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ABSTRACT

This study compared the participation in various types of activities during the elementary school years of academically successful and unsuccessful youth. The academically successful group consisted of 63 college students from lower level general communication classes. The two unsuccessful comparison groups consisted of 53 youth, ages 13 to 16 years, from a nonresidential alternative school, who had been suspended from regular classrooms; and 12 male youths, ages 5 to 17, from a juvenile center, who had displayed aggression in the academic setting. The Activities Participation Scale was devised, based on activities listed by college students that they remembered doing when they were 5 through 8 and 9 through 12 years old. All subjects indicated on the scale the frequency of engagement in activities in the areas of sports, dance, camp, music, work, family activities, church related activities, other structured activities, and other unstructured activities. Findings indicated that: (1) participation in activities overall increased with age to a greater extent in the successful group than in the comparison group; (2) when required school activities were eliminated in the comparison groups, the total percentage of participants in sports was lower than in the successful group; (3) creative activities were indicated less by the comparison groups than by the successful group; (4) television viewing and video games were indicated by more male comparison group participants; and (5) females were more likely than males to participate in a greater variety of activities. (The questionnaire and data tables are appended. Contains eight references.) (KB)

Running head: CONTRAST OF ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

A Contrast of Amount and Type of Activity in Elementary School Years Between Academically Successful and Unsuccessful Youth

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Abstract

The disparities in elementary age participation in activities between academically successful and unsuccessful youth were examined. Differences were rated in such areas as amount of TV watching and video games as well as reading and writing, etc. Figures are provided for exact numbers in each of the 104 activities for control and experimental groups. Many questions arise from the data as to reasons for the differences and the effect on ultimate academic success.

Although there are many problems in the Unites States with which to deal, one that is becoming increasingly more prevalent is that of juveniles exhibiting aggressive behavior in the schools. Several variables have been considered including the influence of television and the music industry. However, one that has not received much notice is that the amount of participation in other activities during childhood. Often individuals who have achieved national prominence will allude in interviews to specific activities that helped raise personal self-esteem, the type of which ranging from sports to the arts, involving family and peers. What types of activities have troubled youth engaged in as children between the age of 5-12 years? Do these vary from childhood experiences of youth who have successfully completed grades K-12 and gone on to higher education?

Several researchers have examined various aspects of this problem. For example, Frey and Rothilsberger (1996) looked at social networks and supports and the effect of these and aggressive behavior in adolescence. For this the researchers examined: 1) the role of nuclear families in long term support situations; 2) the effect of peer group influence on daily matters; and, 3) whether females have better support resources than males during this period. Findings include no difference between males and females in terms of nuclear support, but some in which parent is sought, with males more often seeking females and females the male. Further, no correlation was found between low academic achievement and support, but did note all subjects came from an area of higher living standards.

One area that may interfere is that of communication. This could inhibit involvement in activities if the skills were below the average level. Sanger, Hux and Belau (1997) studied the oral language skills of female juvenile delinquents. When compared to a control group of junior and senior high school students, the aforementioned group was

found to have weaker language skills than the control group. Because the experimental group had been screened for language disorders, the assumption can be made that the lack of ability to communicate could be related to environmental factors and have a negative effect on social adjustments with peers which is needed to participate in activities.

If as Hoge et al. (1995) suggest there is no solid evidence in existence that positive self-esteem and academic achievement are related, even though others suggest the significance of peers and environment, perhaps it is time to step into another setting to determine what types of influences troubled youth have had in earlier childhood. McCreary (1996) pointed out that often African-American adolescents feel society is correct in identifying that race with "criminals, drug users, absent fathers, and adolescent mothers." It is possible that because of this youth maybe more apt to bow to peer pressure and become involved in less socially acceptable activities. The authors also suggested that youth engaged in church activities were less likely to become academic failures.

Perhaps rather than any one factor, a combination of several may be involved. If young people have developed a repertoire of activities when young in which some success has been found and self-confidence among peers established, will this carry-over to behavior in the classroom? Can aggressive behavior be reduced through channeling of energies appropriately in younger years?

Method

To examine the above problem, a questionnaire was developed and titled Activities Participation Scale. Upper class students at Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, OH were offered the opportunity to volunteer to make a list of activities "I did when I was young" between the ages of 5-8 and 9-12. Sixteen students provided a list which totaled 104

items, which were then grouped according to basic categories [see Appendix A]. The forms were first distributed to 63 randomly selected students from lower level general communication classes and members of the Black Student Alliance on campus who came from urban, suburban and rural settings. This comprised the control group.

Experimental subjects came from, 2 schools: Group I - 53 male and female 8th grade students age 13-16 from a non residential alternative school in Charlotte-Mecklemburg, (N.C.) school district. All had been suspended from regular classrooms on several occasions, with most from homes where there was some violence, alcohol or drug abuse, or poverty [No white females in this group]. Group II - 12 male youths from a juvenile center in Cleveland, Ohio, age range 5-17, who had been classified as displaying aggressive behavior in the academic setting [See Table I] [No females in this group].

Table I

	Black	Control Group White	Latino	Asian
Females	14	21		
Males	7	20		
	21	41		
		Group I (N.C.)		
Females	10	0	1	1
Males	38	5		
	48	5		
		Group II (OH)		
Females	0	0		
Males	7	5		
	7	5		

Permission had been obtained to distribute the forms through school authorities. Once completed, forms were collected and identified only by group, sex, and race. In addition to the information on the form, participants were asked to indicate frequency of engagement in each activity. 0 = never; 1 = seldom (1- 2 times per month max);

2 = occasionally; once per week 3+ = frequently (2-3 times per week); 4 = regularly; or every day. This proved to be a difficult number to obtain.

Results:

When compiling the results, numbers of participants in each activity and category were tabulated [See Appendix B]. Frequency, as could best be determined, indicated that the control groups generally ranged from 3-4, while the others from 0-3. It should also be noted that the experimental groups often indicated orally just one experience or having no idea how to answer. Numbers and percentages of participants are shown in Table II.

Table II

Total participants in all activities by category and group

	Male Group I & II No. 55		Male Control No. 27		Female Group I No. 10		Female Control No. 35	
Group I & II								
	Ages 5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12
Sports	244	299	153	245	68	69	237	340
Dance	10	14	5	7	14	12	26	18
Music	16	32	13	23	13	21	16	39
Work	45	75	37	81	13	19	45	110
Helping Neighbors	5	1	4	13	3	5	3	13
Family Activities	173	186	123	116	82	84	274	244
Camp	56	42	19	18	32	39	34	41
Church	49	63	27	31	23	17	54	61
Other	439	288	140	180	126	114	398	476
Total	1037	1000	521	714	374	380	1087	1342
	Percentages of total number of activities (as above)							
Sports	24%	30%	29%	34%	18%	18%	21%	25%
Dance	-1%	1%	-1%	-1%	3%	6%	2%	1%
Music	1%	3%	2%	3%	3%	5%	1%	3%
Work	4%	7%	7%	11%	3%	5%	4%	8%
Help Neighbors	-1%	-1%	1%	2%	-1%	-1%	1%	1%
Family Activities	17%	19%	24%	16%	23%	22%	24%	18%
Camp	5%	4%	4%	3%	9%	10%	3%	3%
Church	6%	6%	5%	5%	7%	4%	5%	5%
Other	42%	29%	27%	25%	34%	30%	39%	36%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Some participants in all groups added notations to the request for other. These can be found in Table III.

Table III

Other activities if noted.

	Male Group I & II	Male Control	Female Group I	Female Control
Sports	None	Wrestling	None	Ice Skating Cheerleading Water-skiing hula hoop
Music	Recorder Piano Rap	Violin Piano Guitar Drums	Saxophone Recorder	Piano Church bell group Trumpet Drum Violin
Other Activities	Shooting People Smoking Pick-up Football	Transformers Hot Wheels Club house	None	Put on plays with friends Play restaurant kick the can clubhouse

Discussion:

First, when reviewing the data one needs to consider that participation in all aspects this study was on a voluntary basis. Consequently, some disparities in numbers reflect that fact rather than possible actual differences in numbers. However, the trends do help in developing some understanding of differences. For example, by examining the next figures (Table IV): one finds that

1. Participation in activities overall increases with age to a much greater extent in the control groups than the experimental;
2. If one eliminates the required school activities in the experimental groups, the total percentage of participants in sports, is a great deal less than in the control;

3. Creative activities, whether organized or recreational, are less in the experimental group than the control;
4. Activities with higher numbers, mainly TV viewing and video games have considerably more participants in the Male Group I & II. These do not build skills to carry over to other activities that are characterized by creative and critical thinking;
5. Females are more apt to participate in a larger variety of activities than males.

If frequency could be more accurately tabulated, it would appear that Groups I & II, male and female , have a great deal more idle or unproductive time than the control groups, and are more often placed in situations where peer activity may not contribute to social or educational skills for the teen years.

Table IV

Percentage of participants in selected activities by groups.

	Male Group I & II No. 55		Male Control No. 27		Female Group I No. 10		Female Control No. 35	
Sport	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12
Baseball	53%	62%	15%	63%	Softball 50%	60%	60%	51%
Basketball	55%	75%	30%	59%	40%	60%	25%	54%
Roller skate	22%	33%	40%	67%	2%	2%	6%	5%
Swimming	44%	48%	44%	44%	8%	8%	7%	5%
Other Activities								
Watch TV	66%	68%	66%	70%	70%	90%	7%	6%
Video games	65%	71%	30%	48%	60%	80%	22%	29%
Card games	26%	95%	25%	48%	30%	80%	57%	74%
Wrestle w/ sibling	28%	42%	18%	33%	--	--	--	
Play with dolls	--	--	--	--	90%	60%	74%	80%
Play teacher	--	--	--	--	50%	30%	62%	65%
Reading	15%	24%	33%	44%	50%	50%	68%	75%
Writing	6%	13%	19%	22%	50%	50%	62%	48%
Drawing	31%	33%	25%	33%	60%	40%	54%	45%

Some questions that arose after evaluation of the data include;

1. Were some of the differences related to economic status or availability? i.e. golf, skiing, tennis etc.
2. Are there differences in self-confidence building between physical activities?
3. Why was there an overall rise in baby-sitting and household chores among females, but a decrease in household chores among black women?
4. Why are there no white females in Group I & II? Does this relate back to previous research tendencies of teacher to put males, with greater amounts found in black males, into special classes? (Buchan et al. 1977, Kelly et al. 1977)

If one reflects back historically, it can be noted early educators stressed the need to stimulate and provide a wide variety of educational experiences so as to develop young minds. Learning does not have to be entertaining or easy, but can be compared to building, where everything in the foundation must be properly placed in order and plumb to insure excellence in the final product. Otherwise, as the height of the "building" increases the more room for flaws and weakness. Combine that with some old adages:

1. Treat children with the respect of an adult but remember always, children are not adults;
2. Keep children very, very busy mentally <u>and</u> physically;
3. Everyone is born with a body and a mind and need both to be developed;
4. The way to learn is by doing. [Aristotle]

This study is not the end but the beginning of reexamining this issue, but may help to start the alleviation of societal pressures that lead young people into inappropriate and aggressive behavior. Programs need to be reevaluated to add more room for creative play

and developmental activities. Children need to compile experiences that will make positive contributions for the future.

Appendix A

SEX = M / F
(Circle One)

Please check the activities in which you participated in the appropriate age brackets. Leave blank anything that does not apply.

Organized or Freeplay Sports	Age 5-8 yrs	Age 9-12 yrs
BADMINTON		
BASEBALL		
BASKETBALL		
BICYCLING		
FISHING		
FOOTBALL		
FOUR WHEEL RIDING		
FRISBEE		
GOLF		
GYMNASTICS		
HORSEBACK RIDING		
MINIATURE GOLF		
ROLLERSKATING		
SKIING		
SOCCER		
SOFTBALL		
SLEDDING		
SWIMMING		
TENNISBALL		
TENNIS		
TRACK & FIELD		
VOLLEYBALL		
OTHER:		

DANCE:	Age 5-8 yrs	Age 9-12 yrs
BALL		
BATON TWIRLING		
JAZZ		
MADE UP OWN ROUTINES		
TAP		
OTHER:		

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CAMP:		
BASKETBALL		
BASEBALL		
BOYSCOUT		
CAMPFIRE GIRLS		
CHURCH		
GIRLSCOUT		
YMCA		
OTHER:		

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MUSIC:		
BAND		
CHURCH CHOIR		
CLARINET		
FLUTE LESSONS		
GENERAL CHORUS		
VOICE LESSONS		

MUSIC OTHER CONT:	AGE 5-8 YRS	AGE 9-12 YRS

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WORK:		
BABYSITTING		
CUTTING GRASS		
HOUSEHOLD CHORES		
NEWSPAPER ROUTE		
RAKING LEAVES		
SHOVELING SNOW		
TAKING CARE OF NEIGHBOR'S:		
ANIMALS		
FISH		
HOUSE		
PLANTS		
OTHER:		

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FAMILY ACTIVITIES:		
GAMES WITH PARENT(S) (ie CARDS, BOARD)		
SUNDAY WITH GRANDPARENTS		
COUSINS		
WENT TO MALL WITH FAMILY		
DRIVES IN COUNTRY		
PICNICS		
KIDDIE PARKS		

FAMILY ACTIVITIES CONT.	AGE 5-8 YRS	AGE 9-12 YRS
PARK OUTINGS		
CAMPING		
OTHER OUTINGS		
FAMILY GET TOGETHERS		
VACATIONS		
PARENTS READING TO YOU		
WENT TO CIRCUS		
WENT TO MOVIES		
WENT TO ICE SHOW		
OTHER:		

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CHURCH RELATED:		
WENT WITH FAMILY		
SUNDAY SCHOOL		
CCD		
BIBLE SCHOOL		
YOUTH GROUP		
OTHER:		

****

OTHER ACTIVITIES - STRUCTURED:		
SUMMER READING CLUBS		
TAG		
[illegible] GAMES		

OTHER ACTIVIES - STRUCTURED CON'T:	AGE 5-8 YRS	AGE 9-12 YRS
CARD GAMES		
COMMUNITY THEATRE		
BOARD GAMES		
GIRL SCOUTS		
BOY SCOUTS		
ART CLASS AT ART MUSEUM, ETC.		
READING		
NEIGHBORHOOD GAMES - PICK-UP, JUMP ROPE, ETC.		
OTHER:		

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OTHER ACTIVITIES - UNSTRUCTURED/IMAGINATIVE:		
BUILT SNOWFORTS		
BUILT TENTS IN HOUSE		
BUILT FORTS IN HOUSE WITH FURNITURE		
WRESTLED WITH BROTHERS		
PLAYED WITH DOLLS		
PLAYED HOUSE		
TEACHER		
KITCHEN COOKING		
LIBRARY		
TAG		
SLUMBER PARTIES		
WRITING		
DRAWING		
CARS AND TRUCKS IN DRIVEWAY		
CLIMBED TREES		
WALKED FENCES		

OTHER ACTIVITIES-UNSTRUCTURED/IMAGINATIVE CONT.	AGE 5-8 YRS	AGE 9-12 YRS
DRESS UP IN MOTHER'S CLOTHES		
LEGOS		
PLAYED CHARLIE'S ANGELS		
FROG CATCHING		
LONG WALKS		
WATCHED TV		
OTHER:		

Appendix B

Total participants each activity per groups.

	BM & WM Groups I & II N=65		BM & WM Control N = 27		BF Group I N = 10		BF & WF Control N = 35	
AGE	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12	5-8	9-12
SPORTS								
Badminton	3	12	6	10	1	3	6	16
Baseball *	24	28	14	17	3	5	10	15
Basketball *	25	34	8	16	4	6	9	19
Bicycling	26	31	13	16	6	7	25	26
Fishing	15	26	17	13	4	0	12	12
Football	21	26	7	13	3	7	8	13
Four wheeler	9	9	0	3	5	2	3	8
Frisbee	16	16	9	12	2	2	21	17
Golf	5	4	2	5	0	2	4	6
Gymnastics [tumbling] 1*	5	4	1	0	5	1	11	9
Horseback Riding	8	6	1	4	2	1	9	19
Miniature Golf	7	11	6	13	0	1	22	30
Roller-Skate	10	15	11	18	7	7	16	16
Skiing	3	5	1	3	0	2	3	6
Soccer	14	8	10	9	2	3	5	11
Softball	17	11	4	7	5	6	21	18
Sledding	9	10	12	14	3	0	20	25
Swimming *	20	22	12	12	7	6	18	18
Tennis ball	1	3	3	3	0	0	1	0
Tennis	4	6	5	8	1	0	3	17
Track & Field	7	10	3	7	4	5	3	16
Volleyball	9	12	5	2	2	2	7	18
Other	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	5
Totals	258	309	150	205	68	70	237	340
DANCE								
Ballet	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	4
Baton	0	0	0	0	2	1	7	1
Jazz	2	2	0	0	0	0	4	3
Made up own routines	5	8	2	3	4	5	4	3
Tap	2	2	0	1	3	1	7	6
Other	1	2	3	3	1	2	1	1
Totals	10	14	5	7	13	12	26	18
MUSIC								
Band	6	11	5	14	3	4	2	11
Church Choir	5	8	4	5	3	3	7	9
Clarinet	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	3
Flute	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	5
General Chorus	2	3	0	2	0	1	4	14
Voice Lessons	1	2	0	1	3	4	1	2
Other	1	7	3	0	2	5	0	5
Totals	16	32	13	23	13	21	16	49
WORK								
Baby-sitting	2	10	0	4	3	9	3	25
Cut grass	11	22	5	13	3	4	3	15
Household chores	15	19	10	15	4	2	20	30
Newspaper route	1	6	0	6	1	1	1	6
Rake leaves	10	20	9	15	1	1	10	16

Contrast of Activity 12

Shovel snow	6	8	9	15	1	2	8	18
Take care of trash	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Totals	45	85	33	69	14	20	45	110
NEIGHBORS								
Animals	2	3	0	0	1	1	0	8
Fish	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	0
House	0	3	3	6	1	3	1	2
Plants	1	1	0	4	0	0	1	3
Take out trash	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	4	9	3	12	2	4	3	13
FAMILY ACTIVITIES								
Games with parents	7	15	12	15	7	5	26	27
Sunday with grandparents	6	8	12	11	1	2	19	21
Sunday with cousins	7	10	5	5	3	4	0	12
Went to mall	26	19	10	13	4	6	22	24
Drive in country	6	12	9	7	3	3	13	12
Picnics	11	7	10	8	5	5	19	18
Kiddie parks	6	8	10	11	7	4	20	15
Park outing	10	9	7	7	2	3	20	21
Camping	7	8	6	8	2	3	13	16
Other outings	4	5	5	4	2	4	9	10
Get togethers	19	25	7	8	9	9	20	23
Vacations	13	8	7	4	9	11	16	14
Parents reading to you	15	4	4	1	9	6	12	9
Circus	14	11	9	5	9	10	21	24
Movies	24	21	6	6	7	8	21	14
Ice Show	4	6	4	3	3	6	14	11
Totals	179	176	123	116	82	89	265	271
CAMP								
Basketball	11	14	1	3	7	5	4	8
Baseball	6	9	1	2	4	7	1	1
Boy Scout	5	3	0	0	7	6	0	0
Campfire Girls	0	0	4	1	1	1	1	2
Church	14	5	4	5	7	8	10	13
Girl Scout	0	0	4	1	0	3	12	7
YMCA	10	10	4	5	6	9	3	7
Other	0	1	1	1	0	0	3	3
Totals	46	42	19	18	32	39	34	41
CHURCH								
Went with family	22	25	11	12	7	6	26	20
Sunday school	10	15	6	8	6	4	19	16
CCD	2	1	2	2	0	0	0	0
Bible School	9	9	4	4	0	1	6	5
Youth group	6	12	4	5	6	5	12	12
Other	0	1	0	0	4	1	1	8
Totals	49	63	27	31	23	17	64	61
OTHER ACTIVITIES								
Summer Reading Club	2	5	4	4	1	1	7	9
TAG	12	14	9	11	1	2	12	13
Video Games	29	32	8	13	6	8	8	10
Card Games	12	34	7	13	7	8	20	26
Community Theater	3	2	0	1	1	2	3	7
Board games	17	19	10	11	6	9	21	23
Girl Scouts	0	0	0	0	2	4	13	8
Boy Scouts	5	10	7	9	0	0	0	0

Contrast of Activity 13

Art Class	4	9	1	2	1	2	5	6
Reading	7	11	9	12	5	5	24	25
Neighborhood games	13	15	4	7	0	0	22	21
Built snow fort	7	7	9	12	1	2	16	16
Built tents in house	11	8	10	7	4	1	21	19
Built forts with furniture	7	6	10	7	1	0	14	10
Wrestled with sibling	13	19	5	9	4	5	15	18
Played dolls	0	0	3	2	9	6	26	27
Played house	3	2	4	2	8	6	15	23
Played teacher	2	2	1	1	5	1	22	17
Played kitchen cooking	2	3	0	0	5	3	16	23
Played Library	3	2	1	0	4	2	11	8
Slumber parties	3	6	9	9	5	4	12	19
Writing	3	6	5	6	5	5	22	23
Drawing	14	15	7	9	6	4	19	21
Cars & trucks in driveway	10	12	8	8	2	2	19	20
Climbed trees	15	14	10	11	8	6	9	8
Walk on fences	3	5	4	5	3	4	0	1
Dress up mother's clothes	3	0	0	0	5	6	23	14
Legos	18	11	15	12	6	2	20	13
Played Charlie's Angels	1	0	1	1	1	0	3	1
Frog catching	5	6	3	2	0	0	10	7
Long walks	11	13	4	7	6	5	12	17
Watch TV	30	31	18	19	7	9	26	30
Other **	2	4	0	8	1	1	0	3
Totals	270	323	186	220	126	115	466	486
Totals for all activities	877	1053	559	701	374	387	1156	1389

**Included: Hang out at mall, shoot people smoking, pick-up football catch turtles transformers hot wheels kick the can rap music play w/cousins restaurant

*Group I Participants - School Requirements

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