

## Background

- Play is an important context where parents may pass on gender stereotypes to their children
- Mothers and fathers have different expectations when playing with sons versus daughters<sup>1</sup>
- Gender-typed play may be reinforced by parents and can impact a child's gender views outside of play
  - Sons acting out power roles, such as superheroes
  - Daughters acting out domestic roles, such as mothering a baby doll
- We hypothesize that parents who identify with and hold stronger gender-stereotyped beliefs will play differently with their children, influencing the child's own gender stereotypes

## Method

- Participants:**
- N = 12 parent/child dyads (5 girls, 6 mothers; mean child age = 3.4 yrs)

**Method:**

- Recorded 15-minute naturalistic play with toys that were traditionally female, traditionally male, and neutral
- Coded separately time children and parents spent playing with toys
- Calculated proportion child and parent played with each type of toy

**Parents completed three surveys:**

- The Implicit Associations Test*<sup>2</sup>
  - Assesses implicit gender biases
- The Bem Sex-Role Inventory*<sup>3</sup>
  - Assesses identification with gender-stereotyped traits using a 1 to 7 Likert scale
- Child Gender Socialization Scale*<sup>4</sup>
  - Assesses likelihood of parents encouraging gender-typed activities for children
- Calculated a difference score between same-gender stereotypes and opposite-gender stereotypes for all surveys
  - Higher score indicates higher alignment with traditional gender stereotypes

**Children completed a sorting task:**

- 15 pictures of toys, objects, and occupations
  - 5 traditionally feminine
  - 5 traditionally masculine
  - 5 neutral
- Sorted into 3 boxes (things for girls, things for boys, things for boys & girls)

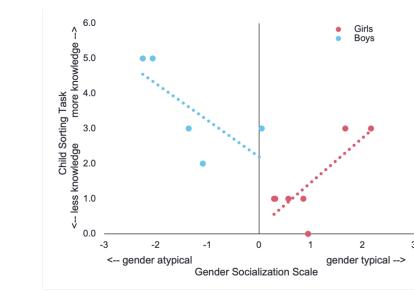


## References

- <sup>1</sup>Gleason, T. R. (2005). Mothers' and Fathers' Attitudes Regarding Pretend Play in the Context of Imaginary. In Source: *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly* (Vol. 51, Issue 4).
- <sup>2</sup>Greenwald, A. G., McGhee, D. E., & Schwartz, J. L. K. (1998). Measuring individual differences in implicit cognition: The implicit association test. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1464–1480.
- <sup>3</sup>Bem, S. L. (1974). The measurement of psychological androgyny. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 42(2), 155–162.
- <sup>4</sup>Blakemore, J. E. O., & Hill, C. A. (2008). The Child Gender Socialization Scale: A measure to compare traditional and feminist parents. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 58(3-4), 192–207.

## Results

- Difference scores on the gender socialization scale differed significantly between parents of girls ( $M = 0.97$ ) and parents of boys ( $M = -1.34$ ),  $t(10) = 4.97$ ,  $p < .001$ 
  - Parents tended to endorse feminine activities more than masculine activities for children of both genders
- Parents who encouraged same-gender activities engaged in more gender-typical play for their child's gender ( $r = .63$ ,  $p = .029$ )



## Conclusion

- Parents who endorsed traditional gender stereotypes engaged in more gendered play with their children
- Parents who endorsed traditional gender stereotypes had daughters who showed greater awareness of gender stereotypes; the same pattern was not apparent for sons
- This supports the possibility that parents communicate gender stereotypes to children through play
- In the future, we plan to:
  - examine if parent play styles mediate a relation between parent's gender stereotypes and children's gender stereotypes
  - account for children who participated in the study more than once to examine differences in play styles and stereotypes within families

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