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UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN YOUNG ADULT OFFENDING AND PARTICIPATION IN EXTRACURRICULAR AND VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the association between involvement in various activities and deviant and illegal behaviors among male and female young adults who participated in Wave III of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Public Use Data. A number of studies, which will be addressed further in this thesis, have assessed the association between adolescent participation in extracurricular activities and alcohol use. This study moves beyond prior research to look at participation in not only extracurricular activities but other civic and volunteer activities, and investigates their association with alcohol abuse, as well as marijuana use and low level crime (damage to others property). The results found here differed from prior research. Using regression models, the data indicated that while an increase in participation in strenuous team sports, volunteer and civic work, and increased time spent on other hobbies were associated with a decrease in alcohol and marijuana use, most of these decreases were not at a statistically significant level. There were also no significant associations between increased time spent on activities and damage to others' property. I predict that the differences in the results here and other research have to do with a variety of factors, including the context of participation in formal extracurricular activities as compared to just general involvement in similar informally organized activities.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction and Hypotheses

Introduction

In the past, a multitude of research has been conducted to look at the impact of participation in extracurricular activities, whether within or outside of the school context, on adolescent and adult outcomes. Of particular interest in the last few decades has been the impact of participation in such activities on adolescent and young adult delinquency rates. This question is especially important because of the possible policy implications of the results. Studies have estimated that approximately 40% of adolescents waking hours are discretionary, and youth spend a lot of their free time participating in various activities (Barko & Eccles, 2003). The time spent in these activities can have both a positive and negative impact on adolescents' behavior in their youth as well as their behavior over time (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Eccles and Barber (1999) reported that approximately 70 percent of students are involved in some extracurricular activity, such as clubs, music and student government groups, and more than 50 percent of students participate in some kind of school-sponsored athletics. There are also high levels of delinquency rates among youth, and studies like this can help to provide mechanisms to help reduce delinquency rates.

While a number of studies have looked at the impact of participation in activities in youth, there is very little known about the impact of participation in activities in young adulthood. It is therefore unclear if programs aimed at increasing young adult involvement in extracurricular and voluntary organizations would significantly reduce levels of crime and substance use.

The term extracurricular activities can have multiple meanings. The term extracurricular usually refers to something that is outside of the scope of ones regular curriculum or program. However, extracurricular activities can be either narrow or broad in its scope. It can refer to school-based programs that are organized and supported by schools, community based activities, as well as informal activities such as leisure activities and hobbies.

Specifically, this paper will move beyond prior research and investigate the association between not only involvement in various extracurricular activities, but civic and volunteer activities, as well as time spent on hobbies, and deviant and illegal behaviors among male and female young adults. In the context of this study, extracurricular activities will refer to respondents' time spent in strenuous team sports, participation in volunteer and community work, and time spent on personal hobbies. This study also moves beyond prior research that focuses primarily on respondents alcohol use, and looks at respondents' marijuana use and levels of minor property damage.

The organization of this paper from this point on can be divided into four different sections. First, past research and the theoretical framework for this study will be analyzed and reviewed, and I will outline my specific hypotheses. Next, the quantitative data and methods used in this analysis will be introduced, and then the findings of those analyses will be outlined. Lastly, I will assess the findings as compared to my hypotheses, and discuss the possible implications and limitations of the findings.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review and Theoretical Background

There are many theoretical perspectives that may be applied to the relationship between extracurricular activities and young adult deviance. I will cover several of the more prominent theories and use these to motivate this study's hypotheses.

Social Learning Perspectives

A perspective that suggests a possible positive association between participation in extracurricular activities and delinquency is Sutherland's (1947) differential association theory, which is based on the idea that criminal behavior is a learned behavior and it is learned through social interaction. According to Sutherland's theory, the principal part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups, and the learning includes techniques of committing the crime and the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes about the behavior. The specific directions of the motives and drives are learned from definitions of the legal codes as favorable or unfavorable. According to the theory, a person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favorable to violation of the law over definitions unfavorable to violation of the law. One of the assumptions of this theory is that the process of learning criminal behavior involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in all other kinds of learning (Sutherland, 1947).

Sutherland's differential association theory is important for understanding extracurricular activities and delinquency, because time spent in these activities involves interacting in small peer groups, which is an important context for learning. A positive association between participation in activities and deviance could then develop because, depending on the type of activity, there may be more definitions favorable toward crime and delinquency. For example, participation in sports might provide more positive definitions of deviance, especially violence,

because of males need to portray a "masculine" image within their peer group. These norms can manifest themselves when athletes are put in situations where they need to defend their "maleness" and "masculine image" by not backing down from fights, which often results in violence (Kreager, 2007). In addition, because of the social status that often comes with being an athlete, there may be more pressure to socialize, and alcohol and marijuana use may have more positive definitions within the group than they would among groups who are involved in volunteer and community work.

Another important theory in the social learning perspective is Akers' (1977) social learning theory. In his work, Akers looked at Sutherland's differential association theory and reorganized some of his principles, while adding the concept of reinforcement. According to Akers, criminal behavior is learned according to the principles of operant conditioning, in which behavior is shaped by the stimuli which follow, or are consequences of the behavior (1977, p. 40). According to the theory, social behavior is acquired through both direct conditioning and through imitation or modeling of others' behavior. This behavior is either strengthened through positive reinforcement, and avoidance of punishment, or weakened by negative reinforcement or loss of reward. Like Sutherland's theory, Akers argues that the more individuals define a particular behavior as good (with a positive definition) rather than undesirable (a negative definition), the more likely they are to engage in it. These definitions become favorable to deviant behavior when the positive and neutralizing definitions of the behavior offset the negative definitions of it (Akers, 1977).

Mahoney and Stattin (2000) studied extracurricular activity participation and delinquency and looked at the effects of social networks on the likelihood of students to engage in antisocial behavior and delinquent acts (p. 113). By using a sample of 14 year olds, they looked at

adolescent involvement in community based leisure activities, peer social relations, and antisocial behavior.

Using social learning theory to explain their results, they found that activities that are less organized, and consist of more deviant peers, may promote anti social affiliations and behavior, as well as deviant behavior. In fact, their results found that students who participated in extracurricular activities were only less likely to commit delinquent acts if at least 50% of their friends were also involved in extracurricular activities, which demonstrates the importance of group behaviors and influences on individuals in determining how they view delinquency.

Hoffman's (2006) study on participation in athletic versus nonathletic activities and alcohol use of high school students, uses social learning theory to explain the positive relationship that was found between athletic participation and level of alcohol abuse. In the article, Hoffman suggests that participation in all forms of extracurricular activities provides an environment where values and behaviors can be affected, and participation in athletics is often accompanied by an environment where peer groups are formed and there is a greater expectation to socialize and attend parties where alcohol may be available (2006, p. 286). On the other hand, Hoffman also found that participation in nonathletic activities such as school clubs and honors societies is associated with a decrease in alcohol use, particularly for males, and that this could be explained by a exposure to different social situations and peer environments that help to diminish the use of alcohol by high school students (2006, p. 286).

Other studies (Zill, 1995) use social learning theory to explain positive relationships between athletic participation and alcohol abuse as an effect of group pressure, where the positive associations toward risky behavior such as binge drinking that can be found in athletic groups may increase the likelihood of students engaging in those activities.

Social Control Theory

Social control theories take a different approach to explaining crime than most other theories in criminology. Instead of looking at what drives people to commit crime, social control theories assume that people are already motivated to commit crime, and is interested in understanding why people do not commit crime. It proposes that when there is a lack of direct and indirect controls on a person, they will be more likely to engage in delinquency.

In 1996, Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman and Johnston concluded that "unstructured socializing with peers in the absence of authority figures presents opportunities for deviance (p. 635). This research supports the idea that the lack of authority figures who can impart social control responses, which is characteristic of unstructured social activities, allows for more possibilities for adolescents to engage in deviant activities. This follows the social control/time use theory of delinquency which posits that the structure and time demands of structured activities prevents students from having time to engage in deviant activities. Osgood and Anderson (2004) also found that students who spend their leisure time in unstructured activities without supervision and other controls are more likely to have higher rates of delinquency, as opposed to those who participate in structured extracurricular activities such as sports and student groups (p. 542).

Social Bond Theory

Hirschi's social bond theory, which is a theory of social control, says that an individual is bonded to society and those bonds restrain the behavior of the individual. Hirschi described the bond as having four parts: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief (1969, p. 16). Attachment refers to the extent to which a person is attached to others, particularly to parents, families, peers, teachers and other members of the community (p. 18). Commitment refers to

ones commitment to conventional social norms and institutions. When a person is considering committing deviant behavior, they must consider the risk of losing the investment and commitments they have already made in conventional behaviors and institutions (p. 20). Involvement has to do with involvement in conventional activities that would keep a persons time too occupied to allow them to indulge in deviant behavior, and would remove opportunities to commit crime. Lastly, belief refers to the presence of a common value system within society whose norms would be violated by deviance. A person is more likely to conform to society when they believe in the social norms of that society (p. 197). According to his view, a person is less likely to engage in delinquent acts if they have strong social bonds. Linking this to the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and delinquency, one could expect to find that the degree to which individuals are bonded to their activities, the people involved in those activities, and the institutions associated with those activities, may explain differences in delinquency rates across activities.

Eccles and Barber (1999) studied the potential benefits and risks associated with participation in five different types of activities: prosocial (church and volunteer activities), team sports, school involvement, performing arts, and academic clubs. They used the involvement aspect of social bond theory to explain their findings of a negative relationship between extracurricular activity participation and delinquency, by saying that engaging in such activities puts students in an environment in which they do not have the time to engage in deviant activities. They find that students who participate in school and academic clubs, as well as prosocial activities have lower rates of delinquency. Their findings also support the time use/social bond theory explanation for delinquency.

In his work on the association between athletic participation and male violence, Kreager (2007) discussed the possibility that a negative relationship between athletic participation in adolescent antisocial behavior might be explained by social control and social bond theory. Citing other past studies, he mentioned one could say that participation in athletics could increase adolescents bonds to conventional society by increasing their attachment to their coaches and peers, and increase their commitment to conventional society because any deviance from it could have penalties for their athletic status (p.707).

The time spent in practice and playing sports would increase their involvement in the sport and decrease the possible time they would have to commit deviant behaviors, and the values of sports teams are likely to lie within a conventional value system, and therefore adolescents would be expected to believe that these values are important and it is necessary to follow them. However, Kreager argues that social controls cannot fully explain such associations because they assume that the motivation to commit delinquent acts is constant across persons, it misses the idea that peer associations or bonds to delinquent groups may actually promote antisocial behaviors instead of inhibiting them (p. 707).

It is possible that deviant outcomes will differ by the type of activity. There may be a difference between the outcomes of participation in strenuous team sports and time spent in hobbies. This could be due to the presence in sports of peer associations and a more formalized arrangement which have been shown to help deter delinquency. Because hobbies often lack those characteristics, we may find the outcome of time spent on hobbies to have less significant of a deterrent effect than participation in sports. From reviewing past research using social learning theory, it is also possible that participation in volunteer work may have a stronger negative effect on delinquency rates than participation in strenuous team sports because of the

difference in the environment of the two activities, where respondents who participate in sports may feel more pressure to socialize and attend functions where alcohol may be available (Hoffman, 2006, p 286).

Because this research is studying young adult's participation in extracurricular activities, and most of the past research has been conducted on adolescents, there is reason to believe that the difference in respondents' age may cause the outcomes to be different from what I have predicted in this study and the results of other studies. From a social learning perspective, because people who are between the ages of 18-28 tend to be more developed and may have already developed definitions either favorable or unfavorable to crime while in their adolescence, any additional impact from these peer networks may not have as strong of an effect. From a social control and social bond theory, which says that social bonds may be the strongest and most deterrent during adolescence, the increased age of respondents may decrease the impact of some of the more important bonds such as attachment to families and commitment to conventional activities. This could be because the respondents are already out of adolescence and past the time when bonds can have the most impact.

Hypotheses

1. Drawing on social control theory and social bond theory, increased participation in strenuous team sports will be associated with a decrease in respondents' delinquency rates.

2. From the research on social learning theory, as well as social bonds theory, increased involvement in volunteer and community work will be associated with a decrease in respondents' delinquency rates.

3. From research on social control/time use theory, increases in time spent on personal hobbies will be associated with a decrease in respondents' delinquency rates, but at lower levels than those for involvement in sports and volunteer work.

4. Participation in strenuous team sports and volunteer and community work may have a stronger inverse relationship with respondents' delinquency rates, than time spent on personal hobbies. This is because time spent on hobbies tends to be very informal, where as involvement in team sports and community service work are often more formally organized activities, where respondents ability to engage in delinquent activities would be reduced.

Chapter 3 – Data and Methods

Sample

I am using the public use data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health), which is a longitudinal study of a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades 7-12 in the United States during the 1994-1995 school year. That same cohort was followed into young adulthood with multiple in-home interviews, and data for Wave III was collected in 2001-2002, when in home interviews were conducted with the original respondents (now ages 18-26) and their parents. Interviews with 15,170 Wave I respondents were completed at Wave III, and my analysis uses a subsample of 4882 respondents who completed the Wave III survey.

Included in the interviews were questions on: basic demographic characteristics; education; social psychology and mental health; marital status; delinquency and violence; involvement with the criminal justice system; tobacco, alcohol, drugs and self-image; civic participation and citizenship; and daily activities. This data is helpful and relevant to my study because I am interested in involvement in various activities and delinquent activities. Because of the large size of the survey, there is some missing data due to non-responses that may create some issues with representativeness and bias; however, the amount of missing data is only 3%, which should not create much of an issue.

Dependent Variables

The three dependent variables that I am interested in are alcohol use, marijuana use, and minor property crime. The descriptive statistics and coding for each of the variables are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Description	Coding	Mean
Gender	Self-reported sex	0=Female 1=Male	53.85%
Race	Self-reported race	0=Other 1=Black	24.87%
Age	Self-reported age	18 - 28	21.82
Married	Self reported marital status	0=No 1=Yes	16.82%
Dropout	Self reported education	0=No 1=Yes dropout	17.03%
Damage Property	In the past 12 months, how often did you deliberately damage property that didn't belong to you?	0=Never 1=1 to 2 times 2=3 to 4 times 3=5 or more times	0.11
Drinking	During the past 12 months, on how many days did you drink 5 or more drinks in a row?	0=Never 1=1 to 2 days 2=Once a month or less 3=2 or 3 days a month 4=1 or 2 days a week 5=3 or 4 days a week 6=Everyday or almost everyday	1.21
Marijuana Use	In the last 30 days, how many times have you used marijuana?	0 - 30+ times	2.68
Esteem	How confident are you? How intelligent are you? How attractive are you?	For each question: 1=No answer 2=Not at all 3=Slightly 4=Moderately 5=Very Total: 3 - 15	12.91
Team Sports	In the past 7 days how many times did you participate in strenuous team sports…?	0 to 7+ times	0.50
Civil / Volunteer Work	During the last 12 months, did you perform any unpaid volunteer or community service work?	0=No 1=Yes	28.93%
Hobbies	In the past 7 days, how many times did you engage in a hobby, such as working on a collection, playing cards or board games, arts and crafts, drama, playing a musical instrument or singing with a group, or just shopping for fun?	0 to 7+ times	2.71

Respondents' alcohol use is measured by adolescents self reports of number of times drinking 5 or more drinks in a row (also referred to as binge drinking) within 12 months of the in-home interview. The responses ranged from never (0) to every or almost everyday (6). The descriptive statistics and the coding are listed in Table 1.

Respondents' marijuana use is measured by self-reports of the number of times the respondent used marijuana in the 30 days prior to the in-home interview. The responses ranged from 0 times, to 30 or more times. The average number of times the respondents used marijuana in the 30 days prior to the interview was 2.68 times.

Respondents' minor crime rates was measured by self-reports of the number of times that the respondent deliberately damaged property not belonging to them in the 12 months prior to the interview. The response ranged from never (0 times) to 5 or more times.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variables are respondents' participation in strenuous team sports, involvement in civic and volunteer work, and time spent on other hobbies. Descriptive statistics and coding for these measures, along with the background control variables, are also listed in Table 1.

During the in-home interview, respondents were asked about their participation in strenuous team sports such as football, soccer, basketball, lacrosse, rugby, field hockey and ice hockey. Respondents were asked to list how many times in the 7 days prior to the interview they had participated in such activities, and their responses ranged from 0 to 7 or more times.

Respondents were also asked whether they had performed any unpaid volunteer or community service work in the 12 months prior to the interview. Responses were coded as 0 for

no, and 1 for yes. Of the respondents, approximately 28.9% indicated that they had performed some form of volunteer or community service work in the year prior to the interview.

Respondents were also asked about how they spent their leisure time, and their time spent on personal hobbies. They were asked how many times in the 7 days prior to the interview they had engaged in a hobby, such as working on a collection, playing cards or board games, arts and crafts, drama, playing a musical instrument or singing with a group, or shopping just for fun. Their answers ranged from 0 to 7 or more times, with the average response being approximately 2.7 times.

Respondents were also asked various background questions which have been used here as control variables, and the descriptive statistics and coding for those variables can be found in Table 1. Self-esteem levels were measured by combining and recoding respondents' responses to three questions about how they view themselves. Respondents were asked to rate how confident they were, how intelligent they were, and how attractive they were. Their responses were then combined and recoded to create a range from 3 to 15, with 3 being the lowest level of self-esteem, and 15 being the highest.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Alcohol Use

Using OLS regression in STATA, I first looked at the impact of my three primary independent variables, along with the other control variables, on respondents' alcohol use. Table 2 reports the three models of alcohol use. All three models include individual background and control variables, for gender, race, age, marital status, educational attainment, and self esteem levels. The first model addresses the impact of participation in strenuous team sports on alcohol use. The second model analyzes the impact of involvement in volunteer and community work on adolescent alcohol use, and the third model investigates the relationship between time spent on personal hobbies and alcohol use.

Model 1 in the table shows that when controlling for the included variables, as the amount of participation in strenuous team sports increases, there is a marginal decrease in alcohol abuse, but not at a statistically significant level ($p>.05$). Looking at the control variables, males drink significantly more than females, and blacks drinks significantly less than non-blacks.

Model 2 in the table shows that when controlling for the included variables, as participation in volunteer and community work increases, there is a marginal decreases in alcohol abuse but not at a significant level.

Model 3 in the table shows that when controlling for gender, race, age, etc. the as the amount of time respondents spend on personal hobbies increases, alcohol use decreases, at a statistically significant level ($p=.009$).

Marijuana Use

Again using OLS regression, I then examined the impact of my primary independent variables on respondents' marijuana use. Table 3 includes the three models of marijuana use.

Like the models for alcohol use, all of the models include control variables for gender, race, age, marital status, educational attainment, and self esteem levels.

Model 1 addresses the impact of participation in strenuous team sports on respondents' marijuana use. The results indicate that when controlling for the included variables, as the amount of participation in strenuous team sports increases, there is a marginal decrease in respondents' marijuana use, but not at a significant level.

Model 2 addresses the impact of involvement in volunteer and community work on respondents marijuana use. The results indicate a negative relationship for the variables, so that when controlling for the indicated variables, as volunteer and community work increases, there is a significant ($p=.004$) decrease in respondents' levels of marijuana use.

In Model 3 we can see that as the amount of time spent on personal hobbies increases, there is a small decrease in respondents' level of marijuana use, but not significant, when controlling for the mentioned background variables.

Minor Crime – Damage to Property

Using OSL regression, I then examined the impact of the primary independent variables on minor crime rates, using damage to another's property as the measure. Table 4 includes the three models of rates of damage to other's property. Like the other tables, all of the models in table 4 include control variables for gender, race, age, marital status, educational attainment, and self esteem levels.

Model 1 displays the impact of participation in strenuous team sports on respondents' property damage rates. The results indicate that when controlling for the background variables, as participation in strenuous team sports increases, there is a small, but not significant, decrease in criminal activities such as damaging property.

Model 2 shows that as respondents' involvement in volunteer and community work increases, there is actually a marginal increase in damage to another's property, but not at a significant level, when controlling for the indicated variables.

Lastly, Model 3 indicates that when controlling for the background variables, as respondents' time spent on personal hobbies increases, there is no change in levels of minor criminal activity, as measured by damage to property of others.

Summary

As noted above, while most of the models indicated that were small decreases in delinquent activity when participation in strenuous team sports, volunteer work, and time spent on hobbies increased, there were only two relationships that were at a statistically significant level ($p<.05$). The data showed an inverse relationship between time spent on personal hobbies and alcohol use, at a statistically significant level of $p=.009$, which actually is contrary to my original prediction that an increase in time spent on hobbies would have the least significant association with lower delinquency rates, because of the lack of structure.

The other significant finding was the inverse relationship between involvement in volunteer work and respondents marijuana use, at a statistically significant level of $p=.004$. This is in line with my original hypothesis about the impact of involvement in community and volunteer work on respondents' illegal activities. Of all of associations, there was only one positive association, between participation in volunteer activities and minor property damage, but not at a significant level, which also went against my original hypothesis regarding involvement in volunteer work and minor property damage, and a possible reason for this is discussed below.

Table 2: Predicting Alcohol Use

	1			2			3	
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.
Strenuous Team Sports Participation	-.008	(.00)	Volunteer / Civil Work	-.051	(.04)	Hobbies / Arts / Music	**-.011**	**(.00)**
Gender (male=1)	**.644**	**(.04)**	Gender (male=1)	**.639**	**(.04)**	Gender (male=1)	**.644**	**(.04)**
Race (black=1)	**-.580**	**(.04)**	Race (black=1)	**-.582**	**(.04)**	Race (black=1)	**-.583**	**(.04)**
Age	**.025**	**(.01)**	Age	**.024**	**(.01)**	Age	**.024**	**(.01)**
Married	**-.557**	**(.06)**	Married	**-.557**	**(.06)**	Married	**-.560**	**(.06)**
HS Dropout	**-.180**	**(.06)**	HS Dropout	**-.188**	**(.06)**	HS Dropout	**-.184**	**(.06)**
Self-Esteem	**-.042**	**(.01)**	Self-Esteem	**-.042**	**(.01)**	Self-Esteem	**-.043**	**(.01)**
Constant	1.128	(.31)	Constant	1.159	(.31)	Constant	1.162	(.31)
N	4735		N	4735		N	4735	

**** Bold** means significant at p<.05

Table 3: Predicting Marijuana Use

	1			2			3	
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.
Strenuous Team Sports Participation	-.030	(.02)	Volunteer / Civil Work	**-.498**	**(.17)**	Hobbies / Arts / Music	-.008	(.02)
Gender (male=1)	**1.031**	**(.20)**	Gender (male=1)	**1.000**	**(.20)**	Gender (male=1)	**1.019**	**(.20)**
Race (black=1)	**-.456**	**(.20)**	Race (black=1)	**-.496**	**(.20)**	Race (black=1)	**-.493**	**(.20)**
Age	-.017	(.06)	Age	-.026	(.06)	Age	-.017	(.06)
Married	**-.848**	**(.27)**	Married	**-.867**	**(.28)**	Married	**-.844**	**(.28)**
HS Dropout	**.993**	**(.27)**	HS Dropout	**.912**	**(.27)**	HS Dropout	**.989**	**(.27)**
Self-Esteem	-.085	(.06)	Self-Esteem	-.079	(.06)	Self-Esteem	-.087	(.06)
Constant	2.960	(1.44)	Constant	3.241	(1.45)	Constant	2.995	(1.44)
N	4735		N	4735		N	4735	

**** Bold** means significant at p<.05

Table 4: Predicting Criminal Activity - Damage to Property

	1			2			3	
	Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.		Coef.	Std. Err.
Strenuous Team Sports Participation	-.001	(.00)	Volunteer / Civil Work	.010	(.01)	Hobbies / Arts / Music	.000	(.00)
Gender (male=1)	**.087**	**(.01)**	Gender (male=1)	**.087**	**(.01)**	Gender (male=1)	**.087**	**(.01)**
Race (black=1)	**.022**	**(.01)**	Race (black=1)	**.022**	**(.01)**	Race (black=1)	**.022**	**(.01)**
Age	**-.018**	**(.00)**	Age	**-.018**	**(.00)**	Age	**-.018**	**(.00)**
Married	-.020	(.01)	Married	.020	(.01)	Married	-.020	(.01)
HS Dropout	**.037**	**(.01)**	HS Dropout	**.039**	**(.01)**	HS Dropout	**.037**	**(.01)**
Self-Esteem	**-.010**	**(.00)**	Self-Esteem	**-.010**	**(.00)**	Self-Esteem	**-.010**	**(.00)**
Constant	.534	(.08)	Constant	.529	(.08)	Constant	.534	(.08)
N	4804		N	4804		N	4804	

**** Bold** means significant at p<.05

Chapter 5 – Discussion, Limitations and Conclusion

Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusion

This analysis examined the relationship between participation in various types of activities and delinquency in young adults. It is interesting to note that the only statistically significant relationships were those between amount of time spent on personal hobbies and respondents' alcohol use, and involvement in volunteer and community work and respondents reported marijuana use. This is different from prior studies that were discussed earlier in this paper, which found statistically significant relationships between involvement in sports activities, as well as community and volunteer work, and lower rates of delinquency, particularly alcohol and marijuana usage. This study, however, is different from others that looked at the influence of respondents' structured participation in extracurricular activities on deviant behavior. This study also looked at an older population than other studies. Here, I used a more broad interpretation of participation in the activities, mainly by amount of time and number of times participating in such activities, and tried to find if those measures would have a relationship with participants deviant activity.

The generally null results found in this analysis could be explained by a variety of theoretical models. Because the data used in this paper was not about participation in rigidly structured, school based, extracurricular programs, and instead focused more on amount of time spent on various activities, it could be the lack of formal structure and social control that caused most the relationships to be non-significant. According to social control theory, less significant decreases in deviant activity could be due to the lack of structure and controls in the activities that were used as measures in this paper. For instance, because it is unknown the actual structure of the team sports that respondents participated in, it might be possible that some of the teams

could be intramural or even completely social activities, where there are no rules and regulations about participation, or sanctions if a person deviated, like there would be on school teams. These respondents would have less motivation for adhering to a non-deviant way of life, because of the lack of both formal as well as informal controls. However, as noted earlier, increased time spent on personal hobbies, which is the least structured activity measured in this analysis, actually had the strongest negative effect on respondents alcohol use, which goes against the social control explanation mentioned above. Future research should be focused on why hobbies, in particular, have an inhibiting effect.

This study used data on young adults who ranged from 18-28 years old, as opposed to most of the other research discussed here which studied the effects of participation in activities on adolescents, who ranged from around 10-18 years of age. One possible way of explaining how age differences would have affected the results found here would be to use social bond theory, which posits that a person is less likely to engage in delinquent activities if they have strong social bonds. Hirschi's social control theory is particularly directed at adolescent delinquency, because he believed that adolescence is one of the most critical times in a person's life, and it is during this time that his four aspects of the social bond can have the most impact. However, because this research used data from respondents aged 18-28, who are no longer in their adolescence, while they may be bonded to society, the bonds may not be as strong or as restricting. Also, because the respondents are adults, the authority of their coaches, etc, should matter less.

Hirschi believed that parents, peers, and schools can play some of the most influential roles in a persons attachment to society (1969, 18). The respondents used here are mostly out of secondary school, and often may be either away at college or no longer living with their parents.

Because of this, there is much less of an attachment to their parents and schools, which reduces the strength of their bond to society. Therefore, even if the respondent is attached and committed to their activities and society, some of the strongest restricting bonds, family and school, are not as present as they would have been in adolescence, and therefore the participation in those activities would not have as significant of a deterrent effect.

A second, similar way of using social bond theory to explain the less significant relationships found between increased participation in activities and delinquency has to do with the school context involved in other studies as compared to this research. Prior studies have looked specifically at impact of participation in extracurricular activities within the school context on delinquency, whereas this study analyzes the impact of general involvement in such activities, which may be outside of the school context. As mentioned before, schools are a significant bond, so when a person is bonded to their school they can be less likely to engage in delinquency. The measures of participation in activities used in this study does not restrict the participation to activities within a school context, and therefore, even respondents who are bonded to their activities outside of the school context may be less deterred by that bond, because of the lack of social consequences that would be found in activities within the school context.

One limitation of this study involves the measure for involvement in volunteer or community service work. There are two issues with this measure. The first is that because the question only asks whether or not a person has performed any kind of community service work in the past year, there is no way to know how involved in those activities the respondent is. Another issue which could have an effect on the findings involves the reason the respondents may have for doing such work. Because respondents were not asked if they were required to

perform such service, perhaps as part of a sentence for a crime, it may skew the results towards those who actually commit more deviant activity, who are required to perform those kinds of services.

Because of the relatively small number of significant relationships that were found in this study it is difficult to come up with specific policy and community recommendations for improving or changing programs to result in more deterrence of young adults delinquent behaviors. The aim of this study was to try and understand more about the relationship between time spent on various activities and delinquency rates of young adults. Ultimately, however, the results of these analyses do not shed much additional light on the relationship, and therefore it is hard to reach concrete conclusions on the subject.

Because this study did not distinguish respondents who were enrolled in college, working full time, or out of school and unemployed, future research should examine if the effects of participation in extracurricular activities matter more for young adults who are in college versus not in college.

Future research on this topic might investigate the importance of the school related context of extracurricular activities on delinquency rates, by analyzing the relationship using measures that limit participation to school activities, and then using similar measures that don't limit participation to school activities, to see if the relationships change. Others studies might also use more dichotomized data as opposed to the ranges in responses used here, which may result in stronger results.

The paper presented here moves beyond prior research on the subject to look at the association between general participation in activities such as sports, community service, and hobbies, and delinquency rates of young adults, measured here as alcohol use, marijuana use and

minor property damage. The findings here are different from past studies because there were only two statistically significant relationships found, and those were the inverse relationships between time spent on personal hobbies and alcohol use, and the inverse relationship between involvement in community and volunteer work and respondents' marijuana use. While not at statistically significant levels, the results here did show for the most part that increased time spent on activities is involved with a decrease in delinquent behaviors, which can be explored and studied further and with different data and measures in future studies.

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