Bleeker, M. M. (2001, April). Relations between parent attitudes, parent activities, and children's self-perceptions of ability. Poster presentation at the meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD), Minneapolis, MN.

Previous research has established the importance of parents' attitudes in influencing their children's self-perceptions of ability (e.g., Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990; Jacobs, Finken, Griffen, & Wright, 1998). In fact, Eccles and her colleagues have found that parents' beliefs about their children's abilities have a stronger influence on children's self-perceptions of ability than children's own grades in school (Eccles et al., 1983; Jacobs and Eccles, 1992). Although the previous research indicates that parents' beliefs have a powerful impact on their children's self-perceptions, less is known about the ways parents communicate their perceptions to their children. Eccles' model (Eccles et al., 1983) suggests that parents' involvement in and support of activities will affect children's self-perceptions of ability in domains such as mathematics, reading, sports, and the arts. The goals of the current study were to examine relations between parents' attitudes, their own involvement in activities, and their children's self-perceptions of ability across 4 achievement domains. Differences due to age of child, sex of parent and sex of child were also investigated.

Method. Data reported here were collected from 761 children and their parents as part of the Childhood and Beyond (CAB) longitudinal study conducted to investigate the development of children's self-perceptions, task values, and activity choices. The analyses reported here are based on items drawn from the surveys parents completed during the second year of the study that assessed their values, beliefs about their children, beliefs about themselves, and activities with their children in the domains of mathematics, reading, sports, and arts. These responses were related to children's reported perceptions of their abilities in the same domains during Year 1 and Year 3 of the study. Scales used in these analyses were created by averaging across 2-5 items (all alphas > .60).

Results and Discussion. For descriptive purposes, we first examined differences in parent attitudes and activities due to parent's sex and child's grade in school. Separate ANOVA's were computed for each of the four domains. As predicted, mothers and fathers differed in the value they placed on domains, with mothers valuing mathematics, reading, and arts significantly more than fathers. Mothers also believed that their children had significantly greater ability in mathematics, sports, and arts as compared to fathers. Fathers' and mothers' reports of their own skills and time in activities and their encouragement of children's activities differed significantly and followed traditional gender-typed patterns, with mothers more involved in reading and art and fathers more involved in sports and mathematics. In addition to these differences, several activities that parents participated in with their children varied by child's grade in school. Specifically, during earlier grades, parents were significantly more likely to engage in reading and art activities with their children, as compared to later grades. However, parents' levels of art encouragement significantly increased as children progressed through school.

We expected parent attitudes, their encouragement of their children, and their involvement in activities to influence their children's self-perceptions of ability in each achievement domain. To test this, regression analyses were conducted separately for each of the four domains and separately for mothers and fathers. We controlled for major pre-existing factors (i.e., sex of child, grade in school, and prior self-perceptions of ability at Year 1) that we knew would be related to the child's self-perceptions of ability by entering them as the first block. Parents' perceptions of the domain (importance and child's ability) were entered as the second block, followed by parents' perceptions of efficacy; parents' perceived skill level in certain activities and time spent; and parents' activities with children and encouragement.

As expected based on earlier research, children's self-perceptions of ability at Year 1 and parents' perceptions of children's ability at Year 2 both predicted children's self-perceptions of ability at Year 3 for all four domains. In each model, children who had high self-perceptions of ability at Year 1, reported similar perceptions at year 3. Similarly, parental perceptions of high ability were related to similar perceptions by their children one year later. Parents' activities predicted children's self-perceptions in all

domains, except mathematics. As expected, both mothers and fathers who reported the highest levels of family art activities had children with the highest self-perceptions of art ability. Contrary to our expectations, fathers who spent the least time in reading activities had children with the highest reading self-perceptions and mothers who spent the least time in sports activities had children who reported the highest levels of sports ability. These findings suggest that parents become involved in some activities only when they believe that their children need help.

The results of this study support the previous research, indicating parents' prior perceptions of their children's abilities are the best predictors of children's self-perceptions of abilities. In addition, these findings extend previous studies and support the Eccles' model by showing that the activities that parents choose to engage in with their children and their support for children's activity involvement are related to children's self-perceptions several years later. The role of parent gender, child gender, and potential reasons for domain differences also will be discussed.

Relations Between Parent Attitudes, Parent Activities, and Children's Self-Perceptions of Ability

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Literature Review

Previous research has established the importance of parents' attitudes in influencing their children's self-perceptions of ability (e.g., Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990; Jacobs, Finken, Griffen, & Wright, 1998). In fact, Eccles and her colleagues have found that parents' beliefs about their children's abilities have a stronger influence on children's self-perceptions of ability than children's own grades in school (Eccles et al., 1983; Jacobs and Eccles, 1992). Although the previous research indicates that parents' beliefs have a powerful impact on their children's self-perceptions, less is known about the ways parents communicate their perceptions to their children.

Eccles' model (Eccles et al., 1983) suggests that parents' involvement in and support of activities will affect children's self-perceptions of ability in domains such as mathematics, reading, sports, and the arts. The goals of the current study were to examine relations between parents' attitudes, their own involvement in activities, and their children's self-perceptions of ability across 4 achievement domains. Differences due to age of child, sex of parent and sex of child were also investigated.

Research Questions:

- Do Mothers and Fathers differ in the types of activities they participate in with their children?
- Do parents' perceptions of their children influence children's self-perceptions?
- Do the activities parents participate in with their children affect their child's self-perceptions?

Sample

Data reported here were collected from 761 children and their parents as part of the Childhood and Beyond (CAB) longitudinal study conducted to investigate the development of children's self-perceptions, task values, and activity choices. The sample is from four-middle class school districts in the Upper Midwest, and subjects are primarily White.

Sample size for each cohort, grade of participants at each year of data collection

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Cohort 1 (N=250)	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3
Cohort 2 (N=278)	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4
Cohort 3 (N=233)	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6

Measures

- The analyses reported are based on items drawn from the surveys parents completed during the second year of the study that assessed their values, beliefs about their children, beliefs about themselves, and activities with their children in the domains of mathematics, reading, sports, and arts. These responses were related to children's reported perceptions of their abilities in the same domains during Year 1 and Year 3 of the study. Scales used in these analyses were created by averaging across 2-5 items (all alphas > .60).

Scales

Parent Values: Math, Reading, Sports, Arts (alphas ranged from .63-.87; 3 items)
Example item: How useful do you think Math will be to this child?

Parent Beliefs about Child: Math, Reading, Sports, Arts(alphas: .85-.95; 2-5 items)
Example item: How good is this child at Math?

Parent Beliefs & Activities: Math, Reading, Art (alphas: .59-.87; 2-4 items)
Example item: How confident do you feel about your ability to help your child in math?

Parent Activities with Child: Sports, Reading, Arts (alphas: .75-.97; 2 items)
Example item: How much are you involved with this child's art projects?

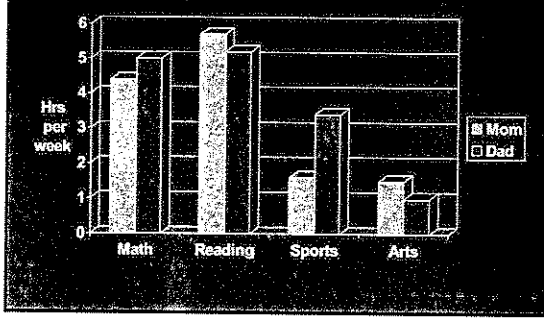
Children's Self-perceptions: Math, Reading, Sports, Arts (alphas: .74-.89; 3 items)
Example item: How good at Math are you?

Results

For descriptive purposes, I first examined differences in parent attitudes and activities due to parent's sex and child's grade in school. Separate ANOVA's were computed for each of the four domains.

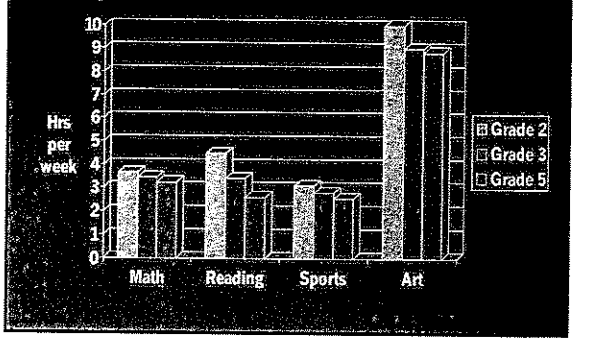
Next, I expected that parent attitudes, their encouragement of their children, and their involvement in activities influence their children's self-perceptions of ability in each achievement domain. To test this, regression analyses were conducted separately for each of the four domains and separately for mothers and fathers.

Mom's and Dad's personal activities



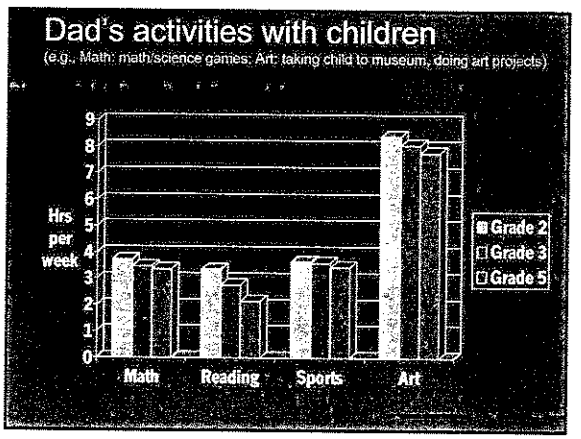
Mom's activities with children

(e.g., Math: math/science games; Art: taking child to museum, doing art projects)



Dad's activities with children

(e.g., Math: math/science games; Art: taking child to museum, doing art projects)



Predictors of children's self-perceptions of math ability at Year 3: Beta weights for mothers & fathers (from & Year 2)

	MOM	DAD
Block 1		
Child Sex	.11*	-.11+
Child Grade in school	.01	.01
Child's self-perception of math ability (at year 1)	.21***	.21***
Block 2		
Parent's gender role beliefs	-.02	.01
Block 3		
Parent's importance of math	-.01	.00
Parent's importance of science	-.04	.15+
Parent's importance of computers	.11+	-.01
Parent's perception of child's math ability	.36***	.38***
Block 4		
Parent's math self-efficacy	.12+	-.11
Parent's perceived math influence	-.10	.14+
Block 5		
Parent's math activities	.05	-.01
Block 6		
Parent's math activities with child	-.01	-.07
Parent's computer encouragement	.03	.01

Predictors of children's self-perceptions of reading ability at Year 3: Beta weights for mothers & fathers (from Year 2)

	MOM	DAD
Block 1		
Child Sex	-.02	-.05
Child Grade in school	-.01	-.01
Child's self-perception of reading ability (at year 1)	.16***	.26***
Block 2		
Parent's gender role beliefs	-.02	-.07
Block 3		
Parent's importance of reading	-.06	.08
Parent's perception of child's reading ability	.31***	.33***
Block 4		
Parent's reading self-efficacy	.02	-.12+
Parent's perceived reading influence	.01	-.00
Block 5		
Parent's reading activities	-.00	-.17**
Parent's description of reading skills	-.01	.12+
Block 6		
Parent's reading activities with child	-.04	-.06
Parent's reading encouragement	.11+	.07

Predictors of children's self-perceptions of sports ability at Year 3: Beta weights for mothers & fathers (from Year 2)

	MOM	DAD
Block 1		
Child Sex	.18***	.21***
Child Grade in school	-.10+	-.10+
Child's self-perception of sports ability (from year 1)	.29***	.28***
Block 2		
Parent's gender role beliefs	.03	.01
Block 3		
Parent's importance of sports	.05	-.03
Parent's perception of child's sports ability	.35***	.35***
Block 4		
Parent's sports self-efficacy	-.02	-.04
Parent's self-perception of sports ability	.09	.15**
Block 5		
Parent's sports activities	.09	-.02
Block 6		
Parent's sports activities with child	-.10+	.07
Parent's sports encouragement	.05	.09

Predictors of children's self-perceptions of arts ability at Year 3: Beta weights for mothers & fathers (from Year 2)

	MOM	DAD
Block 1		
Child Sex	.01	-.05
Child Grade in school	.03	-.09
Child's self-perception of music ability (at year 1)	.19**	.18**
Block 2		
Parent's gender role beliefs	.04	.02
Block 3		
Parent's music value	.15*	.02
Parent's perception of child's arts ability	-.05	-.04
Parent's perception of child's music ability	.13+	.16+
Block 4		
Parent's self-perception of arts ability	-.00	-.03
Block 5		
Parent's arts activities	-.06	.13*
Block 6		
Parent's arts/music activities with child	.12*	.09
Parent's arts/music encouragement	.17*	.36***

Research Findings

- Mothers and Fathers reports of their own skills, time in activities and encouragement of children's activities differed significantly and followed traditional gender-typed patterns. Additionally, several activities that parents participated in with their children varied by child's grade in school. Specifically, during earlier grades, parents were significantly more likely to engage in reading and art activities with their children, as compared to later grades.
- As predicted, parents' perceptions of children's ability at Year 2 predicted children's self-perceptions of ability at Year 3 for all four domains. Also, in each model, children who had high self-perceptions of ability at Year 1, reported similar perceptions at year 3.
- Both mothers and fathers who reported the highest levels of family art activities had children with the highest self-perceptions of art ability. However, fathers who spent the least time in reading activities had children with the highest reading self-perceptions, and mothers who spent the least time in sports activities had children who reported the highest levels of sports ability. These findings suggest that parents become involved in some activities only when they believe that their children need help.

Conclusions

The results of this study support the previous research, indicating parents' prior perceptions of their children's abilities are the best predictors of children's self-perceptions of abilities. In addition, these findings extend previous studies and support the Eccles' model by showing that the activities that parents choose to engage in with their children and their support for children's activity involvement are related to children's self-perceptions several years later.