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Gender and mathematics at play: parents' constructions of their preschoolers mathematical capabilities.

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Summary: Using sociocultural learning theories and feminist post structural theories of gender, we explore how a diverse group of parents ($n = 28$) construct their preschool sons and daughters as capable/not capable of doing mathematics. Our study examines the interactions between parents and children while playing an age appropriate board game. Following an analysis of the parents' words and gestures, we found that on average, parents modeled mathematical procedures equally for daughters and sons, prompted their sons to complete mathematical procedures almost twice as frequently as they prompted their daughters, and enacted executive autonomy much more frequently with their daughters than with their sons. In other words, in the context of playing this board game the parents in this study appeared to construct their preschool sons and daughters as having a fairly equal potential for understanding math but constructed their sons as currently capable mathematicians more often than they constructed their preschool daughters this way. Implications for educators and researchers are considered.

Classification: C61 D21

Keywords: sociocultural theories of learning; feminist poststructural theories of gender; parent-child interactions; preschool children (3-5 years); empirical investigations; research