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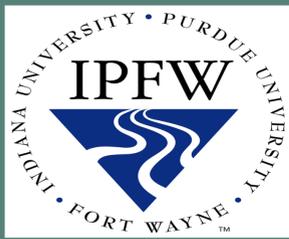
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Are Parents' Gender-Related Interests and Attitudes Associated with their Children's Gender-Related Interests?

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Abstract

In this study parents' own gender-related interests and their attitudes about activities and occupations were rarely associated with their children's gender-related interests and traits. However, parents' attitudes about the desirability of their children engaging in certain child-focused, gender-related activities (e.g., toys) was consistently related to their children's gendered interests and traits.

Introduction

Previous research has examined the effects of parental attitudes toward gender roles on children's gender related behaviors (e.g., Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002), but much of this research involves older children. Also, until recently researchers did not have a measure that examined parents' attitudes about their children's display of gender-related behaviors.

In this study, we examined the relationship between parents' own gender-related interests and attitudes and their children's gender-related traits and interests.

Method

Participants

We include data from 113 parents of 3- to 11-year-old children. Parents consisted of 29 males and 84 females (M age = 32.27; SD 5.59; range 18-48 years).

Measures

Pre-School Activities Inventory (PSAI) (Golombok and Rust, 1993): The PSAI produces a single age-corrected score (the PSAI), ranging from feminine to masculine interests (high scores are masculine). It is also possible to create a measure of feminine and masculine interests separately, which we have done here.

The Child Gender Socialization Scale (CGSS), Blakemore & Hill, 2008): This measures parents' attitudes about the desirability of gender-related behaviors in their children.

Occupations, Activities & Traits Scales (OAT) (Liben & Bigler, 2002): This measures parents' own gender-related attitudes and gender-related preferences. Only the occupations and activities scales were used.

Procedure

Participants completed the PSAI followed by the CGSS, and finally the OAT. All measures were completed online.

Results

Correlations between Parents' Interests and Children's Interests/Traits

	PSAI-M	PSAI-F	PSAI
<u>Parent Masc. Interests:</u>			
Boys'	ns	ns	ns
Girls'	.45***	.34**	ns
Combined	.20	ns	ns

Parent Fem. Interests: no significant correlations

Correlations between Parents' Attitudes and Children's Interests/Traits

Occupations & Activities (OAT):

Boys'	ns	ns	-.45**
Girls'	ns	ns	ns
Combined	ns	.26**	-.27**

Attitudes about Child Playing with "Girl" Toys (CGSS):

Boys'	ns	.58***	-.30*
Girls'	.28*	.46***	-.34**
Combined	-.34***	.68***	-.54***

Attitudes about Child Playing with "Boy" Toys (CGSS):

Boys'	.44**	-.33*	.50***
Girls'	.56***	ns	ns
Combined	.68***	-.44***	.43***

Attitudes about Child Having Characteristics of the Other Gender (CGSS):

Boys'	ns	-.65***	.35*
Girls'	-.37**	ns	-.28*
Combined	ns	-.46***	.23*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Parent Attitudes and Interests Predicting Children's Interests & Traits (PSAI-M & PSAI-F)

Child's Masc. Interests: $F(6,100) = 30.74, p < .001$

Child Sex:	$\beta = -.60, t = -7.68, p < .001$
Approval "Boy" Toys:	$\beta = .34, t = 4.46, p < .001$
Opp.-Sex Disapproval:	$\beta = -.20, t = -2.91, p = .004$
Parent Masc. Interests:	$\beta = .15, t = 2.34, p = .02$

Boys' Masc. Interests: $F(5,39) = 4.43, p = .003$

Approval "Boy" Toys:	$\beta = .36, t = 2.38, p = .02$
Opp.-Sex Disapproval:	$\beta = -.33, t = -2.22, p = .004$

Girls' Masc. Interests: $F(5,56) = 7.86, p < .001$

Approval "Boy" Toys:	$\beta = .40, t = 3.49, p = .001$
Parent Masc. Interests:	$\beta = .27, t = 2.51, p = .02$
Opp.-Sex Disapproval:	$\beta = -.23, t = -2.19, p = .03$

Child's Fem. Interests: $F(6,101) = 56.53, p < .001$

Child Sex:	$\beta = .63, t = 9.54, p < .001$
Child Age:	$\beta = -.12, t = -2.38, p = .02$
Approval "Girl" Toys:	$\beta = .29, t = 4.03, p < .001$

Boys' Fem. Interests: $F(5,39) = 7.07, p < .001$

Opp.-Sex Disapproval:	$\beta = -.54, t = -3.16, p = .003$
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Girls' Fem. Interests: $F(5,57) = 5.34, p < .001$

Child Age:	$\beta = -.27, t = -2.22, p = .03$
Approval "Girl" Toys:	$\beta = .31, t = 2.51, p = .02$

Overall Gender-Related Interests and Traits: Combined
 $F(6,99) = 13.30, p < .001$

Child Age:	$\beta = .20, t = 2.40, p = .02$
Approval "Girl" Toys:	$\beta = -.34, t = -3.01, p = .003$
Approval "Boy" Toys:	$\beta = .32, t = 3.48, p = .001$

Overall Gender-Related Interests and Traits: Boys

$F(5,39) = 11.92, p < .001$

Child Age:	$\beta = -.55, t = -5.03, p < .001$
Approval "Boy" Toys:	$\beta = .37, t = 3.30, p = .002$

Overall Gender-Related Interests and Traits: Girls

$F(5,55) = 23.59, p < .001$

Child Age:	$\beta = .80, t = 9.09, p < .001$
Approval "Boy" Toys:	$\beta = .38, t = 4.35, p < .001$

Conclusion

Overall boys had more masculine interests and characteristics than girls did, and older children were less gender typical than younger children. We were also interested in how parents' interests and attitudes affected children's gender-related behavior.

Parents' Interests

Parents had more interests in masculine occupations and adult activities had daughters with more masculine interests and traits. Interestingly, these parents' daughters also had somewhat more feminine interests as well. Parents' feminine interests were not related to their children's gender-related characteristics.

Parents' Attitudes

Parents with more flexible attitudes about adults having other-gender interests had children, especially sons, with more traditionally feminine interests and traits.

Parents' attitudes (i.e., approval) about their children's gender-related interests were consistently related to their children's actual interests and traits. Parents who approved of their children playing with masculine toys, had both sons and daughters who had more masculine interests and characteristics. Parents who approved of their children playing with feminine toys had sons and daughters with more feminine characteristics and interests. Finally, parents who disapproved of other-gender interests and characteristics in their children had more traditionally gender-typed children.

Poster presented at the Student Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium, April 2013