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Are parents’ gender-related interests and attitudes associated with their children’s gender-related interests?

Judith Elaine Blakemore  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*, blakemor@ipfw.edu

Elizabeth L. Phillips  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

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

Manaal M. Sajid  
*Indiana University - Purdue University Fort Wayne*

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Are Parents’ Gender-Related Interests and Attitudes Associated with their Children’s Gender-Related Interests?
Judith E. Owen Blakemore, Elizabeth L. Phillips, Heather A. Hicks, & Manaal M. Sajid
Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne

Abstract
We examined relationships between parents’ own gender-related interests and attitudes and their 3- to 11-year-old children’s gender typical traits and interests. Parent interests were not often related to child characteristics, but parent attitudes were, especially attitudes about child behavior. Conservative parents had more gender typical children.

Introduction
Many theories, social cognitive theory in particular (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), propose that experiences in the family contribute to the development of children’s gender development.

In this study we examine relationships between parents’ gender-related interests and attitudes, and their children’s gender-related characteristics.

Method
Participants
There were 113 parents (29 M, 84 F; M age = 32.27; SD = 5.59) of 3- to 11-year-old children (46 M; 67 F; M age = 6.62; SD = 2.83).

Measures
Pre-School Activities Inventory (PSAI; Golombek & Rust, 1993), a measure of children’s masculine and feminine interests and traits.

Poster presented at the annual meeting of the Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago, May 2013

Results
Approve Playing with “Girls’” Toys

Parent – Child Correlations

A. Parent Interests & Child PSAI

Parent Masculine Interests

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys ns ns .45***
Girls .65***
Combined .26***

Parent Feminine Interests

No significant correlations

B. Parent Attitudes & Child PSAI

Adult Occupations/Activities (OAT Flexible Attitudes)

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

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

Approve Playing with “Girls’” Toys

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys ns .58***
Girls .29*
Combined -.34***

Approve Playing with “Boys’” Toys

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys .44**
Girls .56***
Combined .68***

PSAI (high scores more masculine)

Boys F(1,104) = 31.93, p < .001
Girls

Parent Masculine Interests

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys ns ns .45***
Girls .65***
Combined .26***

Parent Feminine Interests

No significant correlations

B. Parent Attitudes & Child PSAI

Adult Occupations/Activities (OAT Flexible Attitudes)

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys ns ns -.45**
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Approve Playing with “Girls’” Toys

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Approve Playing with “Boys’” Toys

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys .44**
Girls .56***
Combined .68***

Disapprove Other Gender Characteristics

PSAI-M PSAI-F PSAI

Boys ns -.65***
Girls -.37** ns -.28*
Combined ns -.46***

Higher scores = more disapproval
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Regressions: PSAI
Predictors: Child gender and age, parent OAT M and F interests, OAT Flexibility, Approval “Boys’” Toys, Approval “Girls’” Toys, and Disapprove other Gender

Boys and Girls Combined

F (9,95) = 8.74***
Child Age: ß = .20, t = 2.36*
Approval “Girls’” Toys: ß = -.35, t = -2.98**
Approval “Boys’” Toys: ß = .33, t = 3.24**

Boys

F (8,35) = 7.51***
Child Age: ß = -.60, t = -5.12***
Approval “Boys’” Toys: ß = .30, t = 2.37*

Girls

F (8,52) = 14.60***
Child Age: ß = .81, t = 8.94***
Approval “Boys’” Toys: ß = .38, t = 4.08***
Disapprove Other: ß = -.17, t = 2.09*

Conclusion
Parents’ attitudes, and occasionally interests, were related to their children’s gender stereotyped characteristics. Parents who approved of other gender interests in their children had children with less stereotyped characteristics. Future work will use other measures of child characteristics.