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The Influence of Sibling Gender Configuration on Maternal Attitudes about Gender Socialization and Children's Gender Development

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Abstract

Mothers of 3- to 11-year-olds were less accepting of daughters’ play and more accepting of sons’ play with feminine toys and activities when the family had children of both genders. In turn, children with siblings of the other gender had less stereotyped interests and traits than children who did not.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of mothers (M age = 31.59; SD = 5.13) of 3- to 11-year-old children (51 M; 68 F; M age = 6.92 years; SD = 2.74), reporting on one or more target children.

Measures

Pre-School Activities Inventory (PSAI; Golombok & Rust, 1993), a measure of children’s masculine and feminine interests and traits. We also examined masculine and feminine interests separately (PSAI-M & PSAI-F).

The Child Gender Socialization Scale (CGSS; Blakemore & Hill, 2008): Measures parents’ attitudes about gender-related behaviors in their children.

Occupations, Activities & Traits Scales (OAT; Liben & Bigler, 2002): Measures parents’ gender-related attitudes and preferences for activities and occupations.

Procedure

Parents completed the PSAI followed by the CGSS, and finally the OAT. Measures were completed online.

Results

Mothers’ own masculine and feminine interests and attitudes (OAT scales) were not different in the various family types.

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Conclusions

1. Mothers’ own interests and adult gender-related attitudes were not different in different family types.
2. Mothers’ attitudes about masculine play were not different in families with different child gender configurations, and neither were children’s masculine characteristics.
3. BUT, when families contained children of both genders, girls had less feminine and boys had more feminine interests and traits, and mothers’ attitudes reflected a similar pattern.