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

Elizabeth Phillips  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Manaal Sajid  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Heather A. Hicks  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

Follow this and additional works at: [http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2013](http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2013)

Part of the Psychology Commons

**Recommended Citation**

Phillips, Elizabeth; Sajid, Manaal; and Hicks, Heather A., "Are Parents’ Gender-Related Interests and Attitudes Associated with their Children’s Gender-Related Interests?" (2013). 2013 IPFW Student Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium. Book 42.  
[http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2013/42](http://opus.ipfw.edu/stu_symp2013/42)
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-correlated 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 measure parents’ attitudes about the desirability of gender-related behaviors in their children.

Results
Correlations between Parents’ Interests and Children’s Interests/Traits

Parent Mas. Interests:
Boys’ ns 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

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 had 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.

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: β = -.60, t = -7.68, p < .001
Approval “Boy” Toys: β = .34, t = 4.46, p < .001
Opp. -Sex Disapproval: β = -.20, t = -2.91, p = .004
Parent Masc. Interests: β = .15, t = 2.34, p = .02

Boys’ Masc. Interests: F (5,39) = 4.43, p = .003
Approval “Boy” Toys: β = .36, t = 2.38, p = .02
Opp.-Sex Disapproval: β = -.33, t = -2.22, p = .004

Girls’ Masc. Interests: F (5,56) = 7.86, p < .001
Approval “Boy” Toys: β = .40, t = 3.49, p = .001
Parent Masc. Interests: β = .27, t = 2.51, p = .02
Opp.-Sex Disapproval: β = -.23, t = -2.19, p = .03

Child’s Fem. Interests: F (6,101) = 56.53, p < .001
Child Sex: β = .63, t = 9.54, p < .001
Child Age: β = -.12, t = -2.38, p = .02
Approval “Girl” Toys: β = .29, t = 4.03, p < .001

Boys’ Fem. Interests: F (5,39) = 7.07, p < .001
Opp.-Sex Disapproval: β = -.54, t = -3.16, p = .003

Girls’ Fem. Interests: F (5,57) = 5.34, p < .001
Child Age: β = -.27, t = -2.22, p = .03
Approval “Girl” Toys: β = .31, t = 2.51, p = .02

Overall Gender-Related Interests and Traits: Combined F (6,99) = 13.36, p < .001
Child Age: β = .20, t = 2.40, p = .02
Approval “Girl” Toys: β = -.34, t = -3.01, p = .003
Approval “Boy” Toys: β = .32, t = 3.48, p = .001

Overall Gender-Related Interests and Traits: Boys F (5,59) = 11.92, p < .001
Child Age: β = -.55, t = 5.03, p < .001
Approval “Boy” Toys: β = .37, t = 3.30, p = .002

Overall Gender-Related Interests and Traits: Girls F (5,55) = 23.59, p < .001
Child Age: β = .80, t = 9.09, p < .001
Approval “Boy” Toys: β = -.38, t = 4.35, p < .001

Parenting ’s Gender-Related Interests and Attitudes Associated with their Children’s Gender-Related Interests?
Elizabeth L. Phillips, Manaal M. Sajid, & Heather A. Hicks
Faculty Sponsor: Elaine Blakemore
Indiana University-Purdue University, Fort Wayne