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ABSTRACT

Historically, studies have debated the relationship between student grade point average and student involvement in extracurricular activities. The present study investigated that relationship. A group of 47 high school sophomores and juniors voluntarily completed and returned a questionnaire designed by the researcher, which gathered data on involvement in all-inclusive extracurricular activities, plans for attending a college or university, gender, age, and date of birth. The sample included 22 females, 24 males, and 1 subject who did not indicate gender. Cumulative grade point average was determined by student records. A correlation analysis indicated that a significant, positive relationship existed between grade point average and participation in extracurricular activities.

EFFECT OF PARTICIPATION IN HIGH SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES ON GRADE POINT AVERAGE

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Dedication

I wish to thank my children: Claire, Wesley, and Paige for their patience during this time and for the sacrifices they made so that I could complete this paper. Paige's help as my "research assistant" was invaluable. Also, I wish to thank Leslie for his encouragement, support, and friendship.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The current body of research regarding student success in school and involvement in extracurricular activities seems to indicate that such involvement has far-reaching effects. With changing family roles, schools are put into a position of being the "anchor", where students feel a sense of identity and can develop strong bonds with peers, adults, and social groups, which they so greatly need (Arhar, 1992). Arhar also supports the notion that bonding to peers is crucial to the self-esteem of students and the development of the adolescent's identity. Strahan (1989) states that "'...for students to become less disruptive, they must first become more connected (p. 2)'". Researchers Mahoney and Cairns (1997) strongly believe that involvement in extracurricular activities may support the at-risk student by maintaining, enhancing, and strengthening the student-school connection. Klesse (1994) posits that participation in extracurricular activities relates to a number of desirable characteristics, such as self-esteem, educational aspirations, feelings of control, lower levels of alienation, improved multicultural relations, and academic achievement. Further, participation may lead students to acquire new skills such as organizational, planning, and time management. The Santa Clara County Office of Education (1989) project findings strongly suggest that migrant students have a higher rate of graduation from high school if they participate in extracurricular activities. Taylor and Chiogioji (1988) support participation in extracurricular activities as an important

part of a student's total development. Wehlage and his associates came to the resolution that to enhance student scholastic achievement students must feel a part of the school community (1989).

Holland and Andre (1987) note another important reason to examine the effects of extracurricular activities. They cite the limited funds currently available to schools due to decreased enrollment and inflation. Declining enrollment in schools and the negative effects of inflation have made it necessary for schools to be more accountable for their programs. Holland and Andre also state that at the same time, a perceived increase stressing of academic achievement pervades education. Therefore, schools are put into the position of having to justify the inclusion of extracurricular activities within their schools. One way to do this is for schools to show that student participation in extracurricular activities within the schools has a positive effect on student academic achievement.

Cassel, Chow, Demoulin and Reiger (2000) believe that involvement in extracurricular activities in school leads to a sense of belonging, a feeling of being a part of a larger whole, and this feeling of belonging will cause students to be less likely to become involved in drugs and alcohol. Further, by cultivating involvement in extracurricular activities, honesty and trustworthiness are also cultivated. Glasser (1986) notes that students need to feel a sense of belonging, security, challenge, and fun. Students not having these needs met will attempt to establish some control through misbehavior. Perhaps it is this participation in

extracurricular activities that fosters in the student a sense of security, belonging, challenge and fun, thus enabling the student to experience academic success as well.

Through his research, Joekel (1985) concludes that student involvement in activities in grades kindergarten through twelfth has a direct positive relationship to success in higher education and adult life. Brown & Theobald (1998) investigated extracurricular activities as part of a yearbook on social trends and secondary school adolescents with the National Society for the Study of Education. They concluded that the competencies students acquire through such participation may be more critical to their success in adult roles and responsibilities than their grades in school. In addition, the authors believe that extracurricular environments may provide secondary level students with alternative contexts for achievement and self-esteem. Silliker and Quirk believe that new skills may be mastered and different roles outside the classroom may be explored through participation in extracurricular activities (1997).

Frith and Clark (1984) state that the most important responsibility of educators is to develop a learning environment where students can develop into well-rounded citizens. To create strong peer bonds, principals suggest the encouragement of extracurricular activities (Arhar, 1992). As reported by Lawton (1987), a group of leading middle school educators appointed by the National Middle School Association arrived at the consensus that middle level education needed to address the physical, social, and emotional needs of these students in

the school program. Silliker and Quirk posit that lifelong learning, life roles, and personal effectiveness are three areas in which extracurricular activities can promote learning and development (1997). In a 1985 Illinois State Board of Education study, it was concluded that "research is needed to establish whether or not extracurricular activities enhance student success in the academic, social and/or personal adjustment spheres" (p. 23). In this study, nearly one-half of the inactive sophomores and seniors responding indicated dissatisfaction with education and reported a low quality of academic teaching.

Regarding self-worth, Rabinowitz and Hall (1977) conclude that "the correlation of performance with self-esteem may be greater among youngsters highly involved in school than among those less-involved" (p. 125). Research appears to indicate that the school and the school environment might promote student success by developing and maintaining an extensive extracurricular program conducive to participation by all students (Stephens, 1990).

Statement of the Problem

In the current body of research, there is much debate surrounding the issue of participation in extracurricular activities during the high school years and its relation to academic achievement. Other variables such as minority student school success, retention, school connectedness, and self esteem may be related similarly, yet are not under similar focus and contention. In times of financial cutbacks, taxpayers and legislators may question the worthiness of such activities,

with schools and other proponents often in a position of defending programs to save them.

Developing relationships with peers, teachers, and the school are the avenues enabling young adolescents to interact with their school. Principals have the opportunity to strengthen those bonds by using strategies which will enhance these attachments to adults within the school, school peers, and to the school itself. Creating a miniature society within the school where students know that teachers truly care about them fosters a propensity toward student involvement in school activities. They are also more likely to adhere to school standards as they relate to achievement and behavior. A school environment where students feel secure and accepted promotes comfort with risk-taking, which in turn enhances learning (Arhar, 1992).

Arhar (1992) suggested that bonding was promoted by several methods, including mentoring relationships and the utilization of small communities of support. It was suggested that extracurricular activity satisfies these needs. Out-of-class interactions in an informal setting give students an opportunity to see teachers as positive role models (Arhar, 1992). Arhar suggests that such applications may promote mentorship between teachers and students, as well as help students to equate school with a future and inspire students to meet success standards of the school (1992). It was suggested that establishing the factors imperative to student success may make it possible for students to experience

success. Perhaps it could also pave the way for students to achieve positive outcomes in other areas of life.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to add to the current body of research in an attempt to increase the knowledge of the effect of student participation in extracurricular activities upon grade point average.

Definitions

Extracurricular activities: Includes out-of-class pursuits, usually financed or supervised by a local school system, in which students participate in selection, planning, and control.

Noninstructional: Activities which take place within the boundaries of the school, often within the school day.

High School: Includes grades nine through twelve.

TEAP: Total Extracurricular Activity Involvement

EAP: Extracurricular Activity Involvement

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will be devoted to the events which have led to the current interest in extracurricular activities and how such activities relate to student success in school. Through historical information, the origin of the problem will be examined and current directions in research and theory clarified. Relevant research pertaining to the role extracurricular activities might play in the development of students' lives will be explored. Finally, a summary of the latest research findings will be presented. This will include some conflicting findings, which add weight to the premise that this subject deserves more exploration.

Historical Data

As mentioned in Gholson (1985), prior to 1900, educational leaders did not generally accept the idea of extracurricular activities for public school students, though by 1920 pressure from the educational reform movement spurred a toleration for such activities. Both Gholson (1985) and Joekel (1985) make reference to the report of the Presidential Commission to Study the Reorganization of Secondary Schools, and the "Seven Cardinal Principles" of secondary education. These include good use of leisure time, ethical character, citizenship, and health. As noted by Joekel (1985), Marano (1985) and Mendez (1984), many have argued that these positive attributes are cultivated by participation in student activities. Still, Gholson notes, it took far into the

twentieth century for educational leaders to actively encourage cocurricular and extracurricular activities.

Brown and Steinberg (1991) make reference to the number of studies undertaken in the 1970's and 1980's which raised questions over the narrow parameters of research to date and the low levels of student academic interest.. But, as these authors note, most suggestions for combating these problems centered on "instructional" issues within the school, such as teaching methods, curriculum, "tracking" of students, course work or credit requirements, and the ratios of students to teachers.

Wieckowski (1992) calls attention to the move in the 1970's from an atmosphere of classroom experience only in the schools to the current interest in educational practices outside the classroom. He notes, however, that there is resistance to change. Clark and Astuto (1986) argued that prior to the 1980's, society steered more towards school programs which emphasized the total development of students. Since 1980, the emphasis has been on academic programs alone.

As early as 1978, a study by Laughlin (1978) found that higher grade point averages were reported during the time when the particular activity took place. Further, athletes had better attendance records, fewer disciplinary problems reported, and higher grade point averages than non-athletes. In 1981, Nover's research, presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association concluded that student involvement was found to have a significant

relationship to school performance, experience, and scholastic success. In his dissertation study from the years 1993 - 1996, Whitley (1999) reported that athletes had a higher mean grade point average, a much better mean attendance rate, a lower discipline referral percentage, a lower dropout rate, and a higher graduation rate than nonathletes among 126,700 high school students studied in North Carolina.

Holland and Andre (1987) comment that schools influence personality development and socialization through the extracurricular activities that are offered. The encouragement/rewards that are offered for this participation are tantamount to success of the school's programs overall. James P. Comer (1993) of Yale University said it best:

> Those who are experiencing success in school and see the possibility of life success are more likely to be pulled into positive peer-group cultures with positive physical and mental attitudes, values, and ways. Those who are experiencing school failure with less chance of life success have a greater possibility of involvement in negative peer-group cultures with negative physical and mental attitudes, values, and ways. Yet all young people in this day and age are vulnerable because of the complexity of the society and the nature of adolescence (p. 660).

Further, Comer states, having a better understanding of the implications of the relationship between extracurricular activities and school success may facilitate the design and implementation of non-academic opportunities to the needs of the particular students.

It would seem that involvement in extracurricular activities has far-reaching effects, based on more recent findings, as well. In a study of migrant students, the Santa Clara County Office of Education findings strongly suggest that student participation in extracurricular activities may be a decisive factor in increasing the number of high school graduates (1989). Participation in such activities is said to be strongly related to academic achievement in studies by Valverde and the Office of Educational Research and Development, as documented in Santa Clara County Office of Education (1989). The study further indicates that school performance and disciplinary problems are significantly affected by the students' attitudes toward school. Also, attitudes and self-concepts can be affected negatively by lower-achieving students, as suggested by Graham (1985). In addition, this study states that extracurricular activities contribute to the development of well-rounded intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development of students. Participation in extracurricular activities can help students gain social maturity, incentives for continuing their education, build self-esteem, develop independence, and heighten knowledge.

In independent studies, researchers Tom (1982), Dvorak (1986), Harvancik and Golsan (1986), and Camp (1990) found a statistically significant relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement. Students also demonstrated an improvement in their communication skills and personal relationships, as reported by Gibbs (1982) and Fellows (1986).

Enhanced School Performance

Brown and Steinberg's study (1990) of high school students in Wisconsin and California found that high achievers took part in a substantially wider scope of extracurricular activities and spent more hours in such engagements than did low to average students. The exception to this were sports such as football, basketball, baseball, and performing activities, where significantly lower academic records prevailed. Conversely, leadership activities, clubs and interest groups' participants had higher academic records, partly due, the authors state, to the academic climate of the latter activities, where support of achievement and personal resources were prevalent.

Marsh (1991) found that participation in sports, student government, school publications and subject matter clubs, honor societies, church organizations, and community service organizations was consistent in its beneficial relationship to grade point average. Even participation in what could be categorized as non-academic activities had a positive effect. Marsh's suggestion is that extracurricular activities cultivate identification with the school and school-related values, fostering a positive academic self-concept and encouragement to succeed in school.

Brown and Steinberg (1991) found that extracurricular participation was linked to positive school outcomes. This was true even after controlling for differences between non-participants and participants, such as academic ability and socioeconomic status. The more extensive a student's participation in

extracurricular activities, the more time that they devoted to homework and the higher the students' grade point average. Generally, their study found that extracurricular activities enhanced school performance, while part-time work distracted students from achievement. It appears that it is not the involvement in the activity itself, but the degree of involvement or the demand of the activity on the individual's time that distracted the students from their studies.

Research by Jeffreys (1987), Marano (1985), and Mendez (1984) all target student activity programs as an important part of a good overall educational experience for all secondary level students. Holland and Andre determined through extensive research that student activities in the school are of great importance (1987).

Sweet (1986) reported on a study by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement noting that those students who took part in extracurricular activities had higher grade point averages than those students who did not participate. McNamara, Haensley, Lupkowski and Edlind (1985) found a positive correlation between grade point average and degree of participation in student organizations. Cheong, Toney, and Stinner (1986) found that high school grades and participation in outside of class activities such as church, school, and community involvements are positively correlated. Harvancik and Golson (1986) reported a positive relationship between high school grade point average and participation in school activities in their study of 1,067 college freshmen.

Newman's (1991) study of students with learning disabilities showed a "consistent pattern of positive outcomes for students who were engaged in school or community groups" (p. 24). Further, he posited, these students had lower school absenteeism and better grade performance. The author suggests the possibility that participation in groups may cultivate these students' interest in school for the social and academic benefits they derive from such activities. The value of these social affiliations endured throughout secondary school as well as in these students' early adult years. In summation, Newman posited, bonding to the school means better grades.

Don Hovland (1990), a middle school principal, noted a correlation between high participation and academic achievement. His findings revealed that when individual student participation was high, attendance was higher as well. Additionally, discipline problems in and out of school decreased at these times. He concluded that there is a correlation between extracurricular activities and academic success. In Snyder and Spreitzer's (1992) longitudinal analysis, they concluded that previous studies clearly indicate that athletes tend to perform better academically than nonathletes at the high school level. Additionally, the primary finding of their study shows a positive relationship between both academic and athletic commitment as well as a positive relationship between overall involvement in school activities and measures of self-esteem, and good judgment in regards to life events. The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFSHSA, 1985) gathered results of national surveys, concluding

that students who participate in high school activities are more likely to have a higher grade point average and better attendance records.

Joekel reported a discovery revealed by the College Entrance Examination Board's Scholastic Aptitude test. It disclosed that students who had many activities, hobbies, interests, and jobs were most likely to be successful later on in their lives (1985). Participation in extracurricular activities, athletics, and student government offer alternative routes through which students having academic difficulty can be more in touch with the school environment. At risk students may be more likely to stay in school if they have such activities in their lives.

Edwards (1967), Eidsmore (1964), Phillips & Schafer (1971), and Gordon (1995) all conclude that participation in extracurricular activities has been linked with higher performance as evidenced by better grade point averages. Coleman (1961) conducted an in-depth study of teenage social life and its impact on education. Results pointed to a positive relationship between increased hours spent on homework, college aspirations, and an involvement in sports. Stephens (1990) posited that social control theorists say that when the child loses interest, respect, and attachment for the school and its teachers, he is no longer governed by legitimate rules and behaviors. He suggested that extracurricular activity involvement can curtail this lack of interest, respect and attachment. Joekel (1985) posits that positive identification with school encourages a sense of belonging as well as a value for school-related outcomes. Conversely, lack of participation tends to cause the individual not to continue to participate in school

activities, leading to emotional and physical withdrawal and less-successful outcomes.

An Illinois State Board of Education study (1985) which reported data for sophomores and seniors showed a strong correlation between interest in school and increased activity levels. As the level of disinterest in school rose, the number of inactive students increased. The study further reported that across all age levels, higher grades were equated with higher participation, and lower grades meant lower participation. The study concluded that:

> In general, students were most likely to be highly active if they received high grades, were in academic programs, liked school, felt good about themselves and experienced no disciplinary problems. Conversely, students did not participate if the reverse were true (p. 23).

Correlations between participation in extracurricular activities and student success does not commence at the high school level. Robert Kiner (1993) principal at a middle school in South Dakota collected data regarding students in community service projects in middle schools. His research found that middle school students in community service projects possessed a sense of pride in helping others, had a positive attitude about school, had high self-esteem, and a commitment to service. A heightened school climate was also evident.

Data from Eifner (1985) and Saltiel (1980) also showed that activities other than academic endeavors had a positive effect on student choice of careers and occupations. Scott and Damico (1982) reported student multi-racial activities in high school persisted at the college level. Students who participated in multi-

racial activities in high school tended to seek out the same activities in college. Hauser and Lueptow (1978), Otto (1975), (1976), Otto and Alwin (1977), Holland and Andre (1987), and Otto (1982) report positive effects from extracurricular activities in longitudinal studies. Hanks and Eckland (1976) posited that a broadly based measure of extracurricular activities participation was positively related to grade point average in the students' senior year of high school and subsequent scholastic improvements after controlling for socioeconomic status, academic track, standardized achievement test scores, and sophomore grade point average.

These results were based on a retroactive study of fifteen years. However, Marsh (1992a) remains conservative where these results are concerned, pointing to weaknesses in the size of the effects of extracurricular activity and the research. He also cautions against sweeping conclusions of the effects of extracurricular activities as in relationship to gender, ability level, socioeconomic status, as well as other individual characteristics.

Finn's (1989) review of the model referred to as the participation-identification model indicates that student participation in school and school-related activities heightens identification with the school. This attachment reduces delinquency and student failure in school. Conversely, lack of participation increases the risk of school failure and delinquency, with a tendency toward alienation or disengagement from the school setting. This leads to misbehavior, delinquency, poor academic performance, and, eventually, dropping

out of school. Cassel, Chow, Demoulin and Reiger (2000) state that school records of high school students across the country show that those students who become deeply involved in extracurricular activities tend to be model students and seldom become involved in delinquency or crime. Research seems to indicate that student participation in extracurricular activities generates a positive socialization process, helping students develop self-confidence, self-esteem, and maturity (Stevens & Peltier, 1994).

Finn's (1989) frustration-self-esteem model states that poor academic performance over a period of time will lead to frustration and lowered self-esteem. This promotes a rejection of school and an acceptance of alternative behaviors/interests that are less acceptable to society where the student can experience success. Class disruption, skipping school and unlawful activities are three such behaviors, which eventually lead to school suspensions, expulsion, or total rejection of the system by the student who is on the verge of dropping out.

As Finn (1989) concludes, participation in extracurricular activities by students can have a number of distinct advantages for the adolescent. Such activities "may have the potential for contributing to the student's sense of identification with school" (p. 129). One such advantage is that regular participation in school activities cultivates a youngster's identification with school, possibly with the additional factor of success aiding this positive identification..

Stephens (1990) summarizes strain and control theory in this way: "...it is the school and it's environment as well as the child's view of school that are of critical importance (p.19)" Further, according to Hirschi (1969) strong bonding and social control are cultivated when positive attitudes and feelings toward institutions and persons of authority (such as schools and teachers) are evident. Conversely, rebellion is evident with students who do not like school or do not care what their teachers think. Such students are likely to feel rebellion towards this authority.

Retention

There is much research focusing on extracurricular activities and their effect on student retention. Cervantes' study of family dynamics (1986)) with a sample of 300 dropouts and graduates found that the dropouts had very little involvement in any school-related activities throughout their academic years. Low participation in such activities has been cited as a factor related to students and attrition (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; Finn, 1989). McNeal's (1995) study was to explore whether or not involvement in certain extracurricular activities significantly reduced a student's likelihood of dropping out of school. The study revealed that such involvement, particularly in athletics and fine arts, significantly reduced a student's likelihood of dropping out. One note is that involvement in academic or vocational clubs had no effect. Conversely, Wieckowski (1992) found that student participation may encourage retention of students. Melnick, Sabo, and Vanfossen (1992) examined a stratified, national,

probability sample of minority students drawn from the High School and Beyond Study (U. S. Department of Education, 1987) and found that high school athletic participation was an academic resource only in its influence on school retention.

Mahoney and Cairns (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of 392 adolescents who were initially interviewed during seventh grade and followed up annually to twelfth grade. Findings indicate that the school dropout rate among at-risk students was markedly lower for students who had earlier participated in extracurricular activities compared with those who did not participate. It should be noted, however, that involvement in extracurricular activities were only modestly related to early school dropout among students who had been judged to be competent or highly competent during middle school.

In a survey of prison criminal dropouts, Stephens (1990) showed that these dropouts had a higher rate of grade retention, school transfers, low school attendance, poor behavior, lower academic performance and considerably less involvement in extracurricular activities than graduates in prison. He concludes that school processes and student characteristics have an effect on the act of dropping out.

Dunham and Alpert (1987) state that a dislike of school and classes generally seem to be related to a general dissatisfaction by students with the entire school experience. Enjoyment of the school experience would be a decisive factor, they note, in the successful completion of school. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) report that students who leave school do so because they feel that

school is not for them. Often, this deters them from chances to advance themselves both personally and financially..

Poor academic performance is strongly correlated with dropping out of school. Those students at risk for attrition may possess personal and social characteristics that have a significant influence in deciding the kind of learning and experiences these students will have in school (Stephens, 1990). It is suggested that researchers appraise the broader spectrum of influences when evaluating the variables related to student academic success.

Research by Natriello, McDill, and Pallas (1990) revealed that students leave school for three principal reasons: school is not meaningful to them as it relates to their future aspirations, they have no feeling of success in their school work, and they have a lack of good friendships in the school. Berrueta-Clement et al (1984) posited that strong social bonds to school and other conventional settings are viewed as making delinquency less likely, while weak social bonds to those same settings are more likely to result in delinquency.

School membership theory is that students who do not have a commitment to the school and eventually leave school permanently are those who do not have a strong attachment to the school (Arhar, 1992). Gottfredson (1987) as well as Wehlage and associates (1989) argue that students who maintain a strong bond with the school are likely to stay in school, go to class regularly, and are therefore more apt to graduate from high school. Further, Wehlage and associates (1989) support the idea that reducing the barriers of student isolation can heighten

feelings of bonding to the school. The impediments that must be overcome are the challenge of dealing with school norms, lack of harmony between home/community and school, student isolation from the center of school activity and a faulty adjustment to the detached social setting of many schools. Feeling like a part of the school environment requires that students have frequent and high quality interaction with adults to reduce isolation. This helps them to feel cared about by peers and adults. Further, in schools where black students and poor students are in the minority, higher bonding scores may be due to leadership roles taken on by these minority students.

Successful patterns of thinking need to be replaced for the failure cycle that students are experiencing. Grossnickle (1988) suggests that teachers should enhance positive attitudes and interests at an early age through the aid of parents, administrators, and counselors. The drive for achievement can be enhanced through such factors as status structure systems, educational processes, cultural values, peer group interactions, and others. It is suggested that all of these can be addressed through extracurricular activities. Achievement motivation training can have indirect benefits such as improved attendance and positive attitude toward studies and school. Holland and Andre (1987) posit that there needs to be more research involving variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, and ability as they correlate with participation in extracurricular activities.

Minority Students

Several such variables are addressed in an examination of data from the National Educational Longitudinal Study: 88, by Gerber (1996). In the data, participation in extracurricular activities was based on the number of organizations in which students took part. Separate measures were determined for school-related and non-school-activities. White student and African American student performance was analyzed. Results indicated that the amount of participation in extracurricular activities was positively related to academic achievement. In school-related activities, both racial groups showed a strong relationship. Overall, the relationship was stronger for white students than for African American students.

In a study of minority students by Lisella (1996), there were differences between minority students who participated in traditional extracurricular activities and those minority students who did not participate in such activities. For female students, the pattern of difference was mixed and depended upon the type of activity, but participation was associated with higher achievement. For male students, however, the pattern of the relationship between nonparticipants and participants and achievement was much more consistent. Male participants scored lower in achievement than did nonparticipants.

Brown and Steinberg (1990) caution educators that there is stress between academic achievement and social acceptance. Further, we "...need to help high school students structure a social system in which 'living' and learning are

compatible activities." (p. 60). Camp (1990) fears that extracurricular activities in the public schools are in serious peril at the hands of a new wave of reformers out to curtail such activities.

School Success

According to Hirschi (1969) strong bonding and social control are cultivated when positive attitudes and feelings toward institutions and persons of authority (such as schools and teachers) are evident. Conversely, rebellion is evident with students who do not like school or do not care what their teachers think. These students are likely to feel rebellion toward schools and teachers. Burris and Smith (1987) remark that, unlike classroom learning, sports drills and practices are seen as purposeful, as they are a means to an end. The purposes of the team help the students strive for success. Students do not see classroom learning in the same way. It is not seen as purposeful or tangible, so it is not given the same effort and loyalty. Sinclair and Ghory (1987) found that schools generate discipline problems if they are not organized is such a way so that they easily contribute to marginal students' learning. These students can become disconnected from school. Purkey and Strahan (1986) emphasize the importance of personal relationships when dealing with students. Disruptive students are often diverted from their normally disruptive behaviors because they "connect" with someone in the school.

Brown and Steinberg (1991) suggest that schools play a definitive role in forming the extracurricular programs in their schools to enhance the students'

academic commitments. They suggest the adoption of a different attitude for school-sponsored activities, which would include sports' activities concentration on higher physical numbers of participants as opposed to win-loss records.

There appears to be much conflicting information and research on the possible correlation between involvement in extracurricular activities and grade point average. Stephens (1990) cautions that the literature focusing on the effects of extracurricular activity in school is "diverse and findings conflict" (p. 50). Conflicting results were reported in a 1985 Illinois State Board of Education study involving 3,393 students from 63 public high schools. Students in their sophomore year with B, C, D or failing grade averages consisted of significantly more females in the highly active group. There was no meaningful gender difference in those students wih an A average. Seniors at the D and failing levels are composed significantly of males and "show a significantly larger proportion of participation in activities" (p. 6). As examined by O'Brien and Rollefson (1995), a National Education Longitudinal Study from 1992 indicates that it is not known whether the relationship between participation in extracurricular activities and success in school is causal.

Steinberg and others (1988) remark that examination of the literature currently available regarding the influence of extracurricular activities is "neither monolithic nor unilateral" (p. 40). Landers and Landers (1978) reported some studies in which there was a lower academic performance for school athletes. Examining the results of a study on a national, stratified, probability sample of

African American and Hispanic boys and girls drawn from the High School and Beyond Study (U.S. Department of Education, 1987) Melnick, Sabo, and Vanfossen (1992) found that sports participation was generally unrelated to grades and standardized test scores. However, there was no minority subgroup in which athletes did not at least equal the academic record of nonathletes. Others, reported by Soltz (1986) found higher grades associated with school athletes, while Rehberg and Schafer (1967) found higher self-esteem and educational aspirations among athletes. As reported by Sanders, Field, Diego, and Kaplan (2000), students involved in sports to a moderate degree (3 - 6 hours per week) had lower depression scores than did the low sports involvement group (2 hours or less per week) though these two groups did not differ in grade point average as a result of sports involvement. Though there is an unclear connection between school athletics and academic achievement, Funkhouser (1992) finds that students may be motivated to succeed academically through school sports.

A study by Silliker and Quirk (1997) examined whether extracurricular activity participation enhances the performance of high school students. The results showed that both male and female subjects, all of whom were soccer players, had significantly higher grade point averages in-season than out-of-season. Differences in attendance between in-season and out-of-season were weighted in favor of in-season, but were negligible. Thus, the results are in support of the hypothesis that students who are involved in athletics in high school are not endangering their academic performance through participation,

and actually may improve their grades as a result of playing sports. Stegman (2000) concludes that athletic participation instills desirable qualities such as physical fitness, teamwork, goal setting, and self-discipline and does not hurt academic performance.

Summary of Research Findings

Cassel, Chow, Demoulin and Reiger (2000) state that extracurricular activities should be an integral part of the high school agenda for all students. Further, that this involvement tends "to build the basis for real success in a competitive economic society" (p. 248). However, Otto (1982) terms the current research regarding extracurricular activities and their connection to academic success nothing more than speculation. Andre and Holland (1987) note that such a correlation may be lessened greatly with the control of background characteristics. Brown (1988) draws several conclusions from the current research. First, that current researchers tend to overstate their conclusions, and have problems due to the methods used. Second, the effects of participation on academic achievement are probably positive but only moderate, and vary with the different social and intellectual backgrounds of the students involved. Third, he elaborates on the sweeping generalizations made by so many researchers, without consideration of the many variables, such as the predominant use of studies based on white, male athletes, lack of consideration for differences in academic or extracurricular ability and interests, and disregard for diversity of student populations.

Brown cites a "continuing neglect" (p. 110) of race, gender, and development of the participants. Camp (1990) also cautions that gender has been a neglected variable in research. Holland and Andre (1988) admit that the current literature is biased towards athletics, and the degree of participation is not clearly defined in studies. They also point to past research and its' lack of attention to curriculum, previous grade point average of the students, IQ, and extensive parental variables such as single parent families, interaction between parent and child, and parents' occupations. However, they (Holland and Andre, 1987) argue that extracurricular activities may provide opportunities for adolescents to grow toward capable adulthood. They believe that existing research supports the allocation of funds for research efforts to develop a more complete understanding of the role which extracurricular activities play in the development of adolescents.

Rose (2000) reported that a Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll showed that those polled feel that extracurricular activities must be equal in importance to academic subjects. Socioeconomic status and student grade level were found to be factors in a study by Nover (1981). Whitley (2000) concludes that the positive effects of extracurricular activities in schools may be a solution to our educational problems by improving academic performance as well as instilling socially acceptable values and norms of conduct in students.

Stegman (2000) admits that it is difficult to determine what came first: high-performing students who participate in sports or students who perform better

academically because they participate in sports. Stevens and Peltier (1994) argue that extracurricular participation could be the *effect* of better-performing and better-attending students, rather than the *cause* of such characteristics in student populations.

From the research presented, it would appear that all researchers conclude that involvement in extracurricular activities does have some effect on student academic success. Research appears to indicate that the school and the school environment might promote student success by developing and maintaining an extensive extracurricular program conducive to participation by all students. It might also be concluded that widely varying degrees of influence have been reported. Further, the wide scope of studies present a plethora of uncontrolled limitations, while lessening the validity of the studies. Thus, further research is needed with an emphasis on method and the controlling of variables to make a significant contribution to the current body of research.

Hypothesis

There is a positive correlation (relationship) between student participation in extracurricular activities and grade point average.

Chapter 3

Method

Participants

The subjects of the study were 47 suburban high school sophomores and juniors who were enrolled in Wentzville-Holt High School in Wentzville, Missouri. A table of the participants by gender and grade appears below.

Table 1

Distribution of Participants by Grade and Gender

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
GRADE		
Sophomore	12	25.5 %
Junior	35	74.5 %
GENDER		
Female	22	46.8 %
Male	24	51.1 %

Materials

Materials used include an introductory letter to the principal of the school (Appendix A), a cover letter to the principal explaining the method of distribution of the questionnaires to the teachers (Appendix B), a letter to teachers administering the instrument (Appendix C), and the student questionnaire (Appendix D), which was designed by the researcher and based upon a survey designed by Masters' candidate Michael Baer (1994). The questionnaire was approved in advance by the school principal. The questionnaire consisted of a list of seventeen extracurricular activities. Students were asked to circle "have participated" or "have not participated" in regard to each activity either in or out of school. The activities included items such as cheerleading, sports, drama/debate, music, dance/chorus, and clubs. Students were also asked to give their name and student identification number (for school counselor use only for identification purposes), their date of birth, and year in school.

Procedure

Permission was given by the school principal to use the sample of the students for this study. Permission was obtained through a phone call to the principal followed by a formal letter (Appendix A). The principal selected the seminar classes to be surveyed. The instrument was administered during the students' seminar class, a required class period for all students consisting of a mixture of males and females at all grade levels. The researcher gave the questionnaires to the guidance office registrar for distribution to the selected classroom teachers.

Questionnaires were then given to students by the individual seminar teachers with written instructions (Appendix C), regarding distribution to students. Student participation was voluntary to allow for consistency and validity. The students were given the questionnaire by the seminar teacher. Students completed the questionnaires in their respective seminar classrooms on the day of distribution. Students were not told the purpose of the questionnaire.

The surveys were administered on a Tuesday with instructions to the teachers to return the surveys to the school office. The guidance office registrar was then given the surveys to complete the space on the survey for cumulative grade point average for the respondents. For purposes of confidentiality, the guidance secretary removed the names and ID numbers of the students from the surveys before returning them to the researcher. The surveys were returned to the researcher the following Tuesday.

The questionnaire requested students enter their name, as well as ID number, if known, age (by month and year) and to circle their grade and gender. The students were then asked to circle the extracurricular activities as "have participated" or "have not participated". The survey contained a total of sixteen such items. A seventeenth item "college/university" asked "do you plan to go to college?" with the student instructed to circle "will attend", "will not attend", or "unsure".

For this study, "Extracurricular Activities" included the list of activities below. These activities were defined for the students as activities in which students had participated in or out of school during the past year.

Sports	Cheerleading
Drama/Debate	Music
Dance/Chorus	Hobby Clubs
School Subject Clubs	Vocational Education Clubs
Community Youth Clubs	Church Activities
Junior Achievement	Publications
Student Government	Service Clubs
Honor Societies	Fraternity/Sorority

Chapter IV

Results

A total of 50 surveys were distributed and 47 were returned. Of the 47 participants, 25.5% were sophomores (n=12), and 74.5% were juniors (n=35). One respondent did not indicate gender, leaving 46 respondents indicating gender. Of the 46 respondents indicating gender, 46.8% were female (n=22) and 51.1% were male (24). Age of participants had to be ignored as a variable due to an error in data collection. The value "sports" showed that 66% of the students surveyed (n=31) participated in sports, while 34.3% (n=16) did not participate in sports. Participation in drama produced 14.9% (n=7) while 85.1% (n=40) did not participate in drama. Music participation was 10.6 (n=5) and non-participation was 89.4 (n=42). In response to the question regarding participation in dance, 36.2% (n=17) students said they participated in dance activities, while 63.8% (n=30) did not participate in dance. Fifteen students (31.9%) said they participated in hobbies, while 32 students (68.1%) respondents said they did not participate. Of the respondents, 14.9% (n=7) participated in school clubs, while 85.1% (n=40) did not participate in school clubs. Twelve students (25.5%) responded positively to participation in vocational education activities, whereas 35 (74.5%) did not participate in vocational education. The community youth clubs variable produced 31.9% (n=15) involvement with 68.1% (n=32) students not involved in said activity. Responses indicated that 48.9% (n=23) participated in church activities, while 51.1% (n=24) did not participate in church activities.

Participation in Junior Achievement was low, with participation at 6.4% (n=3) and non-participation 93.6% (n=44). "School newspaper and yearbook" participation was 6.4% (n=3), non-participation 91.5% (n=43) and (n=1) not responding for a total of 2.1%. Of the students responding to the item "student council, student government, political clubs", 21.3% (n=10) responded positively, 76.6% (n=36) responded negatively, and 2.1% (n=1) did not indicate a response. The item "service clubs or other community service activities" produced 25.5% (n=12) indicating that they did participate, and 74.5% (n=35) indicating that they did not participate in such activities. Honorary clubs produced low participation at 6.4% (n=3) and 93.6% (n=44) non-participation. Thirty-six respondents (76.6%) indicated that they intended to go to college or a university, 6.4% (n=3) indicated that they would not attend, and 17.0% (n=8) responded that they were unsure about their future education plans. Table 1 below indicates the number of activities participated in by respondents, the number of students indicating that number of activities participated in, and the percentage of students indicating participation in that number of activities.

A Pearson Correlation was run between student grade point average and participation in extracurricular activities. Results indicated there was a significant positive correlation between the two variables ($r = .44$) ($p < .01$).

A table of the distribution of students' activities by grade point average appears in Table 3 (see Appendix F). It should be noted that the distribution of cumulative grade point average appears to follow a normal curve. The data did

not allow acceptance of the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between GPA and participation in extracurricular activities. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Also, interestingly, (though not part of the research hypothesis) is that the researcher found that both grade point average and college-bound, and college-bound and participation in extracurricular activities are negatively correlated ($r = -.335$, $p < .05$; and $r = -.307$, $p < .05$; respectively). One would imagine that college-bound students who participate in extracurricular activities would have a higher grade point average.

Also of interest (though not part of the research hypothesis) is that the data shows no significant relationship between gender, grade, and participation in extracurricular activities.

Chapter V

Discussion

This study shows that there is a significant positive correlation between participation in extracurricular activities and grade point average. Students who are involved in extracurricular activities tended to also have a higher grade point average. The researcher speculated that students who were involved in extracurricular activities would also have a higher grade point average. What might account for this positive outcome? Perhaps students who tend to be involved in extracurricular activities are simply more motivated to succeed. Perhaps they are more motivated in general. Perhaps pressures to succeed in today's society is of influence in the lives of high school students. Colleges are increasingly examining the "overall" student in their selection process. Perhaps this is a factor in student participation.

Limitations of the Study

It should be noted that there were a number of limitations to the study. Notably, survey variables did not include outside employment. Employment might account for lack of involvement in other extracurricular activities. In addition, poor family socioeconomic status might not allow for participation due to students' need to work to supplement family income or lack of finances to provide transportation to extracurricular events. The size of the school might affect extent of student participation as it relates to availability of money to fund school activities, or limitations of available student "slots" for teams and

involvement. Student ability/talent might be a factor, as it might curtail student participation if the student does not anticipate success in the activity. Student self-esteem may be a factor in participation as students with low self-esteem might withdraw from social situations in the school arena.

The possible influence of race on participation was not examined in this study. The school where research was conducted has a predominantly white student population. Influences of significant others, type of activity, the age of the student, gender, and social influence were also not examined but may influence grade point average as well as participation in extracurricular activities.

The extent of involvement in extracurricular activities was not determined or defined for the study participants. Students may indeed have participated only superficially or infrequently to have indicated participation on the questionnaire. Further, a college-bound student may be extensively involved in one activity rather than a brief involvement with several activities.

To be noted, also, is that the degree of participation in extracurricular activities is easily manipulated, as school personnel and parents have much power and freedom in determining the level of students' participation. Both Marsh (1992b) and Gordon (1995) posit that college expectations may "cause" participation in high school as colleges seek such qualities or involvement in its applicants.

Data by Snyder and Spreitzer (1992) suggests a continued sorting and selection process throughout the high school years. It is also possible to either

encourage or discourage participation in extracurricular activities. It might hold true that grade point average affects participation in activities, or, perhaps students who participate are already higher achievers. It is indeed possible that other outside activities and influences may preclude participation in extracurricular activities.

The study also did not define the length of enrollment at the school. It is likely that a student who has been in attendance within the school district for much of their formal educational years or much of their high school career would have a higher degree of participation in extracurricular activities than someone new to the school or school district.

Family values, number of siblings, context information such as community values and community size, process variables such as social reinforcers and peer group influences as they relate to the degree of participation, were not explored. Or, is it much as Snyder and Spreitzer (1992) suggest: that the major differences between the students committed to academics and extracurricular involvement well established prior to their entry into high school?

Recommendations

O'Brien and Rollefson (1995) suggest further study of the individual constraints of poverty and family background and the influence of school community on student engagement in extracurricular activities. As suggested by Holland and Andre (1987) family values, number of siblings, context information such as community values and community size, process variables such as social

reinforcers and peer group influences as they relate to the degree of participation, deserve further study.

Another clear need for research is that which focuses on the student involvement longitudinally, following student participation from elementary or middle school and the related patterns of involvement in extracurricular activities. The subsequent changes in self-esteem, feelings of control, educational aspirations, and so forth would be valuable in separating the effects of participation from other factors.

Appendix A

Mr. Keith Willis
Emil E. Holt Senior High
600 Campus Drive
Wentzville, MO 63385

Dear Mr. Willis,

I am a graduate student at Lindenwood college, currently doing research for my thesis project. My subject matter concerns the possible relationship between student grade point average and student involvement in extracurricular activities. I am writing to ask your help in this endeavor. Part of my research involves administering a 3 to 5 minute self-report questionnaire to sophomore and junior students in a high school. Students would be selected from advisory periods. I would need to ask the cooperation of the advisory teachers in distributing and collecting the materials for me. Students will not be identified, and I am only interested in group results, not individual responses. Enclosed is a copy of the self-report questionnaire that I intend to use. If you are interested in the results of my study, I would be happy to share them with you.

I am in hopes that you will allow me to administer this self-report questionnaire to students in your school. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss my plans for my project. With your approval, I would like to come to your school one day in the near future during the morning hours to drop off materials, and a week or so later (at your convenience) to collect the completed questionnaires.

I look forward to hearing from you. During work hours my number is 926-8882. If you will leave me a message, I will call you at my first opportunity during the day. In the evenings you may reach me at my home at 970-3555.

Sincerely,

Nancy Aberasturi

Appendix B

Mr. Willis,

Enclosed are the questionnaires for distribution to seminar classrooms. There are 60 questionnaires and 15 cover letters for teachers. The minimum number of questionnaires that I would need completed is 35. It would be helpful to know the day on which the questionnaire is distributed. If someone can call me from the school and let me know when the questionnaires are complete and the G.P.A. has been recorded, I would like to pick them up at the school. I don't want to trust the U.S. Mail with it. Thank you very much for your help. I hope I have the opportunity to thank you in person when I pick up the materials.

Sincerely,

Nancy Aberasturi

970-3555
926-8888

Appendix C

Confidential note to teachers:

Thank you in advance for your assistance in administering this questionnaire. Please note that is to be given to SOPHOMORES and JUNIORS only, and participation is strictly voluntary. Please ask the sophomores and juniors in your classroom if they would be willing to complete a short questionnaire. Students may have whatever time is needed for completion. Instructions to students are attached to the questionnaire. No other instruction is necessary. Please be sure that participating students put their name on the questionnaire. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Nancy Aberasturi

Appendix D

STUDENTS:

YOU MAY HAVE AS MUCH TIME AS YOU NEED TO COMPLETE THE QUESTIONNAIRE. PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS TO THE BEST OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE.

NAME_____

(first) (last)

STUDENT ID NUMBER (if known)_____

DATE OF BIRTH_____

(month) (year)

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR RESPONSES.

GRADE: Sophomore Junior

GENDER: Female Male

Have you participated in any of the following types of activities either in or out of school this year?

SPORTS

Athletic teams - in or out of school

Have participated Have not participated

CHEERLEADING

Cheerleaders, pep club, majorettes, pom pon

Have participated Have not participated

DRAMA/DEBATE

Debating or drama

Have participated Have not participated

MUSIC

Band or Orchestra

Have participated Have not participated

DANCE/CHORUS

Dance or Chorus

Have participated Have not participated

HOBBY CLUBS

Hobby clubs such as photography, electronics, craft, car clubs

Have participated Have not participated

SCHOOL SUBJECT CLUBS

School subject matter clubs such as science, history, languages, business, art

Have participated Have not participated

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION CLUBS

Vocational education clubs such as future Homemakers, Teachers, Future Farmers of America, DECA

Have participated Have not participated

COMMUNITY YOUTH CLUBS

Youth organizations in the community such as scouts, YMCA, etc.

Have participated Have not participated

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Church activities including youth groups

Have participated Have not participated

JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT

Junior Achievement

Have participated Have not participated

PUBLICATIONS

School newspaper, yearbook

Have participated Have not participated

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

Student council, student government, political clubs

Have participated Have not participated

SERVICE CLUBS

Service clubs or other community service activities

Have participated Have not participated

HONOR SOCIETIES

Honorary clubs, such as Beta Club or National Honor Society

Have participated Have not participated

FRATERNITY/SORORITY

Sororities or fraternities (participation)

Have participated Have not participated

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

Do you plan to go to college upon graduation?

Will attend Will not attend Unsure

DO NOT WRITE BELOW

Cumulative G.P.A_____

Appendix E

Table 2

Number of Activities Reported by Students

No of activities	No of students	% of students
0	6	12.8
1	2	6.4
2	8	17.0
3	6	12.8
4	9	19.1
5	5	10.6
6	3	6.4
7	1	2.1
8	1	2.1
9	3	6.4
10	2	4.3

Appendix F

Table 3

Distribution of GPAs for all Participants

GPA	Frequency
1.500	3
1.700	2
1.900	4
2.100	5
2.300	8
2.500	5
2.700	3
2.900	7
3.100	4
3.300	1
3.500	2
3.700	0
3.900	2

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