

Do infants prefer dolls of the same sex?

Sex-typical toy preferences in Poland and in the UK.

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What do we know?

- Girls tend to favour toys such as dolls whereas boys prefer transportation toys
- These sex differences are large ($d = 2.0$) and can be observed as early as 12 months of age

What problems can be seen?

- The same set of toys was used in the majority of studies:
 - Dolls with distinctively female characteristics
 - Vehicles
- Infants show preferences for pictures and movement patterns of others of the same sex → In psychological studies, girls may show a preference towards dolls, because the dolls are of their own sex
- Research showing gender-related toy preferences has been largely confined to North America and Western Europe

What did we do?

Objectives:

- To test toy preferences of infant girls and boys while including a novel toy – a male doll
- To investigate infants' preferences in a new cultural context – Poland; and to compare these findings with those from a new sample of British participants

Participants:

 29 Polish infants (15 boys, 14 girls)

 33 British infants (16 boys, 17 girls)

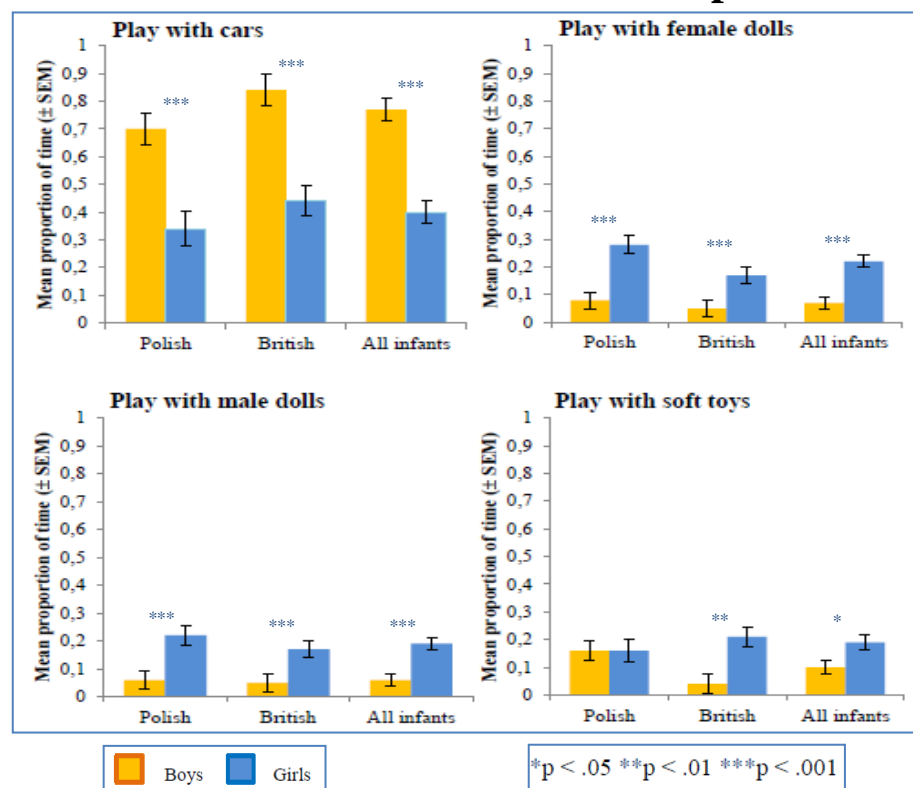
- Age: 14-24 months
- Infants participated with one of their parents; British and Polish parents did not differ in terms of marital status and age, but British parents had a higher level of education

Procedure:

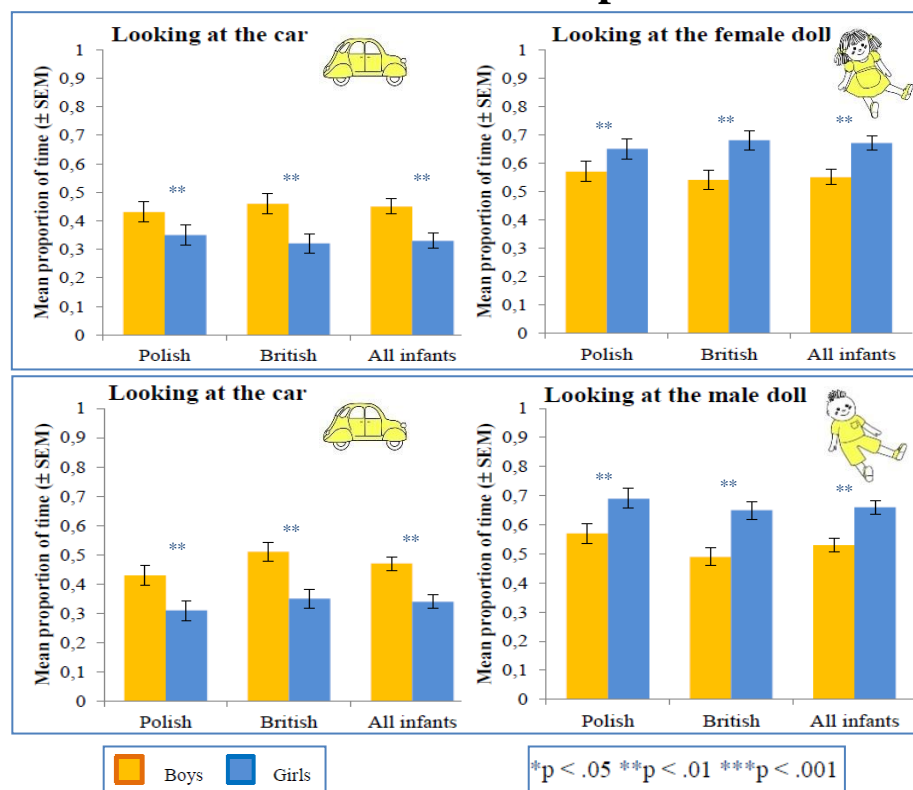
- Free play session
 - Infant placed on a blanket in a circle made of toys (2 female dolls, 2 male dolls, 2 cars, 2 soft toys)
 - Infant recorded with two cameras for up to 10 minutes
- Visual preference task
 - Types of stimuli: female rag doll, male rag doll, car
 - 24 pairs of stimuli presented on a white screen (170cm x 120cm) in a randomised order
 - Infants' face recorded during the display (camera hidden in a box)



What did we find? → Behavioural preferences



What did we find? → Visual preferences



What can we conclude?

- Girls preferred male and female dolls more than boys did
- Girls' preference for dolls cannot be explained by the stimuli being female rather than male dolls
- Sex differences in toy preferences appear to be similar in an Eastern and a Western European setting