

The Relationship Between Child's Toy Selection and Anger: Then and Now

Female expression of anger has long been stigmatized due to historically, and still presently, strict gender roles. Anger is considered a “masculine” emotion, and women have often been discouraged from crossing that gender line. In a study done by Salerno et al. (2018), undergraduate students rated the effectiveness of both male and female attorneys who presented identical closing arguments. When the closing argument was spoken in an angry tone, the male attorneys were seen as significantly more effective than the women attorneys. When the students described the attorneys after the closing arguments, women were described with words such as “obnoxious”, while men were described with words such as “powerful”. Gender roles have placed women at a disadvantage. This topic has become increasingly prevalent today in part due to the “#MeToo” movement and the changing concept of gender becoming more fluid. In this present study, more than 100 children selected from a preschool in the Southeastern US, in a larger study, are presented with an array of toys; representing stereotypically masculine traits (i.e. truck), feminine traits (i.e. cooking set) and gender-neutral traits (i.e. ball). Children first choice of toy selection from a box is documented and coded for its representation of gender traits. Subsequently, teachers were given Social Competence and Behavior Evaluations (SCBE) to assess the same children, with Angry-Tolerant is the focus of examination. The relationship between early sets of data in from 2004 cohort to our most recent 2018 cohort are being analyzed. The selection of stereotypically feminine toys are expected to correspond with lower perceived anger as rated by teachers. Furthermore, we predict that this relationship is stronger today compared with the data collected in earlier years. Final results and implications will be shared at the conference.