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

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POWER POINT 1 TITLE PAGE AND AUTHORS

POWER POINT 2 SEVERAL FACTORS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO AN INCREASED INTEREST IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Several factors have contributed to an increased interest in after-school programs. These include high rates of maternal employment, concerns about the negative effects of self-care and unsupervised time with peers, concerns about youth as victims and perpetrators of crime, and concerns about lagging academic performance. In addition, nationally representative surveys of before/after-school care have suggested inequities in access to extracurricular activities and after-school programs, suggesting that low-income children may have less access to activities posited to facilitate positive youth development.

POWER POINT 3 CURRENT AFTER-SCHOOL INITIATIVES

In response to these concerns, a number of initiatives have been mounted at the national, state, and local levels. These initiatives include the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, a

school-based program for elementary and middle-school students originally administered through the U.S. Department of Education; state-level initiatives such as California's After-School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnership; and local initiatives such as LAs Best in Los Angeles and TASC in New York City. Youth organizations such as the Boys and Girls Club, 4-H, and scouts also have developed after-school initiatives.

POWER POINT 4 VARIATIONS IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

We see substantial variations in the kinds of activities in the programs serving young people. Some programs offer extracurricular enrichment whereas others target explicitly academic activities such as homework help, preparation for standardized tests. Others are structured as special interest clubs in science, math, computers, creative writing, and journalism.

POWER POINT 5 AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS NARROWLY AND BROADLY DEFINED

One, more narrow definition of an after-school program refers to programs that are offered by schools or other organizations on a daily basis through the school year. A broader definition of after-school programs includes extracurricular activities, sports teams, clubs, and other activities that are offered on a regularly scheduled basis by schools, churches, community groups, libraries, and youth organizations.

POWER POINT 6 LIMITATIONS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Unfortunately, systematic research of the effects of after-school programs (both broadly and narrowly defined) is limited. The kinds of students who attend programs and the details of the programs have rarely been studied in detail.

POWER POINT 7 STUDY AIMS

The goal of the current study was to begin to address these issues. In particular, we sought to contrast adolescents' activities, social partners, levels of engagement, and emotions at after-school programs and elsewhere during the after-school hours. We focused on two sets of comparisons – program students' experiences while at a program and while not at a program, and the experiences of nonprogram and program students during comparable periods.

POWER POINT 8 PARTICIPANTS

The participants were 191 8th grade students who attended 8 middle schools that were located in three midwestern states. The sample was 52% male. 60% of the participants were children of color; 33% of the participants had single parents, and 23% of their mothers did not have a high school degree. 26% of the participants had family incomes of less than \$20,000 a year.

POWER POINT 9 PROCEDURES

We employed experience sampling methodology to measure students' experiences. Participants wore watches that were programmed to beep 35 times during one week in the fall and 35 times during one week in the spring. Beeps occurred at random times during the after-school hours, evening, and weekends.

POWER POINT 10 AT EACH SIGNAL, STUDENTS RECORDED

At each signal, participants recorded in a daily logbook (a) whom they were with, (b) where they were, (c) what they were doing, and (d) how they were feeling. Logbooks were collected each day at school and participants were paid \$1.00 for each completed entry for a total of \$35.00 in the fall and \$35.00 in the spring.

POWER POINT 11 NUMBER OF SIGNALS

On average, participants responded to 33 of the 35 signals in the fall and 33 of 35 signals in the spring. A total of 12,143 after-school, evening, and weekend experiences were reported. Of these experiences, 4,846 occurred after school between school dismissal and 6 p.m.

POWER POINT 12 CODERS CATEGORIZED REPORTED ACTIVITIES

When signaled, adolescents recorded what they were doing. Trained coders then classified these activities into XX categories. Inter-coder agreement was .89.

In today's presentation, we focus on 6 categories of activities: homework, academic or arts enrichment, snacks or meals, TV, sports and physical activities, and community service.

POWER POINT 13 ADOLESCENTS ALSO REPORTED WHO WAS PRESENT AND/OR DOING THE ACTIVITY WITH THEM

Adolescents also recorded all individuals who were doing activities with them or who were simply present. These people included parents, siblings, adult relatives, teachers, other adults, as well as various peers. Today we consider two types of social experiences with peers. The first, which we called *supervised time with peers*, referred to experiences in which adolescents were with a friend or friends, child relatives, boyfriend or girlfriend, other kids, brother or sisters, AND an adult (mother, father, teachers, other adults, adult relative). The second type of peer experience, which we called *unsupervised time with peers*, consisted of time that adolescents were with a peer AND no adult present was present.

POWER POINT 14 STUDENTS ANSWERED QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR ACTIVITIES

When signaled, the adolescents also gave, using 4-point Likert scales, responses to 7 questions: (1) how much choice did you have about this activity? (2) How important was this

activity to you? (3) Was it interesting? (4) Did you enjoy what you were doing? (5) How hard were you concentrating? (6) Were you using your skills? And (7) Did you wish you were doing something else?

A factor analysis using a Promax rotation was performed on responses to the 7 questions. Three factors were identified. Three items (challenge, skills and concentration) loaded highly on the first factor. We labeled this factor as *flow*. A second factor, which we called *intrinsic motivation*, had high positive loadings of enjoyment, choice, and interest and a high negative loading of wishing to do something else. *Importance* was a stand-alone item.

POWER POINT 15 STUDENTS RATED 11 FEELING STATES

At each signal, adolescents also rated 11 emotional states using 4-point scales. These emotions were happy, proud, excited, relaxed, sad, angry, worried, scared, stressed, bored, and lonely. A factor analysis using a Promax rotation revealed three factors that we labeled: *Positive Emotions*, *Negative Emotions*, and *Apathy*.

POWER POINT 16 WE CONTRASTED THE EXPERIENCES OF TWO GROUPS

Today we focus on the after-school experiences of two groups of students. The first group consisted of 160 students who reported participating in a structured activity or after-school program during the after-school hours for at least one signal in the fall or spring. We call this group: *program students*.

The second group consisted of 31 students who never reported participating in a structured activity or program during the after-school hours in either the fall or spring. We call this group: *nonprogram students*.

Program students responded to a total of 4089 signals during weekday afternoons between school dismissal and 6 p.m. 1030 of these signals occurred when they were at a program or structured activity and 3059 of these signals occurred when the students were not at a program or structured activity. The *Nonprogram students* responded to 759 signals during the weekday afternoons. All of these signals, by definition, occurred when students were not at a program or structured activity.

POWER POINT 17 TWO-LEVEL HLM ANALYSES WERE CONDUCTED

We were interested in two sets of comparisons. The first comparison was of differences in activities and feelings of *program students* when these students were at the program and not at the program (a repeated measure comparison). This comparison asks the question, Do students engage in different activities and experience different feeling states when they are at a program than when they are not at a program?

The second comparison was of differences in the activities and feelings of *program students* and *nonprogram students* when neither group was at a program (a between-group comparison). This asks the question, Are there differences in how program and nonprogram students spend their time outside of programs?

The second question is relevant to the issue of self-selection into programs. Perhaps program and nonprogram students differ fundamentally in their interests, emotions, and motivation and these differences are reflected in their reports of experiences when neither is at a program. Large differences between nonprogram students and program students when not at a program would suggest selection effects and undermine inferences regarding the generalizability of program effects for nonprogram students.

Alternatively, the two groups may not differ in activities, motivation, and feelings while

not at the program, suggesting some commonalities in these two groups' "unstructured time."

The potential for varying program effects across students was examined in a two-level hierarchical linear models (HLM) analysis that accounted for the nested structure of the data (i.e., repeated reports of activities and feelings nested within students). In the within-subjects model, the experience scores for an individual student are modeled as a function of whether the beep occurs when the student is at or not at a program. The parameters of the within-student model (the average score when not at the program and the program effect) can vary across students. In the between-group model, variability in the within-student model parameters is predicted by whether the student is or is not a program student and a residual component.

POWER POINT 18 ACTIVITIES DURING WEEK DAY AFTERNOONS

This slide show the results of the HLM analyses that contrasted program student activities when at the program and not at the program (the within-student comparison) as well as comparisons of the program students not at the program with the nonprogram students.

Asterisks in column 4 indicate significance differences in program students' activities at a program and not at a program. In particular, program students were more likely to do homework while at a program than not at a program (15.2% vs. 9.4%). They also were more likely to engage in academic/arts enrichment at programs (22.4% vs. 7.6%), organized sports and physical activities (26.9% vs. 7.6%), and volunteer service (2.6% vs. 0.1%). Program students were less likely to spend time eating when they were at programs (5.5% vs. 7.9%) and less likely to be watching TV (5.0% vs. 18.5%).

As indicated by the single asterisk in column 3, we observed only one significant difference during the after-school hours in the activities of program students when not at a

program and the activities of nonprogram students. In particular, program students were less likely than the nonprogram students to be snacking and having meals (7.9% vs. 10.1%) during the after-school hours when neither group was at a program.

POWER POINT 19 SUPERVISED AND UNSUPERVISED TIME

One area of concern of policy makers and parents is the amount of time that adolescents spend with unsupervised peers. In this slide, we report results from the HLM analyses pertaining to this issue. As indicated by the asterisks in column 4, program students were significantly less likely to report being with unsupervised peers at the program versus when not at a program (10% vs. 22%) and significantly more likely to report being with peers in a supervised setting (88% vs. 29%).

As indicated by the lack of asterisks in column 3, we found no differences in the amount of unsupervised time with peers of nonprogram students and the program students when they were not at the program (18% vs. 22%). We also failed to find differences between the nonprogram students and program students while not at the program in terms of their time with supervised peers (26% vs. 28.5%).

POWER POINT 20 RATINGS OF FLOW, MOTIVATION, EMOTION

Next we examined the adolescents' ratings of engagement and emotion. Asterisks in column 4 designate significant differences between program students' feelings when at a program and program students' ratings when not at a program.

In particular, program students reported higher ratings of intrinsic motivation, flow, and importance when at a program than when not at a program. Students also reported feeling less apathy and more positive emotions at after-school programs than when these same students were

not at programs.

There were no differences in motivation, emotion, or engagement between nonprogram adolescents and the program adolescents when neither group was at a program.

POWER POINT 21 COMBINATIONS OF CHOICE AND CONCENTRATION

Next, we examined the likelihood of a student experiencing four combinations of feeling states during the after-school hours. The first combination of interest was reports of a high choice in doing an activity and a high degree of concentration in that activity. This combination of feelings is consistent with the feelings of intrinsic motivation and effort that Larson (1999) has posited as facilitative of the development of initiative. The second combination was reports of a high degree of choice but low degree of concentration, a combination consistent with leisure and relaxation. The third combination was low choice and high concentration, a combination of feeling states that is often reported during the school day. Finally, we examined reports of low choice and low concentration, a combination that may occur when adolescents are particularly disengaged.

In these analyses, low choice was defined as a rating of 2 or less and high choice was defined as a rating of 3 or more (on a 4-point scale). Low concentration was defined as a rating of 2 or less and high concentration was defined as a rating of 3 or more.

As shown in this slide, adolescents were more likely to report a combination of high choice and high concentration (characteristic of intrinsic motivation) when they were at a program versus not at a program (39.7% of the reported experiences vs. 21.1%). Adolescents also were more likely to report low choice and high concentration when at programs versus not at programs (14.9% versus 9.5%). When the program adolescents were not at programs, high choice and low concentration (leisure and relaxation) was more likely (52.2% of the time vs.

33.8% of the adolescents' time at programs). Low choice and low concentration (disengagement) also was more likely when program students were not at the program (22.4% of the time) versus when these students were at the program (15.7% of the time).

There were no differences in the feelings of choice and concentration of program students when they were not at programs and the nonprogram students who never reported being at programs.

POWER POINT 22 CONCLUSIONS

From these analyses, we conclude that adolescents have substantially different activities when they are at after-school programs than when they are not at programs. They are more likely to be doing physical activities and sports, art and academic enrichment, community service, and homework at program at programs. They are more likely to watch TV and eat when they are not at programs. Unsupervised time with peers is less likely when adolescents are at programs.

POWER POINT 23 CONCLUSIONS

Adolescents reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation, flow, and positive emotion when at programs and less apathy at programs. There were few differences between the program and nonprogram students when neither group was at the program, which suggests that the obtained program effects are not explained by child selection effects.