

Women favor daughters, men favor sons despite socioeconomic status

November 13 2018



Credit: George Hodan/public domain

A Rutgers-led experimental study found that women prefer and invest more in daughters, while men favor and invest more in their sons.

The study of [gender biases](#) appears in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

"Our research may help people be better [parents](#) if we become aware of

our [unconscious biases](#) towards different kinds of children," said senior author Lee Cronk, a professor in the Department of Anthropology at Rutgers University-New Brunswick.

Researchers conducted an online experiment to test the 1973 Trivers-Willard hypothesis, which predicted that wealthy parents would prefer and invest in sons, while poor parents would invest and favor daughters.

Participants completed a task that, based on previous research, fosters feelings of relative poverty or relative wealth. Then the researchers measured participants' preferences for daughters and sons in several ways. They included an opportunity to pledge money to a charity that largely supports girls or boys; a test that discretely measures participants' attitudes; gauging preferences for the sex of children they might adopt; and assessing the sex ratio they would prefer in their own offspring, according to Cronk, who works in the School of Arts and Sciences.

While the experiment yielded little support for the Trivers-Willard hypothesis, the participants' sex had a strong impact on what sexes they preferred for their offspring. Females strongly preferred daughters and investing in them, while males had a weaker though still significant preference for sons.

"These results may also have implications for rising income inequality and intergenerational social mobility," the study says. "A recent study using the tax records of 40 million Americans between 1996 and 2012 showed that the single best predictor of lower intergenerational social mobility was having a single or divorced parent. Because most of these single parents are females, and females prefer [daughters](#), we might expect even lower reduced intergenerational mobility for the sons of these single mothers."

More information: Robert Lynch et al, Sexual conflict and the Trivers-

Willard hypothesis: Females prefer daughters and males prefer sons, *Scientific Reports* (2018). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-018-33650-1](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-33650-1)

Provided by Rutgers University

Citation: Women favor daughters, men favor sons despite socioeconomic status (2018, November 13) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-11-women-favor-daughters-men-sons.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.