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A Perspective-Taking Intervention to Decrease Gender-Based Exclusion

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Abstract

Young children preferentially include same-gender peers in their play, restricting learning opportunities and reinforcing stereotypical gender roles (Ruble et al., 2006). Two studies aimed to reduce 4-6-year-old childrens gender-based exclusion through a perspective-taking intervention. Study 1 (N=98, M=5.38 years) evaluated whether inviting participants to consider peers exclusion-related emotions would lead participants to subsequently include (new) other-gender peers. Participants in the intervention condition were more socially inclusive from pre- to post-test than were participants in a control condition ($p < 0.05$). Study 2 (N=101, M=5.37 years) replicated the results from Study 1 ($p < 0.05$) and demonstrated that changes in childrens inclusive behaviors from pre- to post-test were not driven by social desirability concerns; children became more inclusive whether or not an experimenter watched them make their choices ($p < 0.75$). Ongoing research is testing whether the effectiveness of the present intervention is amplified when children can see (rather than infer) excluded childrens emotional reactions.