

EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPPORTS FOR YOUTH
DEVELOPMENT AND SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IN A POLICE ATHLETIC LEAGUE
AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

By

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For the past twenty years, research and practice in recreation and after-school services have utilized the positive youth development (PYD) framework. PYD is guided by principles that emphasize investing in youth through the promotion of developmental assets; it steers clear of past models that view youth as risks (Benson, Scales & Syvertsen, 2011). Internal assets are outcomes for youth that include a commitment to learning, developing positive values and identity, and demonstrating social competency (Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000). Schools and after-school recreation programs affect internal assets by supporting external assets such as the establishment of boundaries and expectations, empowerment of youth, constructive use of time, and support from family, peers, schools, neighbors, and other adults (Scales et al.). Staff practices related to supporting developmental assets fall into four categories: (a) safe environment (e.g., psychological and physical safety); (b) supportive environment (e.g., skill building, conflict resolution); (c) interaction (e.g., mentoring, fostering belonging); and (d) engagement (e.g., opportunities to plan and lead) (Smith et al., 2012). While there have been several studies of school-based after-school programs, there is very little research on programs

run under the Police Athletic League model. The current study sought to investigate the following research questions: (1) What program practices do PAL participants identify as important? and (2) What is the relationship between PAL program practices and youths' report of school connectedness? Results suggest that the PAL staff were performing well in all areas; however, two areas, being able to talk to staff about important things and PAL staff treating students fairly, were determined to be practices areas in which the staff could improve upon. Additionally, the results determined that specific elements of a safe and supportive environment were positively correlated with school connectedness. Specifically, this study has implications for staff practices that develop relationships with youth. Community-based after-school programs, like PAL, are uniquely positioned to serve as a bridge between school and home to reinforce norms such as homework completion and striving for academic success.

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SECTION I: MANUSCRIPT

Introduction

For the past twenty years, research and practice in recreation and after-school services have utilized the positive youth development (PYD) framework. The PYD framework is guided by principles that emphasize investing in youth through the promotion of developmental assets; it steers clear of deficit-based models that stress risk prevention by emphasizing growth and the successful transition to adulthood (Benson, Scales & Syvertsen, 2011). A popular approach to assessing and understanding how PYD occurs is through the 40 Developmental Assets Model (Search Institute, 2017). This model identifies internal and external assets that help youth to become healthy, responsible, and engaged adults.

Internal assets are characteristics and behaviors of youth that support the successful transition to adulthood. Internal assets include a commitment to learning, developing positive values and positive identity, and having social competency (Scales, Benson, Leffert & Blyth, 2000). External assets reflect the positive experiences and environments to support youth and reinforce the continued development of internal assets. External assets include the establishment of boundaries and expectations, empowerment of youth, constructive use of time, and support from family, peers, schools, neighbors, and other adults (Scales et al.).

Parents are the most important socialization agent in the lives of youth (Hutchinson, Baldwin & Caldwell, 2003; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). However, youth are exposed to powerful adult role models through schools, after-school programs, and recreation programs. These social institutions are uniquely positioned to support PYD, as each typically engages youth and families within communities. As such, it is essential to understand the role of teachers and program staff in supporting and engaging youth in ways that foster developmental assets and promote PYD.

Specifically, this study is concerned with the staff practices of practitioners in after-school programs offered by the Police Athletic League (PAL). While there have been several studies of school-based after-school programs, there is very little research on programs run under the PAL model. The purpose of this study was to examine staff practices in a PAL program and the relationship between support for these practices and outcomes related to the internal asset, bonding to school (i.e., school connectedness). School connectedness is an intermediate outcome linked to school achievement motivation, which is predictive of long-term success in school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). Thus, after-school programs that can promote school connectedness play an important role in the lives of youth, and can be a bridge between school and home to support outcomes promoted by each.

Background

The assets framework identifies external and internal factors that promote positive development for youth. Years of research have supported this framework, the settings in which they interact, and the likelihood of youth experiencing positive developmental outcomes into young adulthood. The 40 Developmental Assets Model identifies 20 internal and 20 external assets that promote positive youth development. Internal assets focus on personal qualities that lead to positive choices and the development of confidence, passion, and purpose. Internal assets are reflected in youth when they demonstrate a commitment to learning, develop positive values and identity, and exhibit social competencies (e.g., External assets focus on experiences within the environment and include interactions with peers, family members, and other adults. Examples of external assets are the establishment of boundaries and expectations, empowerment of youth, constructive use of time, and support from family, peers, schools, neighbors, and other adults (Scales et al., 2000; Search Institute, 2017). When interpreting the assets framework, a simple rule is used: the more internal and external assets youth report having, the more likely they are to experience successful development. See Appendix A for a copy of the 40 Developmental Assets Framework.

The Bio-Ecological Model

Another perspective associated with human development is known as the Bio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The Bio-Ecological Model is a systems theory rooted in the idea that multiple interactions between an individual and the environment contribute to human development. Human development is a unique, complicated process that is affected by the actions and reactions of several ecological systems that promote or inhibit growth. The model maps the systems in a series of concentric circles that reflect their relative influence on the

individual. Systems closer in proximity to the individual are those in which more regular interaction occurs, and thus, there is more influence from the system to the individual and vice versa. Conversely, those systems furthest in proximity have less regular interplay and less impact on the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Figure 1 depicts the Bio-Ecological Model.

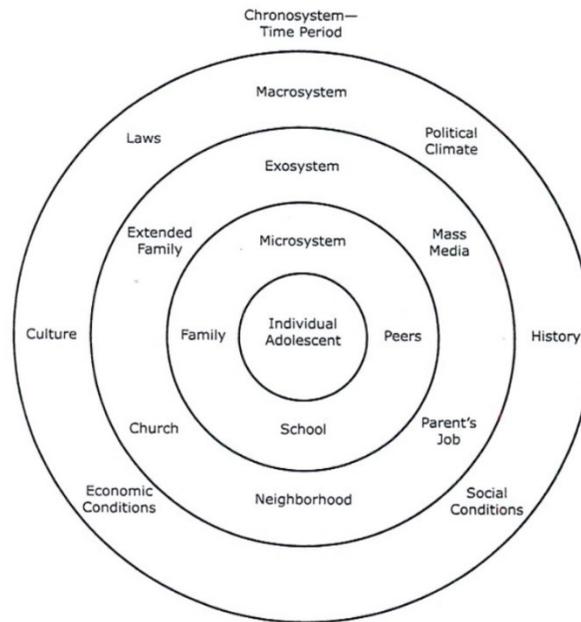


Figure 1. The Bio-Ecological Model

Source: Watts, C. E., & Cremeens, J. (2010). Leisure, adolescence, and health. In L. Payne, B. Ainsworth, & G. Godbey (Eds). *Leisure health and wellness, making the connections* (pp. 213-226). State College, PA: Venture.

Individuals operate directly within a microsystem that consists of common social entities (e.g., family, peers, work, school) in their lives. The interactions between these social entities are known as the mesosystem. The exosystem is one in which the individual does not directly interact, yet it yields indirect influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). For example, a child may not interact within the parent’s workplace, however, this environment affects the child positively

(e.g., financial security, access to benefits) and negatively (e.g., stressors on a parent, time spent away from home). The outermost layer of the model is the macrosystem. This layer represents the broader cultural system in which one interacts, and it has a bearing on the qualities of the other systems (Duerden & Witt, 2010). All of these systems operate within the chronosystem, which reflects the context of time and recognizes the broader historical influences that may also play a role in determining human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris). Events that occur in the microsystem and mesosystem are of particular interest to this study.

The microsystem for youth consists of parents, school, sports and recreation programs, and other social institutions (e.g., church, music lessons) to which youth have regular exposure. Within the Bio-Ecological Model, the microsystem is posited to have the most significant influence on the individual and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Indeed, recreation programs and after-school programs are uniquely positioned social institutions that have the potential to impact the relationships, skills, behavior, and identity of youth participants (McHale, Dotterer & Kim, 2009). The mesosystem accounts for the types of programs (i.e., after-school programs) that have the potential to interact with schools and home to influence development.

When considering the mesosystem, it is vitally important to recognize generative and disruptive processes within an individual's social ecology (Bronfenbrenner & Morris). For example, inconsistent approaches between parents and school or school and after-school programs can hinder the advancement of outcomes. Examples of this could include the child who skips school because of an uninvolved parent, or recreation programs that are poorly monitored and not supportive of school achievement because they do not provide homework assistance. When considering positive youth development, it is essential to have social institutions that align

and support the same developmental outcomes. These generative practices strengthen outcome-based approaches by consistently supporting developmental assets.

Practices to Impact Developmental Assets

While the assets model identified factors that promote positive youth development, these assets can only be cultivated and realized with specific guidance. Youth programs and services that want to influence positive youth development do so through the provision of supports and opportunities (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). Support comes from people in important positions such as teachers, police officers, recreation leaders, neighbors, peers, and adults. These individuals address the motivational, emotional, academic, physical, and mental needs of youth through the provision of social assistance and resources. Programs also offer opportunities to cultivate, learn, express, and belong; these are active ways youth influence their surroundings and learn to function and engage within communities (Witt & Caldwell, 2005).

To guide continuous quality improvement, Smith and colleagues (2012) reviewed the instructional quality of practices among staff in after-school programs. They defined instructional quality as the program content and staff behaviors that shape youth experience (Smith et al., 2012) They argued that these are two essential features of education settings. Their review relied extensively on studies of developmental outcomes in after-school settings. From this review, a hierarchical model was devised to guide the Youth Quality Program Assessment (YQPA). This model relies on the use of observational measures, guided interviews, and survey methods to assess it (Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, & Shinn, 2007).

The foundation of the YQPA model is the need for a safe environment that assures psychological and physical safety. The next level of the model is a supportive environment that emphasizes skill building, reframing conflict and maintaining a welcoming atmosphere. The

third level of the model is interaction. Interaction features active leadership and group membership components such as mentoring and leading while fostering experiences to promote belonging. At the apex of the model is engagement. Engagement refers to decision-making processes where planning, making choices and reflection are active components. The YQPA model adheres to Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem and Ferber's (2003) vision for youth development as an opportunity to support youth to be problem free, fully prepared, and fully engaged in the process. Key to this model is a deliberate attempt to develop a sense of belonging. Developing a sense of belonging is a concept that is central to this study.

Sense of Belonging and School Connectedness

An emphasis on cultivating a sense of belonging is vital during the development process of children and adolescents. Belonging is a state in which individuals feel needed, important, or a part of a bigger picture (Hall, 2014). Walker, Taylor, Caltabiano, and Pooley (2014) noted that a sense of belonging or relatedness is one of three primary psychological needs for human development. Within the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Deci and Ryan (2000) described the need for relatedness or social connectedness as a vital step to internalizing behaviors. Internalization describes the process of how individuals create personal meaning for extrinsically motivated behavior. Fostering relatedness is key to adopting social norms and values that relate to these behaviors. Advocates of school connectedness argue that promoting feelings of connectedness are essential to developing a school achievement orientation (an internal asset) in students. Similar to descriptions of relatedness, connectedness is a psychological feeling of belonging, feeling as though adults and peers care for the individual (School Connectedness, 2015). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([CDC], 2015) identified school

connectedness as a vital protective factor for students and adults who demonstrate care for academic success and personal growth support school connectedness.

To capture the concept of school connectedness, researchers measure a variety of variables such as positive orientation to school, school attachment, school bond, school climate, school connection, school context, school engagement, teacher support, and student satisfaction (Libbey, 2004). In prior studies, feelings of school connectedness were correlated with increased academic performance and school attendance, as well as decreased negative behaviors such as utilization of alcohol, tobacco, other drug use, and violence and deviant behaviors (Anderson-Butcher, 2010).

Resnick et al. (1997) analyzed how school connectedness buffered youth against risk factors such as emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, violence, sexual debut, pregnancy history, use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. Youth ($N = 11,572$) in grades 7 through 12 were randomly selected from a poll of nearly 100,000 initial surveys. From the interviews, the researchers determined that parent-family connectedness and perceived school connectedness were protective against seven out of eight risk factors measured (Resnick et al., 1997).

In a longitudinal study, McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2002) studied individuals in 7th - 12th grades through the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Researchers measured school connectedness through specific Likert-type items. The study determined that specific classes lacking classroom management, such as consistency, student management, and decision-making opportunities for students, were less likely to experience school connectedness. Additionally, the study found that students who were expelled for minor violations experienced lower school connectedness and attachment to their school when enrolled in smaller schools

rather than larger schools. While controlling for class size, gender, and race, the researchers found that participation in extracurricular activities, either at the school or in after-school environments, significantly predicted school connectedness (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002).

Bond et al. (2007) analyzed the influence of social and school connectedness as predictors for substance abuse, mental health, and academic outcomes in later teenage years. This study included 2,678 students between the ages of 13-16 years old. Findings from this study suggested that youth between the ages of 13-14 years old who demonstrated a mix of positive school and social connectedness at the first point of data collection were more likely to experience positive outcomes throughout their teenage years. However, individuals who demonstrated low school connectedness and high social connectedness were at higher risk for anxiety/depressive symptoms, regular smoking habits, drinking, and use of marijuana. Concerning academic performance, individuals with low social connectedness and/or low school connectedness, were less likely to complete school in their later teenage years (Bond et al., 2007).

In a similar study, researchers examined a program designed to foster self-esteem as a protective factor in youth. Increasing self-esteem was vital for increasing the chance of connecting positively with peers, teachers, and school. It was posited that these factors would eventually lead to an increase in academic performance. Participants of the study were involved in the *Healthy Kids Mentoring Program*, which specifically focused on fostering positive relationships, self-esteem enhancement, goal setting, and academic assistance. The study found that programs featuring safe environments, encouragement, empowering activities, and specific guidelines for appropriate behavior were more likely to increase students' attitudes towards

school, increase attendance, and decrease suspension. From pre- to post-test, the researchers observed significant improvements in self-esteem, school, peer, and family connectedness for the 28 fourth graders enrolled in the program. The authors proposed that the short-term outcome of an increased attitude makes a long-term impact on school performance (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002).

The research points to the potential of extracurricular activities to correlate with increases in grades, improvement in attendance, and contributions to feelings of attachment (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Several studies over the past 30 years demonstrate a link between extracurricular activities and specific positive outcomes for youth. Marsh (1988) found that involvement in extracurricular activities produced several outcomes that align with a school achievement orientation: social and academic self-concept, educational goals, academic achievement, and the pursuit of college courses. These benefits were related to participation in specific extracurricular activities such as sports, honor societies, student governments, church organizations, and community service organizations.

Mahoney and Cairns (1997) compared extracurricular activities to youth who were at-risk to drop out of school. The authors chose to focus on at-risk youth, which makes it distinct from previous research previously discussed. Researchers in this study found that children who began early participation in extracurricular activities were less likely to drop out of high school early. Mahoney and Cairns advocated for more research on after-school programs to understand how these contexts contribute to school connectedness and overall positive youth development.

After-School Programs and PYD

As the aforementioned studies showed the benefits of extracurricular activities on academic achievement and school connectedness, several studies on after-school programs demonstrate similar results. These studies showed increases in school achievement (e.g.,

academic performance, decrease risk for dropout) and decreases in negative risk behaviors (e.g., delinquency, substance use). Programs that reflect the PYD orientation can take stock of these lessons by offering opportunities that promote achievement and positive identification of youth participants (Cooper, Valentine, & Nye, 1999).

Farmer-Hinton, Sass, and Schroeder (2009) examined the impacts of an after-school program, *The Lighthouse Program*, on students' academic performance. Participants in this study demonstrated a statistically significant increase in academic performance. Additionally, participants who dropped out of the program before their third year saw a decrease in academic performance, suggesting a benefit to continued participation in after-school programs.

Jenner and Jenner (2007) examined low-income and at-risk children in Louisiana enrolled in after-school programs. The researchers utilized a pre-test/post-test research design to examine the effect of after-school attendance on the academic performance of 1192 students. They found that participation in an after-school program was significantly associated with increased test scores ($p < .01$). Specifically, statistical growth in language, reading, and social studies scores was evident.

Rather than focusing on academics, Riggs, Bohnery, Guzman, and Davidson (2010) sought to measure social benefits associated with after-school programs. The authors completed two pilot studies within community-based after-school programs for Latinos who were between the ages of 12-18. In the first study, data were collected from 46 participants, while the second study collected data from 118 participants. The first study determined that participation in the after-school program was associated with an increase in self-worth. Ethnic socialization was also a significant predictor of ethnic identity development. The second study determined that children who had concentration issues at the beginning of the program experienced a decrease in

concentration problems by the end of the program. Findings from these two studies suggested that addressing developmental outcomes in social psychological (e.g., socialization, feelings of self-worth, positive ethnic identity) and cognitive functioning is possible through after-school programs.

Tebes et al. (2007) examined an 18-week drug prevention curriculum within an urban after-school program. The goal of the program was to decrease drug use by these students. The study included 204 participants, with 149 students in the intervention group and 155 students in the control group. Participants within the intervention group demonstrated greater perceptions of risk associated with drug use at the completion of the program. At the one-year follow-up, intervention participants reported decreased drug use, while the control group members reported increased substance use.

Gottfredson, Cross, and Soule (2007) analyzed 35 after-school programs to determine the specific program characteristics that contribute to positive behavioral outcomes. The characteristics observed were program structure, staffing, and size. Data collection occurred from 2002-2003 through the *Maryland After-School Opportunity Fund Program*, which included 497 youth participants. The study determined that there was a significant inverse correlation between after-school participation and delinquency ($p < .05$). The study attributed efficient time use to decreases in delinquent behaviors.

In a similar study, Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce (2007) examined how participation in promising after-school programs, extracurricular activities, supervised home environments and time spent unsupervised could be linked to grades and work habits, social skills and interpersonal behavior, academic performance, and risky behavior and misconduct. This study followed nearly 3,000 students from both elementary and middle school grades in eight different states.

Approximately half of these students attended high-quality after-school programs. High-quality programs were identified as those programs that offered services four or five days a week, had strong partnerships with schools and community organizations, and developed robust supportive environments for staff and children. These programs featured a mix of academic enrichment, recreation, arts and other activities that facilitated positive engagement in youth. These types of programs were associated with increased academic performance and pro-social behaviors and decreased misconduct.

The research above clearly demonstrates that after-school programs have a vast reach and potential in promoting positive youth development through academics, expressive arts, community involvement, and athletics. These programs are often “links in a chain” between home and school, emphasizing important norms that support school achievement and positive youth development in general. After-school programs serve as a bridge to support these norms and function to play a critical role in supporting other socializing agents in the Bio-ecological environment of youth. For example, after-school recreation programs that offer tutorials, homework assistance, and maintain connections to school support social norms espoused by school and affect academic performance by assuring that work required for school (i.e., homework) is completed before moving on to recreation and enrichment activities. However, these norms need youth to relate to staff and identify with these particular behaviors before they are internalized (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Therefore, staff practices and interactions with youth, play a critical role in how they learn to value and adopt behaviors (Smith et al., 2012). The current study set out to examine specific practices and the outcome of school connectedness through after-school programs offered by the PAL.

Police Athletic Leagues

The *Police Athletic/Activity League* is a program to prevent juvenile crime and violence that provides athletic, educational, and recreational activities for youth 5-18 years old (National PAL, 2017). While the first creation date is unknown, the National PAL Inc. has been operating since the late 1940s. Since then, the National PAL has recruited over 300 PAL Member Chapters throughout various cities in the United States. The majority of PAL chapters are affiliated with law enforcement agencies and typically offer after-school programs, music studios, sports-related programs, and art related programs (National PAL).

Studies of PAL Programs

Subhas and Chandra (2004) completed the most widely known study of a PAL chapter, the Baltimore City Police Athletic League (BC-PAL). The BC-PAL engaged in an assessment study to examine the characteristics and activities of the program; develop an understanding of staff and police officer's characteristics, roles, and responsibilities; describe the characteristics of the participants; understand the impact of communities, parents, and volunteers concerning the programs; and analyze the difference between the two PAL Centers regarding program structure, staffing, and youth involvement.

In the first phase of the assessment, researchers met with police officers to discuss and report on the program's activities within the 17 PAL sites. At these 17 sites, additional interviews took place with staff members from eight PAL sites. The second phase of the assessment asked youth 10 – 17 years old to complete a questionnaire regarding their experience in the program.

Findings from these surveys indicated that youth involved in the program had a positive experience at PAL. Specifically, 80% of youth reported that their PAL peers made them feel

good about themselves. Youth also noted that staff members encouraged, supported, and trusted them (Subhas & Chandra). The study determined that there were positive aspects of the Baltimore PAL Program; however, the Baltimore PAL site also had challenges related to maintaining good relationships with older youth, attracting female participants, managing behavioral issues, and confronting negative family and community situations that youth may experience.

Other studies on PAL programs were limited in scope and not reflective of the processes that occur in PAL programs. For example, Newman, Fox, Flynn, and Christeson (2000) analyzed the needs, impact, and importance of after-school programs to reduce juvenile crime and later adult crime. They studied various programs, including the BC-PAL Program. This study determined that in areas where the program was located, the surrounding communities experienced a decrease in juvenile crime and crimes that targeted youth.

Rabois and Haaga (2002) recruited youth from various PAL chapters to participate in a basketball program. The purpose of this study was to measure how police officers and youths' attitudes towards one another changed when interacting through after-school basketball teams. Results showed that those involved with police reported an increase in positive attitudes towards team members and youth. It should be noted that while youth reported a positive attitude towards their team members, these attitudes did not shift to police officers in general.

Study Objectives

There is limited research on after-school programs that link participation in PAL programs to school connectedness. Even fewer studies exist that specifically examine the programs and staff processes within the Police Athletic League. This study seeks to address this gap in the PAL research and school connectedness by examining staff practices and youth

perceptions of school connectedness in the Greenville, NC *PAL After-School Program*.

Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do staff perform well on practices that the PAL participants identify as important?
- 2) What is the relationship between the PAL program practices and youths' report of school connectedness?

The study seeks to address staff practices identified in the Youth Quality Program Assessment model (Smith et al., 2012) and examine youth participants' reported perceptions of a safe and supportive environment and interaction and engagement in the program. The study serves to advance research while serving as a point of evaluation for the program.

Methods

Study Area

The PAL of Greenville, NC is an organization that focuses on the physical and cognitive development of participating youth. The Greenville PAL Program was created based on the idea that if interactions between police officers, adults, and youth are encouraged and positive, then these relationships can foster the positive development of youth. The Greenville PAL Program attempts to achieve their intended purpose through various program offerings, such as an after-school program, spring break camp, summer camp, football, baseball, and cheerleading teams. While the Greenville PAL has been in operation since 2007, no evaluation or research work has been completed about the effectiveness of the Greenville PAL program. Specifically, the after-school program of the Greenville PAL is the focus of this research study.

The after-school program utilizes various activities to stimulate youth mentally, emotionally, and physically. The target audience of the after-school program is families that live in Greenville, North Carolina with children between the ages of 5-13. Most of the population served live near the centers where the after-school program is offered in Greenville, NC. Currently, the South Greenville Recreation Center and Eppes Recreation Center host the PAL After-School Programs. The area surrounding each center includes low-income families seeking affordable child care and children seeking a safe environment near their neighborhoods, but away from crimes in their neighborhoods.

The PAL After-School Program follows the Pitt County School's calendar for days of operation. The PAL program operates Monday through Friday from 2:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. in an attempt to address the out-of-school time needs for the children it serves. Both centers follow the same schedule; however, the site supervisor can change the schedule to meet the needs of the

participants. On a typical after-school program day, the participants spend one hour on homework assignments, which is followed by a snack provided by the Pitt County School system. After snack time, the youth participate in structured activities and free play.

Sampling

This study sought to recruit youth between the ages of 8-13, who participated in the Greenville PAL After-School Program. Data were collected using a cross-sectional design. Participants of the study received informed consent from a parent/guardian. An additional assent form was completed by participants over the age of 11. The study attempted to recruit at least 36 participants ($\alpha=.05$; $\beta=.20$; $\rho=.45$) to assure adequate statistical power for investigating the stated research questions (Hulley, Cummings, Browner, Grady & Newman, 2013).

Instrumentation

The study instrument measured demographics, the perceptions of staff practices (e.g., safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement in the program), the importance of staff practices, and school connectedness. Demographic information included age, race, and gender of participants. As the study was cross-sectional, there was no need to collect identifying data. Measures of staff practices and school connectedness relied on previously established scales used in after-school and out-of-school program evaluations. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

Staff Practices

Staff practices were measured using existing items from past evaluations of after-school programs in eastern NC (Jackson, 2015; Watts, 2012). Items were linked to domain area specified in the YQPA model offered by Smith et al. (2012). This study differs from Smith et al. because it relies on student perceptions. While items were classified by domain area (e.g., safe

environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement), each item was measured through specific practice or staff behavior when gauging the importance of that item and its association with school connectedness. As the items utilized student perceptions, only specific aspects of each domain were measured.

The study items from Jackson (2015) and Watts (2012) were examined through a factor analysis, and then tests of internal consistency were used to classify items into domains and establish the validity and reliability for these measures. Some or all of the items have been used in past after-school and out-of-school time program evaluations to measure staff practices and program environment (see Gillard, Watts, & Witt, 2009; Moody, 2013; Watts, Witt, & King, 2008).

Fourteen items measuring program elements like those proposed by Smith and colleagues were considered for measurement in the study. A principal components analysis yielded a two-factor solution with a simple structure and no cross-loadings over .45. These two factors explained 57.85% of the variance. Factors were labeled: (1) safe and supportive environment and (2) interaction and engagement to align with the YQPA model. Items for safe and supportive environment reflect physical safety, psychological/emotional safety, encouragement and a welcoming atmosphere. Interaction and engagement items were reflective of active interaction with staff, planning and making choices. Following the principal components analysis, a test of internal consistency was run on each factor to see if the items could be used as scales in future studies seeking to apply the YPQA model. Reliability was deemed adequate as Cronbach's alpha was above .70 for each scale (Cortina, 1993). The items for each measure and reliability statistics are listed below.

Table 1

Staff Practice Measures by Domain (N=88)

Scale and Items*	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α
<u>Safe and Supportive Environment ($\alpha=.91$)</u>			
I feel safe at the PAL program	1.02	0.99	.90
I feel close to the people in the PAL program	0.86	0.90	.91
I like going to the PAL program	0.92	1.04	.90
PAL staff treat students fairly	1.05	0.97	.90
I feel like I belong at PAL program	0.65	1.04	.90
I enjoy activities at PAL program	1.03	1.03	.90
I do activities at PAL program that are important me	0.57	1.16	.90
It is easy to talk to the PAL staff	0.83	1.00	.91
PAL staff like us to do well	1.23	0.87	.90
<u>Interaction and Engagement ($\alpha=.79$)</u>			
PAL staff gave me choices and allowed me to make decisions	0.68	0.96	.77
PAL took time to get to know me	0.61	1.10	.73
I can talk to the PAL staff about important things	0.59	1.22	.73
PAL staff helped me plan activities	0.30	1.28	.79
PAL staff make us feel able to do activities	1.06	0.76	.77

*Items were measured on a seven-point scale from -3 to 3 with “0” as a mid-point.

Items used in the study were measured on a seven-point Likert scale examining the extent to which youth agree with the statement: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Disagree Somewhat, (4) Not Sure, (5) Agree Somewhat, (6) Agree, and (7) Strongly Agree and examined the extent to which youth agreed with each statement. A 7-point format was selected to allow for greater differentiation of responses (Willits, Theodori & Luloff, 2016). The increased variability is thought to counter measurement issues such as ceiling effects and skewing. The items were rephrased to understand the importance of each practice for participants to gauge importance for the proposed importance-performance analysis described below.

School Connectedness

For this study, a scale developed by Resnick et al. (1997) was used to measure school connectedness. The scale was reported to have acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .75$) and contained items such as “People at school like me” and “I feel close to people at school” to reflect school connectedness. Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale with responses being: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Disagree Somewhat, (4) Not Sure, (5) Agree Somewhat, (6) Agree, and (7) Strongly Agree. Both Jackson (2015) and Watts (2012) have used these measures with children from backgrounds similar to those who participated in this study.

Data Collection

Following IRB approval, data collection occurred during May of 2018. Data were collected via an online questionnaire developed with Qualtrics. Following homework tutorials, assenting students with parental informed consent were asked to complete the online questionnaire. Youth not participating in the study took part in typical after-school activities (e.g., recreation, arts) while participants completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Data were collected at the two PAL sites.

At the first site, the principal investigator gathered the participants of the study, while the remaining youth played a game with the PAL staff. Study participants were taken into the computer room and asked to sit along a wall. From there, the principal investigator read aloud a script for youth assent, after which, the participants were given the option to participate or not participate. One individual chose not to participate and was escorted back to the PAL activities. Prior to administering the questionnaire, the investigator read through a prepared script to remind the youth that their answers were anonymous and to ask questions if they were unsure of what was being asked of them. Participants then completed the questionnaire at computer stations in

the classroom. Upon completion, participants were asked to sit along the wall again and to remain quiet so that the other participants could finish. Once everyone finished the questionnaire, the principal investigator escorted them back to the gym area where they joined the activity being led by the PAL staff.

Data collection for site two differed slightly because the PAL Program did not have access to the computer lab. Youth completed questionnaires two participants at a time and followed procedures similar to those described above. Upon completion of the survey, participants were sent back to their classroom to finish homework or to continue engaging in an activity. For this site, it should be noted that many participants were absent due to suspension or end of grade (EOG) tutoring. Due to this situation, the principal investigator had to visit the site on three separate times to capture information from all consenting and assenting youth.

Data Analysis

Upon the completion of data collection, data were imported into a database using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Analyses proceeded first with descriptive statistical analysis to identify potential issues with outliers and missing data. Next, items and scales were reviewed for normality and the degree to which skewness or kurtosis affected responses to specific items. Analyses for research questions were then conducted.

The first research question used importance-performance analysis (IPA) to determine the youths' perceptions of the staff's performance on practices they value. An important-performance analysis is an evaluative tool that can be used to understand where gaps in service occur within recreation and after-school programs (Watts, Wright, & Jones, 2015). In IPA, it concurrently measures satisfaction and performance or rates of performance directly with specific items. In this study, participants rated staff behaviors and the environment in which the

after-school program occurred. The second set of measures asked participants to rate how important these behaviors or environmental features were to the participant. The two measures were then mapped onto a four-quadrant grid to demonstrate where behaviors were rated important and performed well (e.g., “on target”), important and performed poorly (e.g., “focus here”), not important and performed well (e.g., “possible overkill”), and not important and not performed well (e.g., “low priority”) (Oh, 2001). Another way of performing the IPA is a gap analysis (Mount, 2003), where means are compared using a dependent or paired samples t-test to see if a “gap” or significant difference exist between means scores for importance and performance. Both methods were utilized in this study to determine reported gaps in services and experiences. This analysis addressed the first research question while providing meaningful evaluative feedback to the program. The second research question utilized a correlation analysis to determine which staff practices were associated with school connectedness as reported by students.

Results

Sample Description

Before enrolling participants into the study, a parent or guardian needed to complete an informed consent form and youth had to provide assent. Consent and assent forms and procedures were reviewed by the University and Medical Institutional Review Board at East Carolina University. The study attempted to recruit at least 36 participants; however, only 35 forms were returned, one participant chooses not to participate, and the other participant left the program prior to the data collection period. Furthermore, the participant attrition rate for this study was 94%. The sample included 33 participants, 22 males and 11 females, between the ages of 8 and 13. The ages were distributed relatively evenly for children aged 8 - 12 (~17-23%), and the sample was predominantly African-American (~97%), which is reflective of the program population.

Table 2

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N=33)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<u>Gender</u>		
Male	22	67.67
Female	11	33.33
<u>Age</u>		
8.	5	16.67
9	7	23.33
10	5	16.67
11	6	20.00
12.	6	20.00
13	1	3.33
<u>Ethnicity</u>		
African American	32	96.97
Multiracial	1	3.03

Descriptive Statistics of Measures

As mentioned, items utilized in the questionnaire were used in the prior research to measure staff practices and program environment (Jackson, 2015; Watts, 2012). Findings from a previous principal components analysis were utilized to determine how these items mapped out specific dimensions of the YQPA. Four areas are measured in the YQPA: (a) safe environment, (b) supportive environment, (c) interaction, and (d) engagement. The descriptive statistics below provide a summary of the means and standard deviations for each item. For analysis purposes, items were used individually in bivariate analysis. The research questions were stated in such a way that analysis at this level was possible. Furthermore, the sample size and lack of variability in the measures (all measures were significantly skewed and lacked normality) did not allow scale testing to occur.

Table 3

Staff Practice Measures by Domain (N=33)

Scale and Items*	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<u>Safe Environment and Supportive Environment</u>		
I feel safe at the PAL program	6.45	.71
I like going to the PAL program	6.00	1.46
I feel like I belong at PAL program	5.78	1.43
I do activities at PAL program that are important me	5.68	1.42
It is easy to talk to the PAL staff	5.67	1.60
PAL staff like us to do well	6.28	.99
PAL staff treat students fairly	5.70	1.47
I feel close to the people in the PAL program	5.30	1.76
I enjoy activities at PAL program	5.52	1.50
I have friends or someone I like in the PAL Program	6.24	1.15
<u>Interaction and Engagement</u>		
PAL took time to get to know me	5.53	1.78
PAL staff gave me choices and allowed me to make decisions	5.70	1.76
PAL staff helped me plan activities	3.97	2.13
PAL staff make us feel able to do activities	5.75	1.39
I can talk to the PAL staff about important things	5.48	1.81

*Items reported here were measured on a 7-point scale from 1 to 7.

Importance-Performance of Staff Practices

The first research question asked to what extent do staff perform well on practices that PAL participants identify as important. As mentioned previously, data for each item was significantly skewed, and when the mean scores for both performance and importance were examined, all items ranked above the zero mid-point, which would indicate that all were somewhat important and performed somewhat well. Table 3 shows the results of the gap analysis, which used a Wilcoxon Sign Ranked test between dependent variables to test differences in rank between importance and performance. Two items significantly differed on

importance and performance. The rank scores for talking to staff about important things were higher for importance ($M=2.34$) than performance ($M=1.94$). The rank scores for staff treating students fairly was also higher for importance ($M=2.23$) than performance ($M=1.83$). Results suggest a need for improvement in these two areas.

Table 4
Results of Gap Analysis for Importance-Performance Analysis (N=33)

Item	Importance		Performance		<i>p.</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
A. Feel Safe at the PAL Program	2.52	.870	2.70	1.212	n.s.
B. It is easy to talk to the PAL Staff	2.09	.980	2.00	1.173	n.s.
C. I can talk to the PAL Staff about important things	2.34	.902	1.94	1.435	.01
D. PAL Staff treat students fairly	2.23	.973	1.83	1.671	.04
E. I trust the PAL Staff	2.21	.927	2.42	1.232	n.s.
F. I like going to the PAL Program	1.64	1.41	2.34	1.450	n.s.
G. I enjoy activities at the PAL Program	1.24	1.437	1.85	1.253	n.s.
H. Staff took time to get to know me	1.94	1.298	1.88	1.641	n.s.
I. PAL staff like us to do well	2.06	1.110	2.40	1.241	n.s.
J. I feel close to the people in the PAL Program	1.74	1.291	1.54	1.442	n.s.
K. I feel like I belong in the PAL Program	1.74	1.245	1.94	1.626	n.s.
L. PAL staff make us feel able to do the activities	1.77	1.215	1.91	1.579	n.s.
M. I have friends or someone I like in the PAL Program	2.17	1.071	2.34	1.533	n.s.
N. I do activities at PAL that are important to me	1.54	1.379	1.89	1.827	n.s.
O. PAL staff let me plan activities	.77	1.330	.62	1.557	n.s.
P. PAL staff gave me choices and allowed me to make decisions	1.89	1.345	2.09	1.597	n.s.

*Items were converted to reflect a scale from -3 to 3 with a “0” midpoint.

When mapping the IP analysis and visually inspecting the data, the findings indicated that the PAL staff were performing well in all areas and fell into the “keep up the good work” quadrant. The skewed data made it hard to determine an area to suggest from this analysis. No conclusion is provided for this portion of the analysis.

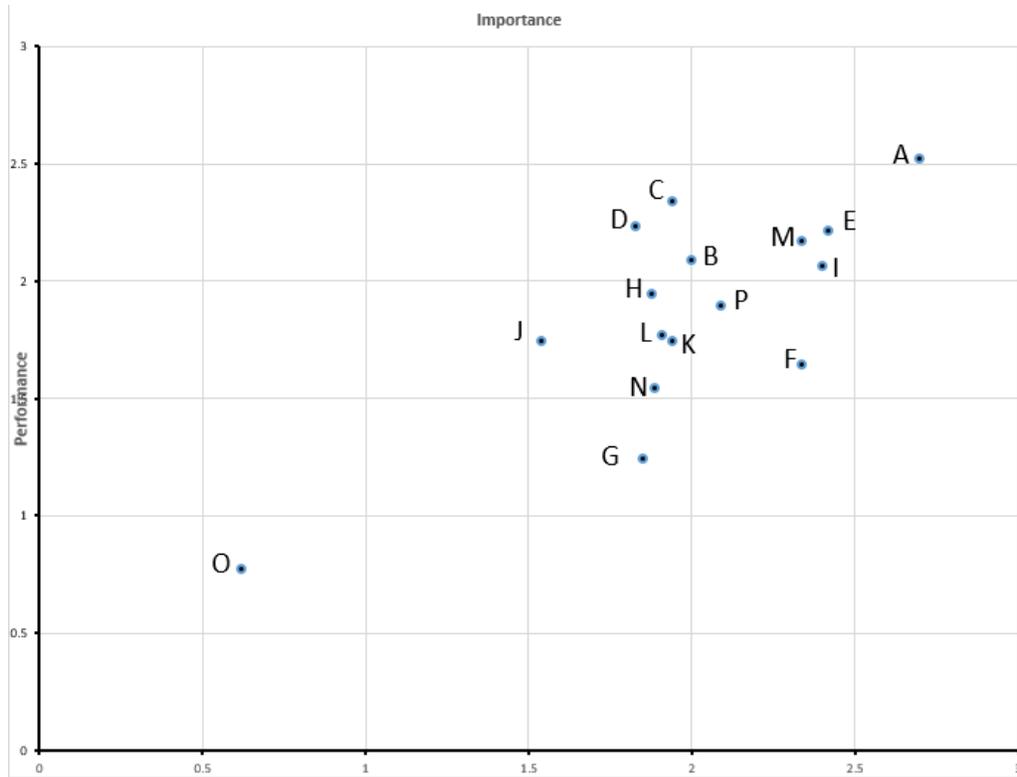


Figure 2. Quadrant Analysis of Importance-Performance

Note: See Table 4 to determine which letters correspond with specific practices.

The Relationship between Staff Practices and School Connectedness

The second research question explored the relationship between PAL Program practices and youths’ reports of school connectedness. To address this question, Spearman’s Rho was utilized to measure the non-parametric correlation between program practices and perceptions of school connectedness. Several program practices were correlated with school connectedness. The analysis showed that school connectedness was positively correlated with specific items of staff practices linked to safe and supportive practices. Significant correlations with school connectedness were found with the following items: the PAL staff like the participants to do well ($r_s = .380, p = .029$), PAL staff treat students fairly ($r_s = .401, p = .021$), able to talk to PAL staff about important things ($r_s = .439, p = .012$), feeling of belongingness ($r_s = .409, p = .018$), enjoying

activities at the PAL Program ($r_s = .485, p = .004$), and having friends in the PAL Program ($r_s = .524, p = .002$). Table 5 provides a summary of results for the correlation between staff practices and school connectedness.

Table 5

Relationships between Staff Practices and School Connectedness (N=33)

Item	r_s	p
I have friends or someone I like in the PAL Program	.524	.002
I enjoy activities at the PAL Program	.485	.004
I can talk to the PAL Staff about important things	.439	.012
I feel like I belong at the PAL Program	.409	.018
PAL Staff treat students fairly	.401	.021
PAL Staff like us to do well	.380	.029
It is easy to talk to the PAL Staff	.368	.035
I feel close to the people in the PAL Program	.336	n.s.
PAL Staff let me plan activities	.282	n.s.
PAL Staff gave me choices and allowed me to make decisions	.245	n.s.
I do activities at the PAL Program that are important to me	.243	n.s.
PAL Staff make us feel able to do activities	.225	n.s.
I feel safe at the PAL Program	.197	n.s.
I trust the PAL Staff	.149	n.s.
PAL Staff took time to get to know me	.124	n.s.
I like going to the PAL Program	.023	n.s.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study set out to examine how staff practices were perceived by youth, and explore if these practices were related to reports of their school connectedness. The study utilized Positive Youth Development (PYD) as a guiding framework, which espouses that youth should work toward assets, rather than focusing on deficits (Benson, Scales, & Syvertsen, 2011). The study also relied on the Bio-ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) to explain how interactions between the individual and social environment impact human development. In particular, this study explored the mesosystem function that after-school programs perform as a bridge to connect the home and school environments. This study addressed the following research questions:

- 1) To what extent do staff perform well on practices that PAL participants identify as important?
- 2) What is the relationship between PAL program practices and youths' report of school connectedness?

The study utilized a cross-sectional design and sampled 33 youth between the ages of 8-13 from the two Police Athletic League (PAL) sites in Greenville, NC. It utilized measures of staff practices from previous studies of after-school programs and classified them using the Youth Program Quality Assessment Model. Practices either fell into categories related to the safe and supportive environment or interaction and engagement. Analyses were limited as all staff practice items were skewed.

Analyses for the first research question found statistically significant gaps between two practice areas: being able to talk to staff about important things and feeling as though staff treated youth fairly. In each case, the level of performance ranked significantly lower than the

level of importance perceived by participants. The second research question examined Spearman's Rho to determine the relationship between staff practices and school connectedness. Results indicated that items related to providing a safe and supportive environment were positively correlated with school connectedness. These specific practices and environmental aspects included: (a) having friends or someone they liked in the PAL Program, (b) enjoying activities at the PAL Program; (c) being able to talk to the PAL Staff about important things, (d) feeling like they belong at the PAL Program; (e) having PAL Staff treat students fairly; (f) having PAL staff like them to do well; and (g) having an easy time talking to the PAL Staff.

According to the results, a safe and supportive environment was found to be positively correlated with connectedness, similar to the findings from a study by King, Vidorek, Davis, & McClellan (2002). In their research, they found that a safe environment, encouragement, empowering activities, and specific guidelines were likely to lead to school connectedness. The YQPA model also supports these areas and suggests that the four areas of safe environment, supportive environment, interaction, and engagement are needed in order to support youth as they develop internal and external assets. These assets include a sense of belonging or connectedness, which is key to positive youth development (Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber, 2003) and a main focus of this study.

The seven specific practices and environmental features found to be correlated with school connectedness have also been linked to school connectedness in the literature. McNeely, Nonemaker, and Blum (2002) noted that students reported lower levels of school connectedness when classroom management features such as consistency, student management, and decision-making opportunities for students were also low. Additionally, they found that participation in

extracurricular activities in an after-school environment was a significant predictor of school connectedness.

In a similar study, Anderson-Butcher (2010) suggested that the following program features were likely to contribute to school connectedness: creating positive relationships with adults and peers, fostering feelings of belonging in the program and in school, maintaining a safe environment, enforcing rules, having high expectations of participants, allowing participants to engage in fun learning experiences, allowing participants to engage with parents/guardians and the community, and supporting classroom learning. This study's findings are consistent with this past study, and draw to light the importance of institutions outside of school and home in bridging the gap between these two areas. Recreation and after-school programs continue to be important in reinforcing those norms that lead to successful developmental outcomes for youth.

When reviewing the importance-performance analysis, five of the seven practices linked to school connectedness were congruent in terms of importance and performance. The two items in which significant gaps occurred were: being able to talk to staff about important things and feeling as though staff treated youth fairly. These areas were still within the "on target" region of the analysis, but indicate a gap to address in service.

Both Anderson-Butcher and McNelly et al. (2002) observed that consistency and the development of positive relationships with adults were key factors for encouraging an environment that leads to school connectedness. These two areas are reflective of treating youth fairly and being able to speak with staff, respectively. These areas of staff practices also relate to the YQPA model; specifically, it represents those levels of the model that include interaction and engagement.

The YQPA model is based on the idea that youth development occurs when all four levels of the model are enacted within programs. It is likely that staff need to determine ways in which youth are included in decision-making and are made to feel as though youth can talk to them openly. Strengthening these areas will also strengthen the program's ability to promote school connectedness. Fostering school connectedness in participants can also lead to additional benefits such as an increase in academic performance and school attendance (Anderson-Butcher, 2010), while protecting against risk factors such as emotional distress and drug use (Resnick et al., 1997). From a PYD perspective, the PAL program is supporting the development of the internal assets, specifically school achievement. School connectedness is also linked to a sense of belonging in school, and nurturing this connection fulfills one of the three primary psychological needs for human development (Walker et al., 2014). The value of the PAL after-school program is that it strengthens how different microsystem entities (school, PAL, home) interact to support youth development, which is evidence of a healthy mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

As an after-school program, the Greenville PAL Program is able to support school connectedness and promote positive youth development through academics, arts, community involvement, and athletics. In order for the program to be successful, it needs to be the link between home and school for youth, while also emphasizing and supporting opportunities for school achievement and positive youth development. Based on Bronfenbrenner's model, the PAL after-school program would be included within the microsystem because the program interacts with its participants on a daily basis. Due to this placement in the youth's life, the PAL Program's ability to maintain a relationship with schools/families would strengthen or limit the effectiveness of the mesosystem in promoting youth development. By connecting the two

entities, the PAL Program can provide support to promote social norms such as school achievement. Research shows that after-school programs have the potential to achieve these outcomes related to academics and school connectedness. Benefits associated with these programs include increased academic performance socialization, feelings of self-worth, and positive ethnic identity (Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Jenner, 2007; Riggs et al., 2010). Other studies have found that after-school programs are able to decrease risky behaviors such as drug use and delinquent behaviors (Tebes, 2007; Gottfredson et al., 2007). These programs help to create an integrated set of social structures aimed at promoting the best interests of youth, while strengthening the community through these individuals' positive engagement.

The Greenville PAL Program and other after-school programs provide opportunities for youth to meet people in meaningful positions such as teachers, police officers, neighbors, peers, and adults, who want to support and encourage positive youth development. These support systems also encourage young people to participate in programs that provide opportunities to learn, express, and belong within their community (Witt & Caldwell, 2005); while attempting to accomplish and gain internal and external assets that help youth to become healthy, responsible, and engaged adults (Search Institute, 2017). School systems and after-school programs are institutions that are meant to support PYD and outcomes-related school achievement orientation (i.e., school connectedness), but these institutions are also charged with helping young people on their way to adulthood. According to Pittman and colleagues (2011), the aim of fostering this transition to adulthood is to have problem-free, fully prepared, and fully engaged adults who enrich communities and continue to support these outcomes in the young people who follow them.

Limitations

Some limitations exist related to this study. Data were collected by the primary investigator who also holds a leadership position at the Greenville PAL. For this reason, the answers to questions could have been influenced by social desirability. Some respondents could have reported answers that were more socially acceptable to please the principal investigator. The study attempted to limit social desirability by asking participants to read and answer the questions themselves. Furthermore, the questionnaire did not collect any identifying information so their responses could not be linked back to participants.

Test fatigue is another limitation that could influence how questions were answered. Several participants mentioned that the questionnaire was long and became restless towards the end of the questionnaire. This could have influenced why data were skewed. It could be that the participants were completing the questionnaire without really evaluating how they truly perceived the program quality and importance of each practice area.

The limited sample size of 33 participants was an additional challenge to this research study. With a small sample size, the statistical power of the study was not realized, which increased the chance for a margin of error. A larger sample size may have afforded more variability in the data.

Lastly, the research design of the study was cross-sectional, and data collection was not collected over a period of time. This type of design made it difficult to determine whether correlations between school connectedness and staff practices was due to direct actions of the program (Babbie, 2013). By collecting data all at once, it was only possible to see their perception of the program at that time of data collection and the processes between all of the individuals in the program were not able to be observed. However, had a pre-test/post-test

method been used, the researcher would be able to measure the youth's perceptions of program practices over time, and better examine how PAL's program practices impacted the behaviors of the youth.

Recommendations for Future Study

Despite current efforts, more research is needed in this area of PAL Programs and how after-school programs contribute to positive youth development. It is strongly recommended that a line of research and evaluation continue to develop surrounding the PAL Program. Using an experimental or quasi-experimental design with a pre-test/post-test method would provide more information to link program exposure with a change in youth behavior. By utilizing an experimental design, researchers could measure how enrollment in the program leads to changes in academics, socialization, development, and other outcomes, over a specified time period. Furthermore, the relative impact of the program could be observed by using an experimental design with follow up after the period of enrollment.

The study could also be expanded to separate police interactions from specific program staff interactions. This study lumped police, professional staff, and paraprofessionals into one category as staff members. It would be important to investigate interactions between each group separately to see how interactions with these separate groups were associated with school connectedness. The PAL Program is unique to many communities and differs from many after-school programs because it involves a significant community agency outside of school that is invested in molding better citizens. Understanding how it functions and supports youth development continues to be an important charge for those interested in youth development.

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SECTION II: EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

Police Athletic League (PAL) After-School Program Contributions to Positive Youth Development Outcomes

Out-of-school time (OST) programs have been a major focus area for youth services since the 19th century at the inception of the recreation movement. For the past twenty years, research and practice in this area have utilized the positive youth development (PYD) framework. PYD is guided by principles that emphasize investing in the youth as assets and steers clear of past models that view youth as risks. According to the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs and additional literature, PYD is defined as an:

International, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths (Positive Youth Development, n.d.).

Simply put, PYD is a pro-social approach that focuses on enhancing individual strengths to produce positive outcomes into adulthood.

Prior to PYD, youth programs structured their ideas and activities around the idea of eliminating deficits through prevention. Youth program directors centered their programs on the prevention of pregnancy, drug use, smoking, sexual interactions, and other risky behaviors that were common concerns for this age group. Predating PYD is the work of Jessor and his colleagues on risk and protective factors for problematic adolescent health behaviors (Jessor, Turbin, & Costa, 1998). This model was based on problem-behavior theory, which stipulates that behavior is the result of interactions between the person and the environment. Problem behavior

theory draws attention to the social contexts of youth (e.g., family, friends, school, work) and examines the successful (i.e., protective factors) and stressful interactions (i.e., risk factors) within these contexts. Protective factors increase the possibility of positive outcomes that are either health-specific or psychosocial. Health-specific factors consisted of a commitment to health and perceived social support for engaging in positive health behaviors. Psychosocial factors include personality, the perceived social environment, and behavior variables towards the institutions of family and school. Engagement in these two forms of protective factors is demonstrated through an increase in perceived value of health, how peers and families value health, overall healthy hygiene practices, a healthy diet, participating in exercise on a regular basis, and getting an adequate amount of sleep (Jessor, Turbin, & Costa, 1998).

In their study, Jessor et al. (1998) examined how protective factors affected levels of health-enhancing behaviors. This study was also concerned with identifying whether certain protective factors were more likely to produce specific health-enhancing behaviors. The study found that both health-related and conventionally-related protective factors have a significant positive relationship with health-enhancing behaviors. Specifically, the study found that the youth's value of health, modeling healthy behaviors by parents and friends, positive orientation to school, involvement in pro-social activities, and church attendance had the most impact on positive outcomes for youth.

Today, many programs focus on prevention techniques as well as promoting the strengths of youth. Roth and Brooks-Gunn (2003) analyzed 71 organizations that claimed to promote positive youth development. The authors examined each organization's goals to determine if they followed the asset-model or deficit-model. Of the goals analyzed, 92% of goals followed the deficit-based model and focused on the prevention of high-risk behaviors. Meanwhile, 77% of

goals focused on promoting positive outcomes such as social skills, life skills, academic performance, and motivation (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The argument for PYD is that focusing on positive experiences and outcomes helps buffer youth against the specter of risk.

Youth Development Assets

As the PYD movement took hold in the late 1990s, the Search Institute (2017) developed the assets framework. The assets framework identifies external and internal factors that promote positive development for youth. This framework was based on years of research on youth, the settings in which they interact, and the likelihood of youth experiencing positive developmental outcomes into young adulthood. The model identifies 20 internal and 20 external assets that promote positive youth development. Internal assets focused on personal qualities that lead to positive choices and the development of confidence, passion, and purpose. Examples of internal assets include having a commitment to learning, developing positive values and positive identity, and having social competency. Conversely, external assets focus on experiences within the environment and include interactions with peers, family members, and adults. Examples of external assets are the establishment of boundaries and expectations, empowerment of youth, constructive use of time, and support from family, peers, schools, neighbors, and other adults (40 Developmental Assets, 2017). A simple rule is used when interpreting the assets framework: the more internal and external assets youth report having (see Figure 1 and Figure 2), the more likely they are to experience successful development.

Developmental Systems Theories

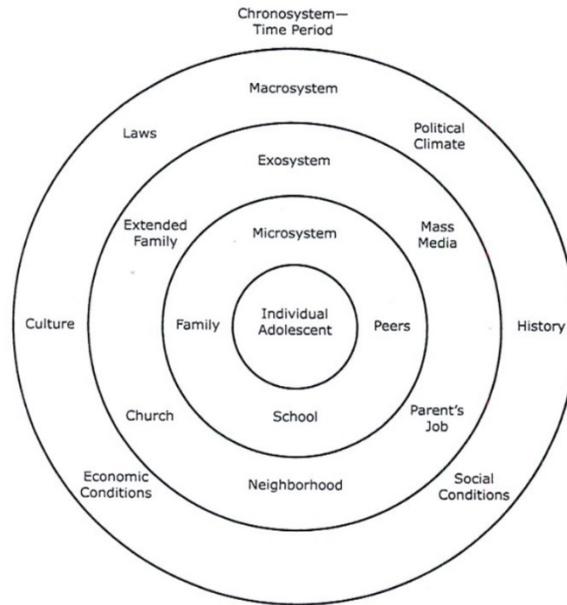
Another perspective associated with the development of individuals is known as the developmental systems theories (DST). DST is a perspective on how research should be conducted and understood involving the development of individuals. Like any theory, it is based

on major themes that all lead to the main idea that multiple interactions between an individual's genes, traits, and environment will contribute to the development of youth.

Oyama, Griffiths, and Gray (2001) stated that there are six major themes of DST: the joint determination by multiple causes, context sensitivity/contingency, extended inheritance, development as construction, distrusted control, and evolution as construction. The authors elaborate that development is encouraged through "multiple causes," both genetic and nongenetic factors. While this is a joint effort, one factor may play a more important role than the other factors. However, all factors are important for vital development. While genes and an individual's environment can play a role in development, the authors noted that the significance of one factor is dependent on the individual as a whole. Prior to birth, an individual obtains specific "resources," such as chromosomes, nutrients, temperatures, childcare, chromatin marks, and cytoplasmic chemical gradients, that are embedded in their genes from their lineage (Oyama, Griffiths, & Gray, 2001). While genes are passed on through DNA, an individual's traits are developed and redeveloped throughout the life cycle. Just as genes impact the development of an individual, so do traits. These traits, however, are affected by their daily interactions in which the individual has no locus of control. The last major theme of DST is that the environment does not just change the individual, rather the environment and individual influence each other and change each other over time (Oyama, Griffiths, & Gray, 2001). This perspective and its major's themes indicate that a series of environmental impacts such as an after-school program, where the program can connect an individual's school and home environment with leisure participation, can contribute to the development of participating youth.

The Bio-Ecological Model

Another perspective associated with human development is known as the Bio-Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The Bio-Ecological Model is a systems theory rooted in the



idea that multiple interactions between an individual and the environment contribute to human development. Human development is a unique, complex process that is influenced by the actions and reactions of several ecological systems that promote or inhibit development. Systems are mapped in a series of concentric circles that reflect their relative influence on the individual. Systems closer in proximity to the individual are those in which more regular interaction occurs, and thus, more influence from the system to the individual and vice versa. Conversely, those systems furthest in proximity have less regular interaction and less influence on the individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Figure 1 depicts the Bio-Ecological Model.

Individuals operate directly within a microsystem that consists of common social entities (e.g., family, peers, work, school) in their lives. The interactions between these social entities are known as the mesosystem. The exosystem is one in which the individual does not directly

interact, yet yields indirect influence (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). A common example of the exosystem is the parent's workplace; a parent's workplace indirectly affects a child. The outermost layer of the model is the macrosystem. This layer represents the broader cultural system in which one interacts, and it has a bearing on the qualities of the other systems (Duerden & Witt, 2010). These systems operate within the chronosystem which reflects a time context that recognizes the broader historical influences that may also play a role in determining human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris). Events that occur in the microsystem and mesosystem are of particular interest to this study.

The microsystem for youth consists of parents, school, sports, and recreation programs, and other social institutions (e.g., church, music lessons) to which youth have regular exposure. Within the Bio-Ecological model, the microsystem is posited to have the greatest influence on the individual and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Indeed, it is recognized that recreation programs and after-school programs are uniquely positioned social institutions that have the potential to impact the relationships, skills, behavior, and identity of youth participants (McHale, Dotterer & Kim, 2009). The mesosystem accounts for the types of programs (i.e., after-school programs) that have the potential to interact with schools and home to influence development.

When considering the mesosystem, it is vitally important to recognize generative and disruptive processes within an individual's social ecology (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). For example, when inconsistent approaches are used by parents and schools or schools and after-school programs, it may be disruptive to the consistent promotion of outcomes. Examples of this could include the child who skips school because of an uninvolved parent or recreation programs that are poorly monitored and not supportive of activities to support school achievement such as homework assistance. When considering positive youth development, it is important to have

social institutions that align around supporting developmental outcomes. These generative practices strengthen outcome-based approaches by consistently supporting developmental assets.

Processes to Influence Assets

Supports and Opportunities

While the assets model identified factors that promote positive youth development, specific guidance is needed regarding how these assets can be cultivated and realized. Youth programs and services that aim to promote positive youth development do so through the provision of supports and opportunities. Support comes from people in meaningful positions such as teachers, police officers, neighbors, peers, and adults. These individuals support the motivational, emotional, academic, physical, and mental needs of youth through the provision of social assistance and resources. Grossman and Bulle (2006) analyzed multiple studies to determine the effects when these supports from parents and others are present, such as positive educational outcomes, increases in physical health, and a decrease in risky behaviors. Additionally, the researchers noted that adults within programs can foster a supportive relationship with youth through responsible, mature adults. Programs should allow adult staff to demonstrate comfort, care, and respect towards youth. Techniques to foster these attitudes among the adults and youth can be taught through training sessions and practice (Grossman & Bulle, 2006). Programs also provide opportunities to cultivate, learn, express, and belong; these are active ways youth impact their surroundings and learn to function and engage within communities (Witt & Caldwell, 2005.).

To guide continuous quality improvement, Smith and colleagues (2012) reviewed the instructional quality practices of staff in after-school programs. They defined instructional quality as “the program content and staff behaviors that shape youth experience” (Smith et al.,

2012). They argued that content and staff behaviors are one of the most important features of education settings. The review relies extensively on studies of developmental outcomes in after-school settings. From this review, a hierarchical model was devised to guide the Youth Quality Program Assessment (YQPA). This model relies on the use of observational measures, guided interviews and survey methods for assessment purposes (Yohalem, Wilson-Ahlstrom, Fischer, & Shinn, 2009).

At the base of the YQPA model is a safe environment that assures psychological and physical safety. The next level of the model is a supportive atmosphere that emphasizes an encouraging environment with elements of skill building, reframing conflict and feels welcoming. The third level of the model is interaction. Interaction features active leadership and group membership components such as mentoring and leading while fostering experiences to promote belonging. At the peak of the model is engagement. Engagement refers to decision-making processes where planning, making choices and reflection are active components. The model adheres to Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem and Ferber's (2003) vision for youth development as an opportunity to support problem-free, fully prepared and fully engaged youth in the process. Key to this model is a deliberate attempt to develop a sense of belonging. Developing a sense of belonging is a concept that is central to this study.

School Connectedness

An emphasis on developing a sense of belonging is vital during the development process of children and adolescents. Belonging is a state in which individuals feel needed, important, or a part of a bigger picture (Hall, 2014). Connectedness is a psychological feeling of belonging, or feeling as though adults and peers care for the individual (School Connectedness, 2015). These two concepts can be connected to every portion of the assets model in some manner. When

considering internal assets, developing a commitment to learning hinges upon feeling needed and connected to the school. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identified school connectedness as a vital protective factor for students; adults and peers who demonstrate care for academic success and personal growth support it.

To measure the concept of school connectedness, researchers measure a variety of variables such as positive orientation to school, school attachment, school bond, school climate, school connection, school context, school engagement, teacher support, and student satisfaction (Libbey, 2004). In prior studies, feelings of school connectedness were correlated with increases in academic performance and school attendance, as well as decreases in negative behaviors such as utilization of alcohol, tobacco, other drug use, and violence and deviant behaviors (School Connectedness, 2015). Information obtained in the following 1997 study corroborates current information on school connectedness. The authors analyzed the how risk factors such as emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, violence, sexual debut, pregnancy history, use of cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana could be combated through protective factors at home, school, and on the individual level. Of the 11,572 adolescents interviewed, all participants were in 7th to 12th grade were randomly selected from a poll of nearly 100,000 initial surveys. From the interviews, the researchers determined that parent-family connectedness and perceived school connectedness were protective against seven out of eight risk factors measured (Resnick et al., 1997).

In a longitudinal study, McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum (2002) studied individuals in 7th-12th grade through the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. Researchers were able to measure school connectedness through specific statements in which the students would respond using a Likert scale. The study determined that specific classrooms that lacked

classroom management, such as consistency, student management, and decision-making opportunities for students, were less likely to experience school connectedness. Additionally, the study found that school connectedness was lower in students who were expelled for minor violations, and that students enrolled in smaller schools felt more attached to their school when compared to larger schools. Towards the end of the study, the researchers were able to detail that class size and segregation according to genders or race did not predict school connectedness; however, extracurricular activities did contribute to school connectedness (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002).

Bond, Butler, Thomas, Carlin, Glover, Bowes, & Patton (2007) analyzed the effect of social and school connectedness as forecasters for substance abuse, mental health, and academic outcomes for later teenage years. This longitudinal study was completed with 2,678 students between the ages of 13-16 years old. Findings from this study suggested that youth between the ages of 13-14 years old, who demonstrated a mix of positive school and social connectedness at the first point of data collection, were more likely to experience positive outcomes in throughout their teenage years. However, individuals who demonstrated low school connectedness, but high social connectedness, were at greater risk for anxiety/depressive symptoms, regular smoking habits, drinking, and use of marijuana. In terms of academic performances, individuals with low social connectedness, low school connectedness, or both were less likely to complete school in their later teenage years (Bond et al., 2007).

In a similar study, researchers sought to link high levels of self-esteem as a protective factor, further giving the individual an increased chance for connecting positively with peers, teachers, and their school, which would lead to an increase in academic performance. Participants of the study were involved in the Healthy Kids Mentoring Program, which

specifically focused on fostering positive relationships, self-esteem enhancement, goal setting, and academic assistance. The study found that programs that specifically offer safe environments, encouragement, empowering activities, and specific guidelines for appropriate behavior were more likely to increase students' attitudes towards school, increase attendance, and decrease suspension. Regarding the specific program studied, the researchers noted significant improvements in self-esteem, school, peer, and family connectedness for the 28 participants enrolled in the program between the pre- and post-test measurements (King, Vidourek, Davis, & McClellan, 2002).

Many researchers have found that involvement in extracurricular activities has led to increased grades, improved attendance, and contributed to feelings of attachment (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). This topic has been studied for years, and there is substantial support for the role of extracurricular activities in producing specific positive outcomes in youth when provided at the correct dosage. Marsh found that involvement in extracurricular activities was associated with the following outcomes: social and academic self-concept, educational goals, academic achievement, and the pursuit of college courses (1988). These benefits were obtained through participation in specific extracurricular activities such as sports, honor societies, student governments, church organizations, and community service organizations. Additionally, Marsh concluded that participation in certain activities or involvement in too many activities would produce negative effects (Marsh, 1988). In 1997, Mahoney and Cairns compared extracurricular activities to at-risk dropout rates. Researchers in this study found that youth with early participation in extracurricular activities were less likely to drop out of high school early (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997). Researchers have advocated for more research on after-school

programs to better understand how these contexts contribute to school connectedness and overall positive youth development.

After-School Programs and PYD

To produce results such as school connectedness and positive youth development, out-of-school programs should ensure physical safety, psychological safety, structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, opportunities to feel needed, opportunities for skill building, and collaborations between family, school, and surrounding communities (Borden et al., 2007). Research on after-school programs for youth has found that the structure of after-school programs can lead to academic enrichment and problem prevention (Smith, 2007).

Just as the above studies showed the benefits of extracurricular activities on academics and connectedness, after-school programs can produce similar results. Cooper, Valentine, and Nye (1999) analyzed five different forms of after-school activities - homework, television watching, extracurricular activities, structured after-school groups, and jobs - to see how they predicted academic achievement. The study determined that after-school activities that promote achievement and positive identification are more likely to produce academic success when compared to employment and television watching (Cooper, Valentine, & Nye, 1999).

Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, and Brown studied *The Gevirtz Homework Project*, an after-school program that assisted with homework. The authors determined that the program had no statistical effect; however, positive impacts were observed for students who were learning English as a second language (Cosden, Morrison, Gutierrez, & Brown, 2004). In a similar study, Farmer-Hinton, Sass, and Schroeder (2009) examined the influence of the *Lighthouse Program*, an after-school program on enrolled students' academic performance. Participants of the study

demonstrated a statistically significant increase in academic performance. Additionally, participants who dropped out of the program before their third year saw a decrease in academic performance, which suggests a long-term benefit to continued participation in these programs (Farmer-Hinton, Sass, & Schroeder, 2009).

Jenner and Jenner (2007) also examined low-income and at-risk children in Louisiana enrolled in after-school programs. The researchers utilized a pre-test/post-test research design to examine the academic influence of after-school attendance on 1192 students. They found that participation in an after-school program was significantly associated with increased test scores of students. Specifically, statistical growth in language, reading, and social studies scores was evident. In the above studies, each after-school program was analyzed according to the academic benefits of the program. Enrollment in these programs could have led to the following assets being accomplished: other adult relationships, adult role models, high expectations, youth program, or interpersonal competence.

Rather than focusing on academics, Riggs, Bohnery, Guzman, and Davidson (2010) sought to measure benefits associated with after-school programs. The authors completed two pilot studies within community-based after-school programs for Latinos between the ages of 12-18 years old. Data were collected from 46 participants for the first study, and 118 participants were utilized for the second pilot test. After the first pilot test, it was determined that participation in the after-school program was associated with an increase in self-worth. Also, ethnic socialization was significantly able to predict ethnic identity development. The second pilot test determined that children who attended the after-school program and had concentration issues at the beginning of the program experienced a decrease in concentration problems by the end of the program. Findings from these two studies suggest that addressing developmental

outcomes in social psychological (e.g., socialization, feelings of self-worth, positive ethnic identity) and cognitive functioning is possible through after-school programs. The outcomes stated from the research study indicated that this particular after-school program can produce outcomes associated with the 40 Developmental Assets model.

Tebes et al. (2007) examined an 18-week drug prevention curriculum within an urban after-school program. The goals of the program focused on decreasing drug use by these students. The study included 204 participants, with 149 students in the intervention group and 155 in the control group. Individuals within the intervention group demonstrated higher perceptions of risk associated with drug use at the completion of the program. In addition, the 18-week session decreased drug use in the intervention participants at the one-year follow up, while the control group experienced an increase in substance use at the one-year follow-up.

In the next study, the researchers analyzed 35 after-school programs to determine what specific program characteristics that contribute to positive behavioral outcomes. The specific characteristics observed were the program structure, staffing, and size. Data were collected from 2002-2003 through the *Maryland After-School Opportunity Fund Program*, which included 497 youth participants. The study determined that there was a correlation between increased after-school participation and decreased delinquency. The study suggested that the promotion of constructive time use decreased participation in delinquent behaviors (Gottfredson, Cross, & Soule, 2007). A similar study by Vandell, Reisner, & Pierce (2007) analyzed how a high-quality after-school program can produce specific outcomes for the 1,434 elementary and middle school students. The study determined that participation in a high-quality after-school program has the potential to increase academic performance, pro-social behaviors, and decrease misconduct. What is clear from the research is that after-school programs have great reach and can focus on

different outcomes related to academics, expressive arts, community involvement, or athletics. Of particular interest to this study are after-school programs offered by Police Athletic Leagues.

The Police Athletic/Activity Leagues (PAL) is a program to prevent juvenile crime and violence that provides athletic, educational, and recreational activities for youth between the ages of 5-18 years old. While the first creation date is unknown, the National PAL Inc. has been operating since the late 1940s. Since then, the National PAL has recruited over 300 PAL Member Chapters throughout various cities in the United States. The majority of these chapters are affiliated with law enforcement agencies, and each chapter offers a different focus including after-school programs, music studios, sports-related programs, and art related programs (National PAL, 2017).

Studies of PAL Programs

While the study by Rabbis & Haaga (2002) did not specifically focus on the Police Athletic League (PAL), the Police Athletic Leagues recruited the participants of the following study to participate in a basketball program. The purpose of the study was to measure how police officers and youth's attitudes towards one another changed when interacting through basketball teams. The study determined that police involved in the study reported an increase in positive attitudes towards team members and youth. Furthermore, youth reported a positive attitude towards their team members, but this general positive attitude did not transfer to police officers as a whole (Rabbis & Haaga, 2002).

In 2004, the Baltimore City Police Athletic League completed an assessment study to a) examine the characteristics and activities of the program; b) develop an understanding of staff and police officer's characteristics, roles, and responsibilities; c) describe the characteristics of the participants; d) understand the impact of communities, parents, and volunteers in relation to

the programs; and e) analyze the difference between the two PAL Centers in terms of program structure, staffing, and youth involvement. For the first portion of the assessment, researchers met with police officers to discuss and report on the program's activities within the 17 PAL sites. At these 17 sites, additional interviews took place with staff members from eight PAL sites. The second portion of the assessment asked youth between the ages of 10 – 17 years old to complete a questionnaire. Findings from these surveys indicated that the youth involved in the program had a positive experience at PAL. Specifically, 80% of youth reported that their PAL peers made them feel good about themselves. Youth also noted that staff members encouraged, supported, and trusted them as a whole (Subhas & Chandra, 2004). While positive aspects of the Baltimore PAL Program were found, it was determined that each site had difficulties maintaining good relationships with older youth, attracting female participants, managing behavioral issues, and confronting negative family and community situations that the youth may experience. Another study by Newman, Fox, Flynn, and Christenson (2000) analyzed the needs, impact, and importance of after-school programs to reduce juvenile crime and later adult crime. This study included various programs, including the PAL Program in Baltimore. Findings from this study revealed that the surrounding communities near where the program was located experienced a decrease in juvenile crime and crimes that targeted.

Importance-Performance Measurement

While measuring the influence of after-school connectedness on school connectedness, it is also important to determine what program practices the participants deem important. This includes whether program practices are on target or need attention and if the program practices predict after-school connectedness. Program practices are measured through an importance-performance measurement. "Performance measurement is the ongoing monitoring and reporting

of program accomplishments... towards pre-established goals” (Performance Measurement and Evaluation, 1998). Performance measurement is completed by collecting data associated with the inputs of the program, (e.g., factors going into and contributing to the program) and what is produced from the program, or the outputs. Performance measurements can determine what adjustments should occur to improve a program.

Cheurprakobkit and Bartsch (2001) utilized a research study to measure police performance according to citizen’s satisfaction and police attributes. The authors surveyed 581 residents in Texas to determine the importance of 14 police attributes. Of the 14 attributes, the residents of Texas ranked professional knowledge, professional conduct, honesty, quality of service, and fairness as the most important attributes of police officers. The study determined that executives of the Texas Police Department’s should be concerned with improving the professional conduct of police officers. This study allowed the researchers to measure the effectiveness of police officer’s performance and contribute to the creation of policies through the input of Texas’ residents (Chreurprakobkit & Bartsch, 2001).

When completing an importance-performance measurement study with after-school programs, there are typically two types of performance measures: measures of effort or measures of effect. Measures of effort involve measuring what outcomes are achieved through the program’s activities, while measures of effect measure changes that occur in the program’s participants. When measuring either of these, there are four important considerations according to the Harvard Family Research Project (Little, Harris, & Bouffard, 2004):

- 1) “The range of performance measures currently used to assess program OST outcomes reflects the diversity of OST programming;
- 2) Performance measures are not the same as performance indicators;

- 3) Availability of data sources; and
- 4) Performance measures should... yield useful information for program involvement”.

In 2008, Watts, Witt, and King conducted a performance measurement study on an after-school program. They analyzed the relationship between the input and output associated with an after-school program between 2004 and 2006. The study contained data collected from 2,428 children. The study determined that there was a significant correlation between satisfaction with the after-school program and the children’s overall positive perspective of their school. The participant's satisfaction with the after-school program and overall positive perspective of their school led to school connectedness. Additionally, students emphasized the importance of wanting to feel safe and have someone to help them with homework to increase their overall satisfaction with the after-school program (Watts, Witt, & King, 2008).

The PAL Program in Greenville, NC will be used in this study. It is necessary first to measure what the participants of this PAL After-School Program deem as important factors for the overall best program. Once these program practices are identified, there is a need to determine if the program is meeting the current needs or if the needs require additional attention from staff members. Next, an in-depth analysis of how the target practices predict after-school connectedness and further influence school connectedness will need to be completed.

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Appendix A: The 40 Developmental Assets Framework

40 Developmental Assets (External)		
Support Assets	Family Support	Need Love, encouragement, and support from family members.
	Positive Family Communication	Parents/Guardians must communicate with youth in a positive and respectful way to fulfill the youth's needs.
	Other Adult Relationships	Must receive love, encouragement, and support from at least one adult other than parents.
	Caring Neighborhood	Must have neighbors who care for the youth.
	Caring School Climate	Outside of the home, youth should experience an encouraging and caring environment.
	Parent Involvement in Schooling	Parents/Guardian must be involved in the youth's schooling to promote success.
Empowerment Assets	Community Values Youth	Adults within the community appreciate and value youth.
	Youth as Resources	Youth should be assigned roles within the community.
	Service to Others	Youth participate in serving the community.
	Safety	Environments experienced by youth should encourage feels of safeness.
Boundaries and Expectations	Family Boundaries	Parents/Guardians understand the needs/wants of youth and understand that without rules there is chaos.
	School Boundaries	At school, youth need rules and consequences.
	Neighborhood Boundaries	Neighbors are willing to hold youth accountable for behaviors outside of the home.
	Adult Role Models	Adults demonstrate appropriate, positive behaviors.
	Positive Peer Influence	Youth's friends must demonstrate appropriate, positive behaviors.
	High Expectations	Adults encourage youth to do their best.
Constructive Use of Time	Creative Activities	Youth are exposed to music, theater, art, and other creative activities for at least three hours per week.
	Youth Programs	Youth participate in sports, clubs, organizations, school activities, or community programs at least three hours per week.
	Religious Community	Youth participate in religious programs for at least one hour per week.
	Time at Home	The encouragement of youth and family time.

40 Developmental Assets (Internal)		
Commitment to Learning	Achievement Motivation	Youth are motivated to do well.
	School Engagement	Youth are interested in learning new things.
	Homework	Youth complete at least one hour of stimulating activities per day.
	Bonding to School (School Connectedness)	Youth enjoy learning and care about their school.
	Reading for Pleasure	Youth enjoy reading for at least three hours per week.
Positive Values	Caring	Youth are encouraged and learn to help others.
	Equality & School Justice	Youth work to make their community a better place.
	Integrity	Youth stand up for their beliefs.
	Honesty	Youth value honesty and demonstrate honesty.
	Responsibility	Youth accept responsibility for their actions and decisions.
	Restraint	Youth make healthy sexual decisions.
School Competencies	Planning & Decision Making	Youth plan and make appropriate decisions.
	Interpersonal Competence	Youth develop appropriate relationships with adults and peers.
	Cultural Competence	Youth are comfortable with people of different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds.
	Resistance Skills	Youth have the ability to resist peer pressure and dangerous situations.
	Peaceful Conflict Resolution	Youth can resolve problems without violence.
Positive Identity	Personal Power	Youth learn that they can influence their surroundings and that they have control over things that happen to them.
	Self-Esteem	Youth experience high self-esteem.
	Sense of Purpose	Youth experience a meaning or purpose within their lives.
	Positive View of Personal Future	Youth are hopeful and positive about their own future.

Appendix B: Study Questionnaire

Spring 2018 Survey

Please read the following:

You are taking part in this study to help us how PAL staff work with children in the PAL program. This questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes. There are three important things you should know before you begin:

1. All answers are anonymous. We cannot link you to your answers. We do expect you to be honest.

2. Answering these questions is voluntary. This means you are not required to answer any question. You can also stop answering questions at any time without any worry.

However, we would really appreciate it if you could fill out as much of the question form as possible.

3. THIS IS NOT A TEST. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. We want to learn about you and how you feel about attending PAL.

1. What is your age? _____ years old

2. Are you a boy or a girl (circle): BOY GIRL

3. What is your race?

- a. African American or Black
- b. Asian or Pacific Islander
- c. White
- d. Latino or Hispanic
- e. Multiracial or Biracial
- f. : Other _____

Section 2: The After-school Program

How much do you agree or disagree with each sentence about the PAL program?

	Disagree a lot	Disagree	Disagree a little	Not sure	Agree a little	Agree	Agree a lot
I feel safe at the PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is easy to talk to the PAL staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can talk to the PAL staff about important things	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAL staff treat students fairly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I trust the PAL staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I like going to the PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I enjoy activities at PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mentors took time to get to know me at PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAL staff like us to do well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel close to the people in the PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel like I belong at PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAL staff make us feel able to do activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I have friends or someone I like in the PAL program	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do activities at PAL program that are important to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAL staff let me plan activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
PAL staff gave me choices and allowed me to make decisions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

<i>How important is it for you to...</i>	Not at all Important	Not important	Not as important	Not sure	Kind of Important	Important	Very Important
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feel safe at the PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Easily talk to the PAL staff?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Talk to the PAL staff about important things?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Be treated fairly by PAL staff?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Trust the PAL staff?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Like going to the PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Enjoy the activities at PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have the staff take time to get to know you at PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have PAL staff liking you to do well?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feel close to the people in the PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Feel like you belong at PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Having PAL staff make you feel able to do activities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have friends or someone I like in the PAL program?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Do activities at PAL program that are important to you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have PAL staff let you plan activities?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Have PAL staff give you choices and allowed you to make decisions?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Section 3: Your views of school

<i>How much do you agree or disagree with each sentence about school?</i>	Disagree a lot	Disagree	Disagree a little	Not sure	Agree a little	Agree	Agree a lot
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People at school like me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel happy at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel close to people at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The teachers at school treat me fairly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel safe at school	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I really feel like my teachers care about me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix C: Research Consent Forms



Parental/Legal Guardian Permission to Allow Your Child to Take Part in Research

Information to consider before allowing your child to take part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study: Examining the Relationship between Staff Practices in a Police Athletic League (PAL) After School Program and School Connectedness

Principal Investigator: Katina Hilliard (Person in Charge of this Study)
Institution, Department or Division: Department of Recreation Services and Interventions, East Carolina University
Address: East 5th Street, Greenville, NC 27858
Telephone #: 252-328-6131

Participant Full Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____
clearly Please PRINT

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) and Police Athletic League (PAL) of Greenville, NC study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why is my child being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this research is to determine what practices beyond school-based models contribute to youth experiences in after-school programs. Your child is being invited to take part in this research because of your child's enrollment in the PAL After-School Program and is between the age of 8-13 years old. The decision for your child to take part in this research will also depend upon whether your child wants to participate. By doing this research, we hope to learn to what extent do youth value and feel staff are enacting specific youth development practices in the PAL Program; what is the relationship between staff practices and connection to the PAL Program.

If you and your child agree for him/her to volunteer for this research, your child will be one of about 50 people to do so.

Are there reasons my child should not take part in this research?

I understand my child should not volunteer for this study if they are not between the age of 8-13 years old, if the child is not enrolled in the PAL After-School Program, or if the child or parent is uncomfortable with the process.

What other choices do I have if my child does not take part in this research?

Your child can choose not to participate. If your child chooses not to participate, he/she will continue with his/her normal PAL daily activities.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at Eppes Recreation Center and South Greenville Recreation Center. The total amount of time your child will be asked to volunteer for this study is 30 minutes over the next month. There will not be space available for you to wait for your child during the research.

What will my child be asked to do?

Your child will be asked to do the following: Upon approval from parent, each child will be called out of their daily PAL activities to complete an online survey. Prior to the beginning of the survey, participants will confirm that they are willing to participate through providing verbal or written assent. If the child agrees, they will continue with completing the survey online. If during the process the child has questions, the principal investigator will be present to answer these questions. After the questionnaire is completed, the child will be asked if they have any additional questions and if so, those questions will be answered. At the end of the survey, the child will return to their normal PAL Activities.

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if your child will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to your child but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will my child be paid for taking part in this research?

We will not be able to pay you or your child for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me anything for my child to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that your child took part in this research and may see information about your child that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your child's private information to do this research:

- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your child's welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify your child;
- People designated by East Carolina University; and
- People designated by the Police Athletic League (PAL) After-School Program.

How will you keep the information you collect about my child secure? How long will you keep it?

Electronic data obtained will be kept secure through a password required software. Records obtained will be kept for three years. Data obtained will be utilized for this research study. After one year, the information will be stripped of identifiers and used in future research without anyone knowing its information from the participant.

What if my child decides he/she doesn't want to continue in this research?

Your child can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if he/she stops and he/she will not be criticized. Your child will not lose any benefits that he/she would normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 336-587-7320 between 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. during the weekdays.

If you have questions about your child's rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC, at 252-744-1971.

I have decided my child can take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that my child can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, my child is not giving up any of his/her rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Parent's Name (PRINT)

Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)

Signature

Date



Script for Participants Who Cannot Provide Written Assent

Title of the Study: Examining the Relationship between Staff Practices in a Police Athletic League (PAL) After School Program and School Connectedness

Person in charge of study: Katina Hilliard

Where they work: Police Athletic League (PAL) Program

Study contact phone number: 336-587-7320

Study contact E-mail Address: khilliard@greenvillenc.gov

Principal Investigator: “People at ECU, the Police Athletic League (PAL) Program of Greenville, and I, Katina Hilliard, plan to complete a research study to answer specific scientific research questions.

Your parent has given you permission for you to participate in this research. You do not have to be involved in this research if you don’t want to, even if your parent has already given permission. You may also stop being in the study at any time. If you decide to stop, no one will be angry or upset with you.

You are being asked to participate in this research study because you are a current participant in the PAL After-School Program and between the age of 8-13 years old. ECU and the PAL Program values your opinions and would love to see what program practices are being met in your eyes.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be one of about 50 people taking a part in it.

During the study, you will required to complete a survey online. If at any time during the process you have questions, please feel free to stop the survey at any moment and ask your question. A PAL staff or I, Katina Hilliard, will attempt to answer your question to the best of their abilities. At any point, you can choose to stop your participation in the survey and you will continue with your daily PAL activities.

All information obtained from this study will only be shared with key individuals at ECU and PAL.

Your participation will benefit the after-school program in many ways and there are minimal risks involved with this study.



University

Assent Form

Things You Should Know Before You Agree To Take Part in this Research

IRB Study # _____

Title of Study: Examining the Relationship between Staff Practices in a Police Athletic League (PAL) After School Program and School Connectedness

Person in charge of study: Katina Hilliard

Where they work: Police Athletic League (PAL) Program

Study contact phone number: 336-587-7320

Study contact E-mail Address: khilliard@greenvillenc.gov

People at ECU and Police Athletic League (PAL) of Greenville, NC study ways to make people's lives better. These studies are called research. This research is trying to find out how the PAL Program is meeting the standards of youth in the program.

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 provide your opinion related to the effectiveness of the PAL Program.

Why am I being asked to be in this research study?

We are asking you to take part in this research because you are currently enrolled in the PAL After-School Program and between the age of 8-13 years old.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this research, you will be one of about 50 people taking part in it.

What will happen during this study?

You will be asked to do the following: Upon approval from parent, each child will be called out of their daily PAL activities to complete an online survey. Prior to the beginning of the survey, participants will confirm that they are willing to participate through providing verbal or written assent. If the child agrees, they will continue with completing the survey online. If during the

process the child has questions, the principal investigator will be present to answer these questions. After the questionnaire is completed, the child will be asked if they have any additional questions and if so, those questions will be answered. At the end of the survey, the child will return to their normal PAL Activities.

This study will take place at Eppes Recreation Center or South Greenville Recreation Center and will last 30 minutes.

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

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private.

What are the good things that might happen?

Sometimes good things happen to people who take part in research. These are called “benefits.” The benefits to you of being in this study may be that you will offer your opinion on how the after-school program is meeting certain program practices.

What are the bad things that might happen?

Sometimes things we may not like happen to people in research studies. These things may even make them feel bad. These are called “risks.” You may or may not have these things happen to you. Things may also happen that the researchers do not know about right now. You should report any problems to your parents and to the researcher.

What if you or your parents don’t want you to be in this study?

If you or your parents don’t want you to be in this study, here are some other things that you may be able to continue participating in your normal PAL activities.

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

Appendix D: IRB Approval Letter



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
 4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
 600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
 Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284
www.ecu.edu/ORIC/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
 To: [Katina Hilliard](#)
 CC: [Clifton Watts](#)
 Date: 4/18/2018
 Re: [UMCIRB 18-000191](#)
 Examining the Relationships Between Supports for Youth Development and School Connectedness in a PAL After School Program

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 4/17/2018 to 4/16/2019. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #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/dosure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Assent-Template-12-17-years-of-age-020818.doc	Consent Forms
COI-Disclosure-Form-Investigator-5-12-17.pdf	COI Disclosure Form
IRB Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statement.docx	COI Disclosure Form
KatinaHilliard_THESIS_prospectus_04102018.docx	Additional Items
KatinaHilliard_THESIS_prospectus_04102018.docx	Study Protocol or Grant Application
PAL Spring 2018 Survey.docx	Surveys and Questionnaires
Parental Permission Form 041018 - KH.docx	Consent Forms
Verbal Assent Script, ages 8-11.docx	Consent Forms

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