

Do mothers favor daughters and fathers favor sons?

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/Public Domain

Imagine a parent who is shopping and has a few moments to spare before heading home. If the parent has both a son and daughter but time

to buy only one surprise gift, who will receive the gift?

Findings from a new study available online in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* suggest that a mother would have a high likelihood of buying something for her daughter, while a father would choose a gift for his son. While more than 90 percent of people in the study said they treat [children](#) of different genders equally, researchers discovered that most parents unwittingly favor the child of the same sex when it comes to spending money.

"We found that the effect was very robust in four different experiments and across cultures," says researcher Kristina Durante, a professor of marketing at Rutgers Business School in New Jersey. "The bias toward investing in same-gendered children occurs because women identify more with and see themselves in their [daughters](#), and the same goes for men and sons."

In one experiment, the researchers recruited participants who had a child of each gender. The participants were told that they would receive a treasury bond of \$25 for one of their children, and they could choose who received it. The majority of mothers chose to give the bond to their daughters, while the fathers preferred their sons. To test if the gender bias occurred in a different culture, the researchers conducted the experiment among parents from India, and the results were the same.

Participants also favored children of their own gender when deciding who would receive more in the family will. The researchers conducted another experiment at a zoo where participants with a child of each gender were given one raffle ticket after filling out a survey. They had to decide whether to enter the raffle for a girl's back-to-school backpack or a boy's backpack. Mothers chose the girl's backpack 75 percent of the time and fathers picked the boy's backpack 87 percent of the time.

The findings have implications for children as they are growing up in different families, Durante says. If mothers make most of the decisions about a family's spending, then daughters may receive more resources such as healthcare, inheritance and investments than their brothers. If fathers are in control of the family finances, then sons may be more likely to benefit in the long-run. This unconscious [gender](#) bias may also have ramifications far beyond the family, Durante says.

"If a woman is responsible for promotion decisions in the workplace, female employees may be more likely to benefit. The reverse may be true if men are in charge of such decisions," says Durante. "If this [gender bias](#) influences decisions related to charitable giving, college savings, promotions and politics, then it can have profound implications and is something we can potentially correct going forward," says Durante.

This study [will appear](#) in the *Journal of Consumer Psychology* in January, 2018.

More information: [www.journals.elsevier.com/jour ... nd-more-on-daughters](http://www.journals.elsevier.com/jour...nd-more-on-daughters)

Provided by Society for Consumer Psychology

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