I, I wouldn't be picky at all, like I wouldn't do that. I would love the child to play with whatever they wanted.

As well, several participants discussed their own experiences with different gender roles. They discussed how these experiences influenced how they would socialize their children for gender roles:

Participant #13
P: I want, and I, and _____ (husband) knows I want this {laughs}, you know if we have a girl, there's no reason that she can't like be out there helping in the yard,

and doing all that stuff. And I mean, my husband is the one that does all the cooking at home anyway...um, so I really, I think the way _____ (husband) and I are in our relationship, we're not really gender role stereotyped as much as some people are. Um, I mean, there's some things that _____ (husband) knows how to do I just don't know to do. So I think he's gonna do it. But he's open to showing me, and he doesn't think, 'Oh you're a girl, like go away', kind of thing. Um, I'm a neat freak so I do most of the cleaning. Um, so there is a little bit, but I also like mow the lawn and help with car stuff, and da da da da da. So I think just because we're like that right now, I think that hopefully we can keep that and portray that on to our kids, and show our son that, you know, 'There's nothing wrong with you like sweeping the floor and doing some laundry', and there's nothing wrong with like our daughter whatever helping dad if he's changing the oil. You know what I mean? Or getting her to cut the grass or take out the garbage, or you know, that kind of stuff.

Participant #11

I: What if it was your child? Um, I know a lot of people think, 'Oh, you know, no problem. My son can play with Barbies, my girl can wear overalls, climb trees, and vice versa'. What do you think about that for your child?

P: Sure. I have no problem with boys playing with dolls. That's fine. Um, I grew up playing with G. I. Joes...And a Karate Ken. We had a Karate Ken and G. I. Joes, but I also had a Barbie camper. You know, and usually the G. I. Joe truck ran over the Barbie camper, but that's life. So I grew up with both, like with everything...and yet my mom was very, she didn't, it wasn't, 'You can't do that', or 'You shouldn't do that'...I was treated the same. I was treated equally to my brothers. There was no differentiation. And I hope to do that with my kids, just they're the same. It doesn't matter whether you're a girl or whether you're a boy.

Participant #2

P: But it's funny cause when I was a kid, I liked playing with cars and trucks. I never played with dolls. So you know, I mean, and I'm a girl, and you know, and my orientation is straight, so I played with trucks and cars. I loved cars. I still do, like give me a car or a truck. My dad's a mechanic. Yeah like, um, I don't, I don't see it a big deal. Um, you know, in this, hey if I have a boy, then if he wants to play with dolls, great. Like, you know, I've heard that it's good to encourage them if they (...), or whatever they want. Like you shouldn't have to force them to like something or play with something, just because, 'Oh it's a boy thing or a girl thing'. You know, I'm gonna try to be very equal, very non-gender specific. I've taken a couple of courses on that, um, stereotyping, and I wanna, because I'm educated now, I don't want to do that to the kids. I'm trying to be aware of, you know, very typical, uh {laughs} gender roles and stuff.

Participant #9

I: What if you, um, for example, say you were out shopping and you had a boy and a girl with you, and the boys says, 'Mum, you know, I like that Barbie. That's

a really cool Barbie. Can you buy that for me, or whatever, or for my birthday'? And the girl said, 'Oh that's a really cool truck. Can you get that for me for birthday'?

P: Yeah, because I played with trucks with my brother when I was a child. We had a nice little race track and it was fun. So, I mean I don't really recall him playing with dolls, but that's probably because of peer pressure. Like there's just, you know, the guys sort of know, it's not right to play with dolls at that age, or I don't know. But I mean, yeah, I mean it didn't affect me in anyway, So, I don't think it's a big deal.

Participant #11

P: ...so that was probably one of the points in my life where I thought, 'Wow. All those skills that I learnt are really cool things. Like they're things I'm realizing make me much more, well, make me unique. 'Cause I have girlfriends who don't have a clue how to do plumbing and electrical. And I'm thinking, 'Well how could you not'? Like this is easy. And on the other hand I'm thinking, 'No, that's just because I had a really cool dad'. You know who just believed that, 'Why not'?...and, and then I realize how special that is and I just think this is that's something so cool, this is something I want to make sure I pass on to my kids.

Furthermore, participants described the similarities and differences in ideas between themselves and their partner about children 'trying on' different gender roles:

Participant #13

I: Do you sort of think that he'll have sort of like the same viewpoints whether it's boy or a girl? Like, 'Yeah, okay. Girls can do this. Boys can do that. Whatever. Sounds good. You know, they'll sort of figure it out on their own'. Is that sort of his perspective?

P: I think so too. Um, maybe if you asked him more of the direct questions, like, 'Would you buy your son a Barbie'? I think maybe he would, you know, kind of cornered maybe not do that so openly, kind of stuff.

I: But do you think he would be open to you know, teaching his son to cook, things like that?

P: Yeah, oh I think so. Yeah, because that's like, he is the one that likes to do all the fancy cooking (...) himself. I think he would be. Yeah.

I: And again you said, open to teaching his daughter to change a tire or something?

P: Yeah, yeah. 'Cause, I mean he's put up with me. Making him put up with a little girl wanting to help him out. So yeah, I think he'll be pretty open and

easygoing, and you know, if that's something they want to do that's their decision. Then that's fine too. I mean, I think he thinks the same, but when they're really little, I mean, they're little they're doing stuff. They don't...maybe when they're a little bit older it will be different.

Participant #2

I: Do you think that he might, um, you were talking a little bit about your ideas about gender and things like that. Do you think he has some similar ideas or different ideas?

P: Um, I think maybe some of the same. I don't know how he feels about boys playing with frilly things (...). But um, yeah I really don't know. I think I have an influence on what he, he does as well. So, I'm sure if he (...) as a parent he may be different, that's because I'm more open to having like, all kinds of experiences with this child. I don't think he will, you know be against, our son playing with dolls or jewellery or whatever. I don't think it would be a problem. I'm hoping, like, you know, I'm hoping he would be fine with it.

Participant #8

P: Okay, um, my, as in _____ (husband) ideas would be, um, I think he would be very much the same in that, um, roles or doing things in the house or, um, activities outside of the house would be very sort of gender-neutral. Like you know, if he had a son, if he wanted to go into gymnastics that would be fine. If, you know, and he would sort of same ideas as myself. Like there wouldn't be anything like that. I think we have very, very similar ideas. We've discussed it already, you know, that you know, we wouldn't have a problem, you know, having boys do the typical traditional girl kind of duties or responsibilities or things like that.

Theme 4 - Girls need protection, boys can take care of themselves

For this theme, participants discussed the idea that 'girls needed to be protected by their parents, while boys could take care of themselves'. The theme included references to a fear for a girls' safety, and to the notion that boys were better able to get themselves out of trouble:

Participant #8

P: I don't know. If I, like my first instincts are also for a teenager, is to be more protective of a girl. I don't know where that came from, but...

I: That's your own idea?

P: That's my own idea. Yeah, to be more protective of a girl, but...

I: Do you mean like with restrictions on where they're allowed to go, or even just what time they're allowed to be back?

P: Yeah, Yeah, I would say so, just, um, yeah, going out on their own at that, when they're at that age I think. You know being alone.

Participant #3

P: I mean, I guess it is a little bit easier to watch your son go off and (...) or whatever and be able to fend for himself than your daughter, I guess.

As well, the participant's discussed their own experiences with this theme, either from their own childhood, from perceptions of their partner's childhood, from watching others, or from their education:

Participant #10

I: Okay, um, tell me a little bit about how you were raised. Um, like the boy and girl thing. Were you sort of restricted a bit in what you could play with, you know, because you were a girl or were your parents pretty much, 'Yeah, you can climb trees. Wear overalls. That's fine'.

P: No they would never let me do anything that would endanger my life, like climbing trees or riding a bike by myself. They were very strict. Uh, they didn't have a lot of money, so we didn't get a lot of toys. Um, basically Barbie dolls and they wouldn't even let me sleep over, which I disagree with. Um, I didn't, I don't, can't remember my childhood that well. I did have birthday parties. My husband didn't and I want my child to until like he or she is like 12 or 13. You know at a reasonable age. Um, but I want to give my child what I didn't have. But my parents did the best they can with the money that they had.

Participant #2

P: Oh yeah. Um, I know there's a lot of difference in like how we were raised. I had two brothers and my parents were very different people (...) For us, um, I really (...). I don't encourage it because it's, then you, then you start kids create stereotypes. And I think it's very unfair that, um, girls and boys are treated unequally. Just because I was treated unfairly. 'Oh you have to be home before dark', ' Oh, you can't go out to a party', or 'you can't...'. Meanwhile, my brother gets away with everything, he goes out, he does a lot more, he experimented with drugs and alcohol earlier than I did. So, um, in some ways he's really careless. He goes off and does his own thing, even though my parents were very lenient.

Moreover, the participants discussed the similarities and differences between their ideas and the ideas of their partner. This included ideas about the role of 'Daddy's girl'

and the perceptions that fathers would protect their daughters:

Participant #10

P: Okay, if I was _____ (husband), I would probably, I'm sure if it was a girl, he would be very overprotective. If it was a boy, 'Do whatever you want' to a certain extent.

Participant #3

P: So, um, his view on raising...hmm...I know he made a comment, I don't know, once that he was ready to have a boy but not a girl, just because he...'daddy's little girl', he'll probably be afraid of watching her go out with (...) and stuff like that, being all protective. Because at least he...letting a son go and not having to worry much about...but yeah, I guess he would do that. I think he'd (...). Like a lot of first parents feel that way or something. Never really thought about it before. I guess I'm waiting for whatever, but...

Participant #12

P: But, um, but I think, you know, down the road, um, I think he would put more restrictions on a girl than a boy just because, um, you know, like with the whole dating thing. You know how girls are when they're teenagers, the struggles they have and that kind of thing. And I think that he would, it wouldn't necessarily have that much to do with trust, but more his fears for them. He'd be more fearful of a girl getting into trouble and running into trouble.

I: He would more want to protect them?

P: Yep, than a boy, and that would go with curfews and everything like that.

I: So he would let a boy stay out later?

P: Yeah I think so. And like, I mean he's talked about, you know, just joking of course, but how he would deal with the dating thing is locking up his daughter 'til she's 21 {laughs}. And part of him is not serious and part of him is serious. But it's just the whole protection thing, and, and looking out for her. And I think, yeah, he'd be more you know, delicate and gentle with her, you know, than with him, um, or than with a boy. And I think that, um, with lawns and that kind of thing, I think he'd probably more see it as something that a boy would do versus a girl.

Participant #6

P: _____ (husband) thinks it's a boy. But I think, we think though for the same reason that because he's a guy {laughs}, he just thinks that boys would be easier for him. And it's interesting because of course he places on it that, I mean, a baby's a baby, either or. But he places on it, 'Oh if it's girl, but she's so fragile' {laughs}. And I'm like, 'Well only because you've now told her she is' {laughs}.

Theme 5 - Acceptance of girls 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, but not vice versa

Within this theme participants discussed their perception that some stereotypically

male activities and behaviours, such as playing football or being aggressive, were

acceptable for girls. However, stereotypically female behaviour and activities, such as

going into ballet or playing with toy kitchen sets, were not as widely accepted when they

were performed by boys. Most often, these girls were commonly referred to as

'tomboys' and the boys were called 'sissies':

Participant #4

P: I guess the only thing I can see being a difference is I'm not gonna put my little boy in pink, or you know what I mean? But like girls wear like blues. That'd be the only thing. My boy's not gonna wear pink, probably {laughs}. Let's not…

I: Even if they ask?

P: Well I don't know. Probably not out the door. They have to stay. Here I don't care what they wear here, but if they were going like to the mall or something, I probably wouldn't put my boy in pink.

I: But here, I mean, if they're playing like dress up or whatever, you're fine?

P: Oh yeah, we've got clothes like _____'s (husband) mom goes to lot of garage sales and bought this stuff. Some like little Osh Kosh pants, and their purple striped overalls, and I'm like, well (…) I don't care. They're totally girls'. But I'm like, doesn't matter. And then there was another pair with flowers, and I'm like, okay those are girls. You know, you can tell? But I'm like, whatever, I'm like it's just daycare. Who's gonna see them. Who's gonna care? If they all (…) my daycare (…). I'm like whatever. You're just gonna go run around in the dirt.

I: They're gonna go have fun.

P: Doesn't matter to them.

Participant #13

I: Okay, well from the backgrounds we have, we know that there's a lot of ideas out there about how to raise boys and girls. So, you were mentioning a little bit about chores, the division of chores and there's also a lot about, well some people think it's okay for you know, boys to play with dolls and girls to play with trucks and vice versa. What do you think about that?

P: Um, I think it's okay too. I think though, even myself I'd be a little more worried about like a six-year old playing with Barbie's than, a boy, than a six-year-old girl wanting to play with trucks. There's kinda, you know there's that stereotype that like it's a little bit worse for a boy to show a feminine side than for a girl to show a masculine side. So, I think you just have to be open. You can't, but I don't know what I would do, you know, if my son was like totally into like dressing up and playing with makeup and stuff. I'd be like 'Hmm'. But...

Participant #8

I: What if you were out shopping with, um, well we'll pretend you have a little boy and a little girl. And the boy says to you, 'Mum, you know, that's a really neat Barbie. Can you buys that for me for my birthday', or something like that. Uh, and the girl goes,' Oh you know what? That's a really cool truck, can I get that for my birthday'? What, what would you think about that?

P: I don't think I'd have a problem. You know what though, specifically with the girl, um, wanting a truck, I wouldn't have a problem. I think if a son said 'I want the Barbie', and I'd go, 'You want the Barbie'? Like, and I'd probably question it. I would say like 'Why'? I would involve him in a discussion on why you want that particular toy. And I can almost see myself if the girl said, 'I want the truck', saying, 'Okay'. Not even questioning it. I don't know. And, and maybe not. Maybe I think for any toy or want or anything like that, I would say, 'Well, why. You know, tell me the reasons why you want that and how it'll benefit your play time' {laughs}. It's the teacher in me.

Participant #12

P: You know, if my 16-year-old son wanted to go into figure skating or ballet, I would have a harder time with that...but, um, but yeah, like if my daughter wanted to go into hockey, I'd probably not encourage it just because of a whole bunch of other reasons, you know.

I: The violence and whatever else?

P: Yeah, and just the hours and all that kind of thing. But, I mean I wouldn't have as a big a problem with that.

As well, several participants indicated that their partners were more concerned

than they were with children 'trying on' different gender roles:

Participant #12

P: Um, I mean, with, um, like with sports and all that kind of thing, I mean, you know, I think it's okay for, you know, like I'd love to put my little boy in gymnastics or something like that, you know, because of the fun and 'cause of what it can teach them and stuff. But say _____ (husband), it's like, 'No that's a girl's thing'.

Participant #12

P: Um, so I think that he would want to raise a boy, um, you know playing, you know, boyish sports like soccer...

I: Football.

P: Or yeah, stuff like that. Soccer is the big one, but he would also put his girl in soccer. But you know, like with say gymnastics, you know he doesn't want a boy in gymnastics. Not because {laughs} of what it could teach them, but just because it's more of a girly... so I think it would be more, um, yeah, stereotypical boy stuff than girl stuff. And I think, you know, in terms of clothing and toys, he would want more stereotypical again, you know, boy versus girl. Although, you know, he's fine with navy blue {laughs} on a girl. You know, it's not pink and all ribbons and all that kind of stuff.

Participant #10

I: Okay. What about toys? For example, I've talked to a few people that say, 'Oh yeah. No problem. I think it's great my boy can play with Barbie's and wear a dress', and 'I think it's great my girl can wear overalls and climb a tree', or vice versa. What do you think about that?

P: Mmm. I would have to disagree. If it's a boy, my husband for sure will make sure that he plays with guy toys, no matter what. I don't know how, if we do have a little boy that he could probably lean toward playing with Barbie's, unless it's a Barbie, like a guy.

I: Like G.I. Joe?

P: Yeah, yeah. Um, I hope he wouldn't play with Barbie's and dress in girl's, but I mean if they do, well what can you really do? Maybe it's a behavioural problem or I'm not sure. I haven't thought about that. As for girls, I mean there's girls that play with boys and boys toys and that's fine, I guess. It's just kinda a little weird for a little boy to play with girls stuff, cause usually guy's stuff can be unisex, and girl's stuff not really. Like...

I: More pink and frilly, and things like that.

P: Yeah. Yeah, Barbie dolls and, I don't know. Um, I would have to say that I'd hope my little boy didn't play with Barbie dolls. Like it just doesn't make sense, unless it's again G.I. Joe and Max Steel, so like that.

Participant #13

P: I would be comfortable buying the truck for the girl {laughs}. I probably wouldn't be quite so comfortable buying the Barbie for the boy, which, I know it's horrible but it, I think it just goes with socialization and maybe not so much with myself and how I feel about him doing that, but his little boy friends

probably aren't gonna come over and then he's gonna, you know, aren't gonna play with the Barbies. If they come over and play and then get teased and stuff....and I think he would learn quickly on his own if he did get that that he's not supposed to like that. So, but I wouldn't want to discourage him or make him feel bad for wanting that, you know, like me making him feel bad. So I probably would say, 'Oh yeah, you can put whatever you want on your Christmas list. What you get might be a different story'.

Furthermore, the participants discussed their ideas about children 'trying on' different gender roles as compared to their partners' ideas:

Participant #12

I: What, um, what if you were out shopping, say you had, we'll look a little bit to the future, you had a boy and a girl. And you're shopping and your son says to you, 'You know mum, that's a really cool Barbie. Can I have that for my birthday?', and your daughter says to you, 'Well, you know, that's a really cool truck. Can I have that for my birthday'? What would you think about that?

P: I would think that's kind of weird. I would, because I would think that would be backwards. Um, and would I actually buy them those things? I would, I could possible picture myself buying the truck, but I don't know if I'd picture myself buying the Barbie.

I: ... So you don't feel comfortable with that?

P: Well, I don't know. Yeah, like first of all I know that my husband would not feel comfortable with that...so my first instinct, I wouldn't be comfortable with it. So, that would be my first instinct.

Theme 6 – Primary caregivers as first influence on gender role ideas

This theme described how parents and caregivers were the most significant *first* influences on a child's morals, values and gender role development. This initial influence had a lasting effect throughout the participants' lifetime, as reflected in participants' discussions about following their parents' ideas about gender roles and incorporating them into the gender role socialization of their own children:

Participant #11

I: Okay. You were mentioning a lot of the stuff came from your parents, but also you were saying that, like the gender roles stuff, you learned a lot of that from your dad because he was doing everything. He was doing the baking, but he was

also doing the plumbing and everything too. And, and do you think that's really, you know, imparted on you?

P: Absolutely. Absolutely. Like I said, myself and my partner the other day were having a discussion over, you know, I was rubbing my belly and talking to the baby and I said, 'Don't worry. I'll teach you how to cook and how to clean…and how to sew'. And my partner kinda went, 'Sewing'? And I went, 'He should at least know how to sew the button on his shirt, or sew the holes in his socks' (…). There's basic things. Um, I said, 'I don't see anything wrong with that'. You know, I said, and I guess I realized more and more how unique my father was, in the fact that he did cook, and like my mom did the basic things, but my dad would, one year for Christmas he decided he wanted a Chinese buffet for dinner…but even sewing, like we'd be sitting there, I'd be doing my homework, and my dad would look at me, and say 'Do you want a new pair of pants? How about a new pair of velour pants to wear around the house'? 'Okay'. He's like, 'Well come here for a second'. And he would take out this piece of paper and lie it down on the floor and he'd sort of trace out your body shape. And he'd make a pair of pants according to the shape that he traced out on the floor {laughs}.

Participant #3
P: I think most of mine are gonna come from my parents, like my mum and my stepmother. Um, I was young, I guess I was maybe eight or nine when my stepmother had her first, and then she had five after that. I was around quite a bit for raising those kids (…) seen quite a bit, so I saw things I liked in her parenting style and a lot of things that I didn't like that I could see where she wasn't getting through, and I could see how, what she should be doing to get through, and…so I guess it's basically from our parents, like my parents.

Participant #1
P: I mean, with my own growing up experience, I guess it was maybe different from, from a lot of people because, um, when my mom was pregnant with me, my dad passed away. So I have a brother who's two years older than me and myself, and my mum remarried when I was 10, but before year 10, I mean you develop a lot of your own ideas. And so, I guess…a lot of the ideas I got young were from my mum. And, um, you know, I saw her as a very, well, I still do, but I saw her as a very strong person. And it's different too because there's one person in charge not two people sharing…so here's the boss and that's it. So I guess it's more confusing later. Um…yeah, so some of my ideas will come from her.

Participant #8
I: There's a lot of theories out there about, you know, where our ideas about child raising come from. So whether it's our parents, of our friends that already have children, or what we learn in school, or what we see on TV. What do you think about that?

P: Where I think they came from? Uh, I think a lot of it came from just my family

life growing up, seeing how, you know, my parents parented really. I think that was, I think that's the main thing. Yeah it's true, there's a lot on TV, and there's a lot of different, you know, views and philosophies on everything you see there. But I truly think when it comes down to it, it's what you know from your childhood.

I: Your own personal experiences?

P: Personal experiences, yeah.

The participants also discussed the gender role ideas of their mothers and fathers as

being a 'stepping stone' to acceptance of less stereotypical ideas:

Participant #6
P: I don't want there to be the roles in that, 'Oh the boys do this, and the girls to that'. Because we got that a bit in our house, and now my, my brother is such that, he's useless {laughs}. Well in the kitchen or whatever, and my mom kind of has the approach that, 'oh well, it's just easier for her to do it herself because, rather than explain it to him because he'll mess it up in the kitchen'. Like if we're preparing for guests, you know, like chopping carrots or whatever. And so, _____ (sister) and I would always have to help, or you know the dishes at the cottage. We'd always have to do the dishes. And you know somehow, I mean, part of it is, we're closer in age, and he came six years after me. So a lot of it was, 'Oh he's too young', whereas they don't remember, well _____ (sister) and I started doing this when we were four and five. So he's like 10 and he's still too young {laughs}. But um, wait a sec.

Participant #11
P: So, um, yeah it was, I would say my upbringing was really unique in the fact that, like I said, there were no pink and blue roles. There were no typical girl roles or typical boy roles. Everybody did everything. My brothers' were also taught how to cook, um, and how to sew. But they also know how to fix cars, plumbing, electrical, and everything else under the sun. But that came from my parents, who also did all that.

Participant #13
I: Yeah, where do your ideas come from?

P: Um, probably a lot from my parents. Um, although I think I've changed a lot since I moved from home and kinda got married and all that stuff, and getting kinda my own views of stuff.

Participant #1
I: Do you think your ideas have maybe changed over the years, or they've just maybe, uh, incorporated more ideas, or do you think you've stayed the same?

P: Um, probably…it's probably mostly just expanded. Um, some ideas I might have been more flexible on than I was when I was younger. Um, if I look again at my mum, for my mom it was just top priority that she be at home with us. That was just her thing. So once we were old enough for her to do other things, then she starting teaching piano out of the home, so that she could be at home with us. So, I mean that was just a very big priority for her. For me, I don't, I'm still not sure what I'll do there, I mean I have a year, um…

I: To decide, yeah?

P: Um-hmm, and I'll probably need it…some people have these ideas, 'oh, I'm gonna want to stay home', 'oh, I'm gonna need to get away', and I just really don't know what I will be like. I have not a clue.

Participant #2

P: I think yeah, I think how we're raised and our parents have a big effect on how we are gonna be as parents. Like you always say, 'I'm not going to be like my mom', 'I'm not going to be like my dad'. I think in some ways you take some of their (…) into your parenting style, and of course your own, you've got your own, just from what you learn, what you read, what you, you know, just learn from everyday life and the experiences. So, I think I might take a little bit of each, like from what my parent's believe in, and how they raised us and take some of those values with me and then like, from what I've learned as an educator, you know, I've learned a lot about kids and how they develop, so…

Lastly, the participants discussed their partner's ideas about parental influence on

gender role socialization:

Participant #8

P: I mean, we're a very non-traditional house, in that _____ (husband) does the laundry and the cleaning, and you know. So in that respect, same with both our homes, it was the mother's who, you know, did all that basic cleaning thing, those things. And _____ (husband) enjoys it much more than I do…and that's fine. So I don't have a problem, you know, if it was a boy that, yeah, you know, 'Your duty today is vacuuming'. And that's the way it is, you know, yeah.

Participant #12

P: I think a lot of the ideas he has, um, would come from how he was raised, which was a house of four men and one woman, where his, his mom did like everything. You know, um, and he would've done more of the, you know, the physical manly stuff. Um, so a lot of his ideas would come from that.

Although mothers, fathers and other caregivers were the most significant for the initial

influence on gender role socialization, other factors influenced gender role ideas as

children aged. This was especially true for partners, peers, siblings, education, the media,

and religion. These secondary influences were be highlighted in the next theme.

Theme 7 - Secondary influences on gender role development

This theme highlighted the other important influences on the participants' gender role

ideas: Those that came later in life after the initial influence from parents or caregivers.

The participants discussed how their parents were initially significant for introducing

them to the world of gender and gender roles, but several went on to describe how other

influences, such as peers and teachers, added on to the ideas that their parents had

instilled in them:

Participant #11

> P: …I know myself and my middle brother just, my middle brother started to come around by the time he was in high school. He was like, 'Yeah, this is me. And…'? But, and he helped me, 'cause by the time he was in grade 12, I was in grade 6. So he was the one who imparted on me, 'Hey, you know what? Who cares? If they don't like you, I still think you're kinda cool'. And to me, that meant the world. It was just like, 'Yes'. And that sort of get into sports and because I was so sports minded, all of a sudden I wasn't picked on so much for being a tomboy anymore. All of a sudden I was this athlete by the time I was in junior high. So that sort of turned around for me and I'm glad I had that, or else I would have been this tomboy that everyone thought was this massive tomboy. And yet as an adult, people don't see it as a tomboy, they just, 'Oh, you're creative'…you can do a lot of things. Well, that's great as an adult, but as a kid, people, other kids don't see it that way. So it would be great if everyone could teach their kids, 'Yeah, you can do anything. You can…'.

Participant #4

> P: Where do my ideas come from? Um, probably a lot of it from school, just cause of my background, my education, like childcare. So a lot of it comes from that. I like, I know a lot of the theory stuff. I don't know how I'll apply it, whether I'll actually…like what's realistic and what's not. I don't know. I see a lot of things in other parents that I know that like I'm never gonna do that…um, yeah that and probably just our own parents probably.

Participant #1

> P: I grew up, I think much to the dismay of my mother as a tomboy, but, you know I didn't, I didn't, uh, go for the pink frilly dresses and Barbie dolls I didn't know what to do with them, so I built them houses {laughs}. I climbed trees, and

you know, things like that. Um, I guess it was just, you know, my playmate was my brother too, so that was an influence.

Participant #2

P: Maybe, this generation is a lot more educated than, you know, the previous generation. Um, we're more sure of going to college and university, and there are a lot more programs out there for parents (…) parenting, even programs for women who are, who are pregnant, teaching them (…) nutrition. I think, I think it's different now, like we're a lot more mature, a lot more older than (…), a lot more resources. So I think it is different like (…). Yeah, I think my friend's parents, like that generation, our parents were probably not as educated, like a lot of, I find that have kids young or they didn't go to university. They got married young, and it's different now cause we're waiting a long time like before we have kids {laughs}…(…) roles. I think a woman is like 30, and it used to be what, early twenties (…). It sure has changed (…)…Like education, career, you know, you want to satisfy your wants and needs first before settling down.

Participant #1

P: Um, a lot of our friends have had kids, they just started before us, five years I guess, so watching them, and observing them and taking, you know, the ideas you want for this and that.

I: Okay. Taking note.

P: Yeah, yeah. Kind of nice they'll do it to before us so that we can prepare.

I: Follow their lead?

P: Yeah exactly, exactly. I'm not doing that, or doing that [laughs}. I'll take one of those, and uh…

I: You learn from their experiences?

P: Exactly, I mean not that I'll get it all right either, although of course they all did (sarcasm). I guess um, yeah, from all, I wouldn't say from TV, like you, you know their, you know, not exactly realistic…so, and I guess ideas just from _____ (husband) too. Run back and forth and talking and what we're gonna do and…

Participant #6

P: Hopefully our child will grow up not being that as…I mean society is just full of, 'This is what boys do, this is what girls do'. So it's hard to, you know, and being part of a church community, there's a lot of the older people who are *very* traditional. _____ (husband) is like, I mean, a lot of the people who are very traditional in the church are 'Complimentarian'. So that means, you know, the guy is the head of the household, the woman is there as his helpmate.

I: It's 'complimentarian'?

P: It's called complimentarian. _____ (husband) would describe himself as, and you know what, I was raised in a complimentarian household. So I just never even thought of anything but ' _____ (husband) is the head of our household. That's fine'. I never thought that, and, and I mean, part of the biblical sense is that the husbands are instructed, 'Don't take this and take advantage and use your wife as a doormat'. Because that's a responsibility you have, not just a 'woo-hoo' bonus (...){laughs}.

I: Wasn't it complimentarian, this like shared responsibility, sort of thing?

P: Yeah, but I think if it, if it comes down to it, it's like, it's like the husband is the president, the wife's the vice president. You know, so they're working together on everything, but man's kind of a little bit more seniority. (...). So I never really thought of that too much and then, uh, _____ (husband) would describe himself though as egalitarian. So he sees us both as, we're equal. And you know what, and I think even people who say they're complimentarian, I think that's how most marriages play out anyways {laughs}, you know. Like I don't see too many, we do, we do know one couple actually that sadly it is that way, and it's, it's highly pathetic. I mean, mind she's happy, but it's really difficult to watch and it's really hard because they two little boys, and so (...) the boys are getting raised. And I'm thinking, 'Yeah good luck finding a wife, you know, who's going to take that' {laughs}. But, um, but, so _____ (husband) doesn't, so for us like we're egalitarian. So if, there's no, you know, every once in a while he'll ask me to go get something and make the whole comment, 'You're the wife', and I'll say 'yeah'.

I: Just to bug you.

P: Just to say these things, so then I say, 'Yeah you shoulda thought of that before you went egalitarian. Tough luck' {laughs}. So, so yeah, it's kind of funny that way.

As well, several participants described how their first lesson in the world of gender roles became less significant to them as they became more educated on gender roles and gender differences, either from direct instruction or watching the experiences of others:

Participant #8

I: Okay, you were just mentioning just a little bit that, um, you think that a lot of your ideas come from just the way you were raised. Do you think there's been any changes or adaptations to your ideas over the years, or do you think some have maybe just expanded?

P: Um, probably expanded. Changed (sighs), no not so much. I don't think. But, like I said before, I think just being educated and being in the type of job I'm in, I'm, I'm surrounded by more ideas and I'm open-minded.

Participant #5

P: And I guess I've had different models of parenting. I have some friends, who're around my age, and who've already had children. And I really admire their relaxed attitude towards parenting. Um, you know, um, really, um, you know, 'Don't fret so much about this', 'Don't always be worrying about that'. You know the child's gonna be fine, you know, the flow that you can go with. And I find that really refreshing because it's different from what I experienced from my own childhood, which, um, was probably a bit more restrictive in, you know, a bit more, you know, controlled, you know like growing up in the mid 60's and early 70's, right. You know, I had a stay-at-home mom. You know the, you know there was, I guess, there was more, um, uh, rigid beliefs as to how children had to be raised or disciplined or things like that. So I had, you know, there's some things, some things just in the way that I and my brothers were raised that I would consciously want to try and get away from. So, from that, you know, from my own family experience.

Participant #13

P: But since meeting _____ (husband), I'm like a real gender role person too {laughs}. I'm not a big stickler on ah, traditional roles. Um, he's taught me a lot about, like changing the tire, change the oil, and how to fix stuff in the house, and stuff like that. And I like to learn stuff, and I don't think it matters if you're boy or girl. Why can't a girl, if she's interested, 'Okay, you're doing what with the plumbing'? Like, you know, why not get her to hand you the tool?. So I think that is really gonna project into my parenting as well.

Finally, several of the participants discussed the similarities and differences between their ideas and the ideas of their partners:

Participant #9

P: ...So, I think he really wouldn't care either way. You know, the girl plays with trucks, big deal.

I: And you think he'd be okay if you know, you had a boy go running around, and you think he'd be okay the if little boy was playing with his sister's dolls or stuffed animals?
P: Oh yeah. I think so. He's pretty easy going, so. He worked in a daycare like when he was going to school, and I mean kids just play with everything. So, that's why I think maybe he's more relaxed about it. I mean, toys are toys, and so, that's why I think he'll be better with kids at a younger age than, like I just have had no experience with young kids. So, it's bit scary.

Participant #5

P: Uh, and, and as far as education and career, I don't think it would, um, you know, we've both been to university, we've gone to school and worked with members of the opposite sex in many different circumstances, so, and his attitude towards, uh, women, and their role has always been you know, wonderfully, um, uh, liberal and tolerant and open minded. So I do not expect that to change, whether we have a boy or a girl.

Participant #12

P: Yeah, but you know, like since being married, I mean I think he's probably lessened up on some things that I think he can give and take because it's me that does all the household repairs and all the painting and that kind of stuff. Not him at all. And so I think he's becoming a little bit, um, more relaxed in terms of those things as well…and, um, and like I said, yeah, before, you know, his girl, and he would put his girl in soccer, and he would you know, enjoy spending time with them, and you know, playing catch and you know, all that kind of stuff. Like I did that with my dad all the time, you know. So yeah, so I think he probably would be a little bit less so than maybe I think. But yeah, he would still have those specific roles I mind.

I: Just because that's how he was raised and things like that?

P: Yeah, yeah.

Theme 8 - Trying myths…but just for fun

This theme highlighted the participants' ideas about using myths to predict the sex of

their baby and implied some ideas about gender role socialization. These myths related

to assumptions about societal norms and included pregnancy or conception myths,

dreams, and intuition. Such myths were used by different groups for different reasons,

and some cultures had used them to 'influence' the outcome of pregnancies:

Participant #5

P: Well, I think it's because in so many cultures and traditionally too, people have had an investment in one gender or another. So you know, you sort of formulate things that you hope are going change the outcome. You know, if you really need sons or if you really need daughters.

The myths discussed by the participants in this study did not give a strong indication

about societal norms and expectations about gender roles. Instead, they suggested their

preference for an infant's sex and information about the perceived value of girls and

boys:

Participant #7

P: Well just for fun, I checked the Chinese Conception chart.

I: Oh you did?

P: Yeah. My cousin and I both did. And, according to the conception chart, we're having a boy {laughs}. So, that's what I found was really interesting. We'll see.

Participant #2

I: What do you think of all of that?

P: Um, well I first off as much as the next, you know. You'll believe in that myth stuff, folklore stuff…Um, meanwhile, my friend had done that needle and thread trick over my wrist, and it was, I think, circling or going back and forth, and it indicated I was gonna have a girl. And I just thought 'whatever', you know, I'll just see if it happens

Participant #10

P: Everybody that sees me looks that I, I'm like I'm carrying a boy. Um, my dad and I think one other person thinks I'm carrying a girl. And that's only because my dad has four daughters and three granddaughters, and doesn't want to be disappointed. So, uh, I personally, I'm in the middle, 'cause I don't wanna hope for a boy and I don't wanna hope for a girl. Um, for my dad and for my husband, I want a little boy. But if it's a girl, I'll be happy.

Participant #7

P: Um, I mean it, to like, it doesn't really matter whether it's a boy or a girl, but I just noticed that, um, on _____ 's (husband) side of the family, most of the first-born children are boys. Like about 99% of them, the first-born is a boy. _____ 's (husband) uncles, um, every single one of them, except for two, had their first born were boys. Um, and one uncle doesn't even have any boys {laughs}. So he doesn't kind of really factor in. But, um, and then, you know, the cousins that have had children, um, there's one that hasn't had a first-born that was a boy. So, I mean, to me it's just deduction. It's just looking at genetics. Um…

Participant #9

I: Well let's talk a little bit about you becoming a mum for the first time. I've heard from actually from quite few people that when a woman becomes pregnant that she just knows if the baby is going to be a boy or a girl. So whether it's the activity level or how you're carrying, or things like that. What do you think about these ideas?

P: Well, I resort to chemical methods {laughs}. I did the Drano test...and the Drano test's a girl. So I'm doing research right now {laughs}, just trying to figure out if this actually works. But it's 7 for 7 so far.

I: Okay if it goes a certain way down the drain?

P: No, it's you just spit into it. Yeah, and it reacts chemically with your saliva. And, I don't know. It's been around forever, but I don't know if anyone's done stats on it to see how often it works. So it's worked seven times in a row for friends of mine, and {laughs} so we'll see. If it ever stops working, then I'll just stop believing it. But so far it's worked every time.

I: And so what is it saying right now?

P: Uh, girl. So you spit into it and if you're not pregnant or you're having a boy, it just, 'cause Drano's blue, the solution colour just stays blue. But if you're having a girl it just reacts and goes crazy and turns grey.

Participant #13
P: So it's almost, like until I went to the doctor a few weeks ago and heard the baby's heartbeat, it was almost like, 'I don't really know if something's inside there' {laughs}, you know. Like...

I: You need confirmation.

P: Yeah, like it was making me throw up, but {laughs} it was the only confirmation that I had. So at least that way, it was a little bit of a, 'Wow, like there is something alive inside me', but like I don't, I don't have that 'Wow, I feel glowing and pregnant and carrying a life'. Like I don't really feel that yet.

The idea about the value of girls versus boys was seen in notions of 'disappointment'. Essentially, a few participants expressed a sense of disappointment over having one sex of baby over another. These participants suggested that there was a certain amount of pressure for the baby to be one sex or another:

Participant #10
P: Everybody that sees me looks that I, I'm like I'm carrying a boy. Um, my dad and I think one other person thinks I'm carrying a girl. And that's only because my dad has four daughters and three granddaughters, and doesn't want to be disappointed. So, uh, I personally, I'm in the middle, 'cause I don't wanna hope for a boy and I don't wanna hope for a girl. Um, for my dad and for my husband, I want a little boy. But if it's a girl, I'll be happy.

Participant #4

    I: But you were saying that both of you think it's a girl. Is it more like a gut feeling?

    P: That's what I'm feeling I think. Well, I thought it was a girl, and then, or no, thought it was a boy at first I think, because everyone around us was having boys. And then I had a dream or something that it was a girl. And then like, 'I think it's girl'. And then I'm like, then I don't wanna let myself think that it's a girl, 'cause I think 'Oh there's so much pressure. So I'll be disappointing my dad or something {laughs}, 'I'm sorry. It's boy'. But we don't, I mean first child you don't really care. We don't, we're happy either way.

Other participants discussed how dreams about the baby influenced their ideas about

the sex of the baby. This included dreams experienced by the participants, their partners,

or by people in their lives:

Participant #13

    P: Um, other than that, I don't really think, don't think I've really had any dreams or anything. Not me, actually though, a cousin of mine {laughs}, before anybody even knew we were pregnant or before my husband and I knew, she had a dream that I was pregnant. So she called my mom, and she's like, 'Is _____ (participant) pregnant' {laughs}? And she was like, '*No*' {laughs}. And then, like a month later I said and we kind of timed it when I would have conceived and when she called and I would have been pregnant and I didn't even know.

Participant #2

    P:…and I think about the eight month of my pregnancy I started having dreams about having a boy, having a boy growing up, having a son, breastfeeding a boy. So it's about three times I've had dreams about having a boy. So which was totally, you know, I didn't prefer one gender or another, I just 'wow, I dreamt about it'. …and then, uh, my mom, they say, you know, mother's intuition, (…). My mom thinks I have a girl. Everyone thinks I'm gonna have a girl except me. Like I think I could have a boy.

    I: Because these dreams…

    P: Yeah, even uh, the father thinks I'm gonna have a girl. So uh, but I think I'm gonna have a boy.

    I: Is it more like a gut feeling or an intuition-type of feeling?

    P: I think it's because of those dreams. Yeah, maybe gut feeling, I don't know. I mean who knows, like I could be wrong. But, I have a sense maybe it will be a boy {laughs}. Who knows?

Participant #11

    P: I know that I had friends, I actually just had a girlfriend who had a baby at the end of August. And I remember I asked her, I said, 'So, do you know what you're having?', and she said 'It's a girl'. I said, 'How do you know'? She said, 'I just know'. Like she had, she said she had dreams of a girl. And I had another girlfriend, who, I'm her son's godmother, and when she was pregnant, she had two dreams. One was she found out, just after she found out she was pregnant, and one, uh, a few months before she delivered. And she dreamt the first one, she dreamt that she knew it was a boy. And in her second dream, it was like August, and she dreamt again about this baby, that she just delivered this baby, and she said, 'In my dream, I remember asking what day is it. Like what day is it'. And the nurse came up, and she was like, 'What day is it'? And the nurse said, 'Well it's November 1st, dear'. And _____ (female friend) said she woke up and remembered thinking, 'Ah, it can't because my due date isn't until November 22nd'. And sure enough she delivered _____ (godson) on November 1st. It was a boy on November 1st.

Finally, participants mentioned the notion of having certain 'feelings' or a sense of intuition about the sex of the baby. They indicated that these feelings were experienced by the participants themselves or by people in their lives:

Participant #12

    P: Mm-hmm. Well, I have to say first, _____ (husband) thinks it's a girl. But I think it's a boy. Um, and we were actually trying, we were talking about this last night. And, I don't think I know for any specific reason why I think it's a boy, but I think, I started thinking it was a boy because some of our close friends in Calgary just had a baby and it was a boy. And so just sort of starting to equate babies with boys. There's only boy babies {laughs). And I think that's sort of how I started to assume that we were having a boy.

    I: Because that was more familiar?

    P: That was more familiar. Yeah, yeah. And, um, and I think that sort of come out was, you know, a lot like I haven't bought any girl stuff at all. Like I've all, I've bought stuff that is probably more boyish. And actually somebody even told me in Old Navy, 'Oh you're obviously having a boy' because of what I was buying. You know, and so it just sort of came out subconsciously. But I think also, um, I mean I think most people have told me like our friends looking at, you know, our ultrasound, the pictures their diagnostic view is that it's a boy. They've discovered the unit {laughs}. And, um, you know, and, you know, carrying low so you must be having a boy. So, so like I said, I mean, I think there's not a specific reason, but just like the familiarity and it's sort of coming in all directions.

I: Are you getting sort of like an intuition or a gut-feeling about it as well?

P: Um...maybe a little bit, but I wouldn't say that it's very strong or anything like that. And I hope that we have a boy because I like the boy's names better than the girls' names that we have. So yeah, yeah. But no not, I, I just think that we are, but I don't think it's based on anything.

Participant #8
P: Well, not to skew this but we do know the sex of the baby.

I: Oh, you do.

P: But before we knew, um, just on hunches, you know, when _____ (husband) and I would ask each other, 'What do you think?', we both said a girl. And we don't know why, you know, it's just, you're sort of first, 'We're pregnant. It's gonna be a girl' {laughs} kind of thing. And you don't, we're not really sure why we came up with that. In the meantime, we found out that it is a girl.

Participant #4
I: But you were saying that both of you think it's a girl. Is it more like a gut feeling?

P: That's what I'm feeling I think. Well, I thought it was a girl, and then, or no, thought it was a boy at first I think, because everyone around us was having boys. And then I had a dream or something that it was a girl. And then like, 'I think it's girl'. And then I'm like, then I don't wanna let myself think that it's a girl, 'cause I think 'Oh there's so much pressure. So I'll be disappointing my dad or something {laughs}, 'I'm sorry. It's boy'. But we don't, I mean first child you don't really care. We don't, we're happy either way.

I: Right. And you're okay if it's boy?

P: Oh, for sure. What (...). Oh yeah. It prob...{laughs}...it's probably better almost because my three nephews live here, and so, my niece lives in Winnipeg. So, the kid's gonna be spending more time with the kids that are here. Doesn't matter anyways, cause it's gonna be mixed in like with daycare boys and girls all over the place.
I: Gonna be fine then.

P: It's gonna have...it's not gonna, it's not gonna be one of those frilly girls and it's not gonna be one of those, you know, macho boys. Yeah, it's just gonna be

To summarize, this chapter elaborated on the eight themes that were developed during the content analysis. These themes were found consistently across interviews. The

themes were:

1. Equal treatment and opportunities for girls and boys
   Participants discussed how children should be raised equally, regardless of sex or gender. This included having similar rules, chores, toys, activities and expectations for boys and girls.

2. Personality of child as influence on parenting and gender role socialization
   Participants suggested that children should be allowed to make their own choices in all aspects of life, such as activities and toy choices, and they should not be restricted by sex or gender. It was the personality of the child that influenced parenting practices and gender role socialization. This included the child pursuing stereotypical roles or non-traditional roles.

3. 'Trying on' different gender roles
   Participants suggested that children should be free to 'try on' different gender roles, rather than restricting their activities or behaviour based on sex or gender. This included ideas about boys playing with dolls, girls playing with trucks, and ideas about children being responsible for chores that are not stereotypically performed by their sex or gender.

4. Girls need protection, boys can take care of themselves
   Participants, but especially partners, perceived girls as not being as capable as boys at taking care of themselves, especially when there was trouble. This included references to a fear for a girls' safety, and to the idea that boys were better able to protect themselves and get themselves out of trouble.

5. Acceptance of girls 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, but not vice versa
   Participants discussed how it was seen as acceptable for girls to engage in certain activities, while the same is not true for boys. They suggested that certain stereotypically male behaviours and activities could be performed by girls, such as playing football or being aggressive, while stereotypically female behaviour and activities, such as going into ballet or playing with toy kitchen sets, were not acceptable when they were performed by boys. Most often, these girls were commonly referred to as 'tomboys' and the boys were called 'sissies'.

6. Primary caregivers as first influence on gender role ideas
   Participants discussed how parents and caregivers were the most significant *first* influences on morals, values and gender role development. This initial influence could have a lasting effect throughout the participants' lifetime, as reflected in following parents' ideas about gender roles and incorporating them into the gender role socialization of their own children.

7. Secondary influences on gender role development

Participants suggested that there can be multiple influences on gender role ideas, and other factors come later in life after the initial influence from parents or caregivers. Parents were initially significant for introducing children to the world of gender and gender roles, but other influences, such as peers and education, add on to or take over ideas that parents had already instilled in children. The combination of these ideas were used to socialize children for gender roles.

8. Trying myths…but just for fun

Participants discussed how various techniques or 'tricks' were used to predict the sex of the baby. This included using dreams, intuition, and pregnancy or conception myths.

In the next chapter, I will describe the themes resulting from the content analysis and their relationship to the available literature. I will also discuss the potential limitations of this research.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

In this research project, I focused on the gender role socialization attitudes and beliefs of expectant first-time mothers. My intention was to find out: (1) How expectant first-time mothers planned to socialize their children for gender roles; (2) how these mothers accounted for their approach to gender role socialization; and (3) whether these mothers saw their approach to gender role socialization as similar to or different from their partners. Content analysis was used to analyze participants' responses.

In the section that follows, I will describe the themes resulting from the content analysis and the relationship to the available literature. I will also discuss the potential limitations of this research.

Themes and Relation to the Literature

Theme 1 - Equal treatment and opportunities for girls and boys

Within the first theme, participants discussed how they wanted to raise their children equally, regardless of sex or gender. This included having similar rules, chores, and expectations. This was demonstrated in the participants' ideas about children having responsibility for household tasks that were not stereotypically associated with their sex or gender. For example, several participants mentioned wanting their sons *and* daughters to do the vacuuming around the house, and the work around the yard.

Several participants also discussed equality between sons and daughters in terms of toys and activities. Specifically, the participants mentioned wanting to give their children the opportunity to engage in activities that were not stereotypical of their sex or gender, such as hockey for girls or gymnastics for boys, or play with toys that were not stereotypical of their sex or gender, such as trucks for girls and dolls for boys. These

ideas were consistent with the work of Leve and Fagot (1997) who suggested that

mothers often had egalitarian gender role attitudes and beliefs about their children.

Some indicated that they would like their sons and daughters to participate equally in

household responsibilities that would help out the family, and in particular, the mother:

Participant #6

>P: And so I, I think, be it boy, be it girl, if I'm doing laundry, 'Hey help mum
>sort' or 'Let's make the bed'. Like let's, this is what needs to be done. It doesn't
>matter who's doing it. It's just gonna get done. And so that sort of thing.

Participant #10

>P: He would probably tell or teach them how to help me out or I would do the
>same. Um, whether it's, say we have another child, and 'Could you please get me
>this', and, or 'Can you help mummy do this'. Like something very light.

Some participants spoke in general terms about equal treatment. They did not specify at

what ages or with which activities it would be encouraged. Although some gave

examples of curfew rules for adolescent children or household responsibilities for

younger children, none of the participants gave explicit detail as to ages or activities.

However, the idea that the age of the child was related to equal treatment arose in several

interviews. Two ideas emerged. The first was that children should be taught about

equality from a young age:

Participant #7

>I: I would, um, still ask my young boy to come and help me with dishes, you
>know, or, or do a little bit of vacuuming, dusting, um, and that's...I was taught at
>a fairly young age how to drive the lawn mower {laughs}.

This idea was consistent with literature suggesting that a child's gender role emerges

between the ages of two and four (Lindsey, 1990).

The second idea was that equal treatment of girls and boys was acceptable primarily in

young children. For example, both young boys and girls were expected to have similar

household responsibilities, where both did the dishes or both cut the grass:

Participant #3

> P: I guess in the younger years whether it's a boy or girl (...), they'll be out fishing and boating, and I don't know about hunt...what _____'s (husband) gonna do about hunting. I don't know if I want my daughter out there {laughs}. But I guess I was. My dad did take me a few times when I was little...

When discussing these toys, activities, or chores, several of the participants used words such as "young" or "little". Young children could 'get away with' playing different gender roles, because they did not yet know that there were certain expectations for how boys and how girls should behave. Again, this was consistent with the work of Lindsey (1990), which suggested that a gender role emerged between the ages of two and four, and with increasing age came the expectation for maintaining dissimilar spheres of gendered behaviour. For example, one participant mentioned how she would enjoy having both her young son and daughter in gymnastics, but did not have the same acceptance of this activity for her adolescent son. This was also inconsistent with research by Pleck (1997) which stated that the *father's* differential treatment of children by sex or gender might be more pronounced with older children.

Participants also discussed the benefits of 'trying on' different gender roles. While this was seen as being important for the personal development of *both* females and males, the participants discussed how this was critical for males. Males would develop a deeper respect for women, as adults, if their gender role or gender role ideas were more flexible as children. They might also parent with more gender-flexible attitudes and behaviours. This was consistent with work by Simons, Whitbeck, Conger, and Melby (1990) who suggested that parenting ideas and attitudes were often significant factors in parental behaviour:

Participant #12

> P:...I think that chores and stuff around the house should be shared, um, with both

boys and girls. I think a girl should learn how to mow the lawn. And, you know, talking to a guy friend at work, I mean his mum taught him to sew, and how to do this and that, and I mean, you know, like I think that's, that's very valid. At least learn how to sew on a button or something like that.

By suggesting that a child should learn certain tasks not stereotypically associated with his gender, the participant attributed a value to these roles or behaviours. By using the words 'at least', she implied that this activity might not be one that was stereotypically performed by males. It might also be assumed that the same behaviours and activities we engaged in as children and as adults held different values, depending on the age of the person and on the perspectives of those within his or her reference group. In particular, it seemed that participants looked at the usefulness of the behaviour (e.g. men being able to cook and women being able to do electrical wiring).

Several of the participants discussed how their personal experiences helped to influence their ideas about equal treatment for their own children. For example, participants discussed their education, how their parents gave them equal treatment and opportunities to their siblings, or how they were raised in a home without sex- or gender-specific activities. However, some participants stated that they wanted things to be equal between their children because they themselves were not treated to the same as their siblings. For example, a few participants mentioned that they were more restricted than their brothers in terms of curfews and how often they were allowed to go out with their friends. This idea is consistent with work by Lewis (1987) and Fagot and Hagan (1991) who found parents often treated their sons and daughters differently.

Within this theme, the participants' perceptions of their partner's gender role ideas were mixed. For the most part, the participants indicated that their partners agreed that boys and girls should perform the same household duties, but the differences of opinion

came when discussing activities and toys. According to some, their partners were hesitant to let their children play with toys and engage in activities that were not typical of their sex or gender. This idea was consistent with the literature, where a number of studies suggested that mothers were more supportive than fathers of their children 'trying on' different gender roles (Crick, 1997; Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Langlois & Downs, 1980; Leve & Fagot, 1997; Ruble, 1988). In addition, this seemed to be the case particularly for boys. For example, one participant suggested that her son might be interested in ballet, but indicated that her partner would not allow this because he considered ballet a female activity. When asked about the physical strength of the male dancers, she suggested that it was a sport her partner did not see as 'masculine'. This idea is consistent with research which found that fathers and adult males perpetuate gender role differentiation more than mothers or other female caregivers (Langlois & Downs, 1980; Leve & Fagot, 1997; Ruble, 1988).

Theme 2 - Personality of child as influence on parenting and gender role socialization

This theme focused on the idea of allowing children to make their own choices, and not restricting them by sex or gender. Specifically, does the personality of the child influence parenting practices and gender role socialization, or vice versa? Lindsey (1990) found that gender role socialization more strongly influenced personality development than child characteristics.

Regardless of their intentions for socialization or the personality of the child, several participants mentioned that peer pressure and fear of rejection were major reasons for individuals, especially children, not wanting to be seen as 'different'. Indeed, several studies found that peers and fathers were more likely than mothers to punish (e.g. teasing)

this behaviour (Crick, 1997; Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Langlois & Downs, 1980; Leve & Fagot, 1997; Ruble, 1988). Some participants wanted to encourage individuality rather than conformity in their children, but there was some resistance to being 'different':

Participant #5

> P: Um, they could, you know, I suppose there could be some, uh, if there if, if they are perceived as a little different from their peers, there could probably be a little bit of, yeah, you know. I mean, I, I, that's really sad, I think, you know, and I hate to think about that. But I would rather try to raise a child to be comfortable as who ever they are, than to see the need to fit into a particular pack.

Participants wanted their children to be themselves, but acknowledged that they feared their children would be rejected for being different. Several discussed how they might encourage their children to conform to group norms so they would be seen as the same as everyone else. One participant suggested that some parents might 'push' their children into gender-typed activities or overly-encourage them to play with gender-specific toys, based on a concern that their children might be rejected by peers or ridiculed for choosing gender-inappropriate toys or activities:

Participant #5

> P: So you know, if a girl's interested in soccer, great. If a boy's interested in dance, great. Like you know, there's no, no need to either push in one direction or worry about, I think, the direction that they want to take...

Participants suggested that there might be something to gain by exhibiting the socially appropriate behaviour. For children, this reward was acceptance by and friendships with peers.

Participants discussed how there were certain preconceived notions for how boys and girls should act, as well as the activities they should be involved in. Several participants suggested that their experiences of being forced to fit a certain mould might have helped to influence their ideas about letting their children pursue their own interests:

Participant #5

> P: Well you know, my mom tried to encourage me to go to {laughs} ballet, and baton, and gymnastics, and you know, totally not fitting with, you know, with, with me. So that, that was frustrating, you know. Um, I think she uh, she seemed to have her own idea bout what a little girl should do, because she already had um, her older sister already had two little girls, my cousins who are older than me. So I think sometimes my mom found it a little frustrating that I didn't follow those similar things, you know.

Other participants discussed how the intentions of the parents could be different than the interests of the child, and it was important to recognize that children had their own wants, needs, and interests:

Participant #5

> P: So I think that's funny 'cause we can have all the intentions and whatever that we want, but this is still a whole other person. So you sort of have to take your cues from what they want too, right {laughs}?

Regardless of social rules and expectations, and regardless of peer pressure or the risk of rejection, some children may choose to be themselves.

For the most part, the participants stated that their partners would be accepting of the child pursuing her or his own interests. In fact, a few participants stated that their partners had indicated to them that they were more concerned with the children acquiring knowledge and pursuing their own interests than being restricted by gender:

Participant #1

> P: Um, I would say with the gender thing that he would be very similar to me, both women can do, girls can do anything that boys can do and he would encourage them to pursue what they want to. And not, again not overkill that 'oh they have to be involved in every sport or everything', but that they have opportunities to pursue what they want to...

Participant #6

> P: So it'll, so the way we kind of resolved that is, we say, 'Well, we'll see what our child's interested in', and then try and encourage them in that way, instead of necessarily putting them in one sport over the other.

However, a few participants did indicate that their partners would restrict some of their

children's behaviours, such as boys wearing dresses and playing with dolls. Some

participants indicated that their partners were uncomfortable with those behaviours, and

indicated that their partners felt those activities were only appropriate for girls.

Theme 3 - 'Trying on' different gender roles

The theme focused on participants' ideas about letting their children 'try on' different

gender roles rather than restricting their activities or behaviour based on sex or gender.

This included ideas about boys playing with dolls, girls playing with trucks, and attitudes

about children being responsible for chores that were not stereotypically associated with

their sex or gender:

Participant #6
> P: I think if it's a boy especially, I don't want to pussyfoot around, 'Oh he doesn't
> have to help with the dishes. Oh, he doesn't have to...'. I don't want there to be
> the roles in that, 'Oh the boys do this, and the girls to that'.

A few participants discussed how they saw gender roles beginning to change. They

suggested that it was beneficial for children to see adults with flexible gender roles, as it

would have an effect on their gender role ideas. For example, one participant discussed

how her husband did all the cooking at home and said that she would be happy if their

son used her husband as a role model.

However, several participants discussed undesirable consequences of this flexibility:

Participant #11
> P: Um, but my middle brother and I more so, we, we did get picked on a bit
> because weren't afraid to do things. So what ends up happening is, from that point
> of view, you're sort of ostracized from the other kids because you're not
> conforming to the norms of being a girl or being a boy. Um, and as a girl you get
> called a tomboy, um, because I took shop in school.

The participants feared that their children would be teased, called names or rejected by

peers if they did not follow along with what the group was doing. Common names were

'tomboy' and 'sissy'. The words 'tomboy' and 'sissy' referred to their behaviour which was consistent with stereotypical gender roles. However, these terms had different connotations; being a 'tomboy' was not as bad as being a 'sissy'. Some behaviours were 'okay for girls', but 'not okay for boys':

Participant #2

> P: I think girls now, I think it's tolerated more that girls play with firemen trucks, and (...) boys are seen playing with feminine toys, it's like, 'Oh, get away from there'. I don't know now, but I'm sure some parents have, you know, have that idea like they ought to be playing with this and that.

This finding was consistent with research by Golombok and Fivush (1994) who found that because particular behaviours produced different results according to a child's sex, they came to be performed with different frequency by boys and girls. It was also consistent with research by Wood et al. (2002), who suggested that parents allowed greater flexibility for girls than boys to play with non-traditional toys for their sex or gender.

Several participants also mentioned that peer pressure was a tactic for trying to get children to conform. One participant linked this idea to her own experience of being teased by other children and ostracized at school for wanting to pursue her own interests. Another participant discussed how she envisioned a similar process occurring with her own child. She expected that her partner would make their son play with masculine toys, "no matter what". If the child decided that he enjoyed playing with Barbies, this could be seen as a rejection of the expectations or rules of behaviour for a boy, at least in their reference group. It might be also seen as rejection of parental authority, where the boy went against his father's authority. Although this could cause discipline issues, it may also be that this parent was concerned about his child fitting in, and therefore, encouraged

his son to play with masculine toys as a protective measure. Wu and Baer (1996) found

that children learned to behave in ways that maximized the attention they received from

others.

For children, boys especially, engaging in behaviours that are typically associated with

the opposite sex may cause parents and peers to question the child's sexual orientation.

Some of the participants discussed having knowledge of a myth that children playing

with toys or engaging in activities not typical of their sex or gender could lead to a gay or

lesbian sexual orientation as an adult. However, participants in this study did not

subscribe to that belief:

Participant #2

P: But it's funny cause when I was a kid, I liked playing with cars and trucks. I never played with dolls. So you know, I mean, and I'm a girl, and you know, and my orientation is straight, so I played with trucks and cars. I loved cars. I still do, like give me a car or a truck. My dad's a mechanic. Yeah like, um, I don't, I don't see it a big deal. Um, you know, in this, hey if I have a boy, then if he wants to play with dolls, great. Like, you know, I've heard that it's good to encourage them if they (...), or whatever they want. Like you shouldn't have to force them to like something or play with something, just because, 'Oh it's a boy thing or a girl thing'.

Participant #9

P: Yeah, I don't, I don't think it matters what kind of toys they play with. I don't think it's going to lead to homosexuality at some point.

Several participants indicated that they were not restricted in their behaviour as

children simply because they were girls. They were free to play with different types of

toys, and some indicated that they combined different roles, such as 'mother' and 'truck

driver':

Participant #11

I: What if it was your child? Um, I know a lot of people think, 'Oh, you know, no problem. My son can play with Barbies, my girl can wear overalls, climb trees, and vice versa'. What do you think about that for your child?

P: Sure. I have no problem with boys playing with dolls. That's fine. Um, I grew up playing with G. I. Joes...And a Karate Ken. We had a Karate Ken and G. I. Joes, but I also had a Barbie camper. You know, and usually the G. I. Joe truck ran over the Barbie camper, but that's life. So I grew up with both, like with everything...and yet my mom was very, she didn't, it wasn't, 'You can't do that', or 'You shouldn't do that'...I was treated the same. I was treated equally to my brothers. There was no differentiation. And I hope to do that with my kids, just they're the same. It doesn't matter whether you're a girl or whether you're a boy.

Other participants indicated that their choices of activities met with some resistance from their parents, but not enough to completely dissuade them from engaging in those activities again. For example, one participant discussed how her mother felt frustrated by her 'tomboy' behaviour, but did not try to change it.

Some participants felt that young children were gender-blind to toys and activities. Until they were taught differently, most children played with the toys they were interested in and engaged in the activities they were interested in:

Participant #6

I: But if you had, say you had a boy and a girl, um, and they shared each other's toys. Like the girl was playing with trucks and the boy was playing with dolls, you would be fine with that?

P: I would be fine with that. Yeah...kids'll do whatever. And it also fits in with I don't necessarily want our kids to feel like, 'Oh I'm a girl, therefore I must, you know, I'm restricted to these things'. Yeah.

According to the participants, children were willing to pursue their own interests and 'try on' different gender roles until they were taught by others, such as parents or peers, that there were different expectations for how girls and boys were to behave.

Additionally, the age of the child factored in to what was seen as appropriate behaviour:

Participant #12

P: But I mean, you know, I, I don't think that there's anything wrong with having, with a little boy having a doll, you know, because it teaches them things...and if it's something that they enjoy and find comfort in. And I don't think there's

anything wrong with little girls playing with trucks or Lego or, you know, whatever...yeah, I mean, you know, there's nothing wrong with that at all...but no, like I'm not opposed to that.

Participant #10

I: What would you think if say your little boy, you came to pick him up one day and he was, and you know two of his little boy friends and a couple little girls were playing house so they were all dressed up. So...

P: That's fine.

I: That's fine? You have no problems with that?

P: Dress up, no, 'cause they'd probably wear costumes and that there. Now if it's in a girl's clothing, I mean, still they're young, so I probably wouldn't think anything of it.

Words such as "little" and "young" seemed to place an age restriction on these

behaviours, implying that they were more acceptable when children were quite young.

Finally, a number of participants discussed the influence of their partners on their

own gender role ideas. They discussed how their partners 'tried on' different gender

roles in their relationship, and a few indicated that they hoped their partner's flexible

gender roles would be influential on their children's gender role ideas. For example, one

participant mentioned that her husband was taking part in the Federal Parental Leave

program. The participant believed that this unusual step (the rate of fathers taking more

than a few weeks off after the birth of their child was very low, at 10% according to

Statistics Canada, 2001), demonstrated flexible gender role behaviour to his family

members:

Participant #13

P: ...so I'm really hoping that that'll just keep things off, you know, like keep things with us not so stereotypical roles, you know, and then our children will see that too.

Another participant discussed the idea of her partner staying home to raise the children

while she went to work. This idea, as indicated by the participant, was fully supported by her partner. However, money was the deciding factor as to who would be the primary caregiver. As women typically earn 71.6% of what men make in full-time, full-year employment (Statistics Canada, 2001), it seems logical to many couples for the father to continue working in the labour force while the mother stays home to raise the children. As a result, gender differences are maintained. Research by Kurdek (1994) and Dunne (2000) suggested that the lesbian parents in their studies had a more equal distribution of household responsibilities, and participants in Dunne's study attempted to integrate childrearing and breadwinning.

One participant discussed how she and her husband hoped that the non-traditional roles they held in their relationship would be a positive influence on their child's gender role ideas as well. However, for those partners who were resistant to children 'trying on' different gender roles, they were described by the participants as being primarily against boys engaging in activities not typical of their sex or gender. One participant suggested that it was men more than women who encouraged their children to participate in gender-appropriate activities:

Participant #5
> P: Yeah, I think what I've seen sometimes too I, it doesn't seem to really happen with women, but it kinda, it seems to happen with the husband or the male partner, where they become very alarmed when they see boys engaged in certain activities. And yeah, a friend of mine {laughs}, her husband had a fit because {laughs} one summer day they were doing toe-nail painting. And of course, you know, the little boy, why not? Why does he have to be left out? So, well, you know, that did not go over very well when dad came home so that had to stop.

This idea was consistent with Langlois and Downs (1980), and Wood et al. (2002) who found that fathers were often more concerned than mothers about their children behaving in a stereotypically gender-appropriate manner.

Theme 4 - Girls need protection, boys can take care of themselves

For this theme, many of the participants discussed the idea that 'girls needed to be protected by their parents, while boys could take care of themselves'. The theme included references to a fear for a girls' safety, and to the notion that boys were better able to get themselves out of trouble. Most participants felt the need to protect their daughters more than their sons:

Participant #3
> P: I mean, I guess it is a little bit easier to watch your son go off and (...) or whatever and be able to fend for himself than your daughter, I guess.

Participant #8
> P: I don't know. If I, like my first instincts are also for a teenager, is to be more protective of a girl. I don't know where that came from, but...

Lewis (1987) suggested that parents had different types of relationships with their children, and held different expectations of their male and female children. Nonetheless, it was not clear what the participants and their partners felt that girls needed to be protected from. There was some indication that they were concerned about their adolescent daughters becoming pregnant.

The concerns were associated with stereotypes held in certain reference groups that girls were 'fragile', while boys are 'strong'. These two notions were discussed by several participants and identified as the perceptions of several partners as well. Some of the participants admitted that these seemed like irrational ideas, and were unsure why they felt that way. Lorber and Farrell (1991) argued that gender was a result and a reason for social arrangements, and a way of legitimizing divisions. Perhaps then, these differences were maintained in order to have clear distinctions in the needs, wants and interests of sons and daughters. Or perhaps it was a way to make them more unique from their

siblings. It may have also been that some mothers and fathers socialized their sons and daughters differently so that mothers would have more in common with daughters, and fathers, with sons. Essentially, this type of differential treatment could be seen as a way for parents to bond with their same-sex children.

Participants discussed two reasons to account for ideas about girls needing or not needing protection from their parents. To begin with, a few participants discussed how they had less freedom than their brothers:

Participant #2

> P: Oh yeah. Um, I know there's a lot of difference in like how we were raised. I had two brothers and my parents were very different people (...) For us, um, I really (...). I don't encourage it because it's, then you, then you start kids create stereotypes. And I think it's very unfair that, um, girls and boys are treated unequally. Just because I was treated unfairly. 'Oh you have to be home before dark', ' Oh, you can't go out to a party', or 'you can't...'. Meanwhile, my brother gets away with everything, he goes out, he does a lot more, he experimented with drugs and alcohol earlier than I did...

This was consistent with the work of Fagot and Hagan (1991) and Lewis (1987) who suggested that parents interacted with male and female children in particular ways, such as rewarding boys for negative, assertive behaviours, but not girls.

While several of the participants recognized that they did not agree with being treated differently than their brothers, it was not clear whether the difference was due to sex or gender, to maturity or level of responsibility, or to birth order. For example, a number of the participants discussed how their older brothers had later curfews than they did, but there was no clear evidence in the data to suggest why this was the case. Regardless, the differential treatment they received appeared to perpetuate gender differences in their families.

Other participants discussed how they were restricted in activities, but again, it was

not clear whether this was due to sex or gender:

Participant #10
> P: No they would never let me do anything that would endanger my life, like climbing trees or riding a bike by myself. They were very strict. Uh, they didn't have a lot of money, so we didn't get a lot of toys. Um, basically Barbie dolls and they wouldn't even let me sleep over, which I disagree with.

A few participants suggested that they tolerated this 'over-protection' because it was their parents doing 'what was best for them'. Nonetheless, the participants described their childhood experiences as a catalyst for the change in gender roles they would encourage in their own children. This was inconsistent with Fagot et al. (1992) who found that people parent as they were parented, through direct instruction or modeling.

Several of the participants discussed how their partner's ideas were very stereotypical with regards to raising daughters as compared to sons. For example, some of the participants mentioned that their partners held notions that girls were 'fragile' and needed their parents, especially their fathers, to protect them:

Participant #10
> P: Okay, if I was _____ (husband), I would probably, I'm sure if it was a girl, he would be very overprotective. If it was a boy, 'Do whatever you want' to a certain extent.

Participant #12
> P: ...I think he would put more restrictions on a girl than a boy just because, um, you know, like with the whole dating thing. You know how girls are when they're teenagers, the struggles they have and that kind of thing. And I think that he would, it wouldn't necessarily have that much to do with trust, but more his fears for them. He'd be more fearful of a girl getting into trouble and running into trouble.
>
> I: He would more want to protect them?
>
> P: Yep, than a boy, and that would go with curfews and everything like that.
>
> I: So he would let a boy stay out later?
>
> P: Yeah I think so. And like, I mean he's talked about, you know, just joking of

course, but how he would deal with the dating thing is locking up his daughter 'til she's 21 {laughs}. And part of him is not serious and part of him is serious. But it's just the whole protection thing, and, and looking out for her. And I think, yeah, he'd be more you know, delicate and gentle with her, you know, than with him, um, or than with a boy. And I think that, um, with lawns and that kind of thing, I think he'd probably more see it as something that a boy would do versus a girl.

Kiecolt and Acock (1988) suggested that fathers were important for encouraging specific gender-role orientations because, compared to mothers, they changed their behaviour according to the sex of child. For example, some participants indicated that their partners would be gentler with their daughters, and would encourage greater independence in their sons. Kiecolt and Acock (1988) also indicated that fathers, more than mothers, insisted on greater conformity to traditional gender roles.

As well, those participants who had different ideas from their partners about girls needing to be protected indicated the potential for disagreement in parenting practices:

Participant #6

P: _____ (husband) thinks it's a boy. But I think, we think though for the same reason that because he's a guy {laughs}, he just thinks that boys would be easier for him. And it's interesting because of course he places on it that, I mean, a baby's a baby, either or. But he places on it, 'Oh if it's girl, but she's so fragile' {laughs}. And I'm like, 'Well only because you've now told her she is' {laughs}.

According to participants, there were multiple influences on gender roles, and a paradoxical effect on them when they were parented differently than their male siblings.

Theme 5 - Acceptance of girls 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, but not vice versa

Within this theme, participants discussed the idea that some stereotypically male activities and behaviours could be performed by girls, such as playing football or being aggressive. However, stereotypically female behaviour and activities, such as going into ballet or playing with toy kitchen sets, were not as widely accepted when they were performed by boys. Boys' activities, toys and clothing were most often discussed by the

participants as being unisex, or suitable for both girls and boys. This was not the same for girls' toys, clothes and for many activities:

Participant #8

P: You know what though, specifically with the girl, um, wanting a truck, I wouldn't have a problem. I think if a son said 'I want the Barbie', and I'd go, 'You want the Barbie'? Like, and I'd probably question it. I would say like 'Why'? I would involve him in a discussion on why you want that particular toy. And I can almost see myself if the girl said, 'I want the truck', saying, 'Okay'. Not even questioning it.

Participant #12

P: You know, if my 16-year-old son wanted to go into figure skating or ballet, I would have a harder time with that...but, um, but yeah, like if my daughter wanted to go into hockey, I'd probably not encourage it just because of a whole bunch of other reasons, you know.

I: The violence and whatever else?

P: Yeah, and just the hours and all that kind of thing. But, I mean I wouldn't have as a big a problem with that.

Several participants stated that they were more comfortable with their daughters 'trying on' stereotypically male roles in public, than their sons 'trying on' stereotypically female roles. They were more accepting of both girls and boys 'trying on' different gender roles if it was done at home. Thus, the parents were tolerant of the behaviour, but feared the repercussions for this behaviour in public. Parents indicated that children, but especially boys, would be teased or rejected for their behaviour. Thus, several of the participants suggested that keeping children from 'trying on' different gender roles in public was a protective action on the part of parents. Research has found that people reacted more negatively to a male displaying characteristics or traits that were considered 'feminine', such as boys playing with Barbie dolls, than to females displaying characteristics or traits which were considered 'masculine', such as playing video games (Hort, Fagot, & Leinbach, 1990).

The participants suggested that although they intended to encourage their children to 'try on' different gender roles and to pursue their own interests, they suspected boys would have a harder time doing this:

Participant #13
> P: There's kinda, you know there's that stereotype that like it's a little bit worse for a boy to show a feminine side than for a girl to show a masculine side.

Male behaviour that was inconsistent with those associated with males may result in ridicule or harassment, loss of friend or family support, or isolation:

Participant #13
> P: I would be comfortable buying the truck for the girl {laughs}. I probably wouldn't be quite so comfortable buying the Barbie for the boy, which, I know it's horrible but it, I think it just goes with socialization and maybe not so much with myself and how I feel about him doing that, but his little boy friends probably aren't gonna come over and then he's gonna, you know, aren't gonna play with the Barbies. If they come over and play and then get teased and stuff....and I think he would learn quickly on his own if he did get that that he's not supposed to like that.

Some of the participants suggested that both they and their partners had previously heard phrases such as, 'girls can wear blue, but boys can't wear pink'. The idea of 'tomboy versus sissy' was consistent with work by Ferree (1990) which suggested that viewing gender as a social construction perpetuated thinking about maleness and femaleness as different categories with "unequal social value" (p. 868).

However, there were a few participants who discussed the differences in opinions between themselves and their partners:

Participant #10
> P: If it's a boy, my husband for sure will make sure that he plays with guy toys, no matter what.

Participant #12
> P: Um, I mean, with, um, like with sports and all that kind of thing, I mean, you know, I think it's okay for, you know, like I'd love to put my little boy in gymnastics or something like that, you know, because of the fun and 'cause of

what it can teach them and stuff. But say _____ (husband), it's like, 'No that's a girl's thing'.

Simons et al. (1990) suggested that differences in parenting practices were a result of different socialization experiences. Because men and women may have had different gender role socialization experiences, they may parent differently.

Theme 6 – Primary caregivers as first influence on gender role ideas

This theme described how parents and caregivers were the most significant *first* influences on a child's morals, values and gender role development. This was consistent with research by Witt (1997) and Lewis (1987), which suggested that parents and caregivers played an important role in influencing social and cognitive growth in their children. This initial influence had a lasting effect, as reflected in participants' discussions about following their parent's gender role ideas and incorporating them into the gender role socialization of their own children:

Participant #11
> P: So, um, yeah it was, I would say my upbringing was really unique in the fact that, like I said, there were no pink and blue roles. There were no typical girl roles or typical boy roles. Everybody did everything. My brothers' were also taught how to cook, um, and how to sew. But they also know how to fix cars, plumbing, electrical, and everything else under the sun. But that came from my parents, who also did all that.

Several participants also mentioned that their parents continued to have an influence on their gender role ideas as they grew older, but this influence became meshed with the influence of others, such as teachers or the media:

Participant #13
> I: ...where do your ideas come from?
>
> P: Um, probably a lot from my parents. Um, although I think I've changed a lot since I moved from home and kinda got married and all that stuff, and getting kinda my own views of stuff.

Golombok and Fivush (1994) found that children learned gender roles primarily from their parents.

Several participants mentioned their mothers as having a significant influence on their gender role development, but for the most part the participants suggested that they were influenced by both of their parents and by their caregivers. This was consistent with research by Ex and Janssens (1998), who found that the gender role ideas and parenting style of mothers had a significant impact on the gender role attitude and ideas of daughters.

A few of the participants indicated that they disagreed with some of the gender role ideas held by their parents, but did not decide to do things differently until they began planning to have their own children:

Participant #6

    P: I don't want there to be the roles in that, 'Oh the boys do this, and the girls to that'. Because we got that a bit in our house, and now my, my brother is such that, he's useless {laughs}. Well in the kitchen or whatever, and my mom kind of has the approach that, 'oh well, it's just easier for her to do it herself because, rather than explain it to him because he'll mess it up in the kitchen'.

Participant #8

    P: I mean, we're a very non-traditional house, in that _____ (husband) does the laundry and the cleaning, and you know. So in that respect, same with both our homes, it was the mother's who, you know, did all that basic cleaning thing, those things. And _____ (husband) enjoys it much more than I do...and that's fine. So I don't have a problem, you know, if it was a boy that, yeah, you know, 'Your duty today is vacuuming'. And that's the way it is, you know, yeah.

Thus, while these participants were brought up to follow prescribed gender roles, they decided on a different route when it came to their own families. This was consistent with the research of Cowan and Cowan (1992) and Belsky and Kelly (1994) who found that gender roles changed over time with transitions into different stages, such as parenthood. However, it was inconsistent with the work of Fagot and Hagan (1991) which suggested

that once children had adopted stereotypical gender roles, there were mechanisms within society that maintained this choice, including family, peers, and the media.

Theme 7 - Secondary influences on gender role development

This theme highlighted the other important influences on the participants' gender role ideas: Those that came later in life after the initial influence from parents or caregivers. The participants discussed how their parents were initially significant for introducing them to the world of gender and gender roles, but several went on to describe how other influences, such as peers and teachers, added on to the ideas that their parents had instilled in them. This finding was consistent with the work of Golombok and Fivush (1994) who reported that children acquired gender roles through reinforcement and modeling the behaviours of a variety of significant adults. These participants discussed how the combination of these influences would be used to socialize their own children for gender roles.

Education, in particular, was seen by several participants as a 'highway' to more open-minded ideas about gender roles, implying that their ideas may not be as flexible had they not obtained an education. For example, research by Bryant (2003) suggested that students' attitudes towards women's gender roles became less stereotypical and less conventional after four years of post-secondary education. Kiecolt and Acock (1988) and Snyder, Velasquez, Clark, and Means-Christensen (1997) also found that a mother's education was associated with more flexible gender roles.

Participants also mentioned the influences of siblings, occupations, their friends and their partners, and the media on their gender role ideas:

Participant #1
P: I grew up, I think much to the dismay of my mother as a tomboy, but, you

know I didn't, I didn't, uh, go for the pink frilly dresses and Barbie dolls I didn't know what to do with them, so I built them houses {laughs}. I climbed trees, and you know, things like that. Um, I guess it was just, you know, my playmate was my brother too, so that was an influence.

The media helped perpetuate gender role differences and gender stereotypes (Golombok & Fivush, 1994; Luecke-Aleska, Anderson, & Collins, 1995). However, positive female role models in books and on television, such as Nancy Drew or Murphy Brown, have helped by providing more flexible gender roles.

Religion, from a few participants, was associated with a set of beliefs that helped to perpetuate gender differences. One participant discussed her concern about raising her child in a church community where many of the patrons were very stereotypical in their attitudes and behaviours. She suggested that this could cause difficulties for children, especially as they grew older and tried to establish relationships with those who held more flexible attitudes. Indeed, Andersen (1997) found that religious beliefs had a significant impact on gender role attitude and behaviours.

A few of the participants discussed how they did not agree with some of the gender role ideas of their parents, particularly after they had been exposed to different ideas in school, from friends and the media. As well, several participants described how their first lesson in the world of gender roles became less significant to them as they became more educated on gender roles and gender differences, either from direct instruction (e.g. women's studies courses) or from watching the experiences of others. For example, one participant discussed how seeing degradation of women in Western society assisted in broadening her gender role ideas. Kiecolt and Acock (1988) found that gender role attitudes and behaviours were influenced very strongly during adolescence and young adulthood, when youth were beginning to think about their future and their career

aspirations. Of course, gender roles did change over time (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Belsky & Kelly, 1994; Murray, 1996). This was inconsistent with the work of Kiecolt and Acock (1988) who also found that maternal employment caused a primacy effect, where the strongest influence on children's gender role attitudes occurred before age six.

A number of participants discussed how their partners' gender roles were developed. While some of the male partners were still 'holding on' to a few of their traditional ideas about gender roles, participants suggested that exposure to the participants themselves, female siblings and female children helped their male partners to expand their gender role ideas:

Participant #9
> P: Oh yeah. I think so. He's pretty easy going, so. He worked in a daycare like when he was going to school, and I mean kids just play with everything. So, that's why I think maybe he's more relaxed about it. I mean, toys are toys, and so, that's why I think he'll be better with kids at a younger age....

Participant #12
> P: Yeah, but you know, like since being married, I mean I think he's probably lessened up on some things that I think he can give and take because it's me that does all the household repairs and all the painting and that kind of stuff. Not him at all. And so I think he's becoming a little bit, um, more relaxed in terms of those things as well...

Other participants mentioned that their partners had developed more flexible gender role ideas from working with members of the opposite sex, from their education, or from their own ideas about gender roles.

Theme 8 - Trying myths...but just for fun

This theme highlighted the participants' ideas about using myths to predict the sex of their baby and to hint at their ideas about gender role socialization. These myths related to assumptions about societal norms and included pregnancy or conception myths, dreams, and intuition. Such myths were used by different societies for different reasons,

and some societies have gone so far as to use them to 'influence' the outcome of

pregnancies:

Participant #5

    P: Well, I think it's because in so many cultures and traditionally too, people have had an investment in one gender or another. So you know, you sort of formulate things that you hope are going change the outcome. You know, if you really need sons or if you really need daughters.

Unfortunately, myths discussed by the participants in this study did not give a strong

indication about societal norms or expectations about gender roles. Instead, they

provided a hint at the preferences for an infant's sex, information about the value of girls

and boys in Western society, and about the idea of gender as a social construction.

Indeed, the construction of gender can begin even before birth, with parents choosing

names that have gendered meanings, or by talking about the child in ways that highlight

social stereotypes about the ways girls and boys behave (Andersen, 1997):

Participant #2

    I: What do you think of all of that?

    P: Um, well I first off as much as the next, you know. You'll believe in that myth stuff, folklore stuff…Um, meanwhile, my friend had done that needle and thread trick over my wrist, and it was, I think, circling or going back and forth, and it indicated I was gonna have a girl. And I just thought 'whatever', you know, I'll just see if it happens.

Participant #7

    P: Well just for fun, I checked the Chinese Conception chart.

    I: Oh you did?

    P: Yeah. My cousin and I both did. And, according to the conception chart, we're having a boy {laughs}. So, that's what I found was really interesting. We'll see.

Participant #7

    P: Um, I mean it, to like, it doesn't really matter whether it's a boy or a girl, but I just noticed that, um, on _____ 's (husband) side of the family, most of the first-born children are boys. Like about 99% of them, the first-born is a boy. _____ 's (husband) uncles, um, every single one of them, except for two, had their first

born were boys. Um, and one uncle doesn't even have any boys {laughs}. So he doesn't kind of really factor in. But, um, and then, you know, the cousins that have had children, um, there's one that hasn't had a first-born that was a boy. So, I mean, to me it's just deduction. It's just looking at genetics. Um…

Participant #9

I: Well let's talk a little bit about you becoming a mum for the first time. I've heard from actually from quite few people that when a woman becomes pregnant that she just knows if the baby is going to be a boy or a girl. So whether it's the activity level or how you're carrying, or things like that. What do you think about these ideas?

P: Well, I resort to chemical methods {laughs}. I did the Drano test…and the Drano test's a girl. So I'm doing research right now {laughs}, just trying to figure out if this actually works. But it's 7 for 7 so far.

I: Okay if it goes a certain way down the drain?

P: No, it's you just spit into it. Yeah, and it reacts chemically with your saliva. And, I don't know. It's been around forever, but I don't know if anyone's done stats on it to see how often it works. So it's worked seven times in a row for friends of mine, and {laughs} so we'll see. If it ever stops working, then I'll just stop believing it. But so far it's worked every time.

I: And so what is it saying right now?

P: Uh, girl. So you spit into it and if you're not pregnant or you're having a boy, it just, 'cause Drano's blue, the solution colour just stays blue. But if you're having a girl it just reacts and goes crazy and turns grey.

Some participants expressed a sense of disappointment over having one sex of baby over another. These participants suggested that there was a certain amount of pressure for the baby to be one sex or another:

Participant #4

I: But you were saying that both of you think it's a girl. Is it more like a gut feeling?

P: That's what I'm feeling I think. Well, I thought it was a girl, and then, or no, thought it was a boy at first I think, because everyone around us was having boys. And then I had a dream or something that it was a girl. And then like, 'I think it's girl'. And then I'm like, then I don't wanna let myself think that it's a girl, 'cause I think 'Oh there's so much pressure. So I'll be disappointing my dad or something {laughs}, 'I'm sorry. It's boy'. But we don't, I mean first child you

don't really care. We don't, we're happy either way.

Participant #10

> P: Everybody that sees me looks that I, I'm like I'm carrying a boy. Um, my dad and I think one other person thinks I'm carrying a girl. And that's only because my dad has four daughters and three granddaughters, and doesn't want to be disappointed. So, uh, I personally, I'm in the middle, 'cause I don't wanna hope for a boy and I don't wanna hope for a girl. Um, for my dad and for my husband, I want a little boy. But if it's a girl, I'll be happy.

By the participants stating they would like to have boys for their husbands or fathers implies that they saw some advantage by having a boy over a girl, or there was a value placed on having a boy versus a girl in their families.

Other participants discussed how dreams about the baby influenced their ideas about the sex of the baby. This included dreams experienced by the participants, their partners, or by significant people in their lives:

Participant #2

> P:…and I think about the eight month of my pregnancy I started having dreams about having a boy, having a boy growing up, having a son, breastfeeding a boy. So it's about three times I've had dreams about having a boy. So which was totally, you know, I didn't prefer one gender or another, I just 'wow, I dreamt about it'. …and then, uh, my mom, they say, you know, mother's intuition, (…). My mom thinks I have a girl. Everyone thinks I'm gonna have a girl except me. Like I think I could have a boy.

> I: Because these dreams…

> P: Yeah, even uh, the father thinks I'm gonna have a girl. So uh, but I think I'm gonna have a boy.

> I: Is it more like a gut feeling or an intuition-type of feeling?

> P: I think it's because of those dreams. Yeah, maybe gut feeling, I don't know. I mean who knows, like I could be wrong. But, I have a sense maybe it will be a boy {laughs}. Who knows?

Participant #11

> P: I know that I had friends, I actually just had a girlfriend who had a baby at the end of August. And I remember I asked her, I said, 'So, do you know what you're having?', and she said 'It's a girl'. I said, 'How do you know'? She said, 'I just

know'. Like she had, she said she had dreams of a girl. And I had another girlfriend, who, I'm her son's godmother, and when she was pregnant, she had two dreams. One was she found out, just after she found out she was pregnant, and one, uh, a few months before she delivered. And she dreamt the first one, she dreamt that she knew it was a boy. And in her second dream, it was like August, and she dreamt again about this baby, that she just delivered this baby, and she said, 'In my dream, I remember asking what day is it. Like what day is it'. And the nurse came up, and she was like, 'What day is it'? And the nurse said, 'Well it's November 1st, dear'. And _____ (female friend) said she woke up and remembered thinking, 'Ah, it can't because my due date isn't until November 22nd'. And sure enough she delivered _____ (godson) on November 1st. It was a boy on November 1st.

Participant #13

P: Um, other than that, I don't really think, don't think I've really had any dreams or anything. Not me, actually though, a cousin of mine {laughs}, before anybody even knew we were pregnant or before my husband and I knew, she had a dream that I was pregnant. So she called my mom, and she's like, 'Is _____ (participant) pregnant' {laughs}? And she was like, '*No*' {laughs}. And then, like a month later I said and we kind of timed it when I would have conceived and when she called and I would have been pregnant and I didn't even know.

Several participants indicated that while they did use myths to predict the sex of the baby, they did so mainly for amusement and not to accurately determine the sex. This was inconsistent with research by Walker and Conner (1993), whose participants believed they could tell the sex of their unborn child by instinct or intuition, through a dream, 'gambler's fallacy', family history, luck, fetal heartbeat, or a friend's beliefs. None of the participants in this study placed an absolute trust in their own intuition or their dreams.

Finally, participants mentioned the notion of having certain 'feelings' or a sense of intuition about the sex of the baby. This intuition was experienced by the participants directly or by people in their lives:

Participant #4

I: But you were saying that both of you think it's a girl. Is it more like a gut feeling?

P: That's what I'm feeling I think. Well, I thought it was a girl, and then, or no, thought it was a boy at first I think, because everyone around us was having boys. And then I had a dream or something that it was a girl. And then like, 'I think it's girl'. And then I'm like, then I don't wanna let myself think that it's a girl, 'cause I think 'Oh there's so much pressure. So I'll be disappointing my dad or something {laughs}, 'I'm sorry. It's boy'. But we don't, I mean first child you don't really care. We don't, we're happy either way.

Participant #8

P: Well, not to skew this but we do know the sex of the baby.

I: Oh, you do.

P: But before we knew, um, just on hunches, you know, when _____ (husband) and I would ask each other, 'What do you think?', we both said a girl. And we don't know why, you know, it's just, you're sort of first, 'We're pregnant. It's gonna be a girl' {laughs} kind of thing. And you don't, we're not really sure why we came up with that. In the meantime, we found out that it is a girl.

Participant #12

P: Mm-hmm. Well, I have to say first, _____ (husband) thinks it's a girl. But I think it's a boy. Um, and we were actually trying, we were talking about this last night. And, I don't think I know for any specific reason why I think it's a boy, but I think, I started thinking it was a boy because some of our close friends in Calgary just had a baby and it was a boy. And so just sort of starting to equate babies with boys. There's only boy babies {laughs). And I think that's sort of how I started to assume that we were having a boy.

I: Because that was more familiar?

P: That was more familiar. Yeah, yeah. And, um, and I think that sort of come out was, you know, a lot like I haven't bought any girl stuff at all. Like I've all, I've bought stuff that is probably more boyish. And actually somebody even told me in Old Navy, 'Oh you're obviously having a boy' because of what I was buying. You know, and so it just sort of came out subconsciously. But I think also, um, I mean I think most people have told me like our friends looking at, you know, our ultrasound, the pictures their diagnostic view is that it's a boy. They've discovered the unit {laughs}. And, um, you know, and, you know, carrying low so you must be having a boy. So, so like I said, I mean, I think there's not a specific reason, but just like the familiarity and it's sort of coming in all directions.

I: Are you getting sort of like an intuition or a gut-feeling about it as well?

P: Um…maybe a little bit, but I wouldn't say that it's very strong or anything like that. And I hope that we have a boy because I like the boy's names better than

the girls' names that we have. So yeah, yeah. But no not, I, I just think that we are, but I don't think it's based on anything.

The use of dreams and intuition by participants seemed to hint at issues of control. The idea of using dreams and intuition to predict the sex of the baby may have been to have control over an uncontrollable situation: Not knowing the sex of the baby implied a lack of control or power, and the use of dreams to predict the sex of the baby gave some power, or a sense of power, back to the mother.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this research project, including those associated with the sampling, timing of the interviews, my limited experience as an interviewer, and data recording.

I interviewed 13 participants for this project. I noticed that the data were becoming saturated after ten interviews. This may have been due to the particular participant sample that was recruited. The participants were a homogenous group; they were of similar age, and most were Caucasian, educated, and employed. The results may have been more diverse if I had recruited first-time expectant mothers who were recent immigrants or refugees, were from different geographical locations (e.g. Northern Manitoba), or were from different socio-economic backgrounds.

In addition, participants might not have given much thought to the gender role socialization of their infant. Specifically, they may not have been as concerned with the child rearing aspect at the time of the interview, as compared to more pressing concerns about labour and delivery and the preparations they needed to make within the home. Though each participant was aware of the purpose and general content of the interview beforehand, specific questions were not provided to them. After time to consider their

responses to these questions, or at a different time in their pregnancy, participants may have come to think differently about their answers.

There were also my own limitations as an interviewer. I gradually became more experienced and more relaxed with each subsequent interview, but for the first few interviews, I felt somewhat inexperienced and nervous. I may have missed opportunities to expand upon participant responses. I may also have been too eager for a response and not let the participant have enough time to think about their answers.

I was not able to seek clarification from interviewees after the interviews, and may have missed important content. For example, as I was analyzing the data, I had some difficulty determining the intended message from the transcribed interview. In some cases, the recording was poor, and in other cases the participant spoke quickly and I was not able to determine what exactly was said. I was the only coder, and I could not compare my results with another investigator.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

There were eight themes. The first described how the participants planned to socialize their children for gender roles by treating daughters and sons equally. The second theme described their perceptions about letting the personality of the child help guide gender role socialization. Theme three included letting sons and daughters try out roles that were associated or not associated with their gender. Participants described a need, in theme four, to protect girls and keep them dependent on parents. In the fifth theme, participants discussed their perceptions that girls could engage in activities and play with toys that were typically meant for boys, but the opposite was not appropriate. Theme six included the participants' beliefs that the biggest influence on their own gender role

socialization came from their own parents during childhood. However, they also admitted (theme seven) that parents were not the only influences; education and the media were also significant influences. Finally, participants described pregnancy myths they had heard of or used to hint at the baby's sex.

In general, the themes were consistent with the available literature. However, there were some inconsistencies. These results suggested that that there were some apparent gaps in the literature, in relation to the consistency of influences on gender role development and behaviour, as well as the means by which gender was predicted. Several participants described their childhood experiences as a catalyst for the change in gender roles they would encourage in their own children. This was inconsistent with research, which found that people parent as they were parented (Fagot et al., 1992). Participants discussed how their gender roles and gender role ideas had changed over time. However, Fagot and Hagan (1991) reported that once children had adopted stereotypical gender roles, usually before the age of six (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988), various influences such as, family, peers, and the media tended to reinforce their beliefs. Some participants discussed how they would be accepting of children trying on gender roles, but mainly when children were younger. This was inconsistent with research that found the *father's* differential treatment of children by sex or gender became more pronounced with older children (Pleck, 1997). Finally, participants indicated that they used myths mainly for amusement and not to accurately determine the sex of their baby. However, other research (Walker & Conner, 1993), reported perceptions of others who believed they could actually tell the sex of their unborn child by instinct or intuition, through a dream, 'gambler's fallacy', family history, luck, fetal heartbeat, or a friend's beliefs.

Gender roles are not consistent across cultures: What one person in one culture believes is acceptable behaviour for women and men may be different than the views of another person. It appears that there is no single answer to the question of 'where do we learn about gender roles'? Our lives are a culmination of experiences and influences, which are continually changing our ideas about gender and gender roles.

The final chapter offers a summary of this research project, as well as practice and research implications.

CHAPTER VI: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis project was to examine gender roles and gender role socialization from the perspectives of expectant first-time mothers. The participants were asked three questions during a semi-structured interview: (1) How did first-time expectant mothers plan to socialize their children for gender roles; (2) how did these mothers account for their approach to gender role socialization; and (3) did these mothers see their approach to gender role socialization as similar to or different from their partners?

Essentially, the participants planned to socialize their children for gender roles by treating daughters and sons equally, by letting the personality of the child guide gender role socialization, and by allowing their children to 'try on' different gender roles. However, participants also believed that girls could engage in activities and play with toys that were typically meant for boys, but the opposite was not true for boys. Furthermore, a general need to protect girls and keep them dependent on parents was discussed.

The participants accounted for their approaches to gender socialization through ideas that had been passed on from their parents during their childhood, but they admitted that parents were not the only resource from which to learn about gender roles. Secondary influences, such as education and the media, were also seen as being influences on the gender role ideas of the participants.

Overall, more than half of the participants perceived their partners as supporting and/or agreeing with their gender role ideas, while the remaining participants thought there could be the potential for disagreement with regards to the gender role socialization

of their children.

A feminist social constructivist perspective helped me understand that there was a continuous change in the perceptions of gendered behaviour among participants. Their own gender roles had changed over time and were not static, and they felt it was important to recognize that children's identities changed throughout life. Participants indicated that while they intended to raise their sons and daughters in ways that were not prescribed along stereotypical gender lines, there were barriers to doing so. These barriers included partners, other family members, children, the education system, as well as the media. These forces pushed for conformity along stereotypical gender lines. The participants had ideas about gender role socialization, and they expected that outside forces would exert a significant influence on their children. Many also expected their partners to have an influence. As a result, participants expected to experience tension between their ideas and the outside forces that would influence their child's gender role development. The pressures were also different for girls and boys. For example, certain activities and behaviours were 'okay for girls, but not okay for boys'. Boys were seen to have less flexibility than girls in gendered behaviour. Participants also perceived a higher social value associated with stereotypically masculine behaviours than stereotypically feminine behaviours. Overall, while mothers can have certain expectations for gender role socialization, other factors can influence the gendered behaviour of their children, and may produce considerable tension for them.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

As a result of this research project and talking to my participants, there are both practice and research implications.

Practice Implications

First-time expecting parents may benefit from knowing what is happening or going to happen while they are pregnant, and what to anticipate after the baby is born. This includes information about how they plan to parent, whether it makes (or made, in cases where the parents already know the baby's sex) a difference to them if they have a boy or girl, and how those involved in the care of the child can have or develop some consistent expectations. Given my discussions with participants, several appreciated the opportunity to think and talk about gender role socialization. Therefore, it may be quite useful to share this information with new parents during prenatal programs or classes.

The goals of the program could be to inform and educate parents about different perceptions of gender roles in North American society, and how they continue to change; the gender role socialization process, including parental, familial, and environmental influences on a child's gender role; and how masculine and feminine gender roles behaviours are valued or devalued in different groups.

As part of the curriculum, existing programs or classes could include a discussion of different parenting styles and perspectives, specifically focusing on treatment of boys and girls, and treatment of children by mothers and fathers. Each parent may have different ideas about parenting or gender roles, and it may be helpful to examine similarities and differences in gender role ideas before the birth of the child, as well as the intentions of the parents regarding gender role socialization of their children.

One part of the program could focus specifically on the dilemmas of gender role socialization faced by new parents. Although many parents, specifically mothers, may want to raise their sons and daughters equally, there are often barriers in society which

may influence or impact gender role socialization. The course could be a forum where parents could discuss the influences of partners, peers, other family members, the education system, and the media on gender roles. For example, course participants could be provided with a summary of the results from this thesis project. This would allow them to see that they are not alone in their ideas about gender roles and gender role socialization. Course participants could also develop a Gender Journal, in which they would take one week to write down ideas about how they intend to raise their children along gender lines, descriptions of the barriers that they encounter during the week (e.g. gendered toy commercials), examples of things they would or would not do as parents (e.g. allowing or not allowing their son and daughter to play hockey), and so on. The entries from this journal would be examined in the following class, allowing participants to generate a discussion about their gender role ideas and to list the potential barriers to gender role socialization. The participants could then develop their own list of possible ways to deal with these outside influences.

Research Implications

While in general there was a great deal of consistency between the results of this study and the available literature, there were some differences related to the idea that gender roles did not changing significantly as we grew older, the idea that myths could tell the sex of their unborn child, and that fathers' differential treatment of children by sex or gender may be more pronounced with older children. Future research should take into account the possibility that gender roles can and do change over time, the variability in use of prenatal tests used to determine the sex of an unborn baby, and that differential treatment along gender lines may be more pronounced with older children. Studies may

involve the participation of single or two-parent families, as well as other primary caregivers, at different points in time including during and after delivery, as well as after the child had reached school age. Cross-cultural studies would be helpful to understand pregnancy beliefs held, which could inform researchers about the value or roles of different genders in different communities. The stability of gender role influences and behaviour could also be examined through studies with children of different ages, their parents, and other significant influences on gender role development, such as teachers.

Conclusion

With this research, I believe I gained a clearer understanding of how parents socialize their children and how they see and think about gender role socialization. I also feel that I gained a better understanding of why parents believe it is acceptable or unacceptable for children to behave in certain gender-related ways, why parents have fears of them not conforming to societal expectations, and why parents fear them not 'fitting in'.

I believe that this research project has provided support for the idea that mothers feel that they have an important influence on the gender role socialization of their children. Participants were emphatic that their own gender role socialization experiences would affect the gender role socialization of their children. Where parents learn about gender role socialization, and from whom they learn about it may vary according to each individual. These ideas and attitudes are important and significant for the gender role socialization of male and female children.

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Appendix A

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CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

Are you pregnant and expecting your first child? Are you past the first trimester in your pregnancy? If you are, then you may be eligible to be a part of an exciting research opportunity.

As a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, I am interested in the knowledge held by first-time expectant mothers about gender roles. If you are a first-time expectant mother, I would like to speak to you.

Interviews will be conducted one time only, and will be tape recorded. Interviews may take place at the University of Manitoba, at your home, or other locations chosen by you. The discussion should take no more than one hour and thirty minutes. An honorarium is available at the end of the interview session.

Your involvement is voluntary, and your identity will be kept confidential. You may withdraw your participation at any time. The results of this interview will be used for the completion of a Master's thesis in the Department of Family Studies, and for further research publications.

If you wish to participate in this project, please feel free to reach me by phone or by email to arrange a time and a place for an interview. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kelly Andrushko, B.A., B.HEcol.(F. S.), M.Sc. Candidate
University of Manitoba
or
Email:

family
studies

Appendix B

Information for Participants

Dear Participant:

As a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, I am interested in the knowledge held by first-time expectant mothers about gender roles. If you are a first-time expectant mother, I would like to speak with you.

Interviews will be conducted at the University of Manitoba, participants' homes, or locations chosen by participants. The discussion should take no more than one hour and thirty minutes, and will be conducted one time only.

If you agree, the interview will be tape recorded in order to analyze the information more closely. Your identity as a participant will be completely confidential. The results of this interview will be used for the completion of a Master's thesis in the Department of Family Studies, and for further research publications.

You will not be asked to answer any questions you find objectionable, and you are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without personal consequence. An honorarium will be made available at the end of the interview. Your participation can contribute to a better understanding of gender role socialization processes.

If you wish to participate in this project, please write your name and phone number on the attached consent form. I will contact you to arrange a time and place for the interview. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or my thesis advisor. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kelly Andrushko, B.A., BHEcol. (F.S.)

Principle Investigator	**Thesis Advisor**
Kelly Andrushko	Nancy Higgitt, Ph.D
Graduate Student	Professor
University of Manitoba	Department of Family Studies
Phone: or	University of Manitoba
Email:	Phone: (204) 474- 8053
	Email: higgitt@ms.umanitoba.ca

Contact Form

I understand that my name and phone number will be given to Kelly Andrushko, a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. She will contact me by telephone. I will be invited to be interviewed about my attitudes and beliefs about gender role socialization.

I understand that I have the right to refuse to be interviewed and I will not be contacted again.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

What is a good time to contact you at this number? _____

_____

_____

Appendix C

Topical Guideline

1. I would like you to imagine that you are the narrator of a snapshot of your life today. From this perspective, tell me a short story about your life.
   - Who they are?
   - Who is in the snapshot?
   - Where are they at in their life?

2. I would like you to talk about becoming a mother for the first time. I have heard from several people that when a woman becomes pregnant, she "just knows" if the baby is going to be a boy or a girl. Some say it is because of the way the baby is carried, or because of the baby's activity level. I would like to understand these ideas better from your point of view. Tell me about your ideas.
   - What has been happening to make you believe/disbelieve these ideas?

   a) I have also heard that women can help determine the sex of their baby by wearing pink or blue throughout their pregnancy, by checking with a Chinese conception chart, or by eating certain foods. What do you think about this?

3. I would like to talk about the parenting you are going to do once the baby is born. There are a lot of theories about where our ideas about child rearing originate. Often we learn from our parents and how they raised us, we learn from our friends with children, we learn from what we are taught in school, or we learn from the families on television and in the movies. What are your ideas about this?
   - Have their ideas changed over the years? If so, why? How?

4. I am interested in what you have been thinking about how you are going to raise the baby if it is a boy or if it is a girl.

   a) How do you think your ideas at the moment will impact on raising your child?
   - What are the benefits/consequences of these ideas?

   b) There are a lot of ideas about how to raise boys and girls. Some people think that it is ok to let boys play dress-up or play with dolls, and some think that it is ok to let girls play hockey and play with G.I. Joes. What are your ideas about this?
   - How were you raised?

5. I would like you to imagine that you are sharing this pregnancy with a partner. Pretend that you are your partner, the other parent of this baby. What kinds of ideas do you think your partner would have about raising boys and girls?
   - How do you think they would want to raise this baby if it's a boy or if it's a girl?

Appendix D

I: Yeah, it does.

P: (…) roles. I think a woman is like 30, and it used to be what, early twenties (…). It sure has changed (…).

I: It's funny how it does that. Now we're wanting to do other things before children like get an education, you know, to have a career, things like that.

P: Yeah. Be more independent.

I: Exactly. I mean raising a family and everything is still very important to us, but it's, it's more…

P: It's not a priority now.

I: No, exactly.

P: Like education, career, you know, you want to satisfy your wants and needs first before settling down.

I: Right. Yeah. Okay, um, well I've been telling you my ideas are really concentrating on gender roles. So I'm interested in what you've been thinking about how you want to raise this baby if it's boy or a girl.

P: Um, so like how I would raise a boy?

I: So whether it's, um, discipline, or the toys you buy, or, um, the rules. Things like that.

P: Oh yeah. Um, I know there's a lot of difference in like how we were raised. I had two brothers and my parents were very different people (…) For us, um, I really (…). I don't encourage it because it's, then you, then you start kids create stereotypes. And I think it's very unfair that, um, girls and boys are treated unequally. Just because I was treated unfairly. 'Oh you have to be home before dark', 'Oh, you can't go out to a party', or 'you can't…'. Meanwhile, my brother gets away with everything, he goes out, he does a lot more, he experimented with drugs and alcohol earlier than I did. So, um, in some ways he's really careless. He goes off and does his own thing, even though my parents were very lenient. But, uh, I think if I have a girl, um, I'm just gonna…or a boy, I'm gonna teach them both that you have to respect the rules, there's gonna be

---

Handwritten margin notes:

less dependence on others, more dependence on yourself

Change in societal values → family not a priority, society becoming separated

Implies that career & education are the major factors in the delay to have kids

← Personal interests first before family

→ If you aren't getting an education & a career, might as well have kids

- The idea was that we were supposed to do & think about family was all & acknowledgement of needs & wants. There wasn't

more like a man

If we don't have a family, is it easier to separate ourselves from others?

Are we becoming more selfish?

recognizes stereotypes can be built/maintained by family

Parents were traditional → encouraged gender differences

girls need protection, boys run free (can take care of themselves)

Theme 3
Equal tx
Expansion of roles for women

parents can create stereotypes & gender differences

rules were stricter for girls, not for boys.

I: Now I know you said he's more egalitarian.

P: He would be very egalitarian, and I, and I think he will be accepting and loving of the child no matter what. But when he kind of discuss it 'cause I ask him sometimes, 'What if, what if our boy wants to be a ballet dancer'? 'Cause I'd have no problem with that, 'cause you know there's a lot of male dancers. I mean it's kind of a crazy world to get into with other perspectives {laughs}. But you know, from the idea of that I find male dancers very masculine, very, you know, lot of strength, lot of whatever. Whereas he grew up…football. Whereas I'm a little more nervous about the football, because like the whole locker room thing, the whole peer pressure from that perspective. So it'll, so the way we kind of resolved that is, we say, 'Well, we'll see what our child's interested in', and then try and encourage them in that way, instead of necessarily putting them in one sport over the other. So when he's teasing, yeah, he talks about hunting and fishing or football, and whatever. But I think, I think when it comes down to it, I'm pretty sure whatever our child was be interested in, he would be very supportive.

I: So you would allow them, give them a choice.

P: Yeah, yeah.

I: So say they have the opportunity to go to you know, hockey or gymnastics. That would be fine with both of you?

P: I think so. I think {laughs} hockey he would try to discourage just because it's so expensive. I mean a lot of football clubs will supply the equipment, or at least they did when _____ (husband) was growing up. A lot of the, a lot of the community clubs will supply equipment. Whereas with hockey you've got to buy it all, and it's so expensive. And there's practices like three, four times a week. And we would like our child, we discussed this, we would like our kids to be, we don't want to be one of those, you know one of those crazy busy families that every night is just like bang, bang, bang, scheduled in and you gotta be just every minute is just _____ (end tape).

Egal w/ kids, but what about w/ marriage?

Implies that people assume male dancers are @ gay or less masculine.

Child's choice/Interest

pursuing own interests
→ aware that she is less traditional than he is, so they have resolved to base sports & activities on the child's interests, not on gender.

Restricting choice of sport based on cost & time commitment.

I: So I mean, if you didn't know, you'd still like to approach it very neutral like.

P: Oh yeah. Definitely.

I: Do you think you'd be the same with like, um, say like curfews, or things like that. Like if, you know, both a boy or a girl had to be home by 11, or something like that?

P: Um, interesting that when growing up I know that, I have an older brother, so I think things were a lot tighter with him. I'm four years younger, so I think I managed to loosen things up a lot. You know, with curfews, going out, taking the car, things like that that I know that I could see the difference. No, you know where just, hypothetically speaking, he had to be home at 11, I managed to be able make it 12, or whatever. And not sure why that happened, if it was second child or I was a relatively good kid so they trusted me. Like I don't know what the reasoning behind it was but I could see you know, standing back, that. "Oh, I'm getting more space here than my brother did".

So, thinking now with our child, I don't know if we'll, you know, put a tighter hold on things because it's a girl, or because she's just the first born. I think it might have more to do with first born, but...

Naivety of "first child"

I: You have a little bit more experience by the time the second one is born.

P: Exactly. Yeah, we can loosen our grip. Yeah, a little bit. I don't know. If I, like my first instinct are also for a teenager is to be more protective of a girl. I don't know where did that comes from, but...

I: That's your own idea.

Age as influence

P: That's my own idea. Yeah, to be more protective of a girl, but...

I: Do you mean like with restrictions on where they're allowed to go, or even just what time they're allowed to be back?

P: Yeah, Yeah, I would say so, just, um, yeah, going out on their own at that, when they're at that age I think. You know being alone.

6

Equal tx

Birth order as influence on parenting - more restrictions on her brother as older order

Gender as influence on parenting

↳ diff in parenting may be due to multiple factors, such as gender, birth order, personality [protect girls]

↳ unsure if h feelings are due to sex or birth order

↓

Gender diff for teenagers (Girls need protect + boys take care of themselves

I: Um well, what about, I'm really interested in what you've been thinking about in terms of what you'd like to do once the baby's born, if it's a boy or a girl. Um, how are you going to raise the baby if it's a boy or a girl? Or have you given that much thought?

P: Like how would I raise it differently if it's a boy versus a girl?

I: Yeah, um, some of the examples I've been giving mums is like discipline or rules or chores, things like that. Do you have any ideas about, um, if you'd like to do things differently if it's a boy or a girl, or the same?

P: Probably the same. Yeah I can't see, um, especially the way things have been changing now with roles in the home either. I don't think I would specifically say the girl would be learning how to do dishes, and the boy would be doing (...). No (...) just yeah, saying regardless of (...).

Equal tx
Acknowledges that roles are becoming more flexible

I: Okay, you'd think that well the chores need to be done so somebody needs to do it regardless.

P: Mm-hmm. 'Cause if you end up having like four girls or something {laughs}. Yeah, I think it would be pretty much the same

I: Okay what about curfews? I've heard a lot of different ideas about curfews whether, you know, it's a boy or girl. So, some people have said, 'Well we wanna put a little bit more restriction on your girl so, she has to come home earlier than her brother". What, um, what do you think about that?

P: I haven't really thought about it 'cause that's when they're older. But, I don't know that I would make any different, because I wouldn't necessarily let a boy stay out two hours later than I would let a girl stay out. So, um, yeah, I don't really know. If I had one of each, you can't really make the times different at different ages, I don't think, so.

Equal tx

consistent parenting = control

egalitarian parenting

I: You think you sort of, what you do for one you have to do for both?

P: Yeah keep it consistent.

P: Yeah, I mean, you know, there's nothing wrong with that at all. Um, but I think that those toys, you know would, I mean, they would be gender different. Like it would just happen. But no like I'm not opposed to that. Um, I mean, with, um, like with sports and all that kind of thing, I mean, you know, I think it's okay for, you know, like I'd love to put my little boy in gymnastics or something like that, you know, because of the fun and 'cause of what it can teach them and stuff. But say _____ (husband), it's like, 'No that's a girl's thing'. And…

I: Has he seen how muscular some of those gymnasts are?

P: I know. I know. You know, so when they're younger, and even, you know, with things like figure skating and that kind of thing, I'd be fine with it. I think when they were older, I'd have a harder time with it. You know, if my 16-year-old son wanted to go into figure skating or ballet, I would have a harder time with that. Like I just know that I would. You know, because it's not to me what, you know, I would see as, as masculine. *why is there a problem?*

I: Even though it's a very physically strenuous sport?

P: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, no, I know that I would have troubles with that. But, um, but yeah, like if my daughter wanted to go into hockey, I'd probably not encourage it just because of a whole bunch of other reasons, you know.

I: The violence and whatever else.

P: Yeah, and just the hours and all that kind of thing. But, I mean I wouldn't have as a big a problem with that.

I: What about things like chores or rules or like I said discipline. Some of the mums I talked to said that they believe there should be certain cores for girls certain chores for boys, or even like curfews. They said they trusted their sons more to stay out later. What have you guys talked about in terms of that?

P: Mm-hmm. Um, yeah, we haven't talked about a whole great deal about that. But I mean, thinking like I grew up and I've never mowed a lawn.

Handwritten margin notes:

→ Gender differences 'natural'

Part. OK w/ cross gender behav.

OK CGB when young, but not when older

Age as influence

+ Contradiction

more acceptance for young boys to try on diff roles b/c "they don't know any better"

OK for girls…

not as much of a problem w/ daughter wanting to go into hockey than son wanting to go into ballet

Jack of hearts ✓

knowing what to expect gives person control

anybody about it and getting any people's feedback. So I was really getting worried about a whole lot of things. Like anything that would happen from two months pregnant to delivery to after. And all _____(husband) said was, 'Well, you know what. It's gonna be okay. The only thing I'm worried about is not getting enough sleep' {laughs}. So that's his big thing. He's pretty, and he's yeah, I think he would probably say, 'Well, we'll figure it out when it comes'. He's a pretty, you know, kind of man of few words, calm and cool, and doesn't worry about things too much. So, um, his views I guess on being a father and raising kids, um, probably just, like he's pretty easy going. Like, 'Well, if she wants to do this, then she can. If he wants to do that, well then he can'. You know, like, 'If she wants to learn how to change a tire, I'll show her'. 'Doesn't matter if she doesn't want to learn. I'm not gonna force her'. That kind of thing. Yeah, he's pretty much just kind of take it as it comes. Um, we've talked about, like teaching them, um, like the religious background and stuff like that. And I said, 'Well, I want to them to learn kind of just the Catholic background, and different traditions with that and stuff'. And he's like, 'I'm quite open to that. You go ahead'. He said, 'But if they ask me what I think, I'm not gonna lie to them' and tell them. He's gonna say, 'Well you know what'? You know like he doesn't really believe in anything, and he doesn't have a strong religious background at all. He said, 'I'm not gonna lie to them and tell them that they have to go to church because there's a god and you have to pray and stuff like that'. So, he's very open and honest, and I think that's how he'll be as a parent, and easy-going, and kids fall and scrape their knees and don't make a big deal about it because it's gonna happen, and they're gonna get over it. So yeah, that's pretty much his take on life I think. 'We'll take it as it comes', kind of thing. So, and I don't think he has too many worries. Like I think he feels pretty confident in us as parents and in himself and in like calling his mom if he has questions ask her what to do. So, yeah.

Husband accepting of flexible gender roles.
← equal opp for boys & girls

I: Do you sort of think that he'll have sort of like the same viewpoints whether it's boy or a girl? Like, 'Yeah, okay. Girls can do this. Boys can do that. Whatever. Sounds good. You know, they'll sort of figure it out on their own'. Is that sort of his perspective?

] P. & husband total opposites in parenting, but P. is trying to be more like husband

P: I think so too. Um, maybe if you asked him more of the direct questions, like, 'Would you buy your son a Barbie'? I think maybe he would, you know, kind of cornered maybe not do that so openly, kind of stuff.

Encourage exploration only certain roles

Appendix E

Gender Role Attitudes and Beliefs of Expectant First-Time Mothers

Researcher: Kelly Andrushko

Consent Form: Part A

The objective of this research project is to better understand how women use pregnancy myths, prior knowledge, experience, and personal attitudes and beliefs to explain their ideas and thoughts about gender role socialization

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

This interview may be conducted at the University of Manitoba, at your home, or at another location of your choice. The discussion should take no more than one hour and thirty minutes, and will be conducted one time only. If you agree, the interview will be tape recorded in order to analyze the information more closely.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification of new information throughout your participation.

Your participation in this research project will not involve any potential risk, whether it is physical or psychological. At no time will deception or harm be used in this project to gain access to information.

Consent Form: Part B

I, _____, agree to be a participant in the study about the gender role socialization attitudes and beliefs of expectant first-time mothers.

I have read the information sheet. I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, the information will be used for research purposes. Any information I disclose will be kept confidential. My identity will not be revealed in written reports of this research, and will only be known to the primary researcher, Kelly Andrushko. I am aware that any reference to myself as a participant in the written reports will be in the form of a number or a pseudonym. I am aware that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and that I may withdraw my participation at any time without consequence.

If I agree to participate, the interview will be tape recorded in order to analyze the information more closely. I understand that the results of this interview will be used for the completion of a Master's thesis in the Department of Family Studies.

I understand that I will be able to debrief with the researcher following the interview. I also understand that I will receive compensation for my participation. I will also have access to a summary of the research findings at the end of the thesis project.

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements for the degree Master of Science. I may contact the researcher, Kelly Andrushko   or her advisor Dr. Nancy Higgitt   , if I have any questions or concerns.

I understand that this research has been approved by the Human Subject Research Ethics Committee of the University of Manitoba. Any questions or concerns can be directed to the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Names (please print): _____   _____

Signatures (in ink):   _____   _____

Date: _____   Witness: _____

Appendix F

Coding Rules

Rule 1. All 13 interviews must be coded.

Rule 2. In order to be coded, data must answer at least one of the three research questions.

Rule 3. Codes must be simple words or short phrases. No numbers will be used. For example, "Dreams", "Equal treatment", and "Okay for girls" would be accepted.

Rule 4. Codes can be applied to any part of the transcribed interviews.

Rule 5. Codes can be applied to the interviewer remarks, as long as they are a paraphrase of the participant's remarks or are repeating the participant's remarks.

Rule 6. Codes cannot be words or phrases that have hidden meanings. For example, the code 'Education' does not provide enough information for effective coding, but 'Education as influence on parenting and gender role socialization' is sufficient.

Appendix G

Final Category Breakdown

1. Breaking away from traditional roles and societal expectations
- includes preliminary categories: Equal opportunities for boys and girls
Equal treatment of boys and girls
'Trying on' different gender roles
Pursuing own interests

Description:
- gender differences are constructed and are learned
- gender differences are not biological and are not universal
- gender roles can be expanded or narrowed
- gender roles are flexible and can be changed ('we are not controlled by the larger society')

2. Sticking with traditional roles and societal expectations
- includes preliminary categories: Gender differences are 'natural' or expected
Girls need protection, boys can take care of themselves

Description:
- gender differences are 'natural' or biological
- gender roles are fairly rigid, and cannot/should not be changed
- gender roles stay the same for the successful functioning of society)'we are controlled by society')

3. Okay for girls, not okay for boys
- no preliminary categories combined; category distinct from the rest

Description:
- societal acceptance of girls/women 'trying on' different gender roles, specifically those typically performed by boys/men
- societal intolerance of boys/men 'trying on' different gender roles, specifically those typically performed by girls/women
- there are no negative consequences for girls/women, but there are negative consequences for boys/men
- this category is a mix of the first two categories, where there is an indication of breaking away from some traditional roles for girls/women, but there is a hesitation or refusal to break from traditional roles for boys/men

4. Environmental influence on parenting and gender role socialization
- includes preliminary categories: Age of child as influence
Personality of child as influence
Media/TV as influence
Toys as influence

Description:

- parenting and gender roles ideas are influenced by factors that are not a result of the direct experience of the participant
- parenting and gender role ideas are influenced by factors not in direct control of the participant

5. Personal experience as influence on parenting and gender role socialization
- includes preliminary categories: Age of participant as influence
                              Education as influence
                              Religion as influence
                              Personality of parent as influence
                              'Practicing' parenting

Description:
- parenting and gender role ideas are influenced by factors that are a direct result of the experience of the participant
- parenting and gender role ideas are influenced by factors that the participant has some control over or choice in
- the experience may have occurred during childhood, adolescence or adulthood
- the experience has helped to shape their parenting and gender role ideas
- the experience has influenced their personality

6. Lack of control (over pregnancy, parenting or gender role socialization)
- includes preliminary categories: Biology is destiny
                              Age at conception
                              Timing of conception
                              Ease of conception

Description:
- parents can socialize their children for gender roles, but the child's gender role may change depending on the influence of peers, the media, the education system, etc.
- the feeling of a lack of control contributes to a sense of powerlessness, and may lead the participant to use resources that help return a sense of the control; the resources used may provide a hint at the gender role ideas of the participant
- conception and pregnancy difficulties may have an effect on parenting and gender role ideas

7. Control (over pregnancy, parenting or gender role socialization)
- includes preliminary categories: Trying myths…but just for fun
                              Intuition as a predictor of the sex of the baby
                              Dreams as a predictor of the sex of the baby
                              Knowing what to expect

Description:
- having control over an uncontrollable situation

- the methods used to determine the sex of the baby may provide a hint at the gender role ideas of the participant
- being prepared for parenting and gender role socialization gives parents a sense of control
- knowing what to expect and using techniques for predicting the sex of the baby provide a sense of control

8. Similar to partner's ideas
- no preliminary categories combined; category distinct from the rest

Description:
- the participant's parenting and gender role ideas were similar to those of their partner's.
- parenting and gender role ideas similarities could be non-traditional or traditional.

9. Different from partner's ideas
- no preliminary categories combined; category distinct from the rest

Description:
- the participant's parenting and gender role ideas were different from those of their partner's
- parenting and gender role ideas differences could be non-traditional or traditional

Appendix H

Content Analysis Examples

For each of the eight themes, excerpts from the participant interviews are provided.

These quotes help to support my reasoning behind each theme. In addition, the quotes

utilized in this appendix will be followed by a brief description. These descriptions will

highlight specific words, sentences or ideas that are unique to the section, which provide

support for the theme, and which contribute to the overall content analysis.

Theme 1 - Equal treatment and opportunities for girls and boys

Participant #6
>P: But I think, I mean that's how we would like to raise our kids. Just there is no, no, no sex is superior to the other.

This statement implies that the gender differences in society make men and women superior and inferior to one another in different aspects (e.g.: women – childrearing, men – home repairs). By the participant not maintaining these differences in her home, implies that these differences can be changed, therefore they are learned.

Participant #3
>P: We'll aim for this, for equal treatment.

By stating "we'll aim for this", implies that plans for socialization can change, and the equal treatment of sons and daughters may not come about, regardless of the parents' intentions. For example, a child's personality or their age could influence the treatment they receive relative to other siblings.

Participant #12
>P:...I think that chores and stuff around the house should be shared, um, with both boys and girls. I think a girl should learn how to mow the lawn. And, you know, talking to a guy friend at work, I mean his mum taught him to sew, and how to do this and that, and I mean, you know, like I think that's, that's very valid. At least learn how to sew on a button or something like that.

By suggesting that a child should learn certain tasks not typically associated with one's gender, the participant attributes a value to these roles or behaviours. However, in discussing the idea of a boy learning how to sew, she minimizes the amount of learning and the depth of application that he would need. For example, she states that a boy should learn how to sew, but then uses the words "at least", implying that they may not be expected to learn as much about sewing as would a girl. As well, by using the words "at least" implies that this activity is not typically performed by males.

Participant #4
>P: ...it will be what you do for one, you do for them all, kind of thing. Hard to say though {laughs}. I think. Well, ideally that's what you want. I don't want to be,

'Well you're a boy, so…'. Boys can get in more trouble {laughs}.

I: Don't want to cause a lot of sibling rivalry either.

P: No. I think they'll be the same, like as far as all that kind of stuff goes, and chores and stuff goes. Like, 'These are your chores, these are your chores', like you have four chores each or whatever. I don't necessarily know like how you would divide them, but whatever.

I: But as long as they're equal you're fine with that?

P: Yeah, or yeah (…).

While the participant discusses the idea of children being equally responsible for household chores and having consistent parenting between sons and daughters, she rationalizes her previous statements by suggesting that "Boys can get in more trouble". This implies that there are gender differences between boys and girls, and boys need to be more restricted in their activities. This contradicts her previous statements about equality.

Participant #9

I: Do you have any ideas about, um, if you'd like to do things differently if it's a boy or a girl, or the same?

P: Probably the same. Yeah I can't see, um, especially the way things have been changing now with roles in the home either. I don't think I would specifically say the girl would be learning how to do dishes, and the boy would be doing (…). No (…) just yeah, saying regardless of (…).

By suggesting that gender roles are changing implies that the participant is more accepting of men and women 'trying on' different gender roles.

Participant #6

I: But if you had, say you had a boy and a girl, um, and they shared each other's toys. Like the girl was playing with trucks and the boy was playing with dolls, you would be fine with that?

P: I would be fine with that. Yeah…kids'll do whatever. And it also fits in with I don't necessarily want our kids to feel like, 'Oh I'm a girl, therefore I must, you know, I'm restricted to these things'. Yeah.

The participant attributes her acceptance of children 'trying on' different gender roles to the educational nature of their play, and to the fact that she does not want her children to feel they are restricted by their gender. She also suggests that this play is due to the personal interests of the child, as indicated by her statement, "kids'll do whatever". This suggests two ideas: that a child's personality can be more of an influence than gender; and that children are gender-blind, specifically to toys and activities, until they are taught about gender differences.

Participant #4

> P: ...Like the kids, it doesn't really matter. I don't think either way it's gonna be...well, we're both into sports a lot. So either way, girl or boy, they're probably gonna play, like you know, encouraged to play sports. I'm sure. Most kids seem to be into that. Now, maybe it just depends on the sport maybe if it's girl or boy. I don't know. But, it seems like girls and boys play all the same sports anyways, so they'll...I don't know.

While the participant admits boys and girls all seem to be playing the same sports, she does contradict herself by stating "maybe it just depends on the sport maybe if it's girl or boy".

Participant #7

> I: What about discipline or rules or chores? How do you think you'd like to do things (...) for a boy or girl or both?

> P: Really, I don't know, I, well at this point I don't think I would do any different, either or. Um, you know, I would, I would, um, still ask my young boy to come and help me with dishes, you know, or, or do a little bit of vacuuming, dusting, um, and that's...I was taught at a fairly young age how to drive the lawn mower {laughs}. So, that's another bonus of being in the country...yeah, I mean, I don't know in that sense like chores wise if I would do anything different for a boy or a girl, um...

By using the words "young boy" implies that the participant will encourage her children to perform these responsibilities from a young age.

Participant #3

> P: I guess in the younger years whether it's a boy or girl (...), they'll be out fishing and boating, and I don't know about hunt...what _____'s (husband) gonna do about hunting. I don't know if I want my daughter out there {laughs}. But I guess I was. My dad did take me a few times when I was little...I don't think it's gonna matter if it's a boy or girl, they'll be out there, yeah, just doing the same thing. Yeah. I've always been more of a tomboy than most, I guess.

The participant discusses how she would like to include all her children in family activities, regardless of gender. However, she contradicts her previous statement by suggesting that she does not want her daughter to participate in hunting, a stereotypically masculine activity. But, she does admit that she did this same activity when she was younger. This suggests that she recognizes her contradiction, and realizes that she cannot argue with wanting to restrict her daughter from something she herself did.
The participant also places an age restriction on these activities by using the words "younger" and "little", implying that these behaviours are most accepted or tolerated when children are quite young. The sense is that young children can 'get away with' playing different gender roles. Their age is an excuse for their behaviour: they are young, therefore they don't know any better.

Participant #1

    P: Um, but there are a lot of things that I didn't try growing up because, you know, if you weren't taught it at home and that kind of thing. Like I wish I had done more sports, but by the time people were doing sports, a lot of kids had done them at home already. And when you're going in, you're like a 'newbie', you know, a starter and everyone else has been doing this for years already, so. Um, I guess I want my children, regardless of gender, to enjoy those kind of activities and to enjoy them at home already. That's where my husband will play a good part too, 'cause he's very athletic and just enjoys that kind of thing, and really more outdoorsy things, and, and again equally with boys and girls. When I look at his family, he has a brother and his sister and his sister is very much that she can do anything that the guys can do. And probably pushes harder to do just as good if not better than them, you know, maybe that's overkill at some points, you know (...). But just having those kind of opportunities, and just, yeah, challenging them equally, and like you say, I mean either, either gender can grow up to do whatever they want and shouldn't feel impacted by gender and (...) for that.

The participant discusses providing her children equally with opportunities for physical activities. She hints that her husband will be the primary teacher of these activities, as she herself did not have the opportunity to try them growing up. The participant also discusses her sister-in-law's perspective that she can compete equally with men. This may have been an important influence on her brother's gender role ideas. The participant suggests some of this behaviour may be "overkill", implying that her sister-in-law is constantly trying to prove herself equal to or better than men.

Theme 2- Personality of child as influence on parenting and gender role socialization

Participant #11

    P: But there's also some kids that, I have a girlfriend, who does have a girl and a boy. And she tried not to socialize them into the typical girl and boy route. But yet her daughter is very, wants to wear dresses and the frillier the better. And her son is, he is like, he's a man's man at five years old. Um, and yet she just said, 'I tried not to do that'. She said, 'But that's just who they are'...that's their personality. So that's actually another interesting conversation that we had is, you may not try to do that but sometimes that's just who they are...yeah. And you just accept it and say, 'Okay. Let's deal with this'. I mean, you know, they may not want to learn how to do plumbing and electrical. My girlfriend does that. She can do plumbing and electrical and all that other stuff. But yet her daughter wants nothing to do with it. You know, so it depends on the personality of the child and also just being able to accept them.

Participant #5

    P: Of course it's, it's surprising because I, I have a very good friend who pretty, pretty much has the similar beliefs and she has one boy and one girl. And of course the girl has turned out to {laughs} wear nothing but dresses {laughs}. And you know, she, you know which is fine. That's what she wants to do. Goodness knows she never got that kind of influence from her mom. You know it's just

something that came, um, she just developed all on her own, you know.

I: Really?

P: Yeah, yeah. She, she's got a very strong personality and wearing dresses is...

I: Is what she wants.

P: Is what she wants, and by golly she does it. So she just turned 7, and yeah, yeah. So I think that's funny 'cause we can have all the intentions and whatever that we want, but this is still a whole other person. So you sort of have to take your cues from what they want too, right {laughs}?

Both participants state that the personal interest of the child is stronger than the will of the parent. This implies that personality may be a stronger influence than sex or gender.

Participant #11

P: But I'm also hoping to...not only like let them be okay with being who they are. Like, 'Who you are is okay. Um, and you can do anything and I believe in you', and I want my kids to know that. But at the same time, I know when they are around other kids in school that sometimes there are kids, there are gonna be girls who are very frilly girly-girls, and, um, there are gonna be boys who are gonna say, 'Oh you're wearing a light blue shirt. You must be a fag'. Um, I think, I don't know if those are necessarily the norms, but I think you're always gonna encounter at least one. You're gonna always encounter one frilly person and one person, like one of the extreme opposite. Um, and I hopefully, I want my kids to know that its' okay to be who you are...like about 8 to 15, you're starting to figure out sort of who you're, like your personality is really developed, and you are who you are, and it's just a matter of being okay with who you are and not letting anyone else dictate, 'Oh well, you're a girl and you shouldn't do that because girls don't do that'.

The participant states that regardless of how comfortable children are with their own identities, there will be peers who follow more of the stereotypical roles and will try to get them to modify their behaviour to fit in with the crowd. She suggests that it is those children who fit the stereotypical role of male and female who are the most likely to want to change those individuals who are different. She suggests that it is the child's choice whether or not they conform to societal expectations or pursue their own interests.

Participant #5

P: Um, you know, I don't really think when raising a boy or a girl, I don't really think in terms of, you know, sports or hobbies or, you know, other stuff like that. Like it's, I really think of it more as, um, supporting whatever interests they're gonna have.

I: Right. Whether it's a boy or a girl?

P: Yeah. Whether it's a boy or a girl. And so many of these things have come together almost, you know, much more co-ed than they were when, when, when I was growing up. So you know, if a girl's interested in soccer, great. If a boy's interested in dance, great. Like you know, there's no, no need to either push in one direction or worry about, I think the direction that they want to take...um, you know, um, just being courteous and just all those kinds of things, rather than the straight gender.

The participant suggests that parents often "push" their children into specific activities based on sex or gender, based on a concern that they may choose the 'inappropriate' activity. This implies that there is value to being one sex or another, and there is something to gain by exhibiting the socially 'appropriate' behaviour.

Participant #8

P: I'm sure most of his ideas, a lot of ideas come from his parents, but I think majority of his ideas just come from himself, his own personal ideas and thoughts. Um, I mean nobody in his house was ever telling him to vacuum. He did it because he liked things clean, so that was his own personal choice, and he doesn't see a problem in doing that. So I think a lot of things that he does and he'll do with our children are based just on his own beliefs.

I: So he never really had any restrictions placed on him as to activities? So, for example, like you were saying no one would tell him about vacuuming. He just did it. Was there ever anything that you know of in his house that, 'Okay, you know, you should be doing this because you're a guy'?

P: I know that he had said he had to do a lot of outside type things whereas his sister didn't. He has said things like that. Um, and I think he always questioned it, 'Why? Why is she inside and I'm outside'? You know, because he's got a very open-minded, you know, 'She's older, she's just as strong as I am. She can do the same thing', kind of thing. So, yeah I think he always questioned it.

The participant states that her husband was raised in a 'traditional' home where his mother and sister did the majority of domestic tasks. She suggests that he has always questioned the gender differences he was raised with, primarily because he could not see any physical differences between himself and his sister. Therefore, his question was, 'If they are equals, why are there gender differences'? The participant states that as an adult, he is more non-traditional, such that he does vacuuming and cleaning

Participant #13

P: But, yeah I think he'll be open to doing whatever. If they wanna do, if that's what their interests are, then let them do it. If his daughter is gonna be a little girly-girl, and wanna wear pink princess dresses, then, you know, go to ballet class, that's fine. Don't have to be a, you know a hockey player, a tough girl if she doesn't want to be.

I: He's looking more like personality?

P: Yeah, yeah. I think so.

The participant suggests that her husband's parenting will be more influenced by the children's personality than their sex or gender. She also states that he will be more concerned with letting them pursue their own interests, with regards to activities, than on restricting them by sex or gender.

Participant #5

P: Yeah, I think what I've seen sometimes too I, it doesn't seem to really happen with women, but it kinda, it seems to happen with the husband or the male partner, where they become very alarmed when they see boys engaged in certain activities. And yeah, a friend of mine {laughs}, her husband had a fit because {laughs} one summer day they were doing toenail painting. And of course, you know, the little boy, why not? Why does he have to be left out? So, well, you know, that did not go over very well when dad came home so that had to stop. But, you know, my husband I have kind of talked about this and he just laughs, he says, 'So what'? Like he's not, he's not worried about, you know, 'Look at those. You know what's gonna happen now, right'? Not that there's anything wrong with that {laughs}. I, you know, I don't see that. I think we'll, you know, we'll whatever they want. We'll be, you know, it'll be, you know, if it's dolls for boys, trucks for girls, it doesn't really matter, you know...It's about giving them choice. Letting them decide what they want what they like, and really I think not, realizing that it probably doesn't {laughs} make a lot of difference when it comes right down to it, you know, they're gonna...

I: Discover what they enjoy doing.

P: Yeah. And I think, well if you want to talk about toys and play, like I think the, um, there's value in you know, playing house or families or dolls for boys, you know, more nurturing and role-playing and stuff like that. And for girls, like I loved playing with Lego, and building truck things, you know. I love that kind of stuff and, you know, I don't think there's anything wrong with that.

The participant suggests that for herself and her husband, the activities their children engage in will depend more on their personal choices than on gender. She implies that the fear for many parents, especially fathers, is that 'trying on' different gender roles will influence a child's sexual orientation. This behaviour seems to be especially worrisome in young boys. This may also imply that there is something to gain by exhibiting certain types of behaviour.

Theme 3 - 'Trying on' different gender roles

Participant #5

I: I'm interested in what you have been thinking about parenting when it comes to what you would like to do if it's a boy or a girl. How would you like to raise a boy as opposed to a girl?

P: I have to say I haven't clearly identified the different, different things, like split

it like that. But then of course, you know, being a woman, there's obviously certain things about growing up as a girl that I would be able to relate to and maybe put more conscious thought into than, than maybe a boy. Um, I guess for, well, for raising a girl, I would things like self-esteem would be very important, awareness of the changes they're going to go through, right, as they mature. I guess a confidence, you know, that they can, you know, do many different things in life and whatever it is. Um, for a boy, I think, let's see, I have two brothers who turned out really well {laughs}. I'm trying to think. You know, I've (sigh), really about the only thing, I mean, if, if, if we had a boy, if he, if he saw his father as a role model, I'd be really happy with that. Um, and because I guess some of those qualities would be, um, willing, willingness, um, to, uh, express your opinions despite peer, um, right, which I think is important for either gender. Um, but, specifically for a male, um, you know, well you know, you can talk about some of the common things like involvement in household tasks, for instance, right. Not splitting, um, work along the traditional gender lines. Okay, for instance my husband does all the cooking. So I think that could be a very, you know, beneficial model for a boy. Um, respect for, you know, women. I'm still appalled at the amount of, um, uh, abuse and uh, denigration of women in society that surround us all, all the way. So, you know, one of the big concerns raising a boy would be to steer him away from that. You know, to show him and model what, what attitudes towards the other gender should be.

The participant states that familiarity with sex or gender may have an influence on parenting, such that as a woman herself, she may be able to relate more to what a girl is experiencing. She also sees household responsibilities as needing to be distributed equally among the children, regardless of gender. She implies this is particularly important for male children, and being able to observe a male role model that takes on a non-traditional role is beneficial. The participant also discusses wanting to instil certain values in her children that steer away from stereotypical roles. As well, she wants both her sons and daughters to be willing to express their opinions despite peer pressure. This idea may be especially valuable for children in North American society to feel they can pursue their own interests and 'try on' different gender roles, without feeling they have to conform to societal norms.

Participant #10

I: Let's say they were at school, kindergarten or something like that. From my understanding of kindergarten, everything's like free play. You know, so they can play with whatever. What would you think if say your little boy, you came to pick him up one day and he was, and you know two of his little boy friends and a couple little girls were playing house so they were all dressed up. So...

P: That's fine.

I: That's fine? You have no problems with that?

P: Dress up, no, 'cause they'd probably wear costumes and that there. Now if it's

in a girl's clothing, I mean, still they're young, so I probably wouldn't think anything of it.

The participant discusses the idea of her son wearing girls' clothes during playtime at kindergarten. She accepts the behaviour, as long as it involves costumes. However, she does place an age restriction on these behaviours by using the phrase "still they're young", implying that these behaviours are most accepted or tolerated when children are quite young.

Participant #6

P: I think if it's a boy especially, I don't want to pussyfoot around, 'Oh he doesn't have to help with the dishes. Oh, he doesn't have to...'. I don't want there to be the roles in that, 'Oh the boys do this, and the girls to that'.

The participant suggests that traditionally there have been activities which separate males and females, and suggests that males have been excused from domestic labour because it is not their role. This implies that stereotypically female tasks may not be appealing to males, and they do not have anything to gain by performing them. Specifically, these tasks are not paid labour, and taking time to do them takes time away from paid labour.

Participant #12

P: But I mean, you know, I, I don't think that there's anything wrong with having, with a little boy having a doll, you know, because it teaches them things...and if it's something that they enjoy and find comfort in. And I don't think there's anything wrong with little girls playing with trucks or Lego or, you know, whatever...yeah, I mean, you know, there's nothing wrong with that at all...but no, like I'm not opposed to that.

The participant attributes the acceptance of these behaviours to education and personal fulfillment. However, she does place an age restriction on these behaviours by using the word "little", implying that these behaviours are most accepted or tolerated when children are quite young.

Participant #2

P: ...But yeah, that...yeah, I would allow whatever toys they wanted, if they want. Like, if they want, if they, well, wanted me to buy a specific toy, I guess I would. Um...

I: You wouldn't place restrictions just because they were a certain gender?

P: Oh no, no. Like if the boy wanted, I don't know, like let's say one of those mock kitchen sets, whatever, cooking, like hey that's great. You know a lot more guys that cook out there now {laughs} so, you know, hey great, like that's good. Um, I would like to see them more in the home, homemaker role. So yeah, like I wouldn't be very picky (...) girl (...). I think girls now, I think it's tolerated more that girls play with firemen trucks, and (...) boys are seen playing with feminine toys, it's like, 'Oh, get away from there'. I don't know now, but I'm sure some parents have, you know, have that idea like they ought to be playing with this and

that. But, I, I wouldn't be picky at all, like I wouldn't do that. I would love the child to play with whatever they wanted.

The participant suggests that things are beginning to change with gender roles, such that she sees more men performing stereotypically 'female' roles. This also implies that there are more non-traditional role models for young children to observe, which may have an effect on their own gender role ideas. Furthermore, this indicates that gender roles can change, therefore they are learned. The participant also discusses the societal acceptance of girls 'trying on' different gender roles, and the intolerance of boys 'trying on' different gender roles. This implies that there is something to gain by exhibiting 'male' behaviour.

Participant #2

P: But it's funny cause when I was a kid, I liked playing with cars and trucks. I never played with dolls. So you know, I mean, and I'm a girl, and you know, and my orientation is straight, so I played with trucks and cars. I loved cars. I still do, like give me a car or a truck. My dad's a mechanic. Yeah like, um, I don't, I don't see it a big deal. Um, you know, in this, hey if I have a boy, then if he wants to play with dolls, great. Like, you know, I've heard that it's good to encourage them if they (...), or whatever they want. Like you shouldn't have to force them to like something or play with something, just because, 'Oh it's a boy thing or a girl thing'. You know, I'm gonna try to be very equal, very non-gender specific. I've taken a couple of courses on that, um, stereotyping, and I wanna, because I'm educated now, I don't want to do that to the kids. I'm trying to be aware of, you know, very typical, uh {laughs} gender roles and stuff.

The participant indicates that 'trying on' different gender roles does not have negative consequences as an adult; specifically, she is referring to the idea that 'trying on' different gender roles will lead to a gay or lesbian orientation. However, she uses herself as an example that this is not the case. The participant discusses how parents may force their children into specific activities based on their sex or gender. Instead, she states it is their personality that is more of an influence on the activities her children will pursue. The participant attributes her ideas to her education, suggesting that certain university courses have opened her eyes to the perpetuation of gender differences in society, and the effects it can have on children.

Participant #9

I: What if you, um, for example, say you were out shopping and you had a boy and a girl with you. and the boys says, 'Mum, you know, I like that Barbie. That's a really cool Barbie. Can you buy that for me, or whatever, or for my birthday'? And the girl said, 'Oh that's a really cool truck. Can you get that for me for birthday'?

P: Yeah, because I played with trucks with my brother when I was a child. We had a nice little race track and it was fun. So, I mean I don't really recall him playing with dolls, but that's probably because of peer pressure. Like there's just, you know, the guys sort of know, it's not right to play with dolls at that age, or I

don't know. But I mean, yeah, I mean it didn't affect me in anyway, So, I don't think it's a big deal.

The participant suggests that many boys may want to 'try on' different gender roles, but won't due to peer pressure. She suggests that children know the "rules" of behaviour, which implies that there are negative consequences for not following the 'norm' or being different. The participant also states that 'trying on' different gender roles does not produce any negative effects. This implies that for children, especially boys, the fear is that being treated like a member of the opposite sex will harm their personality or their sexual orientation.

Participant #13

I: Do you sort of think that he'll have sort of like the same viewpoints whether it's boy or a girl? Like, 'Yeah, okay. Girls can do this. Boys can do that. Whatever. Sounds good. You know, they'll sort of figure it out on their own'. Is that sort of his perspective?

P: I think so too. Um, maybe if you asked him more of the direct questions, like, 'Would you buy your son a Barbie'? I think maybe he would, you know, kind of cornered maybe not do that so openly, kind of stuff.

I: But do you think he would be open to you know, teaching his son to cook, things like that?

P: Yeah, oh I think so. Yeah, because that's like, he is the one that likes to do all the fancy cooking (...) himself. I think he would be. Yeah.

I: And again you said, open to teaching his daughter to change a tire or something?

P: Yeah, yeah. 'Cause, I mean he's put up with me. Making him put up with a little girl wanting to help him out. So yeah, I think he'll be pretty open and easygoing, and you know, if that's something they want to do that's their decision. Then that's fine too. I mean, I think he thinks the same, but when they're really little, I mean, they're little they're doing stuff. They don't...maybe when they're a little bit older it will be different.

The participant discusses the similarity in ideas between herself and her husband. She states that they are both open to children 'trying on' different gender roles, but her husband is most concerned with letting children pursue their own interests. However, she places an age restriction on the acceptance of the behaviour by stating, "I mean, I think he thinks the same, but when they're really little, I mean, they're little they're doing stuff. They don't...maybe when they're a little bit older it will be different". This implies that their behaviour may change with age or the response to the behaviour may change with age.

The participant also states that her husband is supportive of children 'trying on' different gender roles, but contradicts her previous statements by suggesting that the

only thing he might not do would be to buy his son a Barbie, or at least would not do it "openly".

Participant #2

I: Do you think that he might, um, you were talking a little bit about your ideas about gender and things like that. Do you think he has some similar ideas or different ideas?

P: Um, I think maybe some of the same. I don't know how he feels about boys playing with frilly things (...). But um, yeah I really don't know. I think I have an influence on what he, he does as well. So, I'm sure if he (...) as a parent he may be different, that's because I'm more open to having like, all kinds of experiences with this child. I don't think he will, you know be against, our son playing with dolls or jewellery or whatever. I don't think it would be a problem. I'm hoping, like, you know, I'm hoping he would be fine with it.

The participant suggests that some of their ideas are similar, but she has an influence over his ideas and actions that are different from hers, as evidenced by the statement, "I think I have an influence on what he, he does as well". She does admit that there will be some differences, specifically because she is more open-minded, but she states that he wouldn't have a problem with children 'trying on' different gender roles. However, she does contradict herself somewhat by stating that she 'hopes' he will be accepting of this behaviour.

Theme 4 - Girls need protection, boys can take care of themselves

Participant #8

P: I don't know. If I, like my first instincts are also for a teenager, is to be more protective of a girl. I don't know where that came from, but...

I: That's your own idea?

P: That's my own idea. Yeah, to be more protective of a girl, but...

I: Do you mean like with restrictions on where they're allowed to go, or even just what time they're allowed to be back?

P: Yeah, Yeah, I would say so, just, um, yeah, going out on their own at that, when they're at that age I think. You know being alone.

The participant puts an age restriction on this idea, stating that it is teenage girls who need protection. Putting this restriction on girls implies that they are less able than boys to take care of themselves. The participant is also aware that this is contradictory to her previous statements about treating girls and boys equally. By stating, "I don't know where that came from..." suggests that the idea is not something she learned in her education or occupation. This implies that it may have been carried over from her childhood or other personal experiences.

Participant #3

P: I mean, I guess it is a little bit easier to watch your son go off and (...) or whatever and be able to fend for himself than your daughter, I guess.

The statement, "fend for himself", implies that if there was trouble, a boy would be better able to take care of himself than a girl and make the right decisions to get himself out of trouble. This also implies that parents feel the need to protect their daughters more than their sons, which relates to stereotypical ideas of girls as 'fragile' and 'dependent' and to stereotypical ideas of boys as 'strong' and 'independent'.

Participant #10

I: Okay, um, tell me a little bit about how you were raised. Um, like the boy and girl thing. Were you sort of restricted a bit in what you could play with, you know, because you were a girl or were your parents pretty much, 'Yeah, you can climb trees. Wear overalls. That's fine'.

P: No they would never let me do anything that would endanger my life, like climbing trees or riding a bike by myself. They were very strict. Uh, they didn't have a lot of money, so we didn't get a lot of toys. Um, basically Barbie dolls and they wouldn't even let me sleep over, which I disagree with. Um, I didn't, I don't, can't remember my childhood that well. I did have birthday parties. My husband didn't and I want my child to until like he or she is like 12 or 13. You know at a reasonable age. Um, but I want to give my child what I didn't have. But my parents did the best they can with the money that they had.

The participant states that her parents wanted to protect her, and therefore she missed out on many opportunities as a child. This may be due in part to stereotypical beliefs about how girls are delicate and need to be protected.

Participant #2

P: Oh yeah. Um, I know there's a lot of difference in like how we were raised. I had two brothers and my parents were very different people (...) For us, um, I really (...). I don't encourage it because it's, then you, then you start kids create stereotypes. And I think it's very unfair that, um, girls and boys are treated unequally. Just because I was treated unfairly. 'Oh you have to be home before dark', ' Oh, you can't go out to a party', or 'you can't...'. Meanwhile, my brother gets away with everything, he goes out, he does a lot more, he experimented with drugs and alcohol earlier than I did. So, um, in some ways he's really careless. He goes off and does his own thing, even though my parents were very lenient.

The participant states that she was treated differently from her brothers, specifically with regards to being more restricted in her activities. This implies that there may have been the stereotypical perspective that girls need protection because they are fragile and dependent, while boys are independent and can take care of themselves. There is evidence for this in her statement, "Meanwhile, my brother gets away with everything, he goes out, he does a lot more, he experimented with drugs and alcohol earlier than I did". She suggests that this differential treatment helps to create stereotypes, whereby there is an expectation that men and women have different characteristics, roles and responsibilities.

Participant #3

P: So, um, his view on raising...hmm...I know he made a comment, I don't know, once that he was ready to have a boy but not a girl, just because he...'daddy's little girl', he'll probably be afraid of watching her go out with (...) and stuff like that, being all protective. Because at least he...letting a son go and not having to worry much about...but yeah, I guess he would do that. I think he'd (...). Like a lot of first parents feel that way or something. Never really thought about it before. I guess I'm waiting for whatever, but...

While the participant does not make a direct statement that she and her husband both agree that girls need more protection than boys, she does make reference to this idea earlier in the interview, where she is concerned about not letting her daughter go hunting with the rest of the family.

Participant #12

P: But, um, but I think, you know, down the road, um, I think he would put more restrictions on a girl than a boy just because, um, you know, like with the whole dating thing. You know how girls are when they're teenagers, the struggles they have and that kind of thing. And I think that he would, it wouldn't necessarily have that much to do with trust, but more his fears for them. He'd be more fearful of a girl getting into trouble and running into trouble.

I: He would more want to protect them?

P: Yep, than a boy, and that would go with curfews and everything like that.

I: So he would let a boy stay out later?

P: Yeah I think so. And like, I mean he's talked about, you know, just joking of course, but how he would deal with the dating thing is locking up his daughter 'til she's 21 {laughs}. And part of him is not serious and part of him is serious. But it's just the whole protection thing, and, and looking out for her. And I think, yeah, he'd be more you know, delicate and gentle with her, you know, than with him, um, or than with a boy. And I think that, um, with lawns and that kind of thing, I think he'd probably more see it as something that a boy would do versus a girl.

While the participant does not directly state that she agrees with her partner, she does state, "You know how girls are when they're teenagers", which implies that she agrees with the reasoning behind his ideas. As well, the idea of "locking up his daughter 'til she's 21" implies that girls need to be controlled. Putting this restriction on girls during dating seems to imply that they are helpless and cannot take care of themselves. The "running into trouble" may imply issues with sex and teen pregnancy.

Participant #6

P: _____ (husband) thinks it's a boy. But I think, we think though for the same reason that because he's a guy {laughs}, he just thinks that boys would be easier

for him. And it's interesting because of course he places on it that, I mean, a baby's a baby, either or. But he places on it, 'Oh if it's girl, but she's so fragile' {laughs}. And I'm like, 'Well only because you've now told her she is' {laughs}.

The participant states that her partner would be more comfortable having a son because as a male, he would know more of what to expect from a boy. She also suggests that he has more stereotypical views of girls and boys, which appears to be contrary to her beliefs. She also states that gender differences are learned, as evidenced by her statement "But he places on it, 'Oh if it's girl, but she's so fragile' {laughs}. And I'm like, 'Well only because you've now told her she is' {laughs}".

Theme 5 - Acceptance of girls 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, but not vice versa

Participant #4

P: I guess the only thing I can see being a difference is I'm not gonna put my little boy in pink, or you know what I mean? But like girls wear like blues. That'd be the only thing. My boy's not gonna wear pink, probably {laughs}. Let's not...

I: Even if they ask?

P: Well I don't know. Probably not out the door. They have to stay. Here I don't care what they wear here, but if they were going like to the mall or something, I probably wouldn't put my boy in pink.

I: But here, I mean, if they're playing like dress up or whatever, you're fine?

P: Oh yeah, we've got clothes like _____'s (husband) mom goes to lot of garage sales and bought this stuff. Some like little Osh Kosh pants, and their purple striped overalls, and I'm like, well (...) I don't care. They're totally girls'. But I'm like, doesn't matter. And then there was another pair with flowers, and I'm like, okay those are girls. You know, you can tell? But I'm like, whatever, I'm like it's just daycare. Who's gonna see them. Who's gonna care? If they all (...) my daycare (...). I'm like whatever. You're just gonna go run around in the dirt.

I: They're gonna go have fun.

P: Doesn't matter to them.

The participant's acceptance of this behaviour at home and at daycare is linked to her ideas of "Who's gonna see them", where disapproval of this behaviour is likely in public. The idea here is that 'the world is watching'. Moreover, she mentions that to the children, they do not care what they look like or who sees them. This suggests that children are taught to care about gender roles and differences, and therefore gender is learned.

Participant #13

I: Okay, well from the backgrounds we have, we know that there's a lot of ideas out there about how to raise boys and girls. So, you were mentioning a little bit

about chores, the division of chores and there's also a lot about, well some people think it's okay for you know, boys to play with dolls and girls to play with trucks and vice versa. What do you think about that?

P: Um, I think it's okay too. I think though, even myself I'd be a little more worried about like a six-year old playing with Barbie's than, a boy, than a six-year-old girl wanting to play with trucks. There's kinda, you know there's that stereotype that like it's a little bit worse for a boy to show a feminine side than for a girl to show a masculine side. So, I think you just have to be open. You can't, but I don't know what I would do, you know, if my son was like totally into like dressing up and playing with makeup and stuff. I'd be like 'Hmm'. But...

The participant recognizes some of her ideas might be contradictory to previous statements about gender equality. She admits feeling a bit "worried" about her young son playing with Barbie dolls or dressing up and putting on makeup. However, she recognizes that in our society, it is more acceptable for females to 'try on' stereotypically masculine roles, as indicated in her statement, "...it's a little bit worse for a boy to show a feminine side than for a girl to show a masculine side".

Participant #8

I: What if you were out shopping with, um, well we'll pretend you have a little boy and a little girl. And the boy says to you, 'Mum, you know, that's a really neat Barbie. Can you buy that for me for my birthday', or something like that. Uh, and the girl goes,' Oh you know what? That's a really cool truck, can I get that for my birthday'? What, what would you think about that?

P: I don't think I'd have a problem. You know what though, specifically with the girl, um, wanting a truck, I wouldn't have a problem. I think if a son said 'I want the Barbie', and I'd go, 'You want the Barbie'? Like, and I'd probably question it. I would say like 'Why'? I would involve him in a discussion on why you want that particular toy. And I can almost see myself if the girl said, 'I want the truck', saying, 'Okay'. Not even questioning it. I don't know. And, and maybe not. Maybe I think for any toy or want or anything like that, I would say, 'Well, why. You know, tell me the reasons why you want that and how it'll benefit your play time' {laughs}. It's the teacher in me.

The participant states that she would be more comfortable with her daughter 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, which implies that there is something to gain by exhibiting 'male' behaviour. The participant also recognizes that she has made a statement which is contradictory to her previous ideas about gender equality. She recants her previous statement about questioning her son's motives for a doll by stating that she would question any toy that either of her children desired. She then attributes this statement to her education and occupation. This may be due in part to previous statements about being raised in a traditional home and therefore finding it difficult to 'break old habits'.

Participant #12

P: You know, if my 16-year-old son wanted to go into figure skating or ballet, I

would have a harder time with that...but, um, but yeah, like if my daughter wanted to go into hockey, I'd probably not encourage it just because of a whole bunch of other reasons, you know.

I: The violence and whatever else?

P: Yeah, and just the hours and all that kind of thing. But, I mean I wouldn't have as a big a problem with that.

The participant admits that she would be more comfortable with her daughter 'trying on' different gender roles than she would be with her son. This implies that there is more flexibility in women's gender roles, and more social acceptance for them to 'try on' stereotypically male roles. This also implies that there is something to gain by exhibiting 'male' behaviour.

Participant #12

P: Um, I mean, with, um, like with sports and all that kind of thing, I mean, you know, I think it's okay for, you know, like I'd love to put my little boy in gymnastics or something like that, you know, because of the fun and 'cause of what it can teach them and stuff. But say _____ (husband), it's like, 'No that's a girl's thing'.

The participant discusses how she would enjoy putting her son into activities that would be considered stereotypically 'female' activities. However, her husband is against this, solely for the reason that they are 'girls' activities. His ideas may be based on the intolerance in society of boys 'trying on' stereotypically female roles.

Participant #12

P: Um, so I think that he would want to raise a boy, um, you know playing, you know, boyish sports like soccer...

I: Football.

P: Or yeah, stuff like that. Soccer is the big one, but he would also put his girl in soccer. But you know, like with say gymnastics, you know he doesn't want a boy in gymnastics. Not because {laughs} of what it could teach them, but just because it's more of a girly... so I think it would be more, um, yeah, stereotypical boy stuff than girl stuff. And I think, you know, in terms of clothing and toys, he would want more stereotypical again, you know, boy versus girl. Although, you know, he's fine with navy blue {laughs} on a girl. You know, it's not pink and all ribbons and all that kind of stuff.

Although the participant does not explicitly state that she agrees or disagrees with her husband, she admits in a previous statement that she would want to put her son into gymnastics, but that her husband would not approve. As well, she had earlier stated that her ideas were less stereotypical than her husband's.

Participant #10

I: Okay. What about toys? For example, I've talked to a few people that say, 'Oh

yeah. No problem. I think it's great my boy can play with Barbie's and wear a dress', and 'I think it's great my girl can wear overalls and climb a tree', or vice versa. What do you think about that?

P: Mmm. I would have to disagree. If it's a boy, my husband for sure will make sure that he plays with guy toys, no matter what. I don't know how, if we do have a little boy that he could probably lean toward playing with Barbie's, unless it's a Barbie, like a guy.

I: Like G.I. Joe?

P: Yeah, yeah. Um, I hope he wouldn't play with Barbie's and dress in girl's, but I mean if they do, well what can you really do? Maybe it's a behavioural problem or I'm not sure. I haven't thought about that. As for girls, I mean there's girls that play with boys and boys toys and that's fine, I guess. It's just kinda a little weird for a little boy to play with girls stuff, cause usually guy's stuff can be unisex, and girl's stuff not really. Like...

I: More pink and frilly, and things like that.

P: Yeah. Yeah, Barbie dolls and, I don't know. Um, I would have to say that I'd hope my little boy didn't play with Barbie dolls. Like it just doesn't make sense, unless it's again G.I. Joe and Max Steel, so like that.

The statement, "no matter what", implies that rigid gender roles will be expected from a son. It also implies that there would be no choice in the matter and consequences for not following the rules. The participant attributes the desire for boys to 'try on' female roles as a "behavioural problem".
The participant states that male toys can be "unisex", although many are clearly stereotypically male, such as Hot Wheels cars or G. I. Joe. The unisex items may be of a more scientific or cognitive nature, such as Lego or Litebrite.

Participant #13

P: I would be comfortable buying the truck for the girl {laughs}. I probably wouldn't be quite so comfortable buying the Barbie for the boy, which, I know it's horrible but it, I think it just goes with socialization and maybe not so much with myself and how I feel about him doing that, but his little boy friends probably aren't gonna come over and then he's gonna, you know, aren't gonna play with the Barbies. If they come over and play and then get teased and stuff....and I think he would learn quickly on his own if he did get that that he's not supposed to like that. So, but I wouldn't want to discourage him or make him feel bad for wanting that, you know, like me making him feel bad. So I probably would say, 'Oh yeah, you can put whatever you want on your Christmas list. What you get might be a different story'.

The participant states that she would be more comfortable with her daughter 'trying on' stereotypically male roles, than her son 'trying on' stereotypically female roles.
The participant recognizes that this is contrary to her previous statements about gender

equality, as evidenced by her statement, "I know it's horrible", but attributes her ideas to socialization. In particular, she states that there can be a negative reaction to children who 'try on' different gender roles, especially boys, such as teasing and ridicule from his peers. She suggests that this negative reaction would decrease the occurrence of her son's behaviour, and as a result, she admits that she may not actively encourage her son to 'try on' different gender roles. This implies that her behaviour may not be so much a belief that boys should not 'try on' different gender roles, but is a protective action to keep her son from being hurt or ridiculed.

Participant #12

> I: What, um, what if you were out shopping, say you had, we'll look a little bit to the future, you had a boy and a girl. And you're shopping and your son says to you, 'You know mum, that's a really cool Barbie. Can I have that for my birthday?', and your daughter says to you, 'Well, you know, that's a really cool truck. Can I have that for my birthday'? What would you think about that?

> P: I would think that's kind of weird. I would, because I would think that would be backwards. Um, and would I actually buy them those things? I would, I could possible picture myself buying the truck, but I don't know if I'd picture myself buying the Barbie.

> I: ... So you don't feel comfortable with that?

> P: Well, I don't know. Yeah, like first of all I know that my husband would not feel comfortable with that…so my first instinct, I wouldn't be comfortable with it. So, that would be my first instinct.

The participant discusses how boys 'trying on' stereotypically female roles is not the way that things should work. This implies that there is a right and a wrong way to behave as a male or as a female in our society, and there may be negative consequences, such as ridicule or being ostracized, for exhibiting the 'wrong' or socially inappropriate behaviour. The idea is that the negative consequence will correct the wrong behaviour, thus enticing males and females to conform to societal standards and expectations.

Theme 6 - Primary caregivers as first influence on gender role ideas

Participant #1

> P: I mean, with my own growing up experience, I guess it was maybe different from, from a lot of people because, um, when my mom was pregnant with me, my dad passed away. So I have a brother who's two years older than me and myself, and my mum remarried when I was 10, but before year 10, I mean you develop a lot of your own ideas. And so, I guess…a lot of the ideas I got young were from my mum. And, um, you know, I saw her as a very, well, I still do, but I saw her as a very strong person. And it's different too because there's one person in charge not two people sharing…so here's the boss and that's it. So I guess it's more confusing later. Um…yeah, so some of my ideas will come from her.

While the participant used her mother and brother as gender role influences, she suggests that she also developed a lot of ideas on her own. This may imply that she had to explore her gender role ideas from outside of her immediate family, such as gaining information from peers and their families, from school, or from the media. However, she does state that her ideas as a young child were from her mother.

The participant also discusses how having only one parent is "confusing" to children. This could imply that her parenting and gender role ideas will be influenced by only her mother, but her own family is shared with her husband. Therefore, she will have to adjust to having more than one "boss" in her family.

Participant #8

I: There's a lot of theories out there about, you know, where our ideas about child raising come from. So whether it's our parents, of our friends that already have children, or what we learn in school, or what we see on TV. What do you think about that?

P: Where I think they came from? Uh, I think a lot of it came from just my family life growing up, seeing how, you know, my parents parented really. I think that was, I think that's the main thing. Yeah it's true, there's a lot on TV, and there's a lot of different, you know, views and philosophies on everything you see there. But I truly think when it comes down to it, it's what you know from your childhood.

I: Your own personal experiences?

P: Personal experiences, yeah.

The participant states earlier that she believes that the way we learn to parent is how we were parented as children. However, this is contradictory to her earlier claims about being more liberal in her gender role ideas because of her education and occupation, as she was raised in a home with a traditional division of labour.

Participant #13

I: Yeah, where do your ideas come from?

P: Um, probably a lot from my parents. Um, although I think I've changed a lot since I moved from home and kinda got married and all that stuff, and getting kinda my own views of stuff.

The participant states that many of her ideas have come from her parents, but since meeting her husband, some of these ideas have changed. This implies that gender roles can change, therefore they are learned.

Participant #1

I: Do you think your ideas have maybe changed over the years, or they've just maybe, uh, incorporated more ideas, or do you think you've stayed the same?

P: Um, probably…it's probably mostly just expanded. Um, some ideas I might have been more flexible on than I was when I was younger. Um, if I look again at my mum, for my mom it was just top priority that she be at home with us. That was just her thing. So once we were old enough for her to do other things, then she starting teaching piano out of the home, so that she could be at home with us. So, I mean that was just a very big priority for her. For me, I don't, I'm still not sure what I'll do there, I mean I have a year, um…

I: To decide, yeah?

P: Um-hmm, and I'll probably need it…some people have these ideas, 'oh, I'm gonna want to stay home', 'oh, I'm gonna need to get away', and I just really don't know what I will be like. I have not a clue.

The participant states that she was raised in a home with a stay-at-home mom, so she understands the value that her mother placed on that responsibility. However, she indicates that her ideas have changed over the years, and now has alternatives to the stereotypical role of 'mother'.

Participant #2

P: I think yeah, I think how we're raised and our parents have a big effect on how we are gonna be as parents. Like you always say, 'I'm not going to be like my mom', 'I'm not going to be like my dad'. I think in some ways you take some of their (…) into your parenting style, and of course your own, you've got your own, just from what you learn, what you read, what you, you know, just learn from everyday life and the experiences. So, I think I might take a little bit of each, like from what my parent's believe in, and how they raised us and take some of those values with me and then like, from what I've learned as an educator, you know, I've learned a lot about kids and how they develop, so…

The participant states that her two biggest influences will be her own parents and her education. This implies that parents are not solely responsible for the socialization of their children.

Participant #8

P: I mean, we're a very non-traditional house, in that _____ (husband) does the laundry and the cleaning, and you know. So in that respect, same with both our homes, it was the mother's who, you know, did all that basic cleaning thing, those things. And _____ (husband) enjoys it much more than I do…and that's fine. So I don't have a problem, you know, if it was a boy that, yeah, you know, 'Your duty today is vacuuming'. And that's the way it is, you know, yeah.

The participant states that both she and her husband were raised in homes where there was a traditional division of labour, where their mothers had primary responsibility for the domestic tasks, but the ideas for their own home involve a non-traditional division of labour. As well, the participant states that her husband enjoys the domestic role, which signifies a personal choice involved in the activities. This section implies that gender roles can change with exposure to other influences, such as education, therefore they are learned.

Theme 7 - Secondary influences on gender role development

Participant #11

> P: ...I know myself and my middle brother just, my middle brother started to come around by the time he was in high school. He was like, 'Yeah, this is me. And...'? But, and he helped me, 'cause by the time he was in grade 12, I was in grade 6. So he was the one who imparted on me, 'Hey, you know what? Who cares? If they don't like you, I still think you're kinda cool'. And to me, that meant the world. It was just like, 'Yes'. And that sort of get into sports and because I was so sports minded, all of a sudden I wasn't picked on so much for being a tomboy anymore. All of a sudden I was this athlete by the time I was in junior high. So that sort of turned around for me and I'm glad I had that, or else I would have been this tomboy that everyone thought was this massive tomboy. And yet as an adult, people don't see it as a tomboy, they just, 'Oh, you're creative'...you can do a lot of things. Well, that's great as an adult, but as a kid, people, other kids don't see it that way. So it would be great if everyone could teach their kids, 'Yeah, you can do anything. You can...'.

The participant suggests that the same behaviours we engage in as children and as adults hold different values, depending on the age of the person and on the societal perspective. In particular, it seems that we look at the usefulness of the behaviour, for example, men being able to cook and women being able to do electrical wiring, but as children, stereotypically 'feminine' behaviour in boys is worrisome and stereotypically 'masculine' behaviour in girls is something they will 'grow out of'.

Participant #1

> P: I grew up, I think much to the dismay of my mother as a tomboy, but, you know I didn't, I didn't, uh, go for the pink frilly dresses and Barbie dolls I didn't know what to do with them, so I built them houses {laughs}. I climbed trees, and you know, things like that. Um, I guess it was just, you know, my playmate was my brother too, so that was an influence.

The participant uses the word "tomboy" to offer a label for her behaviour as a child, which indicates that she is a girl engaging in 'male' activities, while a boy engaged in 'female' activities is known as a 'sissy'. The words "tomboy" and "sissy" indicate 'trying on' different gender roles, but each has different connotations. Specifically, it is acceptable to be a tomboy, but not acceptable to be a sissy. This implies that there is something to gain by exhibiting 'male' behaviour.

Participant #6

> P: Hopefully our child will grow up not being that as...I mean society is just full of, 'This is what boys do, this is what girls do'. So it's hard to, you know, and being part of a church community, there's a lot of the older people who are *very* traditional. _____ (husband) is like, I mean, a lot of the people who are very traditional in the church are 'Complimentarian'. So that means, you know, the guy is the head of the household, the woman is there as his helpmate.

> I: It's 'complimentarian'?

P: It's called complimentarian. _____ (husband) would describe himself as, and you know what, I was raised in a complimentarian household. So I just never even thought of anything but ' _____ (husband) is the head of our household. That's fine'. I never thought that, and, and I mean, part of the biblical sense is that the husbands are instructed, 'Don't take this and take advantage and use your wife as a doormat'. Because that's a responsibility you have, not just a 'woo-hoo' bonus (…){laughs}.

I: Wasn't it complimentarian, this like shared responsibility, sort of thing?

P: Yeah, but I think if it, if it comes down to it, it's like, it's like the husband is the president, the wife's the vice president. You know, so they're working together on everything, but man's kind of a little bit more seniority. (…). So I never really thought of that too much and then, uh, _____ (husband) would describe himself though as egalitarian. So he sees us both as, we're equal. And you know what, and I think even people who say they're complimentarian, I think that's how most marriages play out anyways {laughs}, you know. Like I don't see too many, we do, we do know one couple actually that sadly it is that way, and it's, it's highly pathetic. I mean, mind she's happy, but it's really difficult to watch and it's really hard because they two little boys, and so (…) the boys are getting raised. And I'm thinking, 'Yeah good luck finding a wife, you know, who's going to take that' {laughs}. But, um, but, so _____ (husband) doesn't, so for us like we're egalitarian. So if, there's no, you know, every once in a while he'll ask me to go get something and make the whole comment, 'You're the wife', and I'll say 'yeah'.

I: Just to bug you.

I: Just to say these things, so then I say, 'Yeah you shoulda thought of that before you went egalitarian. Tough luck' {laughs}. So, so yeah, it's kind of funny that way.

The participant states that it will be difficult raising a child in a society that perpetuates gender differences, but she hopes that her children will not be restricted by gender. However, she admits this will be even more difficult raising a child in a church community where many of the patrons are very stereotypical in their attitudes and behaviours. She recognizes this can be difficult on children raised in this type of home, especially as they grow older and try to establish families of their own. She suggests that she and her husband have a more egalitarian relationship, although he does joke about fulfilling her role as the 'wife'. However, while she suggests that he is joking about their marital roles, he says they are equal, but does not participate equally. The participant also contradicts herself by stating earlier that her husband describes himself as "complimentarian", but then suggests that he would describe himself as "egalitarian".

Participant #5

P: And I guess I've had different models of parenting. I have some friends,

who're around my age, and who've already had children. And I really admire their relaxed attitude towards parenting. Um, you know, um, really, um, you know, 'Don't fret so much about this', 'Don't always be worrying about that'. You know the child's gonna be fine, you know, the flow that you can go with. And I find that really refreshing because it's different from what I experienced from my own childhood, which, um, was probably a bit more restrictive in, you know, a bit more, you know, controlled, you know like growing up in the mid 60's and early 70's, right. You know, I had a stay-at-home mom. You know the, you know there was, I guess, there was more, um, uh, rigid beliefs as to how children had to be raised or disciplined or things like that. So I had, you know, there's some things, some things just in the way that I and my brothers were raised that I would consciously want to try and get away from. So, from that, you know, from my own family experience.

The participant states that she has had multiple influences on her ideas, which implies that parents are not solely responsible for the socialization of their children. She indicates that she was raised in a more restrictive and stereotypical environment where there was a stay-at-home parent, which is something she would like to steer away from.

Participant #12

P: Yeah, but you know, like since being married, I mean I think he's probably lessened up on some things that I think he can give and take because it's me that does all the household repairs and all the painting and that kind of stuff. Not him at all. And so I think he's becoming a little bit, um, more relaxed in terms of those things as well…and, um, and like I said, yeah, before, you know, his girl, and he would put his girl in soccer, and he would you know, enjoy spending time with them, and you know, playing catch and you know, all that kind of stuff. Like I did that with my dad all the time, you know. So yeah, so I think he probably would be a little bit less so than maybe I think. But yeah, he would still have those specific roles I mind.

I: Just because that's how he was raised and things like that?

P: Yeah, yeah.

The participant states that she has had an influence on her husband's gender role ideas, such that he is beginning to accept the idea that women can have more flexible gender roles. However, while he might practice more flexible gender role behaviour with his wife and daughter, he was still raised to believe in stereotypical gender roles for women and men, and would have to work at not reverting back to his old habits. This section implies that his gender role ideas are capable of changing, therefore they are learned or 'constructed'.

In addition, the participant discusses how her husband will play with their daughter, just as her father played with her. This idea follows the notion that mothers have been primarily responsible for childcare, while fathers have been primarily their children's playmates.

Theme 8 - Trying myths...but just for fun

Participant #7

    P: Well just for fun, I checked the Chinese Conception chart.

    I: Oh you did?

    P: Yeah. My cousin and I both did. And, according to the conception chart, we're having a boy {laughs}. So, that's what I found was really interesting. We'll see.
The participant indicates that the activity was "just for fun", which implies that she does not believe wholeheartedly in its reliability. This is evidenced by her statement, "we'll see".

Participant #2

    I: What do you think of all of that?

    P: Um, well I first off as much as the next, you know. You'll believe in that myth stuff, folklore stuff...Um, meanwhile, my friend had done that needle and thread trick over my wrist, and it was, I think, circling or going back and forth, and it indicated I was gonna have a girl. And I just thought 'whatever', you know, I'll just see if it happens
The participant states that she used the needle and threat trick, but is not convinced of its reliability. By stating, "I'll just see if it happens" indicates a 'seeing is believing' mentality, where she will believe myths once they have been proven.

Participant #10

    P: Everybody that sees me looks that I, I'm like I'm carrying a boy. Um, my dad and I think one other person thinks I'm carrying a girl. And that's only because my dad has four daughters and three granddaughters, and doesn't want to be disappointed. So, uh, I personally, I'm in the middle, 'cause I don't wanna hope for a boy and I don't wanna hope for a girl. Um, for my dad and for my husband, I want a little boy. But if it's a girl, I'll be happy.
By stating that she would like to have a boy for her husband and her father, in particular so her father isn't "disappointed", implies that there is a value to be placed on having a boy versus a girl, and there is something to gain by having one sex over another.

Participant #7

    P: Um, I mean it, to like, it doesn't really matter whether it's a boy or a girl, but I just noticed that, um, on _____ 's (husband) side of the family, most of the first-born children are boys. Like about 99% of them, the first-born is a boy. _____ 's (husband) uncles, um, every single one of them, except for two, had their first born were boys. Um, and one uncle doesn't even have any boys {laughs}. So he doesn't kind of really factor in. But, um, and then, you know, the cousins that have had children, um, there's one that hasn't had a first-born that was a boy. So, I mean, to me it's just deduction. It's just looking at genetics. Um...

While the participant indicates that she is impartial about whether the baby is a boy or a girl, she does indicate a belief that the baby is a boy. She attributes this belief to deductive genetics, where the baby is likely to be a boy because the majority of first-born children on her husband's side are male.

Participant #13

P: So it's almost, like until I went to the doctor a few weeks ago and heard the baby's heartbeat, it was almost like, 'I don't really know if something's inside there' {laughs}, you know. Like...

I: You need confirmation.

P: Yeah, like it was making me throw up, but {laughs} it was the only confirmation that I had. So at least that way, it was a little bit of a, 'Wow, like there is something alive inside me', but like I don't, I don't have that 'Wow, I feel glowing and pregnant and carrying a life'. Like I don't really feel that yet.

The participant discusses the reality of being pregnant. She states that she has had symptoms of being pregnant, but needed confirmation to make her believe it was really happening. The idea here is 'seeing is believing'. The participant also discusses the idea that there are certain expected 'symptoms' and emotions to being pregnant, which implies that all women experience pregnancy in the same way. This implies that there are stereotypes about the role of becoming a mother

Participant #4

I: But you were saying that both of you think it's a girl. Is it more like a gut feeling?

P: That's what I'm feeling I think. Well, I thought it was a girl, and then, or no, thought it was a boy at first I think, because everyone around us was having boys. And then I had a dream or something that it was a girl. And then like, 'I think it's girl'. And then I'm like, then I don't wanna let myself think that it's a girl, 'cause I think 'Oh there's so much pressure. So I'll be disappointing my dad or something {laughs}, 'I'm sorry. It's boy'. But we don't, I mean first child you don't really care. We don't, we're happy either way.

I: Right. And you're okay if it's boy?

P: Oh, for sure. What (...). Oh yeah. It prob {laughs}...it's probably better almost because my three nephews live here, and so, my niece lives in Winnipeg. So, the kid's gonna be spending more time with the kids that are here. Doesn't matter anyways, cause it's gonna be mixed in like with daycare boys and girls all over the place.

I: Gonna be fine then.

P: It's gonna have...it's not gonna, it's not gonna be one of those frilly girls and

it's not gonna be one of those, you know, macho boys. Yeah, it's just gonna be…
The participant states that there is pressure for the child to be one sex over another, and because of this, it will be the opposite of what everyone wants. By using the word "disappointed" suggests there is a value or an advantage of having one child over another. She then continues by stating that she is impartial about the sex of the baby, and she attributes this to the baby being her "first child". The participant also discusses the gender roles of her children. She states that her children will not exhibit stereotypical male or female characteristics, which implies that they will have the opportunity to 'try on' different gender roles.