ABSTRACT

FACTORS DETERMINING STRUCTURED ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION IN RURAL

YOUTH: INTERNAL CAPACITIES, MICROSYSTEM SUPPORT, AND CONSTRAINT

NEGOTIATION

by

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December 2013

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Rural youth often face challenges to recreation participation that differ from their urban counterparts. Fewer opportunities for exposure to positive adults, and a lack of resources and programs limit opportunities to positively impact youth in their free time. While these are commonly identified interpersonal and structural constraints, the research literature on adolescent intrapersonal constraints tends to focus on preferences or psychological variables related to aversion as opposed to limitations due to development. Resilience traits or protective factors can be thought of as internal capacities to support development and contribute to one's quality of life. The purpose of this study was to examine how the internal capacities of youth and the presence of external supports from parents and other adults predicted participation in high yield, structured recreation activities among rural youth. Secondary purposes of this study were to understand the constraints to participating in structured activities and identify the negotiation strategies youth use to initiate and continue participation in structured activities. Guided by Ecological Systems Theory (EST), the study examined relationships with parents and

other adults through a concurrent mixed-model design using survey data and focus groups with youth aged 11-16 years. Findings support the proposition that the internal capacities of youth related positively to the availability of high expectations from and caring relationships with parents. Goals and aspirations of youth, an internal capacity, and high expectations from adults also predicted youth participation in structured activities. In focus groups, youth cited distance from opportunities and family obligations as the primary reasons for not participating in sports and after school activities. Constraint negotiation to initiate and continue activities came primarily from the availability of parental resources, making conscious choices to avoid boredom, and the influence and expectations of others. Recommendations for practice focuses on asset mapping and developing recreational programs housed at local community centers.

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NEGOTIATION

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by

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Introduction

The positive youth development framework views adolescence as a period of tremendous growth, and assesses the pathways that motivate, direct and ensure the successful transition to adulthood (Larson 2000). While school provides academic preparation and connection to an institution that promotes pro-social values and behaviors, the free time outside of school is considered an important opportunity to provide services to support youth in their developmental process (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2003). Approximately 60% of youths' waking hours is spent in discretionary, non-obligated free time with more than half of that time spent in unstructured, unsupervised time (Larson & Verma 1999). During early adolescence, many youth have difficulty avoiding risk or finding benefit in unstructured free time. Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) suggest that youth may not have the necessary skills or abilities to manage free time wisely to yield developmental benefits. The balance of negotiating peer pressure while attaining goals set forth by parents is often difficult for youth to manage (Caldwell & Darling, 1999). Youth who are idle in their free time are often those who cannot create meaningful leisure and experience stress and/or boredom (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005).

Many researchers believe that free time should be spent in structured, organized activities that are supervised by adults. Structured activities offer opportunities to persist through challenges over time (Larson, 2000), heighten achievement, allow youth to adopt pro-social behaviors (Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams), increase long-term educational success (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer 2003), and support conditions for acquiring networks of positive adults and peers to become a valued member of a group. Participation in structured activities is linked to higher levels of engagement and achievement within school, and lower levels of negative behaviors (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt 2003).

Youth who live in under-resourced rural areas are at a particular disadvantage because they lack opportunities for participation in structured recreational activities. Structural constraints (e.g., lack of personal resources, lack of community resources, and transportation) and interpersonal constraints (e.g., availability of and support from parents, other adults, and peers) are often cited as reasons for why youth do not participate in structured activities (Hultsman, 1993). In the past, preferences and psychological variables related to aversion (e.g., anxiety, lack of competence) often explained intrapersonal constraints for lack of participation in structured activities. However, as Caldwell and Baldwin observe, youth may be limited in their abilities and unable to use their time wisely, and often end up choosing to participate in low yield activities (e.g., t.v. viewing, video game playing, hanging out with peers). Unstructured, passive activities are bereft of these opportunities and yield little in the way of developmental benefits (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). Participation in unstructured, passive activities often occurs because youth lack the wherewithal, competence, and resources to plan and seek out activities that offer challenge and opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Constraint negotiation often depends on the availability of personal and environmental factors. Internal capacities, such as social competence, autonomy, sense of self, and sense of meaning and purpose, are theorized to eliminate some of the issues related to decision-making and constraint negotiation (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). We use the term internal capacities as a general term to consolidate literature that refers to similar individual-based strengths; specifically, these are known as the resilience traits, internal assets, and protective factors related to individual characteristics and skills (Hanson & Kim, 2007; Jessor, Turbin & Costa, 1998; Scales, 1999). Investigations of recreation constraints in adolescence have paid little attention to the internal capacities and skills needed to plan and successfully negotiate interpersonal and

structural constraints that exist for all youth, let alone those from rural communities. Given this

need, the purpose of this study was to examine how internal capacities and the presence of

external supports from parents and other adults predicted participation in high yield, structured

recreation activities among rural youth. Secondary purposes of this study were to understand the

constraints to participating in structured activities and identify the negotiation strategies youth

use to initiate and continue participation in structured activities.

Related Literature

Positive Youth Development

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is a framework for examining how youth successfully transition to adulthood. PYD occurs through supports and opportunities within youths' bio-social environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), and stresses the development of internal capacities that aid the transition to adulthood (e.g., competence, autonomy, self-efficacy, identity development). PYD is in opposition of risk-focused or deficit-based approaches, which emphasize the prevention of risks such as drug and alcohol use, criminal behavior, and precocious sex. A major tenet of PYD is that youth are assets to develop, instead of problems to fix (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003), and focuses on strengths adolescents possess, and not their deviant behaviors, stressing positive change throughout their developmental systems (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005). Pittman et al. argue that youth policy focuses largely on primary prevention or deficit-based approaches, and these are not often solutions, noting that simply being problem free does not make youth fully prepared to enter adulthood. Preparation for adulthood comes from the development of internal capacities and being capable to utilize and draw strength from external supports and opportunities for successful development. Internal capacities include the capacity for initiative, problem solving, self-efficacy, self-determination, and other strengths (Larson, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Witt & Caldwell, 2005). External supports and opportunities refer to the individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches), occasions (trips abroad or to places of significance), and activities (extracurricular activities, sports, hobbies) that foster and facilitate development (Witt & Caldwell, 2005).

Structured Activities

Throughout adolescents' wide array of daily activities, structured youth programs in the community and extracurricular activities support conditions that foster developmental benefits (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin 2003). Larson (2000) states that structured activities rich in purpose and intrinsic motivation play a vital role in promoting social and academic achievement and school engagement. Mahoney et al. (2005) describes structured activities as having scheduled meetings on a regular basis where adult supervisors set rules and goals and involve many participants who are practicing to enhance some form of skill development. Caldwell (2005a) calls these kinds of activities high yield, because youth construct experiences that lead to self-determined behavior. Leisure supports autonomous action when youths are granted the chance to express themselves and have some control of their environment (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005). Darling et al. further state that structured experiences offer youth opportunities to network and gain different resources, which may not be available otherwise.

Leisure time is context for exposing youth to both risk and opportunity (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). According to Larson and Richards (1994) the leisure context affords opportunities for autonomy, but often lacks guidance on how to manage this time. Youth are often ill-prepared or lack the capacity to direct their behaviors to support engagement and self-determination during free time (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). Larson (2000) notes that adolescents are often afforded more freedom than children, and this is potentially stressful because guidelines on how to use time in unstructured settings are often not concise or non-existent.

Rural Youth

According to Caldwell (2005b) youth who live in low resourced areas have certain disadvantages when compared to their suburban and urban counterparts. Caldwell (2005b) states that rural youth are less likely to experience leisure positively, and lack opportunities for participation in recreational activities. When considering the transition to adulthood, the lack of satisfactory resources and experiences often lead to disengagement from communities. Caldwell (2005b) further states that rural areas lack the capability to offer resources, and entire communities suffer for it, particularly youth.

In the Ley, Nelson, and Beltukova (1996) study, rural youth reported that "community leadership, stewardship, family connections, civic affairs, social responsibility, voluntary service, and close friendships," (pg. 139) did not rank high in importance to overall success in life. Rather, a high paying job was the important motivating factor to healthy adulthood (Ley et al., 1996). These findings are troubling, because stewardship and family connectedness are attitudes and experiences that are considered developmentally beneficial in the transition to adulthood. For youth in rural communities, these experiences and attitudes are essential for long-term sustainability. These experiences fulfill the mission of the positive youth development movement: to facilitate experiences that help develop problem free, fully prepared, and fully engaged young adults (Pittman et al., 2003). Lacking these values and experiences compounds an already tenuous environment for youth development.

Glendinning, Nutall, Hendry, Kloep, and Wood (2003) state that living in rural areas can inhibit young people's overall well-being and sense of identity, while Chapman and Shucksmith (1999) categorize rural youth as isolated and at an extreme disadvantage. Despite obvious disadvantages, Khattri, Riley, and Kane (1997) suggest rural youth have some advantages related

to small classroom sizes, and close ties to the community and schools. Lack of resources and limitations in services continue to limit exposure to experiences and formal class work outside the classroom. Too often, isolation and lack of characteristics within the community lead to few choices in school and services for out-of-school time.

Constraints

The leisure constraints framework was developed by Crawford and Godbey (1987), then extended by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991), and later assessed and revised by Godbey, Crawford, and Shen (2010). Leisure constraints are factors that inhibit participation in an activity (Raymore, Godbey, Crawford, & von-Eye 1993) and are useful to researchers when explaining leisure choices and determining influences on leisure participation and non-participation (Jackson, 2005). Crawford and Godbey (1987) conceptualized three types of constraints that are used today. Interpersonal constraints involve others and the relationships that arise through interaction and/or participation with them. Intrapersonal constraints are those barriers emanating from youth themselves (e.g., inhibitions, avoidance mechanisms). Finally, structural constraints are constraints that prohibit participation such as transportation or lack of money to participate. Hultsman (1993) contends the need to study constraints among adolescents as these factors influence future participation or lack thereof in leisure pursuits.

Meeks and Mauldin (1990) state that all youth have constraints on their leisure which include, money, and environmental factors, such as locations and where activities take place due to a lack of transportation. Understanding constraints in adolescence is important because these often prevent participation in activities that lead to developmental benefits (Shannon, Robertson, Morrison, & Werner 2009). Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) explain that these activities are most beneficial when their selection is for interest development and activity participation. They go on

to explain that youth have to be aware of the opportunities around them, capable of choosing meaningful activities, and possess the means for participation. Caldwell and Baldwin further contend that interest must be more than a passing desire; rather, youth need to experiment with the activity to determine if the interest is there to participate, and then gradually progress through the experience as they become more capable.

Internal Capacities

Internal capacities refer to individual qualities that relate to good health and quality of life (Resnick, 2005). Internal capacities help youth make positive choices, develop a sense of purpose, and successfully transition to adulthood. The literature sometimes refers to these capacities as resilience traits or internal assets (Hanson & Kim, 2007; Search Institute, 1997). Caldwell & Baldwin (2005) include internal capacities and developmental markers as individual-specific factors that contribute to the choices adolescents make in leisure. Among these capacities and developmental markers are autonomy, competence, identity, intimacy, and sexuality. Over time, researchers have linked several internal capacities or assets that contribute to development by helping youth negotiate environmental risks and challenges, while successfully engaging in pursuits that lead to positive development. Fraser-Thomas, Cote, and Deakin (2005) state that when developmental assets are present in youth, their ability to thrive will enhance, resulting in more success in school and engaged in their communities. Over time this gets youth to act as positive leaders, and encourages them to volunteer and become civically active.

Internal Capacities and Constraints Negotiation

Caldwell (2005a) describes how young people's gradually increasing, autonomous behavior often leaves youth unable to manage this free time. The challenge for youth is

experiencing free time in meaningful ways. Often times, youth are unable to use their time

wisely and participate in unstructured, low yield activities (e.g., t.v. viewing, video game

playing, hanging out with peers), which yield little or no developmental benefits (Caldwell,

2005a). Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) looked at constraints adolescents face and how

perceptions depend on personal and environmental factors, and this aids in negotiation of those

constraints. These authors further note that achieving developmental markers (e.g., initiative,

competence, sexuality, intimacy, identity) and positive relations with parents affect perceived

constraints by adolescents.   While not considered in the broader constraints literature, these

developmental markers or internal capacities can be classified as intrapersonal constraints if

these capacities do not exist or are lacking. Unlike traditional intrapersonal constraints that focus

on a person's inner psyche, lacking internal capacities may result in poor choices or preferences

for activities that are attainable. In other words, the capacity to negotiate constraints might not

exist, and therefore adolescents choose or elect to engage in unstructured experiences, because

they lack the wherewithal to develop strategies or identify activities that are more fulfilling.

Objectives of the Study

When considering the leisure constraint literature, a gap exists in understanding the role of developmental markers and internal capacities in youth. When considering adolescence, if youth have not crossed specific developmental markers, they might not be able to employ negotiation strategies to counter the constraints they face in free time. We sought to understand how the presence or absence of internal capacities related to participation in available structured activities. Further, we intended to identify how rural youth negotiated constraints to structured activity participation, and to what extent parents and other adults supported youths' participation in these experiences. This study was designed to test hypotheses that supported the study purpose, while exploring research questions that focused on the unique experiences related to constraints negotiation by rural youth.

Hypotheses

H1: Caring relationships with and high expectations from adults (measures of adult support) will positively relate to measures of internal capacity for youth.

H2: Measures of internal capacity (i.e., goals and aspirations, problem solving, self awareness, self-efficacy, and empathy) will positively relate to structured activity participation.

H3: Measures of adult support will positively relate to structured activity participation.

H4: The relationship between measures of adult support and structured activity participation will be mediated through measures of internal capacity.

Research Questions

RQ1: What constraints to structured activity participation do youth identify?

RQ2: What negotiation strategies and supports do rural youth utilize to initiate participation in desired structured activities?

RQ3: What negotiation strategies and supports do rural youth utilize to continue participation in desired structured activities?

Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine how youths' internal capacities and support of parents and other adults related to participation in structured activities. This study also sought to examine how youth negotiated constraints to facilitate structured activity participation and worked to identify the key factors that aid in this process. The procedures of the study explored these objectives are represented in the following sections of this paper: a) research design, b) study location, c) quantitative procedures, and d) qualitative procedures.

Research Design

Guided by Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) the study examined these relationships through survey research using a cross-sectional design. Focus groups were conducted to look at negotiation strategies youth employed to achieve leisure opportunities. This research used secondary data from the ongoing evaluation of a 21st Century Community Learning Center program in Hyde County, NC. A concurrent mixed model design was employed (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). A concurrent mixed model design in this case was advantageous because the phenomena under investigation were not well studied in a rural population, and the access and ease of administration aided collecting information during a critical time in the program's development. The quantitative model allowed for the collection of standardized numerical data, which were examined through statistical analysis. The use of a survey method provided ease in data collection, and also allowed exploring several phenomena at once. The qualitative model used focus groups to provide rich data, and allowed the primary researcher to transcribe interviews and gain in depth understanding of youth's internal capacities and the negotiation strategies used to achieve activity participation. Concurrent mixed model designs allow for the integration of methods to support study findings and provides explanation

that goes beyond the limitations of each design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This particular design uses a theoretical framework drawn from positive youth development within EST and constraints theory. In this type of design, quantitative and qualitative findings are interpreted within the substantive framework (i.e., guiding theory) that provides structure to the overall design (Evans, Coon & Yoom, 2011).

Study Location

The population was sampled from Hyde County, North Carolina, which is located in rural Northeast North Carolina. As of 2009, Hyde County's total population was 5,810 residents (US Census Bureau, 2010). Hyde County is designated as a Tier 1 county in North Carolina (NC Department of Commerce, 2010), which identifies the state's most economically distressed counties. The Hyde County school system has two campuses with four schools and serves an average of 600 students. Data were collected from students attending the Mattamuskeet campus, which is located on the mainland of Hyde County. Mattamuskeet has one elementary school (grades K-5; 210 students), a middle school (grades 6-8; 106 students), and a high school (grades 9-12; 167 students). Mattamuskeet campus is a Title 1 school, which means that it receives federal funds to support the hiring of teachers and the provision of services to target students who are behind academically or at-risk from dropping out (NC Public Schools, 2011a).

Quantitative Procedures

The quantitative portion of the study used data previously collected by the administrators at the Mattamuskeet School through an electronic survey. The school district collects information from students throughout the year, and these data sets serve to inform program improvement and document proximal outcomes for the evaluation of the 21st Century program. School officials administered an online questionnaire containing sections on demographics and

items measuring school connectedness, parent involvement in school, caring relationships with adults, high expectations from adults, perceptions of competence in academic skills, free time activity participation, resilience traits, and external supports as measured by the California Healthy Kids Survey. These data were collected for students in grades 6-11, and were administered in the school's computer lab. Students completed the questionnaire during their health and physical education classes in grades 6-9, and in their English classes in grades 10-11. School administrators selected this method to capture all students at each grade level. Furthermore, students could be tracked if absences occurred.

As part of the process, the school assigned identification numbers to students and maintained a list that matches the name of the student to the identification number. This identification number was assigned for the purpose of matching and linking data collected over the life of the 21st Century grant. Only school administrators had access to this list. School administrators provided a dataset to the research team without unique identifying information, such as names, birth dates, addresses, and telephone numbers. The questionnaire collected demographic information about gender, race, age in years, and grade level for each student. Prior to data acquisition, the Office of Human Research Integrity and Compliance at East Carolina University (ECU-IRB) reviewed the protocol for collecting and transferring data from Hyde County Schools to this study. This review assured that proper human protections procedures were in place before data collection. A copy the ECU-IRB approval is contained within Appendix A.

Instrumentation

The key variables assessed in this study were adolescent participation in structured and unstructured activities, high expectations and caring from parents and other adults, youth's internal capacities, feelings of constraints, and constraints to recreation participation. Adolescent activity behavior was assessed using an inventory that presents a set of typical free time activities and asks youth to identify how many hours per week they are engaged in each activity (Caldwell, Baldwin, Walls, & Smith 2003; Watts, Caldwell, & Gillard, 2008). Items from the activity behavior inventory form specific factors that assess involvement in sports and exercise, unsupervised "hanging out" with friends, extracurricular activities, and passive home-based activities (Watts & Caldwell 2008). Responses were coded as '1' = Hardly Ever to Never to '5' = Daily. For the purposes of this study, we focused on participation in sports, community-based extracurricular activities (e.g., participation in 4-H, church-based recreation), after school programs, instrument lessons, and hobbies. These items were used to form a summed index of structured activity participation.

We assessed constraints to recreation participation using a leisure ranking order designed by Hultsman (1992). These questions look at reasons for not joining an activity, and reasons for not continuing an activity already started. School officials were interested in the constraints facing youth who wanted to participate in sports or after school program activities, but did not. Using Hultsman's system we asked students to rank the three most prevalent reasons for not participating in these activities.

In addition to this ranking system, students were asked the extent to which they agreed with the statements, "I get to play organized sports as often as I want" and "I get to go to the after school program as often as I want." Answers ranged from '1' = not at all true to '5'

absolutely true with lower scores reflecting constraint and higher scores reflecting a lack of constraint.

Internal capacities (i.e., goals and aspirations, problem solving, self awareness, self-efficacy, and empathy) and supports (i.e., high expectations and caring) from parents and other adults were measured using scales from the California Healthy Kids Survey (Hanson & Kim, 2007). This tool has a long history of use with both local and state educational agencies and researchers, and is used to assess resiliency factors, both internal and external, as they correlate to positive youth development (Hanson & Kim, 2007). Youth answered questions on a four-point continuum from '1' = not at all true to '4' = very much true. A copy of the study questionnaire is located in Appendix B. A list of items with corresponding scales can be found in Appendix C.

Analysis

Once data were released from Hyde County Schools, the database was imported into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Frequency analyses examined the dataset for out of range and missing data, the range, skewness and kurtosis of responses to items used to form scales for the study. Following these analyses, scales were reviewed for reliability through tests of internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha.

We explored four hypotheses to understand relationships between internal capacities, support from adults, and structured activity participation. To investigate hypothesis one, we used a correlation analysis to identify the extent to which internal capacities of youth related to the two adult support variables. We tested hypotheses two through four using a mediating model, as analyses examined the indirect effects of adult support (i.e., caring relationships and high expectations) and the direct effects of internal capacities on structured activity participation.

Procedures for this analysis were guided by Baron and Kenny's (1986) method for testing

mediation in regression analysis.

Qualitative Procedures

Focus group interviews were the sole method of data collection for this portion of the

study. Focus group interviews occurred with groups of three to five students who attended

grades six through twelve. The primary researcher conducted focus groups from November

2011 through June 2012. A purposive sampling procedure targeted a sample of students who

regularly participated in the afterschool program, and a sample of students who did not

participate in the afterschool program. The purpose of this sampling procedure was to capture a

group of students with varied participation in structured activities. Specifically, our goal was to

recruit a diverse sample reflected in the types of constraints faced, level of support from adults

and peers, and their actions when faced with constraints to leisure. The campus principal and

21st Century program coordinator at the Mattamuskeet School helped identify students who fit

the categories (after school participants vs. non-participants) of students. Once identified and

after providing active parental consent and youth assent students were enrolled in the study.

Interviews with after school participants occurred during the after school program, during

homework tutorials and before enrichment programming. Interviews with other students

occurred during the school day with students taking time out of health and physical education

(grades 6-10) or English classes (grades 11-12) to participate in interviews.

We used an inductive, qualitative approach extending from existing theory and literature.

We were directed by Yin's (2003) case study approach to develop a guiding conceptual

framework based on our review of the youth development literature and current understanding of

the constraints literature. This part of the study focused on the phenomena of constraints by

asking what happened and attempting to understand how it happened within this framework (Creswell, Hanson, Plano & Morales, 2007). The case study approach differs from other traditions of qualitative research (e.g., grounded theory) in that analysis and understanding come from a distinct conceptual framework.

To explore the research questions, we used semi-structured interviews. An interview guide using pre-determined stems along with specific probes sought to explore the daily activities experienced by youth; activities that were desirable but unattainable to youth or where youth faced barriers, the experiences led to discontinuing activities, and the role of the microsystem (e.g., parents, peers, other adults, school) in supporting or detracting from participation in structured free time activities. Please refer to the interview guide in Appendix D.

Interviews averaged 30 minutes in length and were digitally recorded. Digital files were uploaded to a computer and transcribed verbatim. Upon entry, the primary researcher reviewed each interview and performed a round of thematic coding. Information from this first round of coding was later integrated into subsequent interviews to verify experiences across the sample and clarify themes and ideas that emerged during data analysis.

Analysis

As described above, interviews were transcribed and initially coded by the researcher using comment fields to identify theme codes. To ensure trustworthiness and reliability, separate thematic coding was performed by the co-investigator, and codes were compared to confirm themes emerging from the transcribed data. The technique of member checking was also employed to further refine themes and verify the researchers' interpretation of findings. This consisted of an active check-back with the original participants, who were offered the opportunity to review findings and elaborated on ideas that were unclear following analysis.

Results

Study results are presented to reflect the mixed-method process with a review of quantitative findings, followed by qualitative findings.

Sample Demographics

One hundred twenty six (126) students out of 190 students (66.3%) in grades six through eleven took part in the study. Two rounds (March 21-29, May 22) of data collection occurred. Thirty-four students were unavailable for sampling because of sports or educational opportunities available outside of the county. Separate follow up dates were offered, but similar conflicts prevented all students from completing the questionnaire. Approximately 53% of the sample was female, and the mean age of the sample was 14.23 years. Just over 24% of the sample was in eighth grade, which represented the largest percentage by grade. Students in grades six, seven, nine, and eleven individually constituted between 12.7-17.3% of the sample. Nearly 42% of the sample was African-American, followed by Caucasian (38.9%), Latino/Hispanic (11.1%), and students classified as other (8.3%) because they indicated bi-racial or multi-racial status. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the sample.

Table 1

Characteristics of Respondents

Category	Sample (n)	%
Gender		
Male	59	47.2
Female	66	52.8
Race/Ethnicity		
African-American	45	41.7
Caucasian	42	38.9
Latino/Hispanic	12	11.1
Other*	9	8.3
Grade		
6th	14	12.7
7th	15	13.6
8th	27	24.5
9th	16	14.5
10th	19	17.3
11th	19	17.3
Age (Mean= , SD=)		
11	11	8.8
12	10	7.9
13	24	19.1
14	28	22.2
15	15	11.9
16	25	19.8
17	10	7.9
18	3	2.4

* bi-racial or multi-racial status noted

Study Measures

We present descriptive statistics for all scaled and indexed measures in Table 2. As

mentioned previously, structured activity participation was a summative index of responses to

participation in sports, community-based extracurricular activities, school-based after school

programs, instrument lessons, and hobbies. Activities were measured on a five-point, Likert-

type scale ranging from '1' = hardly ever or never to '5' = daily. Measures of internal capacity

and adult support were all found to be adequately reliable with Cronbach's Alpha scores ranging

between .71 and .89.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Scaled and Indexed Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Dev.	Range	Reliability
Structured Activity Participation	12.37	3.09	5-25	n/a*
IC: Goals and Aspirations	3.69	0.62	1-4	.89
IC: Problem Solving	3.10	0.95	1-4	.71
IC: Self-Awareness	3.47	0.73	1-4	.88
IC: Self-Efficacy	3.37	0.68	1-4	.81
IC: Empathy	3.34	0.75	1-4	.83
High Expectations from Adults	3.44	0.66	1-4	.88
Caring Relationships with Adults	3.21	0.66	1-4	.84

*structured activity participation is a summative index of self-reported behavior

Hypothesis Testing

Prior to hypothesis testing, we performed tests of normality for all scaled variables.

Structured activity participation was normally distributed (K-S=.080, df=123, p=.052). However,

the internal capacity measures were not normally distributed and did not benefit from several

types of data transformation (e.g, log, square-root, Box-Cox). Therefore, hypothesis four, which

involved the prediction of internal capacities as part of the mediation analysis did not occur. As

the assumption of normality only applies to the dependent variable in regression analysis, we

were able to perform analyses testing how internal capacities (hypothesis 2) and adult support

(hypothesis 3) predicted structured activity participation.

Correlation Analysis

Hypothesis one stated that the adult support variables would be related to the youth

internal capacity variables. A non-parametric correlation analysis using Spearman's Rho was

performed. Table 3 presents the results of the correlation analysis.

Based on the findings of the correlation analysis, we could not reject hypothesis one. High expectations from adults had positive associations with all of the internal capacity measures, and had the strongest relationship with self-awareness (*rho*=.548), followed by self-efficacy (*rho*=.495), empathy (*rho*=.406), goals and aspirations (*rho*=.401) and problem solving (*rho*=.374). Similarly, caring relationships with adults had positive associations with all of the internal capacity measures, and had the strongest relationship with self-awareness (*rho*=.564), followed by problem solving (*rho*=.493), caring relationships (*rho*=.485), goals and aspirations (*rho*=.389) and empathy (*rho*=.369). Each of these associations was significant at the .001 level.

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations between Adult Support and Youth Internal Capacity Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Goals and Aspirations	-						
2. Problem Solving	.453***	-					
3. Self-Awareness	.463***	.600***	-				
4. Self-Efficacy	.504***	.703***	.704***	-			
5. Empathy	.429***	.565***	.585***	.635***	-		
6. High Expectations	.401***	.374***	.548***	.495***	.406***	-	
7. Caring Relationships	.389***	.493***	.564***	.485***	.369***	.822***	-

***p<.001*

Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple regression analyses were performed to see how the internal capacity and adult support variables predicted structured activity participation as hypothesized in hypotheses two and three. Hypothesis 2 stated that measures of internal capacity (i.e., goals and aspirations, problem solving, self awareness, self-efficacy, and empathy) would positively relate to structured activity participation. Hypothesis 3 stated that measures of adult support would positively relate to structured activity participation. Each hypothesis was tested in a single hierarchical regression analysis. Age and gender were controlled for in the analysis, and the internal capacity and adult

support variables were entered as a separate blocks in the analysis. This method was utilized to isolate the change in variation explained (R^2 change) by the study variables of interest. Regression analyses were conducted with parsimony in mind, and set out to yield the simplest plausible model using those study variables that contributed significantly to the prediction of structured activity participation.

Table 4 presents the results of the regression analysis. A final model predicting structured activity participation contained only youths' goals and aspirations and high expectations from adults as predictors while controlling for the effects of gender and age. Of the two variables, youths' goals and aspirations ($\beta = .333$, $p=.004$) was the stronger of the two predictors. Taking these findings into account, it appears that the variance in structured activity participation is partially explained by youths' goals and aspirations and high expectations from adults. This model provided limited support for hypotheses two and three, as the other four internal capacity measures and caring relationships with adults were not significant predictors. The final model accounted for 9.9% of the variation in structured activity participation.

Table 4

Study Model Predicting Structured Activity Participation

	B	SE B	β	t	sig.
Model 1. Control Variables					
Constant	16.546	2.920		5.667	
Gender	-.886	.728	-.111	-1.216	.226
Age	-.277	.205	-.123	-1.348	.180
Model 2. with Basic Needs					
Constant	11.745	4.289		2.738	
Gender	-.981	.711	-.123	-1.380	.170
Age	-.147	.210	-.066	-.701	.485
High expectations from adults	-1.406	.675	-.232	-2.082	.040*
Youth goals and aspirations	2.126	.732	.333	2.905	.004**

* $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$
Model 1. $R^2= .031$, $p=$ n.s.
Model 2. $R^2= .099$, $R^2 Change= .067$, $p= .015$

Examination of Research Questions

Focus groups were primarily used to answer research questions pertaining to youths' free time. We interviewed 14 focus groups involving a total of 56 students. Seven focus groups were with after school participants ($n=21$) who participated in initial and follow up interviews for member checking. After school groups contained three participants per group. Seven focus groups had students who did not take part in the after school program ($n=35$). This second set of focus groups had five participants per group. Five of these groups ($n=25$) were available for follow up interviews. Racial demographic information was not collected at these interviews. Table 5 reports the number of participants by grade and participation type.

Table 5

Focus Group Participants by Grade Level and Group Type

Grade level	After School First interview	After School Follow up	Did not attend After School First Interview	Did not attend After School Follow up
6th	6	6	5	5
7th	5	5	5	5
8th	4	4	5	5
9th	3	3	5	5
10th	2	2	5	5
11th	0	0	5	0
12th	1	1	5	0

Guided questions asked how youth spent their free time, what constraints kept them from participating in activities, and what role, if any, did others (e.g., parents, peers, and other adults) have in their free time and choices in activities. The interviews also sought to understand the experience of typical free time activity participation and what promoted or detracted from activity participation. A descriptive narrative was constructed to contextualize the free time experiences and experiences of constraints for youth in Hyde County. The narrative integrates data from the survey questionnaire and focus group interviews.

Constraints to Recreation Participation

Constraints were investigated using two separate methods. From the questionnaire, we used Hultsman's (1992) ranking classification and asked participants to separately rank the top three reasons they did not join sports and the after school program at school. A rank of one meant that the constraint was the top reason for not joining. A rank of two meant that the constraint was the second most challenging constraint for not participating, and a rank of three the third most challenging constraint for not participating. A final value equaling four was assigned to the response, "reason outside of top three reasons for joining." Ranks were summed

and then divided by total number of ranks to derive a mean rank, which is used to order data and

identify top reasons for not joining sports and the afterschool program. Lower values indicate

the more prevalent constraints, while higher values indicate less prevalent constraints. Table 6

summarizes these statistics. For sports participation, the top two constraints cited by participants

were "no way to get there" (mean rank=2.66) and "don't have good enough skills" (mean

rank=2.76). For the after school program, the top three reasons cited by participants were

"offered at the wrong time" (mean rank=2.84), "belong to other activities" (mean rank=2.91),

and "parent won't let me" (mean rank 2.93). These results were corroborated through focus

group interviews with participants.

Table 6

Mean Rank Scores of Reasons for not Joining Sports and After School Programs

Reason for not joining sports	Mean Rank	Reason for not joing A-S program	Mean Rank
No way to get there	2.66	Offered at wrong time	2.84
Don't have good enough skills	2.76	Belong to other activities	2.91
Don't like the leader	2.94	Parents won't let me	2.93
Belong to other activities	2.95	Don't know how to sign up	3.07
Costs too much	2.95	Costs too much	3.09
Parents won't let me	2.96	Don't know anyone else in it	3.13
Don't know anyone else in it	2.97	Location of Activity	3.16
Don't know how to sign up	3.02	Don't like the leader	3.21
Offered at wrong time	3.05	Don't have good enough skills	3.25
Location of Activity	3.13	My friends don't think I should	3.25
Not old enough	3.17	Not old enough	3.35
Not offered for gender	3.20	Not offered for gender	3.36
My friends don't think I should	3.23	No way to get there	3.38

In focus groups, constraints were introduced to youth as things that inhibited youth from

participating in activities they desired or like. Participants provided in-depth descriptions of

constraints and through a constant comparison process, specific themes and supporting sub-

themes were developed. Several themes were found that acted as obstacles for youth

participation in structured activities. Themes were categorized as: 1) location and distance from resources and 2) family expectations and obligations. For location and distance from resources, the main barriers were identified as getting to and from activities, lacking money, the required travel time was too far, or there was not a particular resource in the community. Barriers related to family expectations and obligations reflected parent expectations and beliefs about withholding their child from participating in structured activities, and responsibilities related to childcare and chores. Themes along with illustrative quotations from students follow.

Theme 1: Location and Distance from Resources

To explore constraints, we asked youth to identify things that often kept them from participating in recreational activities. Approximately 25% (20 out of 79) of the codes accounted for themes related to location and distance from resources. Youth identified lack of transportation, lack of community resources, distance, money, and location or proximity as the primary constraints to recreation participation. The majority of responses from youth about constraints involved the community lacking activities desired by youth, and when activities did exist, the distance was often seen as prohibitive to regular participation. Youth seemed to have no way around these issues and accepted it as a way of life. Noteworthy, however, was the fact that youth realized that they were missing out on pleasures youth in other locations enjoy. The statement below reflects the sentiments of many youth, especially those participating in the after school program.

> "umm, I don't really have any transportation or nothing when I go home because the only transportation I did have was my brother and he moved so he moved to Manteo/Nags Head so when I go home I don't really do nothing."

Not having transportation was a result of many different reasons (e.g., parents worked late, parents had no car). The youth quoted above reported being left at home alone for many hours, his time often filled with watching TV, playing video games, and texting on cell phones.

The lack of services and resources within county towns forced many youth to rely on travel outside the county to buy video games and other items of interest. As this participant indicates, "there's no Game Stop, you gotta waste gas just to drive to go get a game, and the only time you can get a game is when you get a ride and have your own money." Youth shared several examples of resources and opportunities they were missing in the community and how it made their life difficult and boring as a result. The statement below was made by an eighth grader who realizes that he is missing out on activities that less remote areas have.

> "Well, I would like a parks and rec. center. I want one with all the things to do. I'm
> talking about one that has basketball and stuff. My cousin, he plays for a team in the
> summer in Manteo, and they have little basketball groups and they compete with each
> other and everything. Like here during the summer you don't actually see them doing
> anything unless they went off to Florida or something like that. You don't see them
> doing anything and that is something that parks and recreational centers have."

Although there are organized activities occurring throughout the school year and summer months in Hyde County, these activities are scarce and must be sought out, often requiring long distance travel.

Going swimming, having a swim team, bowling, movie theatres, shopping centers or a skating rink were activities and facilities that youth voiced missing or wanting in their communities. Youth reported having to go outside of the community to other towns that offer these opportunities, and these trips were not typically feasible during the school week.

Sometimes students reported having to find a ride to get to these locations. In some instances where parents provided a ride, youth reported that they were unable to drop them off to desired locations. Trips required advanced planning with cooperative parents or friends, and also additional money. Five of the respondents indicated wanting a swimming team and pools in the area. Approximately 90 percent of codes from this theme support the idea that youth feel like they do not have as much in Hyde County, and many noted having to go outside the county to use recreation facilities, play sports, or go swimming.

> "I would like to go swimming every once in a while in the summer and not have to drive a half hour…well, yeah, I'd like to go to a store every once in a while, go bowling or something like that."

> "I would like more sports, a swimming team and stuff…but the school don't have no money and they don't get recognized for anything…because it's so small and stuff."

Some youth were able to seek out activities outside of the county, but in these cases youth relied on family resources. Specifically, youth mentioned money and time to invest in the activity as secondary constraints to participating in desired activities.

Other constraints related to the availability of parents, and reliance on parents for transportation. For example, a sixth grader described how he plays for a football team in Manteo because there is not a team on which he can play in the county. These games take place mostly on the weekends and the practices are during the week. His mother's evening work hours often conflict with practice, and leave him missing out on this opportunity. He also describes that practice is an opportunity for his mother as well. On days where he attends practice, she drops

him off and then goes nearby stores, because there are larger selections and the prices are lower than the stores near their home.

Theme 2: Family Expectations and Obligations

About twenty percent of the responses coded as constraints (5 out of 25) reported parents as constraining factors to participation in structured activities. Some youth described their parents having specific beliefs about negative values learned in after school programs and sports. In these cases, youth reported concerns about what they were learning with respect to social norms and from peers in these programs, stating a preference for religious activities and church involvement over the opportunities available at school.

"Yeah, I ask my mom, she said yeah sure you can play, but my dad be like, no, no, you can't play, and my mom be like go ahead and let him play, he going to do it anyway when he gets older and stuff."

This particular student, in both interviews, described his father as the only reason he was unable to play basketball for the school. He stated that his brother talked to his father on a regular basis, pleading on his behalf. However, his father continuously said no to structured activities offered through school, which is the primary provider of these opportunities within the county.

"Because my daddy, well he's a preacher, he says things like…he said I could play sports but the atmosphere is bad, and my mama, she say let the boy play, but my daddy say no."

Playing sports is what this eighth grader yearns to do, however, because his father does not approve, it constrains him from doing so.

Another boy described his parents as having health issues, which required youth to step up and work in the afternoons at the family business.

"Well, I've always played baseball, that's really the only sport I've ever played, but this year I'm not going to be able to. My daddy's been sick so everyday after school I have to work because my daddy owns a landscaping business and he can't work much anymore. When I graduate in two years I'll have to take it over full time."

As youth get older and move through high school, they experience more pressure to work and contribute to the family in some way. These types of obligation leave no time for structured activities, such as sports that require a great deal of youth's free time. One particular student explained that his parents could not afford a babysitter so it was expected that he ride the bus home with his younger sibling and babysit until his parents were home, "I played sports in middle school, but now I have to do things like watch my little sister. They have a different job now." For this youth, family obligations eliminated options of after school sports or other structured activities. When asked if he would have liked to continue to participate he just continued to state that it was not an option.

Constraint Negotiation

Research questions two and three asked about how youth negotiated constraints to initiate desired recreation activities and continue with these activities. Themes related to constraint negotiation were: 1) the existence of parental resources; 2) making choices in free time; and 3) the influence and expectations of others.

Theme 1: Existence of Parental Resources

Youth reported that constraint negotiation often depended upon the availability of personal and environmental factors. Several youth described situations where they lacked opportunities for participation in recreational activities. Parental income and resources were factors that seemed to help overcome the lack of opportunities within Hyde County. Several

youth explained that they were able participate in activities they desired because they had access to services outside the county, the Internet, or resources at the home or on their property. In response to a probe about how he liked living in the county this youth expressed: "I got a four wheeler and stuff and fields behind my house that I can ride in anytime, and I can practice baseball anytime I want to. I got video games upstairs in my room."

In some cases, students indicated that their families had resources that allowed youth to participate in activities they enjoyed. It was also observed that youth with these resources also participated in more structured activities and talked less about unstructured time. One student remarked about being able to shop on-line. This is a luxury that not many youth have in Hyde County. Not only does this indicate that this student has the financial ability afforded through her family, but it also indicates that she has access to the internet, which is something not all youth have in Hyde County.

Youth who reported these types of financial and property resources were probed to describe their outings and if there were ever issues related to money, distance or transportation. They reacted with shrugs, indicating that these types of issues were not a problem. It was clear that for some, family resources afforded opportunities to work around some of the constraints associated with living in a remote county. The experience of this young female demonstrates that parents were important gateways to getting out and doing activities she desired:

> " movies, talk, just hang out….we usually go to Washington or Greenville and our moms usually take us, they don't have a problem driving us there on the weekends because we don't have anything to do around here and they can do some shopping while we watch the movie or go to stores because we don't have many stores down here and the ones we do have are expensive and don't have much."

Some youth also described their parents as willing to take their friends and them outside of the county to do activities. While this experience existed for some, others clearly lacked these opportunities. Going outside the county to indulge in trips to the mall, the movies or for sports was clearly an option for only some of the youth interviewed.

Theme 2: Making Choices

Some youth reported doing things just to escape boredom, and in many cases, led them to participation in structured activities. Youth expressed coming to the after school program or participating in a certain sport or sporting activity to avoid boredom.

"Yeah, I stay after school, and come to the after school program cuz I know if I go home then I'll be bored, and if I go home I know my homework is not going to get done until like 10 cuz I'm going to go home and text, and watch TV and go outside."

On several occasions, youth reported that going home directly after school led to activities such as watching TV, texting, or playing video games. Often times these activities were associated with boredom or being faced with nothing to do. Rather than stay home and deal with boredom, youth chose to play sports or take part in other organized opportunities available to them. That sentiment is expressed in this focus group exchange, below.

Youth 1-"Like volleyball I wasn't going to go for but I realized I didn't have anything else to do so why not, it keeps me busy."

Youth 2-" the only choice you got for being bored is play the game or go to sleep."

Youth also described in great detail how they participated in activities, such as playing video games, as a means of avoiding boredom. While at home after school, youth were not faced with many choices. Instead of being bored, youth played video games or utilized what was easy and

available. However, many youth also stated they were often bored while watching TV, texting, and playing video games, underscoring the unfulfilling quality of these experiences.

One of the benefits of staying after school is that youth are offered transportation home. Playing sports and going to the after school program not only connected youth to an activity they found engaging, but also allowed them to overcome constraints related to transportation. Youth were also able to come home at a time where parents and family members were home and could interact with youth. For some youth, the choice was easy; return home to a world of boredom or participate in a program that connected them to friends and potentially interesting activities.

Theme 3: The Influence and Expectations of Others

When examining constraint negotiation, the role of others (i.e., parents, peers, and other adults) played an important role in youths' recreational activities. These individuals were often people with whom youth experienced daily contact. These people offered motivation, reinforcement, encouragement and guidance on a regular basis.

From the interviews, it was clear that parents continued to play a major role in the lives of youth, even as they got older and progressed through high school. Youth tended to adhere to their parents' rules, and usually parents provided encouragement and support for youths' activities of interest. An adolescent female who played sports for several years offered this:

> "Yeah, they tell us to keep us active, and tells us to do it because you might like it, or you may not like it but put forth your best effort…. well toward some groups and clubs, like ACA, I'm the vice president so I was voted vice president, but I didn't really want to be, and I told her I didn't want to go to any of the meetings, it just sounded kinda boring, and she was like go because you're the VP you may like it and you should at least show up."

In the preceding passage, her grandmother (with whom she lives) encouraged this female to put forth her best effort. The grandmother allowed this adolescent girl to make choices, while at the same time guiding her. Her encouragement served as a reminder of her choices in roles, and appears to have buoyed her continued participation in student government.

Encouragement and support of others may also take the role of negotiation for those youth who think about dropping out of activities. One adolescent female intimated, "Well, I was going to quite volleyball at one point but my mom talked me into staying at least until the end of the season." This particular youth described how she does not know if she will play volleyball next season, but she was glad to finish out this season and she attributed it to her mother's encouragement. The student expressed being proud of herself for not quitting on a team mid way through the season, and recognized the importance of her mother's support.

The expectations of others may also influence achievement in school by pitting desired activities against school performance and achievement. Coaches (who are teachers as well) reinforce these types of expectations as expressed by this youth:

> "They tell me keep on doing work but if I'm doing something, like if I'm playing sports or something they tell me don't let sports interfere with my work cuz my school work is more important they tell me than sports is… they just say if you don't have good grades they will kick you off, or the coach… if the coach finds out your grades are not good, then they will tell you, you can't play."

Most youth described similar stories about parents, and stated that parents were fond of them playing sports if it did not interfere with school and grades. Emphasizing expectations and linking these expectations to desired activities influenced achievement as well as aspirations to continue playing sports.

Expectations around school also influenced the choice to participate in the after school program as well. Many youth described their motivation and continued participation in the after school program was related to the tutoring provided by the program, and the prospect of performing better in school. Enrichment and other recreational activities made it desirable to youth, but it was the prospect of completing homework and receiving tutoring that motivated parents and some youth.

"My mom is not a math person, she will help me with all of my homework except math, and if she knows I have math homework she will tell me to go ahead and come to the after school program so I can get help with it cuz she knows she can't help me with it.

Other adults play an important role in the lives of youth and their interest in activities. Many youth talked about family members other than parents helping them with transportation or encouragement in activities. Other key adults identified by youth were coaches, 4H leaders, church members, and certain teachers. The statement below reflects the wide array of support existing within the family of this youth:

"When I have games or practices sometimes my sister, sometimes my mama, and sometimes my cousin, Albany, come get me because they all encourage me to play so it will keep my grades up and keep me active."

Many youth who participated in structured activities described similar scenarios of how their parents would work out rides for them if they were unable to provide one. In some cases, coaches, teachers, and other adults took an active role in getting youth out, about and outside of the county to experiences not available to them in Hyde County.

"It was basketball season, and we went out to celebrate how well we did through the season and stuff, the coach he took us bowling and he took us to the mall in Greenville

and we went to McDonalds in Greenville and ate and stuff, and he paid for our bowling and stuff and we had fun. The coach is always doing stuff like that at the end of the season. He's real nice."

Two of the students taking part in this interview acknowledged the role of this particular coach, who provided opportunities that would not regularly occur if they relied on just family. They also described how they could open up to their coach and talk about life events and how their coach would give them advice and listen to their problems.

" Coaches, they keep pushing you to do harder, and to help achieve your goals and stuff…the basketball coach tells us to talk to him about our problems and stuff and that basketball can be our release so not to stress and stuff… and they are always trying to make you do better, and always trying to get you to do your best, and pushing you harder."

Teachers were also cited as having similar roles for youth. For example:

"Like (teacher) days, well there is this guy that sometimes I can choke him, and she knows when I am getting to that point and she will talk to me and I will immediately calm down. Or (another teacher) knows when I am slacking off and he will talk to me and make me want to do better. I try to do my best, but because of them I try to do better cuz they are always there to talk to and help me."

While resource support and encouragement were vital to continued participation in sports and after school opportunities, relationships with other adults also facilitated self-expression and the development of desirable social connections.

Beyond parents and other adults, peers or age-mates were also identified as another source of influence on youths' free time. Social bonding and connection often motivated youth

to participate in activities and help identify what activities were desirable. Sometimes it these motives override any specific benefit attributed to the activity itself.

"Yeah, I like to do the activities for church, and I go to hang out with my best friends cuz he's around (referring to another boy in the interview) cuz there was three of us who grew up in church and we will always be best friends."

This statement is similar to many made by youth about activities. Many youth do things to be around friends. It may not be things they would enjoy alone, but in the company of friends they enjoyed and welcomed the opportunity to participate. Some youth were similar in this saying that certain sports were not their favorites, but participated to avoid boredom and because their friends were on the team. One youth expressed:

"They try to get you to play sports like them, they try to get you to do things to see you get better and to compete with you, but in a friendly way."

Another youth offered:

"I play sports and stuff so I can see my friends, I actually started playing volleyball because all my friends were playing and now I like playing it."

Playing sports with friends provided a particular bond for some youth, who stated that most of their friends were on sport teams with them, and that they often spent time together outside their team experience. Friends were offered as reasons for initiating and continuing activities, and often these activities became informal, unsupervised opportunities when school was out for break or on the weekends. While friendly competition appeared to bond some youth, there were some responses that indicated youth did not play sports because of their friends. For the most part, participation in sports and after school opportunities was desirable because of the availability of friends and the social connections these experiences offered.

Discussion

This study examined developmental readiness in the form of internal capacities as an intrapersonal constraint. We examined how developmental readiness and the presence of external supports from parents and other adults predicted participation in high yield, structured recreation activities among rural youth. We tested hypotheses that supported the study purpose and explored research questions that focused on the unique experiences related to constraint negotiation by rural youth. The conceptual basis for this study was framed within positive youth development using Ecological Systems Theory (EST) and Constraints Theory. To explore hypotheses and research questions, we examined relationships with parents and other adults through a concurrent mixed-model design using survey data and focus groups with youth aged 11-18 years.

When considering the study hypotheses, we found support for the proposition that the internal capacities of youth related positively to the availability of high expectations from and caring relationships with youth. Simply put, youth were likely to express high levels of goals and aspirations, problem solving, self-awareness, self-efficacy, and empathy if they experienced high levels of caring relationships with and high expectations from adults. Due to measurement issues, we were not able to test if these internal capacities mediated the effects of caring relationships with and high expectations from adults on structured activity participation. We did observe that the goals and aspirations of youth and high expectations from adults provided some explanation for why youth participate in structured activities. However, this model explained a modest proportion of the variance in structured activity participation, and failed to account for the role of other internal capacities and caring relationships with adults.

Through focus group interviews we learned that the nature and experience of free time for youth in this remote rural county was often constrained by the limited availability of resources and services within the community. Further, the existing opportunities were often centralized within the county, leaving many youth with the choice of staying later at school to experience opportunities in school or through the school 21st Century program or returning home with few options beyond screen devices (e.g., television, computers, videogames, and cell phone use for texting). The latter experience was often fraught with boredom, and admittedly undesirable to many youth.

In focus groups, youth cited distance from opportunities and family obligations as the primary reasons for not participating in sports and after school activities. These constraints were also cited when reviewing questionnaire data, which also identified the constraints of lacking the skill to play sport and conflicts with time and other activities with respect to the after school program. Constraint negotiation to initiate and continue activities came primarily from the availability of parental resources, making conscious choices to avoid boredom, and the influence and expectations of others. These latter findings provide some convergence with findings from the quantitative study in that youth were active in the choices they made (e.g., to be bored or to pursue opportunity) and that expectations from other adults, as well as peers, accounted for their initiation and continued participation in supervised structured activities. Furthermore, findings also pointed toward the development of relationships outside these specific activities, creating another layer of support that extended the basis of social support for youth.

The framework of Ecological Systems Theory (EST) provided a lens upon which to reflect upon the findings of this study (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Specific to this study, the reciprocal proximal processes occurring between the individual and the microsystem (e.g.,

parents, peers, school, sports) seem to explain patterns for initiating and maintaining

participation in structured activities. These processes provide access and opportunity to engage

in structured experiences, and offer support when motivation to endure or maintain initiative

wanes.

From our analyses we observed a link between youths' goals and aspirations and high

expectations from adults to structured activity participation. Our focus groups provided evidence

that these two variables often work in tandem to maintain participation in structured activities.

Youth admitted to wanting something beyond boredom; they yearned for engagement and

connection to others. After school programs and sports supported these motives, which were a

basis for initiation and continued participation in these activities. Larson (2000) cites that

structured experiences appeal to intrinsic and internalized motives of youth. Coupled with task

demands, these motives help youth endure through challenges to continue participation in

structured experiences. This type of experience translates well into adulthood, as adults must

learn to persevere through far more serious challenges related to work and family life. The

internal capacity of goals and aspirations provides a substantive motive onto which youth find

resolve to persevere. Goals and aspirations reflect an integrated or adopted value that internally

regulates youth to perform behaviors (Ryan & Deci, 2000). However, the expectations and

influence of adults, particularly parents, proved to be nearly as essential to participation as the

goals and aspirations of youth.

Hutchinson, Baldwin and Caldwell (2003) noted the importance of parent expectations

around the use of time and the provision of resources to support activities they deemed

acceptable and beneficial to youth. To a certain extent, we observed this phenomenon in both

phases of the study. Higher expectations from adults were positively linked to structured activity

participation; youth reported higher levels of participation in structured activities when adult expectations were high. Focus groups suggest that parents were a primary source for helping youth maintain and continue participation in structured activities. Furthermore, parents also provided what Hutchinson et al. (2003) deemed an "extra push" toward these activities if they felt that these were helpful or emphasized a role they considered desirable. Conversely, we also observed cases where parents acted as a barrier, denying participation based on apparent conflicts with values that parents held and negative perceptions about participating in sports and after school programs at school. More often though, youth reported parents as being supportive of their choices, and helpful to their pursuit of enjoyable, fulfilling activities if they had the means.

The role of other adults such as extended family members and coaches have long been touted as an important source of support and referred to as an external asset or protective factor in the positive youth development and health literature (Hanson & Kim, 2007; Jessor, Turbin & Costa, 1998; Scales, 1999). The youth development literature clearly emphasizes that exposure to other adults is an important process occurring within structure activity experiences (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles & Lord, 2005). These individuals serve as pro-social models for youth to emulate and oversee opportunities that help develop and reinforce the expression of internal capacities. This study reinforces the importance of other adults, as youth identified teachers and coaches as being helpful in accessing opportunities outside the county, encouraging their participation in existing programs, and serving as intimate confidants and mentors.

Another objective of this study was to draw attention to specific intrapersonal constraints adolescents in this county face related to their development. The transition to adulthood requires that youth successfully develop internal capacities for self-direction such as self-determination,

self-efficacy, competence, autonomy, and goals and aspirations (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005; Hanson & Kim, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Interpersonal internal capacities are directed to effective social integration and emotional intelligence and evidenced in skills such as empathy, relatedness, self-awareness, and problem solving (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005; Hanson & Kim; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In this study, we observed that the goals and aspirations of youth were predictive of their participation in structured activities. Youth who were low on this resilience trait were less likely to report participating in these types of opportunities. For these individuals, lacking goals and aspirations served as a constraint to participating in the structured experiences available to them.

It is likely that parents and other adults supported and helped develop this trait. We observed a correlation between high expectations from adults and caring relationships with adults in our analyses. However, we did not observe the mediation of adult supports through this trait, as it was likely well developed before this study occurred. Participation in structured activities likely reinforced this trait as well, as these types of activities offered exposure to teachers and coaches who supported values reflective of the goals an aspirations measure in the study: graduation from high school, aspiring to attend post-secondary education, and envisioning a plan for the future. As mentioned previously, the literature supports the importance of parents and other adults, and taken in total our findings provide support for this developmental scenario. This study also provides context for the types of interpersonal constraints and sources of constraint negotiation for youth living in Hyde County.

In their study of youth living in remote and isolated communities, Kowalski and Lankford (2010) defined interpersonal constraints as the "consequences of interactions between two or more persons" (p. 136), and these may act as "individual behavioral restraining forces"

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(Crawford & Godbey, 1987, p.122). Similar to Kowalski and Lankford's study, youth in Hyde County live in a remote area with limited access to resources. For some youth, this equated to the availability of other youth. The county averages nine people per square mile, and for some youth, the prospect of returning home meant that they were cut off from other people. This left them with little to do beyond texting, watching television, playing video games, and performing chores. Youth reported that these opportunities were boring and unfulfilling, and some chose to attend sports and after school programs because these offered an escape from being cut off from others and boredom.

In the focus groups, youth noted that parents could sometimes limit behavior due to conflicts with values or because youth needed to support family and deny youths' participation in structured activities. While these other situations could lead to opportunities to experience responsibility and develop core values, youth admitted that they preferred the opportunities that sport or the after school programs provided. The danger for these youth is that these situations limited their opportunities to experience self-determined engagement, which are critical during adolescence (Larson, 2000).

An examination of the context also yielded an understanding of the pervasive structural constraints faced by youth from Hyde County. As noted earlier, Hyde County is an economically disadvantaged county in North Carolina. The lack of resource support, particularly parental income, is a major structural constraint for youth. A small portion of youth reported getting assistance with rides out of the county and access to recreation and leisure opportunities through friends, relatives and other adults. While this works to alleviate some of the challenges associated with living in the county, a number of youth are left without these options. For youth from low-income backgrounds and living in remote areas, after school programs and sports offer

an outlet to break the potential drudgery of home and gain access to external supports who can cultivate and reinforce internal capacities to help them live fulfilling, self-directed lives. These opportunities provide the elements that Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber (2003) identified as most needed in youth development—opportunities to be problem free, fully engaged, and fully prepared to transition to adulthood.

Limitations

This study used a convenience sample of students from a connected middle school and high school campus in Hyde County, North Carolina. Results from this study cannot be generalized beyond the sample. While the study controlled for developmental variation related gender and age, it did not test the interactive effects of these variables with the variables under study. This was a conscious choice to focus on the phenomena under study and to provide a clear approach to the proposed investigation.

The quantitative portion of the study utilized a cross-sectional design to investigate the relationships between internal capacities, adult supports, and structured activity participation. While this method is easily applied, it is often difficult to understand the influence and processes that affect these relationships over time. Further, this makes it difficult to observe theorized effects as these are enduring, transformative processes embedded within time. While we acknowledge these limitations, we feel that this study supports the current literature and offers some extension through the provision of descriptions and themes related to the lived experiences of youth.

Recommendations for Practice

The lack of available resources and transportation were cited as major structural constraints by youth in Hyde County. Like many rural communities, services and programs are

centralized and primarily offered through school (see Yousefian, Ziller, Swartz, & Hartley, 2009). Administrators, teachers and students acknowledged that some youth have bus rides that last as much as an hour, one-way. While transportation exists to and from after school programs and sports, focus group participants recalled instances where friends did not pursue these opportunities because of the long ride home. In Hyde County, there is a need to identify resources where recreation and structured experiences can be offered. Community-asset mapping would help with this process. In informal interviews, teachers and administrators identified churches and community centers in all five of Hyde County's mainland towns. A major step to recreation provision within the county would be identifying spaces and setting up joint use agreements with these community-based agencies in the county (Blanck et al., 2012).

Recommendations for Future Research

We recommend that future research utilize longitudinal designs that focus on factors related to the adoption and continuation of behavior to determine likely drop out or continuation decisions. We also recommend that studies focus on the knowledge of opportunities within communities. It is not clear the extent to which youth reflected the reality of the opportunities present in the county. While structural-based opportunities (e.g., fields, facilities, and programs) are lacking, Hyde County has a tremendous opportunities for outdoor recreation within its many streams, nature viewing areas, and recreation areas. As outdoor pursuits were not explored in this study, it is not clear to what extent youth took advantage of these opportunities or to what extent these recreation pursuits were desirable to youth.

Other areas to consider are gender differences and specific measurement on the influence of parents, other adults and peers. A study exploring gender differences in opportunities, supports and constraints within rural, remote areas would extend the current research and add

greatly to the existing body of knowledge. Of similar benefit to the literature, would be a study

of the specific contributions of support from parents, peers and other adults within a rural,

remote region.

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Appendices:

Appendix A: IRB Approval and Consent Documents

Appendix B: Study Questionnaire

Appendix C: Corresponding Items

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Guide

Appendix E: Categorized Codes

Appendix F: Extended Literature Review

Appendix A: IRB Approval and Consent Documents

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
1L-09 Brody Medical Sciences Building· Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284** · **www.ecu.edu/irb**

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: Jessica Burkhart
CC:
          Clifton Watts
Date: 3/6/2012
Re: UMCIRB 11-001251
          Factors Determining Structured Activity Participation in Rural Youth:?Internal Capacities, Microsystem
          Support, and Constraint Negotiation

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 3/6/2012 to 3/5/2013. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #5, 6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Child consent form	History	Consent Forms
Final Proposal for Burkhart.doc	History	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Focus Group Questions Burkhart Study.doc	History	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Parental consent	History	Consent Forms

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

Parental Consent for Using Research Data

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am working on my Masters Degree in Recreation and Leisure Studies at East Carolina University. As part of my studies, I am planning an educational research project that will help me learn more about the after school choices youth make. I am very interested in learning about what helps lead to these choices; for example, their interests and the role of parents, teachers, and other adult leaders. I am also interested in understanding the constraints or barriers (for example: time, distance, their interests) that keep youth from taking part in after school programs and recreation activities. The goal of this research study is to learn how youth overcome constraints to participate in these after school and recreation programs.

As part of this research project, we are asking that you allow your child to take part in a focus group. A focus group is a way to interview two or three students at a time about a topic. I will ask the group questions about how they use their free time, what constraints they face, and what helps them to participate in after school and recreation programs. I may interview your child once more (later in the month) to follow up on questions I still have about their free time experiences. I am planning to record your child's answers along with other answers provided by students who attend Hyde County Schools. I will keep your child's information confidential. In other words, I will not link your child's name to his or her responses; nor shall I connect your child to the final thesis paper for this study. The recordings and transcripts of your child's responses will be kept on a secured, password-protected server at East Carolina University.

I am requesting permission from you to allow your child's participation in this study and to use your child's recorded responses in my research study. Please understand that your permission is entirely voluntary. As this study is for educational research purposes only, the results of focus group will not affect your child's grade or status at school. If you choose not to provide permission, it will not affect your child's grade or status at school.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at school at (326) 413-9970 or by emailing me at burkhartj10@students.ecu.edu. If you have any questions about the rights of your child as a research participant, you may contact *The University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board* at 252-744-2914.

Please detach and return the form below by February 27, 2012. Thank you for your interest in my educational research study.

Jessica Burkhart
Researcher/Investigator

As the parent or guardian of _____ ,
                                    (write your child's name)

☐ **I grant my permission for Jessica Burkhart to use my child's data in her educational research project regarding focus groups. I voluntarily consent to Jessica Burkhart using any of the data gathered about my student in her study. I fully understand that the data will not affect my child's grade, will be kept completely confidential, and will be used only for the purposes of her research study.**

☐ **I do NOT grant my permission for Jessica Burkhart to use my child's data in her educational research project regarding focus groups.**

Signature of
Parent/Guardian:_____**Date:**_____

East Carolina University **Assent Form**
Things You Should Know Before You Agree To Take Part in this Research

IRB Study #_____ *(The IRB office will fill this in, if this is a new submission)*

Title of Study: Factors Determining Structured Activity Participation in Rural Youth: Internal Capacities, Microsystem Support, and Constraint Negotiation

Person in charge of study: Jessica Burkhart
Where they work: ECU University Graduate Assistant
Other people who work on the study: Dr. Clifton Watts

Study contact phone number: (336) 413-9970 or (252) 737-2426
Study contact E-mail Address: burkhartj10@students.ecu.edu

People at ECU study ways to make people's lives better. These studies are called research. This research is trying to understand what leads to youth taking part in after school programs, sports and other activities in the after school hours.

Your parent(s) needs to give permission for you to be in this research. You do not have to be in this research if you don't want to, even if your parent(s) has already given permission.

You may stop being in the study at any time. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you.

Why are you doing this research study?
The reason for doing this research is to find out why and how youth take part in after school programs, sports and other after school activities. We also want to know what constraints youth face. Constraints could be transportation, money, lack of other people, or interests in an activity.

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?
We are asking you to take part in this research because we want to understand what youth needs exist, and then help develop a plan to take care of these needs.

How many people will take part in this study?
If you decide to be in this research, you will be one of about 30 people taking part in it at your school.

What will happen during this study?
We have meetings with three youth at a time called focus groups. In the focus group, we ask youth questions about living in Hyde County, what is available after school, and why people participate in programs after school. To help remember what you tell me, I will be recording the group, but only with your permission. You can ask me to turn it off at any time. I will just be asking questions about your after school time and you will respond with the answers.

1

Check the line that best matches your choice:

_____ OK to record me during the study

_____ Not OK to record me during the study

This study will take place at Mattamuskeet or Ocracoke School and will last about ten minutes.
(researcher circle one)

Who will be told the things we learn about you in this study?

The only people who will have access to the answers you give me are my college advisor and me. If you tell me anything regarding being abused or causing abuse to others, I will have to report your answers to the school counseling office.

What are the good things that might happen?

There is little change you will benefit from being in this research, however you will be helping my research greatly. This may lead to changes in how school schedules after school programs.

What are the bad things that might happen?

Sometimes we say things we don't want to say to people in research studies. These things may even make us feel bad. These are called "risks." I don't think the questions I ask you will cause you any risk, but I will be respectful of your feelings and work with you to receive help if needed.

Will you get any money or gifts for being in this research study?

You will not receive any money or gifts for being in this research study.

Who should you ask if you have any questions?

If you have questions about the research, you should ask the people listed on the first page of this form. If you have other questions about your rights while you are in this research study you may call the Institutional Review Board at 252-744-2914.

If you decide to take part in this research, you should sign your name below. It means that you agree to take part in this research study.

_____   _____
Sign your name here if you want to be in the study   Date

_____
Print your name here if you want to be in the study

_____   _____
Signature of Person Obtaining Assent   Date

_____
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Assent

2

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Appendix B: Study Questionnaire

Hyde County Recreation Survey: Spring 2012

Hyde County Schools Recreation Survey: Spring 2012

Please read the following:

You are taking part in this study to help your school understand how to best serve the students who attend it. This questionnaire should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. There are three important things you should know before you begin:

1. All answers are confidential. This means that your identity is protected. All of your answers will be combined with others at school to help us know what life and school is like for all students.

2. Answering these questions is voluntary. This means you can choose not to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You can also stop answering questions at any time. However, we would really appreciate it if you could fill out as much of the question form as possible.

Question 1. What is your ID number? *
If you do not know your ID number, please ask your teacher

[   ]

Question 3. What grade are you in?
- ○ 6th
- ○ 7th
- ○ 8th
- ○ 9th
- ○ 10th
- ○ 11th
- ○ 12th

Question 2. Student Gender: Are you...?
- ○ Male
- ○ Female

Question 5. How old are you?

[   ]

Question 6a. How would you describe your ethnic background?

○ African American or Black

○ Asian or Pacific Islander

○ Latino/Hispanic

○ White

○ Other (describe in the box below)

Question 6b. If you answered other for question 6a., please describe your ethnic background below. Otherwise go to the next page.

[ ]

Page 2   After page 1 | Continue to next page

Hyde County Schools Spring 2011 Survey Page 2

Question 7a-7j: What I do in my free time

Free time is the out-of-school hours or time when you are not working. Please try to tell us how much time you spend doing the activities below.

7a. In your free time or time out of school how often do you play sports on an organized team (like a league or school team)?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7b. In your free time or time out of school how often do you play an instrument?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7c. In your free time or time out of school how often do go to an afterschool program or school-based club?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7d. In your free time or time out of school how often do go to other groups outside of school (like a church-based group, 4-H , FFA, or some other youth group)?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7e. In your free time or time out of school how often do you do a hobby? (like model building, baseball card collecting, sewing, needlepoint)?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7f. In your free time or time out of school how often do you watch television (TV) or movies?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7g. In your free time or time out of school how often do you play video games or use the internet?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7h. In your free time or time out of school how often do you just "hang out" at your home or other people's homes without adults?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7i. In your free time or time out of school how often do you spend time in the outdoors

(hiking, birding, fishing, hunting or just enjoying nature)?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

7j. In your free time or time out of school how often do you stay home alone?
1= hardly ever or never, 2=Sometimes (about once a week), 3=Often (about twice a week), 4=A lot (more than twice a week, 5=Daily (every day)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Hardly Ever or Never	○	○	○	○	○	Daily

Page 3   After page 2 | Continue to next page

Page 3: Constraints to Recreation Participation

This section focuses on why you may or may not participate in a specific type of recreation activity. Please follow the directions for each question.

8.1 I get to play organized sports as often as I want
On a scale from 1 to 5, where '1'=not at all true and '5'=absolutely true

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not At All True	○	○	○	○	○	Absolutely True

Please list the top 3 reasons why you do not join sports.
If statement is not in the top 3, select "outside of top 3 reasons"

	#1 reason for not joining	#2 reason for not joining	#3 reason for not joining	Outside of Top 3 reasons for joining
No way to get there	○	○	○	○
Cost too much	○	○	○	○
Wrong time of day	○	○	○	○
Parents won't let me	○	○	○	○
Don't know how to sign up	○	○	○	○
Not old enough	○	○	○	○
Not offered for my gender (only offered for girls or only offered for boys	○	○	○	○

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	#1 reason for not joining	#2 reason for not joining	#3 reason for not joining	Outside of Top 3 reasons for joining
My friends don't think I should	○	○	○	○
Don't know anyone else in it	○	○	○	○
Don't have good enough skills	○	○	○	○
Belong to other activities	○	○	○	○
Don't like the leader	○	○	○	○
Location of the activity	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○

8.2 I get to go to the afterschool program as often as I want
On a scale from 1 to 5, where '1'=not at all true and '5'=absolutely true

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not At All True	○	○	○	○	○	Absolutely True

Please list the top 3 reasons why you do not join an after school program (like 21st Century, 4H or other after school program).
If statement is not in the top 3, select "outside of top 3 reasons

	#1 reason for not joining	#2 reason for not joining	#3 reason for not joining	Outside of Top 3 reasons for joining
No way to get there	○	○	○	○
Cost too much	○	○	○	○
Wrong time of day	○	○	○	○
Parents won't let me	○	○	○	○
Don't know how to sign up	○	○	○	○
Not old enough	○	○	○	○
Not offered for my gender (only offered for girls or only offered for boys	○	○	○	○

	#1 reason for not joining	#2 reason for not joining	#3 reason for not joining	Outside of Top 3 reasons for joining
My friends don't think I should	○	○	○	○
Don't know anyone else in it	○	○	○	○
Don't have good enough skills	○	○	○	○
Belong to other activities	○	○	○	○
Don't like the leader	○	○	○	○
Location of the activity	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○

8.3. In your free time, what would you like to do more of, but can't
List an activity that you do not get to do as much as you like (cannot be sport or after school program)

Please list the top 3 reasons why you don't get to do the activity listed in question 3.3
If statement is not in the top 3, select "outside of top 3 reasons

	#1 reason for not joining	#2 reason for not joining	#3 reason for not joining	Outside of Top 3 reasons for joining
No way to get there	○	○	○	○
Cost too much	○	○	○	○
Wrong time of day	○	○	○	○
Parents won't let me	○	○	○	○
Don't know how to sign up	○	○	○	○
Not old enough	○	○	○	○
Not offered for my gender (only offered for girls or only offered for boys	○	○	○	○

	#1 reason for not joining	#2 reason for not joining	#3 reason for not joining	Outside of Top 3 reasons for joining
My friends don't think I should	○	○	○	○
Don't know anyone else in it	○	○	○	○
Don't have good enough skills	○	○	○	○
Belong to other activities	○	○	○	○
Don't like the leader	○	○	○	○
Location of the activity	○	○	○	○
Other	○	○	○	○

Page 4   After page 3 Continue to next page

Page 4: People in Your Life

Please indicate how true the following statements are for you

At my school, there is a teacher or some other adult...

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
8a. who really cares about me	○	○	○	○
8b. who notices when I am not there	○	○	○	○
8c. who listens to me when I have something to say	○	○	○	○
8d. who tells me when I do a good job	○	○	○	○

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
8e. who always wants me to do my best.	○	○	○	○
8f. who believes that I will be a success	○	○	○	○

Outside of my home or school, there is an adult...

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
9a. who really cares about me	○	○	○	○
9b. who notices when I am upset about something	○	○	○	○
9c. who I trust	○	○	○	○
9d. who tells me when I do a good job	○	○	○	○
9e. who always wants me to do my best.	○	○	○	○
9f. who believes that I will be a success	○	○	○	○

My friends...

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
10a. really care about me	○	○	○	○
10b. talk with me about my problems	○	○	○	○
10c. help me when I am having a hard time	○	○	○	○
10d. get into a lot of trouble	○	○	○	○
10e. try to do what is right	○	○	○	○

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
10f. do well in school	○	○	○	○

Page 5: Your parents and you

LAST PAGE!!! Thanks for sticking with it!

In my home, there is a parent or some other adult

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
10g. who expects me to follow the rules	○	○	○	○
10h. who is interested in my school work	○	○	○	○
10i. who believes that I will be a success	○	○	○	○
10j. who talks with me about my problems	○	○	○	○
10k. who always wants me to do my best	○	○	○	○
10l. who listens when I have something to say	○	○	○	○
10m. who helps me to do my homework	○	○	○	○
10n. who has rules about completing homework	○	○	○	○
10o. who values school	○	○	○	○
10p. who explains what they expect	○	○	○	○

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	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
from me				
10o. who does fun things with me	○	○	○	○
10p. who has rules about how to use my free time	○	○	○	○

Questions about you

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
11a. I have goals and plans for the future	○	○	○	○
11b. I plan to graduate from high school	○	○	○	○
11c. I plan to go to college or some other school after high school	○	○	○	○
11d. I know where to go for help with a problem	○	○	○	○
11e. I try to work out problems by talking to writing about them	○	○	○	○
11f. I can work out my problems	○	○	○	○
11g. I can do most things if I try	○	○	○	○
11h. I can work with someone who has different opinions than mine	○	○	○	○

	Not at all true	A little true	Pretty much true	Very much true
11i. There are many things I can do well	○	○	○	○
11j. I feel badly when someone gets their feelings hurt	○	○	○	○
11k. I try to understand how other people feel and think	○	○	○	○
11l. There is a purpose in my life	○	○	○	○
11m. I understand my moods and feelings	○	○	○	○
11n. I understand why I do what I do	○	○	○	○

THANK YOU!

By filling out this survey, you are helping to make Hyde County Schools better for students. We really appreciate it!

Appendix C: Corresponding Items to Scales

Index of Item Numbers for Hyde County Survey

Internal Capacities/Resilience Traits	
Scale	**Item #s**
Sense of Meaning and Purpose	11a – 11c
Social Competence: subscale: Problem Solving	11d -11f
Social Competence: subscale: Empathy	11j – 11k
Autonomy & Sense of Self: subscale: Self-Efficacy	11f – 11g, 11i
Autonomy & Sense of Self: subcsale: Self Awareness	11l – 11n
High Expectations from Adults	
Scale	
Subscale: High Expectations at Home	10a, 10c, 10e, 10h, 10j
Subscale: High Expectations at School	8d, 8e, 8f
Subscale: Community High Expectations	9d, 9e, 9f
Caring Relationships with Adults	
Subscale: Caring Relationships at Home	10b, 10d, 10f, 10g, 10i
Subscale: Caring Relationships at School	8a, 8b, 8c
Subscale: Community Caring Relationships	9a, 9b, 9c
Structured Activity Participation	
Scale	
Index of Items for Structured Activity Participation	7a-7h
Constraints	
Ranking of Constraints to Sports, After School Programs, and other activities	8.1-8.3

Appendix D: Semi-structured Interview Guide

Structured Interview Guide for Focus Groups
Hyde County Public Schools

Greet, introduce self, ask how folks are doing, and then explain purpose of interview questions. Be sure to explain that:
1)   We are interested in learning about how they use their time afterschool and on weekends. We want to understand what youth in Hyde County do during these times, and what is available for them to do.
2)   We want to understand what types of challenges they face in this time. For example, how often do they get to they activities they really like, and what people play a role in their free time.
3)   Their participation could help others in future years. We want to hear their voice, and ask that they feel comfortable in sharing their ideas. These interviews will help recreation programmers interested in providing activities in Hyde County.
4)   Involvement in the interviews is strictly voluntary. This means that students may choose not to answer questions, and they will not be penalized in any way by the evaluator, their teachers, tutors or school.
5)   At any time, you may choose to withdraw from questions. Please let me or your teachers and tutors know if any question bothers you or you feel is unnecessary. We don't anticipate that there will be any difficulty questions, but we also want you to feel comfortable.
6)   We want to thank you for taking time out of your day to do this interview. It is very helpful, and will go a long way in helping us understand how to serve Hyde County's youth better.

Interview Questions
1.   What types of activities do you participate in you free time (be sure to differentiate -structured or unstructured experiences—take notes, you'll need them in subsequent questions).

2.   What kinds of activities would you like to participate in but cannot?

3.   What gets in the way of doing activities you like?
      a.   PROBE: Can you be specific?

4.   When you have problems with doing what you want to do, how do your work around those problems?
      a.   PROBES should be directed to elaborating negotiation strategies and key individuals or opportunities that lead to overcoming constraint.

5.   What keeps you in an activity? Why do you continue to participate in… (ask questions about activities they list as structured and unstructured activities)

6.   How often do you feel bored throughout the day?
7.   What things are you doing when you feel bored?
8.   Who is with you when you are bored?

9.   What are some activities your friends like?
      a.   What are some activities your friends like but you do not?
            1.   If they indicate activities they participated in—ask them why they continue to do activities they do not like?

10.   What direction do your parents give you concerning leisure or free time?

11.   What other adults do you consider important to you?
      a.   What direction do other adults give you concerning leisure or free time?

Appendix E: Categorized Codes

Categorized Codes from Focus Groups

Constraint Codes

Theme 1: Location and Distance from Resources

Child-" umm, I don't really have any transportation or nothing when I go home because the only transportation I did have was my brother and he moved so he moved to Manteo/Nags Head so when I go home I don't really do nothing."

Child-"There's no game stop, you gotta waste gas just to drive to go get a game, and the only time you can get a game is when you get a ride and have your own money."

Child-"Well, I would like a parks and rec. center. I want one with all the things to do. I'm talking about one that has basketball and stuff. My cousin he plays for a team in the summer in Manteo, and they have little basketball groups and they compete with each other and everything. Like here during the summer you don't actually see them doing anything unless they went off to Florida or something like that. You don't see them doing anything and that is something that parks and recreational centers have."

Child-"I would like to go swimming every once in a while in the summer and not have to drive a half hour"

Child – "well, yeah, I'd like to go to a store every once in a while, go bowling or something like that."

Child-" I would like more sports, a swimming team and stuff, but the school don't have no money and they don't get recognized for anything, because it's so small and stuff."

Child-"A pool would be nice, cuz the closest one to us is 70 miles in Manteo."

Child-"Well, since I can' go to a mall everyday because we don't have one around here I go shopping online at Hollister and places like that."

Child-"Well I know I'd like to go bowling or to the movies or something on a more regular basis cuz I know my parents aren't willing to drive me that far."

Child-"There's no jobs that I can work at. I mean I would like to work at a mall or something like that, but it's not like I can get a ride down to Greenville to work there."

Child-"Cuz there's nothing here. There is a dollar general, a couple of gas stations, and a grocery store, and that's it."

Child-"I'd like to go to the mall to hang out, but we don't get to unless our parents have to go to Greenville or something, and then we may take a friend and they will drop us off while they do what they gotta do."

Child-"It would be cool if they had a club or something like archery where the kids could go and shoot and practice with their guns."

Child-"We don't even have a soccer team like most schools because we don't have goals and stuff around here. The closest one is in Washington."

Child-" I would like to go to a mall, but since we don't have one here I can't much cuz it's to far."

Child-"I'd like to be able to go to an outdoor pool in the summertime."

Child-" we need a gym around here so we can all go and not just the guys who play sports"…. yeah, but you can't do much there cuz you have to be a certain age."

Child-"I'd like to go to the movies on the weekends like I use to before I moved down here, I mean you can go to the one in Washington, but that's still 30 minutes away and that one is crappy, and the one in Greenville is over an hour and that one is very expensive."

Child-" movies, talk, just hang out. We usually go to Washington or Greenville and our moms usually take us, they don't have a driving us there on the weekends because we don't have anything to do around here and they can do some shopping while we watch the movie or go to stores because we don't have many stores down here and the ones we do have are expensive and don't have much."

Child-"Well, since I can't go to a mall everyday because we don't have one around here I go shopping online at Hollister and places like that."

Child-"You kinda get use to going into Washington and Greenville because you go so much, but we have to plan it. Me and my family go once on the weekends, sometimes every other weekend."

Child-" I have to go so much because my granddad has doctors appointment and we go to the movie theatres every time. Or I don't have to go, but that's my chance to do stuff in the city. We went Saturday, and took him and we watch the Good Fighters."

Theme 2: Family Expectations and Obligations

Child-"Yeah, I ask my mom, she said yeah sure you can play, but my dad be like, no, no, you can't play, and my mom be like go ahead and let him play, he going to do it anyway when he gets older and stuff."

Child-"Because my daddy, well he's a preacher, he says things like, he said I could play sports but the atmosphere is bad, and my mama, she say let the boy play, but my daddy say no."

Child-"Well, I've always played baseball, that's really the only sport I've ever played, but this year I'm not going to be able to. My daddy's been sick so everyday after school I have to work because my daddy owns a landscaping business and he can't work much anymore. When I graduate in two years I'll have to take it over full time."

Child-" I played sports in middle school, but now I have to do things like watch my little sister. They have a different job now."

Constraint Negotiation Codes

Theme 1: Parental Resources

Child-"I got a four wheeler and stuff and fields behind my house that I can ride in anytime, and I can practice baseball anytime I want to. I got video games upstairs in my room."

Child-" movies, talk, just hang out. We usually go to Washington or Greenville and our moms usually take us, they don't have a driving us there on the weekends because we don't have anything to do around here and they can do some shopping while we watch the movie or go to stores because we don't have many stores down here and the ones we do have are expensive and don't have much."

Child-"When I get bored I have a basketball goal, or a pitch back or a trampoline."

Child-"Well, since I can't go to a mall everyday because we don't have one around here I go shopping online at Hollister and places like that."

Child-"We get her parents or my parents to take us places on the weekend like the movies, and they take us to each others houses as well."

Child-"My parents pick me up from practices and games. Well, they usually are at my games."

Child-"I go shopping on the weekends. My mom takes me to Greenville, we usually go at least two weekends a month."

Child-"a lot of people, like on Saturdays if they want to go to people's houses and their parents won't take them, a lot of times they will just take their 4 wheelers and drive through the ditches to get there."

Theme 2: Making Choices

Child- "Yeah, I stay after school, and come to the after school program cuz I know if I go home then I'll be bored, and if I go home I know my homework is not going to get done until like 10 cuz I'm going to go home and text, and watch tv and go outside."

Child-"Like volleyball I wasn't going to go for but I realized I didn't have anything else to do so why not, it keeps me busy."

Child-"the only choice you got for being bored is play the game or go to sleep."

Child-" yeah, my parents want me to play softball I guess but, kinda, I push them to want me to play and get me out there because otherwise I'd be going home and doing nothing everyday."

Child-"I don't really like to go hunting that much, but most of my friends do so I go along just to hang out with them and keep from being bored. I look at it like, I'd rather be with them hunting than sitting home being bored."

Child-"Well at first I was a real Twilight hater, and then my friend lended me all of her movies and I was bored so I watched it and now I love it. I figured if they all liked it I might like it to."

Child-"I play guitar a little bit. I don't like to play that often but I play when I'm bored."

Child-"When I get bored I have a basketball goal, or a pitch back or a trampoline."

Child-" because it's fun, girls may not like it here, but I do. I got a big ow wooded area and they took out the trees so there is a path that goes down and I got a rifle a shotgun, another rifle and I got a paintball gun for what deer."

Child-" right now I'm playing little league since I am not in 7th grade."

Child-" K-I play baseball a lot during the spring, and I play all-stars."

Child-"On the weekends I hunt, and play basketball, and fish when the weather is good enough."

Child-"On the weekends I just like to be lazy, and if I get bored I'll practice my volleyball and little."

Child-"When I'm bored I get on face book and text."

Child-"I listen to music a lot when I get bored and then I'm not bored anymore."

Child- Well, cut grass, sit on the couch all day and watch tv, watch my cat run into the wall a couple of times, and that's about it besides playing games too."

Child-"Most of the time on the weekend I just sit around and be lazy, but sometimes I practice my volleyball when I want to or if I'm tired of sitting around."

Child-" Because you can go fishing and hunting, and you can hang out with your friends, like there is not a mall or anything around here, but you can always go outside and do something."

Child-"We could sit around and whine and complain about not getting to do stuff that people in the city get to do, but we get to do stuff that people in the city don't get to do, like hunt and fish

everyday. Lots of people come down here and stay in the cabins and stuff to hunt and fish, but we can do it everyday."

Child-"You kinda get use to going into Washington and Greenville because you go so much, but we have to plan it. Me and my family go once on the weekends, sometimes every other weekend."

Child-" I have to go so much because my granddad has doctors appointment and we go to the movie theatres every time. Or I don't have to go, but that's my chance to do stuff in the city. We went Saturday, and took him and we watch the Good Fighters."

Child-" I don't go, there is not way to work around it. If I don't have a ride to do things I just don't go I just sit there and watch tv all day, and then I won't be bored."

Child-" it's because you get to practice with friends. You can just invite someone and you will have your whole day just goes by and you have fun."

Child-"-I play sports cuz its fun and we are doing it with friends."

Theme 3: The Influence and Expectations of Others

Parents

Child-"Yeah, they tell us to keep us active, and tells us to do it because you might like it, or you may not like it but put forth your best effort. Well toward some groups and clubs, like ACA, I'm the vice president so I was voted vice president, but I didn't really want to be, and I told her I didn't want to go to any of the meetings, it just sounded kinda boring, and she was like go because you're the vp you may like it and you should at least show up."

Child-"Well, I was going to quite volleyball at one point but my mom talked me into staying at least until the end of the season."

Child-"They tell me keep on doing work but if I'm doing something, like if I'm playing sports or something they tell me don't let sports interfere with my work cuz my school work is more important they tell me than sports is. They just say if you don't have good grades they will kick you off, or the coach. If the coach finds out your grades are not good, then they will tell you, you can't play."

Child-" My mom is not a math person, she will help me with all of my homework except math, and if she knows I have math homework she will tell me to go ahead and come to the after school program so I can get help with it cuz she knows she can't help me with it.

Child-"They don't pay attention to much, they may tell me to get outside and go play."

Child-"When I'm watching tv my mom tells me to get outside and go do something."

Child- "Well I go my parents make me and I only see someone once or twice a week and I get to see them there."

Child-"Its hard to explain, she always wants to know, I have a cell phone, wants to know who I am talking to and what I'm talking about"...... My mama always wanting to know my fb password, I usually give it to her then I change it."

Child-" my parents, they say to have fun."

Other Adults

Child-" When I have games or practices sometimes my sister, sometimes my mama, and sometimes my cousin Albany come get me because they all encourage me to play so it will keep my grades up and keep me active."

Child-" it was basketball season, and we went out to celebrate how well we did through the season and stuff, the coach he took us bowling and he took us to the mall in Greenville and we went to McDonalds in Greenville and ate and stuff, and he paid for our bowling and stuff and we had fun. The coach is always doing stuff like that at the end of the season. He's real nice."

Child-" Coaches, they keep pushing you to do harder, and to help achieve your goals and stuff. The basketball coach tells us to talk to him about our problems and stuff and that basketball can be our release so not to stress and stuff, and they are always trying to make you do better, and always trying to get you to do your best, and pushing you harder."

Child-"Like (teacher) days, well there is this guy that sometimes I can choke him, and she knows when I am getting to that point and she will talk to me and I will immediately calm down. Or (another teacher) knows when I am slacking off and he will talk to me and make me want to do better. I try to do my best, but because of them I try to do better cuz they are always there to talk to and help me.

Child-"My uncle Jay he picks me up and takes me to the beach and stuff and in the summer we go to the beach and he means a lot to me."

Child-"My grandparents are important to me and give me advice."
A-my aunt
Child-"Miss Natalie, she is in charge of 4h and she gives me advice and stuff sometimes."

Child-"My coaches, I talk to them about everything."

Peers

Child-" yeah, I like to do the activities for church, and I go to hang out with my best friends cuz he's around (other boy in the interview) cuz there was three of us who grew up in church and we will always be best friends."

Child-"They try to get you to play sports like them, they try to get you to do things to see you get better and to compete with you, but in a friendly way."

Child-" I play sports and stuff so I can see my friends, I actually started playing volleyball because all my friends were playing and now I like playing it.

Child-"A place in Elizabeth City kinda like 4 h thing, and I go so I can see my friends. I don't really like the activities they make us do but I like to see some friends."

Child-"I don't really like to go hunting that much, but most of my friends do so I go along just to hang out with them and keep from being bored. I look at it like, I'd rather be with them hunting than sitting home being bored."

Child-"Well at first I was a real Twilight hater, and then my friend lended me all of her movies and I was bored so I watched it and now I love it. I figured if they all liked it I might like it to."

Child- "Well I go my parents make me and I only see someone once or twice a week and I get to see them there."

Child-"-I play sports cuz its fun and we are doing it with friends."

Child-" it's because you get to practice with friends. You can just invite someone and you will have your whole day just goes by and you have fun."

Appendix F: Extended Literature Review

EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Youth Development Overview

In the last decade, principles of positive youth development (PYD) have guided policies designed to address the needs and challenges facing youth. A major tenet of PYD is that youth are assets to develop, instead of problems to fix (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber 2003). Pittman et al. argue that youth policy focusing largely on primary prevention or deficit based approaches are not often solutions. Pittman and colleagues note that simply being problem free does not make youth fully prepared to enter adulthood. Preparation for adulthood comes from the development of internal capacities and being capable to utilize and draw strength from external supports and opportunities for successful development. Internal capacities include the capacity for initiative, problem solving, self-efficacy, self-determination, and other strengths (Larson, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Witt & Caldwell, 2005). External supports and opportunities refer to the individuals (e.g., parents, teachers, coaches), occasions (e.g., trips abroad or to places of significance), and activities (e.g., extracurricular activities, sports, hobbies) that foster and facilitate development (Witt & Caldwell, 2005).

Problem behaviors such as precocious sex, substance abuse, and alienation can best be described as challenges related to situations where PYD was not supported (Larson 2000). Watts and Caldwell (2008) state that youth prevention models try to battle and/or eliminate behaviors that are detrimental to society. Early prevention models stressed reaching youth early in their development before problems could manifest. As a result, many prevention programs in schools and institutions targeted children as early as the elementary and middle school grades (Pittman et al. 2003). Youth viewed as high risk were targeted, and professionals attempted to fix the problem rather than promoting or building individual capacities, leaving youth considered low

risk with a wider range of opportunities (World Youth Report 2003). Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, & Lerner (2005) contend that a society cannot deny that problems among youth exist, however, the PYD movement focuses on strengths adolescents possess, and not their deviant behaviors. It stresses positive change throughout the developmental systems of youth.

According to Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas, and Lerner (2005) the PYD perspective emphasizes the importance of change in the systems that influence youth development and have the largest impact on youth and their bio-ecological niche. These authors further state that developmental systems can aid in the promotion of positive outcomes, by diminishing or buffering against less desirable behaviors, PYD occurs through experiential processes as youth learning to overcome challenges and become resilient in the face of obstacles, thus taking initiative to enact change. Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, and Hawkins (1998) label these experiential processes circumstances (e.g. families, schools, communities, peer group) that address issues before a problem occurs. Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber (2003) state that within prevention models, it was assumed if problems were non-existent then PYD occurred naturally. Pittman et al. contend that simply preventing problems among youth did not adequately prepare youth for adulthood.

According to Pittman et al. the goal of fully prepared to take on the responsibilities of adulthood is not sufficient, because it does guarantee youths' full engagement in their development and society. They contend that youth are not properly learning to become adults unless they are actively engaged and taking part in decision-making. More recently, researchers have found that young people who are not fully engaged and connected to activities and experiences such as, school, work, sports, community engagement and activism, are at a higher risk of being disconnected from society (Pittman 2000). Purposeful, organized out-of-school

time activities have the potential to develop skills, attitudes, values and insights quickly, especially when that purpose is immediate, relevant and external (Pittman 1999). Adults can contribute to engagement and aid in the transition to adulthood through the provision of supports, opportunities, programs, and services that facilitate development, improve quality of life and support the goal of becoming fully functioning adults (Witt & Caldwell 2005). The context of free time is fertile period in which adults can impact youth, as many free time activities aid in skill development and support the adoption of pro-social norms needed for the successful transition to adulthood (Abbott and Barber 2007).

Importance of Free Time

Approximately 60% of youths' waking hours are spent in discretionary, non-obligated free time (Larson & Verma 1999), this amount of time draws significance to the context of leisure, and offers professionals an opportunity to contribute to healthy development (Caldwell & Baldwin 2003). Depending on how it used and with whom one spends time, free time can act as a liability or an advantage. Irby and Tolman (2002) contend that leisure is a "key context for education and learning, for health care and the decisions that impact young people's health" (p.3). Caldwell, Baldwin, Walls, and Smith (2004) contend that free time and leisure can lead to positive developmental outcomes such as role and identity experimentation. Caldwell and Darling (1999) specify that in free time youth experience autonomy to experiment with different ideas, behaviors, and social roles, which prepare youth for adulthood. During free time, youth have the potential to initiate opportunities and develop competencies that schools fail to teach because of day-to-day routines (Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord 2005). Mahoney et al. go on to state that free time is a context for youth to participate in the development of civic engagement, and these experiences also help build social and emotional competencies. Leisure

time affords youth opportunities to be self determined, explore identities, and become highly interested in activities that significantly contribute to long-term development (Caldwell, 2005a). The social context of leisure can also foster feelings of belonging and self-efficacy, while enhancing skills that heighten competence (Caldwell 2005a).

According to Caldwell and Darling (1999) leisure provides youth with chances to experience integration and differentiation in social settings that are organized. Through integration into a peer group, youth can negotiate with their peers, establish important skills, and learn to cooperate with peers. Differentiation occurs as youth learn to establish boundaries and autonomy within a youth's peer group, react to peer pressure, and respond to parental monitoring.

Leisure is a time for learning self-control, and this is no less important than the type of learning that happens in school through academics (World Youth Report, 2003). Youth, through the context of leisure, have resources to foster exploration for themselves, and develop skills and abilities (Kleiber 1999). Larson (2000) notes that development is promoted through adolescence leisure activities. Leisure, whether in the context of structured or unstructured settings, offers unique opportunities for identity development or recognition of one's self (Darling, Caldwell & Smith 2005). It is within leisure that youth engage in activities that are voluntary and provide optimal experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Optimal experiences occur as youth learn to express voluntary control over these activities and exert more autonomy (Sibereisen & Todt 1994). As Darling (2005) points out, leisure, through different contexts, can provide a catalyst of opportunities for positive development.

Structured Settings

Throughout adolescents' wide array of daily activities, structured youth programs in the community and extracurricular activities support conditions that foster developmental benefits (Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin 2003). Through organized activities, youth learn initiative, which is the ability to be self-directed while persevering through challenging activities (Larson, 2000). Larson states that structured activities rich in purpose and intrinsic motivation play a vital role in promoting social and academic achievement and school engagement. Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams (2003) found that youth who consistently participate in structured extracurricular activities from 8th through 12th grade report higher achievement, and are more likely to adopt pro-social behaviors into adulthood. Furthermore, time spent in organized activities support conditions for acquiring networks of positive adults and peers to become a valued member of a group within the community, and these social supports are linked to higher levels of engagement and achievement within school, and lower levels of negative behaviors (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt 2003). Furthermore, prolonged participation in extracurricular activities is linked to long-term educational success (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer 2003). Mahoney et al. argue that the structure and nature of organized activities explain why these types of experiences are developmentally beneficial.

Mahoney et al. (2005) described structured activities as having scheduled meetings on a regular basis where there is adult supervision that sets rules and goals, and involves many participants who are practicing to enhance some form of skill development. Caldwell (2005a) calls these kinds of activities "high yield" because youth construct experiences that lead to self-determined behavior. Leisure supports autonomous action when youth are granted the chance to express themselves and have some control of their environment (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith,

2005). Darling et al. further state that structured experiences offer youth opportunities to network and gain different resources that may not be available otherwise. Similar to extracurricular activities, sports offer opportunities to connect to adults outside of school and family. Sports also offer opportunities to practice, set and achieve goals, and accept defeat through competition while learning to play fairly (Carnegie Corporation of New York, 1992).

The Downside of Structured Activities

While leisure often catalyzes development, it can also prove detrimental under circumstances (Darling, 2005). Larson, Hansen, and Maneta (2006) found that organized sport activities were linked to higher levels of emotion regulation, initiative, and teamwork experiences. Larson et al. (2006) also found negative outcomes and report cases where sports lowered rates of networking with adults, inhibited identity formation, and led to fewer positive relationships with others. Hansen, Larson, and Dworkin (2003) also describe team sports both positively and negatively. They found that youth report high levels of personal development (i.e., regulation of emotions, developing physical skills); however, sports might be developmentally disruptive when looking at the adoption of pro-social norms. Hansen et al. found that sports have the propensity to yield negative interactions with peers, and sometimes expose youth to adults who behave inappropriately. Roberts and Treasure (1992) state that coaches face pressures to win, which may reinforce norms that lead to negative behavior from youth. In these instances, coaches fail to encourage developmental benefits. Teammates may also support norms that promote alcohol use and abuse in teens. Zaff, Moore, Papillo, & Williams (2003) found that participation in team sports for males leads to higher rates of alcohol use.

Over Structuring

Another potentially detrimental outcome of structured activity participation is related to over structuring or the over scheduling of structured activities. Over-scheduling of structured activities may be developmentally maladaptive (Melman, Little & Akin-Little 2007). Structured settings are often sought and scheduled by parents, and include lessons, sports, and activities through church groups (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2003). Kleiber and Richards (1985) contend that obligation of adolescents' time is taking away from positive unstructured leisure experiences that aid in self-discovery. Furthermore, stress is most often associated with time stress related to participation that diminishes the potential of leisure opportunities (Shaw, Caldwell, & Kleiber, 1996). Stress may also be a response for youth having little control of their required activities or feelings related to time stress or feeling hurried (Shaw et al., 1996). Barnett and Kane (1985) suggest that over-structured youth are slow to gain pro-social and emotional developmental skills. Barnett and Kane further suggest that intrinsic motivation among over-structured youth is weak. Over-structuring can lead to what Kleiber (1999) describes as activity bias, and this can result in youth not knowing what to do during unstructured time. Youth who possess this trait believe they must always be busy. McMeeking and Purkayastha (1995) found that youth seek free space through their leisure, and the push for more structured activities causes frustration.

Risk of Free Time

Leisure is a context for exposing youth to both risk and opportunity (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992). According to Larson and Richards (1994) the leisure context affords opportunities for autonomy, but often lacks guidance on how to manage this time. Youth are often ill-prepared or lack the capacity to direct their behaviors to support engagement and self-determination during free time (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). Larson (2000) notes that

adolescents are often afforded more freedom than children, and this is potentially stressful because guidelines on how to use time in unstructured settings are often not concise or non-existent. Young, Rathge, Mullis, and Mullis (1990) found stress to be linked to lower self-esteem during adolescence and lower academic performance.

Youth, unfortunately, often lack the ability to create meaningful leisure with their free time and it is in these situations where leisure fails to contribute to developmental outcomes (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Caldwell 2005a). The balance of negotiating peer pressure while attaining goals set forth by parents is often difficult for youth (Caldwell & Darling, 1999). Youth who are idle in their free time are often those who cannot create meaningful leisure and experience stress and/or boredom (Caldwell 2005a). Caldwell (2005a) refers to unstructured activities that lack developmental benefit low yield activities. Low yield activities are often experiences that do not challenge youth or adequately support meaningful engagement.

Caldwell and Baldwin (2003) state that there are certain tensions in leisure settings that result in negative leisure which stem from feelings of boredom. Iso-Ahola and Crowley (1991) link boredom to negative behaviors such as drug abuse and alcohol. In unstructured leisure, youth are also prone to delinquency and sexual experimentation (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Deviant acts are most often orchestrated while in the company of peers in unsupervised settings (Goodale & Godbey, 1988; Wartella & Mazzarella 1990). Gilman, Meyers, & Perez (2004) state that too much time in unstructured, unsupervised activities directly reflects lower academic achievement and less than optimal behavior. Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, and Johnston (1996) relate through their research the challenges youth face with unstructured time and peer interaction. They found that higher amounts of time spent with friends in an

unsupervised, unstructured setting, led to heightened amounts of problem behavior. Peer related unstructured activities account for much of youth's leisure time (Eccles, Barber, Stone & Hunt 2003), and the risk associated with this context of leisure has led to increased pressure to fill youths' time with structured, meaningful activities to avoid potential peril. However, not all unstructured free time is harmful.

Larson and Verma (1999) found youth have a tremendous amount of free time that is spent in the context of unsupervised, unstructured leisure. Fletcher, Nickerson, and Wright (2003) describe unstructured leisure activities as those that happen randomly and may include being engaged with peers or siblings, being alone while listening to music, or reading a book, and play that is spontaneous. Coatsworth, Sharp, Palen, Darling, and Marta (2005) found youth often list passive leisure activities such as socializing with friends as self-defining leisure. Waterman (2004) states that activities with friends in social settings often promote increased levels of personal expressiveness. Larson and Seepersad (2003) state that youth do spend much of their time 'hanging out' with peers, but it is within this context that youth achieve self validation and discovery of oneself. Thomson (2000) contends that unstructured leisure may foster self-discovery and skill development.

What is clear from the literature is that the quality and developmental potential of free time is not simply a product of time spent in structured or unstructured activities. These contexts rely on the presence of others, the content and nature of the experience, and the abilities or internal capacities of youth themselves. The developmentally generative and disruptive processes that occur within these contexts often dictate how development is impacted. Ecological Systems Theory provides a framework for understanding how development is

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stimulated or disrupted, and how youth learn to positively adapt or engage in maladaptive behavior.

Theoretical Framework - Ecological Systems Theory

According to the developmental literature, human development is a unique, complex process that is impacted by the actions and reactions of several ecological systems that promote or inhibit development. Duerden and Witt (2010) note that practitioners frequently focus on programs alone without correlating it to the influences or settings that play a vital role in the developing youth (e.g., school, family, peer groups, communities, etc.). Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory (EST) identifies ecological systems from the individual level and extends these outward (e.g., communities, nation, family etc.), where youth have interaction and participate as active members and aid to shape their own development. McHale, Dotterer, and Kim (2009) contend that youth's range of activities impact their relationships, skills, behavior, and identity. To understand developmental benefits, researchers must look not only at how youth spend their time, but who the participants in the activity are, how the participants carry out the activity, and why youth participate initially (McHale et al., 2009). Paquette and Ryan (2001) contend that EST is made up of layers. These layers include family, peers, social institutions, and other aspects of the community environment that affect the developing individual. Paquette and Ryan contend that disturbances in any layer interacting with the individual eventually pass through to the other layers or ecological systems.

Four layers make up the EST: the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystems (Brofenbrenner 1979). The microsystem is the closest and most influential to the individual and one in which the individual comes into daily contact (Paquette & Ryan 2001). When we think of the microsystem, we think of the people and institutions that have the greatest

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impact on the individual. For many youth, this includes family, school, neighborhood, and

childcare. When describing the mesosystem, Bronfenbrenner (1986) states that even with the

family acting as the main setting for development, the interaction between two settings is

important and effects individuals on a different level. An example by Paquette and Ryan (2001)

is the relationship that occurs between youth's teacher and youth's parents or between church

and the community. The exosystem has an external influence on the child, and is one in which

the individual rarely enters but feels the effects (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The exosystem can

include parents' workplace, parents' peer and social group, and the influences that society has on

the functioning of the family. The final level in Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is the

macrosystem, which is the outermost layer of a series of concentric circles (Paquette & Ryan

2001). Duerden and Witt (2010) describe this layer as the "broader cultural system" (p. 110),

and state that this layer dictates qualities of the other systems. Figure 1 depicts each system.
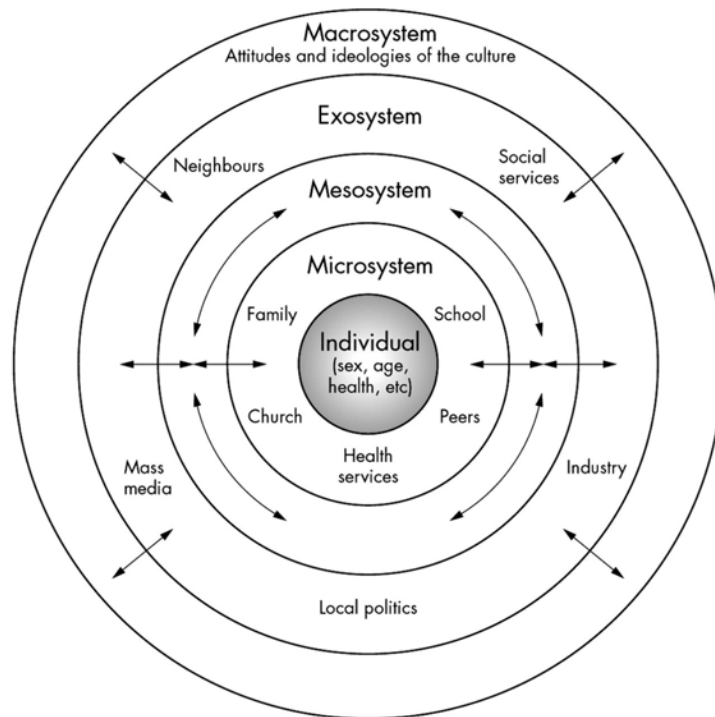

Figure 1. The Bio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979)

Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998) describe the development of individuals as occurring through reciprocal interactions known as proximal processes. Proximal processes occur typically between the individual and the microsystem, the system closest to the individual level. Interactions are significant when these occur on a regular basis for extended periods of time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris). McHale et al. (2009) note that through activities youth are in close proximity with peer groups and adults who share their happiness and common desire for activity participation. These parallel with closeness and connectedness, which are crucial to psychological well-being. Transactions exist through individuals and the environment, where individuals are active members and environments are responsive, affecting the person engaged within it (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998). Individuals are active players, they set proximal processes into motion through their action or inaction and these processes impact development over the long term. EST states that there is a bi-directional process that depends on characteristics at each layer (Bronfenbrenner & Morris 1998). Proximal processes can have positive (i.e., generative) or negative (i.e., disruptive) impact on development, and their impact is felt further over time or the chronosystem. Proximal processes have their greatest strength through the microsystem, which further underscores the role that parents, peers, and other adults play in the development of youth.

Parental Influence

Parents, along with the family, act as the primary socializing agent in the lives of adolescents (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington, & Bornstein 2000). Hutchinson, Baldwin, and Caldwell (2003) state that parents can influence adolescents' free time directly and indirectly. Parents play the primary role in determining if youth spend their free time in unstructured or structured activities. The actions of parents largely determine if youth spend

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time in experiences that possibly result in maladaptive behaviors, or if youth spend their time in productive ways, leading to healthy, autonomous functioning. Shannon (2006) describes the importance of parents for youth leisure, stating they aid in the discovery of the values, behavior, and attitudes related to leisure.

In looking at how parents motivate leisure choices, Hultsman (1993), sought to explore what constrained youths' participation in activities they found interesting. Hultsman found that parents were largely the reason for youths' lack of participation. Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) note that some youth have their activities selected for them by their parents; however, this oversight is often constraining for adolescents, and can lead to less desirable behaviors because of boredom or stress. Conversely, parents are often credited for why youth continue in activities they find unappealing.

Hutchinson, Baldwin, and Caldwell (2003) looked at why youth who initially wanted to participate in an activity continued when wanting to quit. They found that parents often set rules and expectations related to sticking with activities, especially if parents valued the activity. Overall, Hutchinson et al. found several factors, which parents used to direct their adolescents' free time use, these included: 1) expressing specific values or ideas about how free time should be used, 2) enforcing certain standards and rules around free time and leisure, 3) parents made decisions for their child regarding activity involvement, 4) using specific strategies to monitor how youth spend their free time, 5) allocating certain resources for youth, and 6) directing youth toward activities that allowed youth to become more responsible and to act autonomously.

Shannon (2006) found that mothers encouraged their children to participate in leisure activities because it created balance, relieved stress, and was physically and mentally beneficial. She found that fathers acted indirectly as role models instead of conveying the importance of

leisure to youth through conversation. She also found that, although money or transportation sometimes hindered participation in certain activities, how a parent valued an activity was just as important. Lack of participation was often linked to parent's perceptions that a particular activity was insignificant. In addition to valuing the activity, Howard and Madrigal (1990) found that youth activity participation often depended upon how that activity fit into their mothers' schedule, as mothers were often responsible for transportation.

Hultsman (1993) notes that parental influence diminishes as youth mature and reach high school, and states that other social agents start to intervene. Quane and Rankin (2006), state peers can diminish parental authority during the trying years of adolescence. Like parents, peers may also approve or disapprove of certain activities (Phillip, 1996).

Peers

Caldwell and Darling (1999) state that peers and parents are an important influence on youth while they are striving for autonomy and seeking control of their environment and experiences. Within the peer group, youth learn negotiation tactics while participating in leisure activities. Stressors resulting from peer pressure, parents, and the need for autonomy are played out through experiences in leisure. Youth participate in activities based on what their peers do, and youth who are better adjusted participate in activities that are developmentally beneficial (McHale, Crouter, & Tucker 2001).

Agnew and Petersen (1989) describe the impact peers have on one another and their reflective behavior. These researchers state that youth who associate with other youth in structured activities are less likely to behave negatively when faced with time in unsupervised activities. Similarly, maladaptive behaviors such as abusing substances, juvenile delinquency, and smoking, are most influenced by the participation of peers in these activities. Caldwell and

Darling (1999) found that youth who had low parental monitoring and socialized with peers who valued partying were more likely to abuse substances. Gender also seems to be a factor for females, as Hultsman (1993) found that females were more likely than males to drop an activity if their friends drop out. Peers are often a motivating factor for youth to continue activity participation (Hultsman, 1993).

Other Adults

The presence of other adults may also explain why youth initiate or continue specific forms of activity participation. Scales and Gibbons (1996) report on recent studies of significant adults and found that relationships with caring adults (outside of parents) are a protective factor for youth who possess several risk factors. Important adults are those who act as a positive influence in the development of youth (Rishel, Scales & Koeske, 2005). Beam, Chen, and Greenberger (2002) report that these adults are compensating for what youths' parents lack or cannot provide. Often times, relationships with significant adults happen naturally through exposure to different contexts. As youth migrate into adolescence, they have more contact with other adults outside of their parents and develop special bonds, helping promote positive developmental benefits in the process (Beam et al.). Youth who have contact with supportive, significant adults have better coping mechanisms, and handle difficult situations better than those youth who don't spend time in these relationships (Garmezy 1985).

It is estimated that half of youth's contact with significant adults is with adults who are related to them such as grandparents, and uncles or aunts (Beam, Chen, & Greenberger 2002). Related adults are often deeply involved with youth and offer a wide array of support, whereas relationships with unrelated adults are most often sporadic and the support specific. Unrelated adults include church members, a favored teacher, coaches, and others with whom youth have

regular contact throughout the week (Beam, Chen, & Greenberger 2002). Youth most often have contact with teachers who they favor or daycare workers (Richel, Scales & Koeske, 2005). Richel et al. (2005) found that youth who have frequent positive interactions with other adults also have fewer maladaptive behaviors.

Richel et al. state that positive non-parental adults have an important role in youth programs as mentors, and state those relationships already present should be strengthened. The need to stress policies and practices that encourage the involvement of mentors is an important component to youth programs, because of the significant qualities these adults pass on the youth. Congruent with past research, Greenberger, Chen, and Beam (1998) found significant adults most often reflected the sex of youth, and that females, however not by a large difference, were more likely to have a significant adult in their lives.

The microsystem consists of individuals with whom youth have regular interaction, and these individuals often play the greatest role in determining the behavior and development of individuals. However, the context in which the ecological system is based also influences all levels of the ecological system. The level of urbanicity is related to cultural, economic, and resource differences. Much of the positive youth development literature focuses on the experiences of urban and suburban youth. This study focuses on rural youth, and makes considerations given the unique circumstances faced by youth living in rural communities.

Rural Youth

According to Hart, Larson, and Lishner (2005), scientists have struggled with the concept of rurality. Rural counties can be defined as non-metro county with an urban population of 20,000 or more or a non-metro-county that is completely rural and adjacent or not adjacent to a metro area (USDA, 2013). The study area in question fits the latter definition. When comparing

rural areas to their urban, suburban, rural areas incorporating small cities, rural areas are generally under-resourced and have higher proportions of the population that are elderly, unemployed, poor, and lacking health insurance (Hart et al., 2005). Rural communities often have specialized economies that are susceptible to economic downturn (Hart et al., 2005). Residents of rural areas often have to travel farther to destinations and this results in inflated costs related to good and healthcare (Hart et al., 2005).

According to Caldwell (2005b) youth who live in low resourced areas have a certain disadvantages when compared to their suburban and urban counterparts. Rural youth are less likely to experience leisure positively, and lack opportunities for participation in recreational activities. Caldwell further states that rural areas lack the capability to offer resources, and entire communities suffer for it, youth particularly. Quane and Rankin (2006) suggest youth who live and grow in high poverty areas are worse off, in terms of behavior, health, cognitive, and social factors, than those from high-income families. Glendinning et al. (2003) states that living in rural areas for youth can inhibit their overall well-being and sense of identity.

Haller and Monk (1992) state that many schools in rural areas push to teach and prepare students to leave after graduation. However, Ley, Nelson, and Beltyukova (1996) describe youth as the town's greatest attribute and that when youth leave, the town's vitality is diminished. These researchers state that youth may leave home due to loneliness, and due to challenges imposed by few economic resources or opportunities within their communities. Ley, Nelson, and Beltyukova further offer that rural youth view family and community relationships as important; yet when listing assets important for adulthood such as, social responsibility, civic affairs, close friendships, and contributions to community, these attributes were viewed as secondary and not

as important. PYD states that these assets are fundamental for success and transitions to adulthood (Search Institute, 1997)

Chapman and Shucksmith (1999) have categorized rural youth to be isolated and have an extreme disadvantage. Jentsch (2006) contends that many rural youth leave home, which sets the communities at a disadvantage. Jentsch further states those who do return upon graduation do so in the hopes of paying off loans or other debts incurred. Rural youth who opt to stay in their communities are unable to secure independent housing, and often live with parents or in accommodations of poor fit within the remote area (Rugg & Jones 1999). Khattri, Riley, and Kane (1997) suggest rural youth do have certain advantages such as classroom sizes that are small, and the ties to the community from schools. This is alleviated when looking at the resources for education that rural areas offer its youth. Often times, the isolation and characteristics within the community lead to lack of choices in school and services for out-of-school time.

Constraints

Meeks and Mauldin (1990) state that all youth have constraints on their leisure which include, money, and environmental factors, such as locations, and where activities take place due to transportation. Structured activities lead to positive development and understanding constraints is important because these often prevent involvement in these types of activities (Shannon, Robertson, Morrison, & Werner 2009). The first framework on leisure constraints was set from Crawford and Godbey (1987), extended later by Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991), and later assessed and revised by Godbey, Crawford, and Shen (2010). Leisure constraints are factors that inhibit participation in an activity (Raymore, Godbey, Crawford, & von-Eye 1993) and are useful to researchers to explaining leisure choices and determining what

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influences leisure participation and non-participation (Jackson 2005). Crawford and Godbey (1987) conceptualized three types of constraints that are used today. Interpersonal constraints involve others and the relationships that arise through interaction/participation with them. Intrapersonal constraints are constraints emanating from youth themselves (i.e., inhibitions, or avoidance mechanisms). Finally, structural constraints are constraints that prohibit participation such as transportation or lack of money to participate. Hultsman (1993) contends the need to study constraints among adolescents as these factors influence future participation or lack thereof in leisure pursuits.

Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) describe the importance to studying constraints on leisure in adolescence by noting the extent of constraints that impact development, security, and competence youth have in civic and societal engagements. These authors suggest that constraints that keep youth from participating in activities are different than constraints that cause youth to cease involvement. Hultsman (1992) looked at reasons for starting and ceasing recreation participation by adolescents, and found cost of activity, parental disapproval, transportation issues, and age as reasons for youth not to join an activity. Ceasing participation was related to loss of interest, inconvenience related to timing of the activity, and relocating to a new place.

Hultsman (1993) looked at parental influence, influence of other adults, and peer influence as constraints to initiating new activities in structured activities and continuing activity participation. She found the main reason for ceasing participation related to perceptions of the program leaders, while the main reason for not joining a structured activity was attributed to parents of the youth.

Raymore et al. (1993) studied adolescent constraints through a hierarchical model among 12th graders and found that intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints were distinct, but all were correlated and connected. These authors also looked at self-esteem, gender and SES. There was a significant negative relation between self-esteem and intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints, but no connection to structural constraints. They found gender to influence self-esteem and heighten intrapersonal and total constraints. With SES they also found a negative effect, resulting in lower perceived constraints for those from a high-income family.

Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) describe selection for interest development and activity participation. Caldwell and Baldwin suggest that youth have to be aware of the opportunities around them, capability of choosing meaningful activities, and possess the means for participation. These authors further contend that interest must be more than a passing desire; rather, youth need to experiment with an activity to determine if the interest is there to participate, and then move on to a deeper level of engagement. McMeeking and Paukayasthat (1995) studied leisure and how it related to space and accessibility and found the concept of place proved to be a constraint for adolescents.

Internal Capacities

Internal capacities refer to individual qualities that relate to good health and quality of life (Resnick, 2005). Internal capacities help youth make positive choices, develop a sense of purpose, and successfully transition to adulthood. The literature sometimes refers to these capacities as resilience traits or internal assets (Hanson & Kim, 2007; Search Institute, 1997). Caldwell & Baldwin (2005) include internal capacities and developmental markers as individual-specific factors that contribute to the choices adolescents make in leisure. Among these capacities and developmental markers are autonomy, competence, identity, intimacy, and

sexuality. Over time, researchers have linked several internal capacities or assets that contribute to development by helping youth negotiate environmental risks and challenges, while successfully engaging in pursuits that lead to positive development.

The Search Institute (1997) identified 40 developmental assets (20 internal and 20 external) that correlate with positive development and the successful transition to adulthood. These assets identified over a series of studies, and these align with previous research on protective and resilience factors (Jessor, Van Der Bos, Vanderwyn, Costa, & Turbin, 1995; Werner & Smith, 1992). Fraser-Thomas, Cote, & Deakin (2005) state that when developmental assets are present in youth, their ability to thrive will enhance. Thriving results in more success at school, which can impact youth to be positive leaders and encourage them to volunteer. Table 1 lists the internal and external assets identified by the Search Institute.

Table 1:

The Search Institute's List of 40 Developmental Assets (Search Institute, 1997)

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING
Achievement Motivation - Young person is motivated to do well in school.
School Engagement - Young person is actively engaged in learning.
Homework - Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
Bonding to School - Young person cares about her or his school.
Reading for Pleasure - Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

POSITIVE VALUES
Caring - Young Person places high value on helping other people.
Equality and Social Justice - Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
Integrity - Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
Honesty - Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
Responsibility - Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
Restraint - Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES
Planning and Decision Making - Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
Interpersonal Competence - Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
Cultural Competence - Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
Resistance Skills - Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
Peaceful Conflict Resolution - Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

POSITIVE IDENTITY
Personal Power - Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
Self-Esteem - Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
Sense of Purpose - Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
Positive View of Personal Future - Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

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While the developmental assets framework is useful and aligns well with Jessor et al. (1995) and Garmezy's (1985) work in protective factors, the Search Institute has been proprietary with research in this area, and maintains ownership of all measures. Available publicly are the measures on the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), which were developed based off the work of those study assets, protective factors, and resilience traits (Hanson & Kim, 2007). During development of the CHKS three clusters of resilience traits correlated with measures of adolescent health and well-being. The three clusters are (1) social competence, (2) autonomy and sense of self, and (3) sense of meaning and purpose. Social competence measures cooperation and communication skills, empathy and respect, and problem solving skills. The autonomy and sense of self clusters measure personal conviction, self-efficacy, and self-awareness. The cluster for sense of meaning and purpose measures optimism and goals and aspirations. This battery of measures has been used in numerous studies to assess baseline data and understand the efficacy of intervention and treatment for adolescent youth (Hanson & Kim, 2007).

Internal Capacities and Constraints Negotiation

Caldwell (2005a) describes youth's autonomy as they grow into adolescents, and how this autonomous behavior often leaves youth unable to manage this time in a meaningful way. Often times, youth are unable to use their time wisely, and participate in unstructured, low yield activities (e.g. t.v. viewing, video game playing, hanging out with peers), which yield no developmental benefits (Caldwell 2005a). Caldwell and Baldwin (2005) looked at constraints adolescents face and how perceptions depend on personal and environmental factors, and this aids in negotiation of those constraints. These authors further note that achieving developmental markers (e.g., initiative, competence, sexuality, intimacy, identity) and positive relations with

parents effect perceived constraints by adolescents. While not considered in the broader

constraints literature, these developmental markers or internal capacities can be classified as

intrapersonal constraints if these capacities do not exist or are lacking. Unlike traditional

intrapersonal constraints that focus on a person's inner psyche, lacking internal capacities may

result in poor choices or preferences for activities that are attainable. In other words, the

capacity to negotiate constraints might not exist, and therefore adolescents choose or elect to

engage in unstructured experiences, because they lack the wherewithal to develop strategies or

identify activities that are more fulfilling.

Jun and Kyle's (2011) work examines leisure identity, an internal characteristic, and its

relationship with constraints negotiation. Jun and Kyle contend that people often engage in

behavior that is linked to their identity, this phenomena is known as self-verification. When

leisure participation is interrupted by constraints, negotiation tactics are employed to attain

leisure that is linked to one's identity, an internal capacity. Those who view their leisure as

highly important will facilitate more strategies to negotiate constraints on their leisure; however

at times there may be conflict, limiting access to negotiating through constraints. The strength of

one's leisure interest determines the extent they will go to negotiate constraints (Jun & Kyle

2011).

When considering the leisure constraint literature, a gap exists on understanding the role

of developmental markers and internal capacities in youth. When considering adolescence, if

youth are lacking specific skills and abilities related to development, they might not be able to

employ negotiation strategies to counter the constraints they face in free time. This study seeks

to understand how the presence or absence of internal capacities predicts structured activity

participation by rural youth. Further, it seeks to identify how rural youth negotiate constraints,

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and to what extent parents and other adults support youths' participation in structured activity experiences.

Summary of Literature

Positive youth development focuses on how youth successfully develop into adults. It espouses the belief that youth will experience success in development as they stay free of problems, become prepared to take on the challenges of adulthood, and are fully engaged in the processes at work to prevent problems and prepare them for successful transition through adolescence. The context of free time and qualities of leisure play a significant role in development, and offer opportunities as well as risks. How youth negotiate these opportunities and risks often depend on relationships with parents, peers, and other adults. These players in the microsystem often explain why youth engage in structured, self-determined, high yield activities or get mired in unfulfilling, unstructured low yield activities associated with risk. Youth living in under-resourced rural areas face additional challenges, as these individuals often have fewer opportunities for programs, greater distances to travel, and fewer resources to fund leagues, clubs and other organizations that contribute to youths' free time world. Finally, the internal capacities of youth may explain why youth are able to negotiate constraints to participation in structured activities. Internal capacities are often developmental markers, whose achievement is assisted by supports and opportunities made available through the microsystem.

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