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Parent Talk: How Parents Discursively Construct, Co-construct and Re-Do Gender
Expectations and Practices in Their Young Children.

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Sociology

by

April Dawn Cubbage

June 2016

Dissertation Committee:

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Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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counselor once told me). It was your guidance and mentorship that inspired me to dedicate my career to teaching in a community college.

To the friends I met in graduate school, especially Stephanie D'Auria and Joanna Rainey, I always say, you're the best thing that came out of UCR!

I would also like to acknowledge Saddleback College for the opportunity to take a sabbatical to finish writing my dissertation and to all the supportive colleagues who have encouraged me to finish. I did it!

To my love, for believing in me, wiping away my many tears, massaging the many knots in my shoulders and encouraging me in the most difficult times.

And finally, to my family, without your support and love, this would never have been possible. Being a single mom of twins is no small feat. Being a single mom of twins while in a PhD program is nearly impossible. The journey was long and fraught with many difficulties along the way but, your love, support and continual sacrifice in time made it possible for me to preserve. You truly understand the concept of it "taking a village".

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my twins, Christian and Chloe, who have been by my side every step of the way. To my mom, without her support and "co-parenting" finishing, graduate school would never been possible. I love you all more than you will ever know!

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Parent Talk: How Parents Discursively Construct, Co-construct and Re-Do Gender
Expectations and Practices in their Young Children.

by

April Dawn Cubbage

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Sociology
University of California, Riverside, March 2016
Dr. Karen D. Pyke, Chairperson

This research explores how parents discursively construct, co-construct and re-do
gender expectations and practices of their young children. Using the social construction
of gender approach, which views the accomplishment of gender as an ongoing and
multifaceted process, the author investigates parents' of young twins' discursive
engagement with the gender binary. It examines the ways in which parents are invested in
normative gender expectations, how parents resist gender expectations and how parents
feel accountable to others for their children's gender and gender embodiment.

This study draws off of 40 in-depth interviews and 8 observations with parents of
twins between the ages of 12 and 60 months. By using an inductive model of inquiry and
an open-ended interview guide, parents were able to guide the conversation and

voluntarily provide information about their gender ideologies and practices. What emerged were rich descriptions of parents' gender ideals and practices, their ambivalence about those ideals and their attempts to resist gender expectations.

The findings showed the strength of the gender binary and parents' investment in reinforcing gender. The strength of the gender binary varied among the gender of the twin pairs, with parents of boy/girl twins expressing the most commitment to the gender binary. The study found that parents of boy/boy twins were the most invested in constructing and upholding social expectations of hegemonic masculinity, often rooted in homophobia and prompting them to "closet" behavior and practices the parents deemed non-gender appropriate. Whereas, parents of girl/girl twins often avoided gendered language and expressed the most comfort with gender fluidity and non-gender conformity.

This research also found that parents feel responsible for constructing and upholding gender expectations for their children and their children's gendered bodies. The study found that children's bodies are often scrutinized by networks of accountability (e.g. family, friends, and other people) and parents' feel accountable for their young children's bodies living up to these gender expectations. Accountability also emerged as a reason parents often felt constricted to uphold gender expectations and practices and often didn't engage in resisting gender norms. It contributes to scholarship on doing gender, redoing gender, accountability and embodiment.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The sociology of gender has undergone a bevy of changes from the initial feminist theorizing that helped shape the field. Early theorists sought to explain gender inequity and relations in terms of sex roles, as sex was believed to be germane to individual's lives and principal reasons for inequity (Parsons and Bales, 1955; Garfinkel, 1967). This framework looked at women's oppression as being rooted in the biological differences between men and women, but it failed to adequately challenge the institutional and, more importantly, the social basis of women's oppression. As biologically deterministic arguments came under increasing scrutiny, feminist theorists began to challenge simplistic concepts of difference based on biology and the androcentric tradition of positivist research (Firestone, 1970; Friedan, 1963; Lopata and Thorne, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Scott, 1986).

As a response to these critiques, theories such as the social construction of gender emerged (Bem and Bem, 1970). Social construction was a response to the essentialist thinking of sex role theory and was grounded in the belief that ideologies are influenced by socialization agents and the psychological internalization of normative gender ideals (Bem and Bem, 1970; Hochschild, 1973). It is not biology that is responsible for inequality but the construction of masculinity and femininity and the meanings attached to these ideals (Connell, 1987; Lorber, 2000). It is through the dissemination of ideals through agents of socialization that our non-conscious ideologies, or gender ideals,

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emerge (Bem and Bem, 1970). These ideologies shape how individuals view the world, as well as how individuals are agents of their own oppression.

In the late 1970's and throughout the1980's, scholars began theorizing more sophisticated conceptualizations of gender trying to depart from the binary models of socialization and towards a more nuanced social construction theory. Theories such as symbolic interaction theory and ethnomethodology argued that the production and reproduction of gender is an on-going process produced by interactions. In particular, the pivotal work "Doing Gender" by West and Zimmerman (1987) established the idea that gender is an on-going social process that as members of society we are both accountable to and accounted for (West and Zimmerman, 1990). This accountability to gender norms and the co-construction of gender norms is evident in both the macro and micro spheres, being identifiable in places such as public discourse and in more nuanced places such as conversations with friends and with family. Accountability and the construction of gender in children has been a particular focus over the past few decades (Martin, 2005; Berkowitz and Ryan, 2011) as scholars have moved beyond basic socialization models (Gerson, 1986; Scott, 1986; Chaput Waksler 1991; Thorne, 1993) and have attempted to look at how children come to embody gender.

There is a substantial body of research examining family and gender using a social construction approach (Thorne, 1993; Lorber, 1994; Coltrane, 2000; Fox and Murray, 2000; Adams and Coltrane, 2004; Clark and Griffin, 2007; Berkowitz and Ryan, 2011; Allison and Prout, 2015). In particular in the sociological and family literature, a good portion of research has been devoted to how children engage in the construction of

gender and on the accountability of gender with one another. Work such as Barrie

Thorne's *Gender Play*, look at how children's play co-creates and supports the

scaffolding of gender norms (1993) and how children act as gate-keepers of sorts in the

building and reifying of gender norms and gender practices. These works have been

particularly informative in both understanding the construction of gender, but more

importantly how the co-construction of gendered meanings occur within both the spheres

of the public world and private lives of children. It has focused on children as the active

agents of gender construction, rather than non-agentic as models in the past. The shift

from non-agency to agency in the study of gender construction in children has been

important in realizing the nuances and on-going nature of gender development. However,

despite the plethora of research on the social construction of gender and "doing gender",

there seems to be a lack of literature focusing primarily on how parents engage in the

construction and co-construction of gender. While the current work has focused on

agency and public discourse, little looks at how parents discourse and practices

influences and shapes children's gender expectations and practices (Messerschmidt,

2009).

Studying parental construction and co-construction of gender norms and

expectations using a "doing gender" approach through a social constructionist lens can

help us glean the importance of familial interactions. The very nature of familial

practices, or "doing family", in regards to small children in particular, puts parents and

children in constant contact with the production of gender norms and practices. For

example, grooming practices (e.g.bathing, dressing), playing, feeding and caring for

children sets the stage for the communication of and co-construction of gender norms and expectations (Blume and Blume, 2003). Parents convey a great deal of information to their children about gender and the gendered body through these grooming practices and likewise, a great deal of information can be gleaned regarding the construction of gender.

Observations of how parents' engage in gender norms through their everyday familial body rituals, especially in younger aged children where these practices are often labor intensive, allows us to examine how parents construct, reinforce and resist cultural gender norms and what contradictions are at play. This research examines the often mundane tasks of grooming, play and discipline to see how parents handle these tasks and how gender is a part of these practices. Most of the existing literature on parental practices and gender discourse focuses on parents of older children, over the age of five (Thorne, 1993; Martin, 2005; Berkowitz and Ryan, 2011). This research examines how parents' of children under the age of five use discourse to construct and co-construct their children's gender. The study examines parents' ideologies about gender and how that emerges in their discourse and interactions with their children. In particular, this research seeks to examine the strength of the gender dichotomy and the construction of gender ideals. Other research questions explore how the bodies of young children are gendered, how parents' discuss and construct gender in fluid ways, how race and class intersect with gender and how parents' work to "undo" or "redo" gender. In this first chapter, I will discuss the theoretical framework for this study. I will outline the sample and methods in chapter two. The following chapters will present the findings and include a

discussion of the significance of this study along with recommendations for further work in this area.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Scholarship on gendered bodies has focused on how gender difference is (re)produced by cultural standards of femininity and masculinity (Clarke and Griffin 2007; Crawley, Foley and Shehan 2008; Chernin 1983; Connell 2000), practices of body discipline (Bartky 1988; Bordo 1989; Davis 2003; Gimlin 2000; Holliday and Taylor 2006; Millman 1980; Orbach 1988) and embodiment or "the physical manifestation of and enactment of cultural and social norms" (Davis 1997; Frost 2003; Lorber and Moore 2007). Scholars argue that despite the many developments and contributions of the past few decades, little is known about how parents engage discourse to (re)produce cultural ideals about gender, especially with their very young children (James 2000; Joiner, et. al. 2006; Prout 2006; Simpson 2000). As most scholarship examines individuals in adolescence and beyond (e. g. Archibald and Brooks-Gunn 2000; Abrams and Sormer 2002; Blume and Blume 2003; Botta 2003; Byley 2000; Frost 2003; Jones 2002; Milikie 2002; Nitcher 2000; Oliver and Lalik 2000; Ogle and Damhorts 2004) there is a need for both theoretical and empirical work on childhood bodies to further our understanding of the relational and interactional construction of gender and gendered bodies (James 2000; Joiner, et. al. 2006; Lorber and Moore 2007; Prout 2006; Simpson 2000).

Children are acutely aware of how their bodies are gendered reflections of being sons or daughters within a given family and reflect the impact of parent's ideas about their bodies (James 2000). While many cultural factors such as television, music, book,

movies and toys external actors such as baby-sitters, day care, peers and schools shape understandings of appropriate gendered behavior and bodies, this study examines how parents, through their discourse and practices, guide the social construction of their children's bodies as gendered bodies. Although the construction of gender is influenced by various aspects, the family is the first and foremost interactional site in which a child's gender is constructed (Coltrane 1998; Backett-Milburn 2000; MacCoby 1992; Peterson and Rollins 1997; Tepperman and Curtis 2004; James 1993; 2000; Joiner, et. al. 2006; Lorber and Moore 2007). This study will look at parents' gender ideologies and engagement in gender construction and co-construction of gender with their children.

I will draw from two bodies of literature, social constructionist and embodiment theories, both of which have informed a great deal of scholarship on gender and engendering but are rarely used together in current scholarship (Messerschmidt, 2009). Bringing these two theoretical frames together can further our understanding of gender embodiment and how parents engage in disciplinary practices as an aspect of constructing gendered bodies in their twin children. In addition, I will utilize elements of Blume and Blume's (2003) dialectical model of family discourse, thus further moving the conversation beyond the binary approach and allowing for investigation of the contradictions and nuances of gendered language and practices.

Social Constructionist Approach and "Doing Gender"

Boys and girls are gender categorized from birth, and these gender assignments are reinforced by the daily markers of life and the bifurcated ways in which gender is often categorized (e.g. boy/girl, man/woman, masculine/feminine). Moreover the

differences between men and women are created and used to maintain "the essential distinctiveness of feminine and masculine natures" (West and Fenstermaker 1993:44). The binary nature of gender, "one is a boy or a girl, never both" fuels our dualistic thinking about gender (Thorne 1993:158). Social constructionist approaches challenge the binaries that perpetuate labeling gender as difference, such as man/woman, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual (Butler, 1990). Gender is not just a category but a "dimension of social relations and social organization" (158). There are multiple meanings of gender that are often contradictory and shifting: "there are many ways of being a boy or a girl" (Thorne, 1993: 158). The framework of gender as binary ignores the dynamic interaction of gender and the great fluidity and variation that exists within and between the gender categories (Lorber 2000; 2006; Thorne 1993). The social construction of gender approach provides a challenge that gender is bifurcated and that there actually is more fluidity to gender than what is expected socially (Dozier, 2005; Lorber 2007; Lucal, 1999).

West and Zimmerman's groundbreaking, and often used, work *Doing Gender*, challenges these binaries and provides a social constructionist framework to look at gender, and gender accomplishment, as an on-going social process and not an apriori fact or role (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Doing gender considers the way in which men and women are continually engaged in the production of gender, including an active pursuit of gender competency, and, at the same time, they are also "are hostage" to the (re)production of gender (1987; 1991). Gender and difference are accomplishments achieved continually through social interactions and through social structures, such as the

family, where belief systems about gender and power are perpetuated, supported and were individuals are held accountable (Acker, 1999; Coltrane, 1998; Lorber, 2000; Glick and Fiske, 2000; West and Zimmerman, 1990). Doing gender, as a theory, argues that gender is constantly produced and re-produced on both an individual and structural level. One of the chief reasons individuals engage in doing gender is that both men and women are held accountable by society for the accomplishment of gender (Coltrane, 1989). "Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine nature" (West and Zimmerman, 1987:126). The accomplishment of gender means that men and women are constantly striving, re-inventing and engaged in the active pursuit of achieving gender competency.

Social constructionist theoretical strengths lie in the illumination of how social interactions are grounded in accountability and how we are constantly socially reconstructing gender (Crawley, Foley and Shehan, 2008). Gender is not who we are but what we do (Coltrane, 1989; West and Zimmerman, 1987). However, the concept of social construction may ignore structural elements of gender (Lorber, 1994; 2007). For some scholars, the accomplishment of gender suggests both agency and structure. Social structures of inequities are maintained and perpetuated by belief systems about gender and power (Glick and Fiske, 2000). There are multitudes of structural powers built into society, such as family, religion and work that hold individuals accountable to conform to current ideals of femininity and masculinity and that process is active and not passive (Acker, 1999; Blumberg, 1984; Coltrane, 1998; Lorber, 2003). Structural powers alone

have been ineffective in explaining gender differences, but there are significant sights of

inequality within social structures through social interactions. The doing gender approach

seems to inadvertently ignore this link (Maldonado, 1995; Weber, 1995; Deutsch, 2007)

although West and Fenstermaker (2002) revisit in their later work, doing gender and

discuss the role of structural institutions in perpetuating gender.

Undoing Gender

A decade after West and Zimmerman's seminal work *Doing Gender* (1987),

changed the theoretical discussion in how gender is constructed and reproduced, scholars

began exploring the possibilities of "undoing" gender. The idea of "undoing gender"

postulates that if gender is socially constructed then it can also be deconstructed (Butler,

2004; Lorber, 2007; Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009). If we "do" gender then we can also

"undo" gender (Deustch, 2007). Undoing gender entails challenging the structures and

institutions that work to maintain and reproduce gendered expectations and to challenge

the unequal binaries that these systems create (Bem, 1993; Firestone, 1971; Lorber, 1990;

2007; Witting, 1980). For some, the idea of undoing gender seems impossible. It has been

criticized as being too "radical" for many mainstream liberal feminists and argue that

gender is so embedded that a true "undoing" may be impossible. (Lorber, 2007).

Yet the "undoing" of gender may not be such an ominous task, as not everybody

views gender in the same way and gender is nuanced in our lived experiences. Thus,

beyond challenging and dismantling gendered institutions, daily social interactions

should also be aimed at the undoing of gender (Deutsch, 07). Judith Lorber suggests

starting on the micro level and dismantling daily gender divisions that structure everyday

lives (2000). West and Zimmerman also explore the possibilities of undoing gender and suggest that instead of aiming at undoing gender, gender should be redone (2009). Redoing gender entails re-interpreting cultural notions of what gender means, and challenging these ideals (2009). Redoing gender aims to change the way gender is constructed, and the consequences as a result of binary gender construction, but does not aim to do away with gender as a whole.

Accountability

The active pursuit of achieving gender competency also means that we are held accountable for our gender accomplishment. Accountability to gender expectations is central to doing gender. West and Zimmerman (1987; 2009) argue that gender is not achieved in a vacuum but is culturally and socially situated, thus the accomplishment of gender is socially produced and "the key to understanding gender's doing is . . . accountability" (West and Zimmerman, 2009:116). As members any given society, we are aware of gendered expectations, sometime subconsciously, however we anticipate what the reactions of others about our gender expectations are and often adjust accordingly (West and Fenstermaker, 2002). Men and women are both consciously and subconsciously aware of the rewards for the accomplishment of appropriate gender and the punishments when it is not accomplished. The accountability for the production and reproduction of gender.

Interestingly, as integral as accountability is to concept of doing gender, most literature on doing gender has paid scant attention to accountability. As Jocelyn Hollander notes, "although other scholars have enthusiastically embraced the idea that

people do gender, they have largely neglected the concept of accountability. Most writings either ignore accountability entirely or give it only passing mention" (2012:2). She argues that most of the existing literature on doing gender exploring accountability, does not consider "whom or how" members of society are held accountable and lacks discussion on the interactions of accountability. Because parents are charged with the production and reproduction of their children's gender, they are also held accountable for their children's accomplishment of gender. They often are subject to both direct and non-direct social disapproval in the form of looks and comments when there is perceived gender non-conformity.

Threats of social disapproval and accountability are also explored in Emily Kane's work, *The Gender Trap*, where she examines the role of accountability in parents' doing and undoing of their children's gender accomplishment (2012). Looking at the barriers parents face in "loosening the limits that gender can impose upon us", she examines the interplay between resistance, complicity and accountability that parents experience often experience; and that part of the "gender trap" are parents desiring looser gender expectations for their children, but fearing the social repercussions for not conforming (Kane, 2012:3).

Kane also identifies "five configurations of parenting practices" (p.11), used to describe various parental strategies used in constructing and resisting gender in their children (see Table 1). The parental configurations look at two key areas: 1) the extent to which parents rely upon either biological or social expectations to explain their children's

gender and 2) to what accountability to social networks plays in parents' ideals about gender construction.

Table 1.1: Emily Kane's Five Configurations of Parenting Practices

Naturalizers	Parents who interpret their children's behavior as rooted in biology and are uncomfortable with gender nonconformity.
Cultivators	Parents who believe their children's gender patterns are due to social influences but they work to reproduce gender norms.
Refiners	They attribute both biology and society to gender norms and display both complicity and resistance to gender norms.
Innovators	Parents who resist gender structure and are not concerned about others judgement.
Resisters	Those who show resistance to gender structures but fear judgement of others.

The gender trap, and the five configurations of parenting practices, laid out by Kane, highlights the complex interplay that parents face in making gender decisions for their children and the accountability they face. It also provides a framework in which to analyze research on parental practices and gender. As accountability was an emergent theme in this research, I draw off of Kane's configurations of parenting practices as a framework to further analyze parental attitudes about gender and gender practices.

Embodiment

My research on twins looks at how the doing and undoing of gender occurs. In particular, how parents discursively construct gender both within same-gender twins and within opposite-gender twins and the salience of the gender. Throughout the analysis of my findings, I will draw off of the social constructionist approach. In particular using the

theories of doing gender to provide a lens for analyzing parental discourse regarding their actions, motivations and accountability in gendering their twins. I will also draw off of the embodiment theories, as despite the emergence of a deep and rich field on embodiment in both sociology and feminist studies (Chernin, 1983; Orbach, 1988; Bordo, 1993; Shilling, 1993; Davis, 1997; Christensen, 2000. Dworkin and Messner, 2000; Backett and Milburn, 2001; Disch, 2003; Libby and Blume, 2003; Clarke and Griffin, 2007; Crawley, et. Al. 2008), there is still a lack of research on the family and theories of body (Connell, 1999; Messerschmidt, 2009). The family, has been long recognized in sociology as a primary site for learning and reinforcing gender and cultural gender norms (Coltrane, 1998; Leaper, 2000). The treatment, social meanings and values that are attached to particular bodies have a significant effect on an individual's sense of self, as well as how that person is viewed in society (Goffman, 1963). Scholars have argued that in modern society, the body has become the "principal field of political and cultural activity" (Bordo 1993; Foucault 1979; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1992). Social inequalities and power hierarchies are often based on gender and bodily difference and played out on the body (Davis 1997).

In the context of children, research has mainly focused on bodily practices as "teaching" children and not as a way of (co)constructing gendered bodies through these practices. By examining how gender embodiment occurs in the family not only how the gender binary is reified but also how masculinity and femininity are defined within gender, we can glean parents' gender ideals and efforts to construct and reify gender ideologies.

Embodiment and Femininity

For women and girls the implications of the social importance of the body are magnified as femininity and value are intricately linked to their appearance (Featherstone 1991). Rigid feminine beauty standards are employed to control the lives of women and girls' as a part of a system of inequality with female self-worth and value often intrinsically tied to how her body looks (Bordo 1993; Lorber 1993; Weitz 1998). Girls are encouraged to conform to gender body norms (Currie, Kelly and Pomerantz 2007; Bartky 1988). The process of learning the appropriate standards of feminine beauty is often reproduced from one generation to the next (Clarke and Griffin 2007; Cubbage-Vega 2003). Young girls often learn from their mothers regarding appropriate measures of beauty and accountability (Archibald, Graber and Brooks-Gunn 2008; Ogeden and Steward 2000; Ogle and Damhorst 2003; 2004). A mother's concern over her own body and weight often shapes her daughter's attitudes (Pike and Rodin 1991; Byely et al., 1999; Usmiani and Daniluk 1997).

Research suggests that adolescent girls with poor body image often have mothers who are critical of their own weight and appearance (Pike and Rodin 1991). Mothers highly emphasize appearance may pressure their daughters to be thin (Pike and Rodin 1991) and girls whose mothers participate in weight-control are more likely to do the same (Flynn and Fitzgibbon 1996). Women are disciplined by the oppressive beauty standards and at the same time participate in the construction of them (Bartky 1988). Mothers often encourage dieting and thinness in their daughters. They convey the importance of appearance, especially weight, and often berate or belittle their daughters

when they don't comply with cultural standards of appropriate body size (Griffin and Clarke 2007; Nitcher 2000; Millman 1980; Usmiani and Daniluk 1997). There is a "dual character" to this oppression; it is internalized and reified by mothers' interactions with their daughters. Social pressures such as the commodification of women's bodies (Bordo 1993; Orbach 1988; Wilson 2002; Wolf 1998), success in the marriage market (Chernin 1983; Orbach 1988) and women as physical capital (Bourdieu 1984), contribute to women's participation and perpetuation of the same practices that oppress them. Women reproduce the inequality that oppresses them and teach their daughters what the vital capital for women is.

The female body is viewed as an object, one that exists for men's eyes (Walters 1992). It has been argued that a "male connoisseur" resides within all women and that women are constantly under his gaze (Mulvey 1981). Women live as if their bodies were under the constant surveillance of another, "an anonymous patriarchal other" (Bartky 1988). The disdain for "massiveness, power or abundance in a woman's body" suggests a desire by patriarchy to reign in women's power and ensure that they "take up as little space as possible" (Bartky 1988; 2002 Chernin 1983). Foucault's "docile body", created by the process of coercion and control over the human body and its bodily activities (1979), suggests that the trend toward the lithe and slender female body is a new form of social control, one that does not seek to restrict women's movement from place to place, but restrict her embodied power (Bartky 1990).

Bartky's analysis of Foucault illustrates that the oppression inherent in the control of female beauty, "the disciplinary techniques through which the "docile bodies" of

women are constructed aim at a regulation that is perpetual and exhaustive" (1988).

Girls try to navigate their concepts of beauty and body image within this highly controlled and restrictive system, and yet they also see maintaining body ideals as being in-control (Chrisler 2008; Gagne and McGaughey 2002). They begin to see themselves as a physical commodity, an object that can gain social approval from society and family (Gimlin 2000; Heilman 1998). For those who do not meet societal standards of thinness, the task of being thin situates them in a world to feel "somehow less" (Bordo 1989). Their body then, categorizes them as a "failed" member of society (Shilling 1993) someone who could not meet social expectations of appropriate femininity and beauty.

Embodiment and Masculinity

In contrast, to the literature on feminine embodiment, literature on men and masculinity highlights the construction of manhood as in direct opposition to anything feminine; to be a man is to be the opposite of women (Adams and Coltrane, 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Lorber, 2001). Women's subordination and male power is often derived from essentializing difference: difference that feminist studies have debunked as social rather than biological and yet, that still persist (Adams and Coltrane, 2004). The exaggeration of male behavior, often through physical violence and aggression, works to reify maleness (Connell, 2002). Women's subordination is justified by these "masculine" and "inherently" male traits (Brickell 2005; Ferguson, 2000; Savin-Williams, 1997).

There is a hierarchy of masculinities, a hegemonic masculinity, that is not based on the most common pattern of masculinity but reflects a social ideal (Connell and

Messerschmidt, 2005). It operates on a local, cultural and global scale to appear to be customary (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). The apparent normalcy obscures the social meaning of gender involved in constructing ideals of manhood and makes men seem "generically human" (Coltrane, 1994). Hegemonic masculinity is far reaching and is more of a gender practice than a particular masculinity (Connell, 1995). It only makes sense when culturally positioned (Coltrane, 1998). Men who fall outside the hegemonic model are "othered" and constructed to be less valuable (Carrigan, 1985). Essentialist standards of masculinity are still used to maintain men's supremacy and also denigrate those that do not achieve the socially accepted and constructed notion of manhood (Hearn, 2004; Kimmel, 1996). The insidiousness of hegemonic masculinity is that even though, the cultural ideals of masculinity do not meet the lived reality of most men, they are still upheld and men are judged by these standards (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell 1995; McGuffey 1999). Despite being situated in a social structure that grants men power, men are still held accountable and must accomplish gender (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Kimmel and Messner 2004).

A large part of being masculine, involves how male bodies are evaluated on physical action and performance (Franzoni 1995; Macdonald 1995). Boys are taught that tall, fast and strong bodies are dominant and masculine (Crawley, Foley and Shehan 2008). The body ideals for boys that are generationally transmitted are strong, fit bodies (Connell 1983; Crawley, Foley and Shehan 2008).

Fathers may be deeply invested in their sons athleticism and reinforce the idea that boys who perform in well sports also perform masculinity well (Crawley, Foley and

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Shehan 2008). Sports play a large part in the construction of masculinity and the

disciplining of male bodies (Messner 2005; 1992; Dworkin and Messner, 1999). They

typically encourage physical power and aggression (Ferguson 2000; Messner 1992;

Dworkin and Messner 1999) and require a body that meets up to masculine standards.

Boys who do not meet the standard are often ridiculed and denigrated (Dworkin and

Wachs 1997; 2000; Gerschick and Miller 1994). Heterosexual fathers in particular

actively shape and reinforce their sons' masculinity, while at the same time reinforcing

their own (Kane 2006). Theories of embodiment as they relate to both the construction of

masculinity and femininity, provides a framework to analyze parents' ideologies about

gendered bodies and ways in which parent construct and co-construct gender

embodiment in their children.

Dialectical Model of Family and Gender Discourse

This study will use a dialectical model to analyze parental discourse. Dialectical

models focus on the changing, nuanced and contradictory concepts in discourse (Baxter

and Montgomery, 1998). The use of a dialectical gender approach is useful in

investigating and exploring the various ways in which gender is discussed, reinforced,

debated and often re-done (Allen and Barber, 1992; Blume and Blume, 2003). To provide

a framework for gender and in particular gender in the family, Blume and Blume (2003)

proposed a "dialectical model of family and gender discourse" to be used for analysis of

family discourse. The model looks at particular "dialectical issues: nature versus culture,

similarity versus difference and stability versus fluidity" (p.785).

Moreover, the model developers suggest three sites of study: body, identity and sexuality. The use of this dialectical model in this research is two-fold: 1) it permits an analysis of the multi-faceted and complicated ways in which gender is discussed, and 2) it provides an opportunity in which to deconstruct the things that we often take for granted, such as gender expectations.

Blume and Blume's dialectical model was developed specifically for analyzing and theorizing discourse within the families, based on emergent and continual themes that came up in their study of family discourse and their own research. A "model for family discourse" is useful because family discourse is often fraught with various themes and tensions. As past research on families has noted, families are a primary source for observing and analyzing how gender is constructed and co-constructed (Berkowitz and Ryan, 2011) and how gender is also de-constructed and "undone" (Risman, 1998; Kimmell, 2000).

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH DESIGN
Sample

This study involves forty in-depth interviews and eight participant observations that occurred at meetings of two mother-of-multiples clubs (N=2) located in two regions of Southern California. Examining twins allows for the exploration of how parents compare and contrast siblings of the same age. Parents are more likely to compare twins than types of siblings (Turkheimer, et. al, 2009). Twins are non-normative, as they represent only 30 live births out of 1000 (Russell, et. al. 2003), and non-normative sites are useful for us to see what is taken for granted (McGuffey 2005; Goffman 1963). Twins also provide unique sibling relations as they are often viewed as a "unit" and experience

many of the same events within families and social settings. Twins of both the same and opposite gender provide an opportunity to listen to how parents construct gender across and within gender categories.

Most twin studies have focused on the genetic similarities and differences of twins, given that the genetic environment is "controlled" (i.e.50% shared genetics in the case of dizygotic or fraternal twins and 100% shared genetics in the case of monozygotic twins (Turkheimer, et. al. 2009). These studies support the argument that genetics plays a role in outcomes and personalities (Hamer and Copeland, 1998). Social scientific studies, however that these types of studies have been exhausted, yet argue that "the twins study is far from outliving its usefulness, the existence of pervasive familial influences on twins samples continue to provide opportunities for environment studies" (Horowitz, et. al., 2003). In talking to parents of twins, there is an opportunity to uncover how parents construct and co-construct their twin's gender and how the familial environment shapes and influences the ways parents understand their children's gender. By examining twins, rather than singleton children there is a unique opportunity to contribute to the body of literature looking at environment and for implications on gender construction. Respondents chosen for this study were all first-time parents whose children consisted only of their twins. This sample allowing for analysis of the unique and non-normative situation of raising two children at the same exact age and developmental stage and in the same environment, controlling for parents' age and other factors that typically change when parents have children at several different points in time. This study does not compare fraternal-versus identical-twin outcomes; rather, it focuses on how parents

discuss the gender of their twins. For this reason, all twin pair-types, fraternal and identical, were included in the sample.

Research Questions

Guided by social constructionist theories and embodiment, along with a "dialectical model of family and gender discourse" this study set out to explore three research questions:

1. How do parents construct and co-construct their children's gender and bodies as gendered bodies?
2. What is the role and strength of the gender dichotomy and/or do parents describe a gender fluidity instead of the dichotomy?
3. How does the race, class and gender of parent's affect the construction of their children's gender?

These questions guide the interviews and analysis of to examine how parents' gender their children through discourse and practices. By interviewing parents of opposite-gender and same-gender twins under the age of five, this research attempts to glean how parents' engage in the construction of gender with their twins and how parents' discourse about their twins may reinforce the gender binary. The study examines how parents' networks of accountability (i.e. other parents, friends, relatives, etc.) affect parents' attitudes and actions with regard to gender and sexuality, operating as mechanisms of social control.

In structured, open-ended interviews parents' were asked to talk about their play, grooming and disciplinary habits to explore how parents acknowledge, subvert and reinforce gender dichotomies about their twins. By interviewing parents' of same-gender twins and parents of opposite-gender twins, the study explores how parents' construct,

resist and reinforce gender, within and among gender categories and gender fluidity.

Finally, this research will examine how parent's class, race and ethnicity may affect how

parents' construct gender.

CHAPTER 2

METHODS

In consideration of the social constructionist and "doing gender" frameworks of this study, I chose a qualitative approach to provide an intimate, in-depth look at how parents discursively construct and co-construct gender expectations and practices of their young children. Since language is often used to construct reality (Vaughan, 1986) and interviews have been suggested as the best method to understand meaning and how it is constructed (LaRossa, 1989), interviews and observations were chosen as this study's methods of data collection. Interviews with parents and observing parents interacting with one their children in play settings a detailed and rich account of parent's discourse and experiences with gender construction of their young children was obtained.

Sample

This study involves forty in-depth interviews and eight participant observations that occurred at meetings of two mother-of-multiples clubs (N=2) located in two regions of Southern California. Although the club members resided within 50 miles of each other, each region was demographically distinct. The first region was an upper-middle class community in Orange County, CA. The median household income of this area is $96,210, with Caucasians making up 69% of the population (U.S. Census, 2014). The second region was a working to middle-class community in the Inland Valley Empire, CA. The median household income of this community is $55,636 with 34% of the population being Caucasian (U.S. Census 2008). Every effort was made to obtain a racially and ethnically diverse sample, but as the methods were purposive sampling and

snowball sampling, the sample was slightly less representative than the population (See

Tables 2.1 and 2.2).

Table 2.1: Sample Demographics, Region 1, Located Within Orange County, CA (n=25)

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Respondents
African American	0
Asian American	4
Hispanic/Latino	6
Caucasian	15

Marital Status	Number of Respondents
Married	23
Divorced	2

Educational Attainment	Number of Respondents
Some College	4
B.A.	3
M.A.	15
Doctorate	3

Employment Status	Number of Respondents
Employed (Full-time)	7 (male), 7 (female)
Employed (Part-time)	0 (male), 1 (female)
Unemployed	1 (male), 8 (female)

Income reported as Household	Number of Respondents
$0-25,000	0
$25,000-55,000	2
$55,000-85,000	3
$85,000-115,000	8
Over $115,000	12

Table 2.2: Sample Demographics, Region 2, Inland Valley Empire (n=15)

Race/Ethnicity	Number of Respondents
African American	2
Asian American	0
Hispanic/Latino	6
Caucasian	7

Marital Status	Number of Respondents
Married	13
Divorced	2

Educational Attainment	Number of Respondents
Some College	8
B.A.	5
M.A.	2
Doctorate	0

Employment Status	Number of Respondents
Employed (Full-time)	6 (male), 3 (female)
Employed (Part-time)	0 (male), 3 (female)
Unemployed	0 (male), 3 (female)

Income reported as Household	Number of Respondents
$0-25,000	0
$25,000-55,000	6
$55,000-85,000	8
$85,000-115,000	2
Over $115,000	0

As a mother of twins myself, I was a former member of both clubs and had easy access to the clubs' membership lists, meetings, play-dates and activities. In general, the membership is comprised of parents' children age 5 and under. Therefore, the sample was limited to parents who only had twins and whose twins were between the ages of 12-60 months. The latter criterion allowed for a focus on parents' of young children before

they entered the K-12 school settings with its intense interactions with peers and other socializing agents (Thorne, 1993), and on parents' role in (re)producing gender. The age range of 12-60 months is also a particularly "body labor intensive" period in that most children require a great deal of assistance in their grooming, feeding and play; thus parents' interactions with their children's bodies and gender is time and labor intensive. During this developmental period, discussions among parents often focus on body norms and expectations. In initial field observations on playgrounds and in play groups, discussions of bodily norms and labor were quite frequent and thus guided the research design.

This study used purposive selective sampling; it was a non-random sample and respondents were chosen for the selected criteria described above (Draucker, et. al., 2007). I initially recruited respondents through advertisements in the clubs' monthly newsletter and announcements made at the clubs' monthly meetings. The announcement solicited first time parents' with twins between the ages of 12-60 months, who were interested in assisting a fellow member, and mom of young twins, in her doctoral research project on twins. It was noted that no compensation would be provided to the respondents and they were encouraged to call based on their interest.

Initial interest resulted in twelve people (four mother-father dyads and four mothers) signed up for the study. Then over six months, twenty other people (eight mother-father dyads and 4 mothers) signed up. I also utilized snowball sampling, which is when respondents suggest others who have similar criteria and may be interested in the study. Eight additional respondents (two mother-father dyads and 4 mothers) were

obtained through snowball sampling. Single parents and LGBTQ parents were not

excluded, however only four single parents responded to by announcement and were

interviewed and no LGBTQ parents contacted me. Seven people who contacted me with

interest were ineligible to participate due to them having triplets or other singleton

children present at home. The sample includes fifteen people from the Inland Valley

Empire and twenty-five from Orange County.

The main findings in this study are drawn from the 40 in-depth interviews

conducted with parents of twins. The sample included five types of twin pairings

emerged (See Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Twin Group Pairings (n=40)

Group A	Parents with boy/girl fraternal twins	11 mother/7fathers
Group B	Parents with boy/boy fraternal twins	5 mothers/4fathers
Group C	Parents of girl/girl fraternal twins	4 mothers/2 fathers
Group D	Parents of boy/boy identical twins	3 mothers/1 father
Group E	Parents of girl/girl identical twins	2 mothers/1 father

The analysis involved comparing these five groups to examine how parents

discuss their children's gender and how parents construct gender in nuanced and/or

dichotomous ways, both within sets of twins that are same-gender and opposite-gender.

In case of dyads (i.e. both parents participating) interviews were conducted separately so

as to avoid bias introduced by the presence of the other partner. Separate interviews

provided an opportunity to get answers from both parents about their gender and body

ideals and without potential communication changes based on social dynamics that often affect our communication and interactions (Tannen, 1995).

In addition to interviews, eight participant observations were conducted at various locations throughout the two demographic regions studied: five in public parks and three in homes of mother's hosting "playdates". The observations were predominately of mothers and their children, with fathers being in attendance during two observations. The playdates, although not closed to fathers, mainly include mothers as the organizational purpose is to support mothers of multiples. The average number of attendees at each playgroup was 8 mothers with 19 children (8 sets of twins and 3 non-twins siblings). The observations took place over the course of 6 months and each observation averaged 105 minutes. I learned of these playdates through the clubs' monthly newsletter. Three took place in the Inland Valley Empire and five in Orange County (see Table 1 and Table 2). Only seven of the respondents that were interviewed were present at the playgroups (Dawn, Maria, Aisha, Danielle, Tiffany, Brenda and Scott). I observed Dawn and Maria on three occasions and at the same play group, Aisha four times, Danielle and Tiffany once and Scott and Brenda, who are married, twice at a home playdate.

The observations included watching the children play that is, how the mothers interacted with their children and guided their play and hanging out with the mothers as they watched their children play and discussed their children. My presence as a researcher was known to the people being observed, I was able to discreetly jot some notes down while observing, but most of my notes were written down once in my car after the observations. Immediately upon arriving home, the observations were written

down thoroughly and typed up. Once all my observations were complete, I read through all of the observation transcripts and began to code for themes. Some of the same coding used for the interviews was used for the observations (bossy girls, biological reasoning for gender attributes, comparisons of boy/girl twins). However, there were also a few emergent themes from the observations. Coding for these included "sweet boys", guided play, resisting gender norms.

Interview Design

Before the interviews were conducted, a background survey was sent via email to the respondents asking participants about their demographics, employment history, number of children, etc (see Appendix A). The background data was collected at the time of the interview and the results were tabulated (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2). The interviews average 1 ½ to 2 hours in length and included open-ended questions (see Appendix B). The majority of the interviews were conducted inside the parents' homes. When both mother and father agreed to an interview, a time was chosen when both parents where home, but the interviews were conducted separately. Typically, the mother was interviewed first while the father watched the kids and then they swapped roles with the mother caretaking and the father being interviewed. The children were home in all of these interviews that were conducted in the parent's residence. In the interviews that were with just one parent, most of the interview times were chosen around a nap but in a few cases the children were being entertained by the television or a babysitter. Three interviews occurred in public spaces: one being at a coffee shop and two occurring at a local restaurant near the parent's place of work based upon their request.

All of the interviews were voice recorded and all participants were given pseudonyms, along with the children in order to maintain anonymity in the written transcript. The tapes were transcribed verbatim over the course of a year, with fifteen of the interviews being transcribed by six undergraduate assistants under the close supervision of myself and having had worked and been trained in qualitative methods. I then read through each interview, coding common themes that emerged. Initially the codes were broad based, such as "body", "girly", "bossy", "all boy" and so on. I also made index cards for quick reference for each of the interview transcripts. This was in order to easily organize interviews that had common emergent themes. After the first round of coding, I went back and re-read the interview transcripts and refined the codes to fall under five general themes: embodiment, gender binary, closeted play, accountability and redefining gender. These themes were used to further organize the coded data.

Since this research was exploratory and guided in the qualitative tradition of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 2012) no hypothesis was tested. Although I had general guiding research questions such as how parents gender their children, how parents construct gendered embodiment, the fluidity or strength of the gender binary and the role of intersectionality, questions were not developed to directly ask leading or direct questions about these practices. Instead, general questions asked parents' opinions about their twin's personalities, difference and similarities, likes and dislikes, play and dressing habits, grooming habits and eating. Questions regarding their children's gender were specifically not asked as the research design was crafted to see if gender would be a

central or emergent theme in parents discourse about their children and if parents' practices with their children were gendered (see Appendix C).

The structured interview guide was then developed. Parents were asked to describe their children's physical appearance, body practices such as grooming- bathing-potty training and dressing, eating habits, food likes and dislikes, body shape and size, physical capabilities, temperament and types of play their twins engage in. Sample of questions include, "Can you describe the way your twins look", "Were you surprised in any way about your twin's appearance", "What types of comments do others make about your twins", "Can you describe your twins favorite toys", "What kinds of toys do family and friends like to buy for your twins" and "Are there any types of toys you do not allow your twins to play with?" Parents were also asked what types of resources (e.g. family, friends or literature) they use to obtain information on parenting and what types of comments family members, friends, doctors, care providers and strangers make about their twins appearance and behaviors. Some examples of these questions include, "Describe where you get your information about parenting from", "What has been the most useful parenting advice you have received?"

Questions regarding their children's outside influences (e.g. time spent in preschool, daycare, playgroups) and media exposure was also included. A sampling of these questions include, "Who are the primary caretakers for your twins", "Do your twins spend any time in daycare, preschool or with a babysitter", "What type of instructions do you give to your children's caretakers". Questions regarding caretaking were asked in order to see how many children spent time in care away from their parents and if so for

how long. Although the children in the study certainly could be influenced by many other

outside influences such as television, toys, books, friends, playgroups, etc. the targeted

age group of 12-60 months was chosen due to their often limited amount of time in peer,

educational and other groups. Research has suggested that once children immerse and

spend a significant amount of time in peer groups, their peers become significant

influences in their likes (Handel, 1988; MacCoby 1988; Witt, 2000). Most of the existing

literature on children and gender has been done on children once they've entered formal

education and peer groups (Thorne, 1993; Martin, 2005; Berkowitz and Ryan, 2011) and

this research seeks to fill a gap in examining children before they enter these spaces.

Parents of children in daycare full-time were not excluded, but most of the

children were in primary care of the parents in the sample, with only four children in the

sample in full-time formal daycare and ten children going to preschool part-time. Another

ten children had babysitters occasionally help out as caretakers and another six children

spent a good amount of time in the care of grandparents. Grandparents were the only

influence parents mentioned in interviews in terms of being significant in both the

construction of their twin's gender and their accountability.

The following chapters will discuss the findings of the aforementioned in-depth

interviews and participant observations. The core research question of this study

examines how parents' of children under the age of five use discourse to construct and

co-construct their children's gender. The interviews looked at parents' ideologies about

gender and how gender emerges in their discourse and interactions with their children. In

particular, this research seeks to examine the strength of the gender dichotomy and how

gender ideals are constructed within gender. Other research questions explore how the

bodies of young children are gendered, do parents' discuss and construct gender in fluid

ways, the intersection of race and class and how parents' work to "undo" or "redo"

gender. The findings chapters will present the findings and conclude with a discussion of

the significance of this study along with recommendations for further work in this area.

CHAPTER 3

BACKGROUND

Gendered language is used to explain, construct, maintain and reproduce cultural ideals of gender. Scholars have explored how gendered "difference" is played out on bodies by disciplinary actions (Bordo, 1993; Davis 1993; 1997; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1992), performance and accountability (Crawley, Foley and Shehan 2008; Kessler and MaKenna 1978; West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1993) and how cultural norms of the body are significant to the social construction of gender (Blume and Blume, 2003; Paquette and Raine, 2004; Pelican et. al. 2005; Prout, 2000). These beliefs and practices are never settled but negotiated, contested and reinvented through the construction of gendered bodies (Backett-Milburn, 2000). Studying the ways in which mothers and fathers engage in gendered language and behavior may uncover how parents construct and co-construct body norms and how those are gendered constructions.

Masculinity and femininity are often intrinsically linked to the appearance and accomplishment of the body. The social meanings and values that are attached to particular body forms have a significant impact on an individual's sense of self, as well as how that person is viewed in society (Goffman, 1963). The sociological study of embodiment has flourished in the past several decades (Davis, 1997; Frank, 1990; Turner, 1992; Shilling, 1993). Just a few of the contributions include how gendered meaning of body produces and reproduces social inequalities (Bordo, 1993; Bourdieu, 1984; Davis, 1997;2003; Pyke and Johnson, 2003), how femininity is linked to beauty and normative body standards (Bartky, 1988; Millman, 1980; Orbach, 1988), the

medicalization of bodies (Davis, 2003; Kaw, 1998 ;Gimlim, 2000; Holliday and Taylor, 2006) and the social construction of gendered bodies (West and Fenstermaker, 1993).

Parents map notions of masculinity and femininity onto their children's bodies and "children's bodies are targets of parental practice" in reinforcing and maintaining gender ideals (Christensen and Milburn 2000). The "gendering of the body in childhood is the foundation on which further gendering of the body occurs throughout the life course" (Martin 1998:495) and gender is played out on and through our bodies (Crawley, Foley and Shehan, 2008; Kessler and MaKenna, 1978; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Difference in bodies is constructed through gender, weight, age, beauty, race, class, sexuality and ability and "children's bodies are targets of parental practice" in reinforcing and maintaining these differences. (Christensen and Milburn, 2000)**.** Bodies, even those of babies, are not seen as generic; rather, they "bear the markers of culturally constructed difference" (Davis, 1997)**.** Early regulation of the body is seen in doctors' encouragement to weigh and measure babies and young children's bodies. This practice has been critiqued as the first step that encourages parents to take to regulate children's bodies (James, 1995; 2000).

The social meanings and values that are attached to particular bodies and the treatment that ensues have a significant effect on an individual's sense of self, as well as how that person is viewed in society (Goffman, 1963). Scholars have argued that in modern society, the body has become the "principal field of political and cultural activity" (Bordo, 1993; Foucault, 1979; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1992). Social inequalities and power hierarchies are often based on gender and bodily difference and played out on

the body (Davis, 1997) through disciplinary actions such as grooming, dressing, play and etiquette. Scholars note the lengths that women take to discipline their body to conform to gendered beauty and body ideals (Bartky, 1988; 1990; Bordo, 1993; Davis, 1993).

Cultural notions of body are also constructed based on intersecting positions such as race, ethnicity and social class (Barber, 2008; Collins 2000; Holliday and Taylor, 2006; King, 1988; McLaren and Kuh, 2004; Simenson, 2000). Families give messages about bodies that are culturally relative. For example, families of color often challenge white, middle-class definitions of beauty. The internalization of hegemonic beauty ideals have often been rejected and resisted (Patton, 2006). Despite resistance to hegemonic standards of beauty, racialized constructions of beauty are reproduced within families as well. Children with more Anglo features are often perceived to be more attractive and treated differently both within the family and socially (Disch, 2003; Ford, 2008; Thompson and Keith, 2001). There has also been a rise of racially specific plastic surgeries where patients note they are seeking to "erase" their inherited ethnic and family traits (Bartky, 2002; Kaw, 1993). Furthermore, anorexia, bulimia and body dysmorphia has traditionally been considered a "white" problem (Simmons and Blyth, 1987). Yet, studies have shown body dissatisfaction is growing at an alarming rate among African-American and Latina girls (Jones and Shorter-Gooden, 2003; Thompson, 1992) and there are increasing pressures to conform to white standards of beauty (Patton, 2006).

The rise in eating disorders amongst women of color has been linked to their families' social mobility; as some families of color move into the middle and upper-middle classes, their rates of eating disorders increase (Molloy, 1998; Patton, 2006;

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Thompson, 1992). This holds true for white women as well (McLaren and Kuh, 2004). The body as social capital has been identified by scholars as another way in which social class can be distinguished (Bartky, 2002; Bettie 2000; Bourdieu, 1993; Gimlin, 2000; McLaren and Kuh, 2004) and western notions of feminine beauty glorify traits associated with the upper-middle classes (Oliver and Lalik, 2000; Rooks 1996). Bodies act as a "class marker that shows whether you are a first-rate or second-rate citizen" (Simenson, 2000:1) and have "become a resource and a site on which difference was inscribed" (Bettie, 2000:14). Class is often used as a distinct marker of beauty in that working-class women often do not have the luxury or the financial means to engage in the expensive and time-consuming practices needed to meet upper-class standards of body and beauty (Holliday and Taylor, 2006; Saltzberg, 2003). Social status is often marked by the body and thinness often requires time and money, making bodies another way in which the wealthy can distinguish themselves (Saltzberg, 2003; Skeggs, 1997).

There is more focus on beauty tied to thinness and social worth in upper class families (McLaren and Kuh, 2004) and as fat is stigmatized in our society we increasingly see the wealthy distancing themselves from this "lower class" body and its class distinction (Bourdieu, 1993). Western standards of feminine beauty include Anglo features such as straight or wavy hair (Byrd and Tharps, 2001; Ford, 2008; Patton 2006; Weitz, 2001; Wilson and Russell. 1996), wide, round eyes, slimmer noses (Faludi, 1991; Kaw, 1993), and thin bodies (Bordo 1989; Bartky, 1988; Oliver and Lalik, 2000; Patton, 2006; Rooks, 1996). Glorifying the physical traits of the "hegemonic standards of the ruling class" means that beauty for the majority is elusive (Saltzberg and Chrisler, 1997).

Recent research has looked at how social class and hierarchy of masculinity is maintained by grooming practices, especially those considered to be associated with upper-middle class masculinity (Barber, 2008). The standard of beauty perpetuates race and class oppression (Bartky, 2002) and racist ideals (hooks 1995).

Parents are aware of their need to foster their children's gender identity and accomplishment of gender in childhood (Kane, 06). Parents of children as young as three begin constructing weight ideals for boy and girls differently. One study found that parents of 36-month-olds worried that their sons were underweight and not their daughters, even when the body mass index was the same for both girls and boys (Joiner, et al. 2006). Parents also reported that their sons did not eat enough food but their daughters ate adequately (Joiner, et al. 2006). This research suggests that parents' body expectations are intertwined with cultural expectations of gender. Despite the significant ways in which gender is transmitted and mapped onto the body, little research examines the ways in which families transmit gendered body ideals and how these ideals relate to the construction of gender norms (Prout, 2000; Blume and Blume, 2003). This chapter examines the ways in which parents' discuss their children's bodies and how they construct gendered body norms.

FINDINGS
"Yeah, I Have a Big Girl": Discourse on Body and Gender

Both the observations and interviews revealed the way in which parents discussed the gender appropriateness of their children's bodies. Of the forty interviews, two-thirds directly discussed their children's body size and how this related to their gender. Twenty-one of the respondents discussed how their children's bodies have become sources of

discussion among strangers and family, suggesting that the application of body ideals

begins far before grade school or adolescence. For instance, Dawn, a mother of 60-

month-old, boy/girl twins, recalled how since birth, strangers and family have

commented on her twins' bodies:

> "It's been constant from birth what people make about the twins appearance. Mainly the comments about their appearance has been about their size, their bodies, from the beginning my son had grown heavier and larger than my daughter and he outweighed her by about ten pounds by the age of one and had a bigger head…and so people wouldn't think they're twins at first. When people would find out they'd say things like, "oh it's so good that the boy is bigger than the girl it's just the way it should be". And I always remember thinking to myself what would happen if she was the bigger one? Would they find them inappropriate? And even though I find this horrible, that people would say this about my babies and that I know many parents of twins where their daughter is a lot bigger than their twin brother, secretly I was happy. Happy they were the way society expects boys and girls to be. I just figured it would be easier for them in the long run….and I guess me too."

Stephanie, a mother of 41-month-old boy/girl twins, had an experience that was

similar to Dawn's:

> "I have probably heard about 100 times from strangers how it is just "so perfect that my son is the big protector and he's big like a boy should be and she's petite and cute as a little girl should be. Like a doll". I want to say, 'Are you serious? They're babies'! It also bothers me as I was always a bigger child, I was always tall, and kind of athletic and a bit overweight, bigger than most girls. And that always bothered me that people think she's perfect because she's petite and small. So I am internally happy my daughter won't have to deal with that, but still it is not right. And now that they're a bit older people still make comments about how he is all boy and she is all girl because of their size. That has been a theme that has resonated throughout their lives."

Stephanie and Dawn represent most of the parents who had twins that met societal

expectations of gendered bodies. They reported that strangers and family would

constantly comment on their "gender appropriateness" and how "perfect" their children

were for their bodies to fit societal expectations of smaller girls and bigger boys. This suggests a network of accountability that spreads beyond parents' immediate family and friends and into the community at large. It also shows that an emphasis on appropriate gendered bodies begins very early on in a child's life. Several of the respondents with boy/girl twin-pairs expressed being conflicted about this accountability, feeling relief when their children met societal norms and at the same time, feeling outraged that it seems there will never be a time in their children's lives that their bodies are not scrutinized and gendered.

However, several respondents in the study expressed relief when their children fit into their own and society's expectations of the body, regardless of twin-pair type, and did not appear conflicted. These parents reflected similar attitudes as the cultivators in Emily Kane's work *The Gender Trap* (2012). Cultivators often acknowledge gender as socially constructed, but express a desire for their children to meet cultural expectations of gender norms (Kane, 2012). For example, Heather, a mother of 36-month-old boy/girl twins, described her relief about her twin's size:

> "The twins are the same height but Noah has always been bigger. He has always been five pounds bigger and I think he's stockier, more like a boy to me, like solid. Sydney is more tall and lean. She's very petite, very girly. I was very relieved."

She also expressed pleasure in the comments of family and strangers,

> "You know people really comment about the twins, especially how petite Sydney is and how big Noah is. They'll say, 'They're so perfect, just as they should be' or 'God, they're mini-me's'! My husband and I love that."

Heather, like several other respondents, expressed not only their relief and delight that their children were deemed to be the appropriate sizes for their gender, but also connected their children's bodies to those of their own, suggesting that intergenerational transmission of beauty and body ideals begin when children are very young. Parents who had "larger" female children expressed their unease with their daughter's larger size. For instance, Rose discussed how her daughter being 4 pounds heavier than her twin brother was not what she had expected or wanted for her 18-month-old twins:

> "That's not the way I would want it. I think the typical people want their kids, their boys, to be bigger and their girls to be smaller, petite. I think that's the way, socially Americans think of their selves. You know based on the social pressure, it's difficult to have a big, well you know, a big girl."

Her husband Carlos also notes, "Well yeah, I do have a big girl. She's bigger right, because she's the one who always ate. I mean a girl always knows how to eat." The idea that their girls are larger and have a bigger appetite came up often in the interviews and observation. Parents commonly expressed their unease about their young daughter's appetites, and how it would relate to their later eating habits and potential weight problems. Parent's anxiety often reflected their own ideas and relationships with their bodies and reaffirms the literature that suggests boys are often fed more and are encouraged to eat more than girls (Joiner, et al. 2006). For example, Cindy shared her fears about her 60-month-old, boy/girl twins, when asked to describe how her children look:

> "Physically, Tess outweighed Finn at birth and hasn't stopped. She's also taller than him. I am surprised by this. I am not short and my family is not short and their dad is 6'3". I am surprised Finn is so small. I want him to be taller, to have good self-esteem from it. But he can eat anything he wants and doesn't gain

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weight. That will be good for him later in life. Tess however has, um, a lot of body fat. Actually, this is so bad, but we call her chunky cheese. You know for Chuck E. Cheese's, because she just loves cheese and pizza and is chunky. I hope she grows out of it. You know, it's hard for a girl. It's always been hard for me, and um, I just don't want that for her."

The emphasis on bodily difference was not limited to parents of boy/girl twins.

Nearly all of the parents with same gender twin-pairs, expressed concern about their children's bodies as they related to size, comparing the differences in their twin's bodies and couching those comparisons in gender expectations. For example Kristin, mother of 33-month-old, girl/girl twins, told them at a playgroup where cupcakes were offered, "No, cupcakes are not healthy for us. They make us fat." Although her argument against cupcakes was constructed in terms of healthy, the emphasis was on the body, in particular, being fat. And Tiffany, a mother of 60-month-old, boy/boy twins, said about her boys' bodies: "Will, he has a good little build, he doesn't have an ounce of fat on him. His brother sure makes up for that."

Further on in the interview, she related their size to cultural gendered expectations:

"Will is more of like a hot dog, a show off. For example at the basketball game, he kept making all the baskets. And he has this like, macho attitude, and I can't help but thinking like, that's so hot. Whereas, R.J. he's very artistic, quite, sweet. He gets me up in the morning, responsible, but not as athletic, not macho, he just doesn't have that."

She then goes on to discuss an instance where it seems the boys had internalized the message that body size and shape are tied to masculinity or being "good":

"For the first time, R.J. was a quarter of an inch taller than Will when we went to the doctors. Will jumped on R.J. and started like pummeling him and was in tears. We had to pull them apart. To R.J. it was a big deal. He was saying, "I'm taller,

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I'm bigger, I'm better." So that's when we really had to start reprimanding them on it" [the comparisons the boys would make about their physicality].

At the age of almost five, Will and R.J. were already in competition with each other over their bodies. They had learned and internalized the message that a larger body, was a better body. This speaks to the social pressures and expectations that boys and men are supposed to be large, muscular and the ensuing body dissatisfaction that comes with not matching the cultural ideal of a masculine body (Ricciardelli and Clow, 2009).

For girls, gendered expectations to be small, little and petite came up often in parents with girl/girl twins or boy/girl twins. Many parents were surprised that people, such as doctors, family and strangers thought one twin was larger. They also expressed surprise and frustration that they were supposed to be accountable to others for their daughter's bodies. Brian, a father of 43-month-old, girl/girl twins, for instance noted:

"Lauren, she's our squishy one. She just has a lot of fat, but I am okay with that…..but people will come up and definitely notice that Liz is smaller. And they will comment on Liz's small size and people will comment on her lips, I mean this baby has these little lips and I get it, she's beautiful but so is Lauren and, I don't know it just bothers me".

Brian's wife, Jo, reiterated what he said in a separate interview:

"People would ask about her size and we got a lot of reassurances of oh don't worry, that will change overtime. And I am like whatever….but you know, it hurts and now they're at the age when they can hear these things, understand what people are saying and I am just shocked".

Similar to Brian and Jo, Amy and Eric, parents of 30-month-old identical twin girls, discussed how their family have scrutinized their twins' bodies, despite the fact that they're the same height and a mere one pound difference in weight. This one pound, and in turn the twins bodies, have become a much talked about topic in their family. Amy

says, "A lot of people think Natalie is so much heavier. "Oh, I can't pick you up" and I

am like, "Oh my gosh, it's like a pound difference, are you kidding me?" Amy's husband

Eric tells of an incident where his father made an issue about his girl's weight:

> "He picked up Priscila and threw her up in the air and put her down. Meghan then asked to be picked up and he said, 'Oh no, your way too heavy.' And my wife and I both said, 'You can't say that. You can't say anything about her weight ever, ever please'.

Amy also spoke of the incident with her father-in-law constructing difference in the

bodies of her twin girls:

> "It is just insane, how a pound gets constructed into this huge difference and the girls haven't said anything [about it] yet, because they're not three, but I worry about the impact on them, especially since they are both girls."

Amy expressed concern that her girls' bodies, at such a young age and with such a

minute weight difference, were being compared and evaluated. She wondered what the

impact these comparisons and criticisms would have on her twin daughters' body images

and ideals throughout their life. Parents such as Brian, Jo, Amy and Eric shed light on the

ways in which young children's bodies, in particular, girl's bodies, are scrutinized and

monitored. These narratives help inform, how the social pressures and accountability,

occurs at a very young age and supports research that describes young girls increasingly

dieting and dissatisfied with their bodies younger and younger (Currie, Kelly and

Pomerantz 2007).

Girly-Girls and Aggressive Boys: The Gender Dichotomy Reified

No matter what the twin-pair type the respondents had, gendered language and

practices were present in the discussions of their children. Despite the interview guide

never specifically asking parents about their twins' gender, gender dichotomies or their

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perception on gendering, parents' use of gendered language was omnipresent. For example, when asking questions such as, "in what way are your twins similar", "in what way are your twins different" and "what factors do you think contribute to those similarities/differences" every respondent in the study replied,, on some level in highly gendered language. Regardless of the twin-pair type, all respondents defined differences between their twins and dismissed any similarities they may have had. Parents of boy/boy twins and girl/girl twins, regardless of whether they were fraternal or identical, discussed their children's gender in terms of traditionally masculine or feminine traits. Defining gender in culturally expected ways was particularly true for boy/girl twin-pairs, where nearly all respondents said they supported and reaffirmed the cultural gender dichotomy. They expressed the gender dichotomy as something that was desirable and natural and these parents expressed similar ideals to parents describes as "naturalizers" in Emily Kane's 2012 work. Kane explains that naturalizers are parents who interpret their children's behavior as rooted in biology and are uncomfortable with gender nonconformity (2012). For example, while discussing how his 47-month-old, boy/girl twins like to play, Larry stated:

> "She's just a different type of thinker, he likes puzzles and putting things together and taking things apart and she likes imaginary worlds. I think it is the natural gender specific tendency that girls are more creative and the boys are more on the logic, science. I think that's how they fall into this".

The parents interviewed and observed made great effort to illustrate the gender binary and/or traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. This suggests the gender binary is deeply entrenched, even in younger generations of parents and in the language these parents use to construct the gender of their very young children. The respondents

often defined the gender binary as something that is natural, for example, Maria, a mother of 60-month-old, boy/girl twins said:

> "You could just tell that he was totally a boy. He falls down and gets hurt, he gets right back up and doesn't cry. He's just, I don't know, the typical boy I guess".

Later in the interview Maria continued to discuss her twins in terms of their personality traits being natural and part of the gender dichotomy:

> "Paige is so different. She's more easily hurt, she's a girly, girl. It's so strange to see the two, the boy and the girl together, growing up together how they just kind of lean toward things you figure that they would without any guidance or direction. She always liked makeup and girly things and him tough stuff."

Like Maria, many parents spent a lot of time discussing how their children were stereotypically boyish or girlish. On the playground and in the home playgroups, the parents focused on their boys being "all boy" and their girls being "all girl". The parents gained social approval from the other parents for their children's appropriate gender displays. For instance, at a playdate, Yolanda, a mother of 36-month-old, boy/girl twins, explained to two other mothers, "My twins are just so typical boy/girl. Look at Tommy, he's running, jumping, and so aggressive and Natasha just likes to sit there and play." The mothers in turn, nodded their heads in approval and reiterated Yolanda's assessment of her twin's gender displays. Suggesting their social approval of the children's display of appropriately gendered behavior. In this example, the active boy and the passive girl were reinforced. This dichotomy appeared in many cases. For example, when discussing how her 38-month-old, boy/girl twins play, Samantha stated, "Brianna is just so passive, she will let Joe take anything from her….Joe just gets in there and takes ownership, very dominant. I guess he plays like a boy, aggressive."

In the above examples, Samantha and Yolanda both relate their twin's behavior to their gender. Not only did they express approval of their twins acting in ways they deemed to be appropriately feminine and masculine, but their peer group also positively reinforced this behavior. This pattern was typical in the case of parents of boy/girl twins. Almost all of the parents in the study who described their children in traditionally gendered language, did so in positive ways. However, when parents used terms such as "pushy, aggressive or loud" in reference to girls, it was always done so in a negative way. For example, during Samantha and Yolanda's conversations about their twins' at the playgroup, Stacey said of her 40-month-old, boy/girl twins, "I wish mine [daughter] would just sit there. She always seem to be so loud and on the go and she is so aggressive. See how she stole that toy, I swear she thinks she's the dominant one." And Gabe described his 36-month-old twins as, "She's very loud and a know it all and talks back. Noah is laid back in personality." Being laid back or "passive" was not problematic for the parents of boys or girls in the study, but being loud and aggressive for girls was.

Another theme that came up when parents described their daughters, especially in boy/girl parings where this occurred in over 70% of cases, was their daughter being "bossy". This term is used to describe girls and women who exhibit traits typically associated with boys and men: showing leadership, being strong and having an opinion (Lakoff, 2014). However, those same traits that are positive in a man are framed as negative for a woman and hence the term "bossy" is used to sanction the girl or woman exhibiting those traits. "Bossy" was used by parents' of boy/girl twins to describe their

daughter in two-thirds of the interviews and was never once used to describe a boy. For example, Heather described her 36-month-old, boy/girl twins as:

> "Sydney is very bossy. Miss bossy boots, that's our name for her. I will tell the twins to come in and she will say, 'No Noah, you don't have to go in' and I will tell her I am the mom and she will say, 'No, I am!' She's really pushy for a girl".

During a playgroup, Alice, told the members about her 37-month-old, daughter, "Sabrina is very bossy, very domineering and we have issues with her sometimes pushy, biting or um pulling hair." Later in that playdate, Alice's son pushed her daughter to get on the slide first and Alice shrugged it off as, "He's just so dominant". Here, the same behavior she described as "bossy" when exhibited by her daughter is framed positively when exhibited by her son.

Several respondents juxtaposed their daughter's "bossy" attitude with their son's "good natured" demeanor, while at the same time being careful to qualify that their sons' could be aggressive, and not dominated, if they wanted to. During a playgroup, Christina said of her 20-month-old daughter, "She's very independent and bossy and has to have her way, she's very controlling. Sam (her twin son) is laid back, but he could push her around if he wanted to." Jake, another parent at the playgroup noted in agreeance, how "bossy" his 41-month-old, twin daughter is and how he attributes this to her gender, "Claire is bossy, I think her bossiness is attributed to her gender." He then added, "Even though he (his son) weighs less and is passive, he could push Claire around if he wanted to, he's not a pushover".

Among all the respondents who described their daughters as "domineering" or "bossy" when a male twin was the sibling, all immediately followed up with justification

and explanations about their son being strong and independent enough to "stand up for himself" as Arthur, a father of 60-month-old, boy/girl twins noted or as Nicole put it about her 24-month-olds, "She's bossy but he doesn't take any of her shit". This implies that the parents are reifying their societal expectations of masculinity, that boys and in turn men, "don't take shit". To be a boy, to be masculine, is to stand up for oneself. Boys they can't just be "sweet"; they also have to know when to be a "man".

The word "bossy" did not emerge in any of the discourse among the parents' of girl/girl twins. This suggests that parents perceive their daughters behavior to be more inappropriate in the presence of a male sibling. Behaviors, such as being exploratory, loud or a leader that were described as bossy or aggressive in boy/girl twin pairs were not described as such in girl/girl twin-pairs. The word "bossy" was never used for boys, but "aggressive" was commonly used for boys. Whereas aggressive was seen to be problematic for girls, it was seen to be positive for boys. This term was mentioned by all but one of the parents of boy/boy twin-pairs. Being aggressive was commonly described as related to the twins' size and activity of the child among parents of boy/boy twins. The bigger, more physically active a child, the more often he was described as more aggressive. For instance, when asked to describe her 20-month-old twin boys Laura said:

> "Aaron is the bigger of the twins and is a little monster. He climbs everywhere. He is very aggressive and is a leader. Evan is smaller, not as aggressive and needs to come out of his shell. He is, well the tag along. The follower. Aaron is just strong, you know the first to do everything, more hands on and physical".

Laura explained in the interview that the size difference of her twins is four pounds at 20-months-old despite them having been two ounces apart at birth. Since the difference in

weight emerged in her boys at one-years-old, Aaron is described as being heavier, bigger, stronger, and more aggressive. Laura equated Aaron's weight difference and size to suggest the difference in her boys' personality traits.

Equating physical size with perceived aggression and athleticism in boy/boy twin-pairs was common amongst the respondents, with most echoing Laura's sentiments regarding physical size and behavior. In all but two of the boy/boy twin-pair types, the parents reported their boys being relatively equal in height and weight at birth but noted a size difference as being significant as their twins aged. Aisha, said about her son 60-month-old son, Marcus:

> "Marcus is just an aggressive guy. He's tall. Like really tall for his age. And I don't know if it's because people treat him as older or if it is his size but he is aggressive and the stud. Jake (her son) is so sweet. He is smaller and not as athletic, but very sweet".

Aisha constructs Marcus's aggression as tied to his height. She describes her smaller son as the opposite of aggressive: very sweet. Likewise, Scott said about his 30-month-old boys, "Anthony is bigger, more physical. He excels in sports. He's aggressive and the leader….Kevin is just, shyer and, I guess more, sweet". This supports the literature that has emerged on the importance gendered body expectations for boys and men (Ricciardelli and Clow, 2009; Crawley, Foley and Shehan 2008). Respondents of larger boys, particularly within the same gender, described support for cultural gender norms as they relate to body and masculinity, as well as equating size with aggression or sweetness. In another example, Danielle said about her 47-month-old boys:

> "Bob is just, you know, well taller and bigger and it plays out in sports. He's physical, athletic and Ted. He's smaller, shyer. They're identical so I am

assuming, hoping Ted catches up to Bob. My husband and I are short and he's not very athletic and you know, we just want them both to be, I don't know, big and tall and athletic. Guys, guys."

Danielle, along with nearly all of the respondents, referred to their son's physical size as important and equated size with aggression, athleticism and being a "guy". The normative gendered language parents used in describing their twins bodies and their personalities, regardless of gender or twin pairing, mirrored culturally familiar and normative gendered language. Parents expressed being relieved when their children fit society's gender expectations. Although they acknowledge the differences between their children, they still discussed their children in ways that reify gender norms and supported the gender dichotomy.

DISCUSSION

As the above illustrated, many parents in this study were aware of the public scrutiny their children received and tried to counter it with statements such as, "whatever" or "I don't care." They expressed how they are hurt by the comments of strangers and friends and how they feel shame for internalizing the comments and cultural body ideals associated with them. Some parents expressed that although they didn't care what their children looked like, they felt "relief" when their children met societal standards, suggesting that parents feel the pull of both complicity with and resistance to the gender structures when it comes to ideals of their children. Because children are often discussed and scrutinized in ways in which adults and even older children are not, young children's bodies often become a topic of open conversation for family and strangers alike. Some parents seemed to internalize the idea that the size and

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shape of their children's bodies will determine the size and shape of their bodies later in life. Moreover, parents use gendered language such as "bossy, aggressive and passive" to construct different gender meaning. The findings of this study suggest that "bossy" is never used for a boy, and when done so for a girl is in a negative connotation. However, leadership and aggression is positive for boys and negative for girls; whereas, passive is expected and denigrated for girls but acceptable for boys, if they can also ensure that they are appropriately aggressive. This adds to the existing literature on the social construction of gender and doing gender, and gleans further knowledge into how parents engage in the perpetuation of gender norms and the construction of cultural gender stereotypes. It also, reinforces literature that suggests that parents operate in a framework of accountability, always having the voice of the "other" (e.g. spouse, family, friends, professionals, society) in regards to how they construct and co-construct gender norms for their children.

Overall, these data suggest that even when children are very young, their parents and other networks of accountability construct and reify gender dichotomies, ideals of and body ideals. By examining parenting practices and the construction of children's gendered bodies through parents discourse, this research expands the theoretical understanding of the relational construction of gendered bodies in families and shows that the gender binary is still deeply entrenched.

CHAPTER 4

BACKGROUND

This chapter focuses on how parents' discuss the ways in which their children play, and how parents use play to construct masculinity and femininity. At the onset of this study, theoretical literature and guiding research questions postulated that although the gender binary is strong, parents would discuss gender in a fluid and nuanced way. Surprisingly the majority of respondents in this sample discussed toys and play in highly dichotomous ways. They grounded their discussions of play in the "natural differences" relying on the gender binary. As in the findings of the previous chapter, parents of boy/girl twins were the most entrenched in the use of gendered language and the gender dichotomy. The respondents reported the most concern about their sons' play and suggest that for the parents' in this study, masculinity is tied their child's play.

Toys and types of play were examined in order to get insight into how parents' encourage, guide and/or dissuade their children from engaging in certain types of play and how this may relate to their gender. Parents' perspectives on their children's' play is important because despite the significant ways in which the media, peers and schools impact childhood socialization, ultimately it is what children learn in the home, the regulation and passing down of normative practices and ideals, that have the greatest impact on them (Prout, 2000). Families raise children to be masculine or feminine (Adams and Coltrane, 2004). The family is widely considered to be the first and foremost place children learn about appropriate gender behavior and (MacCoby 1992; Peterson and Rollins, 1987; Coltrane, 1998; Tepperman and Curtis, 2004) and one of their primary functions is the production and reproduction of gender values (Adams and Coltrane,

2004). It is through families that children learn the expectations of society and "learn to see through their parents' eyes" (Andersen and Taylor, 2007). Children learn how to groom, regulate, exercise, eat and think about themselves within families (Backett-Milburn, 2000).

Families communicate their sex and gender beliefs (Blume and Blume, 2003) and are constantly in the process of negotiating and reinventing gender within the family (Backett-Milburn, 2000). The gendering process often occurs even before birth when parents pick out names and nursery themes and continues after the birth of the child based on clothing and other markers (Fagot and Leinback, 1993). Part of this process involves "learning society's gender rules and regulations and becoming adept at behaving in accordance with socially accepted gender patterns associated with our sex" (Adams and Coltrane, 2004). Socialization research has long documented that parents gender type children, with fathers engaging more in the differential treatment of sons and daughters, favoring sons (Coltrane and Adams, 1997; MacCoby, 1998). Most children's first encounters with toys shows children what appropriate displays of masculinity and femininity are. Boys are encouraged to play with toys that mostly relate with action and work in the public sphere (Young, 1980). Heterosexual fathers in particular actively shape and reinforce their sons' masculinity and at the same time reinforce their own (Kane, 2006).

Girls are often raised to identify with beautiful and pretty images. They are "raised to be the consumers of the future- domestic, caring and objects of beauty" (Carter and Steiner, 2004). The different ways in which boys' and girls' are treated within the

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family are often constructed as inherently male or female traits. Yet, feminist scholars have long argued that gender differences are a result of societal expectation and not biology (Firestone, 1970; Friedan, 1963; Lopata and Thorne, 1978; Rubin, 1975; Scott, 1986; Bem and Bem, 1970; Hochschild, 1973; Connell, 2002; Adams and Coltrane, 2004). By focusing on parents' construction of gender norms by examining how parents' describe and regulate their children's play, we can unearth how parents' engage in the construction and deconstruction of gender difference.

This chapter also takes a close look at how fathers', construct the masculinity of their young sons' and how this relates to hegemonic masculinity. Although most of the parents' in the study expressed some ease with non-gender stereotyped play, a few father's expressed a strong belief in gender-appropriate play and behavior when it came to sons. Homophobia and accountability for their son's masculinity and sexuality appeared to be an underlying reason they either closeted their son's non-gendered play or out-right discouraged it. The construction of masculinity is contingent on qualities that are the antithesis of the feminine, and the construction of manhood is in direct opposition to anything feminine (Adams and Coltrane, 2004; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Lorber, 2001). The possession of feminine attributes is a direct assault on masculinity and boys' are often targeted both within and out of families because of these traits. For boys, the notion of an active, physically able body is often tied to masculinity and expectations of play for boys often revolve around action and sports (Connell, 2002). Euphemisms such as "you throw like a girl" are often used to construct difference in developing male bodies (Young, 80) and sports have been identified as a playing a large part in the

construction of masculinity (Messner, 05; 92; Dworkin and Messner, 99). Any boy or man who performs in sports well is also performing masculinity adeptly (Crawley, Foley and Shehan, 08). Males are encouraged to take risks while exhibiting their physical prowess and superiority (Curry, 1991). Considering the importance of sports or "play" in boys and men's' lives, looking at how children's play is encouraged and constructed by their parents' enables us to understand how difference is constructed and upheld.

Finally, this chapter will look at how socio-economic status emerged as a significant factor in the father's opinions about gender and gender-appropriate play. While race did not emerge as significant, the respondents with the most negative feelings regarding non-gender appropriate play were working class men. Men with higher income and education levels reported more flexible and fluid ways of describing their twin's non-gender play.

FINDINGS
Girl's Toys, Boy's Toys and "Oh, No!" Toys: How Parent's Construct Gender Difference through Play

While talking to parents about their children, they were asked about their children's favorite way to play. Many of the parents described their children's interests, toys and the ways in which they played as being rooted in "nature". Several of the parents said that although they preferred gender-appropriate toys, they did not guide their children to gender stereo-typed or "appropriate" play. They expressed a belief that their children's play and preferences for toys were due to their gender. The parents' supported and reified the gender dichotomy through their discussion of their twins play. Most parents seemed to attribute their children's play and toy preferences as something that

was a "natural" gender occurrence. They did not attribute these preferences to the types of toys that were purchased for their children or the encouragement by themselves or others to play with gender-stereotyped toys.

Some parents' commitment to the idea of gendered play as "natural" was so pervasive that it emerged in discussions not related to play or toys. This was most clear in boy/girl pairs in the sample. For example, when asked, "describe twin one", Maria, described how her son Tristian, 60-months-old, was all boy and how this related to his play:

> "I think that even though nobody has really told him, I almost think it is programmed in them to play with the boy directed toys….he's always been kind of attracted towards things that you would figure a boy would, a truck, he wants a gun, motorcycles, you know, bicycles, skateboards, roller skates. Girls would be a little more timid about getting hurt and he just doesn't worry about it, so he's more like a typical boy in that way. He just thinks he's just a tough guy."

When asked to "describe twin two", she said about her daughter:

> "She's a girly-girl, she likes dresses and skirts and ponies. It's just so strange seeing the two, the boy and girl together, how they lean toward things you figure that they would without any guidance or direction."

She continued on the idea of natural play differences when she answered a question about her twin's differences:

> "I don't know I guess it's like I said, I think it's almost if they were born with what they know, like if it's something they came equipped with. They were never treated any differently or pushed any different direction, but yet they ended up having differences because of their sex. You know, he's the boy and he likes guy stuff, and she's the girl, so she likes girl stuff. It was noticeable, even at age one."

Maria, like several others in the sample, held a firm belief that the differences in play, interests and personality were all due to nature and "the way they were born."

When asked what types of play Maria liked to engage in with her twins she said, "rough and tumble", with her son and, "painting nails and blow drying hair", for her daughter. Likewise, when asked about any similarities or differences, Heather a mother of 36-month-old, boy/girl twins notes:

> "It really surprised me when they were babies, and they have this big toy bin with a variety of toys, and when they start crawling and walking, we never once told him to play with trucks, and never told her to play with dolls. They naturally gravitated to them. He always found boyish toys, cars, trucks. She always found girlish toys".

Asked if she was surprised by that, Heather responded, "It surprised me, but it was kind of neat to just watch that. Like where did that come from." Most of the respondents felt that it was their child's natural gravitation towards toys that explained their play patterns and preference. Despite most of the parents in the study stating that they themselves or their family members typically purchased gender-appropriate toys for their children. Here, Heather described what is purchased for her twins:

> "They're either going to buy the traditional boy girl toy or they're going to buy her my little ponies or babies or something and they're going to get him cars and trucks."

And Maria said about purchases for her twins:

> "For Paige (I'd buy) probably things that are more girl-oriented like a doll or dog or something, not that a dog can't be for a boy, but Tristian he's not interested in that stuff, so I like to buy him boy-type stuff."

Most of the parents in the study who have boy/girl twins, held similar beliefs to those of Heather and Maria. They viewed the gender binary as "natural" and described their twins in dichotomous ways. When asked questions about their twins personalities, similarities and/or differences, the responses revolved around their children's gendered

preference for toys and play and how that related to their gender difference. This result

suggests that for parents of opposite gender twins, reifying the gender binary and

constructing difference is an important way in which they view their children and

construct their gender. They described the natural gravitation towards appropriately

gendered toys, despite them reporting that most of the toys they themselves or others

have purchased for their twins were all gender stereotyped. In essence, the toy came first,

but the parent's attribute the preference to the child not the presence or introduction of

the toys.

For the few parents in the sample who discussed being committed to resisting or

redoing gender norms, they described being conflicted when it came to their twins' play.

When Dawn, a mother of 60-month-old, boy/girl twins, was asked, "what types of toys

do family members and friends like to buy your twins" she responded:

> "From the beginning, from birth, they like to buy anything that was
> stereotypically boy or girl. Caleb always gets power rangers, and transformers,
> and star wars, and swords anything action. Action figures. Not dolls. Action
> figures. Lily on the other hand gets Barbie's', Bratz, make-up and glittery glitzy
> stuff. It's an explosion, usually at their birthdays or Christmas, of pink and purple
> for her, and blue and black and red for him. One of the most horrific gift that they
> ever got was from my father. It was at Christmas and Lily got a Bratz DVD; she
> was three-years-old. It was so vapid, telling her what outfit she should choose and
> what make-up scheme and she had to interact with the TV. And Caleb, got a
> power rangers DVD, which of course is all about fighting. I was mortified, but my
> family thought it was just so great, because they thought it was just so boy and so
> girl."

Dawn expressed her deep concern over the gender stereotyping of her twins,

particularly when it came to toys, and yet still believed that at least some of her twin's

preferences were based on "the way they were born." When asked if her twins are "more similar or different", Dawn explained:

> "I think they're much more different than I expected them to be…. I expected that any preferences for certain toys or certain types of gender behavior would be because of parental, peer, or media influences and ironically my son when he was little was automatically obsessed with trucks. You know the kids had access to each other's toys and he just always gravitated towards trucks, looking at trucks, looking at the way the wheels moved, and very athletic. My daughter, on the other hand, her third word was shoes! Much to my chagrin, but I think that probably surprised me in different ways, that when they were very little they seem to have some of these traditionally masculine and feminine stereotypes. Part of it, I think, is nature. I think it's the way they are, their personalities, the way they were born. I do think, looking back, when they were very little, probably by family members encouraged them to play with toys that are more "gender-appropriate". I certainly think that has contributed to their differences. I think now, as that they are older, that is the case. They have very much been given toys that are "gender" appropriate and I think that contributes to that (preferring gender-appropriate toys)."

Dawn is aware that her family, and others, have guided her twins' play with the types of toys they have purchased them, yet feels, like other parents in the sample, that her twins' gender differences are still somehow "the way they were born". She is conflicted in her discourse, being surprised by their tendencies to like gender-appropriate toys, yet also acknowledged how others have influenced her twins' gendered-preferences as she described here:

> "Looking back when they were very little probably by family members they were encouraged to play with toys that are more "gender appropriate", I certainly think that has contributed to their differences."

Dawn, like other parents in the study, seemed to struggle with the interplay of "nature" vs. "nurture." For those with twins of the opposite-gender, the gender binary and construction of difference was a common theme in their discourse. However, when

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examining the narratives of parents of same-gender twins, the gender binary was rarely discussed. Out of twenty-two respondents with same gender twins, none brought up gender or gendered play in response to the questions, "describe twin one", "describe twin two" or "what are your twins similarities or differences. In response to these questions, the parents of same gender twins all described how their children looked and personality traits. In terms of play, only three of the respondents with same gender twins reported thinking their children's play was attributed to their gender or a "natural" gravitation to things "boyish" or "girly". In fact, most parents discussed their same gender twins' play in terms of what they did and how they played, rather than what they played with, which was in sharp contrast to how parents of opposite gender twins focused on what their children played with. Play in parents of same gender twins was often described as being connected to their personality rather than their gender. For example, when asked "what are your twin's favorite ways to play", Elizabeth, a mother of 50-month-old, boy/boy twins, said:

> "I would say their favorite ways are interactive ways. They love to play with action figures. It's not parallel play. They are playing with each other. You know like, "I'm this guy and you're that guy." They sit there for hours and do this type of play."

When asked about their different types of play she continues: "Tyler is a lot more ready to go out and play with the neighbor kids whereas, Ted is ok just staying at home." Elizabeth made no mention of gender differences, but instead discusses how her boys play differs. Aisha, a mother of 60-month-old, boy/boy twins, described her son's favorite ways to play in a similar way:

"They love Legos. They play all sorts of ways; they have babies and they have stuff animals that they care for. They feed them. So it's very, very nourishing. They have babies. We're very into, you know the Wii, the basketball, they're very physical like that, but yea LEGO's, babies and we're very into Darth Vader."

In Aisha's description of how her boys play, she mentions them being physical and nurturing, but not as directly related to their gender. This contrasts with how all of the parents' of opposite gender twins in the sample connected their children's play to their gender and it being a "natural" occurrence. This result is significant in that it suggests that parents' of opposite gender twins are more committed to constructing and supporting the gender binary than parents' of same gender twins.

"Closeted Play": Networks of Accountability and Monitoring Masculinity

Another theme that emerged in relation to play was how some parents' in the sample discussed being supportive of non-gender appropriate toys, but how they often "closeted" or kept this play within the home. This was especially apparent for parents' with boys and was evident in both opposite-gender and same-gender twin pairs. The parents' expressed their support for non-gendered toys but felt accountable for their son's masculinity and thus, often encouraged their sons' to keep their "non-boy" toys in the home. For example, Aisha's husband, Dion, described a time when he was showing a co-worker pictures on his phone from a recent trip. As he was flipping through his phone, a picture of one of his son's, with his baby doll, came up:

"And he was like, 'what is that?' And I say, 'oh, that's baby pup pup'. And he goes, 'How old is your kid again?' And I tell him five and he's like, 'Wow, I don't know about that!' I went home and asked my wife if she had a problem with baby pup-pup, and she said no. So I was fine with that. They won't even remember them in a few years."

Dion, who was supportive of the dolls for his boys, was like several of the other, especially male, respondents in the sample who expressed their encouragement of non-gender stereotyped toys, but still needed reassurance that giving their children such toys was "ok". They reported feeling more ease when the toys were played with in the house and often only allowed non-gender "appropriate" toys to be played with in private. They described pressure for their children to conform to gender expectations and being accountable to other people for this. They often looked to their wives for affirmation that non-gender stereotyped toys were acceptable, suggesting not only accountability to other people, but to each other.

Accountability was a common theme amongst parents' who closeted their children's play. Heather and Gabe, parents of 36-month-old, boy/girl twins described how they felt comfortable with non-gender stereotyped play when it occurred within their home, but not when it occurred outside the home. Heather described how her son likes to play with his twin sister's toys, especially her shoes, and how she and her husband reacted when their son tried to wear the shoes out in public:

> "At Christmas my mom found this set of little dress-up shoes. And it's hysterical because Noah will go there (to Sydney's room) with her or without her. It's funny, he always picks the blue pair (of shoes). He'll put them on, and then he'll come down walking with her high heels. It was so funny, one day, it was like, 'ok honey let's get ready to go.' And he went down, and he came walking to me. Click, click, click, 'I'm ready'. And we're like, 'this is not happening to me."

Both of these parents' were okay with their son playing with the high heels, but felt pressure in public to ensure that he conform to gender expectations. Heather and Gabe both described how their twins played with each other's toys and that this was not

discouraged. However, they did not allow their son to play with the high heels, or any of his sister's toys outside the house, "We're just not ready for that." They expressed not wanting to have to hear "comments" from others about their sons' play and choices.

A strong example of parents' feelings of constraint and accountability for their children's gender is found in Heather's description of her brother's reaction to her twin's bedroom:

> "He made a comment because they were both sharing what is now Sydney's room and the top part was yellow and the bottom part was green. We put a white chair rail in the middle and he [her husband Gabe] painted these really cute flowers, white picket fence at the bottom and flowers because that's the theme I wanted. My brother saw it and made a comment that, 'Noah will be gay, because his room is yellow and green.' And we were looking at him and I was upset that. First of all, it was a mixture theme. And I was like, 'Do you seriously think someone is gay because of the color of their nursery?' And then second of all, I was mad he would say that and that he said it as a negative thing. Third, all I was thinking to myself was, clearly he doesn't understand yellow and green are actually neutral colors. That's why I always keep that in the back of my head with toys, I assume he [the brother] is going to make a negative comment."

Heather grapples with two frameworks. First, from her previous statement, and the above quote, she doesn't mind her son playing with non-gender stereotyped toys or having a room with flowers and, in fact, was angry at her brother's comments about her twin's room and the homophobic comments. On the other hand, she feels accountable to opinions like those of her brother. She felt the need to defend the colors of the room as "gender neutral" and "keeps these comments in the back of her head" when it comes to the toys and play of her son.

Heather's narrative, like many other respondents in this sample, described complicity and resistance to those they feel accountable too. They used language that

strongly opposed societal stereotypes for their children, especially their boys, but at the same time, acknowledged complicity to those very stereotypes by hiding their children's play or complying with the expectations of others. Heather said that her husband's reaction to her brother's comments was to paint the room:

> "That's why in the bedroom, in the nursery, we had the bottom painted and the top painted. We had to put where Noah's crib was cars above the chair rails so we could have a little masculine touch to it."

Despite Heather being very angry about the comments her brother made:

> "It got me really upset. But I said those things to him out loud. I said, 'you seriously think someone is going to be gay based on the color of the infant room which they won't even remember?'"

Although Heather was upset with her brother for his disparaging comments, she agreed to have the room repainted for "masculine" touches. She felt it was easier to paint the room and avoid the criticism and comments, like those of her brother, than to constantly have to justify their sons' masculinity.

Most of the parents who did not discourage non-gender appropriate toys or play for their sons, but actively limited these behaviors to the home, were likely to justify the play if the toys were "masculine" in color. As Heather had noted, when describing how her son played with his sister's high heels, "He always picked the blue pair". Likewise, several parents in the sample expressed their comfort with their sons playing with dolls or non-gender appropriate items, as long as they were "masculine". For instance, at a playdate, as several mothers discussed how "sweet" it was when their boys cared for baby dolls, a mother of 36-month-old, boy/boy twins, said:

"My mom got them baby boy dolls. And they were all blue, you know, and we tell them, 'Oh wow, what a good job, what a good dad you're being'. It was nurturing…..I thought for sure we were going to hear something negative from friends about the dolls, but we didn't. Maybe because they were blue and clearly masculine dolls."

For these parents, the appearance of "masculine" colors made the toys more "appropriate" and none of the parents described their sons' dolls or things as feminine. Several made sure that other parents knew that the toys with which their sons played were "masculine" in appearance and to stress the more "feminine" toys, were only played with at home. They also held beliefs that their twins naturally gravitated to gender "appropriate" toys. This speaks to the complexity of parents' feelings towards gender and play. They expressed a deep belief that their children "naturally gravitated to" gender appropriate toys but also often discussed how their twins played with non-gender stereotyped toys as long as the toys were kept in the house. Parents who expressed the belief that their children naturally preferred gender appropriate toys were more likely to express their desire for their children to play with non- gender stereotyped toys within the home and not in public. Revealing the accountability these parents' feel to construct and defend their sons' masculinity and the accountability to one another.

Respondents reported being accountable to social networks, such as friends and colleagues, but also to each other. For example, several respondents encouraged non-gender stereotyped play for their twins, while their partners did not. This pattern was particularly common when it came to beliefs about appropriate play as it related to masculinity by several husbands in the sample. All of the husbands who held staunch views on their sons playing with gender-appropriate toys identified as working class. For

example, Laura, a mother of 18-month-old, boy/boy twins, who identified as working class, spoke of her husband's unease with their twin boys' playing with dolls. She framed her husband's opinions and beliefs as being those common to men:

> "You get the men that'll say stuff like, 'What's wrong with your kid? Why does your kid like a baby girl thing? It's like, your kids a girl!' It's more like my husband is the typical male. He'll say, 'Boys like trucks. Boys like computers. Boys like video games. And that's why boys don't need dolls'. And I am just like, give them the opportunity to have it if they want it."

And Cindy, who has 60-month-old, boy/girl twins, emphasized how her husband discourages her son from playing with anything feminine, although she did not have a problem with her son playing with feminine toys or non-gender appropriate items. Cindy said of her husband, "He will say, 'It's a girl's toy, leave it alone and go play with a truck'. Typical man." She went on to describe how her husband is very "masculine" and often berates her son for showing any interest in the feminine or for acting in a "non-tough" fashion:

> "He will say, 'Boys shouldn't cry. Boys need to get tough. They have that desire for the boy things. To get out there and play ball. Play soccer, play baseball, play, run. He just needs to grow up and be a man.' He always tells him (her son), 'What are you crying for. Suck it up!' And, I, of course, just want to go cuddle him. Finn and I have a secret code, he looks at me for reassurance."

Both Cindy and Laura expressed anxiety with their husband's staunch beliefs that their sons shouldn't play with anything feminine and that they needed to be "tough". Both of these mothers seemed to encourage non-gender stereotyped play but had to closet that play from their husbands. When asked the question, "are there any toys you discourage your twins from playing with", Cindy answered:

> "I don't mind him playing with anything because he is at least playing nice. Unfortunately, his dad does. So I have to be careful. I want to keep peace, so I try to get them to play something that is unisex, or he play with his (toys) and she play with hers."

Cindy accepts that her son plays with his sister's toys but feels that she has to be "careful" and "keep the peace", in essence, she must "closet" her son's play, knowing her husband would disapprove. Laura also described sentiments similar to those of Cindy. She encourages her sons to play with traditionally feminine toys and even bought them dolls. However, she describes how she has to be careful, as she is both accountable to her husband and his friends' for the type of play her twins engage in:

> "I got the boys dolls for their birthday. I am not really opposed to them having dolls but my husband might say otherwise. Well, my husband was a marine. I hate to say it, but marines are little more homophobes. The thing with the baby dolls and my husband is it's just like you know, men have a stigma. I mean he might say something like, 'Don't let them bring them in public' or 'Oh my god, that's a girl toy! Why give that to a boy? You know, he's a boy. He has to have boy stuff.' It's like, just because you're giving them a doll, it doesn't mean that he's a girl! Maybe if we're going to go to some macho-man, football game at some other guys house, but we're not going to bring our baby dolls over there because my husband is going to have a hard time explaining 'why do your boys have dolls'. I mean I would let them play with them anywhere else…if it makes them happy...it's not going to make you gay."

Laura described her husband as feeling accountable to his friends for the masculinity of his twins and entrenched in monitoring their masculinity. Patrolling or monitoring masculinity through play for young boys has been identified by scholars as a way to reify hegemonic masculinity (McGuffy and Rich, 1999). Similarly, the fathers in the sample who discouraged non-gender play felt that gender-appropriate activities and gender segregation were important to the construction of their sons' masculinity.

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Danielle, a mother of 47-month-old, boy/boy twins, who identified as working class, had a similar situation to that of Laura. She described a Christmas, when her boys were younger and she bought them baby dolls:

> "And they had the outfits, the diapers and all that stuff. My husband threw a fit. He was upset when they opened them and he was like, 'Are you joking?' And I'm like, 'Don't be a sexist' (she laughs)! They loved them for a long time and he was hoping it was a phase they'd grow out of."

Danielle was different from the other respondents in that she not only encouraged her sons to play with non-gender stereotyped toys, she did not hide their play from others. Many parents in the sample not only felt accountable to each other as parents but also to their network of family, friends and the public. This suggests that parents' choices regarding their children's play, and in a broader context gender, are constrained due to their accountability to broader social networks. Laura knows that her husband would have to explain her sons' dolls to his friends, just as Dion mentioned having to justify his sons' doll to his colleague and Heather and Gabe made sure that their son played with his doll and high heeled shoes in in the house. These finding suggests, that although current popular culture and beliefs about parenting puts "choice" and "control" in parents' hands, parents are ultimately constricted by their networks of accountability and societal expectations.

Constructing and being accountable for femininity was not present in any of the parents' discussions. Almost all of the parents' discussed their sons' play and behaviors that were congruent with societal gender expectations. They all provided justifications if the play did not. However, none of the parents expressed unease with their girls playing

with their brother's toys or non-gender appropriate toys. This result was true for both boy/girl and girl/girl twin pairings. For example, when Cindy, whose husband was strongly opposed to their son playing with any of his sister's toys, was asked if her husband minded her daughter playing with her brother's toys, she responded:

> "No… she doesn't usually want to play with his trucks or anything like that. When she does though, her dad doesn't mind. That doesn't bother him. She plays wheelbarrow or something like that. She wouldn't mind doing that or those little red yellow taxi cars, she likes doing that. But no, he doesn't care."

This finding supports the notion that femininity is more fluid and nuanced, whereas masculinity is narrowly defined. Research of non-stereotypical gendered behavior is often "tolerated" more in younger women and girls' than it is for boys (Kimmel and Mahler, 2003). Although it is important to acknowledge that there is a plurality to both masculinity, like femininity, (Pyke, 1996), masculinity is often framed as a hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity operates on a local, cultural and global scale to appear to be customary (Collinson and Hearn, 1996). One of the most important elements of hegemonic masculinity is that it is constructed in relation and opposition to femininity (Demetriou, 2001). The respondents in this sample, especially fathers' of sons', framed their sons' masculinity in opposition to that of the feminine and framed their sons' masculinity in very narrow terms.

DISCUSSION

The findings in this chapter suggest that parents' perceptions of their children's play and preferences are not just benign behaviors, but that the behaviors are socially situated actions and interactions grounded in cultural conceptions of gender. The patterns

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of results that emerged in this study- suggest that the most salient factor in parents' belief in the gender binary was the gender pairing of their children. Parents with boy/girl twin-pairs, were the most likely to describe their twins' preferences for toys and play in terms of "nature" or "biology". Similar to findings in the previous chapter, the boy/girl twin parents were invested in constructing difference based on their child's gender and in reifying societal gender roles. These parents were the most likely to describe their children in terms of being appropriately feminine or masculine and juxtaposing the differences between their boy/girl twins. Despite these parents' acknowledgement that they and other people purchase gendered toys for their twins, they firmly believed that the twins guided those choices and the play. Even parents with children as young as 12 months, described their children's natural tendency and preferences for gender-assigned toys. Same-gender twin pairings were less likely to discuss their twins play and preferences in terms of being naturally tied to their gender. Only one respondent described their girl/girl twins play as being naturally feminine, and none of the respondents with girls expressed concern over their girls' playing with masculine or non-gender appropriate toys.

However, some parents of boy/boy twin-pairs expressed comfort with their sons' playing with non-gender stereotyped toys. All of the parents who were comfortable with this type of play explained they tried to keep the perceived non-gender appropriate toys within their home and/or in private. They described how they did not want to "explain" their child's behavior to others or have to deal with family or friend's thinking their son might be gay. Accountability to other people, whether in or outside the family, for

children's play was a common theme for parents. Several mothers described how they had to hide or discourage their sons' playing with dolls to avoid their husband's disapproval. These women described themselves as being accountable to their spouse and society at large and their husbands as accountable to other men.

Although no patterns emerged in terms of race or ethnicity, social class was a factor in the results. More affluent and educated parents were least likely to attribute their child's play to gender and more likely to encourage non-gender stereotyped play. A few even thought that it was good for their children to play with toys not traditionally associated as masculine or feminine. However, some of these parents mentioned gender-appropriate play and were surprised by and conflicted about their child's preference for toys associated with their gender. Parents who were less affluent and/or had some to no college education, were most likely to attribute their child's play to their gender. Parents with boys, whether boy/boy or boy/girl twin-pairs, were most likely to express the belief that their child's play was based on natural tendencies, with boy/girl pairings constructing this difference the most.

The lower-income, less educated fathers were most likely to hold firm beliefs about gender norms and appropriate play for their boys. However, mother who were married to these men did not hold the same beliefs and were among the most likely to encourage non-traditional play for their boys. They described having to hide their sons non-gender appropriate play from their husbands' ordeal with their husbands fits over toys, such as dolls. They walked a tight-rope of accountability to their husbands, while permitting feminine play by sons.

One underlying theme among several of the respondents was fear that their son would be perceived by other people as gay if they were associated with anything feminine. Several respondents' directly stated that crying, baby dolls and traditionally feminine things were not okay for their sons', especially in the presence of other people and that their friend's would question whether their son was gay or not. Hyper-masculine toys, play and rejecting the feminine for these respondents' was important to how their sons' masculinity was not only constructed but perceived by other people. Repainting bedrooms and dressing their children in gender-specific colors were ways in which parents could avoid questions about their children's, and particularly their boys', sexuality. Homophobia and the "threat" of being gay or perceived as gay was evident for boys but was never mentioned for girls in the sample. The boys' age did not matter, "boyhood" was tied to cultural expectations of masculinity for men. This finding scholarship that argues that the possession of feminine attributes is a direct assault on masculinity and that homophobia is often used to define and maintain definitions of heterosexist masculinity.

CHAPTER 5

BACKGROUND

While the previous chapters focused on how parents often construct gender in congruence with the gender binary, this chapter focuses on parents who described a commitment to practicing more gender-neutral parenting and redefining gender ideologies. A few respondents, especially mothers, spoke of their desire to raise their twins in gender-fluid ways and the importance of freeing their children from the constraints of societal expectations for their gender. As previous research has shown, parental ideals about gender expectations differ based on the gender of both the parent and child, with mothers tending to encourage greater gender fluidity while fathers tending to encourage more traditional gender interpretations, especially when it comes to their sons. (Kane, 2006).

The parents in this sample ground their commitment to a more gender-fluid parenting as being important to the raising their children. Gender fluid parents, as they will be called in this chapter, spoke of their desire for their children to be able to explore all types of opportunities and not to be boxed in by cultural gender stereotypes. They described the interplay between their desires for more gender-neutral parenting and their frustrations with their family, friends and society at large. The discussed how their networks of accountability operate to box their children in and how despite their commitment toward greater gender-fluidity for their twins, they feel the pressure to explain to family, peers and society at large their gender-related parenting choices and ideals.

A chief reason parents reproduce dichotomous gender expectations is that society holds them accountable for gender accomplishment (Coltrane, 1989). "Doing gender" involves a set of constructed and co-constructed interactions that frame what is "naturally" feminine or masculine (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The accomplishment of gender means that men and women are constantly striving for, re-inventing and pursuing gender competency. It is no wonder, then, that parents, who are embedded in social structure and culture, are primary transmitters to their children of what it means to "do gender". Children learn in the home what is appropriate in terms of gender displays and accomplishments and are accountable to their parents. Parents' perspectives on normative gender practices and ideals often have the greatest impact on children (Prout, 2000). Parents do not operate in a vacuum however. Along with the media, peers, education and other sources of socialization, they create a system that reinforces and supports the ideals of gender (Bylerly and Ross, 2006; James, 2000).

Although parents often reproduce and reinforce cultural gender norms and expectations, some parents actively encourage non-conformity in their children and "seek to disrupt the gendered expectations for their children" (Risman, 1998; Stacey and Bibliarz, 2001; Kane, 2006). Parents' disruption and expansion in undermines binary thinking. Individuals are often thought of in terms of boy/girl, man/woman and masculine/feminine; they are rarely thought of in the nuanced ways in which they experience their lives. In the past decade, a great deal of literature has examined on the "undoing" of gender. "Undoing gender": arguing that if gender is socially constructed

and an accomplishment, then it can also be deconstructed or re-done (Lorber, 2007; Deutsch, 2007; Rubin, 1975; West and Zimmerman, 2009).

However, many have pondered what undoing gender would look like and whether it is possible. Gender categories are deeply entrenched; even gender redefinitions or disruptions of gender occurs within the confines of broader gender structures and gender expectations. Some scholars suggest starting on the micro level and dismantling daily gender divisions that structure everyday lives (Lorber, 2000), while others suggest expanding and redefining narrow definitions of gender (Dozier, 2005). There are a multitude of ways in which individuals attempt to "accomplish" or construct gender and (Chodorow, 1995). Undoing the binary categories attached to gender would allow for more fluidity much like the lived experience.

This chapter focuses on parents who described a desire to expand definitions of gender for their twins. It examines how parents in the sample consciously work to expand what gender means and encourage greater gender fluidity in their twins. It also looks at the limitations parents feel and how, despite their desires for more gender fluidity, they feel constricted by their networks of accountability to comply with societal expectations of gender.

FINDINGS

Gender-Fluid Parenting and Play

Redefining and challenging gender norms emerged in a multitude of ways through the respondents discourse in the sample. One of the most common ways parents described gender fluid parenting as "gender-neutral" parenting. Parent's often described their commitment to combating stringent gender ideals for their children as gender

neutral ideals. They spoke, often around the topic of play, of how they guide their twins

to a more nuanced sense of gender. These parents align with Kane's findings on parents

who she described as "innovators": who resist the gender structure and are not concerned

about other peoples' judgements (12). However, they differ in that unlike the parents in

Kane's study, the parents in this sample seemed to subvert the gender structure rather

than resist it. Here, Dennis describes how his 47-month-old, boy/girl twins' play is not

"very-gendered" and how he and his wife insist that family and friends buy his boy/girl

twins two of the same toy, whether it is defined as a boy or girl toy:

> "I don't think that their playing is very-gendered, like traditional gender, what you
> would think of. Rick plays with dolls and Rach with dump trucks." He goes on to
> say: "We tell people, that if you're going to get stuff, you need to get two. I said
> whatever it has to be, they have to be able to get two of the same thing."

He explained why they ask for two of everything: "So we make a big effort that the kids-

that the stuff is not theirs in particular." Dennis's reasoning for not gendering the toys

and play of his twins wasn't grounded in resisting gender expectations, but in order for

both twins to have equity. Even though Dennis does not explicitly express his reasoning

for his twins having equal access to the same toys, he expressed his pleasure in this twins

not playing in "very-gendered" ways. He was committed to equal access and opportunity

for his twins regardless of their gender and made this known to family and friends. His

commitment to what he sees as "equal access", by allowing his children to play with toys,

rather than "boy toys" or "girl toys", is a subtle disruption of gender norms.

Other parents described expanding definitions of gendered play in the types of

toys their children have and what type of play they engage in with their twins. Jen and her

husband Brian both described their twin's toys as "pretty gender neutral". Here Brian, a

father of 43-month-old, boy/girl twins, describes the toys his girls' play with:

> "They've got airplanes and trucks. I would say they don't get as many of what
> you would consider traditional boy toys, the big Tonka trucks and that kind of
> stuff, but they love that kind of stuff. I don't know why, they love it! I think for
> me I like to just be kind of more physical with them. I like to you know, run
> around, throw them around, you know that kind of stuff."

Both Brian and Jen described their girls playing with the trucks at playdates and at

friend's houses. Although they described these toys as boy toys, they did not express their

surprise at their daughters' playing with these toys nor did they try to dissuade or closet

that play. For instance, when Jen was asked about how her twin girls play she said:

> "I want them playing outside. I try to steer them toward the active things, the
> running, jumping, the climbing, let's go play outside…..I want them to be creative
> and play, do silly things, get outside and play bubbles or plant flowers, water, you
> know that kind of stuff. So I probably steered towards that personally."

Jen and Brian did not guide their twins play to be gendered nor did they attribute their

play to their gender. Rather, they spoke of a desire for their girls to be active and play in a

variety of ways. They also acknowledged steering their girls' play based on their own

likes and dislikes.

Several of the parents in the sample expressed concern that princess themes I

children's toys and activities were gendering their daughters in negative ways. They

described how media and their families put immense pressure on them to encourage their

daughters' interest in princesses. Several parents' discussed how they were either actively

trying to dissuade their daughters' from princess play or how they dislike their daughters'

interest in princesses. Jen and Brian both described their dismay with their daughters'

new interest in princesses. Jen said:

> "They're really not into dollies or anything. They are starting to notice princesses. They have a shirt with princesses on it, they like that. I am like, no! And just tonight, Liz, on her towel at swimming class, there was a princess. And she was like, 'Look princess!' I am not encouraging the princess thing, to be honest with you, because that could just get out of hand in a hurry. We have friends who have kids who have gotten out of control. Like you have to have every princess dress and the shoes and the crown. It is my influence entirely, but I am like, 'Oh no, just run and play.' No girly-girls."

Jen's husband also described his dislike for princess toys for his girls':

> "Jen isn't a girly-girl. We try to avoid it (princess stuff). They have in a hand-me-down box, a little tote bag that has princesses. I didn't even think they knew the word princess! But we were in the car the other day and that bag was in the car, and Lauren was like, 'I want my princess purse!' I'm link no! It is frightening."

Both Jen and Brian described princess play by their daughters as being

"frightening" for them. They desired more gender-neutral play and a reduced emphasis

on the "girly" or princess play. They both felt that it did not contribute to their daughter's

development of self, and they didn't expressed how they didn't want their daughters'

growing up to believe in princess fantasies. They described a desire for more gender-

neutral play; play that they believed would contribute to a holistic and healthy sense of

self. They both expressed concern about the messages about beauty and female

helplessness that princess play encouraged and how this supported gendered-norms.

Beth, Dennis's wife, and mother of 47-month-old, boy/girl twins, described

similar beliefs. She was committed to gender-neutral play, yet she did not articulate her

reasoning for discouraging princess as gender-neutral. She said about her twins play

interests:

> "They like to play dress up a lot. So I don't have like princess dress-up clothes. I don't want my daughter to think that a princess looks like Cinderella or Snow White. I want her to think that a princess looks like her." She went on to say: And I don't want all that stuff. I see so many, you know the Disney this and that. And I went in the Disney store, which I hadn't been in forever, recently and I'm like, "There's nothing that appealed to me there for my daughter. Never mind my son."

Beth expressed some apprehension about not having gendered toys, revealing the complexity of gender fluid parenting and societal expectations of appropriate play:

> "I took Rach with me to somebody with older girls' house to shop for clothes and stuff. And she was playing with the girls and they were playing with dolls and there was a dollhouse. So I'm thinking, already in my head like, I don't want to deprive her of girl things. And there's no reason why Sam can't play with it too. And I don't wat to deprive him of like boy things just because they happen to be twins who are different genders. But overall, in the past, it's mostly been gender neutral stuff."

Beth seemed conflicted about wanting "gender-neutral stuff" and accepting her daughter's interest in feminine toys. She framed the gender-neutral play as possibly "denying" her twins of "girl things" and "boy things" and consequently involving feelings of guilt. The interplay between wanting gender-neutral play for their children and worrying about its consequences was a theme amongst the gender-fluid parents. They held strong beliefs about not wanting to define their children's play and gender in narrow ways; yet, they worried that they may somehow not be doing the right thing. This reveals the complexity of encouraging greater gender fluidity.

Resistance and Accountability to Gender Norms

The parents in the sample who described actively resisting gender norms for their children also described feeling constricted by societal expectations and accountable to them. Their discourse was an interplay between resisting gender stereotypes and often giving in to the very stereotypes they resist. These parents, like the "refiners" (Kane,

2012; see Appendix D) spoke of complicity and resistance to gendered expectations for the twins. However, they differed from the "refiners" in that they didn't attribute their twins' gender traits to biology, but social expectations and also feared judgement of others. This finding was evident in Beth's account. She described her children's gender-neutral play, suggesting a resistance to narrow definitions of gender. She also described her apprehension about possibly "depriving" them of boy and girl things, revealing anxieties about not complying with societal gender expectations.

Dawn also described feeling conflicted about not wanting her 60-month-old, boy/girl twins to be gender stereotyped, yet enjoying when they dress in highly gendered ways:

> "I have to be honest I have always liked to dress Lily in very girly, frilly, pretty things and its very ironic. On the one hand, I want her to be this strong independent, fearless, little girl and women, who could do anything, and not be beholden to beauty standards. On the same token, I enjoy seeing her in little dresses, and skirts, and bows, and looking very cute, and very pretty and I think it's because probably I like to dress up. I do make-up, I do clothes and like fashion, and she has certainly taken that up. She always wears a dress now, in fact I have to battle with her to wear pants. I don't know if it's her preference or whether I created it. I think part of it too is that, you know, the grandparents and people would give her a lot of praise and a lot of attention for looking pretty. Or being dressed pretty. Caleb I like to see kind of fashionable trendy clothes little cool shirt, Volcom shorts, Quicksilver, or something like that and he loves that kind of stuff too. So he would definitely dresses, I guess how you would say all boy."

Dawn described resisting and not wanting to succumb to gendered expectations and stereotypes throughout her interview, perhaps being the most vocal about gender fluidity and trying to actively expand the ways in which both her son and daughter experienced gender expectations. However, there was tension between her resistance to gender norms

and her complicity in reproducing the norms she viewed as oppressive. She expressed being conflicted about liking her son in fashionable and "cool guy" clothes and her daughter in things that are frilly. This tension was apparent in the discourse of several other parents. They expressed not wanting to stereotype their twins, but their narrative reveal participation in gender stereotyping. For example, when describing her twins' toys and play, Rose, a mother of 38-month-old, boy/girl twins, said:

> "No we're not into stereotyping what they can play with. Although in my mind I say, 'Honey can you please not like pink?' But my son's favorite color is pink. If you give him a pink and blue choice, he will choose pink 100% of the time. He would rather have pink."

Her husband Carlos described his attitudes towards play as resistant to gender norms: "I don't ever tell my kids, 'No don't! Gavin put that doll down because you're a boy'. We don't do that, there's no point in that." However he followed up with, "Gavin, he's really drawn to pink. So we try not to have too many pink and blue toys you know. We have a tool set they both play with. We borrowed (that) from a friend". Rose and her husband expressed a commitment not to engage in gender "stereotyping" their twins and allowing them to play with all sorts of toys. However, when it came to their son, even though they never discouraged him from his love of pink or feminine toys, both of them expressed a level of discomfort with his preference for pink. When asked about how the twins dressed, Rose said:

> "It's just what's comfortable and sometimes, I just love the day I put her (Autumn) in a dress because I think she needs to look girly that day. But if she's wearing purple, I try to do color similarities for the twins. Obviously they both can't wear dresses; and her wearing boy clothes, I'm not doing that. So they're gender specific. She's very girly pink and there's not a darn pink shirt in his

closet! I don't want to dress him in pink that's not where I want to go with it. I want him to look like a boy and her look like a girl."

Several times in their interviews, Rose and Carlos expressed being committed not to gender stereotype. However, they also described their children in gendered ways, "They are very gender typical. What you would expect in a boy and what you would expect in a girl". Hinting at the complexity of wanting to resist gender stereotypes, but complying with them at the same time. They have internalized some of the oppressive cultural ideals about gender and as a result, even though they talk about non-conformity, they ultimately guide their twins, their son in particular, to conform. Carlos said about his twins' bedroom:

> "They share a room. Two separate beds. Her side's the pink. His side's blue. Even though the whole room is painted blue she has pink decorations. And that's how I would probably keep it. She's on the pink zone and his on the boy's zone not necessarily blue, but just boy look."

Similar to the findings presented in an earlier chapter, that non-gender appropriate toys were tolerated more when the object was deemed to appear gender-appropriate in terms of color, Carlos and Rose seemed to justify their son's love of pink, by explaining he had a "boy's zone" and that they didn't allow him to dress like a girl.

"Not That Kind of Parent": The Subtle Ways Parents' Disrupt and Subvert Gender

Many parents in the sample did not actively resist gender norms for their twins; however, their narratives revealed subtle subversions of gender norms. These parents often believed in biology as an explanation for their twins gender, like the "naturalizers" in Kane's work (see Appendix D), but unlike the "naturalizers", these parents are comfortable with gender non-conformity, and even encourage it. Amy, for instance, the

only mom of girl/girl twins to describe her 50-month-old twins in gendered ways, later in her interview described her twins play in more nuanced ways:

> "Natalie is more into ballet, that kind of thing. Priscilla would rather be out at a fire department. She began her obsession with firefighters at my nephew's 5th birthday party two years ago. She has not let up. Every time we see a firetruck, 'Mom, can we drive by it? Can we go to a fire station? Can I wear my firefighter costume?' She is obsessed!"

Amy further explained, "But she doesn't want to go into burning buildings. She wants to shoot the hose and save the kitties." She acknowledges what she perceives to be a more masculine activity and encourages it; however, she seems to justify the behavior as grounded in more feminine motivations, such as saving "the kitties." Like Amy, Maria described her 60-month-old, boy/girl twins in dichotomous ways- e.g., "a typical boy" and a "girly-girl." However, in a story about her sons' preferences for play she said:

> "Yeah, occasionally, he would like to have some nail polish on. Not so much makeup, but he likes to get his nails done too. And I usually put clear nail polish on him, but he's gone to colors occasionally and he'll wear colors and he doesn't seem to have any problem with it. He doesn't think he's going to get teased or bugged and if he does I don't think it really bothers him because he continues to do it. There'll be days when he comes home and his toe nail will be peach color or something. He's just doesn't have any problems with that. Where you think a boy might say, 'Ew, get away from me with that stuff,' but he doesn't. He doesn't seem to mind it at all."

Maria firmly believed that boys and girls are naturally drawn to masculine and feminine toys saying she thought it was "programmed in them." However, she expressed an ease with her son engaging in practices that could be considered redoing gender (i.e., wearing nail polish). Her main concern isn't how she perceives her son's non-gender stereotyped acts but how others may perceive them and the effect on her son. In fact, in terms of what she thinks about her son using nail polish or makeup, she said:

"I think its fine, he's got to be in individual and be his own person. If that's what he thinks he's going to enjoy, then he can do it. And when he gets a little older, he'll be able to make-up his own mind. When reactions of other people probably starts to bother him, that's probably when he'll probably not do it. Who knows, he may do it. Guys do."

Here, Maria not only views these acts as "fine;" she thinks that other boys use nail polish and do feminine things as well. Thus, although she is culturally tied to the idea of the gender binary as "natural", she also acknowledges a fluidity of gender. Although this act may not be considered revolutionary, it is subversive in that it dismantles what it means to be a man or woman.

Subtle acts of subversion can also been seen through the discourse and actions of Laura, Cindy and Danielle, whose husbands were adamant about masculinity and the gender binary. These women purchased dolls for their sons, despite their husband's strong disapproval. They believed that it was important for their sons' to have and care for dolls to learn how to be, as Laura said, "loving to our children we know we're supposed to have some day." In response to her husband's opinion that, "Boys like trucks. Boys like computers. Boys like games. Boys like video games. And that's what boys like and they don't need dolls." Laura said:

"Give them the opportunity to have, if they want it. If they like it, they like. Fine. It's them wanting to be a little mommy or daddy and some kids have stronger inclination for that than others."

Likewise, Cindy let her son play with his sister's toys when her husband wasn't home and Danielle bought her twin boys baby dolls at Christmas without telling her husband.

"They Can Be and Do Anything They Want"

A few parents in the sample firmly upheld a belief in gender equality and resisted narrow and dichotomous definitions of gender. They described their attempts to raise their children as not to be "boxed into" cultural gender norms and were disturbed when other people attempted to gender stereotype their twins. For example, Dawn said:

> "It always disturbs me how people have made comparisons about them. Not about them as individuals, but as a boy and as a girl. It's never been, 'Oh, Caleb is athletic.' It has been, "Caleb's athletic. As a boy should be.' Or 'Lily is into clothes and make-up. Just like a girl.' And you know, it has bothered me that people have always steered them into this gender-type of behavior with the toys that they've bought. I think I have done a good job as well (not to gender stereotype), the fact that my son could go to school confidently with nail polish on his nails and not worry about being teased or taunted says something about him. The fact that he comes and snuggles with me. He gives me a kiss in front of his friends. I think it says something about him. I just hope that he is able, and that I am able, to instill in him that those (things) are important qualities to maintain. That it doesn't get beaten out of him by peers or society. Or that he gets the message that it's wrong to be a sensitive and caring as a man.

Dawn describes her beliefs in raising her twins as, "to be anything they want to be" and to expose them to both masculine and feminine objects and qualities. For her son in particular, she resists the stereotypical ideals about gender and describes being disturbed by her family and friends insistence on describing her children in dichotomous ways. Dawn and a few other parents in the sample described the idea of seeing gender in nuanced ways and not wanting to box their children into gender stereotypes. At a playdate, Cynthia described her boy/girl twins as "individuals". For her that doesn't mean juxtaposing them as different because they are a boy and a girl but because they are unique human beings:

"They choose different kind of toys to play with and have their own individual friends to play with. Here you can see that Tyler is sort of more preferential toward the girls' and Taylor likes to play with the boys' more. I don't mind at all. I think it is awesome. Of course he'd want to play with sparkly pretty stuff. It's pretty!"

The two other mothers whom Cynthia was talking to expressed agreement and added, "Ya, I totally agree that my kids are better for playing with all sorts of toys. They're going to learn soon enough not too by others. So I encourage it."

During this observation, none of the mothers' guided their children away from play considered non-gender appropriate. They appeared to not only be at ease but also encourage play that was nuanced and not gendered. They also described how they like to put their children, regardless of gender, in clothes that encouraged play. Roxanne said, "I love to put my girls' in sturdy clothes, so they can play and explore their world. So many of the girls' clothes are too dainty, and my girls are messy and dirty." She went on to explain to the group how she and her husband encourage the girls' to be messy, despite her own mother's dismay at the girls' seemingly messy grooming habits being inappropriate for girls. Similarly, in her interview, Dawn described conflicts with family members over her twins' eating habits:

> "Caleb is very neat, very tidy, never makes a mess. Of course the food he eats is not messy by nature. Lily, she is a mess. She spills her milk. She spills her soup. She eats with her hands. She doesn't use napkins. She gets it all over her clothes. If she's wearing white, it's absolutely going to get all over. It's funny because I don't think it has anything to do with being a girl or boy. I just believe that children are children. Other people really make an issue about it. About how she's such a messy girl. They ask her, 'Don't you want to be a polite little girl? Look at how messy you are. Your pretty dress.' Where if Caleb spills, no one ever really makes a comment. They just accept it because he is a boy. So there are different expectations and standards for her with eating."

Dawn described her frustration as not that others noticed differences in her twins, but that they attributed those differences to her twins being a boy and a girl. She also expressed this frustration when it comes to the grooming of her twins as well:

> "Lily has no concern whatsoever for how her hair looks. It is usually messy. She has baby fine flossy hair. It's usually just messy, ratty and she doesn't just really care. It really wouldn't bother me so much, other than people make a lot of comments about her hair like, 'Oh my God! Look at you hair. You would be so pretty if you hair was brushed.' I really don't like that people make those kind of comments to her. It makes her definitely self-conscience."

Dawn expressed her frustration that family members and friends wanted her daughter to look a certain way, and she did not want her daughter to get the message that she had to be clean, neat or "pretty" all the time. She did not want her daughter to feel the limitations of gender in her life. Throughout Dawn's interview, resisting the gender dichotomy and redoing gender was a dominant narrative. She expressed a deep commitment to gender neutral parenting and not defining her children based on gender. The following quote illustrates her parenting style:

> "Well, I think I do parent them both the same. They both get timed out. They both get the same rewards and punishments. They both get taught the same lessons, the same things. I see no difference in parenting them because they're a boy and a girl. I always looked at them in the same light. I want my son to grow up to be sensitive. To be kind and to be caring. To not have to buy into the masculine stereotypes of society. And I do want my little girl to not have to be so torn and beholden to the beauty standards and the prescriptions of society that say her be pretty and looking put together is what's most important. I feel strongly that my job is to treat them as human beings, not as a boy or a girl."

Dawn describes being committed to raising her children as human beings and desires to parent them the same. She also expresses her belief that her twins not be beholden to the "prescriptions of society" that narrowly define what it means to be masculine or feminine. However, despite her deep commitment to redoing-gender, she also described

her confliction about feeling complicit in reinforcing gender norms in the pleasure she gets from some traditionally gendered items (e.g., clothing and grooming). Dawn's case speaks to the complexity of resisting and redoing deeply entrenched gender norms; and the ensuing shame that may accompany those who actively resist gender stereotypes, however find pleasure in some things traditionally deemed as gendered.

Although Dawn was the clearest example of a parent with a desire to redo-gender, there were several other parents' in the sample who also expressed wanting their children not to be gendered. They aligned with the "innovators": parents who resist the gender structure and don't care about judgement from others (Kane, 2012; see Appendix D). For example, Raquel, a mother of 36-month-old, boy/girl twins, described how she and her husband do not want their children to be given "boy" and "girl" stuff. She explained her frustration about, and resistance to, her own mother's gendering of her twins:

> "My mom, she might have a little bit more of a gender influence on them. I mean, I would let him wear hair bows if he wants to. But if she's doing Ellas's hair and if he asks for a bow, she'll tell him, "Nope. Boys don't wear bows.' But sometimes, the next day, I'll put a pink bow in his hair. And my husband has long hair. He's a musician. So he kind of is, like you know, 'whatever.' I mean that's how I feel. I think it's healthy for them to be able to explore all those things."

Here, Raquel not only resisted her mother's gender influence, but also is defiant in countering her mother's gender ideals by purposefully putting a pink bow in her son's hair the next day. She is committed to the idea that being "healthy" is being "able to explore" activities across the gender spectrum. Likewise, Tuany, a mother of 12-month-old, boy/girl twins, described how clothing has become an act of resistance for her in regards to her twins and others peoples gendering of them:

> "I get so excited when I get anything out of that color spectrum (pink and blue). It's harder with Aiden. He'll always get a lot more blue and brown, but when Ava gets something green or blue we get really excited. Oh, a different color! She's always in pink. It's just what people buy. I do that too, when people have a baby shower. In most cases the moms are excited, until they realize their daughter is in pink all the time."

She expressed being very grateful for the generosity of other people, but was very frustrated with the colors always being gendered. She told a story about bathing suits for her twins when they were 6 months old:

> "They bought her a swimsuit that makes her look like a strawberry and he gets these like, cool board shorts. I'm like, why can't he look like a blueberry? They're like, "don't do that to my nephew." I think it's a joke because they get so upset. Why is it okay for the girl but not okay for the boy?"

Tuany was bothered by her family's insistence that her daughter could be cute and her son had to look in a contrived masculine way. Tuany said she purposefully puts her twins in clothes that will bother her family as an act of defiance and that her sister's in particular get "really angry". She expressed satisfaction with making her family upset and in "disrupting" their gendered expectations.

DISCUSSION

This chapter was devoted to parents in the sample who exhibited resistance to the gender dichotomy, in particular when it came to the ways in which their twins played and dressed. The discourse of these parents showed a nuanced way of thinking about gender. Some, like Dawn, were deeply committed and vocal about resisting and redoing gender and gender norms. Others, discussed redoing gender in subtle ways. They often described being conflicted about not gendering their children, however being accountable to and complicit with gender expectations. These results reveal the conflicting viewpoints that

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some parents have about the gender and gendering of their children. Many parents do not want to stereotype their children, but as products of culture themselves, they grapple with the interplay between freedom of gender expression and accountability to it. Their narratives revealed contradictory beliefs about boys and girls: having "natural" tendencies and yet, non-gendered.

These findings add to the literature on redoing gender that argues that redefining gender is a fraught task, one in which individuals are both resistant and compliant. Gender is redone in the more mundane daily tasks than in a revolutionary dismantling and this was apparent through the discourse of the parents interviewed and in the observations. These findings also suggest, that parents are accountable to their networks of peers, family and society as a whole. It also suggests that the awareness of this accountability is ever present in the actions and decisions parents make in the construction of their twins' gender.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study is about parents' ideologies about gender and how they emerge in parents' discourse and interactions with their children under age five. In particular, this research explores the strength of the gender dichotomy and how gender ideals are constructed by parents. By interviewing parents of opposite-gender twins and parents of same-gender twins, I was able to examine how parents engage in the construction of gender and how their discourse about their twins helps reinforce and/or resist the gender binary. This study also examines how parents' networks of accountability (i.e. other parents, relatives, etc. to whom parents feel accountable) operate as mechanisms of social control and how this control affects parents' attitudes and actions. However, during the interviews, parents were never asked directly about their gender ideologies or practices (see Appendix B). Rather, by using an inductive model of inquiry and an open-ended interview guide, parents were able to guide the conversation and voluntarily provide information about their gender ideologies and practices. What emerged were rich descriptions of parents' gender ideals, gendered practices and resistance to gender expectations. In all of the interviews, parents brought up gender. These findings are significant in that it illustrates how deeply entrenched gender-expectations are and how the construction of gender is deeply intertwined with parenting.

CONTRIBUTIONS

The Boy/Girl Dynamic: Strength of the Gender Binary and "Visible Gender"

Throughout my interviews and observations the strength of the gender binary and parents investment in reinforcing gender were strong, especially for parents of boy/girl

twins. Although nearly all of the parents in the sample spoke in gender dichotomous

ways at times, parents of opposite-gender twins were the most likely to use gender

dichotomous language and to believe in traditional ideology about gender. They were

more likely to describe their twins' gender as "naturally" inherent or biologically based.

The parents with opposite-gender twins typically strongly held belief in the gender

binary. The reliance on the gender binary was so strong, that most parents of boy/girl

twins descried the gender binary in every aspect of the interview, suggesting that the

pairing of the children by (opposite) gender may influence the "buy in" to the gender

binary.

The "buy in" of parents of opposite-gender twins may be reflected in the relief

they often expressed when their twins displayed what they deemed to be culturally

normative gender behavior. These parents were the most likely to guide their twins in

play, toys, clothing and behavior in the direction of stereotypical gender. Most of the

parents of boy/girl twins were invested in constructing difference based on their child's

gender and in reifying societal gender roles. Their anxieties about how other people's

perceptions of their twins' gender came up often and seemed to contribute to their

reliance in constructing their twins' gender in dichotomous ways. This suggests that

constructing and reifying gender is a social expectation for parents. For parents of

opposite-gendered children, construction of gender in opposition to one another is

heightened. The gender of the child was significant in parents' gendered expectations and

construction of gender. In opposite-gender twins, the bodies are different and this seemed

to serve as a cue to gender differently. It is the physical reminder of "opposite" that

becomes a cue for differential treatment. Parents are more aware of the importance of difference vis-à-vis various networks of accountability (e.g., doctors, family, friends, media, each other). This finding also supports literature that argues that because gender, in the normative binary framework, is visible, it is a powerful way in which we organize our expectations, interactions and institutions (Ridgeway, 2011).

The strength of the gender binary also emerged as it related to the way in which parents described their twins' bodies. Parents of all twin pairings expressed either being relieved when their children seemed to fit societal gender expectations of appropriate male and female bodies or a level of shame when they felt they did not. Most of the parents discussed their children's bodies in ways that reify gender norms and support the gender dichotomy as mapped onto the body. Gendering of children's bodies was described from as early as when the twins were first born. Descriptions used by parents as appropriately gendered bodies were girls being feminine, little and petite and boys being bigger and "large". Parents also reported family and other people giving positive feedback or commenting on their children's bodies when they met societal expectations for what a "girl" and a "boy" should be. Parents of same gender twins also described how their twins slight differences, such as a pound in weight, were constructed by family and other people to have significant meaning- specifically, to signify gender.

Constructing and Re-enforcing Hegemonic Masculinity

The reliance on the gender binary and gendered expectations were not limited to parents with opposite-gender twins; however, parents of same-gender twins were less likely to describe their twins in dichotomous ways. This perhaps is due to the "binary"

nature in which parents see a boy and a girl. Children who share the same gender are held to gendered standards, but not pitted against one another in gender dichotomous ways. However, parents of boy/boy twins were more likely to describe their sons in gendered terms than parents of girl/girl twins. Parents of boy/girl twins often described their sons' gender in hegemonic masculine ways in opposition to their daughter, however, parents of boy/boy twins did so both outside and within the twin pair. They were more invested in describing their sons in terms of their masculine attributes, significant, as parents of girl/girl twins for the most part were not concerned with their daughters' being perceived or described in highly gendered or culturally feminine ways. Suggesting that for parents of boys, in particular, parents who only have boys, constructing hegemonic masculinity is an important part of how they construct their sons' gender.

Parents of boy/boy twins often reified hegemonic masculinity by encouraging their sons to behave in culturally masculine ways: rough play, giving them boy toys, denying them feminine objects, etc.; and in describing their sons' in language that supports cultural expectations of masculinity: big, strong, tough, athletic, etc. Even parents who felt more comfortable with their sons playing with, or behaving in, non-gender stereotyped ways, still justified their sons' behavior and described how he was appropriately "masculine" as well. They described their sons' dolls and non-gender stereotyped toys in masculine terms, and were quick to follow their descriptions of their "sweet" boys, with descriptions of how tough the boys were. They described their boys in nuanced ways (e.g., sweet, kind, active, powerful, shy) but ultimately felt a need to qualify what they felt weren't masculine qualities with masculine descriptions.

These findings are significant in that they suggest that no matter how gender-fluid parents of boys are, they feel a need to justify their sons masculinity. Most of the parents reasoning was rooted in their fear of other people perceiving their sons to by gay. This finding also supports literature that suggests that hegemonic masculinity and its narrow definitions are in part constructed and reinforced by parents. Parents feel accountable for their sons' perceived masculinity and sexuality, perhaps limiting their ability to raise, and see, their sons in more gender-fluid ways. Hence, reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and homophobia as it relates to men.

Play was also an area that emerged as a site of for parents' construction of their sons' masculinity. Parents who were comfortable with their sons playing and dressing in more "feminine" ways, confined those behaviors to the home. "Closeting" this play was framed as protecting their sons from other people who would require an explanation of their sons' behavior. The parents didn't want people to think their son might be gay. Homophobia and the "threat" of being gay or perceived as gay was a theme described by several parents of boys, whether the boys were part of boy/girl or boy/boy pairings. This finding reaffirms scholarship that argues that homophobia is often used to define and maintain definitions of heterosexist masculinity and that masculinity is fragile (Edwards, 2005; Kimmel, 2003; Kimmel and Mahler, 2003). The findings in this study also suggest that hegemonic masculinity is constructed and regulated at the earliest of ages of life.

Attempts to Disrupt, Subvert and "Neutralize" Gender Expectations

In contrast to parents of boys, parents of girl/girl twins were the least likely to describe their twins in gendered ways. There was more fluidity in their descriptions of

their children; they were the least likely to express belief in the gender binary. Unlike parents of boy/girl twins and parents of boy/boy twins, most parents of girl/girl twins did not attribute their daughters' habits, personality or play to their gender and they avoided gendered language. One significant area where this was apparent was in the ways parents described their daughters' leadership qualities. Gendered terms such as "bossy" and "pushy" were often used by parents of boy/girl twins to describe their daughters' personalities. "Bossy" and "pushy" are highly gendered terms to negatively describe women who show leadership or initiative (Lakoff, 2014). Parents of boy/girl twins were using these descriptions of their daughters' behavior as a negative, particularly when it came to their daughter being bossy to their son. In sharp contrast, neither "bossy" nor "pushy" was used by parents of girl/girl twins. These parents described their daughters' leadership qualities in ways like those of parents of boys; they used positive terms, such as "dominance", "leader" or "in-control." The parents of girl/girl twins did not frame their daughters' leadership as negative and in fact constructed those qualities as positive. This was not the case in boy/girl twin pairings.

These findings suggest that gender ideologies and constructions of gender vary by the gender of their children parents are raising. The presence of a male sibling, influences the way in which parents construct gender ideals for girl children. This is significant in that parents with only daughters focus on the growth of the child more than the growth of gender. They were the most likely to describe their children in gender fluid ways and even perceived highly gendered qualities such as "leadership" or "dominance" as positive attributes for their daughters, whereas parents' who also have a son frame these qualities

as negative for girls. This finding also adds to, and supports, current literature that there is greater gender fluidity for girls and higher gender conformity for boys. In all twin-pairs, parents with a son were the most likely to narrowly define gender expectations, especially when in terms of masculinity. This was even more evident in boy/boy twin-pairs, suggesting that the sibling structure (i.e. boys, girls or both genders) significantly impacts how parents construct gender expectations.

Accountability, Resistance and Complicity

Complicity and resistance was described throughout the interviews, indicating the heavy accountability parents feel. Despite popular cultural beliefs about parents being in control and responsible for the gendering of their children, the findings in this study suggest that parental "control" is constricted by various networks of accountability and societal expectations. Parents are often "disciplined" by other parents, their family, and even their own partners, prompting them to "closet" their children's non-normative behaviors. Parents feel pressure to be accountable for their children's gender. Parents describe the ways they'd like to raise their children; however, they also are aware of the responsibility they have to others for their children's gender. This study found that free will in parenting seems to be more constrained than we acknowledge and that we perhaps give too much agency to parents since it is couched in broader networks of accountability.

Accountability was evident even for parents who described themselves as committed to raising their children in a gender neutral manner or as wanting to "undo" gender. These parents described the interplay between their desires for more gender

fluidity and the frustrations they often encounter with their family, friends and society at large. They described how their networks of accountability operate to box their children in and how despite their commitment to "redoing" gender, they feel responsible for ensuring that their twins conform to societal expectations of the gender binary. Choosing to "opt out" of the gender binary, thus, creates situations of scrutiny both for the child and the parent.

Gendered Bodies

Gendered language is used to explain, construct, maintain and reproduce cultural ideals of gender. Scholars have explored how gendered "difference" is played out by disciplinary actions (Bordo 1993; Davis 1993; 1997; Shilling 1993; Turner 1992), performance and accountability (Crawley, Foley and Shehan 2008; Kessler and MaKenna 1978; West and Zimmerman 1987; West and Fenstermaker 1993) and how cultural norms of body are significant to the social construction of gender (Blume and Blume 2003; Paquette and Raine 2004; Pelican et. al. 2005; Prout 2000). Parents teach children body discipline through instructions and practices regarding grooming, dressing, eating, toilet training and playing. Through such disciplinary practices, families communicate sex and gender beliefs. Children learn very early in life what is an acceptable body and what is not (James, 2000). Previous studies have shown that children as young as preschool, discuss bodies in manners that deem them "too fat" or "too thin" and reflect a cultural understanding of what appropriate body shapes are for that given society (James, 1993; 2000; DeJong, 1980). Parents map notions of masculinity and femininity onto their children's bodies and the "gendering of the body in childhood is the foundation on which

further gendering of the body occurs throughout the life course" (Martin 1998:495). This study adds to this literature in that findings suggest that parents often uphold binary cultural ideals about the body: boys should be stronger and bigger and girls should be smaller and petite. It also is significant, in that the study found parents construct notions of appropriate body earlier than previously thought. The disciplinary actions of parents through dressing, regulating play and grooming were significant in parents' perceptions and constructions of their children's gendered bodies. These beliefs and practices, howeve,r were never absolutes, but were constantly in a process that parents negotiated, contested and reinvented through the construction of gendered bodies.

This research also found that although parents are responsible for constructing and upholding gendered bodies, they are also held accountable by other people for the gendered-bodies of their children. While parents have long been accountable for the health of their children's bodies, the findings in this study suggest that as early as infants, parents are also held accountable for their children's gendered-bodies: how they met societal expectations for how a boy and/or a girl should look. Being out in public spheres or in their private homes, parents found the bodies of their children were subject to unsolicited comments; comments that were gendered. Family members and strangers alike felt comfortable approaching the parents in the study to make remarks about their twins' body size, shape and how it related to their gender. The body of the young twins was a source of comment, critique or praise. Several parents reported feeling horrified that their children, often as babies, were subject to public comment. Some parents felt both shame for internalizing the cultural body ideals associated with those comments, but

also a relief when their child fit the societal ideal. This experience often related to parents' feelings about their own bodies- in particular, their feeling that their bodies did not meet societal expectations.

Parents are acutely aware of how their bodies are gendered reflections of being sons or daughters within a given family and reflect the impact of parents' ideas about bodies on children (James, 2000). Parents often discuss their children's bodies in terms of how they have "inherited" certain body parts, often reflecting parents own views of their bodies (James, 2000). Parents in this study expressed that they didn't care what their children looked like, but it was a "relief" or made life easier for them when their children met into the expectation. Parents, thus, feel the pull of complicity and resistance when it comes to monitoring, and regulation of their children's bodies, much like they feel complicity and resistance in the regulation of their own bodies.

This adds to the literature on embodiment, in that is suggests that the scrutiny and judgement that adolescents and adults receive about their bodies begins earlier than previously studied. It also suggests that culturally situated body and beauty pressures begin near birth, and, perhaps there is never a time where our bodies are not scrutinized and tied to expectations of appropriate male and female bodies. The implications of these findings could not only inform future research in the embodiment literature, but also perhaps prompt the health community-parents and others rethink ways in which we approach discussions about children's bodies.

Similarities and Differences from Previous Work on Parenting Discourse and Gender

One of the main theoretical frameworks used in this study was Emily Kane's parent typology from her work *The Gender Trap* (2012). Kane's work identified five typologies based on parents' beliefs in regards to the origins of their children's gender, biology or society, and how those parents constructed their children's gender based on those beliefs. Several of the respondents in this sample aligned with Kane's five types of parenting types, most notably a few parents who would be categorized as "innovators": parents who resist the gender structure and don't care about judgement form other people. However, this differed from Kane's "innovators", in that, the parents in this study who described actively resisting gender norms for their children, also described feeling constricted by societal expectations and accountable to them. Their discourse was an interplay between resisting gender stereotypes and often giving in to the very stereotypes they resist.

The interplay of complicity and resistance was prevalent in most of the parents' practices and ideologies regarding the construction of their children's gender. This differed in that Kane only identified "refiners" as describing complicity and resistance. The "refiners" in Kane's work spoke of complicity and resistance to the gendered expectations for their children and believed their children's gender traits were a result of both biology and society (2012). Several of the parents in this study appeared to be "refiners", often talking about the interplay of complicity and resistance to gendered practices and expectations for their twins. However, they differed from the "refiners" in Kane's work in that they only attributed their children's gender to social expectations; not

biology. In addition, these parents described how they feared judgement of others, similar

to the "resisters". For these parents, accountability was key to their motivations for being

complicit in constructing and reinforcing gender expectations. They described a tension

in that they wanted to resist the societal norms they felt were harmful to the development

of their children as a "whole" person, but they feared the repercussions to their children,

and themselves, by others if they resisted cultural gender norms.

Another parenting type that emerged in this study was reflected in parents who

believed in biological explanations for their twins' gender, like the "naturalizers" in

Kane's work (2012). However, unlike the "naturalizers" who worked to reproduce gender

conformity, several parents in this study who believed in a biological basis for gender and

gender differences did not seek to reproduce gender norms, but actively subverted them

and were comfortable with gender non-conformity. This finding is particularly

interesting, as biological reasoning for gender is often associated with high gender

conformity. However, these parents acknowledge biology, yet described subversions and

comfort with gender non-conformity. Moreover, these similarities and contradictions to

Kane's typology suggest more nuances to parenting practices and that expanding upon

Kane's parent types to reflect these various parenting ideologies.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This research focused on parents with twin children between the ages of 12 and

60 months. This age group was chosen to capture parents' gendering prior to their

children enter into K-12 education where peers and other socializing agents may exert

influence. It was also chosen, because it is as a particularly "body labor intensive" period-

that is, most children require a great deal of assistance in their grooming, feeding and play. Thus, parents' interactions with their children's bodies are time and labor intensive. This research, thus, is limited to the construction of gender in children in this age group. Examining other age groups of children, could be useful for documenting the ongoing social construction of children's gender by parents.

Given that the focus of this study was twins, a non-normative parenting situation, the findings here are limited. It would be useful to expand this study to examine parents of various sibling types including singleton children, along with families with multiple, non-twins siblings. Also, since the presence of boys in the boy/girl siblings seemed to be significant to parents commitment to the gender binary, exploring families with only children could be a particularly useful site for study.

The sample is limited in that it is non-random and all of the respondents were self-selected volunteers. Due to the geographic regions studied, generally had higher education levels than the average person in the United States. Exploring a more representative sample could make the results more generalizable. Since the multiples clubs limits their membership to mothers, women were overrepresented in the sample. Male respondents were recruited by their female partners and many declined to participate in the interviews. Further study of fathers, is, thus, needed.

In terms of family structure, most of the couples in the study were heterosexual and married. There were only four single parents all of them divorced. There were not enough single parents to make comparisons by marital status. Given the limited amount of research on same-sex and single parents' social construction of their children's gender,

this is an important area for future research on how potentially family structure may influence parents' construction of gender in their children.

In this study no significant patterns emerged in terms of race or ethnicity. This is a source for further examination. Social class was, however, a factor in this study. Lower income, less educated fathers were most likely to believe in stereotypical gender norms, especially when it came to their sons. More affluent and educated parents were least likely to support the gender binary and more likely to support more fluid notions of gender. As previous research suggests, there are multiple masculinities, often based on class (Connell 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Pyke, 1996). Further exploration of the relation between social class and how parents construct gender in their young children needs to be explored.

In addition, more research needs to be done on the networks to which parents are accountable. Western culture often frames parenting, especially when children are small, as an isolated activity with parents being solely responsible for raising their young. The present research suggests that parenting is not an isolated activity; rather, it is accessible to a wide range of people who are invested in parenting outcomes- i.e. the social construction of the child. Parents' decisions on day-to-day tasks, such as dressing, playing and grooming, were described as actions that were critiqued and judged by other people including family members, friends, doctors and strangers. Parents felt accountable to these people for their children's gender and thus, constrained by other peoples' gender expectations. Greater attention to the link between parenting and accountability can help

glean how parents own constructions of gender are produced and why there are

reproduced in raising their children.

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Appendix A

Interview Guide

"Thank you for taking the time to talk with me about your twins. I would like to make this interview as comfortable as possible for you. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, need to take a break or would like to stop, please let me know. I have some questions I would like to ask you, but I will also explore new areas that emerge during our interview. In that regard, the interview is much like a conversation. However, I would appreciate it if you provide me with much detail in your answers. I will tape the interview so that I may transcribe the information. All information will be kept confidential and the tape will be destroyed immediately after I or my research assistant has transcribed it."

*General Questions***:**

1. Describe (Name of Twin #1), what is s/he like?

2. Describe (Name of Twin #2), what is s/he like?

3. In what ways are they different?

4. In what ways are they similar?

5. In what kinds of ways do you find that you parent them differently, perhaps because of their differences?

6. Are they more similar or more different than you expected twins to be?

7. What factors do you think contribute to their differences?

8. What factors do you think contribute to their similarities?

Caretakers, Parenting Advice and Instruction

    1.   Who are the primary caretakers for your twins?

2. Do your twins spend any time in daycare, preschool or with a babysitter?

    a. How much time?

    b. With who?

3. What type of instructions do you give to your children's caretakers?
(probes: activities, play, dress, eating, potty training)

4. Describe where you get your information about parenting from?
(probes: family, friends, books, doctor, magazines)

5. What has been the most useful parenting advice you have received? What was that advice?
(probes: family, friends, etc.)

Play and Interests

1. What are your twin's favorite ways to play? What do they most enjoy when they play?

2. How is the kind of play they enjoy the same?

3. How is it different?

4. What kinds of things do they like to play together?

5. How is their play different when they play separately?

6. What types of play to you encourage them to do? How do you go about that?

7. What types of things do you enjoy playing with your twins?

8. Tell me about how you play separately with them?

9. Can you describe what your twin's favorite toys are?

10. What types of toys do you like to purchase for them?

11. What kinds of toys do family and friends like to buy for your twins?

12. Are there any types of toys you do not allow your twins to play with? What are they?

Gender and Body Practices
Eating

1. Tell me about your twin's appetites?

2. How are their appetites similar or different?

3. What kinds of issues have you had with feeding? How do you handle those issues?

4. What types of eaters do you consider your children?
   (probe: good, picky, messy)

5. Describe the kind of eaters your kids are in terms of neatness. What strategies do you engage for dealing with messes?

Grooming

1. Tell me how you bath your twins? Has this changed since they were very young? (probes: together, separate, when will you separate them and why)

2. Tell me about how you are teaching your children to care for their bodies (i.e. brushing their hair, teeth, etc.)

3. How has this guidance varied or been the same for your twins?

4. Describe how you typically like to dress your twins? (Probes: the same, different)

5. What types of clothes do they like to wear?

6. Do they ever try to wear each other's clothes or items like shoes or make-up? How do you handle this?

7. If you have started potty training, tell me about your experience potty training your twins.(probes: did you train at same time, how long did each take, issues, separate toilets or same for each)

8. How do you deal with bathroom issues when the twins have to use public restrooms?

9. Do your twins have their own room or share a room? What prompted this choice? (probe: if in separate rooms, do you plan on separating them)

Appearance and Personality

1. Can you describe the way your twins look?

2. Where you surprised in any way about your twin's appearance?

3. When you were pregnant what were your expectations of how your twins would be?

4. What types of comments do others make about your twins?
   (probes: body, appearance, height, weight, clothes, hair)

5. Can you describe your twin's personality?

6. What type of similarities and differences do you see in your twin's temperaments?

7. Do you see similarities between their personalities and yours?
   (probe: what about your partners)

8. Have you seen any changes in their personalities since they have gotten older?

9. What types of things do others say about your twin's personalities?

Last Questions

1. Do people make more comparisons or differences between your twins?

2. Is there anything about raising twins that has surprised you?

3. Is there anything else you would like to add or share with me about your twins?

"Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me, I know you are busy and truly appreciate it."

Appendix B

Pre-Interview Survey

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey prior to our interview. Doing so will provide me with some background information about you and your family. If for any reason you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may chose to leave them blank.

Background Survey Questions:

1. What city do you live in?

2. Are you a member of a national twin's organization? If so, please specify which chapter.

3. What is your age?

4. What is the highest level of education you have attained?

5. Are you currently employed?

    a. If so, what is your occupation?

    b. If not, what was your occupation before having children?

6. What is your ethnicity?

7. What is your marital status?

8. How many children do you have?

9. What are their ages and gender?

10. What are the names of your twin's?

11. Who was born first?

12. What were their weights at birth?

13. Did your twins spend any time in NICU?

Appendix C

Overview of Research Questions

This study will examine three general areas of interest:

A. **Discursive Construction of Children's Gender and Gendered Bodies by Parents**
4. Examine how parents construct gender in interview accounts.
5. Explore various nets of accountability (i.e. books, magazines, other parents, relatives, etc.) and what parents draw on and how these inform parent's gendered language about their twin's bodies.
6. How do parent's "do gender" with their children and how much variation is there amongst parents with opposite versus same-gendered twins?
7. How do parents engage in the construction of gender with their children and how parents discourse about their children and their children's bodies help reinforce and reify their masculine and feminine selves.
8. How gender and sexuality are regulated by both parents and external actors.

B. **Theorizing Gender Fluidity and the Strength of the Gender Dichotomy**
1. Examine how parents express, acknowledge, subvert and encourage gender dichotomies in their discourse about their twins.
2. Explore how parents comparisons about their twins, same and opposite gender, rely on dichotomous notions of masculinity and femininity.
3. Examine how parents resist and comply with cultural body ideals in regards to their children's bodies and disciplinary practices.

C. **The Intersection of Race, Class and Gender**
1. Explore parent's discourse regarding class based masculinities and femininities and do these differences emerge in their discourse about their children.
2. Examine the construction of racialized masculinities and femininities.
3. How the intersection of class and race/ethnicity affects how parents construct gendered body ideals.

Appendix D

Emily Kane's Five Typologies of Parenting Practices

Naturalizers	Parents who interpret their children's behavior as rooted in biology and are uncomfortable with gender nonconformity.
Cultivators	Parents who believe their children's gender patterns are due to social influences but they work to reproduce gender norms.
Refiners	They attribute both biology and society to gender norms and display both complicity and resistance to gender norms.
Innovators	Parents who resist gender structure and are not concerned about others judgement.
Resisters	Those who show resistance to gender structures but fear judgement of others.