

**Title:** SEX-TYPING AND DEVELOPMENT IN AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE.

**Language:** English.

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This study is based on data which has been collected within the Family Support and Development project (FAST), a longitudinal investigation of 128 families with small children. The project has focused on environmental circumstances and their impacts on child development.

This study is concerned with sex-typed patterns in the children's developmental process, and how these are related to environmental conditions and social and cognitive development. The purpose was a) to define factors in the socialization process which were likely to affect the development of sex-typed behaviour and b) to analyze the relation between sex-typed behaviour and the development of social and cognitive competence. The general assumptions were that a) social background factors (maternal educational level, family type and child-care arrangement) in interaction with sex of child would influence the degree of sex-typed developmental patterns and b) variations in the development of social and cognitive competence would be related to the degree of sex-typed developmental patterns.

Data were collected on three occasions: at the ages of 4-5, 6-7 and 7-8. The instruments consisted of rating scales, child observations, child interviews, standardized test scales. A variable was constructed which was used to classify the children according to sex-typed behaviour.

**Results:** Sex-differences were found which correspond to the traditional male-female stereotypes. The congruence between female oriented behaviour and expectations from pre-school and school settings was pointed out. Concerning social background and sex-typed behavioural pattern it was found that children, boys as well as girls, with high educated mothers were female oriented in their behaviour, while children with low educated mothers were more male oriented. Boys showed more variations in degree of sex-typed behaviour than girls. The most sex-typed boys were found among boys with low educated mothers and boys from single parent families, the least sex-typed boys had high educated mothers. Low sex-typed boys had more positive relations to other children. Highly sex-typed girls were more responsible, performed better in reading and writing and were more able to concentrate on school-work than low sex-typed girls. It was concluded that definitions of male and female behaviour are strongly related to environmental contexts and that children during their developmental processes are confronted with a considerable amount of variations concerning expectations on appropriate behaviour, which also include expectations on sex-appropriate behaviour.