

Gender Development



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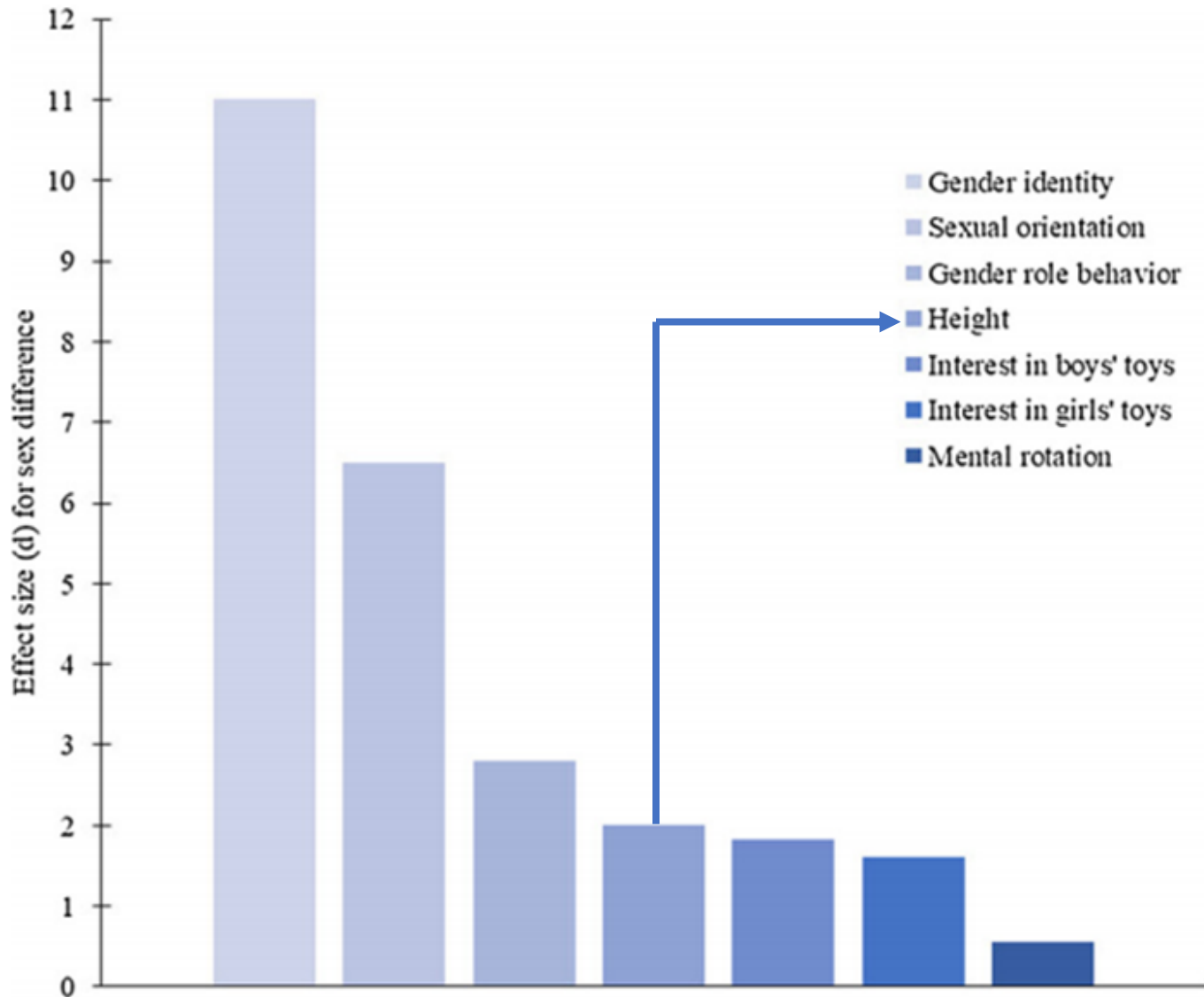
PhD, University of Cambridge

BSc, University College London



Evaluating Average Differences

- Cohen's d
 - 0.8 = Large
 - 0.5 = Medium
 - 0.2 = Small



Today - Focusing on Play

- Early Emerging
- Enormous and Persistent Differences
- Foundation of Human Gender Development?

Lecture Structure

- Measuring Play
- Early Influences
- Long-Term Implications

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Measuring Play

-Visual Preference in Infants-



Measuring Play

-Observed Behaviour in Children-



Measuring Play

-Self-Reported Preferences in Children-

- Ask children to rate different toys and activities
 - E.G. “dressing up games”, “sports competition”, “reading or watching things about fairy tales and princesses”



Measuring Play

-Parent-Reported Behaviour in Children-

- Standardised Questionnaire (e.g., The Pre-School Activities Inventory; PSAI)
 - E.G. “Plays with trains, cars or airplanes”, “Plays house”, “Enjoys rough-and-tumble play”, “Plays with girls”
 - 5-point Likert scale (from “Never” to “Very Often”)

Lecture Structure

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Early Influences on Play

-Early Androgen Exposure-

Kung et al. (2024)

- Early androgen exposure -> behavioural sexual differentiation
- Critical windows: Prenatal and early postnatal periods
- Numerous animal experiments show organisational influences
- Some evidence suggesting organisational influences on children's play

Early Influences on Play -Social Mechanisms-

Kung (2022)

- Learning from a range of social agents
- Modelling and reinforcement
- Creating/sustaining/changing through social mechanisms

Early Influences on Play -Cognition-

Kung (2022)

- Gender identity, labels, and schemas
- Learning gender appropriateness
- Matching with own identity
- Behaviour guided by gender cognition

Lecture Structure

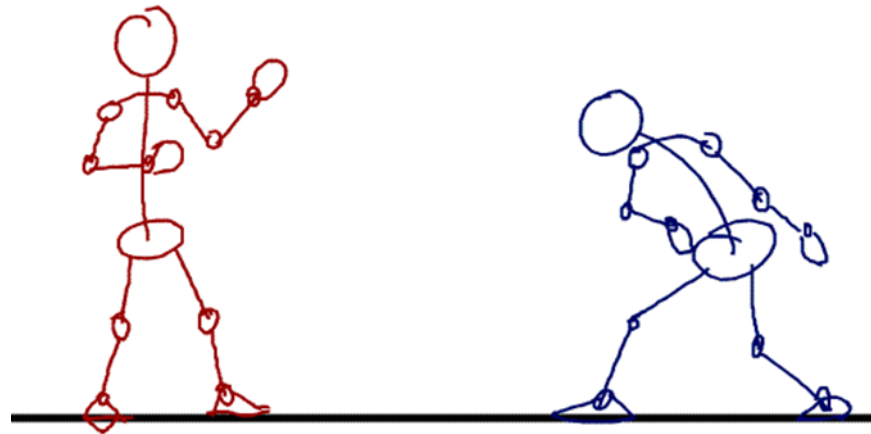
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Long-Term Implications of Play

-Link to Physical Aggression-

- **Kung et al. (2018)** – Childhood gender-related play longitudinally predicts physical aggression in adolescence



Long-Term Implications of Play -Link to Occupational Interests-

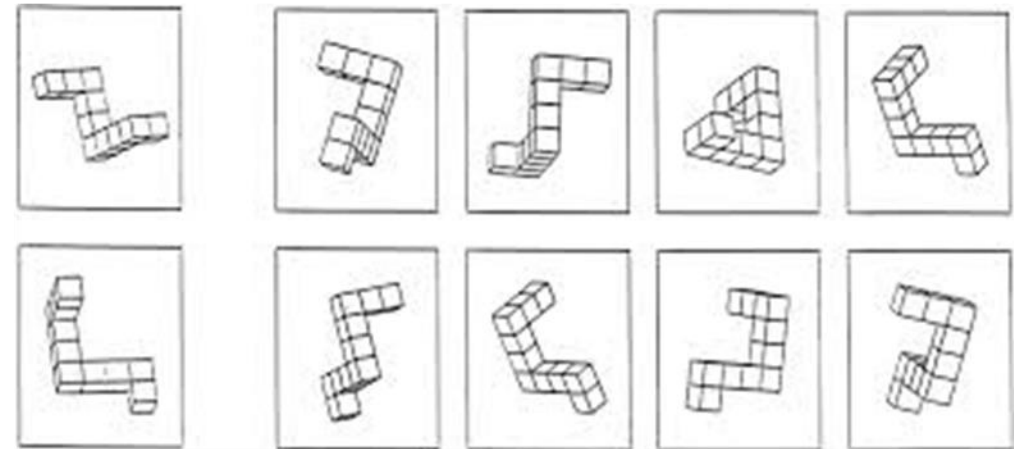
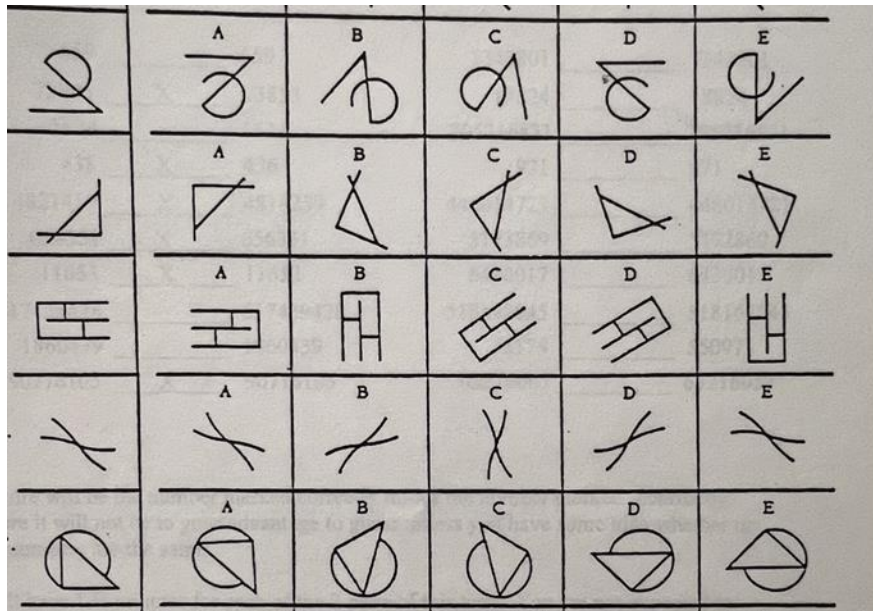
- **Kung (2021)** - Childhood gender-related play longitudinally predicts occupational interests in adolescence



Long-Term Implications of Play

-Link to Spatial Skills-

- **Kung et al. (under review)** - Childhood gender-related play longitudinally predicts mental rotation performance in adolescence



Summary

- Biological, social, and cognitive factors contribute to differences in boys' and girls' play
- Play is not just something fun for boys and girls to do but has long-term implications for different aspects of their development