

Uncovering the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess:
A Modified Grounded Theory Approach to Gender Stereotypes in Parenting Blogs

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ABSTRACT

A modified grounded theory approach was used to analyze 200 parenting blog posts for instances of conforming to or deviating from gender stereotypes. A plethora of research recognizes the negative effects of perpetuating stereotypes on such aspects of life and culture as self-concepts, concepts of others, opportunities, obstacles, and occupations. Social cognitive theory informs how these gender stereotypes can affect parents even through blogs and how parents can then affect their children. Thus, research question one asked: *Are there gendered instances in parenting blogs that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype?* and research question two asked: *What categories and themes of gendered instances that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype are present in the blogs? What categories and themes are most prevalent in the blogs?* Findings indicated that there were gendered instances in the parenting blogs. Although only 30% of the analyzed blog posts contained gendered instances of deviating from or conforming to stereotypes, 75.6% of those instances were found to conform to a gender stereotype rather than deviate. Moreover, the categories that were present in the blog were as follows: Unrealistic Domestic Goddess, Perceived Gender Conformity of Children, Part-time Domestic Father, Realistic Domestic Mother, Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons, Full-time Domestic Father, Negative Stereotypes Against Women, and Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children. The category that was by far the most prevalent was the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess as 75.6% of the gendered instances fell under this category.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

Social media have become important communication media in the last several years with more than 252 million people from the United States utilizing at least one social networking site in 2016, and an estimated 2.95 billion users worldwide in 2020 (Statista, 2016). This is no less true for one form of social media called the blog, as evidenced by the 67% of Internet users who read blogs several times a week and 46% of Internet users reading blogs more than once a day (Marketpath, 2017). An impressive number of these Internet users are parents reading parenting blogs. Although exact statistics of how many parents read parenting blogs are not available, in 2010 more than 17 million mothers read blogs monthly (eMarket, 2010). A plethora of research recognizes the negative effects of perpetuating stereotypes on such aspects of life and culture as self-concepts, concepts of others, opportunities, obstacles, and occupations. Social cognitive theory informs how these gender stereotypes can affect parents even through blogs and how parents can then affect their children. Therefore, this study examined 200 blog posts from parenting blogs to determine if instances of conforming to or deviating from gender stereotypes were present in the blogs, what categories embodied these instances, and what categories were most prevalent. Although only 30% of the analyzed blog posts contained gendered instances of deviating from or conforming to stereotypes, 75.6% of those instances were found to conform to a gender stereotype rather than deviate. Moreover, the categories that were present in the blog were as follows: Unrealistic Domestic Goddess, Perceived Gender Conformity of Children, Part-time Domestic Father, Realistic Domestic Mother, Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons, Full-time Domestic Father, Negative Stereotypes Against Women, and Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children. The category that was by far the most prevalent was the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess as 75.6% of the gendered instances fell under this category.

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Introduction

Social media have become important communication media in the last several years with more than 252 million people from the United States utilizing at least one social networking site in 2016, and an estimated 2.95 billion users worldwide in 2020 (Statista, 2016). Although the term social media is typically used to describe social networking sites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, the term actually refers to computer-mediated technologies like social networks, photo sharing, video sharing, forums, microblogs, and blogs (Aichner & Jacob, 2015; Obar & Wildman, 2015). The most popular or influential users of social media are considered social media influencers. Social media influencers are individuals who have access to and influence over a large or powerful audience on social media. The size of an audience, or the number of followers, is what separates a social media influencer from a social media user. The degree of the influencer's impact and persuasive power is usually measured by the number of followers (DeMers, 2016). Influencers become a trustworthy source and a persuasive influence by establishing credibility through their posts, interactions with their audience, and by appearing authentic (Pixlee, 2017).

The role of influencers is evident in one form of social media called the blog, since it is considered the fifth most trusted source for accurate online information behind newsites, Facebook, retail sites, and YouTube (Kanapi, 2017). A blog or weblog is any online hierarchy of text, media, or other data, usually arranged chronologically in a sequence of posts (Winer, 2003). Although the first blog was created in 1994 by Justin Hall called Link.net, the term weblog was not used until 1997, which is attributed to a blogger named Jorn Barger. The term weblog was then shortened in 1999 to blog by a programmer named Peter Merholz (WDD Staff, 2011). Since blogs can be hosted through social networking sites, open source platforms, or individual

websites, it is impossible to know how many blogs exist online. However, some of the most popular blog hosting sites such as Tumblr, Squarespace, and WordPress have more than 440 million combined blogs. Therefore, the overall total of blogs online is most likely well above 440 million (Mediakix Team, 2017).

Blogs are popular as evidenced by the 67% of Internet users who read blogs several times a week and 46% of Internet users reading blogs more than once a day (Marketpath, 2017). The trustworthiness and popularity may stem from the more personal and experienced-based nature of blogs (Cray, Doyle, Heslop, & Ramirez, 2012), considering bloggers are found to be much more credible when disseminating experience-gained knowledge rather than research-gained knowledge. Simply being an authority on a subject is not sufficient for audiences. In fact, the audience must be able to identify with the blogger through personal experience and find the content of the blogs accurate and relevant (Cray, Doyle, Heslop, & Ramirez, 2012).

Some types of blogs are more apt for sharing personal experience and creating identification (Johnson & Kaye, 2011). Although there is not one consistent list of blog types in research (Johnson & Kaye, 2011; Pacea, 2014; Rocamora, 2011), most online guides separate blogs into categories of corporate/business, niche, personal, professional, forum/reverse, and review (HellBound Bloggers, 2017; Mijatovic, 2017). Corporate/business blogs are not considered very credible because they are perceived as only relaying commercial interests. However, personal blogs are seen as more credible to readers because of the emphasis on personal experience (Johnson & Kaye, 2011).

One variety of personal blogs is the parenting blog. Most of the research about parenting blogs ignores those pertaining to fatherhood and concentrates on motherhood blogs--better known as "mommy blogs." This focus is most likely due to the popularity of "mommy blogs," as

3.9 million mothers in the United States consider themselves bloggers (Laird, 2012). However, only 500 of these mothers have a large enough following to be considered social media influencers (Laird, 2012). Although there are no current statistics for how many mothers read blogs, more than 17 million mothers read blogs monthly in 2010. To clarify, more than 63% of online mothers were reading blogs in 2010 (eMarket, 2010). More specifically, the “mommy blog” has garnered public interest and research attention

Even though the exact statistics of how many parents read parenting blogs are not available, there is enough information to know that a significant amount of them do read parenting blogs and are potentially influenced by the blogs. This potential influence is more apparent when examined through the social cognitive theory (SCT). This theory states that an individual’s perceptions and knowledge is directly related to observing others in different contexts. First, the observer notes how a certain person or model behaves and then observes the consequences of that behavior. SCT suggests that the observer will retain this information and utilize it to govern later behaviors (Bandura, 1986).

However, SCT is not limited to real-life observations and physical behaviors; repeated images or themes in mass media have the potential to be observed and encoded into actions, thoughts, and beliefs (Bandura, 2011). This makes the theory viable for studies involving the analysis of media content as it provides an opportunity to consider the social values of the content while maintaining that these social values can influence the audience (Anderson, Harwood, Miller, Raman, & Weis, 2008). Much of the research involving SCT and media content concerns media representation of race, age, or gender (Anderson, Harwood, Miller, Raman, & Weis, 2008; Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2009; Mastro & Stern, 2003). For example, Raman, Harwood, Weis, Anderson, and Miller (2008) conducted a content analysis of cross-

cultural media portrayals of older adults and other age groups in United States and Indian magazine advertisements. They justified the potential impact of these portrayals on magazine readers through SCT. Likewise, Ellithorpe and Bleakley (2016) examined the amount of racial and gender diversity in adolescent television from 2014-2015 and used SCT to indicate why diversity in media is important.

One area of media representation that requires more exploration through SCT is that of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes exist in television, films, and advertisements (Collins, 2011; Gerding & Signorielli, 2013), although not all media have been examined for gender stereotypes. In fact, social media presence of gender stereotypes is important due to the potential harm stereotypes can inflict on individuals, such as limiting opportunity and self-concept and contributing to or reinforcing social discrimination (Bandura & Bussey, 1999; Glick & Rudman, 2001). According to SCT, media can also influence individuals' gendered behaviors and attitudes (Bandura & Bussey, 1999; Bandura, 2001). Research indicates that even adults who are more conscious of gender stereotypes and typically make an effort to rebuff these stereotypes are still influenced by gender stereotypes (Bandura & Bussey, 1999).

Unfortunately, if these adults are parents, their children can be influenced by the parents' behaviors and attitudes. According to SCT, the children can observe, encode, and re-enact their parents behaviors, perpetuating the negative influence of gender stereotypes. Although any number of stereotypes (i.e., race, ethnicity, nationality, and social status) could be detrimental to a child's development, behavior, and self-image, gender stereotypes can affect almost every aspect of their life. For example, their abilities, self-concept, concept of others, opportunities, obstacles, occupation, and relationships can all be influenced by consciously or unconsciously accepting gender stereotypes (Bandura & Bussey, 1999).

Literature Review

Blogs

Blogs are not only a popular form of social media, with 67% of Internet-users reading blogs several times a week and 46% reading blogs more than once a day (Marketpath, 2017), but also blogs are considered trustworthy, as the fifth most trusted source for accurate information online (Kanapi, 2017). As mentioned above, research suggests that trustworthiness and popularity may be partially due to the more personal and experienced-based nature of blogs (Cray, Doyle, Heslop, & Ramirez, 2012). As most parenting blogs focus on personal experience, this could explain the popularity of motherhood blogs and potentially parenting blogs as a whole.

Parenting blogs. While almost 4 million mothers in the US consider themselves bloggers, about 500 can be considered social media influencers, as they have a large enough or powerful enough following (Laird, 2012). In 2010, 17 million mothers read blogs monthly, which accounted for over 63% of online mothers (eMarket, 2010). Although fathers and other male users are usually excluded from parenting blog research, it is sensible to assume that the number of fathers who read parenting blogs is not zero and that the overall number of parents who read blogs monthly would increase if fathers were included. The research that is available about parenting blogs focuses on motherhood and how they utilize or experience the blogs. The research also ranges from topics like children with eating disorders, children's health, and debating parenting decisions (Bronstein & Steiner, 2017; D'Auria, 2014; Dawczyk, LaMarre, & Robson, 2015). However, there is no research at this time that explores the content of parenting blog instead of how users utilize or experience the blogs.

Motivations for blog-reading. However, another area that has been researched in regard to blogs is the motivation users have for reading blogs (Johnson & Kaye, 2007; Johnson & Kaye,

2006). One study found that readers were motivated by information seeking or media checks, convenience, personal fulfillment, political surveillance, social surveillance, and expression/affiliation (Kaye, 2005). Another study using college students as research participants found that guidance, sociability, entertainment, surveillance, and convenience or instrumentality were also motivators (Lee, 2007). While the previous research studies used pre-existing motivational items and adapted them to blog-use, a study in 2010 developed new motivational items through open-ended questions about blog uses and gratifications. This study found that motivations for blog use fell into categories of convenient information seeking, anti-traditional media sentiment, expression or affiliation, guidance or opinion seeking, blog ambiance, personal fulfillment, political debate, variety of opinion, and specific inquiry (Kaye, 2010). Many of the motivations that were consistent from study to study dealt with seeking convenient information in an interactive way that increases identification and personal involvement.

Blog influence. These motivations also align with the persuasive power of blogs and social media influencers. Credibility and persuasive power is built through the dissemination of experience-gained knowledge as well as the interactions among bloggers and their audience (Cray, Doyle, Heslop, & Ramirez, 2012; Pixlee, 2017). This is in part due to the perceived authenticity and trustworthiness that comes from sharing experiences and interacting (Cray, Doyle, Heslop, & Ramirez, 2012). To be persuasive and influence their audience, bloggers must cater to the audience's motivations for not only gaining information but also for expression and affiliation as well as personal fulfillment.

Social Cognitive Theory

Social Learning Theory. In 1961 and 1963, Albert Bandura conducted what was later known as the Bobo doll experiment in order to test his newly developed social learning theory

(SLT). Although there were multiple variations of this experiment, the main point was to study children's behavior after they observed an adult model behaving aggressively toward a Bobo doll. Bandura's social learning theory suggested that people can gain behaviors by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1971). Not only can people learn through direct instruction but also through observation of models in differing contexts as well as observing rewards and punishments associated with a behavior (Bandura & Walters, 1963). Bandura created this theory by expanding on previous behavioral theories that relied heavily on reinforcement of behaviors instead of cognitive processes like learning (Hull, 1930; Rotter, 1954; Skinner, 1947).

Key concepts. The theory was first published in 1963 and expanded in 1977 with a total of five major components developing from the theory. First, learning was considered a cognitive process occurring in a social context and not just a behavioral factor. Second, learning can happen through either observing a behavior or the consequences of the behavior; the second of which is called vicarious reinforcement. Third, learning does not mean that a new behavior or behavioral change will occur. Learning first manifests through observation, then acquiring information from the observation, and then making decisions about the behavior. These steps together form what is known as observational learning or modeling. Fourth, although reinforcement of a behavior contributes to the learning process, it is not the only factor related to learning. The last component to social learning theory is that of reciprocal determinism. Reciprocal determinism means that a person's cognitions, environment, and behavior are all connected and influence each other, instead of the person being a passive receiver of information (Grusec, 1992).

Although there is more to this theory, it is relevant to note that Bandura altered social learning theory's name to social cognitive theory in 1986. He wanted to emphasize how

cognitions influence the encoding and executing of behaviors (Bandura, 1986). The theory itself was not actually altered with the name change. As such, all the previous information pertaining to social learning theory is also true for social cognitive theory.

Social Cognitive Theory. Social cognitive theory (SCT) states that when people observe another's behavior and the consequences of that behavior they retain this information, which can potentially influence or guide their own behavior. The main idea of this theory is that people learn from directly and indirectly observing others. This learning affects how people behave or what they believe by giving a guide for people to reproduce. The concept of learning by observing others, or models, is called modeling. Modeling not only deals with the actual behavior being observed but also the context and situation that surrounds the behavior (Bandura, 1988).

Reproduction of behavior. There are three different factors that influence the reproduction of an observed behavior: personal, behavioral, and environmental. These three factors are referred to as schematization of triadic reciprocal causation. More specifically, personal reproduction is when a person has either high or low self-efficacy toward a behavior. Self-efficacy is the extent people believe they can master a particular skill. Then, behavioral reproduction is the responses a person receives from a behavior. Environmental reproduction is also the context or other elements of the environment that affect a person's capability to enact a behavior (Bandura, 2001).

Modeling. As stated above, modeling is an important component of social learning theory, but there is not just one type of modeling. Instead, Bandura has described three different types of modeling. First, live models are people who are enacting the observable behavior. Second, verbal instruction is when someone relays the behavior in detail along with instruction

for how the observer can emulate the behavior. Third, symbolic modeling is when models come from the media (Bandura, 1972).

These three models can be either directly or indirectly observed (i.e. directly modeling behavior of a parent or indirectly modeling media sources). Whether the individual is observing the model directly or indirectly, the observation itself should include four parts: attention, retention, production, and motivational process. First, attention is when people give selective consideration to specific social behaviors. This attention depends on the accessibility, relevance, complexity, behavioral value, personal characteristics, value preference, and preconceptions of the person, context, or model. Second, retention is when people modify an observation and its consequences into a symbol that can be accessed later to reproduce the observation. Third, production is when the symbol is appropriately reproduced into an action or behavior. During this time, people can still encounter consequences or feedback from their behavior and adjust accordingly. Lastly, motivational process is when people apply the feedback they receive from their own behavior and repeat the newly adjusted behavior again (Bandura, 1986).

Human agency. Although social cognitive theory does focus on outside forces such as behaviors, the theory greatly relies on the notion of human agency, which states that people are self-developing, self-regulating, self-reflecting, and proactive (Bandura, 1986). Human agency itself has three different modes: individual agency, a person's influence on the environment; proxy agency, some other person's attempt to gain a person's attention; and collective agency, a group collaboration to attain a common goal. Human agency is also made up of four core properties: intentionality, a person's resolution to participate in a certain behavior; forethought, a person's capacity to foresee the consequences of an action; self-reactiveness, a person's capacity to utilize and administer appropriate behaviors; and self-reflectiveness, a person's capacity to

evaluate the condition of cognitions and behaviors (Chen, Pajares, Prestin, & Robin, 2009). An example of this concept can be found in Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) study that uses social cognitive theory as a framework to examine aspects of career development. The researchers use agency to help exam the means by which a career develops including personal factors that enhance or constrain agency.

Human capability. Along with human agency, another important factor in social cognitive theory is human capability, which showcases people's ability to learn both directly and indirectly. The four human capabilities that are essential to social cognitive theory are symbolizing capability, self-regulating capability, self-reflective capability, and vicarious capability. First, symbolizing capability is when people are affected by direct experience as well as indirect experience through messages. For example, a child may learn that being bitten by a dog hurts either through directly experiencing a dog's bite or through an explicit message from a parent that being bitten by a dog hurts. Second, self-regulation capability is when people can manage their own intentions and behaviors. Individuals can set goals for themselves and proactively try to accomplish these goals. This can be seen in more concrete goals such as learning to drive or more vague goals like fitting in with peers. Third, self-reflective capability is when people can judge their own thoughts and actions. Individuals can verify their own thoughts, which allows them to create new ideas and adapt old ones to new situations. For example, after a child learns that being bitten by a dog hurts, this thought can be reflected on and expanded to the thought being bitten by any animal will hurt without another individual having to tell the child this explicitly. Fourth, vicarious capability is when people acquire insight into their actions by observing others' behaviors and consequences of the behaviors. Vicarious capability seems to be gaining more and more importance due to the influx of mass media (Bandura, 2001). For

example, a child can still learn that a dog's bite will hurt without experiencing it or without an individual telling them about it, as they can learn vicariously by observing others. This is often depicted as occurring through the media; for instance, a child may learn that a dog bite hurts by viewing a character on television reacting to being bitten by a dog.

Self-efficacy. Learning by observing these models is most likely to occur if there is identification between the observer and the model and if the observer has enough self-efficacy. Identification occurs when someone puts themselves in the place of someone else and takes on that person's perspective (Cohen, 2001), and self-efficacy is the strength of someone's belief that they have the ability to enact a behavior (Bandura, 1997). If people feel they can identify with the model that they are observing, they are more likely to emulate that model because they feel they are more similar and attached to the model (Bandura, 1988). Similarly, people need to have a sufficient level of self-efficacy to feel like they have the ability or skill to emulate the model (Bandura, 1989).

Prior Research. Social cognitive theory applications exist in several research disciplines including psychology, education, and communication (Bandura & Bussey, 1999; Marmo, 2013; Ngu & Phan, 2016). Within the discipline of communication, the theory has been researched in regards to media effects and media content. Media effects research uses social cognitive theory as a way to scrutinize the attitude and/or behavior changes influenced by the mass media through media modeling (Bandura, 2001). It has been used in such areas as health, education, sports, and health communication (Bandura, 2004; Greer & Hardin, 2009). On the other hand, media content research often uses social cognitive theory as a theoretical framework for studies dealing with representation in the media, as the theory suggests that repeated media images or information can affect attitudes and behaviors (Bandura, 2011). These types of studies can help predict potential

media effects that can guide future empirical research (Anderson, Harwood, Miller, Raman, & Weis, 2008).

Social Cognitive Theory and Gender Development

According to social cognitive theory, gender development is affected by three different forms of influence and cognitive processing: modeling, enactive experience, and direct tuition. First, models depict much of the gendered information children process through their parents, peers, mass media, and other influences. Second, enactive experiences occur when an individual evaluates the consequences of behaviors, although the individual must be able to perceive the connection between the gendered action and consequences. Third, direct tuition is a way for people to inform others about their views on gendered conduct and behavior by talking directly about ideal gender models and their behavioral consequences. These three forms of influence are not mutually exclusive but instead work in conjunction with each other (Bandura & Bussey, 1999). For example, Coyne, Linder, Rasmussen, Nelson, and Collier (2014) conducted a longitudinal study that examined the associations between viewing superhero media and gender stereotyped play in children. They noted that children are influenced by modeling gendered behavior observed through the superhero media, enactive experiences that reinforced or discourages the behavior learned through the media, and direct tuition through parents verbally instructing children on appropriate gender behaviour.

However, due to the dynamic nature of gender attitudes and portrayals, there is an increasing number of sources for gender influence as well as some disharmony in the gendered message. For example, parents, peers, teachers, and media can all influence gender development according to social cognitive theory, but the behaviors displayed by these models may not be cohesive with each other. The behavior of the model could also be in direct conflict with what

the model is actually saying. If the messages and behaviors of every model are consistent, then gender development is clear, but if there are inconsistencies from model to model or from message to behavior, gender development becomes complicated (Bandura, 1986).

Parental role. Bussey and Bandura (1999) authored an influential article on parenting and gender development in which they described children's gender development through social cognitive theory. They report in their research that parents start influencing their children's gender development as soon as their children are developmentally able by constructing their physical environment and by their reactions to behaviors and activities. Generally, children's physical environment consists of gendered names, clothes, and nursery decorations, and others reactions to their hairstyles and clothing are examples of a gendered social environment. Even when children are newborns and have no perceptible size or activity difference, parents still perceive girls as finer featured, weaker, softer, and more delicate than boys. Infants can also decode intonation of speech and facial expressions that influence how they perceive their own action (Bandura & Bussey, 1999).

Another way parents influence their children's gender development is through role learning. Parents usually give boys educational materials, machines, vehicles, and sports equipment while girls receive baby dolls, dollhouses, domestic items, and floral furnishings. When a child requests a toy, parents are more likely to fulfill that request if the toy is gender traditional. This means that even children's playtime is teaching them about traditional gender roles. This, of course, is not where parental influences end. Parents also guide their children to behave in a certain way on certain occasions and then evaluate how they performed the behaviors (Bandura & Bussey, 1999).

As children get older and their verbal and cognitive abilities increase, parents begin to

educate their children on gender roles and conduct; for example, girls are encouraged to be nurturing and polite while boys are encouraged to be adventurous and independent (Cole, Barrett, & Zahn-Waxier, 1991; Huston, 1983). Parents also encourage gender roles and conduct through their relationships with their children. For example, mothers tend to talk more with their daughters and use more supportive and emotional language than with their sons (Flannagan & Perese, 1998). Likewise, mothers will hastily ascribe anger to their sons emotional state but seldom talk about anger with their daughters (Fivush, 1989). Encouraging gender roles and conduct not only promotes children to divide individuals between one of two sexes but also to associate each sex with gendered activities, objects, and behaviors. This division of characteristic based on sex leads children to start developing gender stereotypes by exclusively linking gendered activities, objects, and behaviors to biological sex. After this association with sex and gendered factors, children begin to choose gendered activities stereotypically linked to their sex because they view it as socially acceptable and the “right way” to behave (Bandura & Bussey, 1999). An example of this can be found in a longitudinal study that examined the association between a child’s gender and their aggression through parents’ physical control, moderated by the parents’ gender stereotypes (Endendijk, Groeneveld, van der Pol, van Berkel, Hallers-Haalboom, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Mesman, 2016). The study found that fathers with stronger stereotypical gender-role attitudes used more physical control strategies with boys than girls and fathers with counter-stereotypical attitudes used more physical control strategies with girls. This difference in treatment was linked to gender differences in the children’s aggressive behavior a year later (Endendijk, et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, parents who are more conscious of gender stereotypes are still influenced by, and accept, traditional gender models (Bandura & Bussey, 1999). However, those parents

who try to utilize a more gender egalitarian or androgynous way of parenting seem to have more mentally healthy and adjusted children. The children also have been reported to have higher self-esteem and more gratifying personal relationships (Barnes & Ickes, 1978; Bem, 1981; Helmreich, Holahan, & Spence 1979). This shows some of the positive attributes of being conscious of and deviating from gender stereotypes. These findings complement the research on the negative effects of gender stereotypes.

Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes are a set of socially agreed upon beliefs toward a certain group and anything associated with that group (Fagot, Leinback, & O'Boyle, 1992). Research on gender roles and gender stereotypes often rely on gender constructs or scales that were developed many years ago. For example, Kachel, Steffens, and Niedich (2016) sought to validate a new scale that assessed gender roles called the Traditional Masculinity-Femininity (TMF) scale. The TMF scale is informed by research conducted by Constantinople in 1973. Likewise, Brown and Gladstone (2012) developed a shortened version of the Gender Roles Belief Scale (GBRS) first created in 1978 by Kalin and Tilby.

Although some of the following research about gender stereotypes are older, much of the current gender research still references these or similar studies to support their use of gender stereotypes (Cvencek, Greenwald, & Meltzoff, 2011; Freeman, 2007; Kusterer, Linholm, & Montgomery, 2013). One study even indicates that the stereotypes have been consistent from 1983-2014 (Deaux, Haines, & Lofaro, 2016). Much of the current gender stereotype research seems to rely on older studies. Even new or altered scales seem to be informed by older research. When these scales are validated, it seems to indicate that the older research is still relevant; however, this may mean that new or emerging stereotypes may be overlooked. Therefore, this

study will review many of the gender stereotypes found in research but will also utilize a grounded theory approach as the method of analysis to help identify any new potential gender stereotypes.

Gender stereotypes can influence crucial aspects of people's lives from how they view themselves and others, the talents they acquire, opportunities available to them, and obstacles they will face (Bandura & Bussey, 1999). For example, a study in 2011 found that elementary-aged children associated math with male, and those children who identified themselves as male related more to math than those who identified as female (Cvencek, Greenwald, & Meltzoff, 2011). Even as young as elementary school-age, children limit themselves due to the influence of gender stereotypes.

Children's limitations in regard to gender stereotypes also are observable in another study that showed that children assigned gender to their toys and perceived that their parents would be unwilling for them to play with toys that deviate from the traditional gender norm (Freeman, 2007). Some of these stereotypes were that skateboards and baseballs were for boys whereas tea sets and dolls were for girls. Although in a separate test the parents seemed to be willing to let their children play with any toy, this study still shows children are manifesting gender stereotypes.

This negative influence, of course, does not stop in childhood but only seems to become exacerbated with age as it affects occupations (White & White, 2006), work-based evaluations (Eagly & Heilman, 2008), wages (Blau & Kahn, 2000), social discrimination (Glick & Rudman, 2001), as well as a multitude of other important elements of people's lives.

Not only do gender stereotypes affect people in a number of different ways but also they manifest themselves in different ways as well. For example, roles in society, personal

characteristics, preferences, hobbies and activities, physical appearance, and actions can all be gendered and therefore subject to stereotyping. As mentioned above, biological females are associated with feminine characteristic, behaviors, and roles, while biological males are associated with masculine characteristics, behaviors, and roles. For instance, stereotypical females are homemaker or caretakers while males are breadwinners (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2015). Females are nurturing and polite while males are adventurous and independent (Barrett, Cole, & Zahn-Waxier, 1991; Huston, 1983). Females prefer Disney princess media over males (Coyne, Birkbeck, Linder, Nelson, & Rasmussen, 2016), and males prefer superhero media over females (Collier, Coyne, Linder, Nelson, & Rasmussen, 2014). Males need to be successful, aggressive, self-reliant, and sexual while females need to be beautiful, sensitive and caring, successful and competent in all areas, as well as able to internalize mistreatment (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2015). In one study measuring implicit gender stereotypes, participants found it more difficult to pair male attributes to the concept of family than female attributes, and they found it more difficult to pair female attributes to the concept of career than male attributes (Bakermans-Kranenburg, Endendijk, Groeneveld, Hallers-Haalboom, Mesman, & van Berkel, 2016).

Even when these stereotypes are not necessarily negative, the stereotype itself still affects people negatively (Ahlberg & Sandnabba, 1999; Beal, 1994; Bem, 1981; Eccles, Harold, & Jacob, 1990; Fagot & Hagan, 1991; Ignico & Mead, 1992). For example, the stereotype that males are leaders may seem positive, but, for those males who do not have or do not wish to have leadership qualities, this expectation may cause feelings of inadequacy or discontent, particularly by limiting their experience and personal growth (Spees & Zimmerman, 2002).

The influence of these stereotypes can be so severe that some researchers have found that those who identify as androgynous enjoy several benefits that others do not (Byravan, Detwiler,

& Ramanaiah, 1995; Stake, 1997). People with an androgynous orientation were found in studies to be more comfortable conversing with their parents, believed that their parents understood their problems, and believed that their parents were comfortable conversing with them (Kemper & Lombardo, 1992). Androgynous people were also found to be more cognitively adaptable (Carter, 1985) and more satisfied with life than their peers (Byravan, Detwiler, & Ramanaiah, 1995). Androgynous women also reported lower stress levels than other females (Han & Heilbrun, 1986). This research shows that there are measurable benefits that are associated with limiting gender stereotypes. From the above research, it is clear that gender stereotypes are harmful to both children and adults, while limiting gender stereotypes can be beneficial.

Research Questions

The following research questions are proposed after consideration of the previous literature on the popularity and influence of parenting blogs, the potential modeling of behavior and attitudes of the blogs, and the harm gender stereotypes could inflict if present in the blogs.

RQ1: Are there gendered instances in parenting blogs that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype?

RQ2: What categories and themes of gendered instances that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype are most prevalent in the blogs?

Method

Sample

Blogs and blog posts. The study included blog posts from 20 parenting blogs. The blogs were chosen from five lists of recommended parenting blogs. The lists were taken from the first five relevant results of a depersonalized Google search of the phrase “parenting blogs.” Since more than 70% of internet-users utilize Google as their search engine (NetMarketShare, 2017)

and 67% of clicks on search engines are from the first five results (Jacobson, 2015), collecting the first five results from Google gives an accurate depiction of what individuals searching for parenting blogs will find. The first five lists of recommended parenting blogs on Google were as follows: *The 100 Incredible Parenting Blogs Every New Parent Should Read* (Taylor, 2017); *Best Parenting Websites & Blogs Every Mom And Dad Should Read* (Illuminati, 2017); *25 Must-Follow Parenting Blogs* (Abraham, n.d.); *5 Parenting Blogs You Should Totally Be Reading* (Guldo, 2017); and *Top 72 Parenting Blogs* (ParentNeeds, 2017).

After the five lists were chosen, they were condensed into one master list of parenting blogs. However, blogs were excluded if they were 1) duplicates; 2) inactive for at least two months; 3) not in English; 4) not dated; or 5) did not, at least in part, pertain to parenting advice, commentary, or information. Blog posts must also be mainly text-based and were excluded if only containing an image or video, regardless if there was a caption. While images and videos can have gendered elements, the focus of this study is the textual content of the blogs.

The remaining 77 blogs on the list were numbered, and twenty blogs were chosen via random.org. Then random.org was used again to choose ten unique numbers between 1 and 365. The website, epochconverter.com, was used to find the corresponding dates in 2017 to the numbers. A blog post from the twenty blogs was collected for each of the following dates in 2017: 3/16, 4/22, 5/3, 8/5, 9/14, 9/19, 11/8, 11/12, 12/19, and 12/26. If a blog post did not exist for the chosen date, the next blog post chronologically was collected.

These 200 blog posts are the sample for this study, and the unit of analysis is any instance of gender portrayed, implied, or referenced that either deviates from or conforms to a stereotype. Although there is no limit on how long or short the text of a unit of analysis can be (e.g. phrases, sentences, paragraphs), the unit of analysis is evaluated as one topic or issue.

Procedure

Grounded theory approach. As for the actual analysis of this study, a modified grounded theory approach beneficial as gender stereotypes have never before been used to analyze content in this context. Thus, deductive categories do not exist in the current research.

The grounded theory approach was first introduced in 1967 by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in order to explore unknown relationships and develop theory from those relationships. This is achievable first through the collection of the nuances of the content, considered the unit of analysis, and then the analysis and comparison of this data to find any meaningful relationships among the data. Categories are then created from these relationships, and a codebook is created from the categories. Finally, the codebook is used for analysis, and repeated use of the codebook allows for the validity of the emerging theory to be tested (Lindloff, 2002).

Since this is a preliminary study, no actual theory was developed; however, categories were constructed from the nuances of the content and their materializing relationships. Future studies may continue this research by establishing a codebook and testing the validity of the codebook. Other studies have successfully utilized a modified grounded theory approach. For instance, researchers have used grounded theory in relation to tourism and hospitality (Lalicic, 2014), workplace cooperation (Fields & Selvaraj, 2010), ethnographic sociology (Tavory & Timmermans, 2009), and software development and organization (de Souza & Treccani, 2011).

Although the grounded theory approach has been utilized successfully by a number of researchers in varying fields, some researchers are not consistent with the terminology used with this approach (Ke & Wenglensky, 2010); however, the process and concepts behind the approach seem to remain the same. For example, the most common explanation of grounded theory

organizes the units of analysis into themes then concepts and then categories (Emmelin & Eriksson, 2013); however, there seems to be no discernible difference between a theme and a concept in these studies. Other researchers combine the themes and categories into thematic categories (Foster, 2017). Some even argue that the approach should move from categories to themes instead of themes to categories (Morse, 2008).

Again, although the terminology can differ among researchers, the process and concepts behind the grounded theory approach remain the same. With this in mind, this study is moving from themes to categories as it seems to be the most common approach with the exclusion of the repetitive and seemingly unnecessary movement from theme to concept.

One reason researchers may find it difficult to agree upon the terminology used in the grounded theory method is because the only discernible difference between themes and categories seems to be a higher level of grouping for the units of analysis. Therefore, the order these terms take in the grounded theory approach sometimes depends on what the researcher believes is the higher level term. For this study, themes are considered recurring subject matter, and categories are the higher level classification of the themes.

Step one. As stated above, the first five parenting blog lists as suggested by Google were compiled into a master list with the exclusion of blogs that were 1) duplicates; 2) inactive for at least two months; 3) not in English; 4) not dated; or 5) did not, at least in part, pertain to parenting advice, commentary, or information. This list was narrowed down even further by numbering the list and using random.org to choose twenty of the blogs. Ten unique numbers between 1 and 365 were then chosen via random.org, through which ten corresponding dates in 2017 were noted. A blog post for each date was collected from each of the twenty blogs. If a blog post did not exist for the chosen date, the next blog post chronologically was collected.

Similarly, any blog post that was simply an image or video with or without a caption was excluded from the sample, and the next chronological blog post was collected.

Step two. The nuance of the content, or unit of analysis, is any instance of gender portrayed, implied, or referenced that either deviates from or conforms to a stereotype. This data was noted as well as any emerging themes that manifested during the data collecting process. The number of units of analysis per blog and per blog post were noted as well.

The units of analysis were analyzed in ten increments. Specifically, the oldest post chronologically from every blog was analyzed, and then the second chronological post from every blog was analyzed, etc. This order of analysis was used to avoid themes or patterns from emerging from certain blogs that are not truly there.

To help maintain consistency, the units of analysis as well as the number of occurrences was noted again without reviewing any notes. The first round of data collection was compared with the second before moving onto the next step. Although there were no new units of analysis found during the second collection process, four instances were removed from the units of analysis after the researcher determined that the instances of deviation or conformity to a gender stereotype were not portrayed, implied, or referenced but rather inferred by the researcher without suitable context.

An example of an instance conforming to a gender stereotype can be seen in the following quote, which can also be found in the analysis chapter of this thesis:

Also school for my second is a year and a half in the distance and with two children in full-time education, I'll have five whole days to myself. What will I do with all that time?! [sic] I could do anything. Or at the very least, visit the shop without anyone demanding Kinder Eggs and then sit in our silent house checking my watch until pick-up time. (Crawshaw, 2018, para. 7)

This instance is consistent with the gender stereotype literature in that the mom is portrayed as domestic and focused on her children and family (Bakermans-Kranenburg, Endendijk, Groeneveld, Hallers-Haalboom, Mesman, & van Berkel, 2016; Barrett, Cole, & Zahn-Waxier, 1991).

An example of an instance deviating from a gender stereotype can be seen in the following quote, which can also be found in the analysis chapter of this thesis:

In addition to the real women in our lives, superheroes have been a way to introduce Girl Power to my son. From the books we read, to the notes I put in his lunch, and of course the TV shows and movies we watch--he's never lacking for examples of strong, wondrous women. (Almond, 2017, para. 3)

This instance deviates from gender stereotypes as the literatures has found that males try to avoid enacting or being associated with femininity, sometimes even abhorring or rejecting femininity out right (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2015), Instead, the author of this blog post seeks out positive feminine examples for his son.

Although some of the specific instances found in the blog posts may not have a corresponding reference in the literature review, the researcher has enough knowledge and familiarity with the literature to make inferences about the gender stereotypes in the blogs. This is due to gender stereotypes being the researcher's area of focus since January 2016.

Step three. The units of analysis were reviewed again while simultaneously being sorted into categories that emerged from the themes. The same order as laid out in step two was followed. Some units of analysis were sorted into more than one category. During this step, a process called data reduction where some units of analysis are excluded as they do not belong to

nor do they begin a category would usually occur (Lindloff, 2002) However, this process was omitted due to the preliminary nature of this study. Therefore, units of analysis could not be excluded at this time as further research needs to be conducted before data reduction can begin.

Then, step three was repeated again without reviewing any notes on the created categories. The first and second round of the categories were compared and inconsistencies were corrected. The only inconsistencies that were corrected during this step were obvious human errors in note keeping. Otherwise, the themes were categorized identically during the first and second round of step three.

Step four. In order to maintain internal consistency, steps two through four were repeated without reviewing the first round of data collection, themes, and categories. Since it is the second time conducting the same inductive analysis, only half the time spent on the initial analysis was spent on the second. The first round of the analysis took about 30 hours to complete, and the second round took about 15 hours. The first analysis was compared to the second, and inconsistencies were reviewed and corrected.

The third round of step two showed no inconsistencies with the units of analysis or the number of instances. However, during the third round of step three, the researcher concluded that two pairs of categories could be collapsed together to create two distinct categories instead of four. The categories were initially Daughters Are Perceived as Feminine, Sons Are Perceived as Masculine, Sons Can Be Feminine, and Daughters Can Be Masculine. After combining the categories, the categories became Perceived Gender Conformity of Children and Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children. Of course, this did not change the total number of instances in the blog posts nor did it affect the individual themes that made up the categories.

After the analysis occurred, more information about the 10 blogs used in this study was collected as a way to add clarity. The following Table 1 notes the type of authorship, gender of the authors, country of origin, and the use of sponsorships in the blogs. The type of authorship found was single, dual, or multiple with some bloggers indicating occasional guest contributions. The genders of the authors were ascertained via biographies on their blog or through individual blog posts. The country of origin for the blogs was also obtained by searching through the biographies on the blogs, individual blog posts, or other social media platforms. Sponsorship was also discovered through the biography or a disclosure page of the blogs or by scanning the blogs' five most recent blog posts. Although this method of discovering if a blog contains sponsored material is not infallible, as this information was collected to illuminate the discussion of this study and not to definitively state if sponsorships have an effect on the research questions, the method was considered adequate.

Table 1

Information about Authorship, Authors' Genders, Countries of Origin, and Sponsorships by blog

Blog Name	Type of Authorship	Gender of Author(s)	Country of Origin	Sponsorships
5 Minutes for Mom	Dual (+Guests)	Female	Canada	Sponsored
A Baby on Board	Single	Female	England	Sponsored
Beauty Through Imperfection	Single (+Guests)	Female	United States	Sponsored
Cafe Mom	Multiple	Females	Various	Sponsored
Designer Daddy	Single	Male	United States	Not Sponsored
Growing Nimble Families	Single	Female	NA	Not Sponsored
Happy You Happy Family	Single	Female	United States	Not Sponsored
Hellobee	Multiple	Females	Various	Sponsored
Hurrah for Gin	Single	Female	England	Not Sponsored
Masshole Mom	Single	Female	United States	Sponsored
Not Just Cute	Single	Female	United States	Not Sponsored
Not Your Average Mom	Single	Female	United States	Sponsored

Pint Sized Treasure	Single	Female	Cambodia	Sponsored
The Deliberate Mom	Single	Female	Canada	Sponsored
The Realistic Mama	Single	Female	NA	Sponsored
The Uphill	Single	Female	England	Sponsored
Working Mom Magic	Single	Female	United States	Sponsored
Cando Kiddo	Single	Female	NA	Not Sponsored
Mommy A to Z	Single	Female	United States	Not Sponsored
Giving Birth with Confidence	Multiple	Females & Males	Various	Sponsored

Note. Under the column “Country of Origin,” all the blogs labeled “Various” contained blog posts from individuals from mainly the United States but also Canada and England.

Table 1 indicates that the majority of the blog posts were written by single females from the United States with many of the blog posts containing sponsorships. Although the blog *Pint Sized Treasure* is indicated as being written from Cambodia, the blogger is a United States citizen who is currently a missionary in Cambodia. Although there may be minute differences among the United States, Canada, and England when it comes to gender stereotypes, the purpose of this study was to generally see how the top parenting blogs portrayed gender as guided by gender stereotype research. Therefore, the minute differences among the varying countries are unrelated to this study.

Analysis

Research Questions 1

Research question 1 asked, “*Are there gendered instances in parenting blogs that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype?*”

To reiterate, RQ 1 was assessed by noting any instance of gender portrayed, implied, or referenced in the 200 blog post sample that either deviated from or conformed to a stereotype. Each instance was the unit of analysis of this study. There was no limit to the length of the text

of a unit of analysis (e.g. phrases, sentences, paragraphs); however, the unit of analysis was limited to one topic or issue.

For example, Paula Rollo in her blog post published on May 10, 2017, entitled “We Still Call Her Beautiful” stated that “It’s interesting [the] kinds of things that come up, once you are a momma of a little girl” (para. 1). Although this sentence references and implies gender, it does not conform or deviate from a gender stereotype; hence, it was not noted as a unit of analysis.

Later on in the same blog post, however, Rollo wrote the following:

I certainly want my little girl to grow up knowing that she is valued for a thousand reasons beyond [sic] her looks. I want her to be confident that her face, body, her size are not what defines her as a woman. I yearn for her to value the things that are most important, in herself and in others. (para. 6)

This paragraph was noted as a unit of analysis as it referenced gender in a way that deviated from the stereotype of females being valued mainly for their looks and attractiveness (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2015). The above quote also counted as just one unit of analysis as the whole paragraph related to the deviation of a gender stereotype and the topic or issue did not change.

Main Findings. There are gendered instances in parenting blogs that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype. Out of the 200 blog posts, 60 of the blog posts (30%) contained at least one unit of analysis, and 140 (70%) did not. In total, there were 123 units of analysis noted in the blog posts. The number of units of analysis that conformed to a gender stereotype was 93 or 75.6% of the total units of analysis, and the number of units that deviated from a gender stereotype was 30 or 24.4% of the total units. More

specificity is given about the number of instances found in each blog post in Table 2 at the end of this section.

The majority of the blog posts did not contain gendered instances that either conformed to or deviated from gender stereotypes. This may be an indicator of a conscious effort on the part of parenting bloggers to avoid controversy, especially when considering a number of the blog posts or blogs as a whole were sponsored or contained affiliated links as shown in Table 1.

If the avoidance of conforming to or deviating from gender stereotypes is purposeful, it may be due in part to the presence of sponsors, considering the potential threat of losing a sponsor's support over controversial content. If future research is conducted on less popular blogs that do not have sponsors or affiliated links, the findings may show that instances of conforming to or deviating from a stereotype increase as these bloggers may not feel the pressure to remain uncontroversial.

However, another possible reason for the lack of units of analysis could be that parenting bloggers find more neutral or vague posts to be more widely applicable to readers, thereby attracting a larger audience. A considerable number of the posts did not give specific anecdotes from the bloggers themselves nor did they give specific parenting advice according to a child's gender. Instead, the parenting advice or commentary was usually vague and referenced children in general. In fact, when a gendered instance did occur, it was usually in reference to moms and only sometimes dads, which is not surprising considering the majority of the authors and readers of parenting blogs are female, as seen in Table 1.

Although a lack of units of analysis may seem to indicate a positive trend in parenting blogs at first, upon further consideration avoiding gender whether it be portrayed, implied, or referenced does nothing to help parents navigate gendered issues nor does it help to combat negative gender stereotypes. This is especially true when the majority of gendered instances that are present conform to gender stereotypes. As indicated in the above paragraphs and in Table 2 below, 93 (75.6%) of the units of analysis conformed to a stereotype, and only 30 (24.4%) deviated from a stereotype. Although the blog posts as a whole lacked instances of gender, when an instance was present, it was usually conforming or reaffirming a gender stereotype. This means that when gender is not ignored it is usually stereotypical. Therefore, parenting blogs are still perpetuating gender stereotypes even when a majority of the blogs avoids gendered instances.

Table 2

Number of Instances of Conforming (C) to or Deviating (D) from a Gender Stereotype by Blog

Blog Name	Post 1	Post 2	Post 3	Post 4	Post 5	Post 6	Post 7	Post 8	Post 9	Post 10	Total Per Blog
5 Minutes for Mom	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	0	1 (1C/0D)
A Baby on Board	1 (1C/0D)	2 (2C/0D)	0	0	0	0	2 (2C/0D)	0	0	0	5 (5C/0D)
Beauty Through Imperfection	0	0	2 (2C/0D)	0	3 (1C/2D)	0	0	0	0	0	5 (3C/2D)
Cafe Mom	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (2C/0D)	1 (1C/0D)	2 (2C/0D)	1 (1C/0D)	6 (6C/0D)
Designer Daddy	1 (0C/1D)	2 (1C/1D)	4 (1C/3D)	6 (2C/4D)	0	0	2 (1C/1D)	2 (1C/1D)	0	0	17 (6C/11D)
Growing Nimble Families	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (2C/0D)	0	2 (2C/0D)
Happy You Happy Family	0	0	3 (1C/2D)	6 (3C/3D)	0	2 (1C/1D)	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	1 (1C/0D)	13 (7C/6D)
Hellobee	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	0	3 (2C/1D)	1 (1C/0D)	2 (2C/0D)	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	8 (7C/1D)
Hurrah for Gin	1 (1C/0D)	3 (3C/0D)	0	2 (2C/0D)	0	0	0	0	0	2 (1C/1D)	8 (7C/1D)
Masshole Mom	0	1 (0C/1D)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (0C/1D)
Not Just Cute	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 (3C/0D)	0	0	0	3 (3C/0D)
Not Your Average Mom	1 (1C/0D)	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (2C/0D)
Pint Sized Treasure	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	3 (3C/0D)
The Deliberate Mom	4 (3C/1D)	0	2 (2C/0D)	0	0	2 (2C/0D)	0	0	0	0	8 (7C/1D)
The Realistic Mama	1 (1C/0D)	0	2 (1C/1D)	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	2 (0C/2D)	0	0	6 (3C/3D)
The Uphill	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	0	0	3 (3C/0D)	5 (5C/0D)
Working Mom Magic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3 (3C/0D)	3 (3C/0D)
Cando Kiddo	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (1C/0D)
Mommy A to Z	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	0	1 (1C/0D)	4 (4C/0D)	3 (1C/2D)	1 (1C/0D)	0	7 (7C/0D)	17 (15C/2D)
Giving Birth with Confidence	0	0	0	3 (3C/0D)	4 (2C/2D)	0	0	0	1 (1C/0D)	1 (1C/0D)	9 (7C/2D)
											Total: 123 (93C/30D)

Note. The total number of instances per blog post is the first number in each cell with the numbers before the “C” and “D” in parentheses indicating how many of these instances conform to or deviate from gender stereotypes.

Research Questions 2

Research question 2 asked, “*What categories and themes of gendered instances that deviate from or conform to a gender stereotype are most prevalent in the blogs?*”

Since this is a preliminary study, every noted theme is accounted for even if only one unit of analysis falls under that theme. This is so future studies that complete the grounded theory approach used here will have a thorough understanding of what was found in this sample. As for categories, at least five units of analysis must fall under a category for it to be deemed as such; however, isolated categories are noted if less than five and more than one units of analysis are present. As noted in the methods chapter, a unit of analysis can fall under more than one category or theme if applicable. Since the grounded theory approach has no official guidelines on how many instances are needed to create a category or theme, the above designation of five or more instance for a category was constructed by the researcher of this study to add clarity and consistency to the analysis.

Main Findings. The eight categories found in this study as well as the number of instance that coincide with the categories are Unrealistic Domestic Goddess (93), Perceived Gender Conformity of Children (17), Part-time Domestic Father (14), Realistic Domestic Mother (13), Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons (10), Full-time Domestic Father (9), Negative Stereotypes Against Women (6), and Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children (5). The two isolated categories are Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons (3) and Domestic Equality (2).

Unrealistic Domestic Goddess. This category was the most prevalent across all the blog posts with 93 units of analysis included under the category, as shown in Table 3 below. This

means that 75.6% of the 123 total units of analysis are classified under the category Unrealistic Domestic Goddess, which in turn is made up of eleven themes. These themes include *Mom is the primary child rearer*, *Mom is the chauffeur*, *Mom has no life outside her children*, *Mom has no career*, *Mom neglects self-care*, *Mom neglects social life*, *Mom is superwoman*, *Mom strives for the impossible*, *Mom is the emotionally available parent*, *Mom feels guilty for not living up to her expectations*, and *Mom is the primary household caretaker*.

Table 3

Themes of Unrealistic Domestic Goddess by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Unrealistic Domestic Goddess</i>	<i>Total 93 (75.6%)</i>
Mom is the primary child rearer	27
Mom has no life outside her children	12
Mom is the primary household caretaker	10
Mom is superwoman	9
Mom neglects self-care	9
Mom feels guilty for not living up to her expectations	7
Mom is the chauffeur	6
Mom strives for the impossible	4
Mom is the emotionally available parent	3
Mom neglects social life	3
Mom has no career	3

The prevalence of the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess category could be due to a number of reasons. One of which may be due to the targeted audience of the blogs. Although the bloggers may feel the need to avoid controversy by talking more generally about children, they may not find it necessary to do so with moms. The majority of these blogs are written by females as indicated in Table 1 or, more specifically, by moms for moms, so they may feel that many of

the experiences or thoughts they write about are shared within the community of mom blog readers. Likewise, sponsors most likely perceive this to be their target audience; therefore, the sponsors may feel that by sharing personal narratives about themselves as mothers the bloggers attract the sponsors' target audience. If the bloggers share relatable anecdotes or narratives about being mothers, than they may attract readers who are mothers and can identify with the bloggers.

The most prevalent theme under the category Unrealistic Domestic Goddess and the most prevalent theme in the blogs as a whole is *Mom is the primary child rearer*. One reason why the theme of *Mom is the primary child rearer* appears so frequently in the blogs may be due to the fact that the majority of the bloggers are moms themselves and the bloggers assume the readers are moms as well. This can be shown in how the bloggers often either directly address or reference their audience as mothers. This may lead the blogs to take on a motherhood perspective and leave out instances of the fathers' parenting. The following quote shows how *Mom is the primary child rearer* is sometimes implied simply by the absence of references to fathers: "A lot of the anti-playgroup sentiment I read is that people who go aren't mums like you. But they are full of mums, like you" (Crawshaw, 2017, para. 14). This quote by a British blogger implies that moms are the parent who takes their children to playgroup, which is consistent with the theme *Mom is the primary child rearer*.

Another reason why the theme of *Mom is the primary child rearer* appears so frequently may be due to the fact that these moms are bloggers. Many of these moms reference the fact that they maintain their blogs instead of working outside the home. As they are the parent who stays home with the children the most, they are probably regulated to the position of primary child rearer. However, even with these two reasons, the theme *Mom is the primary child rearer* is still stereotypical and can influence the readers of the blogs. Future researchers may find it interesting

to compare mom bloggers who stay at home to dad bloggers who stay at home to analyze whether these dad bloggers also become the primary child rearer or if this theme is exclusive to moms.

The second most prevalent theme under the category Unrealistic Domestic Goddess is *Mom has no life outside her children*. An example of this can be found in the following quote:

Also school for my second is a year and a half in the distance and with two children in full-time education, I'll have five whole days to myself. What will I do with all that time?! [sic] I could do anything. Or at the very least, visit the shop without anyone demanding Kinder Eggs and then sit in our silent house checking my watch until pick-up time. (Crawshaw, 2018, para. 7)

This quote demonstrates how moms were portrayed in the blogs as only focusing on their children. Other instances indicated that most of the moms' time was spent either parenting their children or completing domestic tasks. The moms indicated a lack of adult conversation and adult friends. Most of the interactions with spouses or partners described in the blogs revolved around their children, and conversations with other adults took place at activities for their children like playdates or school functions.

Another theme under the category Unrealistic Domestic Goddess is *Mom is superwoman*.

A majority of the time this theme is explicitly stated as indicated in the following quote:

Being able to laugh at yourself and all the things that go wrong in your day is one way that many busy moms are able to stay sane. Having a good sense of humor helps to break the stress that comes with the impossible goal of trying to raise a perfect family while being Super Woman for your partner and kids. (Levy, 2017, para. 1)

This theme usually occurs when moms talk about the pressures of “having it all.” They either explicitly state or imply the pressure to manage the needs of their children, their household, and their partners. Although stress is often associated with the theme *Mom is superwoman*, the bloggers often imply that it is either a goal to reach for or that it is a given that moms need to be superwoman.

Mom feels guilty for not living up to her expectations is another common theme under the category Unrealistic Domestic Goddess. This theme is usually explicitly stated, and many of the bloggers use the term “mom guilt” when referencing the feelings they have when they fall short of their own expectations. The following quote demonstrates this theme:

So really, should pouches be a Mum Guilt? I mean, the ingredients seem good, the products are tasty, there’s no salt or added sugar...The guilt--for me--comes from the fact that I’m not personally titting around with a blender and a variety of carefully chopped, slow-cooked vegetables. Every time I spoon goop from a pouch and into the baby’s mouth, a small part of me feels disappointed that I haven’t somehow fulfilled my completely unrealistic domestic role, but then I think about all of the things I’ve done instead of the cooking and everything is OK again. (Crilly, 2017, para. 7)

As indicated above, many of the moms realize that their domestic goals are unrealistic and that they should not feel guilty for not reaching these goals. However, the moms still demonstrate a need to pursue these unrealistic goals even when they allow these goals to relax occasionally. Either not reaching these goals or purposefully pausing them almost always results in a feeling of guilt.

One last example of the themes under the category of the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess falls within the *Mom is the chauffeur* theme. The quote showcasing this theme is as follows:

It's Kristen here, sharing more about my adventures as a #boymom! A proud momma of two little men, we find ourselves trekking out of the house daily to get to school, soccer, the grocery store, and everywhere in between. (Hale, 2017, para. 2)

When this theme occurs, moms are shown as chauffeuring their children to a variety of functions and activities. Moms are also portrayed as being the main driver for accomplishing domestic tasks such as grocery shopping. This theme was often found alongside the themes of *Mom is the primary household caretaker* and *Mom is the primary child rearer*. However, the theme *Mom is the chauffeur* was distinct enough to warrant separation from those two themes partially due to the specificity of the theme.

The analysis of the themes within the category of the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess reveals that the blogs are perpetuating a stereotype of stay-at-home moms that feel pressured to live up to unrealistic expectations and to take care of the children and household while at the same time neglecting their self-care and social needs. Even when the bloggers indicate that these expectations are unrealistic, not living up to the Superwoman goal results in guilt. These goals may be relaxed briefly before returning, as does the guilt when inevitably the goals are not reached.

Perceived Gender Conformity of Children. This category (n=17) includes 13.8% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 4 below. There are two themes and fifteen sub-themes that make up this category. The two themes are *Daughters are perceived as feminine* and

Sons are perceived as masculine. The seven sub-themes that fall under the first theme are *Girls want to be beautiful, Girls are beautiful, Girls are imaginative, Girls are funny, Girls are open, Girls value feminine toys and media, and Girls are socially oriented.* The eight sub-themes that fall under the second theme are *Boys value masculine toys and media, Boys will be boys, Boys are adventurous, Boys are opinionated, Boys are analytical, Boys struggle with empathy, Boys are physical, and Boys reject femininity.*

Table 4

Themes of Perceived Gender Conformity of Children by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Perceived Gender Conformity of Children</i>	<i>Total 17 (13.8%)</i>
<i>Daughters are perceived as feminine</i>	9
Girls value feminine toys and media	3
Girls want to be beautiful	1
Girls are beautiful	1
Girls are imaginative	1
Girls are funny	1
Girls are open	1
Girls are socially oriented	1
<i>Sons are perceived as masculine</i>	8
Boys value masculine toys and media	1
Boys will be boys	1
Boys are adventurous	1
Boys are opinionated	1
Boys are analytical	1
Boys struggle with empathy	1
Boys are physical	1
Boys reject femininity	1

This category showcases that bloggers perceive children to conform to traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Most of the instances that relate to these themes are all opinion-based with no specific story or anecdote. These themes seem to manifest from the bloggers opinions of what boys and girls are and what they want or value.

The most prevalent theme under the category Perceived Gender Conformity of Children is *Daughters are perceived as feminine*. One of the sub-themes under this theme called *Girls want to be beautiful* can be seen in the following quote:

It's not wrong for little girls to want to be beautiful, this is a desire that runs to our very core as women, it feeds the fashion industry and is at the heart of many eating disorders and plays a role in a girl's self-worth or lack thereof. (Rollo, 2017, para 18)

This quote indicates that all females have a desire to be beautiful and assumes that because girls are biologically female they have the desire to be feminine. Another sub-theme under *Daughters are perceived as feminine* is *Girls are socially oriented*, which can be seen in the following quote:

Girls and their frenemies. 'Mean' girls. Emotional bullying between girls. More and more people are joining the discussion on the important topic of relational aggression in girls, tackling the issues of exclusion, name-calling, the silent treatment, and more. (Hilary, 2017, para. 1)

In this quote, the blogger indicates that when girls show aggression, which is a stereotypically masculine emotion, they do so in a social context. In this case, even more traditionally masculine emotions are expressed in feminine ways that are relational or social.

The other theme present under the category Perceived Gender Conformity of Children is the theme *Sons are perceived as masculine*. One of the sub-themes under this theme called *Boys are physical* can be seen in the following quote: "...you've probably seen emotions popping right to the surface in the form of punching, licking, physical competition, and more. Boys are physical! We cannot deny that" (Hilary, 2017, para. 7). This quote suggests that all boys are physical and demonstrate their emotions in a physical way. This implies that boys require a physical outlet to relieve their emotions. It may even imply that boys are incapable of using non-physical avenues to relay their emotions.

Two other sub-themes under *Sons are perceived as masculine* are *Boys struggle with empathy* and *Boys reject femininity*, both of which can be seen in the following quote:

For some kids skills like empathy, compassion and service come easily. It seems to just be part of their personality. Boys, in particular, have a harder time with these types of skills. They often are seen as girly or makes them look soft [sic]. (Avila, 2018, para. 11)

This quote depicts boys as unskilled at empathizing with others and indicates that this lack of empathy is an innate part of being a boy. Not only that but this quote also implies that boys may purposefully reject empathy because they feel it is feminine.

Part-time Domestic Father. This category (n=14) includes 11.4% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 5 below. The four themes that make up this category are *Dad is the temporary child rearer (babysitter)*, *Dad has a career*, *Dad relates to children through masculine activities*, and *Dad completes some domestic chores*.

Table 5

Themes of Part-time Domestic Father by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Part-time Domestic Father</i>	Total 14 (11.4%)
Dad is the temporary child rearer (babysitter)	9
Dad completes some domestic chores	2
Dad relates to children through masculine activities	2
Dad has a career	1

One theme that falls under the category of Part-time Domestic Father is *Dad completes some domestic chores*, which can be seen in the following quote:

Every night, my husband spends about an hour (or more) prepping dinner for our family of five. And I mean real cooking with veggie-chopping and meat-thawing and actual recipes, not my style of cooking that involves dumping a box of pasta into water, setting a timer, then mixing in a packet of powdered cheese. While he cooks, my primary responsibilities include:...(Holmes, 2017, para. 1)

In this quote, the dad is completing the stereotypical feminine task of preparing dinner; however, he is not solely in charge of the domestic responsibilities as his wife indicates she is helping as well. This is why the category is called Part-time Domestic Father.

When moms are shown to be domestic, they are responsible for all of the domestic chores and tasks. As this dad is only sharing the responsibility, the bloggers seem to be implying that dads can only share domestic responsibility and are not held to the same domestic standard as women.

One theme that falls under the category of Part-time Domestic Father is *Dad is the temporary child rearer (babysitter)*, which can be seen in the following quote: “Initially Max was pumped about his new bed situation. He loved that Mr. Ice Cream and I could lie down next

to him when reading bedtime stories. Although seeing Mr. Ice Cream (who is 6’2”) laying next to Max in that tiny bed was a pretty funny sight!” (Mrs. Ice Cream, 2017, para. 3). This quote shows the dad reading bedtime stories to his son. Although the dad takes part in the child-rearing responsibilities, he is only briefly responsible for the child. This theme manifests when dads share responsibility for their child for a short time or is solely responsible for a short time (babysitting). Similarly to the last theme, this indicates that dads only have temporary or shared responsible for child-rearing where when moms are in similar situations they are the primary caregiver.

Realistic Domestic Mother. This category (n=13) includes 10.6% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 6 below. The three themes that make up this category are *Mom has a part-time or full-time career*, *Mom has a social life*, and *Mom has an identity outside her children*.

Table 6

Themes of Realistic Domestic Mother by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Realistic Domestic Mother</i>	<i>Total 13 (10.6%)</i>
Mom has a part-time or full-time career	8
Mom has an identity outside her children	3
Mom has a social life	2

One theme that falls under the category of Realistic Domestic Mother is *Mom has a part-time or full-time career*, which can be seen in the following quote:

After 11 weeks at home with Baby P and his big brothers, I am going back to work full-time today. Our nanny needs full-time hours if we want to keep her (which we most definitely do), plus Big P and Little P start preschool and we’re

all ready for our new normal. So it's back to work I go...and while I am neither looking forward to or dreading it, I feel mostly ready. (Mrs. Peas, 2017, para. 1)

In this quote, the mom blogger is preparing to return to work after giving birth to her second child. This is in direct contrast with the category the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess where mothers were stay-at-home moms and only focused on their children. This shows a much more realistic depiction of motherhood today. This quote also deviates from gender stereotypes where moms are depicted without a career and usually only responsible for their children and domestic tasks.

Another theme that falls under the category of Realistic Domestic Mother is *Mom has an identity outside her children*, which can be seen in the following quote:

Mummy has forgotten about World Book Day because she has a life, a job, 726 unread emails, a damp problem in the hallway, parcels to drop off at the post office, undiagnosed back pain, red final remind bills, hardly any food in the house, an itchy head (nits? again!), washing that has been sitting in the machine for two days, PMT and 15 million other things on her multiple to do lists. (Kirby, 2017, para. 2)

Although this quote includes some domestic chores and tasks on the mom's to-do list, it also shows that her life does not revolve around her children and that she probably has an identity outside of her children. This quote implies that the mom has forgotten something she needed to do for her child but does not feel guilt and also indicates that she has a life, a job, and tasks to complete that are not related to her children or her household.

Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons. This category (n=10) includes 8% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 7 below. The six themes that make up this category are *Parents encourage empathy in boys*, *Parents discourage gender-biased toys and media*, *Parents expose sons to female fictional characters*, *Parents discourage “boys will be boys” attitude*, *Parents prioritize strong female role models*, and *Parents acknowledge gender equality*.

Table 7

Themes of Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons</i>	<i>Total 10 (8%)</i>
Parents expose sons to female fictional characters	4
Parents discourage “boys will be boys” attitude	2
Parents encourage empathy in boys	1
Parents discourage gender-biased toys and media	1
Parents prioritize strong female role models	1
Parents acknowledge gender equality	1

One theme that falls under the category of Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons is *Parents expose sons to female fictional characters*, which can be seen in the following quote:

In addition to the real women in our lives, superheroes have been a way to introduce Girl Power to my son. From the books we read, to the notes I put in his lunch, and of course the TV shows and movies we watch--he’s never lacking for examples of strong, wondrous women. (Almond, 2017, para. 3)

This quote indicates that the father who wrote this blog post is exposing his son to female fictional characters in order to show him examples of strong females. This helps

to normalize feminine characteristics and interests in sons by not only giving them a positive view of women and their characteristics but also showing them that having feminine interests is normal.

Full-time Domestic Father. This category (n=9) includes 7.3% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 8 below. The four themes that make up this category are *Dad is the primary child rearer*, *Dad is a self-conscious parent*, *Dad brings competition into parenting*, and *Dad is emotionally available*.

Table 8

Themes of Full-time Domestic Father by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Full-time Domestic Father</i>	Total 9 (7.3%)
Dad is the primary child rearer	4
Dad is a self-conscious parent	2
Dad brings competition into parenting	2
Dad is emotionally available	1

One theme that falls under the category of Full-time Domestic Father and Interests in Sons is *Dad is the primary child rearer*, which can be seen in the following quote: “My husband was also adjusting to not working and being home in the dead of winter with a newborn. I often joked he saw and experienced things dads often aren’t exposed to” (Mrs. Marshmello, 2017, para. 12). This quote shows a dad at home without a career and being solely responsible for a newborn. In this instance, the dad is shown as being capable of being the primary child rearer.

Negative Stereotypes Against Women. This category (n=6) includes 4.9% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 9 below. The six themes that make up this category are *Women secretly long to be objectified*, *Women don’t understand masculine activities*, *Women*

apologize too much, Women don't know how to take compliments, Women don't speak up, and Women are emotional.

Table 9

Themes of Negative Stereotypes Against Women by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Negative Stereotypes Against Women</i>	<i>Total 6 (4.9%)</i>
Women secretly long to be objectified	1
Women apologize too much	1
Women don't understand masculine activity	1
Women don't know how to take compliments	1
Women don't speak up	1
Women are emotional	1

One theme that falls under the category of Negative Stereotypes Against Women is *Women apologize too much*, which can be seen in the following quote: “Women love to say sorry. I am aware that is a blanket statement, but it’s true. We apologize when we are wrong, we apologize for being right and sometimes we apologize when we don’t know what else to say.” (Berger, 2017, para. 2)

In this quote, the blogger expresses her observation that all women apologize too much. She even indicates that she knows she is generalizing; however, she indicates that her statement is still true. This quote implies that women apologize regardless if it is necessary or not.

Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children. This category (n=5) includes 4.3% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 10 below. The two themes and five sub-themes that make up this category. The two themes are *Sons can be feminine and Daughters can be masculine.* The four sub-themes that fall under the first theme are *Boys can be tender, Boys can*

be thoughtful, Boys can be creative, and Boys can be socially oriented; the one sub-theme that falls under the second theme is that *Girls can participate in masculine activities*.

Table 10 Themes of Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children</i>	<i>Total 5 (4.3%)</i>
<i>Sons can be feminine</i>	4
Boys can be tender	1
Boys can be thoughtful	1
Boys can be creative	1
Boys can be socially oriented	1
<i>Daughters can be masculine</i>	1
Girls can participate in masculine activities	1

One themes that falls under the category of Gender Perceived Nonconformity of Children is *Sons can be feminine*, and one of the sub-themes of this theme is *Boys can be tender*, which can be seen in the following quote: “What if ‘boys will be boys’ could mean compassionate, powerful, alert agents for change?” (Hilary, 2017, para. 19). This quote indicates the blogger wishes that instead of viewing boys stereotypically with statements such as “boys will be boys” that parents see boys as capable of traditionally feminine emotions like compassion, and the boys have the capacity to change the current gender climate for the better.

Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons. Although there were not enough instances for Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons to concretely say a category has emerged, the researcher has included it in this study as an isolated category to indicate to future researcher its potential for becoming a category. This isolated category (n=3) includes 2.4% of the 123 total units of analysis. The two themes that make up this isolated

category are *Parents encourage masculine toys and media* and *Parents expose sons to male fictional characters*.

Table 11

Themes of Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons</i>	<i>Total 3 (2.4%)</i>
Parents encourage masculine toys and media	2
Parents expose sons to male fictional characters	1

Domestic Equality. Again, these combined themes were delineated as an isolated category to indicate its potential to become a category. This isolated category (n=2) includes 1.6% of the 123 total units of analysis, as shown in Table 12 below. The one theme that makes up this isolated category is *All genders equally share domestic chores*. However, one last theme that emerged from this study is *Gendered domestic chores*, which constitutes 1% of the units of analysis, as shown in Table 13 below. This theme does not seem to start a new category, but it may be related to the isolated category of Domestic Equality.

Table 12

Themes of Domestic Equality by Number of Instances

Category & Themes	Units of Analysis
<i>Domestic Equality</i>	<i>Total 2 (1.6%)</i>
All genders equally share domestic chores	2

Table 13

Theme of Gendering domestic chores by Number of Instances

Theme	Units of Analysis
<i>Gendering domestic chores</i>	<i>Total 1 (1%)</i>

Discussion

This study found that out of 200 parenting blog posts 60 of the posts (30%) contained at least one instance that either deviated from or conformed to a gender stereotype, and 140 (70%) did not. There were 123 instances in total with 93 of the instances conforming to a gender stereotype (75.6% of the total instances) and 30 deviating (24.4% of the total instances), as seen in Table 2.

Eight categories were found in this study, including Unrealistic Domestic Goddess, Perceived Gender Conformity of Children, Part-time Domestic Father, Realistic Domestic Mother, Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons, Full-time Domestic Father, Negative Stereotypes Against Women, and Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children. Two isolated categories that were found are Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons and Domestic Equality. By far the most prevalent category was the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess as it consisted of 93 instances of conforming to or deviating from a gender stereotype, or 75.6% of the total instances.

As stated in the analysis, the findings of this study seem to indicate that although a majority of the parenting blogs do not contain instances either conforming to or deviating from a gender stereotype, when the blogs do contain an instance, it is more likely to be conforming to a stereotype than to be deviating from it. Even though a majority of the blog posts do not contain any instances, it is still worrisome to find the instances that are present mostly conform to or reinforce stereotypes. Although many of the blog posts do not contain any instance that conform to or reinforce stereotypes, the instances that are present still hold the possibility of influencing readers, according social cognitive theory.

Many of the conforming instances pertain to moms and motherhood instead of children or dads. This is likely due to the fact that most of the blogs are written by moms for moms. These blog posts seem to perpetuate the themes of *Mom is the primary child rearer*, *Mom is the chauffeur*, *Mom has no life outside her children*, *Mom has no career*, *Mom neglects self-care*, *Mom neglects social life*, *Mom is superwoman*, *Mom strives for the impossible*, *Mom is the emotionally available parent*, *Mom feels guilty for not living up to her expectations*, and *Mom is the primary household caretaker*. These themes can be stereotypically limiting for moms and often seem to contribute to mentally unhealthy behavior, such as neglecting self-care, bolstering unrealistic expectations, and contributing to unnecessary guilt. Not only could these themes negatively influence moms but also the themes could negatively influence the mom's children. As indicated by SCT, the blog posts have the potential to influence the moms, and the moms have the potential to influence their children. Therefore, any negative or harmful gender stereotype from the blog posts that influence the parents can influence the children. In this case, girls could perceive everything under the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess as the appropriate themes for motherhood, and boys could perceive the themes under this category as unrelated to them.

However, the researcher does not mean to suggest that parenting blogs should only deviate from gender stereotypes and never conform to them, as this is unattainable and may be just as harmful as only conforming to stereotypes. If parenting blogs only contained deviations from gender stereotypes, the parenting blogs would still be limiting how they portray females and males, and, eventually, new stereotypes could form. In fact, it may be beneficial if parenting blogs contained a more balanced number of instances that conform to and deviate from a stereotype. This way readers could have more expansive and varied portrayals of males and

females without limiting certain gendered behaviors, attitudes, or interests. However, since stereotypes are more ingrained, pervasive, and usually more socially acceptable, balancing between instances conforming to and deviating from gender stereotypes may be difficult as one instance of conforming to a gender stereotype may be more influential than one instance of deviating from a stereotype.

Interestingly, the blogger whose blog posts contained the greatest number of deviating instances for one blog also contained one of the most balanced number of conforming and deviating instances (when considering the potential of increased influence for conforming instances). This blogger named Brent Almond created the blog *Designer Daddy* and was one of the two male bloggers present in this study. However, the other dad blogger only contributed one out of ten blog posts for the blog *Mommy A to Z*, while Almond wrote all the blog posts for *Designer Daddy*. The genders of the authors of the blogs can be found in Table 1.

Almond's blog contained 17 instances in total with 6 conforming to gender stereotypes and 11 deviating from gender stereotypes. Future studies may find it beneficial to compare mom and dad bloggers as the sample size in this study was not robust enough to do so. It is interesting how the only dad blogger for a full 10 posts has the greatest number of deviating instances among the bloggers. However, Almond most likely does not represent the typical dad blogger, especially considering Almond is gay and has a husband. In fact, he may have more deviating instances on his blog due to his atypical parenting experience when compared to the other bloggers in this study.

Most of the instances that conformed to gender stereotypes were consistent with other gender research, although the use of a modified grounded theory approach has added specificity and context to the gender stereotypes within parenting blogs. For example, stereotypical females

are homemakers or caretakers (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2015); however, this thesis adds that moms are not just stereotypically portrayed as domestic and as primary child-rears in the blogs but also as feeling guilty when their high expectations for themselves are not met. To a lesser extent, children's gender stereotypes are also reiterated in the blogs with girls portrayed as favoring feminine media while boys prefer masculine media (Coyne, Birkbeck, Linder, Nelson, & Rasmussen, 2016; Collier, Coyne, Linder, Nelson, & Rasmussen, 2014). Girls are also portrayed with more feminine characteristics and wants while boys are portrayed with more masculine characteristics and even seem to reject femininity (Barrett, Cole, & Zahn-Waxier, 1991; Huston, 1983).

Even the deviations from gender stereotypes reinforce the current research by opposing the stereotypes in the research. Of course, the use of the modified grounded theory approach has added specificity to the stereotypes within the blogs. For example, moms are sometimes portrayed as having careers and full-time jobs in juxtaposition to the stereotype of females as homemakers (Fixmer-Oraiz & Wood, 2015). Parents are also sometimes seen as prioritizing females in media for boys and discouraging gender-based media (Coyne, Birkbeck, Linder, Nelson, & Rasmussen, 2016; Collier, Coyne, Linder, Nelson, & Rasmussen, 2014). The same can also be said for boys being portrayed as having feminine characteristics, such as tenderness and creativity (Barrett, Cole, & Zahn-Waxier, 1991; Huston, 1983).

Therefore, this study seems to confirm the current stereotypes within the gender literature both by having instances that conform to stereotypes in the literature and having instances that deviate from the literature. However, current research, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, does not have specific gender categories that can be applied to blog posts or other similar media. Once the grounded theory approach is completed in regards to this topic, these categories will

allow future researchers to conduct more specific and thorough analysis on parenting blogs and potentially other forms of social media.

This study helps maintain that social cognitive theory is an effective theory to utilize for studies that pertain to media representation, especially gender. SCT is not only effective in examining attitude or behavior changes due to mass media but also for analyzing the social values in media that could potential influence attitude or behavior. Although studies that look at the content of media cannot test behavioral or attitude change, they can indicate a way to predict these potential media effects from certain content. This study not only gives future researchers new ways to analyze and categorize blog content but also gives researchers potential avenues for media effects testing when looking through the len of SCT.

Limitations

Due to the collection method chosen for this study the analyzed blog posts were limited to posts in 2017 and the beginning of 2018. Although this was necessary for the manageability of the study, a larger span of time for collection would create a more comprehensive view of the categories and themes that appear in parenting blogs. A similar limitation is that a number of blogs were excluded from the collection process due to undated blog posts. Again, the exclusion of undated blogs was necessary for data collection, but many parenting bloggers do not date their blog posts. This may be due to bloggers wanting their posts to seem timely no matter when a reader found their post.

The chosen collection method for this study also limited the sample to the “top” parenting blogs. By focusing on the what some defined as the “top” parenting blogs, the findings may be somewhat obscured, as more popular bloggers might feel more pressured to remain neutral and controversy free to appeal to more readers. The “top” blogs were chosen because of their

potential to be read by as well as influence a larger amount of people; however, these blog posts may not completely reflect parenting blogs as a whole.

Another set of potential limitations may be due to the use of the grounded theory approach as the method. Since grounded theory approach inductively creates categories and themes from more detailed and specific instances, some of the sentiment and specificity may be lost in the categories and themes. However, this loss of specificity is necessary for categories to be applicable to other blog posts. Grounded theory also does not take into account that some readers of the blogs may interpret gendered instances differently, although this limitation is likely minimized due to the comprehensive review of gender literature that the researcher of this study completed.

Conclusion

Social cognitive theory continues to be an essential theory not only in testing media effects on the cognitive process but also in predicting potential effects from certain media content. Studies such as this one that utilize social cognitive theory predictively provide guidance for future empirical studies.

According to social cognitive theory, parenting blogs have the potential to influence the parents who read the blogs, and the parents have the potential to influence their children. Therefore, it is important to study the content of these blogs and what is being portrayed there. Although SCT is often used to evaluate how media content represents gender, there were no studies that examined gender portrayals in parenting blogs.

Since there were no studies that looked at gender in parenting blogs and no established categories that could be applied to gendered instances in parenting blogs, this study inductively created eight categories and two isolated categories from the instances found in the sample of

parenting blogs that either deviated from or conformed to gender stereotypes. These eight categories and two isolated categories were as follows: Unrealistic Domestic Goddess, Perceived Gender Conformity of Children, Part-time Domestic Father, Realistic Domestic Mother, Normalizing Feminine Characteristics and Interests in Sons, Full-time Domestic Father, Negative Stereotypes Against Women, Perceived Gender Nonconformity of Children, Encouraging Masculine Characteristics and Interests in Sons, and Domestic Equality.

After looking at the categories and themes present in the blogs as well as the prevalence of those categories and themes, the researcher concluded that when parenting blogs did contain a gendered instance that instance usually conformed to a stereotype. The most prevalent category by far was the Unrealistic Domestic Goddess. Many of the blog posts had no instances of deviating or conforming to a stereotype, but, when an instance did occur, it usually referenced mothers and conformed to a stereotype.

As this was a preliminary study that utilized a modified grounded theory approach, future studies need to be conducted to verify the validity of the categories and themes identified in this thesis. By conducting an unmodified grounded theory approach to parenting blogs, researchers can make substantial theoretical advancements in this area. If these same categories and themes continue to be inductively found by researchers, then the categories can be utilized in deductive, empirical research. Future researchers could determine if parents are aware of these categories in parenting blogs, or other quantitative analyses could be conducted to determine the actual effects parenting blogs have on parents.

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