

Parental Gender Beliefs and Attitudes Involving Child's Toy Play

From birth, children acquire the first set of social and emotional skills from parents. Despite children are born with sex differences, their gender identities stem from early years of socialization. Development of gender identities has been a topic of interests over the years, with many findings suggesting parental gender beliefs play a huge role in forming our gender identities. A study examining how a child's level of gender-typed knowledge is related to the child's family structure found that children raised by single mothers had less gender-typed knowledge and had more of an androgynous view during play time (Hupp, Smith, Coleman, and Brunell, 2010). However, our previous lab data showed single-mother households had children who tended to have stricter gender play rather than androgynous gender play. This study is thus designed to further examine parental beliefs and attitudes in relation to child's gender development and beyond. Specifically, the present study aims to explore parental beliefs and attitudes in endorsing gender related behaviors and toys in relation to the sex of their child. The data for this study is being collected from preschool programs in the Southeastern United States through a larger intervention program promoting social competence. Over 50 parents with children ages of 3-5 years old filled out a parental survey. The survey consists of a wide range of behavioral items for parents to endorse whether they are comfortable for their child to engage in. Parental explicit attitudes about what toys they would purchase for their children are compared with their implicit attitude about what toys they are comfortable for their children to play with. It is expected that mothers of boys are more restrictive about what toys they would purchase and allow their sons to play with than mothers of girls. Results and implications will be shared at the conference.