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Gender Stereotypes Within Children's Play

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For my research I will study the interaction habits of boys and girls. I wanted to watch these children and observe this behavior: to see if girls interacted with girls more than boys, and boys would play with boys more than girls. Bigler & Liben and Fagot & Hagan's Journal articles support my hypothesis of the children interacting with their own sex more. But Shirley and Heywood would disagree and support the idea that there is no difference. I wanted to study this because I think that it would be interesting to find that children really do play with their own sex. These findings would be interesting to me because my childhood was the exact opposite of what I am hypothesizing.

Method

Participants

For my study, I will use thirty children, fifteen boys and fifteen girls. All of the children will be between the ages of two and five. I plan on recruiting my participants from personal contacts, and also by letting local daycares and asking them to let parents know about the study, maybe by putting up flyers or simply by telling them.

Materials

Materials needed for this study include various types of toys. In particular, I will use toys stereotypical for girls and boys such as dolls and toy cars. I will also use toys that may not be stereotypical of either gender, such as coloring books. I will also be using a one way mirror looking into a playroom with three large tables with five chairs around each table. There will also be a play mat for the children to play on the floor. There will

also be four different toy boxes placed in each corner of the room filled with the toys as mentioned above. Other materials that I will be using in this research will be a pen and paper so I can write down my observations.

Procedure

For this research I plan on scheduling three play sessions in one week, on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. The children will arrive at 4 p.m. and last until 5 p.m. When the children arrive, that parents will be asked to wait in another room. The procedure will be explained to the parents, but not to the children, because I want the kids to act and play as naturally as possible. They will just be told to play with the other children. Then I will simply observe the children for the hour and write down my observations. When the hour is over, the children will reunite with their parents I will tell the parents that I will be contacting them via e-mail or regular mail about the results of my experiment, if they are interested in the results.

Implications

For this experiment, I would assume that even though my hypothesis will be supported, boys and girls will probably interact at some point in time. These results could be beneficial to parents wanting their children to meet other kids and play with them. Parents may have been unaware before.

References

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