

One of the benefits of modern medical technology is the ability to learn a great deal about a baby prior to its birth. One of the pieces of data available through prenatal testing that is of greatest interest to many expectant parents is the sex of their child. This in turn has caused gender role designation to begin before a baby breathes its first breath. One of the most popular means of signifying sex designations of infants is by using the familiar pink and blue color dichotomy. From newborn wardrobe items, to nursery decorating motifs, to “gender-reveal” events, these colors are still strongly associated with expectations of gender. This research project will investigate the origins of the “blue for boys, pink for girls” dichotomy, explore the manifestations of this dichotomy in our contemporary society, and to discuss the implications of maintaining strong associations between colors and ideas of sex and gender.

Drawing on the disciplines of sociology, psychology, pop culture studies, and history, this research will delve into the influences of United States culture and societal norms on the “genderization” of pink and blue. The implication of colors designating gender has been a topic of sociological analysis. However, the lasting impacts on how these gendered colors affect gender identity has not. Through content analysis of text and images in mainstream publications, this paper seeks to illuminate the social construction of gendered colors, and how this construction affects aspects of an individual’s life beyond the color of their nursery walls.