

Do They Know What I Like?

Comparing Child Enjoyment and Parent Perceptions of Child Enjoyment

Teomara Rutherford and Allison Liu

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?

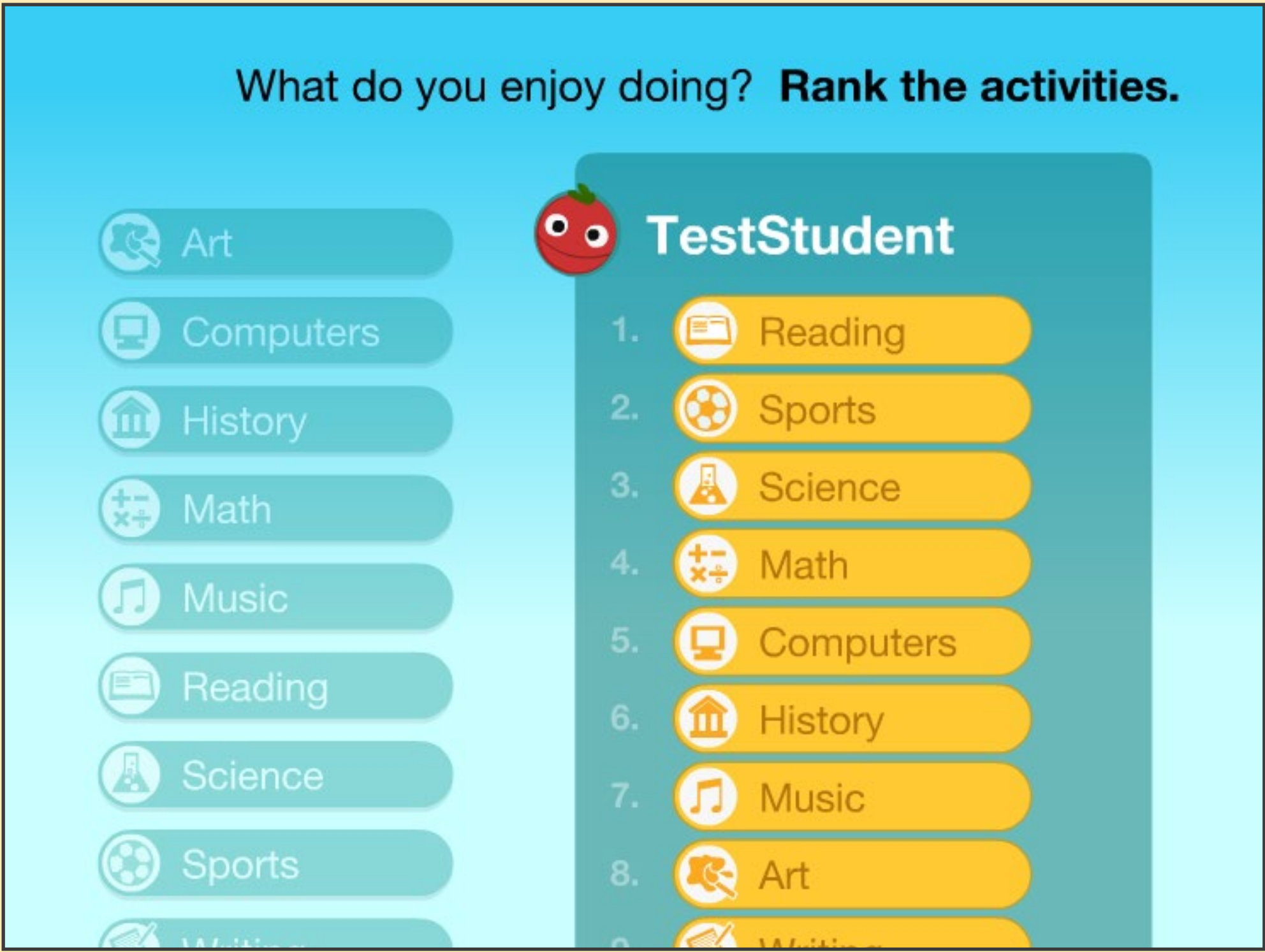
BACKGROUND

- 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

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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.

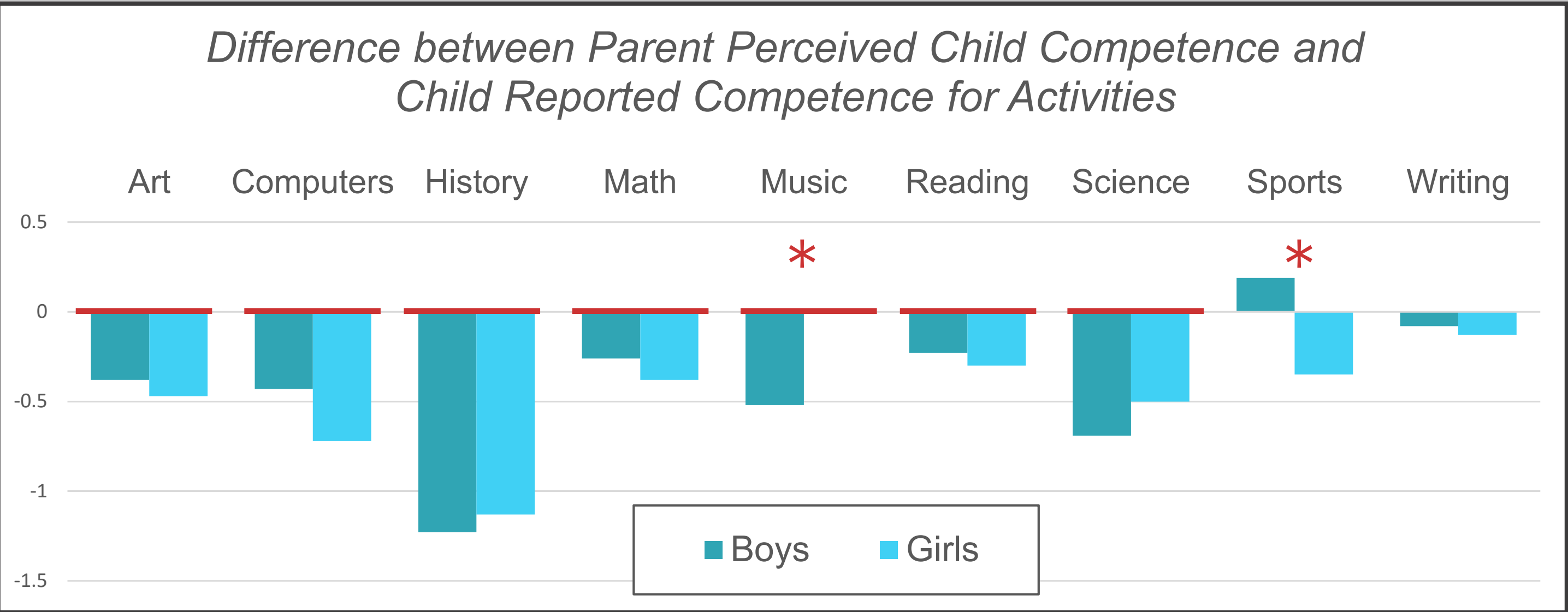
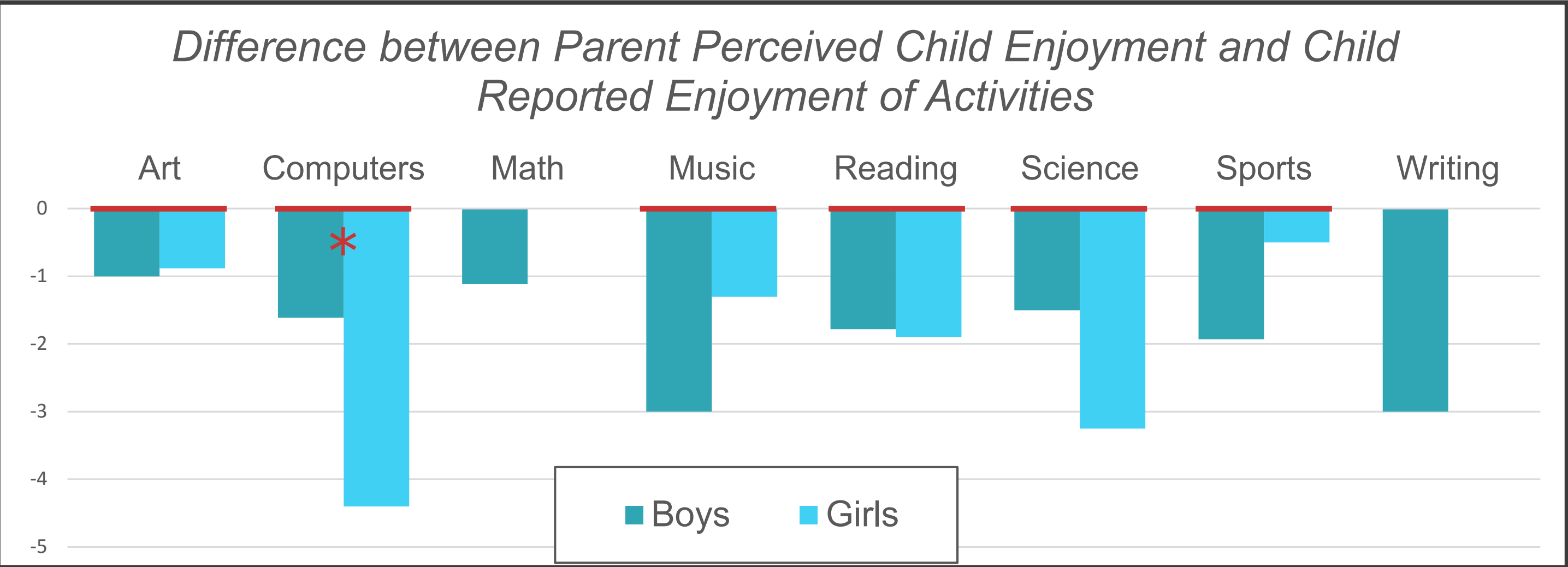
Circle the **one** you think your child enjoys the most:

Art	Computers	History	Math	Music	Reading	Science	Sports	Writing
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Rank the following activities based on how much your child enjoys each activity from 1 (most enjoys) to 9 (least enjoys):

Art	Math	Science
Computers	Music	Sports
History	Reading	Writing

- N=125; comparisons for enjoyment limited to those whose parents indicated activity was “most enjoyed.” [CLICK TO SEE TABLES FOR FULL DETAILS.](#)
- 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.



In all graphs, red lines indicate values statistically significantly different from zero. Asterisks indicate values for boys different from girls. $p < .05$.

Parent perceptions of child competence measured the same in both sample. Differences calculated by subtracting child value from parent value.

Negative values indicate parent perceives child as more competent than child reports being.

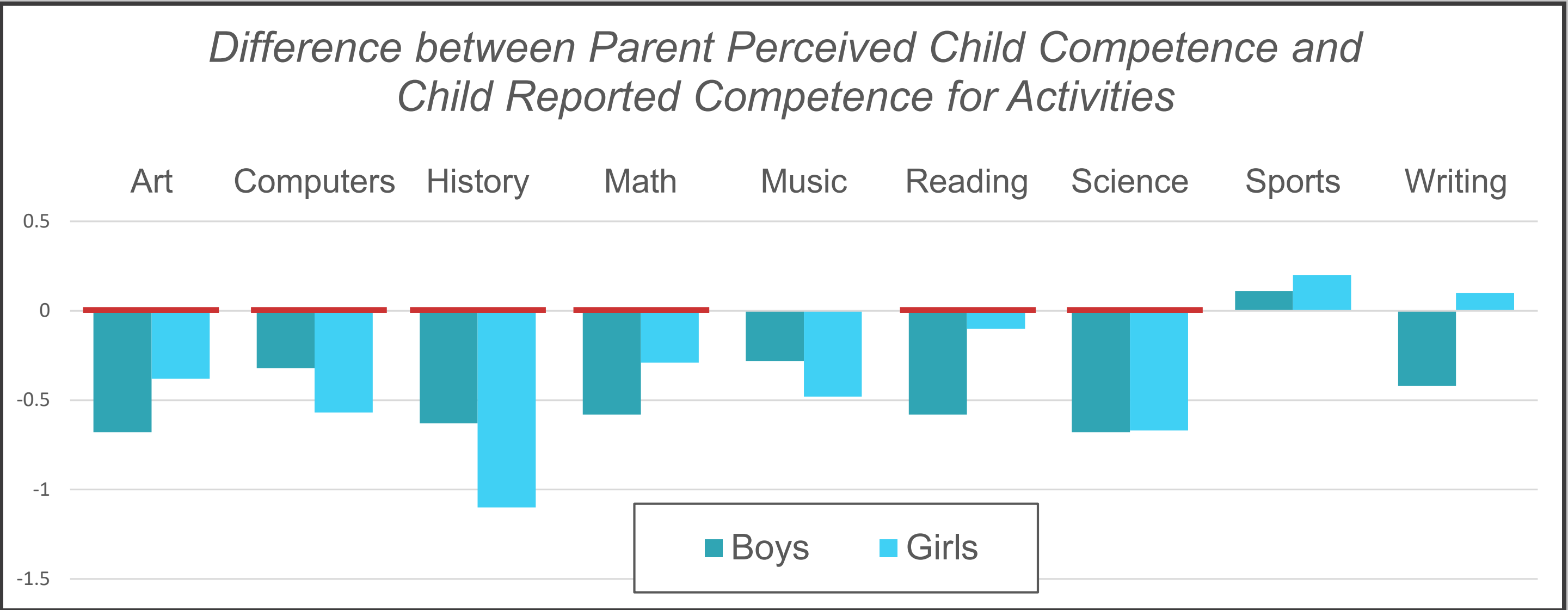
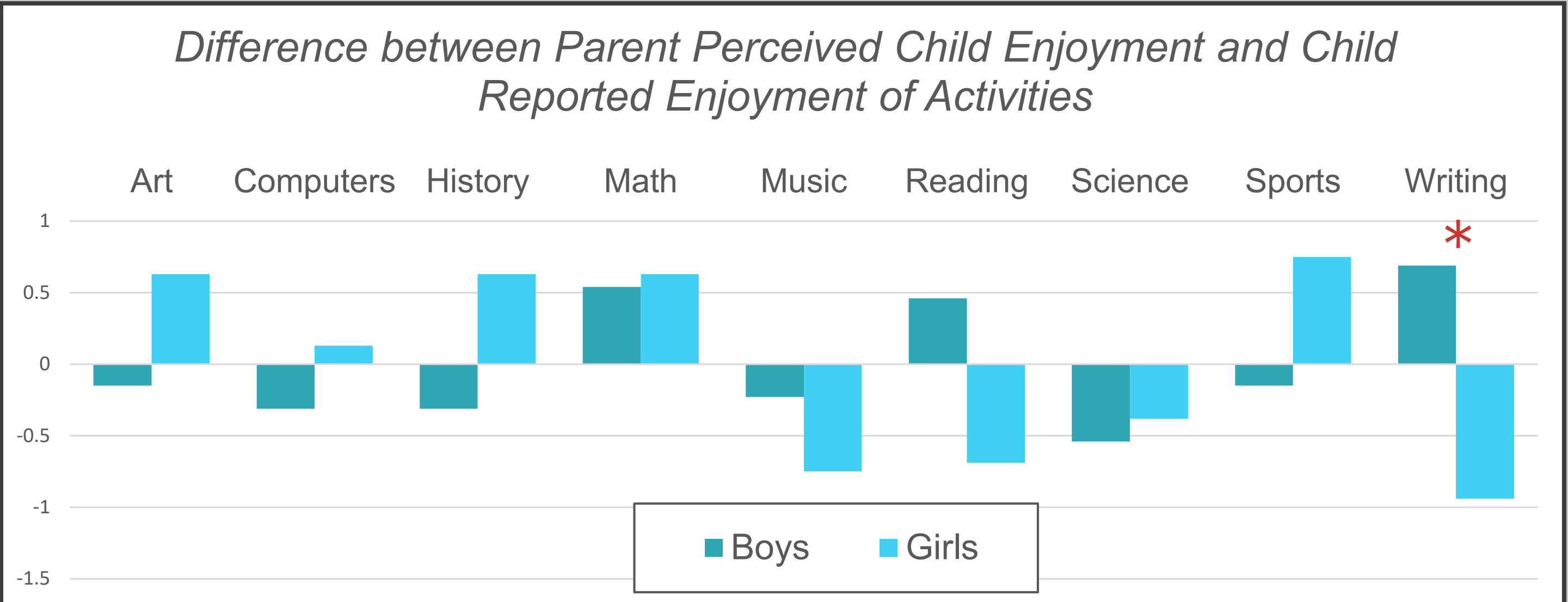
How good is your child at each of the following activities?

Art	Computers
History	Math
Music	Reading
Science	Sports
Writing	

RESULTS--SAMPLE 2

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

- N=40; comparisons for enjoyment and competence limited to those who had data on each measure.
- t-tests compared activity ratings from zero and compared ratings by boys and girls
- Ave. of the absolute value of difference = .38 for boys and .61 for girls.



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.

Parent perceptions of child enjoyment appear distinct from perceptions of child competence.

This can have implications for activity choices and provided encouragement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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teomara@udel.edu
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