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**THE ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL
CAPITAL IN YOUTH**

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has noted that the absence of extracurricular activities encourages adolescents' engagement in deviant behaviors and that adolescent time spent in extracurricular activities may be one avenue for building social capital. However, less research attention has focused on creating a hierarchy which distinguishes those activities that foster social capital more than others. Blending Becker's (1981) economic resources model with Coleman's (1988, 1990) concept of social capital development in youth, we aim to develop a better understanding of the relationship between family socioeconomic status and youth time-use. Specifically, we use data from the Survey of Parents and Youth (SPY) to examine the frequency and type of extracurricular activities in which adolescents participate, comparing teens in families who live below poverty and those who do not. Further, we will measure poverty status of families using the standard federal poverty measure and a new experimental poverty measure (Proctor & Dalaker, 2001; Short, 1999).

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

The development of social and human capital has been of particular interest to academics, researchers, and policy makers. Recent research has focused on the development and maintenance of social and human capital among different subsets of the population. Much of this research has examined the development and maintenance of social and human capital among the poor, with a specific regard to impoverished children. Further, researchers have noted that little focus has been paid to the “role of extracurricular activities in the development of social skills and competencies that may increase self-regard and help widen social contacts” (Furstenberg, 2000: 903). In addition, even less research has focused on creating a hierarchy which distinguishes specific extracurricular activities that foster social capital more than others or how involvement varies by youth and family characteristics.

In this paper, we utilize Becker’s economic resource model (1981) in an effort to understand the ties between human and social capital and how it varies by socioeconomic status (SES) of parents, specifically focusing on children’s time in extracurricular activities. Becker’s economic resources model (1981) posits that poor families will focus on economic survival above all else, including the development of social and human capital within their children. To be sure, impoverished parents have less time, less money, and less energy to invest in their children’s social capital as compared with more economically advantaged families. Furthermore, low-income families often tend to reside in poor neighborhoods, have fewer connections to quality mentors for impoverished children, and have less access to other capital building institutions such as high quality schools.

Putnam (1993, 2000) conceives of “social capital” as the social networks in which trust and reciprocity exist to further social connections between people. He further argues that social capital manifests itself through four avenues. First, social capital uses social networks to pass along information. Secondly, the element of reciprocity within social capital furthers social networks. Next, collective action of social capital creates and drives social networks. Lastly, social capital encourages group cohesion within social networks.

More specifically, the application of social capital to children pioneered by Coleman (1988, 1990), asserts that social capital inheres within families through the relations between children and parents and is partially dependent upon the time they spend together. However, little research has utilized family time-use as a conduit for building social capital (Folbre, 1997). Social capital is also fostered outside of families through community relations with neighborhood and social institutions (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). We recognize the many critiques of this theory and its application, especially the vague nature of Coleman's specifications, and his assertion that growing up in a single parent family or with a working mother necessarily reduces children's access to social capital (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997; Morrow, 1999). We also recognize the debates in the literature over whether families in poor neighborhoods have less access to social capital. While some argue that families with fewer economic resources, who must focus on economic survival, will have less energy and time to foster outside community ties that lead to social capital, others argue that considerable social capital exists in ghetto neighborhoods, but that tangible rewards from these ties seldom lead to youths' ability to rise above poverty (Portes & Landolt, 1996). However, we assert that social capital theory has merit in framing our analysis of youth development and access to social capital outside the family, specifically through youth and parent involvement in extracurricular activities.

Researchers identify after-school or extracurricular activities as pathways through which parents can foster social capital outside of the family. Such after-school activities not only create social ties with other adults and children, but also may deter teens from engaging in negative behaviors including crime. Recent reports cite that most violent juvenile crime occurs during the hours of 3:00 in the afternoon and 6:00 in the evening, or the time between the end of the school day and the time parents return home from work (Newman, Fox, Flynn, & Chisteson, 2000). Research on after-school and extracurricular activities has shown that participation in these types of programs and activities lower the rates of violent juvenile crime (Newman, et al., 2000; Osgood, Wilson, O'Malley, Bachman, & Johnston, 1996). Adolescents left with more unsupervised free-time have more opportunities to engage in deviant activities than adolescents left with less unsupervised free-time. However, research on the connection between socioeconomic status and deviant behavior has provided obscure results (Tittle, Villemez, & Smith, 1978). For example, while some

research finds a negative relationship between social class and deviant behaviors such as alcohol or drug use, others have found a positive effect between class and such behaviors (see Agnew, 1990; Gove, 1975; Osgood et al., 1996; Reid, 1976).

While previous research has looked at adolescent work experiences and the development of social capital (Mortimer, Pimental, Ryu, Nash, & Lee, 1996; Newman, 2000), relatively little research has focused on the relationship between extracurricular activities and social capital (for an exception see Teitler, 2000). Although several researchers and policy makers have speculated that extracurricular activities play a role in building social capital, little research has documented time allotment to specific extracurricular activities. Still, fewer researchers have attempted to create a hierarchy of extracurricular activities as they relate to building social capital. We argue that not all extracurricular activities are created equal. For example, extracurricular activities such as scouting or Boys and Girls Clubs might provide more access to social networks than activities such as an individual music lesson. A further lacuna includes variation in extracurricular activities by neighborhood, gender, race, social class, and school context.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is fourfold. First, we go beyond previous research by providing more specific detail on the types of youth involvement in both school and non-school related extracurricular activities and the degree to which both youth and their parents engage with others during these activities. Secondly, we will document variation in participation by individual characteristics of children. For example, Gager, Cooney, and Call (1999) find that boys spend much more time in extracurricular activities than their female counterparts. Thirdly, we create an alternative measurement of poverty similar to measures designed by the National Academy of Sciences to encapsulate a more comprehensive definition of poverty¹ (Proctor & Dalaker, 2001; Short, 1999). Lastly, we compare level of engagement in these activities by income level. We explicitly compare activities of youth in families who live below the federal poverty guidelines, below an experimental measure, and with those above both poverty guidelines. We expect that children from families who live below the federal poverty level will have the least access to social capital building activities. However, the group captured between the federal poverty level and the alternative poverty level may be

¹ See Appendix A

comprised of the working poor who may have more access to social building activities when compared to the poorest families. We expect to find variation not only between the less advantaged and the more advantaged, but also within the less advantaged as a whole.

DATA

The dataset used for this paper, the Survey of Parents and Youth (SPY) conducted at the Center for Child Well Being at Princeton University, is designed to monitor trends in youths' access to parental and community resources. The SPY survey is a nationally representative sample of 15,571 adults and 7,778 youth. The SPY survey is unique in that it includes interviews with adults, parents, and youth, and features an extensive and detailed survey time-use module covering the after-school hours among children ages 10 to 18. The parent survey generates information on parent/child relations, existence of and enforcement of rules, parents' employment hours and environment, measures of work/family balance, and family structure. Youths were asked to evaluate the time they spend with their parents as well as their general satisfaction with parent/child relations. Most importantly, SPY surveys youth about their involvement in school and non-school related extracurricular activities, identifies the degree to which youth and parents are involved with these activities, and their personal knowledge of the activity coordinators. We expect children in single-headed and/or lower income families will have a lower level of engagement in extracurricular activities. We also posit that gender and racial ethnic background will be associated with extracurricular involvement, as female, African-American, and Latino(a) youth have been shown to have less available time and access to extracurricular activities (Gager et. al., 1999; Teitler, 2000). Therefore; we will include variables measuring teens' gender and race/ethnic group, parental income and employment, family structure, environment and geographic location, to better understand the extent to which social capital is developed through youth involvement in extracurricular activities.

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APPENDIX A

Creating an alternative measure of poverty (from SPY variables):

- Q16 – What is your zip code?
- Q42 – Is (respondent’s child) covered by any health insurance policy or pre-paid health care program?
- Q43 – Is (respondent’s child) covered by Medicaid?
- Q47 – How often do you worry that your total family income won’t be enough to meet your family’s expenses and bills?
- Q55 – Does your job provide maternity/paternity leave, health insurance for your family, on-site child care?
- Q57 – Marital Status
- Q62 – Does your spouse’s/partner’s job provide maternity/paternity leave, health insurance for your family, on-site child care?
- Q68 – What was your total family income last year?
- Q69 – In the past 12 months, did you or anyone in your family receive assistance from AFDC or TANF, food stamps, child support?
- S12 - Gender

Using a combination of these variables, the definition would be similar to DES-DCM2 which accounts for child care expenses, geographic adjustment, and uses different parameter scales of adjusting for threshold for the reference family of two adults and two children for families of different sizes and composition (Iceland, 1998). It is also similar to “Definition 4”, which includes the current measure of poverty less government cash transfers, plus employee health benefits. In addition, this definition could include the value of Medicaid and other means and non-means tested government cash transfers (from Experimental Poverty Methods of Measurement table²).

² Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2001 Annual Demographic Supplement. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2002 Annual Demographic Supplement.