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**AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITY  
AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT**

by  
Jean Marie Gwathney

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Psychology College of Science and Mathematics  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Masters of Arts in School Psychology  
at  
Rowan University  
May 19, 2014

Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

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## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this manuscript to my family, friends and mentors.*

## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Roberta Dihoff, and Dr. Terri Allen for their guidance and support throughout this research project.

## Abstract

Jean Marie Gwathney  
AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND  
EXTRACURRICULAR INVOLVEMENT

2014/2015

Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.  
Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this exploratory study were to (a) examine student participation in extracurricular activity, (b) define whether involvement in extracurricular and organizations influence academic achievement, (c) identify if risk behavior is a result of decrease in participation in extracurricular, and organizations. A review of existing literature presented contributing factors affecting student involvement in extracurricular activity, organizations, and increase with academic achievement and decrease in risk behavior. Estimations were made regarding similar factors in extracurricular involvement, and academic achievement literatures. To investigate these estimations, data was configured via, the Rowan University Subject Pool. A correlation and non-parametric analyses revealed no relationship between student participation in extracurricular activities, organizations, academic achievement and risk behavior. A Correlational analyses revealed no correlational relationship in regard to: grade point average, participation in sports, participation in organized activities, and participation in risk behavior. Implications for participation in extracurricular activities, organizations, academic achievement, and decrease in risk behavior are discussed. In addition to factors, types of behavior, motivation, and supportive literature are discussed in more detail.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Need for Study

Exploring factors that contribute to youth development is imperative to positive youth growth and maturity. Exposure to different environments and types of activity and organizations create conditions necessary for student academic achievement and growth. Consistency and commitment imposed by participation in various types of activity. A variety of questions remain regarding the extent to which patterns of participation (e.g. variety of activities) influence developmental outcomes for youth. To promote positive youth development, and achievement it is crucial to explore contributing factors in greater detail. The factor that influences academic achievement and decreases participation in risk behavior has been extensively explored. Factors that deserve more investigation are: (a) participation in activities and organizations, (b) grade point average, (c) risk behavior. These items are extrapolated from previous literatures that investigate similar contributing factors to student growth, achievement, and time spent in types of activities, and risk behavior. I propose that an increase in student participation in extracurricular activities, and organizations influences student academic achievement, and decrease student participation in risk behavior. Empirical evidence demonstrates the overall value of participation in organized activities, for positive youth development, including fewer behavior problems, increased educational achievement and attainment, and better psychosocial adjustment. Finally, I propose that students will not participate in risk behavior do to involvement in activities and organizations. The findings of this exploratory research may have consequences do to attention to participation in

extracurricular activities and organizations in regard to academic achievement. This investigation might restate benefits of student's involvement in extracurricular organizations. This study was conducted and conclusions were made in light of the following operational definitions:

**Extracurricular Activities:** Extracurricular activities serve as organized and constructive context where youth are supervised by adults and have less time available for involvement in unstructured and unsupervised contexts (Jiang, & Peterson,2012).

**Academic Achievement:** achievement reflects the strength of achievement goals and is a predictor of future goal- relevant performance (Gamzow, Johnson, & Willard, 2014).

**Risk Behavior:** refers to people's beliefs about their vulnerability to danger, or harm; typically, assessed by participants' judgments of the likelihood of experiencing negative outcomes (Sheeran, Harris, & Epton,2014).

**Intrinsic Motivation:** motivation associated with activities that are their own reward (Woolfolk,2012).

**Extrinsic Motivation:** motivation created by external factors such as rewards and punishments (Woolfolk,2012).

**Self Regulated Learning and Motivation:** mediate the effects of emotions on academic achievement (Mega, Ronconi & De Beni, 2014).

**Goal Directed Actions:** deliberated actions toward goal (Woolfolk, 2012).

It is imperative to note that this study design functions under specific assumptions. It is assumed that subjects who participate and complete questionnaire answers as accurately and honest as possible. It is assumed that subjects having no incentive for responding to questions inaccurately. This research functions under the

assumption that subjects are informed about the setting in which they are completing the questionnaire, and to accurately respond to the survey. In addition to assumptions there are limitations to this research study. Challenges were encountered because of a sample size of participants do to total school population. Challenges also arise in response from participants and the complexity of participation in extracurricular activity and organization, in regard to academic achievement and risk behavior. In summary, this study will investigate the possible relationships between student participation in extracurricular activities, organizations and academic achievement, and decrease in risk behavior. The study will examine the notion that students invest time in interests thought extracurricular activity and organizations, as a result experience better grades academically, and decrease in risk behavior. This study will also explore factors that may influence response to survey items that may contribute to student participation in survey items. First existing literature will be explored and propose questions similarly to supporting literatures of existence from the past. Literature will explore relationships pertaining to extracurricular involvement academic achievement and risk behavior. Next, the experimental design will be explored in detail. Finally research findings will be presented and concluded.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### The Importance of Student Involvement

There have been various factors that have influenced student outcomes that have resulted in positive behaviors associated with academic achievement, and decline in risk behavior. Students have become reliant on involvement in extracurricular activity because of high levels of interest, motivation, and academic success. Extracurricular Activities have become a prominent interest due to factors including social aspects, cultural diversity, stability, and structure. Students who participate in extracurricular activities endure less levels of stress, and increase in positive youth outcomes. Literature supports college students using effective stress management techniques that implement student interests, and participation in outlets such as involvement in activities and organizations. Stress management makes reference to a person controlling their personal stress levels, by trying to improve their daily function. Research has shown that involvement in leisure activity such as physical activity is an effective means of reducing anxiety and various indices of stress among adults (Nguyen-Michel, Unger, Hamilton, & Spruijt-Metz, 2006). Extracurricular activity, academic achievement, and risk behaviors are worth investigating for a variety of reasons. Research indicates involvement in extracurricular activity exposes youth to a variety of settings by allowing them to explore, inquire, and communicate. There are high levels of youth involvement in structured activities, and both younger and older students benefit from participating.

## **Extracurricular Activity**

An extracurricular activity is anything an individual participates in that is not a course, or type of paid employment (Grove,2014). Extracurricular is a term used to describe activities that are acknowledge outside a normal curriculum that is performed by students. They are generally “voluntary”, as opposed to mandatory, non paying, social, as opposed to scholastic (Grove, 2014). Participation in extracurricular activities helps to protect the broad spectrum of youth from a host of behavioral risks (Jiang & Perterson, 2012). These activities are organized by schools, youth organizations, and after school programs (Metapelto & Pulkinene, 2012). In regard to types of activities, activities range and vary. Studies have explored the relationships between extracurricular activities and youth development. School extracurricular activities such as athletics, fine arts, vocational and academic subject clubs have been identified as a vital developmental context for American youth, with participation in which such activities often viewed as an important strategy to protect youth from engaging in a variety of risk behaviors (Jian & Perterson, 2012). Extensive research has explored youth participation in structured activity and its effect of decreased involvement in risk behavior. Although there is extended research, research lacks to explore consistency in beneficial effects of youth participation and activities and risk behavior. Additional research explored differences in youth participation and factors that influence risk behavior regarding specific behaviors, motivation and environmental influences. A substantial body of research explored college student’s participation in activity and factors that influence development. A three year longitudinal study investigated the associations of student’s participation in extracurricular activities and relationships between socio-emotional behavior and school

(Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2012). In regard to the study, grade level was controlled, and the level of outcome variables which included: participating in arts, crafts and music activities in correlation to factors associated with higher adaptive behavior, and academic attainments (i.e: reading, writing, arithmetic, and working skills (persistence, concentration, carefulness) (Metsapelto & Pulkkinen, 2012). Additional survey items were associated with higher academic achievement, for example involvement, sports. Results showed that participation was associated with more positive outcomes. In addition, sports were of the most popular type of involvement. Extracurricular activities offer a variety of interests among students. There have been connections between extracurricular activities in comparison to school based activities (Peguero, 2011). Students are more engaged in activity, when being stimulated, tasks are appealing, and relatable. Research indicates adolescents report to experience boredom when lack of interest is present (Sharp, Caldwell, Graham, & Ridenour, 2006). Evidence supports the notion that students report to experience self- regulated motivation when time is spent freely. A longitudinal study of adolescents, indicated that adolescent self- regulated motivation and parental knowledge related to leisure were positively associated with interest in free time due to experiences, and motivation (Sharp et al., 2006). This notion transcends into other realms of growth in students. Students continue to search for self- fulfillment for personal growth. Individuals are curious, vital, and self- motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Individuals learn to commit their time in various areas, which exhibits acts of human motivation and personality (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The self-determined approach to human motivation explains development of specific behavior, and

tendencies. Types of motivational approaches and behaviors will be explained in more detail.

### **Pro-Social Behavior**

Pro- Social Behavior is characterized by attitudes and behaviors conducive to helping others such as: caring, kindness, and altruistic behavior (Morrisey, & Werner-Wilson, 2005). Pro-Social activities consist of: church, and volunteer activities, team sports, school involvement, performing arts, and academic clubs (Barber, Eccles, & Jacquelyne, 1999). Various studies sought to explore Pro-Social Behavior, and academic achievement. Bonnie Barber conducted a study that explored student development and academic achievement. Barber (1999) had created a sample study to explore youth development, academic achievement, and risk behavior. Barber (1999) found that factors could be linked to positive educational trajectories to high rates of activities were explored (Baber et al., 1999). As a result individuals participated more in sports, and athletics, compared to any other factor. Although various amounts of information support positive development and student involvement in organizations, negative effects of free time spent in regard to risk behavior and low levels of structured involvement in free time have been made. Factors that contribute to this notion are: motivation, self-determination, and academic achievement. In regard to motivation, there are five general approaches. Motivation is a vast and complicated subject encompassing many theories (Wolfolk, 2012). There are five approaches to motivation. The first approach to motivation is the *Behavioral Approaches to Motivation*. The behavioral approach to motivation begins with a careful analysis of the incentives inside and outside of the classroom. An example of this can be seen with in reward. A reward can be an



object or event that is supplied by a consequence of a particular behavior (Woolfolk, 2012). Behavioral approaches also involve incentives. An incentive is an object of events that encourages or discourages a behavior (Woolfolk, 2012). The second approach to motivation is the *Humanistic approach*. The humanistic approach to motivation emphasizes on intrinsic sources of motivation as a person's needs for "self-actualization," the "inborn actualizing tendency" (Woolfolk, 2012). The humanistic approaches to motivation help encourage, bring self-esteem, autonomy, and self-actualization. The third approach to motivation is the *Cognitive Approach to Motivation*. The cognitive approaches to motivation, emphasizes on intrinsic motivation. It is said that behavior is determined by one's own thinking, and behavior is initiated and regulated by planning, curiosity, and personally relevant problems (Woolfolk, 2012). The fourth approach to motivation is the *Social Cognitive Theories to Motivation*. Social cognitive theories to motivation can be compared to the notion: expectancy and value theories (Woolfolk, 2012). This means that motivation is seen as a product of two main forces (Woolfolk, 2012). The two main forces within motivation include (a) an individual's expectation of concurring or reaching a goal, and value of a specific goal (Woolfolk, 2012). This refers to the perspective pertaining toward an individual effort and success (Woolfolk, 2012). Lastly the fifth approach to motivation refers to *Sociocultural Concepts of Motivation*. The sociocultural concept of motivation refers to identity, and with what an individual associates themselves most strongly with (Woolfolk, 2012). People engage in activities to maintain their identities and their interpersonal relations with community. Motivational approaches transcend in to various aspects of our lives and development. In every day life, motivational conflicts are the rule rather than the

expectation (Grund, Brassel & Fries, 2014). Individuals are regularly energized by multiple action tendencies (Grund et al., 2014). Students struggle with motivational conflicts, such as budgeting time between leisure and academics. Motivational approaches play an influential role in education, and free time in leisure. Liem and Martin (2012) believe motivation and engagement is a multidimensional conceptual framework that represents salient cognitive and behavioral dimensions relevant for motivation and engagement. Motivation is also associated with self- determination and student needs. It is suggested that humans have needs that vary from lower- level needs and higher level needs, for intellectual achievement, and self-actualization (Woolfolk, 2012). Self- determination is defined as understanding how self- determination can boost or diminish motivation (Woolfolk, 2012). The self- determination theory suggests that we all need to feel competent and capable in our interactions in the world, whether it is leisure extracurricular activities or achievements academically. Individuals yearn for choices and feelings as though we are in control of our lives. We thrive on making connections with others, as well as contributing to communities and belonging to groups. An individual's need for motivation, and self- determination, influences people pursuing goals, and maintaining routines. Characteristics of motivation are influential in youth participation in activities, organizations and academic achievement. Specific characteristics aid in decreasing levels of risk behavior and promote developmental growth, students attain to set goals throughout development. Goals and structured routine remain influential in academic achievement and levels of activity.

## **Goals/Self-Regulation**

Students strive for goals and have structured routines for academic tasks delaying strenuous leisure activities becomes probable (Deitz, Hofer, & Fries, 2007). Supporting strenuous leisure activities becomes probable (Deitz, Hofer, & Fries, 2007). Findings explained values and learning routines and academic procrastination (Dietz et al., 2007). Dietz (2007), explained that data supports findings of goal attainment and routine. His findings show that a planned course day and involvement in activities can prevent procrastination and foster decisions for academic tasks in cases on conflicts (Dietz et al., 2007). It is said that learning takes place with in societal context and reflects the values held in respective cultures (Dietz et al. 2007). Literature has focused on the correlation between academic procrastination, and individual values, which transcends into other outlets, such as learning tasks, and leisure. Researchers have stated that procrastination, in turn should be linked to preference for choosing the leisure alternative when there is motivational conflict between learning and leisure activities (Dietz et al., 2007). Research states that participation and goal orientation is reliant on quality of an activity. Goal orientation is measured by assessing student's individual perceptions. The literature adds to previous studies examining effects of school-based extracurricular participation in development of individual motivation (learning, goal oriented) and school attachment depending on the quality of the activities (ie: amounts of challenge and social support at school level (Fischer & Theis, 2014). Recent studies have explored relationships between learning and goal orientation, in comparison to school attachment. Fischer and Theis (2014) conducted a study that focused on motivation development of 3,230 students among 98 schools. Fischer and Theis explored the quality of extracurricular

activities and responses from students in 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 9<sup>th</sup> grades (Fischer & Theis, 2014). Results exhibit the effects of extracurricular participation in regard to the development of learning goal orientation and its dependency it imposes on both features of school quality, whereas the development of school attachment in particular influenced by activities offering support (Fischer & Theis, 2014). The effects of extracurricular activities are based not only on individual perceptions of activity features, but also on school quality (Fischer & Theis, 2014).

Extracurricular involvement is generally beneficial toward students progress and success (Peguero, 2011). Extracurricular activity allows for individuals to explore goals and inquire. In regard to goals, personal goals can be defined as those things that an individual would like to achieve or accomplish in a given situation (Wentzel, 1994). Supporting evidence had been explored, and as a result the degree to which students actively pursue two general types of social goals supported inquiry. As a result two types of social goals were concluded as a result of the study. In addition to this individuals obtain personal goals, and choose specific outcomes due to personal pursuit, and social acceptance.

Research states that self-regulated learning theory and self-assessed learning coincides with participation in activities, and academic achievement (thinking about one's thinking), strategic action, planning, monitoring and evaluating personal progress against a standard), and motivation to learn (Self-Regulated Learning, 2014). Self-regulated describes a process of taking control of and evaluating one's own learning and behavior (Self-Regulated Learning, 2014). Self-regulated learning emphasizes on aspects of autonomy and control by the individual who monitors, directs and regulates action

towards goals of information acquisition, expanding expertise and self-improvement (Self-Regulated Learning, 2014). Self-regulated learners acknowledge their academic strengths and weakness by concurring difficult tasks. In addition, self-assessed learning allows an individual to assess one's self and conclude what one is good at, and identifying interests and ideas. Specific factors can influence self-regulation and types of learning and activity. Additional factors have been linked to student involvement in activity. Factors include cognitive stimulation, self-expression, creativity, competition, relaxation, sensual enjoyment, and belongingness (Tinsley & Eldredge, 1995). Supporting evidence has also been found in regard to engagement, developmental work personality, and academic effort (Strauser, O'Sullivan & Wong, 2012). In regard to various factors, a study explored positive relationships between academic effort, engagement, and work personality (Straser et al., 2012). As a result, engagement appeared to be a priority in comparison to other factors in regard to student interests. Additional studies have examined the relationships between various combinations of social influences and activity among youth across structured and unstructured settings (Spink, Wilson, & Ulvick, 2012). In addition, a variety of factors influence developmental outcomes in student success. In regard to developmental outcomes, early adolescence stages were explored in more detail.

Early adolescence encompasses rapid changes associated with development establishing autonomy from parents, identity exploration, and social changes around transition in school and activity (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006). The relations between participation in high school extracurricular contexts and developmental outcomes in adolescents and young adulthood were explored in various literatures (Fredrick & Eccles,

2006). As a result of exploration, pro-social activities were associated with educational status and civic engagement (Fredrick & Eccles, 2006). Evidence supporting this notion was found in a study pertaining to positive youth development frameworks. Positive youth development frameworks and ecological models examined the roll of school-home and community based participation in students, which involved academics, motivation, engagement, and nonacademic outcomes in students (Martin, Mansour, Anderson, Gibson, Liem & Sudmalis, 2013). In addition to this socioedemographics were explored in further detail. Specific factors that influence development are: prior non- academic achievement, prior variance in outcome measures, and school predictors of academic and non- academic outcomes (Martin et al.,2013). It is important to explore different factors pertaining to student involvement, in order to see what activity is beneficial, and what decreases levels of risk behavior.

Additional findings of self-regulatory cognitions and social influence factors on healthy behaviors, and involvement in activity were explored (Luszczynska, Gibbons, Piko, & Tekozel, 2004). As a result a correlational analysis was conducted, and activity did have a correlational relationship with each factor. Although there are various factors, concern for negative effects continue to be explored.

There is a growing concern that students are over scheduled in extracurricular activities, and that this increasing involvement has negative consequences for youth functioning (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). A longitudinal study was conducted to explore concerns in more detail. The implementation of high school students were used. Only high school students participated in two to three extracurricular activities during the duration of 5 hours per week were used for the study and as a result, a small percentage

of high school students participated in activities; do to sample size, and measures. Although participating in activities have been linked to increase in specific factors, too much of a good thing can lead to transverse affect. Concern for student's exposure to negative behavior is one consequence for over involvement and participation (Fredricks & Eccles,2008). Concerns are based on several interrelated arguments (Fredricks & Eccles,2008). Researchers have argued about excessive participation in extracurricular activities, and the reduction of time for an individual to spend in other outlets. An additional factor that is taken into consideration is the concern for adolescent's level of stress and functioning.

This also transcends into social benefits and physical activity. Extracurricular activities provide settings that are theorized to help adolescents maintain existing friendships and develop new friends (Schaefer, Simpkins, Vest, & Prince, 2011). Supporting evidence explored whether school- based extracurricular activities support adolescents relationships. IT is said that children and adolescents spend most of their time in routine and in different sets of social atmospheres experiences more time at play in school settings (Larson & Verma,1999). In addition, peer relationships were explored to observe how influential participation is in regard to social networking, and student friendships. In regard to a study, the implementation of social networks were used to observe student friendships. Results of this study provided new insight into the complex relations between activities and friendship that can inform theorists of their developmental outcomes (Schaefer et al., 2011).

Positive links to extracurricular activity are evident due to supporting evidence found in literatures. Additional research has explored factors of physical activity have

proven to affect cognition, and cognitive processes (Hillman, Erickson, & Kramer, 2008). In addition a growing body of literature has linked physical activity with improvements in brain functions and cognition (Hillman et al., 2008). Additional links to cognitive development is a result of neuronal growth that is involved in learning and memory which indicates physically active behaviors and influences in brain functions (Hillman et al., 2008). Participation in extracurricular physical activities helps promote higher levels of self- esteem.

Research supporting adolescent self- esteem indicates that adolescence is a time in which individuals experience important changes in their physical, cognitive, and social identities (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Prior research suggest that positive relationships between an adolescent's participation in structured extracurricular activities and well- being in a variety of domains indicate that these relationships may be dependent on one another (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Various studies were conducted and discovered supporting evidence to back the notion that self- esteem trajectories influences adolescence. Extended research has explored self- esteem trajectories from adolescence between those ages of 14 and 26 years of age (Kort- Butler & Hagewen, 2011). The growth-curve analysis estimated a hierarchical growth- curve model emphasizing the effects of age and type of school-based (Kort- Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Results indicated that age had a linear relationship with self- esteem over time (Kort-Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Self- esteem and growth of self- esteem over time were significantly influenced by the type of extracurricular activity (Kort- Butler & Hagewen, 2011). An additional study was conducted to explore adolescent's participation in activity and behavior in delinquency.



Research conducted observed adolescents extracurricular activity and delinquency. Youth development relies on situational context (Gues & McRee, 2009). Findings reported levels of depression and delinquent behavior. Research found results by observing near-normal distributions across schools in proportion of delinquent or depressed youth involved in extracurricular activities (Guest & McRee, 2009). Research illustrated that extracurricular activities can be positive, neutral, or negative for youth development (Guest & McRee, 2009). Additional factors influence youth development. Social environments play an important role in youth development and participation in activity. A present study examined components of adolescent's social environment (Mason, Schmidt, Abraham, Walker, & Teryak, 2009). Social environment also influence social and emotional factors imposed as a result of participation. In regard to research, total adolescents were self- assessed for social risk, and level of involvement in extracurricular activities (Mason et al., 2009). A linear regression modeling indicated social environment components were associated with a significant proportion of variance in adolescent (Mason et al., 2009).

Passion and drive plays an important part in influencing an individual to participate in activity. Passion may ensure dedication toward extracurricular involvement and, eventually, performance, it may also be associated with positive or negative subject wellbeing depending on the type of motivation involved (Vallerand, Salvy, Mageau, Elliot, Denis, & Grouzet, 2007). Further reasons for individual performance can be associated with levels of risk behavior. There are several types of risk behavior individuals expose themselves to as a result of low levels of structured activity. Students are said to consistently report involvement in leisure and physical activity at the ages of

16, 17 and 18 as persistent exercisers, compared to individuals who exercise less than three times monthly persistently in active, and other exercisers were found to have no correlation or clear association between risk behavior (Korhonen, Kijala, Rose, & Kaprio, 2009). Specific factors in risk behavior include alcohol and drug use. Studies have implemented the use of categories including; homework extracurricular activities, sport time, paid work, housework, television watching, family time, peer time for their effects on heavy alcohol use, cigarette smoking, illicit drug use, delinquency and sexual activity (Barnes, Hoffman, Welsted, Farrell, & Dintcheff, 2007). As a result the most important predictors of adolescent problem behaviors were family time and peer time (Barnes, 2007).

Adolescent's use of time is an issue of importance to youth and society as a whole because of time spent in various environments and its correlation to development of adolescent problems (Barnes, 2007). It's important to examine why participation in extracurricular activities plays a protective role in preventing individual from engaging in risky behavior, and activities. Similar research has found that extracurricular involvement is associated with lower dropout rates, and is linked to the reduction of problem behavior in areas of delinquency and substance use (Bandura, 1995). Additional studies investigated alcohol consumption of college students and their relationship to school life and leisure time used with peers (Koutra et al., 2012). Contributing risk factors are eminent in extended research. Trends of positive and negative influence of extracurricular and leisure activities in regard to academic achievement, and risk behavior were explored (Bandura, 1995). Bandura (1997) conducted a study that focused on social and cognition benefits from involvement in extracurricular activity. Bandura focused on self- efficacy,

and its core principle, efforts of control, and influences imposed by factors in reference to risk behavior. Bandura (1995) defines self- efficacy as a confidence in one's ability to organize and executive a course of action required to attain a goal. Bandura, (1997) proposed the notion that if individuals feel their life is out of their control, they are more likely to be at risk of increased anxiety, feeling of depression, and engage in substance abuse (Bandura,1995). This transcends into students reaction to various constraints varying from academic and social environments (Bandura,1995). Exposure to environments and peers, play an eminent role in in influencing behaviors.

Acceptance by peers is perceived as important especially by young adolescents (Arnon,Shamai & Ilatov, 2008). A recent study compared the influences of various factors pertaining to adolescent involvement in risk behavior and peer co-participation in school sponsored organized activities. Results conclude that nominated friends contribute to co-participation. An example of this would be: (ie: adolescent named the alter as a friend), and only reciprocated friends (ie: both adolescents named each other as friends) (Fujimoto & Valente, 2013). Studies have highlighted the complexity of extracurricular participation during adolescence (Knifsend & Graham, 2012). Additional findings were found amongst other studies. For example an additional study sought to expand on prior research by investigating how adolescent's sense of belonging at school mediates the links between academic achievement and involvement in extracurricular activities (Knifesend & Graham.2012). A curvilinear model of extracurricular participation proposed the notion that, adolescents who participate in activities are better adjusted than their (Knifesend & Graham,2012). Positives associations were found between attitudes in regard to school and students' academic achievement.

A variety of factors influences participation in activity. The importance of leisure as a means of coping with related stress has both positive and negative effects on students. Research sought to explore the importance of individuals attachment to leisure activity, and the correlation between stress (Trenberth & Dewe,2002). Analysis revealed patterns of individual engagement in active challenging leisure activity (Trenberth & Dewe,2002).

Positive correlates of participation in extracurricular activities have been explored, and as a result positive outcomes have been associated with adolescent's participation in (Blomfield & Barber,2011). Adolescents who participate in extracurricular activities are exposed to a greater variety of developmentally facilitative experiences than are their non- participating peers (Blomfield & Barber,2011). Such beneficial outcomes may explain outcomes that are associated with adolescents' participation with adolescent's participation in extracurricular activities (Blomfield & Barber, 2011).

Various factors investigated the combined influence of social structural factors (income) and cognitions in predicting changes in physical activity (Godin, Sheeran, Belanger-Gravel, Gallani, & Nolin, 2010). A study was conducted to explore social structural factors influence behavior controlling for: (cognitions, mediation, social structural influences, moderation, structural factors and moderate cognition-behavior relations, and mediated moderation), and cognition mediate the modeling effects of social structural position (Godin et al. ,2010). Results showed social structural factors exhibited small and marginal effects on behavior change and only education moderated the intention behavior relation (Godin et al. ,2010). The magnitude of direct effects of the

social cognition variables were comparatively large and intention stability mediated the moderating effect of education (Godin et al. ,2010).

Family resources, however do not account for all variation in adolescents activity participation in constructive activities influence families, communities, and positive developmental outcomes in students (Morrissey, & Werner- Wilson, 2005). Community, and participation in structured out of school activity increased youth attitudes, and attitudes toward community and family was directed predictor of positive development (Morrissey, & Werner- Wilson, 2005). In regard to culture and community, individuals can also benefit greatly.

Less acculturated and more enculturated adolescents may lower extracurricular activity participation due to multiple mechanisms (Simpkins, O'Donnell, Delgado, & Becnel, 2011). A variety of factors from the environment affects youth participation in activity. Daily routines have been altered, the variety of after- school care has increased, playing settings changing, the emergency of new communications, and information technologies that have impacted habits (Simpkins et al.,2011). A study was conducted to provide a scope of daily organizations and youth experiences. Extracurricular activities have growing popularity and motivated the interest and impact of development in various area (Molinuevo, Bonillo, Pardo, Doval, & Torrubia,2010). Previous research as acknowledge the relevance and possible influences of social environment on adolescent behavior. Additional influences have been explored. The influence of leisure time and risk behavior was investigated (Van Den Akker & Lees,2001). As a result of research, differences in leisure activities were found between boys and girls participation in regard to subjects interest i.e.: reading more books, magazines, and watching television (Van

den Akker & Lees, 2001). Additional findings have explored similar popularity in college in college students and motivation and peer influences. This transcends in how our ideas are shaped. College students seek ways to engage in activities on campus in order to have social interaction, and fit into environments amongst peers. Opportunities for intellectual social interaction, and fit into environments amongst peers. Opportunities for intellectual exchanges outside of class are plentiful on college and university campuses (Walsh,2009). Positive factors were found in student participation in activity because of positive experiences imposed by involvement in campus activities and organizations. In regard to the study, researchers sought to find relationships between extracurricular activity, liberal learning, and academic knowledge. As a result, students stated that they were able to learn outside of the classroom, and were able to adapt to situations, multi tasking and critically think. Individuals that fall outside of the realm of the normal curriculum of school, or college may experience difficulties maintain structure and stability. Information supports positive youth development and the transitions in which individuals make from a variety of developmental stages. A longitudinal study was conducted to examine positive youth development frameworks and the role of school, home, and community based participation in students academic ( e.g., motivation, engagement, and non- academic ( e.g., self- esteem, life satisfaction) (Martin et al., 2013). Participation in constructive leisure activity facilitates positive youth development (Morrisey et al., 2005). Davis & Murrell (1993), stated that students are highly responsible for their own academic gain in college, an student's involvement in activity can create environments conducive to learning (Cheung & Kwok, 1998).

Student activities and academic achievement contribute to students seeking to improve progress in school, and as a result students will be pro- active by taking initiatives to: study, plan ahead, budget time, and form routine (Cheung. 1998). (Dickinson & O'Connell, 1990), suggest the majority of evidence and research has documented contributing factors to student initiative to study and academic progression among students.

Lastly evidence has been found in regard to student participation on campuses. Students and educators continue to search for ways to assess campus programs, to appease students and aid them to adjust to environment and constraints. Additional research has sought to explore alternative approaches toward seeking more Links between student involvement in campus activities that have correlations to self- efficacy, and student attitude and disposition toward risk behavior (DiRamio & Payne, 2007). Researchers continue to form studies focusing on the value of student participation and extracurricular programs in a variety of settings, and age of students.

In conclusion student learning is largely driven from content learned and competency, that influences tasks by assessing student involvement and life programs (Kuh, 2001). Such tasks and programs rely on elusive and proximal measures of eladership development, citizenship, and engagement (Kuh, 205). Unequal participation in extracurricular activities has greater significance when considering correlations between extracurricular participation and academic outcomes (Covay & Carbonaro, 2010). Lastly, there are numerous factors that influence student involvement, academic successes, and decline in risk behavior. Flora & Segrin (1998), conclude that student

involvement, and values learned from structured environments trigger students interests, and spill into other realms.



## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### Participants

Participants in the study were selected at random from the Rowan University Subject Pool. Participants were eighteen years and older, and cooperation and participation were voluntary. Participants were obtained and approved for participation by the Institutional Review Board. Participants considered ineligible to participate in the study were students who were not from the Rowan University subject pool where were not eighteen years or older. There were limitations because of the scope of the study. Outside students who were not a part of the Rowan University subject pool were not included in the study sample. Participants individually participated in the study, and the questionnaire was voluntary, resulting in a self- selecting sample.

The survey was distributed via SONA system, and approximately 47 participants participated in the questionnaire. Of the surveys distributed, 20 participants returned the questionnaire electronically answering all questions. Twenty seven of the 47 survey items were returned without any responses, and these twenty seven surveys were not included in the data analysis. Responses were provided for a smaller portion of the remaining surveys. It is important to know that the sample size for the statistical analysis conducted vary according to the available responses. The questionnaire prompted responses from students of various ages, and grade levels. In reference to academic grade level, there were 30 freshman, 6 sophomore, 10 juniors, and 1 senior. Seven participants stated they had an A GPA. Two participants stated they had a B- to B+ GPA, 3 participants indicated they had a C GPA. 2 participants indicated they had a D GPA. 12 participants indicated

they participate in risk behavior often . 8 Participants indicated rarely, 11 indicated sometimes, 1 never. The levels of involvement in sports and extracurricular activities varied. A small percentage of the participants indicated that they had no involvement in extracurricular activities & organizations. A large sample of participants indicated they were involved in extracurricular activity and organizations. Survey participants were also asked to state their age. Ages ranged from 18 to 21 years old.

## **Materials**

The questionnaire utilized in this study was created by the principal researcher, and called Extracurricular Activity Academic Achievement and Risk behavior Questionnaire. The survey asked participants a series of multiple choice questions to best describe grade point average (GPA) in comparison to risk behavior, and participation in organizations. The remaining survey items (grade level, and age) distinguishes the variety in sample size of participants who participated in the questionnaire. Participants are presented with a scale with the following equally distanced response correlating with the numerical score for data analysis: grade level: Freshman (1), Sophomore (2), Junior (3), Senior grade point average: GPA: A(1), B+ (2), B(3), C(4), D(5), Risk Behavior: rarely (1), sometimes (2), often (3), never (4), and lastly survey item asked participants to state how many extracurricular and organizations pertained to them. For the purpose of interpreting scores, participants with a higher numerical score correlates with a higher level of agreement with a positive statement regarding GPA, Risk Behavior, and Extracurricular/ Organization involvement. The principal researcher avoided the issues of participants from trying to take the “good-participant” role, by making the survey

anonymous, and distributing the questionnaire online. Electronic copies of the questionnaire were used in the distribution of the questionnaire on the SONA system.

Lastly a relatively small sample size imposes limitations on the validity of the study. For example only 20 students out of 47 answered each item fully. The 20 participants who answered some the survey items, cannot be assumed to represent the entire population of participants who took the questionnaire.

### **Design**

The study investigated the relationships between student participation in extracurricular activities, and academic achievement. Extracurricular involvement was further investigated in relation to academic achievement. The five survey items in the survey were to analyze student participation in extracurricular activities/ organizations, and response to GPA, Risk Behavior. Three of the questions were designed to investigate participant's response and to distinguish factors from supporting data conducted in prior research. The three questions involved the following factors: 1. Participation in extracurricular activities & Organizations, 2. Academic Grade Point Average, and 3. Participation in risk behavior. The two remaining questions pertained to 1. Grade Level, and 2. What age the participant is. Over all response to questionnaire were scored by averaging and grouping data. The statements include: "What year are you in School? What is your grade point average? How often have you drank, and or used recreational drugs, and lastly choose from the following sports and organizations." The validity of the average response and score to survey items will be assessed using a Spearman Rank Correlation Analysis, and Non- Parametric Analysis by grouping the data responses. The

purpose of the statistical process, was to measure extracurricular activity, academic achievement, and risk behavior.

### **Procedure**

Participants were gathered from the Rowan Subject Pool, who were eighteen years and older. Participants were compensated for their time, by receiving credit for participation in the study. Participants were administered a debriefing prior to participating in the study. The five questions asked within the survey were as follows: a) What year in school the participant is in? b) what is the participant's grade point average? c) What age is the participant, d) How often the participant drinks/ and or participants in recreational drugs? And e) Choose from the following activities that the participants has participated in?

Participants were not permitted to identify themselves on the survey. Furthermore, participants were allowed to decline the survey at any time, with no questions asked. Finally, participants should put honest precise answers to the best of their ability.

## Chapter 4

### Results

An understanding of the numerical scores used to conduct the analysis is important when interpreting results. When response scores to survey items were used in analysis, the numerical scale corresponds to the responses in the following way: Risk Behavior: *Rarely(1) Sometimes(2), Often (3), N/A (4)*, Grade Point Average *A(1), B+ (2), B(3), C(4), D(5)*, Year in School *Freshman (1), Sophomore(2), Junior(3), Senior(4), N/A(5)*. In this way, a mean score can be identified. In regard to risk behavior 1 signifies the participant *sometimes* participates in risk behavior, 2 signifies the participant *often* participates in risk behavior often, 3 signifies the participant *Never* participates in risk behavior. In regard to Grade Point Average, A=1 signifying the student has an A average with the number 1, B+= 2 signifying a grade point average of a B+, B=3 signifying the grade point average D. The principal researcher grouped data. All survey items are represented numerically. The questionnaire was created to test the hypothesis: “Student participation in extracurricular activities and organizations influence academic achievement, and decreases student participation in risk behavior.” There was no significant difference between involvement in extracurricular activity, involvement in organizations, GPA, and Risk Behavior. There were no correlations, or correlational relationships between survey items.

## Analysis Investigating Correlational Relationships Among Survey Items

To investigate participants response to survey items, the following statistical process were conducted to see how student involvement, increases academic achievement, and decreases risk behavior and the correlation between factors with survey items. No correlation or significance were found between participants responses in the following areas: GPA, participation in Risk Behavior, Extracurricular Activities and organizations. First a correlation analysis of parametric methods was run to see if there were correlations between: GPA, Risk Behavior, Sport and Organization frequency. Table 1 demonstrates the use of parametric measures to suggest that there are no correlational relationships of statistical significance between the measures, GPA, participation in sports, participation in organization, and participation in risk behavior.

Table 1

*Parametric Correlations Among Measures*

Measures	GPA	Participation in Sports	Participation in Organizations	Participation in Risk Behavior
GPA	----	-.028	-.337	.079
Participation in Sports	.028	----	.125	.009
Participation in Organizations	.337	.125	----	.001
Participation in Risk Behavior	.079	.009	.001	----

*Note.* Presented findings are not significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Second, a non parametric correlation analysis was ran using Spearmans rho to calculate if participants perform higher academically do to participation in extracurricular activity, organizations, and participation in risk behavior decreases between items. No

significance was found. There is not correlational relationship between scores. Scores do not correlate according to participants indicated level of involvement, and response to survey items. Table 2 demonstrates the use of non-parametric measures to suggest that there are no correlational relationships of statistical significance between the measures GPA, participation in sports, participation in organization, and participation in risk behavior.

Table 2

*Nonparametric Correlations Among Measures*

Measures	GPA	Participation in Sports	Participation in Organizations	Participation in Risk Behavior
GPA	----	-.041	-.318	.068
Participation in Sports	.041	----	.113	.057
Participation in Organizations	.318	.113	----	.025
Participation in Risk Behavior	.068	.057	.025	----

*Note.* Presented findings are not significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

In conclusion, the current study's findings indicate that relationships of statistical significance were not present between survey items.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### Conclusions Regarding Sample Population

Findings reveal correlational relationship pertaining to sample population in regard to the study. The subject pool and survey items represented in the survey are not representative of student participation in extracurricular activities, academic achievement and risk behavior. Findings must be viewed with an open mind of survey items, and characteristics. First participants were debriefed, and were allotted twenty minutes to answer specific survey items. Participants expressed a high level of agreement to the following statements: “What grade level are you? “What Grade Point Average do you have?. “Do you participate in risk behavior?,” and lastly participants were asked: “How many sports, and organizations do you participate in?” Upon examination of the sample responses, the data scores reflect the responses to survey item questions. Findings found had no correlation.

In regard to participant’s response to survey items, responses varied. Participants responded by choosing: often, rarely, sometimes, and always in reference to measures of risk behavior and academic achievement. Participants responded by choosing: Freshman, Sophomore, Junior, Senior in response to grade level. Participatns responded to age, by listing their age, and lastly participants responded by choosing a number of sports and or organizations that they participate in.

Finally, the sample population as a whole, answered the survey items pertaining to participation in risk behavior, and involvement in (2-5) extracurricular activities, and



organizations. It is imperative when interpreting findings, to acknowledge the small sample size of participants from the Rowan Student Subject pool.

### **Factors Relating to Overall Participation in Survey Items**

A Non Parametric Correlation Analysis supports findings pertaining to factors determined no correlation to student participation in extracurricular activities, increase in academic achievement, and decrease in risk behavior. In regard to GPA in correlation to Frequency of sports, Risk behavior, and Frequency of organizations, there were no correlational relationship. In regard to frequency of sports in correlation to GPA, Risk behaviors, and Frequency of risk in correlation to GPA, frequency of sports, and frequency of organizations, there were no correlational relationship. In regard to frequency of organizations in correlation to GPA, frequency of sports, and risk behavior there were no correlational relationship. As a result participation in extracurricular activity and organizations do not increase academic achievement, or decrease risk behavior. Survey items have no relation.

### **Limitations**

Conducting an exploratory study exposes itself to limitations. Interpretations for weak relationships between survey items result in small sample size, and biases of the sample population. A lack of reliability in the data limited the scope of analysis, creating difficulty in finding meaningful relationships or trends between survey items. The basis of the literature helped build an understanding and interpretation of the research conducted, but after investigating, limited research could contribute to limitations imposed to the results and findings.

### **Further Directions**

This section highlights additional research that could be done to build upon evidence supporting student participation in extracurricular activity, and academic achievement. Specific limitations in the study could be addressed by: extending the sample size of participants, and not limiting questionnaires and survey items to non Rowan affiliated students. In addition the principal researcher had the option in choosing different survey items to test in comparison to other factors that could improve significance with in results. Lastly evidence supporting student participation in extracurricular activity and academic achievement could be explored by changing survey items and measures all together, for example the principal researcher could: choose a specific grade level of students to focus on, broaden the sample size to just a specific age group, test to see if a specific age group is prone to more risk behavior, or distribute survey questions differently with less leniency and limited.

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