Developmental Changes in Children’s Interests during the Preschool Years
Molly A. Schlesinger & Rebekah A. Richert, University of California, Riverside

Introduction

• Developmental changes in preschool-aged children’s interest in digital compared to tradition play has implications for learning and social development1,2,3.
• The current research examined age and gender differences for children’s play and activity preferences.

Participants

• 595 children ages 3-5 (M = 3.95, SD = .644), 48.9% male
• Ethnicity & Race: 10.3% European American, 49.1% Latino American/Hispanic, 7.1% African American/Black, 2.5% Asian American, 4.9% reported multiple ethnicities or races, 25.3% did not report

Measures

Scale -1 (Does not like) 0 (Unsure) +1 (Likes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Expressive Activities</td>
<td>.692 (.807)</td>
<td>makes up songs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>.831 (.326)</td>
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Discussion

• Gender differences: girls prefer non-digital and boys prefer digital play; consistent with traditional preferences4.
• Age differences: Interest in expressive activities decrease with age and pretend increases, peaking at age 4, a critical period for cognitive development.
• Pretend friends. Children without pretend friends like digital activities more than children with pretend friends; this was the reverse for all other measures.
• These results have implications for understanding how children develop preferences, especially for activities linked to controversy, such as media consumption during early childhood.

Differences for children with pretend friends

![Graph showing differences for children with pretend friends](image)

Gender Differences

![Graph showing gender differences](image)

Age Differences

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References


Support

Support for this research was generously provided by:
• UCR Academic Senate Committee on Research Grant
• The National Science Foundation Collaborative Research Grant DRL-1252146
• Social Sciences Research Council: New Directions in Study of Prepar Grant

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