Do They Know What I Like?
Comparing Child Enjoyment and Parent Perceptions of Child Enjoyment
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RESEARCH QUESTIONS
How well do parents’ perceptions of child enjoyment of activities match children’s reported enjoyment? Is this match similar to that of parents’ and children’s perceptions of competence?

BACKGROUND

- In Eccles et al.’s expectancy-value model, parents play important roles in children’s beliefs and choices.
- Parents may choose and encourage participation in activities they value, think their child is good at, and believe their child likes.
- Parent perceptions of child competence have been widely studied (e.g., Simpkins et al., 2015).
- We know much less about how parents perceive children’s interest and enjoyment.
- We compare these perceptions in two samples of children using two different instruments of parent perceptions.

METHOD & SAMPLE

- Student survey within the ST Math software
- Children took survey on college campus or at museums
- Child ranked enjoyment of activities from 1 (best) to 9 (worst)
- Child also rated “how good” they were on each activity from one to five stars

RESULTS--SAMPLE 1
Parents were asked to identify the one activity their child enjoyed the most. Difference measure calculated by subtracting child ranking from 1 if parent ranked subject highest.

- N=125; comparisons for enjoyment limited to those whose parents indicated activity was “most enjoyed.”
- t-tests compared activity ratings from zero and compared ratings by boys and girls.
- On average, parent-perceived favorite activity was ranked between second and third by the child; this did not differ by child gender when all subjects were considered together.

RESULTS--SAMPLE 2
Parents completed 1-9 ranking directly comparable to children’s ranking. Child rankings subtracted from parents’ for differences measures.

CONCLUSIONS

- There are differences in how parents and children perceive child’s enjoyment of and competence in different activities.
- Parents think girls enjoy computers more than girls report enjoying computers, but this was not replicated with a different measure of parent perception.
- Parents rate child competence higher than child self-ratings for most activities. Gender differences small and not replicable across samples.
- This work is exploratory. Measure and sample limitations should temper conclusions.

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