

# Adolescents' Activities and Feelings at After-School Programs and Elsewhere

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# Several Factors Have Contributed to an Increased Interest in After-School Programs

- High rates of maternal employment
  - 69% of married mothers and 71% of single mothers of 6- to 17-year-olds are employed
- Concerns about
  - negative effects of self-care
  - youth as victims and perpetrators of crime
  - lagging academic performance
- Inequities in access to after-school activities and programs

# Current After-School Initiatives

- 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers
  - \$40M in 1997; \$1B in 2002
  - 1.2 million students participated in programs located at 3600 schools in 2001
  - 2,252 applications for funding; 310 awards in 2000
  - Future funding is uncertain
- State-level initiatives
  - California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership (30,000 children)
- Local initiatives
  - L.A.'s Best, The After-School Corp (TASC)
- Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H, Camp Fire, YWCA

# Variations in After-School Programs

- Organized sports and recreational sports
- Music, drama
- Arts and crafts
- Homework clubs
- Preparation for standardized tests
- Extension of the school day
- Science, math, & computer clubs

# After-School Programs Narrowly Defined and Broadly Defined

- Narrow definition – programs that are offered by schools or other organizations on a daily basis throughout the year
- Broad definition – includes extracurricular activities, sports, clubs, and activities that are offered on a regularly scheduled basis by schools, libraries, and youth organizations

# Limitations of Previous Research

- “Evaluation of after-school activities is still limited. Often the information about a program is based on the opinions of experts instead of formal evaluations.” (Working for Children and Families, 2000, p. 7)
- “Circumstances surrounding the type of care provided, the kinds of students who attended the different programs, and what the programs themselves entailed, have rarely been studied in detail.” (Fashola, 1998, p. 3)

# Study Aims

- To contrast the students' activities, social partners, levels of engagement, and emotions at programs and elsewhere during the after-school hours
- We focus on two sets of comparisons
  - Program students
    - At the program vs. Not at the program
  - Nonprogram vs. Program students

# Participants

91 8<sup>th</sup> grade students who attended 8 middle schools in 3 midwestern states

52% male

60% children of color

33% single parents

23% mothers < high school degree

26% family incomes < \$20,000/yr

# Procedures

- Students wore watches that beeped 35 times during 1 wk in the fall and 35 times during 1 wk in the spring
- Beeps occurred at random times during the after-school hours, evenings, and weekends

- At each signal, students recorded
  - Whom they were with
  - Where they were
  - What they were doing
  - How they were feeling

- On average, students responded to 33 of the 35 signals in the fall and 33 of 35 signals in the spring.
- 12,143 after-school, evening, and weekend experiences were reported.
- 4,846 of the experiences occurred after school (school dismissal to 6 p.m.).

Coders categorized students' activities.  
Today we focus on 6 of those activities.

– Homework

– Community service

– Academic/Arts  
enrichment

– Sports & physical  
activities

– Snacks & meals

– TV

# Students reported who was present and who was doing activities with them

No one

Mother

Father

Brothers/sisters

Teachers

Other adults

Friends

Adult relatives

Child relatives

Boyfriend/girlfriend

Other kids

# Students answered questions about their activities, using 4-point scales

- How much choice did you have?
- How important was this activity to you?
- Was it interesting?
- Did you enjoy what you were doing?
- How hard were you concentrating?
- Were you using your skills?
- Did you wish you were doing something else?

# Students rated 11 feeling states using 4-point scales

- Apathy
  - Bored
  - Lonely
- Positive Emotions
  - Proud
  - Excited
  - Happy
  - Relaxed
- Negative Emotions
  - Scared
  - Worried
  - Sad
  - Angry
  - Stressed

# We contrasted the experiences of two groups of students

- *Program students* participated in a structured activity (or program) at least once ( $n = 160$ ).
- *Program students* responded to 3,059 signals while not at the program and 1,030 signals while at a program in the afternoon on weekdays.
- *Nonprogram students* never participated in a structured activity ( $n = 31$ ).
- *Nonprogram students* responded to 759 signals in the afternoon on weekdays.

# Two-Level HLM analyses were conducted to test

- differences in experiences of program students while at the program and not at the program
- differences in experiences of nonprogram and program students while they were not at a program

## Percentages of Different Types of Activities during Weekday Afternoons by Program Status

Activity	Nonprogram students	Program students not at program	Program students at program
Homework	10.2	9.4	15.2***
Academic/Art enrichment	7.7	7.6	22.4***
Eating	10.1	7.9*	5.5**
TV	19.0	18.5	5.0***
Sports	8.9	7.6	26.9***
Volunteering	0.2	0.0	2.6***

# Percentage of Supervised and Unsupervised Time

	Nonprogram students	Program students not at program	Program students at program
Unsupervised peers	17.7	21.8	10.0***
Supervised peers	26.3	28.5	88.0***

# Ratings (4-pt scales) of Flow, Motivation, Engagement, and Emotion

	Nonprogram students	Program students not at program	Program students at program
Intrinsic Motiv.	2.8	2.8	3.0***
Flow	1.9	1.8	2.6***
Importance	2.6	2.5	3.0***
Apathy	1.5	1.5	1.4***
Positivity	2.3	2.3	2.5**
Negativity	1.3	1.3	1.3

# Likelihood of Different Choice/Concentration Combinations

	Nonprogram	Program not at program	Program at program
Hi choice Hi concentration	25.3	21.1	39.7***
Hi choice Lo concentration	46.5	52.2	33.8***
Lo choice Hi concentration	10.1	9.5	14.9***
Lo choice Lo concentration	22.4	22.4	15.7**

# Conclusions

- Students who attended programs engaged in different activities when they were at programs than when they were not at programs
  - Students were more likely to be engaged in “productive” activities at programs. They were less likely to be watching TV and eating at programs.
  - While at programs, they were more likely to be with supervised peers and less likely to be with unsupervised peers.

# Conclusions

- While at programs, students experienced more intrinsic motivation, more flow, more positive emotions, and less apathy.
- There were few differences in the activities, feelings, and emotions of the program and nonprogram students when students were not at programs.
- These findings suggest that the obtained program effects are not explained by selection effects, but by the context.

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for more information