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Does my daughter like math? Relations between parent and child math attitudes and beliefs

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Abstract

As early as age six, girls report higher math anxiety than boys, and children of both genders begin to endorse the stereotype that males are better at math than females. However, very few studies have examined the emergence of math attitudes in childhood, or the role parents may play in their transmission. The present study is the first to investigate the concordance of multiple implicit and explicit math attitudes and beliefs between 6- and 10-year-old children and their parents. Data from implicit association tasks (IATs) reveal that both parents and their children have implicit associations between math and difficulty, but only parents significantly associated math with males. Notably, males (fathers and sons) were more likely than females (mothers and daughters) to identify as someone who likes math (instead of reading), suggesting gender differences in academic preferences emerge early and remain consistent throughout adulthood. Critically, we provide the first evidence that both mothers' and fathers' attitudes about math relate to a range of math attitudes and beliefs held by their children, particularly their daughters. Results suggest that girls may be especially sensitive to