

Background

- Prior studies have found different play styles in mothers and fathers (Cabrera et al., 2017; Lindsay and Mize, 2001; Tamis-LeMonda & Bornstein, 1991)
 - Mothers tend to do more pretend play, teaching, talking about emotions
 - Fathers tend to do more physical play, acting like age-mates
 - Why do these differences exist?
- Identification with stereotypical gender roles may influence play styles more than biological sex
- Parents who take on more childcare responsibilities (traditionally the mothers) may view play as an opportunity to teach and guide children. Parents who take on fewer childcare responsibilities (traditionally the fathers) may view play as a time to have fun and bond with their children (Biehle & Mickelson, 2012; Renk et al., 2003)

Method

Participants (so far):

- 13 children (11 girls; $M_{age} = 43.37$ months; Range = 36.6-55.9)
 - 20 parent/child dyads (13 with mother, 7 with father)
- High SES sample (Average annual income = \$116K, 80% of parents held graduate degrees)



Method:

- Recorded 15-minute naturalistic play observations over video chat (Three-boxes task)
- Coded in 15-second intervals separately for parent/child play and parent talk variables
- Calculated proportion of codable intervals that were coded as each play/talk type

	Play Frequency (M, Range)	Talk Frequency (M, Range)
Construction	.40 (0 - .95)	Educational .24 (.07 - .58)
Functional	.09 (0 - .38)	Emotional .21 (0 - .38)
Silly	.03 (0 - .22)	Directing .06 (0 - .17)
Symbolic	.25 (0 - .63)	Scaffolding .17 (.02 - .67)
Rough & tumble	.00 (0 - 0)	Behavior regulation .23 (.03 - .64)
Reading	.16 (0 - .52)	

Parents completed two surveys:

- Who does what? (Cowan & Cowan, 1990)
 - Assesses division of childcare labor between partners using a Likert scale from 1 to 5
 - Higher numbers indicate a greater reported share of the labor
- Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974)
 - Assesses identification with gender-stereotyped traits using a Likert scale from 1 to 7

	Women	Men	Overall
WDW*** ($\alpha = .90$)	3.54 (0.38)	2.58 (0.43)	3.20 (0.61)
BSRI: masculine* ($\alpha = .89$)	4.30 (0.60)	5.02 (0.72)	4.55 (0.71)
BSRI: feminine ($\alpha = .82$)	4.94 (0.53)	5.05 (0.66)	4.98 (0.57)
BSRI: difference (f - m)	0.65 (0.90)	0.03 (1.13)	0.43 (1.00)

Men vs. women: * $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$

References

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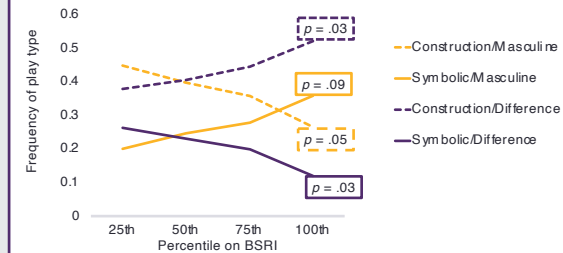
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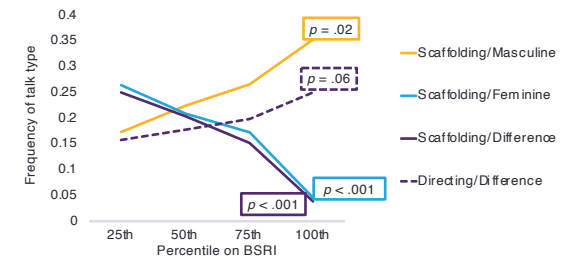
Results

- Parent gender and division of labor did not significantly predict the frequency of any play or talk variables.



- Parents who rated themselves higher on masculine traits engaged in more symbolic play and less construction play.
- Parents with a stronger feminine identification (higher BSRI diff. score) engaged in less symbolic and more construction play.

- Parents who rated themselves higher on masculine traits engaged in more scaffolding.
- Parents who rated themselves higher on feminine traits engaged in less scaffolding.
- Parents with a stronger feminine identification (higher BSRI diff. score) engaged in less scaffolding and more directing.



Discussion and Future Directions

- Our results supported our prediction that gender role identification would be more closely related to play styles than gender itself. However, our prediction that childcare labor would relate to play styles was not supported.
- Surprisingly, we found that aspects of play that have been associated with mothers in the past (symbolic play, scaffolding) were more likely among parents who identified more strongly with masculine traits.
- This may reflect demographic differences. Past research has often focused on low-income samples; our sample was high income and highly educated.
- Our goal is to collect a larger sample, including more boys, more fathers and more families where both parents participate. This will enable us to look at how the dynamic within a family relates to play styles.

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