

Background

- Play is a context in which parents may communicate their ideas about gender roles to their children
- Mothers and fathers tend to engage in different styles of play with their children¹, and parents have different perceptions of play for their daughters vs. their sons²
- Parents with stronger gender stereotypes are more likely to encourage gender-typical toys for their children³
- **We hypothesize that parents who identify with and hold stronger gender-stereotyped beliefs will play differently with their children, thereby influencing the children's own gender stereotypes**

Method

Participants

- N = 19 parent/child dyads ($M_{\text{child age}} = 40.5$ months, Range: 35.7-49.1)
 - 6 children participated with both their mother and father
- 68% White, 11% Asian, 21% more than one race
- Median household annual income = \$120K (Range: \$49K-\$350K)

Parent/Child Play

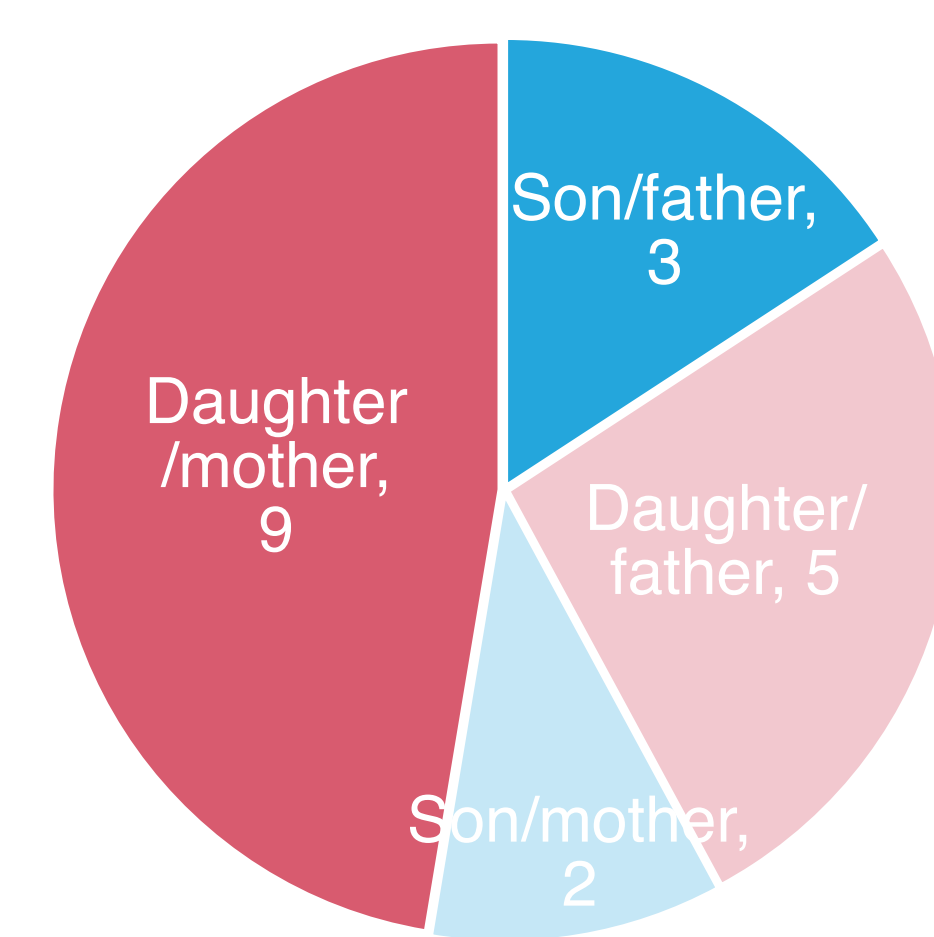
- 15-minute unstructured play session with toys that were traditionally feminine, traditionally masculine, and neutral
- Coded the time that children and parents spent playing with each type of toy
- *Parent play score* = time parents played with toys typical for child's gender – time parents played with toys atypical for child's gender

Parents' Gender Beliefs

- *The Implicit Associations Test*⁴
 - Assesses implicit gender biases (women/home, men/career)
- *The Bem Sex-Role Inventory*⁵
 - Assesses identification with gender-stereotyped traits using a 1 to 7 Likert scale
- *Gender Socialization Scale*⁶
 - Assesses likelihood of parents encouraging gender-typed activities for children
- For all three measures, calculated a difference score between same-gender stereotypes and opposite-gender stereotypes
 - Positive scores indicate alignment with traditional gender stereotypes. Negative scores indicate alignment with counter-stereotypical views.

Children's Gender Beliefs

- Children sorted 15 pictures of toys, objects, and occupations (5 traditionally feminine, 5 traditionally masculine, 5 neutral)
- Positive scores mean more gender-stereotypical sorting



Sample items from the GSS

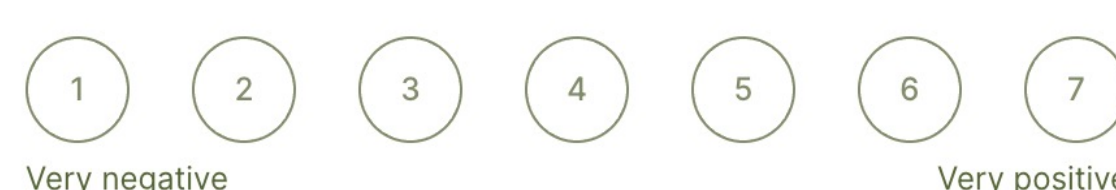
Child Activities

Below are several activities in which your child might engage now or in the future. Indicate how you would feel about your child doing these things, on the scale from "very negative" to "very positive". There are no right or wrong answers, only opinions.

Playing with a toy kitchen set

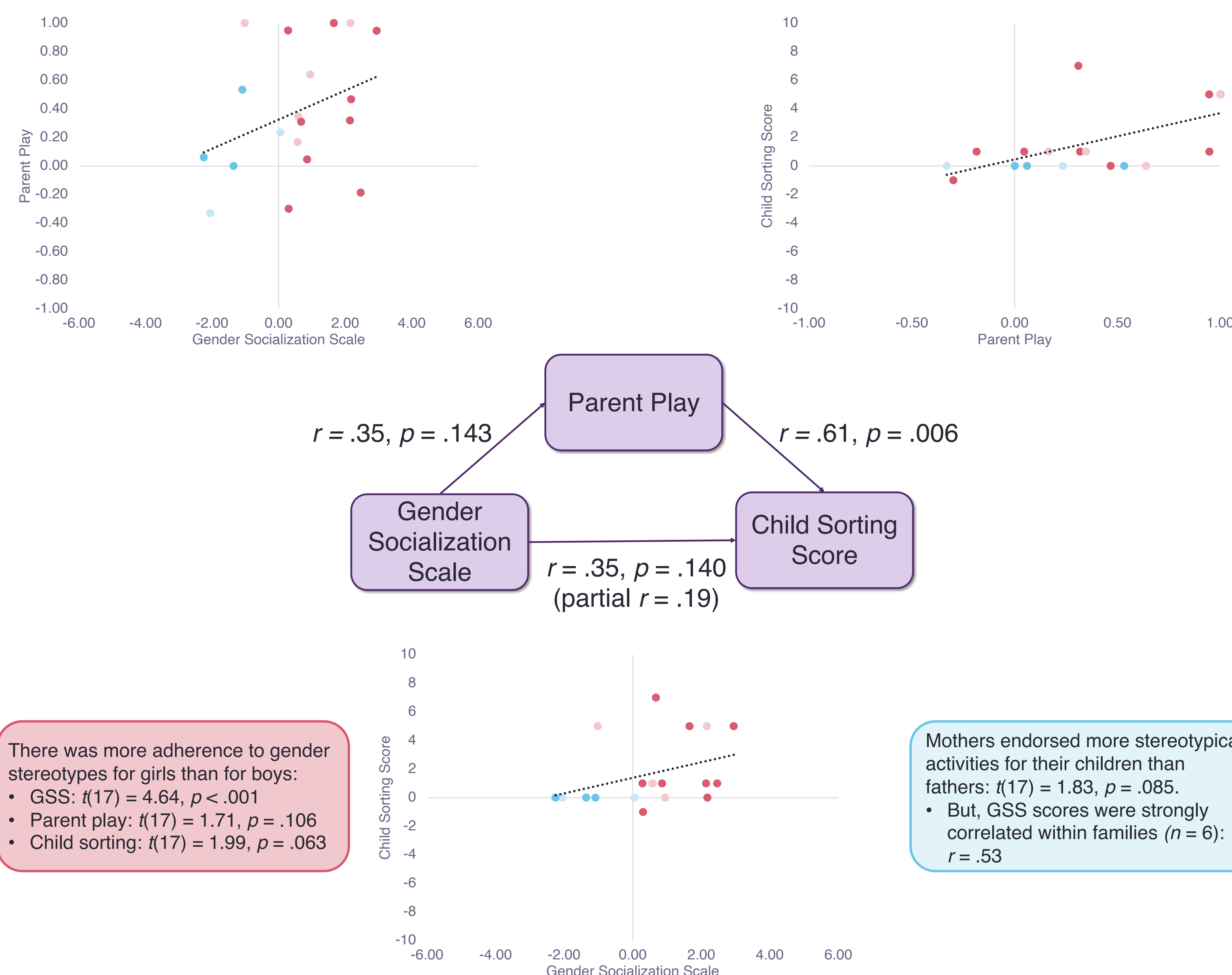


Playing with G.I. Joes



Results

Preliminary results are consistent with a mediation model



There was more adherence to gender stereotypes for girls than for boys:

- GSS: $t(17) = 4.64, p < .001$
- Parent play: $t(17) = 1.71, p = .106$
- Child sorting: $t(17) = 1.99, p = .063$

Mothers endorsed more stereotypical activities for their children than fathers: $t(17) = 1.83, p = .085$.

- But, GSS scores were strongly correlated within families ($n = 6$): $r = .53$

Discussion and Future Directions

- Initial data are consistent with our mediation hypothesis, but more data is needed to confirm.
- Contrary to expectations, girls and mothers held stronger gender stereotypes than boys and fathers.
- Future directions
 - Recruit a larger sample
 - Compare within families
 - Examine parent engagement during child play

References

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