

ABSTRACT

ADOLESCENT FREE TIME ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTING AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

by

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Abstract:

The positive youth development framework emphasizes those developmental tasks and milestones that assist youth in the successful transition to adulthood. These developmental affordances thrive in contexts where social-emotional, physical and institutional resources (e.g., family supports, resources, and socializing agents such as school and churches) are present. The current study is guided by Self-Determination Theory, which recognizes the important role that parents play in what youth do in their free time by articulating how youth internalize and value specific free time behaviors through autonomy supportive practices. Autonomy supportive parenting practices are those that allow youth to experience freedom and control in free time. Parenting practices (e.g., monitoring, involvement) that lack autonomy supportive traits (e.g., openness, agreeableness) and involvement during free time thwart the internalization process associated with motivation. The relationship between parents and youth is key to guiding youth to structured experiences that aid in development (e.g., sports, extracurricular activities), as well as making appropriate choices when faced with the prospect of unstructured free time. The

purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between autonomy support from parents, free time motivation and types of recreation participation. Specifically, this study examined activity profiles of rural youth ($N=283$) and found that respondents' activity patterns were either after school/sports-based or home-based in their free time. The study compared youth by activity profiles on measures of intrinsic motivation and parent autonomy support. The relationships between intrinsic motivation, age of respondents, and perceptions of autonomy support from parents were also examined. No differences were observed between the after school based and home-based activity profiles with respect to intrinsic motivation or reported levels of parent autonomy support. A relationship between parent autonomy support and free time intrinsic motivation was observed. A negative relationship between age and parent autonomy support was also found, which suggests that parents were perceived to be less autonomy supportive and involved by older children in the sample. The lack of differentiation on motivation and parenting practices between groups were contrary to previous studies, which observed that youth who participate in structured activities reported higher levels of parent autonomy support and intrinsic motivation. Consistent with the literature, there was a relationship between parenting practices and intrinsic motivation in free time. The discussion explores the uniqueness of the rural setting from which the sample was drawn. This setting and the experiences of youth in rural environments support the need to examine community resources and offer experiences to youth when constraints related to distance and family responsibilities prevent access to existing structured experiences. The study also underscores the importance of parent autonomy supportive practices regardless of free time behavioral patterns. Directions for future research are offered given the limitations of cross-sectional research and reliance on data that were collected solely from the adolescent's perspective.

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INTRODUCTION

The demand for positive youth development (PYD) interventions targeting adolescents has increased steadily over the last 20 years due to the structural, behavioral, and emotional concerns associated with this stage of development (Dotterweich, 2015). Upheld for their intentional positive outcome promotion strategies, PYD programs allow youth to directly engage with their family, school, and/or community (Damon, 2004). Research indicates that the more exposure adolescents have to positive resources and experiences, the more likely it is that they will develop positively (Caldwell & Witt, 2011). Therefore, social-emotional, physical and institutional resources present in the social environment (e.g., family supports, resources, and socializing agents such as school and churches) are just as essential in promoting PYD as individual assets and activities (Zarrett & Lerner, 2008).

Often utilized as a vehicle for PYD, unstructured and structured leisure activities play an integral role in an adolescent's development. The positive youth development framework contends that youth are valuable contributors to society rather than problems or burdens to be managed (Damon, 2004). However, keeping youth problem free does not make them fully prepared to take on the responsibilities of adulthood (Pittman et al., 2003). For this reason, engagement in PYD driven programs is essential for promoting development strategies that regulate the integration of behaviors that lead to a successful transition into adulthood (Onescu, 2014; Watts & Caldwell, 2008).

Unstructured activities are those activities chosen for enjoyment and overall personal interest. Unstructured activities are often linked to low levels of engagement, experienced outside of a structured setting, and are linked to the formation and exploration of new interests and socialization (e.g., hanging out, watching television, or going to the movies). Structured

activities are those activities that are intensely engaging and supportive of personal expression (e.g., sports, volunteering, or club activities) while simultaneously supporting persistence through challenge and engagement (Shannon, 2016). While structured and unstructured activities offer unique developmental experiences, youth must be able to deal with the challenge of managing their unstructured time when left to their own devices (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). In other words, too much time spent in unstructured activities might be detrimental to those youths who are unprepared to handle the prospect of it.

Parents are often recognized as the most important socialization agent in the lives of youth (Hutchinson, Baldwin & Caldwell, 2003). Parents are responsible for socializing youth into leisure activities, setting boundaries and expectations on free time, providing social and emotional resources, and monitoring youth's behavior (Watts & Caldwell, 2008). However, a reality of our modern era is that many young people come from homes with two working parents.

Researchers and practitioners have emphasized the need to provide opportunities to engage youth during the gap in time when many young people are alone and unsupervised; specifically, the hours between 3 – 6 p.m., where increased incidences of risk behavior (juvenile crime, experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex) are observed (After school Alliance, 2009). These concerns have led to the creation of after school programs through school, recreation centers and community-based agencies to support parents and families in helping youth reach their potential, minimize their exposure to risk, and ease the transition to adulthood (Watts & Shores, 2014). In order for these programs to be effective, parents and organizations who sponsor after school programs must understand how best to reach and engage youth.

Advocates of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggest that the process of internalization is paramount to adopting and participating in new behaviors (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Internalization is a process through which one learns to value or identify with an activity that was previously performed for an external reason (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Moody, 2012). Parents and programs are most successful in promoting internalization when supports for the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness exist (Moody, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Conversely, Ryan & Deci (2000) contend that amotivation develops when psychological needs are not met. Amotivation is disadvantageous to the adoption of new behaviors and can ultimately thwart developmental progress (Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Larson, 2000). For these reasons, understanding the link between supports for basic psychological needs, motivation, and activity participation type is warranted.

Statement of the Problem

Approximately 40% of adolescents' waking hours are discretionary, which is why youth researchers place a heavy emphasis on understanding how choices in leisure time activities correlate to academic, psychological, and behavioral functioning (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). Parents play a key role in what youth do in their free time and also affect how youth internalize and value specific free time behaviors (Zabriskie and McCormick (2001). A number of studies link autonomy supportive practices to internalized and intrinsic motivation in youth (Larson, 2000; Sharp, Caldwell, Graham, & Ridenour, 2006; Smetana & Daddis, 2002).

In mainstream adolescent psychology, autonomy is traditionally defined as independence or self-reliance; that is, the extent to which one behaves, decides, or thinks without relying on others (Soenens, Petegem, & Vansteenkiste, 2017, pp. 3). Similarly, autonomy support, the extent to which parents implement structure in an autonomy-supportive versus controlling

manner, directly supports the child's need for autonomy (Grolnick et al., 2014, pp. 360).

Parenting practices (e.g., monitoring, involvement) that lack autonomy supportive traits (e.g., openness, agreeableness) and involvement during free time are more likely to be perceived by an adolescent as antagonistic of their values and opinions, thus thwarting the internalization process associated with motivation.

Adolescents' motivation to participate in free time activities is often perceived as being directly related to their perceptions of parenting practices. In situations where parents exert too much control, youth's sense of control and competence may be lacking—their choices are not their own. This has serious implications for situations where youth perceive their free time as being occupied by prescribed activities rather than voluntary ones (Larson, 2000; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). In situations where parents are not involved, youth may be pressed to find the direction and structure needed to support good choices. In either case, lacking support for autonomy is a serious roadblock to adopting and valuing behaviors that allow for developmental affordances in free time.

As underscored in the preceding paragraphs, a major problem facing adolescents today is learning how to internalize the benefits of leisure participation (Shannon, 2016). Parents play a large role in how pre-teens and adolescents participate in and experience leisure. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between autonomy support from parents, free time motivation and types of recreation participation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Adolescence is most commonly referred to as a period of both disorientation and discovery (Bastable & Dart, 2007), and it is considered a time of unprecedented cognitive and physical growth (Siegler, 1997). Though this period is one of intense learning and development, it is also a high-risk period for impulsive behavior – and is often when the onset of mental health and substance abuse disorders occur (Winstanley, Steinwachs, Stitzer, Fishman, 2012.)

Milestones, often referred to as developmental tasks in adolescence, gradually progress through a series of frustrating starts and stops along the way (Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth, & Tellegen, 2004). Each developmental task is dependent on the accomplishment of other developmental tasks; however, many researchers see human development as a lifelong process. The transition through puberty is marked by an increased risk for the onset of a range of health-related problems, particularly those related to the control of behavior and emotion (Mundy et. al., 2013); thus, adolescence is often the focus of youth development interventions due to the structural, behavioral, and emotional concerns associated with this crucial developmental stage.

When considering adolescence, researchers typically analyze the roles, positions, and circumstances of young people in society. These roles, positions, and circumstances are often perceived from a crisis or predicament perspective. Less attention is given to young people's everyday lives and affiliations with their local communities – especially regarding recreational opportunities (Fabiansson, 2005; Farkas at al., 1997). Leisure is one of the most important aspects of youths' everyday lives and acts as an avenue for community affiliation and involvement (Cooper, 2011). It is often within the family environment, through parental interest

and engagement, where youth have a chance to explore different leisure activities (Roberts & Brodie, 1992).

PYD is often defined as an “...intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools... and families in a manner that is productive and constructive” (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, Hawkins, 2004; Turner, Rudz, Bertolacci, 2018, p. 50). In the current literature, PYD “...recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths while also promoting positive outcomes for youth by providing opportunities, fostering relationships, and furnishing support needed to build their leadership strengths” (Catalano et al., 2004; Turner et al., 2018, p. 50). The term positive youth development is used in at least three different ways, referring to a natural process of development, principles, and practices (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). The principles of PYD emphasize the active support for the growing capacity of young people by organizations and individuals (Spera, 2005). The three most basic principles, and the most useful in current literature, are those which (a) place emphasis on a universal approach in which all youth thrive, (b) place importance on healthy relationships and challenging activities that endure and shift over time, and (c) place significance on the engagement of young people as participants rather than recipients (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004).

Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber (2003) argue that simply keeping youth problem free from risk/problems does not make them fully prepared to take on the responsibilities of adulthood. Therefore, engaging youth within programs is deemed essential in accomplishing youth development. Recreation programs in the form of after school and extracurricular activities play an important role in the development of specific capacities and internal strengths that youth need for the successful transition into adulthood (Watts & Caldwell, 2008). Theories such as the Self-Determination Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action often

guide efforts that seek to identify how youth make decisions and stay motivated regardless of structural, interpersonal, or intrapersonal constraints (Martino, Ellickson & McCaffrey, 2009).

Youth Leisure Activities

Recreation and leisure-based youth programs are typically defined through the implementation of skill-building activities that are designed to encompass youth strengths, interests, and preferences – and are primarily tasked with promoting action and accountability (Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998; Vance, 2018). The developmental context of recreation often describes unstructured time as discretionary time. In the United States and abroad, the discretionary time period accounts for approximately forty to fifty percent of an adolescent’s waking hours (Larson, 2000). This period typically includes the after school context as well as evenings and weekends – and may extend to include extracurricular activities (Neira, 2014). Often associated with discretionary time, leisure refers to the enjoyable and personally meaningful activities that occur within the discretionary time context – and is often associated with a sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Although the term leisure is often used in the literature surrounding PYD, most studies are conducted within the free time or out-of-school-time context. For this reason, this time period is used as a matter of convenience for youth involvement. Rather than solely connecting adolescents to society and preventing delinquency, free time activities provide adolescents with a special opportunity to experience deep attention and consciousness regarding their actions over time (Larson & Kleiber, 1993; Malo et al., 2018; Marsh 1992; Xie et al., 2016). Comparable to work and school, free time most often entails involvement in a context (Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998) defined through structured or unstructured activities. In other words, something is done, either alone or with someone, with or without supervision.

Structured Leisure Activities

Structured activities are those activities that are intensely engaging and supportive of personal expression (e.g., sports, volunteering, or club activities) while simultaneously supporting persistence through challenge and engagement (Shannon, 2016). Structured activities exist within a framework that offers constraints, rules, and goals (Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Larson, 2000) and are almost always monitored or supervised; however, only a select few support the development of initiative (Larson, 2000; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Initiative, described as the devotion of cumulative effort over time to achieve a goal (Larson, 2000), requires intrinsic motivation experienced concurrently with concerted engagement over time (Larson, 2000; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). In order for initiative to develop, all three of these elements (i.e., intrinsic motivation, concerted engagement, devotion over time) need to converge. Activities that are voluntary and involve some structure are more likely to assist in the development of initiative than those that are involuntary and lack structure (Larson, 2000). Additionally, program structure and adult monitoring are also needed to ensure optimal youth engagement. For example, Shannon (2016) observed that dance participants were more likely to engage in continued dance routines when (a) there were opportunities for flexible participation, (b) they enjoyed of the dance experience, (c) adults provided support as needed, and (d) structured supportive environmental factors were all present during any given day. Both non-verbal and verbal support can be offered to youth as they engage in new challenges or learn new skills – resulting in the experience of small successes in the face of bigger challenges (Shannon, 2016). Subsequent activities, with adult monitoring and structure, promote the development of competence and encourage youth to stay engaged in an activity despite challenges or setbacks (Holt, 2008). Consequently, it is through this iterative process that initiative is strengthened.

Accounting for approximately 4-6 hours per week, Larson (2000) explains that sports are the most frequent activity in this category and are crucial for the development of both awareness and initiative. Larson and Kleiber (1993) found that organized activities (e.g., sports, hobbies, arts) produce higher levels of intrinsic motivation during participation than unstructured activities. Roberts (1999) posits that by the age of 16, the majority of youth have adopted some adult leisure practices. Roberts and Brodie (1992) found that those who played sports regularly at a young age, between sixteen and thirty years, became committed to the sport or structured activity and were likely to continue with the pursuit. The strongest factors for people who continue their leisure activities (i.e., structured) were involvement and parental engagement in three to four different activities during adolescence (Roberts, 1999).

The co-occurrence of motivation and awareness, in association with structured activity participation, is often supported by Gibson and Rader's (1979) definition of 'self-generated attention'. In other words, when attention is self-directed, adolescents tend to experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation – as well as increases in the level of perceived environmental control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Larson & Kleiber, 1993). This optimal experience is characterized by activities in which individuals feel strong, alert, and in control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); therefore, the stratification of structured activities to include various subcategories is needed to fully comprehend the element of initiative.

Accounting for differences among adolescent enjoyment and engagement, the free time context is an especially important realm in which parents and peers are able to influence development. Socialization figures (i.e., parents, peers) have the ability to influence whether adolescents develop and adopt skills and competencies that support a healthy, responsible, and autonomous form of functioning – or whether they spend their time engaged in unproductive or

maladaptive ways that deter development (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003). After school sports, extracurricular activities and programs play an important role in the development of youth. The following paragraphs illustrate this point.

First, youth who participate in sports or sport-related activities are less likely to drop out of school – and are more likely to excel in social situations (Fawcett et al., 2009). Sport participation provides youth with (a) structure and direction in physical pursuits, (b) cooperative and competitive exercises, (c) sport-specific skills which tend to lead to specialization, and (d) strategies for healthy-behavior development (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009; Roul, Auger, Royer, & Adjizian, 2016). In general, youth engaged in sports report higher levels of resource support and direct monitoring when compared with youth highly involved in unstructured activities (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). Conversely, participation in team sports predicted greater involvement in risky behaviors. Eccles & Barber (2003) found that both male and female athletes drank and became inebriated more often than non-athletes; however, results also highlighted the association between active sport participation and positive academic performance with regards to coach involvement.

Second, individuals who became involved in extracurricular activities were less likely to drop out of school as adolescents or to be arrested as young adults than were similar young persons who were not involved (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Mahoney and Stattin (2000) also reported that extracurricular activities continue to have a positive influence beyond the years of formal schooling. Extracurricular structured activities, such as music-directed programs or academic clubs, provide youth with (a) problem-solving skills, (b) self-esteem enhancing strategies, and (c) healthy-decision making skills (Watts, Caldwell, & Gillard, 2008). Eccles and Barber (2003) posited that engagement in extracurricular activities, such as academic clubs, is

related to educational and occupational outcomes. In other words, those youth who participated in academic clubs were more likely to be enrolled in college at 21 than their non-involved peers – similar to the findings of Mahoney and Stattin (2000).

Third, similar to extracurricular programs, after-school programs complement formal learning curricula in educational institutions under the guidance of PYD (Tambasco, 2016). They typically are designed to facilitate motivation and promote direct engagement among youth (Carruthers, 2006; Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, Valsiner, 2007). Consequently, after-school programs provide an ideal setting in which to incorporate an autonomy-supportive context (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Larson, 2000; Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005; Noam, 2003; Ryan & Grolnick, 1986). Autonomy-supportive contexts allow for choice and support active problem solving in school, the classroom, and even at home (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, Valsiner, 2007). Conversely, controlling environments pressure students and solve problems for them; thus, taking a more external stance toward their work and adopting performance rather than learning goals (Bandura, 1994; Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, Valsiner, 2007). Therefore, educational institutions have been expanding their strategies – and have increased the number of autonomy-supportive opportunities youth have access to (Terzian, Giesen, & Mbwana, 2009).

Generally speaking, when adolescents are engaged in structured activities, they are seeking the most efficient way to achieve pre-existing objectives while simultaneously directing attention and effort toward a challenging goal (Larson, 2000; Shannon, 2006; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). When experienced over time, as previously mentioned, concerted engagement and intrinsic motivation converge to form the concept of initiative (Shannon, 2006; Larson, 2000; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). However, not all structured activity experiences lead to positive

outcomes. An overemphasis on structured activities may ultimately lead to the depreciation of motivation and awareness in adolescents and children (Holt et al., 2009; Meeks & Mauldin, 1990). With too much structure, social, emotional, and cognitive development may be thwarted (Meeks & Mauldin) and the development of initiative may be inhibited. Recent research highlights several reasons for the overemphasis of structured activity participation. Parents typically associate structured participation with (a) safety, (b) achievement, and (c) self-discipline (Meeks & Mauldin; Larson & Verma, 1999); thus, the overemphasis of structured play has fluctuated in the United States over the past century due to the belief that childhood is a period strictly for the accomplishment of developmental tasks – not one for mere child’s play (Harman & Harms, 2017). In contrast, Kao and Salerno (2014) present findings supporting the hypothesis that adolescents often endorse parental practices that keep them busy with activities. Therefore, distinguishing between the quality of youth experience from the quantity may be central to understanding socialization and developmental processes in youth programming (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). Accounting for just over 13% of the total time spent in free time, structured activities are perceived as having great potential to impact PYD (Larson & Verma, 1999) and assist with the development of social negotiation skills, cooperative behaviors, and initiative (Watts & Caldwell, 2008).

Unstructured Leisure Activities

Unstructured activities are those activities chosen for enjoyment and overall personal interest that require low levels of engagement. They are often experiences outside of a structured setting which allow for the formation and exploration of new interests (e.g., hanging out, watching television, or going to the movies). Similar to structured leisure pursuits, unstructured activities also provide opportunities for skill and identity development (Darling, Caldwell, &

Smith, 2005). However, the same qualities of the unstructured leisure context that afford opportunities for PYD can also lead to engagement in problematic risk behaviors (Osgood, Anderson, & Shaffer, 2005). For this reason, parents generally do not value unstructured social activities such as ‘hanging out’ (Kleop & Hendry, 2003) and fail to provide the resources that would otherwise encourage participation. The lack of allocated resources to adolescents in the form of time, attention, space, warmth, or caring may be connected to research evidence suggesting that participation in unstructured activities does not produce the same degree of positive developmental outcomes as structured activities (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Yousefian, Ziller, Swartz, & Hartley, 2008). However, it may be that parental monitoring, and not the activities themselves, explain when unstructured activities are of developmental value.

Research indicates that parental knowledge of adolescent time use can promote PYD – including adolescent self-regulated motivation and self-determination through balancing knowledge, facilitation, and control (Sharp et al., 2006). Unstructured activity participation usually occurs behind closed doors and without supervision (Kleop & Hendry, 2003) and is regarded as important to adolescent development when youth are ready for the challenges in this environment (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). Current literature on the assessment of youth self-sufficiency and life skills recognizes the importance of tangible and intangible skills in adolescent development and unstructured free time participation (Nollan et al., 2000). Tangible skills (Lyman et al., 1996) are those skills we know or do (e.g., money management, and vocational interests) and intangible skills are those skills needed for interpersonal relationship development and involvement (e.g., decision-making, self-esteem management) (Lyman et al., 1996). Both are developed through unstructured free time participation and engagement. During unstructured free time, adolescents are able to develop new interests, try new things, and

experiment with others – resulting in opportunities which promote tangible and intangible skill development. Both tangible and intangible skills must be present to provide a complete picture of optimal youth functioning, and are acquired through unstructured activity engagement (Furstenberg, 2000; Gilman, Meyers, Perez, 2004).

Activity Profile Analysis

Participation in activities provides adolescents with opportunities to develop specific skills through the interaction with others while simultaneously developing positive relationships with nurturing and caring adults. These skills tend to lead to the development of a sense of belonging with particular peer and social groups (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). Despite being studied by several disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology), some research (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh, 1992) has reported findings based solely on the participation rates in one leisure area (i.e., extracurricular activity) (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). Bartko & Eccles (2003) noted that solely relying on extracurricular involvement limits how researchers understand the impact of out-of-school time (i.e., free time) activities on adolescents' lives. Cooper, Valentine, Nye, and Lindsay (1999) observed significant contributions when multiple activity variables were present (e.g., homework, television viewing, extracurricular activities). When controlling for age, gender, and grade level, researchers determined that accounting for variables beyond the structured/unstructured dichotomy more than doubled the amount of variance explained for the measures of student achievement; thus, demonstrating the increased explanatory power gained from examining multiple activity settings (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999).

Additionally, great attention has been given to the correlates of different types of activities, such as constructive, organized activities, and relaxed free time pursuits in the leisure

studies field (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Larson & Kleiber, 1993). For this reason, researchers (e.g., Kleiber, 1999) have distinguished between activities that are enjoyable – but not necessarily demanding or related to the development of specific skills or competencies – and those that require effort and persistence and are thought to be more directly related to skill development and self-concept (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Watts, Caldwell, & Gillard, 2008). These have been labeled “passive” and “constructive” activities, respectively.

Though researchers have distinguished between constructive and passive activities, youth utilize their time in different ways that doesn't cleanly match the passive/constructive dichotomy. Instead, activity profiles lend themselves well when specific free time situations are considered (i.e., homework, paid work). Activity profiles (e.g., sports-oriented, extracurricular) are often utilized to either identify patterns of activity involvement among adolescents. They are also used to examine patterns of activity involvement and the academic, emotional, and behavioral functioning of adolescents through the implementation of a cluster analysis (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). As stated prior, utilizing more than one activity profile will increase the explanatory power of the data set. For this reason, some researchers advocate that specific grouping of profiles outlined in a cluster analysis, is most appropriate (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Bergman & El-Khouris, 1995; Watts, Caldwell and Gillard, 2008).

Activity profiles are determined using cluster analysis. Cluster analyses do not assume normal distribution, unlike traditional linear approaches, and identify cases that are then grouped in a specific, organized manner (Bergman & El-Khouris). Cluster analyses take a heterogeneous set of individuals, oftentimes through self-reported measures, and group them according to their similarity across specified variables – leaving a smaller number of mutually exclusive and exhaustive clusters (Everitt, Landau, & Leese, 2001).

This study investigated the relationship between activity profile type and motivation in free time. Past studies have examined motivation and its relationship to structured and unstructured activity participation (Fawcett, Garton, & Dandy, 2009; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). These studies have dichotomized activities based on specific elements for structured (e.g., adult-supervised, goal-directed) and unstructured (e.g., lack adult supervision and monitoring) activities. By clustering youth on specific reports of what they do in their free time, this study examined how specific patterns of behavior relate to perceptions of parent autonomy support and free time motivation. Self-determination theory provided guidance on how parenting practices work to influence motivation.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Often associated with human motivation and the aspects of personality, SDT argues that if three basic psychological needs are met (i.e., competence, autonomy, relatedness), optimal functioning will occur. Though all three basic needs must be satisfied to achieve optimal functioning, each resource is, in itself, of significant importance. Ryan and Deci (2000) define these inner resources in the following manner: (a) competence requires outcome control and experience mastery; (b) relatedness requires interaction, connection, and experience with others; and (c) autonomy requires recognition of one's inner-self and acknowledgement of independence in decision making. To actualize the full potential of these resources, the social environment is key in nurturing the needs of the individual. From a leisure-based standpoint, program participation is largely dependent on (a) overall value or (b) external coercion. Further, two types of motivation exist in current literature: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges in participation and is supported by the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation is the tendency to

perform an activity mainly because doing so will yield some kind of reward, benefit, or external goal outside of the behavior and is supported by the Organismic Integration Theory (OIT; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991).

OIT, a sub theory of SDT, offers a suitable framework for clarifying the inclination individuals have towards integrating subjective reasons for leisure behavior into themselves (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For this reason, different regulatory forms are aligned on a continuum of self-determination related to internalization. Framed in terms of internalization, which explains the integration of the regulation for motivated behaviors and is often supported through the contextual factors that either promote or hinder this process, OIT is characterized as a theoretical procedure in which individual reasons to engage in a certain behavior change over time. Ideally, these dynamic changes result in stronger internalization, such that the reasons to engage in a behavior become more and more part of the self (i.e., organismic integration) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wasserkampff & Kleinert, 2016). Internalization is a process through which one learns to value or identify with an activity that was previously performed for an external reason (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Moody, 2012). Programs are most successful in promoting internalization when supports for the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness exist (Moody, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Conversely, Ryan and Deci (2000) contend that amotivation develops when psychological needs are not met. Amotivation is disadvantageous to the adoption of new behaviors and can ultimately thwart developmental progress (Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Larson, 2000).

The Internalization Process

The central socialization goal is internalization wherein youth take in social regulations, make them their own, and eventually self-regulate autonomously (Joussemet, Landry, &

Koestner, 2008). Integration is oftentimes referred to as the period where means have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one's other values and needs. As individuals internalize regulations and assimilate them to the self, they experience greater autonomy in action (Ryan & Deci, 2000) – however, the process of internalization can largely be influenced by social factors (e.g., parental units, peers, siblings). For this reason, it is important to understand the factors within the internalization continuum.

Extrinsically motivated behaviors that are the least autonomous are referred to as externally regulated. External regulation involves performing an activity to satisfy an external demand or reward contingency and is often prompted or valued by significant others to whom they feel attached or related (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Introjected regulation, typically performed out of anxiety or guilt, involves taking in a regulation but not fully accepting it as one's own (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Identified regulation involves a conscious valuing of a behavioral goal – such that the action is accepted or owned as personally important (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Integrated regulation is the last form of motivation before intrinsic motivation and occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The Role of Parents in Internalization

Ample research exists that suggests the significant relation between parental involvement and the internalization of behavior and motivation (Fawcett, 2007; Grolnick, 2016). Parental involvement largely affects children's achievement through the facilitation of motivational resources: perceived competence, perceived control, and autonomous self-regulation (Grolnick, 2016). Due to the varying developmental needs of adolescents, it may be appropriate for parents to adjust their level of control and supervision of their children's free time accordingly (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). However, the combination of autonomy support

with a developmentally appropriate level of parental involvement and structure is considered ideal for fostering PYD (Grolnick, 2003; Sharp et al., 2006; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). Moreover, parental support is also an important determinant of adolescent participation in structured and unstructured activities. The more adolescents perceived their parents to be supportive in a particular structured leisure activity, the greater their length of participation and enjoyment (Fawcett et. al., 2009); however, too much parental involvement and control may also be detrimental to an adolescent's development of self-regulated motivation and may lead to amotivation (Sharp et al., 2006). Thus, the role of parents in the internalization process is of significant importance.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The review of the literature demonstrates the importance of autonomy supportive parenting practices to adolescent motivation; however, measuring activity participation has been limited to dichotomized variables (e.g., structured vs. unstructured activity participation) or a singular focus on structured activities. These approaches do not reflect typical patterns of behavior that adolescents demonstrate in their free time hours. This study examined relationships between parenting practices that support autonomy, motivation in free time and adolescent recreation participation. Specifically, this study used activity profiles derived from common patterns of recreation behavior as opposed to dichotomizing recreation as either structured or unstructured. With these goals in mind, this study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: Are there differences in free time intrinsic motivation when comparing students by activity profiles?

RQ2: Are there differences in youths' perceptions of parent autonomy support practices when comparing students by activity profiles?

RQ3: What is the relationship between adolescents' perceptions of parent autonomy support practices and adolescents' free time intrinsic motivation?

RQ4: Are there differences in free time intrinsic motivation, perceptions of parent autonomy support practices and activity profile type by age?

The first three research questions reflected this study's focus on understanding the parenting practice-motivation-participation dynamic that youth experienced. The fourth research question was applied with the recognition that variation in reports of parenting practices, motivation and activity participation might occur by age because of developmental aspects. For example, parents of older children might grant more control to adolescents during free time. As

youth progress through adolescence, they spend an increasing amount of time outside the family and in the company of peers. Parental monitoring becomes less reliant on supervision and control and includes more autonomy-granting as youth enter adolescence (Ying, Ma, Huang, Guo, Chen, & Xu, 2015). Researchers have identified that parental autonomy-granting, rather than parental control, promotes adolescents' honesty and facilitates mutual trust (Ying et al.). By striking the right balance between individuation and connectedness, parents and adolescents can maintain trust in and warmth with each other in recreational pursuits and throughout the developmental process (Kerr & Stattin, 2000; Ying et al.). In other words, parental knowledge of the adolescent's behavior, as well as the adolescent's activities during free time, is closely linked to trust (Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2002) and is often associated with parents' greater responsiveness to their adolescents during their free time pursuits (Rutten, Boen, & Seghers, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

The following section describes the methods which were utilized to explore this study's research questions. Using a quantitative design, this study collected data from students who attended schools located in Hyde County, North Carolina. Data originated from an ongoing evaluation of a 21st Century Community Learning Center in the county. School administrators collected data on youth's free time activity participation, free time motivation, and school connectedness, as well as on youth's perceptions of parenting practices in free time. These data were already in the possession of the school district, so the researcher simply requested the data for study goals. Data were stripped of identifiers for the stated study purpose. The superintendent approved of this use, and data were released to the study team, which consisted of the researcher and his faculty advisor. This letter is on file with the East Carolina University (ECU) University and Medical Institutional Review Board. A description of the sampling area, data collection procedures, instrumentation, and analysis procedures follows.

Population and Sample

The mainland in Hyde County is rural and remote with a population density that averages nine people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). According to the 2017 United States Census Bureau, Hyde County, North Carolina had a population of 5,363 people with men representing 55.1% of the population. Between 2010 and 2017, the population of Hyde County, NC declined from 5,810 to 5,363 – a 7.7% decline. The population of Hyde County, NC was 67.5% Caucasian, 29.1% African-American, and 8.7% Hispanic. Hyde County, NC had a median household income of \$37,741 and a per capita poverty percentage of 22.3%.

Approximately 81% of the population graduated from high school, and 8.7% of the population obtained a bachelor's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Data Collection

Data were collected in the spring of 2014 and spring 2017 using an electronic questionnaire administered by school officials from Hyde County, North Carolina. Throughout the year, the school district collects information from students. These data sets serve to inform further improvement of after school initiatives and assist in outcome evaluation of the after school program. School officials administered an electronic questionnaire that contained sections on demographics, youth free time intrinsic motivation, youth perceptions of parental autonomy support, and free time activity participation. A detailed description of each section is provided in the instrumentation section of the proposal.

Data were collected from students in grades 6-11 and were administered in the school's computer lab. To capture students from each grade level, students completed the questionnaire during their health and physical education classes. Student absences were monitored, and one follow-up administration was scheduled. No other attempt was performed at follow-up beyond this second administration because of concern for unnecessary disruptions of the typical school day. Student identification numbers were used to ensure that responses were unique - thereby allowing the school to track the percentage of students who completed the questionnaire. School administrators provided a dataset to the research team without unique identifying information, such as names, birth dates, addresses, and telephone numbers.

The questionnaire collected demographic information about gender, race, age in years, and grade level for each student. Prior to data acquisition, the Office of Human Research Integrity and Compliance at East Carolina University (ECU-IRB) reviewed the protocol for

collecting and transferring data from Hyde County Schools to this study. This review assured that proper human protections procedures were in place prior to data collection. A copy the ECU-IRB approval can be found in Appendix A.

Instrumentation

School officials administered an electronic questionnaire, which transferred data directly to a database. The database was stripped of identifiers and shared with the current study team. The database contained sections on demographics, free time activity participation, free time intrinsic motivation, and youth perceptions of parental autonomy support. A description of each section follows.

Demographics

The questionnaire included questions about each student's sex, grade level, race and participation in the 21st Century Community Learning Center after school program. These measures were used to describe the sample and note any differences on study measures.

Free time Activity Participation

Free time activity participation was measured using an inventory developed by Watts and Caldwell (2008). Activities assessed were common structured and unstructured activities for students that included sports, playing an instrument, extracurricular activities (e.g., after school program or after school club), activities outside of school (e.g., church youth group, 4H, Future Farmers of America), hobbies (e.g., model building, collecting baseball cards, sewing, knitting), watching television, playing videogames and using the internet, hanging out with friends, and outdoor pursuits (e.g., hiking, fishing, hunting, just enjoying nature). The inventory used a five-point scale with the following response categories: (1) hardly ever or never, (2) sometimes

(about once a week), (3) often (about twice a week), (4) a lot (more than twice a week, and (5) daily (every day).

Free time Intrinsic Motivation

Free time intrinsic motivation was measured using items from the Free time Motivation Scale for Adolescents (FTMS-A) developed by Hutchinson, Baldwin and Caldwell (2002). Four items reflecting intrinsic motivation (e.g., “I do what I want to in my free time because I enjoy what I do”) were presented on the questionnaire. These were measured on a five-point scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree. Items were then averaged to form a mean scale score for this measure.

The FTMS-A demonstrated both reliability and validity in past studies. Baldwin and Caldwell (2003) reported scale statistics for intrinsic motivation through a 5-item motivation subscale which produced a low reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .68$). Reliability improved when the item ‘sense of freedom’ was deleted. While other intrinsic motivation items conveyed enjoyment and desire, adolescents may have interpreted freedom as lack of restrictions rather than choice (Baldwin & Caldwell, 2003). With the deletion of this item, the reported reliability statistic improved ($\alpha = .72$). Baldwin and Caldwell (2003) also reported that intrinsic motivation and amotivation displayed an expected negative and significant correlation ($r = -.359$), supporting the construct validity of the FTMS-A. Further, Sharp, Caldwell, Graham, & Ridenour (2006) contended that a high score on self-regulated motivation ($\alpha = .83$) (“The activities help me develop into the person I want to become”) indicated that a behavior is internally driven due to expectations of some internal reward (e.g., pleasure or accomplishing a personally valued goal). Similarly, Watts and Caldwell (2008) assessed adolescent’s self-determination through Baldwin and Caldwell’s (2003) FTMS-A and reported intrinsic motivation and amotivation through a 5-

point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Posed questions reflected intrinsic motivation and were sufficiently reliable ($\alpha = .77$) (Watts & Caldwell, 2008).

Perceptions of Parental Autonomy Support and Involvement

Perceptions of Parental Autonomy Support and Involvement (PASI) were measured using items from Robbins (1994) and revised by Watts (2004) to reflect parenting practices in free time. Questions focused on perceptions of choice and control (e.g., *My parents let me make my own choices, My parents always want me to do things their way, My parents help me make choices about what I do*), expectations (e.g., *My parents explain to me how to behave*), and monitoring during free time (e.g., *My parents like to know what I am doing, My parents know what I like to do*). These measures trace their origin to the work of Grolnick, Ryan, and Deci (1991), who identified children's perceptions of their parents on dimensions of autonomy support and involvement through the development of the Children's Perceptions of Parents Scale (POPS).

Utilizing Harter's (1985) Self-Perception Profile for Children, POPS examined children's reasons for engaging in school activities, ranging from less to more autonomous reasons (Ryan & Connell, 1989); however, in this study (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991), children's perceptions of their parents' autonomy support and involvement were examined. As mentioned previously, three inner resources act as central elements in motivation: (a) control understanding, (b) perceived competence, and (c) perceived autonomy (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). The central element in motivation, intentionality, (i.e., the determination to act toward a goal or engage in a particular behavior) plays a major role in understanding how to control outcomes associated with behavioral choices (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). Intentionality to act is strongly influenced by control understanding (i.e., children's understanding of who or what controls outcomes in their

lives). Further, several research studies have shown that variables such as parental belief systems and behavior patterns are also related to academic and cognitive outcomes in children (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). These studies demonstrated that questions from the POPS were effective in assessing children's perceptions of their parents' autonomy support and involvement.

POPS demonstrated both reliability and validity in past studies. Watts (2004) reported scale statistics for autonomy support through a 7-item scale (1 = "Not at all true", 4 = "Somewhat true", and 7 = "Very true"). Reliability analysis for internal consistency on the autonomy support scale indicated reliable measures ($\alpha = .93$) (Watts, 2004). Watts (2004) indicated that the correlation between the parent autonomy support scale and the parent involvement scale was very high ($r = .891$), which indicated a possible conceptual overlap. This strong correlation ($r = .89$) suggested that measures of parent autonomy support and involvement measured the same concept; thus, study hypotheses were restated to reflect the combination of the parent autonomy support and parent involvement (PASI) items (Watts, 2004). Reliability analyses for the revised scales yielded a Cronbach's alpha score of .95 (Watts, 2004). Under the new model, no correlations between psychological needs variables were above .60, and there were no measurement concerns with the variables under the revised model (Watts, 2004).

Analysis of Data

Data were imported into a file using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The first pass at data analysis examined descriptive data for out of range and missing data; the range and skewness or kurtosis of responses to specific items were also examined. Following this review, data were tested for reliability using a test of internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha as a determinant.

Activity profiles were developed through a two-step cluster analysis with Bayesian information criterion (BIC) on the five types of activity measures. This procedure is used to create profiles that summarize specific characteristics about the participants in the sample; in this case, identifying specific patterns of free time behavior by participants. This procedure is run using SPSS to specify parameters for maximum number of categories. In a similar study that examined activity profiles, Watts, Caldwell and Gillard (2008) found that participants fell into one of five activity behavior profiles:

- (1) High-involved – youth exhibited high levels of participation across a variety of activities to include extracurricular clubs, sports, social activities and unstructured activities.
- (2) Sports-oriented – youth exhibited high levels of participation in sports.
- (3) Extracurricular – youth exhibited high levels of participation in extracurricular clubs and activities that were not sport.
- (4) Low-involved – youth exhibited low levels of participation across a variety of activities to include extracurricular clubs, sports, social activities and unstructured activities.
- (5) High-unstructured – youth reported participating in unsupervised unstructured activities at home or out of the home with friends.

As cluster analyses yield clusters unique to specific samples, a similar analysis was performed before analyzing the research questions. Once profiles were determined, analyses of research questions ensued and are described in the results section.

RESULTS

Results for this study were divided into three subsections: (1) profile of respondents, (2) summary statistics for study measures, and (3) results of research question testing.

Profile of Respondents

Demographic information from the school questionnaire included gender, race/ethnicity, grade, and age. Data from 303 respondents were collected and analyzed. A total of 299 respondents had data for all sections of the questionnaire. This represents approximately 66% of the total school ($N=453$) population available to take the survey. Students were excluded if they were absent, on an excused school trip, or in cases where the school did not receive permission from parents to participate in the evaluation. All respondents in the sample attended one of two schools in Hyde County. As shown in Table 1, there were slightly more male (53.2%) than female (46.8%) respondents. Close to 60 percent of the sample (58.2%) were in the middle school grades (grades 6-8). The age of participants was consistent with the grades represented. The sample was mostly represented by students who were Caucasian (45.4%) and African-American (38.6%). Approximately 10.2% of the sample were categorized as Hispanic/Latino and 5.8% of respondents were classified as "Other" for ethnicity. Students who identified as 'Other' were Asian-American or those who reported biracial or multi-racial status.

Students were also asked to report whether or not they attended the after school program located at their school. Students who indicated 'No' represented the largest group captured in the sample (65.7%). A summary of respondents' characteristics is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Characteristics of Respondents (N=303)

Category	Sample (n)	%	Valid %
Gender			
Male	159	52.5	52.3
Female	140	46.2	46.8
Missing	4	1.3	-
Total	303	100.0	100.0
Race/Ethnicity			
Caucasian	133	43.9	45.4
African-American	113	37.3	38.6
Hispanic/Latino	30	9.9	10.2
Other*	17	5.6	5.8
Missing	10	3.3	-
Total	303	100.0	100.0
Grade			
6 th	59	19.5	19.7
7 th	77	25.4	25.8
8 th	38	12.5	12.7
9 th	41	13.5	13.7
10 th	35	11.6	11.7
11 th	25	8.3	8.4
12 th	24	7.9	8.0
Missing	4	1.3	-
Total	303	100.0	100.0
Age (Mean=13.97)			
10	1	0.3	0.4
11	27	8.9	9.7
12	50	16.5	18.0
13	51	16.8	18.3
14	41	13.5	14.7
15	47	15.5	16.9
16	21	6.9	7.6
17	22	7.3	7.9
18	17	5.6	6.1
19	1	0.3	0.4
Missing	25	8.3	-
Total	303	100.0	100.0

Summary of Statistics for Study Measures

Free time Leisure Activity

An inventory of out-of-school leisure time activities collected information on what respondents did in their free time. This inventory has been used in similar studies on youth and free time behavior (see Burkhart, 2013; Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Watts, Caldwell & Gillard, 2008). Ten items were used to measure free time leisure activity participation (e.g., In your free time or time out of school how often do you go to an after school program or school-based club). Free time activity participation was measured on a five-point scale with responses being: (1) Hardly ever or never; (2) Sometimes (about once a week); (3) Often (about twice a week); (4) A lot (more than twice a week); and (5) Daily (everyday). A summary of free time activity participation is provided in Table 2.

After school participation ranked the highest among ‘Hardly Ever or Never/’ responses (60.1%). Time spent alone ranked the highest among ‘Sometimes (about once a week)’ responses (27.1%). Time spent alone ranked the highest among ‘Often (about twice a week)’ responses (23.4%). Time spent outside ranked highest among ‘A lot (more than twice a week)’ responses (22.0%). Time spent watching television or videos on the television ranked the highest among ‘Daily (everyday)/’ responses (49.7%).

Table 2

Summary of Free time Leisure Activity Participation (N=299)

How often do you... (%)	(1) Hardly Ever	(2) Sometimes	(3) Often	(4) A lot	(5) Daily
Play sports for school or outside club?	34.1	12.7	18.4	16.1	18.7
Play an instrument?	71.2	11.0	7.0	4.7	6.0
Go to an after school program or club?	60.1	10.7	9.4	9.7	10.1
Go to programs outside of school?	39.9	21.1	22.8	11.7	4.4
Participate in a hobby?	29.0	13.1	17.2	18.2	22.6
Watch TV or videos on TV?	5.0	10.3	13.7	21.3	49.7
Play videogames or use the internet?	9.4	12.4	17.1	17.1	44.0
Hangout at other people's homes without supervision?	13.7	20.1	21.1	21.1	24.1
Spend time outside?	13.7	16.3	21.0	22.0	27.0
Spend time alone at home?	20.7	27.1	23.4	16.7	12.0

Determining Free time Leisure Activity Participation Profiles

As directed by Bartko and Eccles (2003) and Watts et al. (2008), a two-step analytic process was required to classify the activity types using principle components analysis. This was followed by cluster analysis to yield activity type clusters; hereafter referred to as “activity profiles” in this study.

A principal components analysis with Varimax rotation was used to classify the activity participation variables into particular types of free time activity subsets. To ease interpretation of results the analysis suppressed factor loadings below .40 and assured that no items cross-loaded with values of .10 or higher (Stevens, 2012). The analysis identified four distinct factors:

unsupervised hanging out or time alone, media use (TV and videogames), school-based after school programs and organized sports, and activities outside of school (hobbies, community-based activities, and time outdoors). These four factors accounted for 56.38% of the variance for this group of items. Results of the principal components analysis are reported below in Table 3.

Table 3

Principal Components Analysis of Free time Participation Items (N=299)

Item	Factor Loadings			
	1	2	3	4
Hang out at home alone unsupervised	.77			
Hang out with others unsupervised	.60			
Playing videogames		.70		
Watching TV and movies		.53		
Go to after school program at school			.82	
Organized Sports			.48	
Doing hobbies				.49
Involved in community activities				.41
Doing outdoor activities				.40
Eigenvalues	1.92	1.46	1.20	1.06
% of variance (56.38%)	19.20	14.57	11.98	10.63

*Note: Factor loadings below .40 were suppressed to ease interpretation of simple structure

Cluster Analysis

Activity profiles were developed through a two-step cluster analysis with Bayesian information criterion (BIC). The analysis clustered participants into groups based on specific patterns of free time behavior by participants. The analysis used a log-likelihood method to determine the best fit solution in fifteen iterations. The analysis yielded a two-cluster solution with cluster quality that was deemed “fair” on the degree to which there was cohesion and separation between the clusters. A listwise deletion further reduced the sample to 283 cases due to missing data on one of the free time participation types.

Differences between groups were examined using a Mann-Whitney U test for differences in rank means. Mean scores are reported for ease of interpretation. Table 4 indicates that the groups differed only in the degree to which they participated in sports and after school activities or programs. Differences in after school program (ASP) and sport participation were significant between those in the After School/Sport cluster when compared to the Home/Hobby-oriented cluster ($M_{diff}= 3.19$; $U= 1.5$; $p < .001$). No other differences were observed between the two cluster groups on measures of TV/Video game participation, time reported in unsupervised activities, and time spent in hobbies, outside or with community-based agencies.

Table 4

Summary of Free time Leisure Activities: Cluster Analysis (N=283)

Free time Activity Type	Cluster 1: After School and Sports (n=85)		Cluster 2: Home and Hobby Oriented (n=198)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
ASP/Organized Sports***	5.58	.97	2.39	.78
TV/Video games	4.02	.83	3.86	1.14
Unsupervised Time	2.89	.92	2.77	.92
Home-based/Community-based	3.01	.99	2.94	1.20

*** $p < .001$

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis for Parent Autonomy Support Practices

To measure perceptions of parental autonomy support and involvement, the study used a scale modified by Watts and Caldwell (2008) based on the work of Robbins (1994). The scale contained items that measured intrinsic motivation and perceived parental autonomy support/involvement (Ryan & Connell, 1989). For each item, respondents were asked to indicate if they disagreed or agreed with the statement. Each statement was measured on a five-point scale with values ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. A summary score for perceived parental autonomy support and involvement was derived based on these responses.

Table 5 reports statistics for the scale (i.e., POPS scale). Table statistics include the mean, standard deviation, number of respondents, and Cronbach's Alpha if the item was deleted from the total scale. A total Cronbach's Alpha is also reported for each scale in the table. According to Cortina (1993), reliability for scales with less than six items is considered adequate when $\alpha = .60$ or above. Thus, results presented in Table 5 indicate adequate reliability for the total scale.

Table 5

Perceptions of Parents Scale Reliability (N=299)

Item	Mean	SD	α if item deleted
<u>Parent Autonomy Support ($\alpha=.63$)</u>			
My parent(s) make time to talk with me	2.54	1.03	.58
My parent(s) explains to me how to behave	3.59	0.65	.53
My parent(s) lets me make my own choices in my free time	3.81	0.49	.55
My parent(s) like to know what I am doing	3.01	1.04	.51
My parent(s) let me make my own choices in free time	3.35	0.83	.54

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Analysis for Adolescent Free time Motivation

Intrinsic motivation was measured using items from a scale developed by Baldwin and Caldwell (2003). For each item, respondents were asked to indicate if they disagreed or agreed with the statement. Each statement was measured on a five-point scale with values ranging from 1= Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly Agree. A summary score for intrinsic motivation was derived based on these responses. Results in Table 6 indicate adequate reliability for the total scale and its subscales.

Table 6

Free time Intrinsic Motivation Scale Reliability (N=299)

Item	Mean	SD	α if item deleted
<u>Free time Intrinsic Motivation ($\alpha=.91$)</u>			
I do what I do in my free time because I enjoy what I do	4.00	1.12	.86
I do what I do in my free time because I like what I do	3.92	1.12	.87
I do what I do in my free time because it is what I want to do	3.89	1.18	.91
I do what I do in my free time because I want to have fun	4.04	1.13	.87

Analysis of Research Questions

Prior to hypothesis testing, tests of normality were performed on all study variables. Scales measuring free time intrinsic motivation and perceptions of parent autonomy support practices, when comparing students by their activity profiles, did not meet the assumptions of a normal distribution as they were positively skewed. Therefore, Mann-Whitney U tests were utilized in place of independent samples *t*-tests on research questions one and two, and Spearman's Rho was used in place of Pearson's product-moment correlations for research questions three and four.

The first research question examined the differences between free time intrinsic motivation when comparing students by activity profiles. Results point to no significant differences between activity profiles on measures of free time motivation. Specifically, those classified as after school did not differ significantly from those classified as home-based on self-reported measures of intrinsic motivation in free time.

The second research question investigated the differences between youths' perceptions of parent autonomy support practices when comparing students by activity profiles. Results of the analysis found no significant differences between activity profile groups when examining youths' perceptions of parent autonomy support practices. Specifically, those classified as after school did not differ significantly from those classified as home-based on self-reported measures of perceptions of autonomy support in free time. Results for research questions one and two are reported below in Table 7.

Table 7

Self-Reported Measures of Perceptions of Autonomy Support/Intrinsic Motivation in Free time (N=283)

	Extra- curricular <i>M (SD)</i> (<i>n</i> =85)	Home- based <i>M (SD)</i> (<i>n</i> =198)	<i>U</i>	<i>p</i>
Intrinsic Motivation	4.05 (1.03)	3.90 (1.00)	7534.00	n.s.
Parent Autonomy Support	3.37 (.51)	3.22 (.53)	6509.50	n.s.

The third research question examined the relationship between adolescent perceptions of parent autonomy support practices and adolescent free time intrinsic motivation. A correlation analysis using Spearman's Rho was performed. A positive correlation existed between the outcome variable, free time intrinsic motivation, and parental involvement ($\rho=.137, p<.05$). Thus, as parental involvement increased, so did the youth's levels of free time intrinsic motivation.

The fourth research question used Spearman's Rho to examine if age was related to either intrinsic motivation or parent autonomy support. Parental autonomy support was negatively related to age ($\rho=-.231, p<.01$), which was suggested as a variable of interest considering the differences in age for the sample. Parental involvement decreased as the age of the youth in this study increased. There was no significant relationship between age and free time intrinsic motivation ($\rho=.008, p > .05$). Table 8 presents data used for research questions three and four.

Table 8

Bivariate Correlations (Spearman's Rho) among the Study Variables (N=299)

	1	2	3
1. Parent Inv.	–		
2. Motivation	.137*	–	
3. Age	-.214**	.008	-

* $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed); ** $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed).

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

This study utilized the Self-Determination Theory as a guiding framework to understand the relationships between parent autonomy support, free time motivation and free time activity participation. Using activity profiles, youth categorized as after school-oriented were compared to those who were home-based in their leisure on measures of free time intrinsic motivation and perceptions of parent autonomy support practices. . Further, the study tested the relationship between free time intrinsic motivation and perceptions of parent autonomy support practices. Lastly, the researcher tested whether age correlated with intrinsic motivation or parent autonomy support practices. Data for scales measuring intrinsic motivation and perceptions of parent autonomy support were positively skewed, which required the use of nonparametric statistics.

When considering the first research question, there were no differences observed in mean ranks between the after school based and home-based activity profiles with respect to intrinsic motivation. Similarly, on research question two, no differences in mean rank scores were observed between the two activity profile groups on reported levels of parent autonomy support. For the third research question, a positive relationship between parent autonomy support and free time intrinsic motivation was observed. This finding suggests that when parents supported autonomy support practices youth reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation, which is supported in the literature. A fourth research question explored the relationship of age with parent autonomy support. A negative relationship between age and parent autonomy support was observed, which suggests that parents were perceived to be less autonomy supportive by older children in the sample.

When considering the findings, the lack of differentiation on motivation and parenting practices between groups was surprising. In past studies, youth who participated in structured activities reported higher levels of parent autonomy support and intrinsic motivation. This study did not observe a difference between these two groups. Consistent with the literature, there was a relationship between parenting practices and intrinsic motivation in free time. The implications of these results are discussed below.

Discussion

This study found that the nature and experience of free time for youth in this particular rural county was often associated with home-based activity participation rather than structured after school activity participation. After school activity participation, often centralized within the county, allows youth to stay later at school to experience opportunities at school or through the 21st Century program. In contrast, home-based activity participation may allow for more in-depth social and physical contact with parents and responsibilities associated with chores and assisting family members (Burkhart, 2013).

This study identified whether differences existed between free time intrinsic motivation and youths' perceptions of parent autonomy support and involvement (PASI) by activity profiles of youth. The results of this study indicate that PASI and free time intrinsic motivation were positively correlated – suggesting that it is not what an adolescent participates in or who they engage in an activity with – but how well-connected parents stay to the adolescent during their free time that matters. Furthermore, this study reported a negative relationship between PASI and age, whereby younger adolescents reported higher levels of PASI when compared to older adolescents. When considering how PASI was measured in this study, it placed emphasis on both parent autonomy support and involvement. Older youth may have framed this as general parent

involvement, which we would expect a decrease in with age (Green, Walker, Hoover-Dempsey, & Sandler, 2007). Given the evidence that parental involvement decreases with age, Strawhun et al. (2014) contend that the introduction to after school and summer learning opportunities may encourage parents to utilize resources that are consistent with their expectations as reflected in the missions of local schools and agencies in rural communities.

The findings say much about the area from which the sample was drawn—a remote rural, southeastern community that relies heavily on agriculture and fishing. Youth living in rural areas face many challenges both in terms of economic and recreation services. Important barriers to recreation services in rural communities include isolation, lack of access to places with recreation activity opportunities, climate and terrain, cost, and exposure to outdoor opportunities in and around the home (Yousefian, Ziller, Swartz, & Hartley, 2008). Important barriers to economic services, in relation to recreational services, in rural communities include dispersed population with limited community-funding and a lack of a sufficient tax base to support new or existing programs or events (Yousefian et al., 2008).

When designing opportunities for youth, geographic isolation within rural areas presents the need for social network systems and social capital building structures as strategies for prosperity and progress (Putnam, 2000; Rojek, 2005). Adolescents' leisure pursuits are considered one of the principal institutions through which social capital is accumulated (Putnam, 2000; Rojeck, 2005). Further, community constructs with active and established social capital and social network systems (i.e., sports, structured leisure activities) promote the enhancement of health and well-being through participation. Leisure activities create social capital through the establishment of a community ethos. These subtle connotations can introduce adolescents to community values and ethics while facilitating socialization within the community (Fabiansson,

2005). Schools in rural communities play a central role in the affirmation and development of leisure for youth (Alpe & Barthes, 2014) and may directly affect the quality of life in these environments as well (Oncescu, 2014; Roullet, Auger, Royer, & Adjizian, 2016).

Another condition to consider with respect to the sampling area is availability of opportunities. Current literature (i.e., Fawcett, Garton, and Dandy, 2009) has dichotomized activities based on specific elements, structured (e.g., adult-supervised, goal-directed) and unstructured (e.g., lack adult supervision and monitoring) activities exist in the out-of-school context. However, the activity profiles from this study underscore the types of opportunities available in this rural county, which were either school-based or home-based. These two activity profile groups only differed on their participation rates for school-based opportunities. No differences were observed in their levels of what this study is classifying as home-based or non-school based activities. While no relationship existed on levels of free time intrinsic motivation, some concern exists for the vast majority of the sample who are missing out on the enrichment opportunities provided through school-based extracurricular programs like sports and the after school program within this particular school district. This is particularly true for younger adolescents who lack the skills to structure and endure challenges in free time environments (Caldwell & Baldwin, 2005). A major argument for after school programs is that they satisfy the need for adult supervision and monitoring for adolescents who need structure and support.

Quality after school programs, including sports and summer learning programs, are critical systems of support that can help balance opportunity at all levels. After school programs provide students with a number of supports, including a safe-environment, academically enriching activities, mentors who care about them and to whom students can look up to, healthy snacks and meals, and opportunities for physical activities (Burkhart, 2013; Tambasco, 2016).

Though viewed as student-centered, after school programs provide parents additional opportunities to become more involved in their child's education, recreational habits, and personal choices. In rural areas, specifically, consistent participation in high-quality after school programs has been shown to help students improve their work habits and demonstrate higher levels of persistence – while also closing the achievement gap between low-income youth and their more affluent peers (Tambasco, 2016). After school settings are becoming increasingly recognized as having potential to contribute to positive youth development (Carruthers, 2006; Noam, 2003; Tambasco, 2016). Noam (2003) refers to after school programs as a bridge for the adolescent worlds (Tambasco, 2016). As Tambasco (2016) notes, adolescents traverse multiple worlds each day: cultural, familial, peer, and academic. Therefore, after school programs should work in tandem with one another with the intention of connecting these worlds to support learning – and for those connections to become more meaningful and relevant to their lived experiences (Cooper, 2011; Noam, 2003). Self-contained after school programs, as well as community-programs, offer many developmental benefits that strive to connect the four adolescent worlds (i.e., cultural, familial, peer, and academic) and help youth to investigate and participate in a safe and supportive environment (Tambasco, 2016).

Despite the many developmental benefits associated with after school programming, the home setting has been considered the first, and perhaps most essential, context for positive youth development. Within the home environment, parents are often the primary socialization agents – and most invested adults – within the lives of youth (Ward & Zabriskie, 2011). As Ward and Zabriskie found, parental involvement is one of the strongest protective factors an adolescent can have related to maximizing his or her potential – and intrinsic motivation. Positive interaction within the family clearly provides the context that has the potential to play the most significant

role when considering experiences that can foster meaningful relationships and influence all aspects of a youth's environment (Rutten, Boen, & Seghers, 2015). When considering this sample, youth who head home to situations where adults or other parents are present benefit from shared time with these adults. According to Zabriskie and McCormick (2001), shared leisure may be one of the few experiences that bring family members together for any significant amount of time.

Involving adolescents, particularly those from low-income communities, in structured after school programs may be a challenging task. It is estimated that children, from families who live 100 to 200 percent below the federal poverty line, are three to four times more likely than children from higher income families to not be involved in out-of-school-time activities (Theokas & Bloch, 2006). Structured after school programs are oftentimes competing with family and non-family-related activities (i.e., chores, babysitting, and participating in sports and/or religious activities) (Terzian, Giesen, & Mbwana, 2009). For this reason, sustaining participation is a major challenge for structured after school programs. Additional research suggests that low-income youth are less likely to participate in out-of-school activities and that when they do, they participate less frequently (Terzian et al., 2009).

The framework of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provided a lens upon which to examine the findings of this study (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Specific to this study, the satisfaction of the three basic psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, relatedness) explain patterns for initiating and maintaining participation – as well as motivation – in free time activities. Parent autonomy support and involvement provides access and opportunity for an adolescent to participate in free time activities, while also offering support when motivation to endure or initiative wanes is crucial (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003; Watts & Caldwell, 2008).

In other words, it is more important as to how involved the parent(s) are than what youth participate in. For instance: parents of a high school-aged youth encourage him/her to try out for the marching band. The adolescent does not believe it is right activity to pursue. However, the parents are highly involved in the decision process and encourage him/her to do so. With time, the adolescent develops skills (competence), makes friends and feels comfortable in the environment (relatedness), and eventually recognizes that the ultimate choice to maintain participation was their own (autonomy).

This study observed a link between parental involvement and intrinsic motivation. These two variables often work in tandem to maintain participation in free time (Larson, 2000; Fawcett, 2007). Typically, parents enroll their children in after school programs to reap the academic and social gains associated with participation. Effective after school programs bring a wide range of benefits to youth, families, and communities. After school programs can boost academic performance, reduce risky behavior, promote physical health, and provide a safe, structured environment for youth (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005). After school programs provide connection and engagement with others. Furthermore, after school programs fill a void for rural youth who often report boredom and want experiences that get them beyond boredom (Terzian, Giesen, & Mbwana, 2009). After school programs and sports supported these motives, which were a basis for initiation and continued participation in these activities (Holt, 2008). However, Burkhart's study on rural youths' leisure constraints demonstrate that after school might not be a viable option for youth who failed to make the sports team, lacked transportation to and from the activity, or had to take care of personal matters. Even if after school activity participation is not an option, structured experiences supported by community-based groups like churches or civic-oriented agencies (e.g., Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts) appeal to intrinsic and internalized motives of

youth (Larson, 2000). Coupled with task demands, these motives help youth endure through challenges to continue participation in structured experiences – in this case, home-based activity participation. This type of experience translates well into adulthood, as adults must learn to persevere through far more serious challenges related to work and family life.

Within urban areas, youth are typically excluded from labor markets and are sheltered from adulthood (Hendry et al., 2002). Contrarily, youth in geographically isolated regions tend to have a higher percentage of developed tangible and intangible skills due to their time assisting family members and community leaders (Furstenberg, 2000). In modern society, adolescence is promoted as a time when youth can be adventurous by exploring new things; however, they are also criticized for being selfish, reckless, and socially irresponsible (Farkas et al., 1997). To balance this perception, Roberts (1999) observed that leisure opportunities, whether structured or unstructured, can be seen as a means of expressing a youthful sense of adventure – while simultaneously promoting positive youth development.

The internal capacity of goals and aspirations, gained from exploring interests, provides a substantive motive onto which youth find resolve to persevere (Bandura, 1994). However, the expectations and influence of adults, particularly parents, proved to be nearly as essential to participation as the goals and aspirations of youth (Hutchinson et al., 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This is especially true for youth in early adolescence, who need parental structuring and guidance before they can learn to internalize the values and goals associated with the behaviors they adopt (Hutchinson et al.).

Implications for Future Research

Although the importance and scope of family and adolescent-based leisure within an urban or suburban context has been a topic of research, little attention is devoted to the families

and/or adolescents who reside in rural areas (Hornosty & Doherty, 2003). This study suggests that the meanings and experiences of adolescent home-based leisure may be distinct from urban families. Several compelling reasons exist to explore adolescent home-based leisure in the rural context. First, many families in urban areas are not only bound through kinship but also through business relationships (i.e., farming) (Trussell & Shaw, 2009). Thus, economic and social hardships are detrimental to the interconnectedness of family life and adolescent leisure participation – due to the close proximity of familial ties and relationships (Trussell & Shaw, 2009). Second, life in rural communities has often been described as the *rural dull* due to a lack of cultural and leisure facilities (Haugen & Villa, 2006). These differences in environments, between urban and rural communities, suggest that residing in the rural context may alter the adolescents' leisure opportunities, contexts and meanings – as well as the family's involvement in leisure opportunities (Trussell & Shaw, 2009). Lastly, this study did not fully take advantage of important demographic variables under analysis. Data for both gender and race were collected, but not examined under this study's focus. Future studies should consider how gender and age relate to the variables under study, as well as the interactions these two variables have with age. Adolescence is developmentally broad in its outcomes and tasks, and this study only scratches the surface with respect to developmental variation between early and mid/late adolescence.

Study Limitations

The most significant limitation is the limited generalizability of the sample. Hyde County, North Carolina is rural and remote with a population density that averages nine people per square mile (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The sparsity of recreational and leisure opportunities, both commercial and private, limits overall adolescent engagement. In addition to

a lack of physical resources, residents of Hyde County, North Carolina are also subject to financial and occupational constraints that may hinder recreational participation. Another potential limitation of the study is the use of a cross-sectional design. Parenting practices, motivation and recreation participation vary over time, and this study is only capturing participation at a specific point in time. The study may have included responses from youth on two occasions as data were collected from middle and high school students twice over a three-year period. The study was stripped of identifiers, and this prevented a longitudinal analysis for these individuals. Finally, all of the captured perceptions regarding free time motivation are collected from the perspective of the adolescent rather than reported by the parent. Findings of the study may have been strengthened if parental reports were included.

Recommendations for Practice

It is important to recognize that the county under study is highly centralized in service provision to the community. This is especially true to the mainland where distance puts a strain on youth who live far away. The county needs to consider the feasibility of offering services in the more remote areas. Conducting a community inventory and identifying places where shared use can happen is an important first-step.

Rural communities, similar to those within Hyde County, North Carolina, promote positive social and developmental change through the shared use of their facilities and campuses (Talmage, Figueroa, & Wolfersteig, 2018). Joint-use agreements, also known as shared-use agreements, may provide pathways to greater community well-being – specifically through supplying space and amenities for physical and social activities for youth, adolescents, and adults (Talmage, Figueroa, & Wolfersteig, 2018). Shared use may occur through an informal arrangement or may involve a formal written contract (i.e., joint-use agreement) between a

school district and another entity, such as a municipality, county, or nonprofit organization. To put it differently, community centers, volunteer fire departments, public libraries, and churches may establish joint-use agreements with a municipality through informal or formal means (Leslie et al., 2016). These facilities can provide ample indoor and outdoor recreational and gatherings spaces for youth, adolescents, and adults to congregate, exercise, and learn together (Talmage, Figueroa, & Wolfersteig, 2018). The shared use of such facilities can also provide safe and affordable places for communities. Joint-use agreements may vary, but consistent benefits have been identified for rural and urban stakeholders (Young et al., 2014).

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SECTION II: EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive Youth Development (PYD)

Adolescence is most commonly referred to as a period of both disorientation and discovery (Bastable & Dart, 2007), and is considered a time of unprecedented cognitive and physical growth (Siegler, 1997). It is characterized by cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional development (Sanders, 2013, pp. 354). Cognitive development is the progression of thinking from the way a child does to the way an adult does. Adolescents move from being concrete thinkers, who think of things that they have direct contact with or knowledge about, to abstract thinkers, who can imagine things not seen or experienced (Sanders, 2013, pp. 354; Strahan, L'Esperance, & Van Hoose, 2009). Though this period is one of intense learning and development, it is also a high-risk period for impulsive behavior – and is often when the onset of mental health and substance abuse disorders occurs (Winstanley, Steinwachs, Stitzer, Fishman, 2012.) Milestones, often referred to as developmental tasks in adolescence, gradually progress through a series of frustrating starts and stops along the way (Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth, & Tellegen, 2004). Each developmental task is dependent on the accomplishment of other developmental tasks that empathize the development of autonomy, the establishment of identity, and future orientation; however, many researchers see human development as a lifelong process. The transition through puberty is marked by an increased risk for the onset of a range of health-related problems, particularly those related to the control of behavior and emotion (Mundy et. al., 2013); however, the rate of emotional and cognitive development does not parallel the rate of physical maturation in adolescents (Sanders, 2013, pp. 356). For this reason, connections among emotions and thoughts are especially powerful during early adolescence (Strahan, L'Esperance,

& Van Hoose, 2009). Asynchrony among physical, cognitive, and psychosocial development may limit adolescents' ability to perceive and judge risk effectively and may result in adolescent views that are incongruous with parents or guardians (Sanders, 2013, pp. 354); thus, adolescence is often the focus of youth development interventions due to the structural, behavioral, and emotional concerns associated with this crucial developmental stage.

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is often defined as an "...intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools... and families in a manner that is productive and constructive" (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, Hawkins, 2004; Turner, Rudz, Bertolacci, 2018, pp. 50). PYD, in current literature, "...recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people's strengths while also promoting positive outcomes for youth by providing opportunities, fostering relationships, and furnishing support needed to build their leadership strengths" (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, Hawkins, 2004; Turner, Rudz, Bertolacci, 2018, pp. 50). The term positive youth development is used in at least three different ways, referring to a natural process of development, principles, and practices (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004). The principles of PYD emphasize the active support for the growing capacity of young people by organizations and individuals (Spera, 2005). The three most basic principles, and the most useful in current literature, are those which (a) place emphasis on a universal approach in which all youth thrive, (b) place importance on healthy relationships and challenging activities that endure and shift over time, and (c) place significance on the engagement of young people as participants rather than recipients (Hamilton, Hamilton, & Pittman, 2004).

Moreover, Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, and Ferber (2003) contend that simply keeping youth problem free from risk/problems does not make them fully prepared to take on the responsibilities of adulthood. Therefore, engaging youth within programs is deemed essential in

accomplishing youth development. Recreation programs in the form of after school and extracurricular activities play an important role in the development of specific capacities and internal strengths that youth need for the successful transition into adulthood (Watts & Caldwell, 2008). Theories such as the Self-Determination Theory and the Theory of Reasoned Action often guide efforts that seek to identify how youth make decisions and stay motivated regardless of structural, interpersonal, or intrapersonal constraints (Martino, Ellickson & McCaffrey, 2009). As pointed out by the United Nations (2004) in its 2003 World Youth Report, “research confirms that leisure time is important in helping young people achieve a broad range of positive outcomes: social/emotional, vocational, physical, cognitive, and civic development and engagement” (Malo, Viñas, González-Carrasco, Casas, & Alsinet, 2018, pp. 1).

Youth Leisure Activities

Recreation and leisure-based youth programs are typically defined through the implementation of skill-building activities that are designed to encompass youth strengths, interests, and preferences – and are primarily tasked with promoting action and accountability (Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998; Vance, 2018). The developmental context of recreation often describes unstructured time as discretionary time. In the United States and abroad, the discretionary time period accounts for approximately forty to fifty percent of an adolescent’s waking hours (Larson, 2000). This period typically includes the after school context as well as evenings and weekends – and may extend to include extracurricular activities (Neira, 2014). Often associated with discretionary time, leisure refers to the enjoyable and personally meaningful activities that occur within the discretionary time context – and is often associated with a sense of freedom and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Although the term leisure is often used in the literature surrounding PYD, most studies are conducted within the free time or out-of-school-time context. For this reason, this time period is used as matter of convenience for youth involvement. Rather than solely connecting adolescents to society and preventing delinquency, free time activities provide adolescents with a special opportunity to experience deep attention and consciousness regarding their actions over time (Larson & Kleiber, 1993; Malo et al., 2018; Marsh 1992; Xie et al., 2016). Comparable to work and school, free time most often entails involvement in a context (Safvenbom & Samdahl, 1998) defined through structured or unstructured activities. In other words, something is done, either alone or with someone, with or without supervision.

Structured Leisure Activities

Structured activities are those activities that are intensely engaging and supportive of personal expression (e.g., sports, volunteering, or club activities) while simultaneously supporting persistence through challenge and engagement (Shannon, 2016). Structured activities exist within a framework that offers constraints, rules, and goals (Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Larson, 2000) and are almost always monitored or supervised; however, only a select few support the development of initiative (Larson, 2000; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Initiative, described as the devotion of cumulative effort over time to achieve a goal (Larson, 2000), requires intrinsic motivation experienced concurrently with concerted engagement over time (Larson, 2000; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). In order for initiative to develop, all three of these elements (i.e., intrinsic motivation, concerted engagement, devotion over time) need to converge. Activities that are voluntary and involve some structure are more likely to assist in the development of initiative than those that are involuntary and lack structure (Larson, 2000). Additionally, program structure and adult monitoring are also needed to ensure optimal youth

engagement. For example, Shannon (2016) observed that dance participants were more likely to engage in continued dance routines when (a) opportunities existed for flexible participation, (b) they enjoyed of the dance experience, (c) adults supervised the group when needed, and (d) structured supportive environmental factors were all present during any given day. Both non-verbal and verbal support can be offered to youth as they engage in new challenges or learn new skills – resulting in the experience of small successes in the face of bigger challenges (Shannon, 2016). Subsequent activities, with adult monitoring and structure, promote the development of competence and encourage youth to stay engaged in an activity despite challenges or setbacks. Consequently, it is through this iterative process that initiative is strengthened.

Accounting for approximately 4-6 hours per week, Larson (2000) contends that sports are the most frequent activity in this category and are crucial for the development of both awareness and initiative. Larson and Kleiber (1993) found that organized activities (e.g., sports, hobbies, arts) produce higher levels of intrinsic motivation during participation than unstructured activities. The co-occurrence of motivation and awareness, in association with structured activity participation, is often supported by Gibson and Rader's (1979) definition of 'self-generated attention'. In other words, when attention is self-directed, adolescents tend to experience higher levels of intrinsic motivation – as well as increases in the level of perceived environmental control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Larson & Kleiber, 1993). This optimal experience is characterized by activities in which individuals feel strong, alert, and in control (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990); therefore, the stratification of structured activities to include various subcategories is needed to fully comprehend the element of initiative.

Accounting for differences among adolescent enjoyment and engagement, the free time context is an especially important realm in which parents and peers are able to influence

development. Socialization figures (i.e., parents, peers) have the ability to influence whether adolescents develop and adopt skills and competencies that support a healthy, responsible, and autonomous form of functioning – or whether they spend their time engaged in unproductive or maladaptive ways that deter development (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003).

First, youth who participate in sports or sport-related activities are less likely to drop out of school – and are more likely to excel in social situations (Fawcett et. al., 2009). Sport participation provides youth with (a) structure and direction in physical pursuits, (b) cooperative and competitive exercises, (c) sport-specific skills which tend to lead to specialization, and (d) strategies for healthy-behavior development (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). In general, youth engaged in sports reported higher levels of resource support and direct monitoring when compared with youth highly involved in unstructured activities (Hutchinson, Baldwin, & Caldwell, 2003; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). Conversely, participation in team sports predicted greater involvement in risky behaviors (Eccles & Barber, 2003). Eccles and Barber (2003) found that both male and female athletes drank and became inebriated more often than non-athletes; however, results also highlighted the association between active sport participation and positive academic performance with regards to coach involvement. Weybright, Caldwell, Ram, Smith, and Wegner (2015) contend that adolescents' lack of ability to restructure a boring situation into something more interesting is related to higher levels of substance abuse – suggesting that leisure restructuring is vital to positive youth development and structured activity participation.

Second, individuals who became involved in extracurricular activities were less likely to drop out of school as adolescents or to become arrested as young adults than were similar young persons who were not involved (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). Mahoney and Stattin (2000) also found that extracurricular activities continue to have a positive influence beyond the years of

formal schooling. Extracurricular structured activities, such as music-directed programs or academic clubs, provide youth with (a) problem-solving skills, (b) self-esteem enhancing strategies, and (c) healthy-decision making skills (Watts, Caldwell, & Gillard, 2008). Eccles and Barber (2003) posit that engagement in extracurricular activities, such as academic clubs, is related to educational and occupational outcomes. In other words, those youth who participated in academic clubs were more likely to be enrolled in college at 21 than their non-involved peers – similar to the findings of Mahoney and Stattin (2000).

Third, similar to extracurricular programs, after school programs aim to complement formal learning curricula in educational institutions under the guidance of PYD (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Strawhun et al., 2014). They typically are designed to facilitate motivation and promote direct engagement among youth (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, Valsiner, 2007). Consequently, after school programs provide an ideal setting in which to incorporate an autonomy-supportive context (Ryan & Grolnick, 1986; Larson, 2000; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Autonomy-supportive contexts allow for choice and support active problem solving in school, the classroom, and even at home (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, Valsiner, 2007). Conversely, controlling environments pressure students and solve problems for them; thus, taking a more external stance toward their work and adopting performance rather than learning goals (Grolnick, Farkas, Sohmer, Michaels, Valsiner, 2007). Therefore, educational institutions have been expanding their strategies – and have increased the number of autonomy-supportive opportunities youth have access to.

Generally speaking, when adolescents are engaged in structured activities, they are seeking the most efficient way to achieve pre-existing objectives while simultaneously directing attention and effort toward a challenging goal (Shannon, 2006; Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Larson,

2000). When experienced over time, as previously mentioned, concerted engagement and intrinsic motivation converge to form the concept of initiative (Shannon, 2006; Larson, 2000; Watts & Caldwell, 2008). However, not all structured activity experiences lead to positive outcomes. The overemphasis of structured activities may ultimately lead to the depreciation of motivation and awareness in adolescents and children (Holt et al., 2009; Meeks & Mauldin, 1990). With too much structure, the social, emotional, and cognitive developments may be thwarted (Meeks & Mauldin, 1990) and the development of initiative may be inhibited. Recent research highlights several reasons for the overemphasis of structured activity participation. Parents typically associate structured participation with (a) safety, (b) achievement, and (c) self-discipline (Meeks & Mauldin; Larson & Verma, 1999); thus, the overemphasis of structured play has fluctuated in the United States over the past century due to the belief that childhood is a period strictly for the accomplishment of developmental tasks – not one for mere child’s play (Harman & Harms, 2017). Contrarily, Kao and Salerno (2014) present findings which support the hypothesis that adolescents often endorse parental practices that keep them busy with activities. Therefore, distinguishing between the quality of youth experience from the quantity may be central to understanding socialization and developmental processes in youth programming (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2009). Accounting for just over 13 percent of the total time spent in free time, structured activities are perceived as having great potential to impact PYD (Larson & Verma, 1999) and assist with the development of social negotiation skills, cooperative behaviors, and initiative (Watts & Caldwell, 2008). Moreover, structured voluntary youth activities provide a fertile context for PYD, particularly the development of initiative (Larson, 2000). Unlike unstructured activity participation, structured activity participation allows for children and adolescents to come alive and engage in ways that rarely happen in other parts

of their lives (Larson, 2000); thus, making structured activities an invaluable laboratory for the study of PYD (Larson, 2000; Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Shannon, 2006).

Unstructured Leisure Activities

Unstructured activities are those activities chosen for enjoyment and overall personal interest that require low levels of engagement. They are often experiences outside of a structured setting which allow for the formation and exploration of new interests (e.g., hanging out, watching television, or going to the movies). Similar to structured leisure pursuits, unstructured activities also provide opportunities for skill and identity development (Darling, Caldwell, & Smith, 2005). However, the same qualities of the unstructured leisure context that afford opportunities for PYD can also lead to engagement in problematic risk behaviors (Osgood, Anderson, & Shaffer, 2005). For this reason, parents generally do not value unstructured social activities such as ‘hanging out’ (Kleop & Hendry, 2003) and fail to provide the resources that would otherwise encourage participation. The lack of allocated resources to adolescents in the form of time, attention, space, warmth, or caring may be connected to research evidence suggesting that participation in unstructured activities does not produce the same degree of positive developmental outcomes as structured activities (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Grolnick et al., 2014). However, it may be that parental monitoring, and not the activities themselves, explain when unstructured activities are of developmental value.

Research indicates that parental knowledge of adolescent time use can promote PYD – including adolescent self-regulated motivation and self-determination through balancing knowledge, facilitation, and control (Sharp, Caldwell, Graham, & Ridenour, 2006). Grolnick et al. (2014) found that when parents provided clear and consistent structure for unsupervised time, youth felt more competent to handle themselves during unsupervised time than when parents

were lower on structure. Unstructured activity participation usually occurs behind closed doors and without supervision (Kleop & Hendry, 2003) and is regarded as more appropriate for adolescent development. Current literature on the assessment of youth self-sufficiency and life skills recognizes the importance of tangible and intangible skills in adolescent development and structured free time participation (Nollan et al., 2000). Tangible skills (Lyman et al., 1996) are those skills we know or do (e.g., money management, and vocational interests) and intangible skills (Lyman et al., 1996) are those skills needed for interpersonal relationship development and involvement (e.g., decision-making, self-esteem management). Both are developed through unstructured free time participation and engagement. During unstructured free time, adolescents are able to develop new interests, try new things, and experiment with others – resulting in opportunities which promote tangible and intangible skill development. Both tangible and intangible skills must be present to provide a complete picture of optimal youth functioning during structured free time participation – and are acquired through unstructured activity engagement (Gilman, Meyers, Perez, 2004).

Activity Profile Analysis

Participation in activities provides adolescents with opportunities to develop specific skills through the interaction with others while simultaneously developing positive relationships with nurturing and caring adults. These skills tend to lead to the development of a sense of belonging with particular peer and social groups (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). Though youth activity participation is based in several disciplines (i.e., sociology, psychology), and is widely researched, a number of studies (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Marsh, 1992) have reported findings based solely on the participation rates in one leisure area (i.e., extracurricular activity) (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). Bartko and Eccles (2003) note that knowing only about extracurricular

involvement, when considering other disciplines, provides a limited picture of a youths' out-of-school activities and their relations to other characteristics of adolescents' lives. Cooper, Valentine, Nye, and Lindsay (1999) found significant contributions when five activity variables were present (e.g., homework, television viewing, extracurricular activities). When controlling for age, gender, and grade level, researchers found that all five activity variables more than doubled the amount of variance explained for the measures of student achievement; thus, demonstrating the increased explanatory power gained from examining multiple activity settings (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Cooper, Valentine, Nye, & Lindsay, 1999).

Additionally, great attention has been given to the correlates of different types of activities, such as constructive, organized activities, and relaxed free time pursuits in the leisure studies field (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Larson & Kleiber, 1993). For this reason, researchers (e.g., Kleiber, 1999) have distinguished between activities that are enjoyable – but not necessarily demanding or related to the development of specific skills or competencies – and those that require effort and persistence and are thought to be more directly related to skill development and self-concept (Bartko & Eccles, 2003; Watts, Caldwell, & Gillard, 2008).

Though researchers have distinguished between constructive and passive activities, youth utilize their time in different ways. Therefore, certain activity profiles lend themselves well when specific free time situations are considered (i.e., homework, paid work). Activity profiles (e.g., sports-oriented, extracurricular) are often utilized to either identify patterns of activity involvement among adolescents or examine patterns of activity involvement and the academic, emotional, and behavioral functioning of adolescents through the implementation of a cluster analysis (Bartko & Eccles, 2003). As stated prior, utilizing more than one activity profile will

increase the explanatory power of the data set. For this reason, Bergman & El-Khoury (1995) contend that a specific grouping of profiles, outlined in a cluster analysis, is most appropriate. Cluster analyses do not assume normal distribution, unlike traditional linear approaches, and identify cases which are then grouped in a specific, organized manner (Bergman & El-Khoury, 1995). Cluster analyses take a heterogeneous set of individuals, oftentimes through self-reported measures, and groups them according to their similarity across specified variables – leaving a smaller number of mutually exclusive and exhaustive clusters (Everitt, Landau, & Leese, 2001).

This study seeks to investigate the relationship between activity profile type and motivation in free time. Past studies have examined motivation and its relationship to structured and unstructured activity participation (Fawcett, Garton, and Dandy, 2009; Watts and Caldwell, 2008). These studies have dichotomized activities based on specific elements for structured (e.g., adult-supervised, goal-directed) and unstructured (e.g., lack adult supervision and monitoring) activities. By clustering youth on specific reports of what they do in their free time, this study seeks to examine how specific patterns of behavior relate to perceptions of parent autonomy support and free time motivation. Self-determination theory provides guidance on how parenting practices work to influence motivation.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Often associated with human motivation and the aspects of personality, SDT argues that if three basic psychological needs are met (i.e., competence, autonomy, relatedness), optimal functioning will occur. Though all must be satisfied to achieve optimal functioning, each resource is, in itself, of significant importance. Ryan and Deci (2000) define these inner resources in the following manner: (a) competence requires outcome control and experience mastery; (b) relatedness requires interaction, connection, and experience with others; and (c)

autonomy requires recognition of one's inner-self and acknowledgement of independence in decision making. To actualize the full potential of these resources, the social environment is key in nurturing the needs of the individual. From a leisure-based standpoint, program participation is largely dependent on (a) overall value or (b) external coercion. Further, two types of motivation exist in current literature: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges in participation and is supported by the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Extrinsic motivation is the tendency to perform an activity mainly because doing so will yield some kind of reward, benefit, or external goal outside of the behavior and is supported by the Organismic Integration Theory (OIT; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). One of the reasons leisure might be healthy is because experientially, youth feel positive when engaged in meaningful and personally rewarding activities. In these situations, youth typically are not bored and feel more intrinsically motivated (Weybright, Caldwell, Xie, Wegner, & Smith, 2017, pp. 3).

OIT, a sub theory of SDT (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985), offers a suitable framework for clarifying the inclination individuals have towards integrating subjective reasons for leisure behavior into themselves (Deci & Ryan, 1985). For this reason, different regulatory forms are aligned on a continuum of self-determination: internalization. Framed in terms of internalization, which explains the integration of the regulation for motivated behaviors, and is often supported through the contextual factors that either promote or hinder this process, OIT is characterized as a theoretical procedure in which individual reasons to engage in a certain behavior change over time. Ideally, these dynamic changes result in stronger internalization, so that the reasons to engage in a behavior become more and more part of the self (i.e., organismic integration) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wasserkampf & Kleinert, 2016). Internalization is a process

through which one learns to value or identify with an activity that was previously performed for an external reason (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Moody, 2012). Programs are most successful in promoting internalization when supports for the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness exist (Moody, 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Conversely, Ryan & Deci (2000) contend that amotivation develops when psychological needs are not met. Amotivation is disadvantageous to the adoption of new behaviors, and can ultimately thwart developmental progress (Watts & Caldwell, 2008; Larson, 2000). Many studies have used theories of self-determination and motivation as a theoretical basis because leisure motivation plays a crucial role in shaping leisure experience, associated developmental outcomes, and risky behaviors (Xie et al., 2017, pp. 319).

The Internalization Process

The central socialization goal is internalization wherein youth take in social regulations, make them their own, and eventually self-regulate autonomously (Joussemet, Landry, & Koestner, 2008). Integration is oftentimes referred to as the period where means have been evaluated and brought into congruence with one's other values and needs. As individuals internalize regulations and assimilate them to the self, they experience greater autonomy in action (Ryan & Deci, 2000) – however, the process of internalization can largely be influenced by social factors (e.g., parental units, peers, siblings). For this reason, it is important to understand the factors within the internalization continuum.

Extrinsically motivated behaviors that are the least autonomous are referred to as externally regulated. External regulation involves performing an activity to satisfy an external demand or reward contingency (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and is often prompted or valued by significant others to whom they feel attached or related (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Introjected

regulation, typically performed out of anxiety or guilt, involves taking in a regulation but not fully accepting it as one's own (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Identified regulation involves a conscious valuing of a behavioral goal – such that the action is accepted or owned as personally important (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Integrated regulation is the last form of motivation before intrinsic motivation and occurs when identified regulations are fully assimilated to the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The benefits of autonomous functioning have been demonstrated in different cross-cultural studies and the increasing levels of internalization correlate with higher levels of well-being and less externalizing problems (Van Petegem, Beyers, Vansteenkiste, & Soenens, 2012).

The Role of Parents in Internalization

Ample research exists that suggests the significant relation between parental involvement and the internalization of behavior and motivation (Grolnick, 2016). Parental involvement largely affects children's achievement through the facilitation of motivational resources: perceived competence, perceived control, and autonomous self-regulation (Grolnick, 2016). As the most important socializing agent in adolescents' lives, parents may create an autonomy-supportive environment that promotes autonomous motivation or an autonomy-controlling environment that elicits amotivation (Mageau, Jousset, Koestner, Moreau, & Forest, 2015). Thus, due to the varying developmental needs of adolescents, it may be appropriate for parents to adjust their level of control and supervision of their children's free time accordingly. However, the combination of autonomy support with a developmentally appropriate level of parental involvement and structure is considered ideal for fostering PYD (Grolnick, 2003; Sharp, Caldwell, Graham, & Ridenour, 2006; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). From an SDT perspective, structure should facilitate competence (Grolnick et al., 2014, pp. 360). Parental or supervisory monitoring and support are critical to ensuring that adolescents remain safe while

gradually becoming more independent (Sanders, 2013, pp. 357). Moreover, parental support is also an important determinant of adolescent participation in structured and unstructured activities. The more adolescents perceived their parents to be supportive in a particular structured leisure activity, the greater their length of participation and enjoyment (Fawcett et. al., 2009); however, too much parental involvement and control may also be detrimental to an adolescent's development of self-regulated motivation and may lead to amotivation (Sharp, Caldwell, Graham, & Ridenour, 2006). Thus, the role of parents in the internalization process is of significant importance.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



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
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Not Human Subject Research Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Isaiah Lubben](#)
CC: [Clifton Watts](#)
Date: 11/21/2019
Re: [UMCIRB 19-000623](#)
Social/Behavioral IRB

On 11/21/19, the IRB Staff reviewed your proposed research and determined that it does not meet the federal definitions of research involving human participants, as applied by East Carolina University.

Therefore, it is with this determination that you may proceed with your research activity and no further action will be required. However, if you should want to modify your research activity, you must submit notification to the IRB before amending or altering this research activity to ensure that the proposed changes do not require additional UMCIRB review.

The UMCIRB appreciates your dedication to the ethical conduct of research. It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is being conducted in accordance with University policies and procedures, the ethical principles set forth in the Belmont Report, and the ethical standards of your profession. If you have questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact the UMCIRB office at 252-744-2914.

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

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

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Study,PI Name:
Study,Co-Investigators:

