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An attitudinal study of parental preferences toward programs for underprivileged youth in a small city school

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An Attitudinal Study of Parental Preferences toward Programs for Underprivileged Youth in a Small City School

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my family who has supported me with encouragement throughout my college career journey. My passion for education is inherited from my mother and, for that, I am infinitely appreciative. My mother's words have and will always inspire my world:

"You can be whomever you wish to be and do whatever you set your mind to."

{ Teresa Cave }

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine parents' attitudes and preferences toward youth programs in a small city school in Northwest Virginia that offer sports activities and mentoring. The study was conducted through the use of surveys, and an in-depth study of similar research and peer-reviewed journal articles. Special interest was given to the youth's parents' attitudes (with specific emphasis on their children's preferences) toward different, existing programs and interest in specific types of sports activities and mentoring programs. Most studies have focused on evaluating youth programs and the effects of youth programs for troubled youth in large cities, instead of the actual attitudes toward and interest for the programs; the focus of this study. The study was conducted prior to opening a new program, as opposed to studying an already existing center.

Keywords: afterschool, after school, afterschool program, after school program, youth, youth program, Hispanic youth, parental attitude, mentoring, sports, ELL

Introduction

"Be the change you wish to see in the world."
{ Gandhi }

Purpose

The ultimate purpose of this study is to provoke the change to instill a purpose in the lives of youth. An astonishing 70% of high school dropouts studied reported that they were not inspired to be motivated and 80% dropped out for family reasons (Bridgeland, Dilulio, & Morison, 2006). Underrepresented schools, schools with a high population of students underrepresented in colleges, have more pressure than ever before, growing socio-economic pressure (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010; Muijs, et al., 2010; Reback, Rockoff, & Schwartz, 2011), greater percentage of ELLs in the classroom (Fry, 2008; Aleman, Johnson, Perez, 2009; Meza, 2010), and increasing issues involving criminal behavior and drug abuse (Congress 99th, 1986; White House, 2006). Many students are giving up their education to take care of family matters and this lack of educational achievement not only applies to large urban cities, but also to small rural areas (Johnson, Holt, Bry, & Powell, 2008; The Effects of Developmental Mentoring and High School Mentors' Attendance On Their Younger Mentees' Self-Esteem, Social Skills, and Connectedness, 2005; Warren, Jackson, & Sifers, 2009). Yet, most studies on youth programs have focused on the evaluation and effects of the programs on troubled youth in large cities, instead of taking into account the average small city student, who is also in danger of dropping out.

This study was conducted in an underrepresented school as a needs assessment for a new program; to discover the actual attitudes of parents toward youth programs and activities. The purpose of this research was to ascertain the specific after school organized activities parents viewed as important and then to match these activities to the proposed program for the school. Special interest was taken in the parents' attitudes toward different and specific types of activities and mentoring programs that have broad appeal to their children.

The school's surrounding area is relatively small and many attempts to organize programs have fallen through the cracks due to lack of support by large traditional organizations (Big Brothers Big Sisters; YMCA) that have overlooked the potential to expand in these new markets (M. Perry, personal communication, May 14, 2009; C. Valentine, personal communication, July 30, 2009; B. Wubbe, personal communication, July 17, 2010; A. Minor, personal communication, July 16, 2010). The school, itself, has only two after school programs, both of which are aimed at underrepresented students (Hispanics/Latinos and African Americans). One program utilizes 21st Century Community Learning Center grant money to extend the school day for approximately fifty English Language Learners (ELL) students. The other program is hosted by a local church and works with approximately twenty students to provide meals and hygiene training for students and families. Both programs are worthwhile; however, this study delves into the need for more programs to reach more students. Table 1.1 shows a matrix comparison of the available after school programs.

Table 1.1 – Current Programs in Survey School

Program	Number of Students Served	Hours Per Week	Activities	Location	Sponsorship
T.E.A.M. Grace Low socio-economic students	24	8	Connecting with families, etiquette, homework, snack, sports, arts, music, etc.	At local church	Local church, school system
L.E.A.P ELL's	48	8	Extends school day, homework, snack	At school	Government 21st Century Grant, school system

Problem Statement

The focus of this study on the attitudes of parents and the interest in youth programs stems from an interest to start a youth program in a small rural city in Northwestern Virginia. This particular city does not have adequate activities or mentoring programs accessible to youth; with 25% of the estimated population of 98,000 under the age of 18 (Frederick County, Virginia, 2009; U.S. Census, 2008; Winchester city, Virginia, 2000). A youth program offering activities, such as sports, as well as providing engaging mentoring programs would benefit the city.

Nature of the Study

This study of the attitudes of parents and the interest in youth programs that offer activities and mentoring was conducted through the use of a survey and is supported by an extensive literature review to include an in-depth study of learning theories, similar studies, and peer-reviewed journal articles. Special interest in the parents' attitudes toward different and specific types of activities was the main motivation for this study, as well as the attitudes toward programs and the interest in different and specific types of mentoring programs. The study was strategically conducted prior to starting a new program in the same small city school. Since much thought, preparation, and fundraising must go into the design and implementation of a youth program, this study is the source of specific and substantial information (B. Wubbe, personal communication, July 30, 2009). The problem-prone field of starting a youth program needs attention to detail, theory, and concrete research to prove the worthwhile vigor of the potential program.

Research Questions

In order to start a youth program, the details of what the program needed to be decided. Most similarly situated programs have routinely made these start-up decisions in a haphazard way. With the intention of aligning parents' specific needs to the actual creation of a new youth program, this research aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the interests for specific youth programs?

2. What are the attitudes (positive or negative) of the parents of youth toward youth programs?

Hypotheses

The researcher hypothesized that:

1. Youth programs that focus on sports and/or video games will be needed.

2. Parents' attitudes toward youth programs will be positive.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Scope

This study assumed that parents in small cities are aware of and have experienced their children's participation in activities or mentoring programs to some degree. It was also assumed that parents are aware of sports that exist.. There was an assumption that parents were aware of mentoring programs and their subsequent benefits, their availability and the interests of their children.

The most important assumption is that parents were aware of their children's activities and interests. It may seem that parents must be aware of what their child is doing, but this is not the case for many children. Many children in this particular school come from migrant families who travel for work at apple orchards in the surrounding area. Many children float in and out of the school during different times of the year based on where their family must live for work at that point in time (Stechuk & Burns, 2005).

The interests of children are also difficult for parents to keep up with. Children may participate in activities their parents have chosen for them, but the children may not necessarily enjoy these activities. Children will tell their parents how they feel about an activity if asked (Vygotsky, 1930-1931/1998g). The survey for this study was designed to take into account children's changing minds. The survey was given to parents at Back-to-School night (August 2010) when their children would be present to respond to parents' questions about their interests. Even though parents were surveyed, the survey

was specifically designed to capture the parents' responses based on what their children told them while taking the survey.

This study was limited by the location in which the survey was conducted. Parents of students at the surveyed elementary school have children who attend middle school, but not many who attend high school. Most survey information was received for students in elementary school. Few data were received for middle and high school students. The scope of this survey is intended for elementary-aged students.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant in that it investigates the actual attitudes of the parents who may potentially grant permission for their child to participate in a future youth program in a small city school. Understanding the attitudes of parental support or dislike is primary to analyzing how effective and successful the program will be in the future. Focus is also directed to the attitudes of the parents toward specific activities and mentoring programs currently available or potentially available in the future.

Significant literature exists on the evaluation and merits of after school programs in general (Brown, 2004; Denault & Poulin, 2009; Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Hirsh, 2005; Johnson, Holt, Bry, & Powell, 2008; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Walker, & Arbreton, 2001; Warren, Feist, & Nevarez, 2002). However, scant literature exists on the exploration of parental support for after school programs, particularly in advance of program design and development. Yet, performance analysis and needs assessment literature suggests that the best programs result from significant

forethought in the planning, design, and scope of the intended program. This study seeks to provide the foundation for such a program.

Definition of Terms

In order to address this research question, there are several important key terms that need to be defined. Table 1 presents these terms and how they will be addressed throughout the research process.

Table 1.2 – Definition of Terms

Attitude:	"A psychological tendency that is expressed" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1997).
Interest:	"Evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1997).
Youth:	Children under the age of eighteen (Youth, 2010).
Youth Program:	A program that offers activities and/or mentoring programs for youth (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008).
Activity:	An individual and/or team pursuit (Denault & Poulin, 2009).

Mentoring:	A "dynamic, reciprocal relationship, aimed at promoting both" (Healey & Welchert, 1990).
Small City:	A United States' city with a population density of less than 250 people per square mile (Frederick County, Virginia, 2009; U.S. Census, 2008; Winchester city, Virginia, 2000).
Underrepresented School:	A school with a high population of students underrepresented in colleges (National College Access Network, 2010).

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This chapter provided the reader with an overview and rationale of the study, the research questions and hypotheses and key definitions as well the significance of the study. The next chapter covers the literature on after school programs and will continue to delve deeper into the research by including the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guide the study. It will also cover and continue to support the research with theory and past studies.

Review of the Literature

Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher will cover the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that undergird the study. It is necessary to cover the conceptual framework for an overall understanding of the foundation of this study. It is equally as important to understand the theoretical framework of learning theories that build upon the conceptual foundation.

It is necessary to understand the relationship between the conceptual and the theoretical frameworks in order to comprehend the difference between the two ideas. This chapter goes into great detail about both frameworks, from the big picture down to each part that composes the frameworks. The conceptual framework creates a visual display of the broad concept behind the study. Major concepts and connections are visually depicted to better explain the broad concept.

The theoretical framework drills down farther to look specifically at the learning theory concept from the conceptual framework. This "big picture/ smaller connection" visual depiction brings to light a dynamic relationship. The "smaller connection" of the learning theories is the gear that runs the "big picture" machine. The conceptual framework is the whole machine and the theoretical framework is one of the gears within that machine.

Conceptual Framework

The broad concepts contained within the study are needs assessment, learning theories, activities, and mentoring. The conceptual framework behind this study is based on the simultaneous and mutual workings of needs assessment, learning theories, activities, and mentoring. Figure 2.1 shows the conceptual framework for this study.

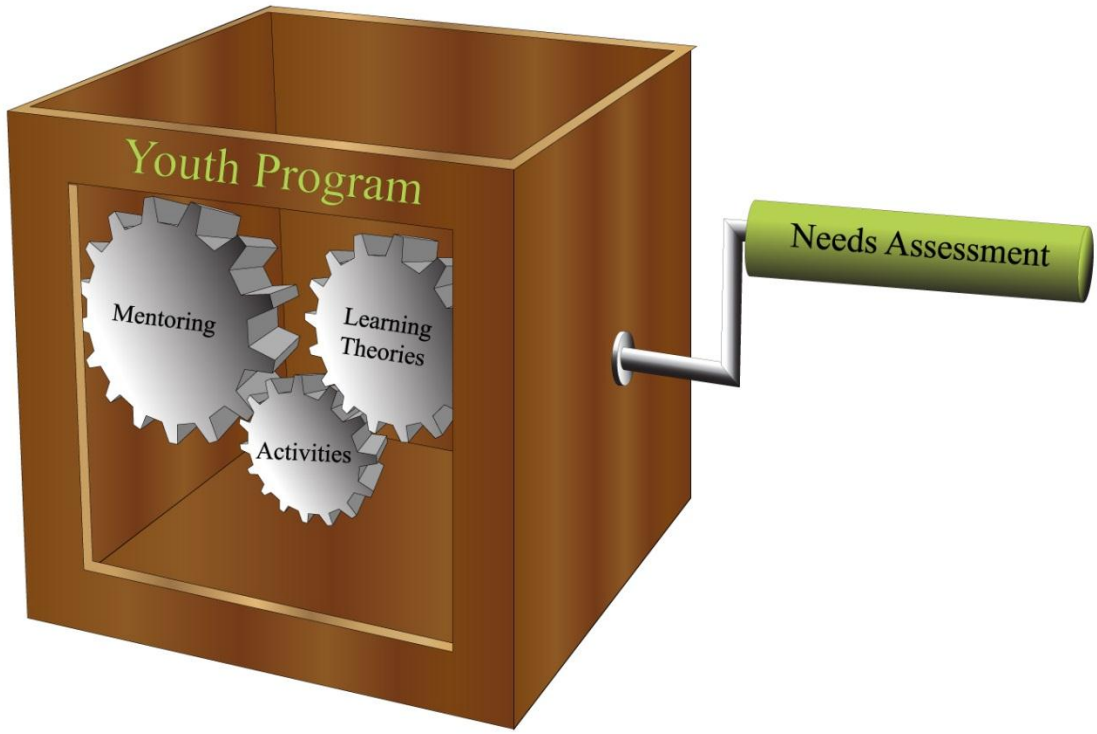

Figure 2.1 - Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 displays how needs assessment is the catalyst for this study. Needs assessment is the first rotation of the process, just as a starter turns over a motor. This starts a continuous reaction through all the gears. Mentoring does not rotate without the simultaneous rotations of learning theories and activities. The "learning theories gear" has thick teeth to represent the solid foundation that learning theories allow when practiced through activities. The "activities gear" is overall slightly smaller to illustrate the activities' unnoticed facilitation of mentoring. The "mentoring gear" is the overall largest, to exemplify the importance of mentoring to this study and its teeth reveal that many small acts can make a significant difference.

Needs Assessment

The catalyst in this study, needs assessment, does not usually start the machine in real life scenarios. An activity is usually the catalyst. However, this makes it much harder to start the machine from within. The "activity" gear is the smallest and hence, the most difficult to turn as an initial rotation. This causes many difficulties for beginning youth programs that initiate an activity without first conducting a needs assessment.

Needs assessment plays a vital role in the conception of any business, including nonprofits. A needs assessment is a systematic approach to collect information (Rothwell, 2008). It is a process to make warranted decisions. As a result of the practice-based nature, needs assessments are utilized in many businesses, from management to social work. For the purposes of this study, needs assessment is a focus for program design and development.

The goal of needs assessment is to refrain from putting the cart before the horse, such as starting with a solution. The assessment forges the way to make decisions for a solution with the necessary information to make that decision. Many activities are used as solutions. Training and mentoring are two of the countless number of options. As a pioneer of decision-making, needs assessments entail an end-performance perspective. The outcome is a recommendation for which activities should be focused on and developed.

Needs assessment literature. There is a vast amount of needs assessment literature published to date. The earliest work began in the 1970's and the idea sparked by focusing on results, rather than solutions has carried forth and continues to be a significant concept today. A select few leaders in the field of needs assessment were identified. Those leaders include Harless (1975), Hannum and Hansen (1989), Rothwell and Kazanas (1992), and last, but not least- Kaufman (2003). The next few paragraphs discuss each leader's contribution to the field sequentially. Figure 2.2 is a timeline of the leader's contributions.

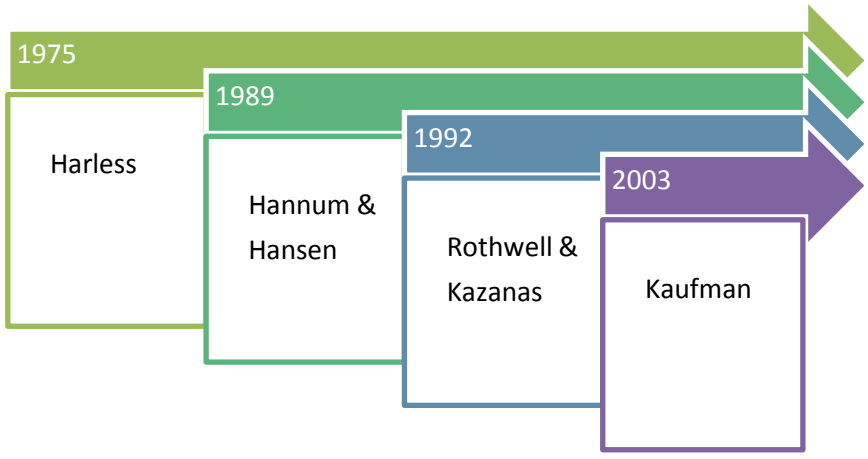

Figure 2.2 – Needs Assessment Timeline

Harless (1975) determined that tools can be used to find the most effective way to correct a performance problem. He focused on performance analysis and cause analysis as tools. Harless' focus on the results aligns with other needs assessment frameworks. His emphasis on removing symptoms from performance problems is a suitable direction for assessments.

Hannum and Hansen's (1989) work supported a top-down needs assessment, but they limit the process to remediate gaps in individual level results. The main purpose solely is to document process inefficiencies. The model solidly supports research methods for the collection of independently verifiable and not independently verifiable data which are appropriate in an assortment of scenarios.

Rothwell and Kazanas (1992) operationalize definitions related to needs assessment. The planning process, the actual plan, and the implementation of the needs assessment are discussed as different slices of the pie. Sampling and data collecting are stressed as a plan for management and implementation. However, Rothwell and Kazanas base their work on two assumptions. The first is that the authors assume that applying skills will automatically drive results. Secondly, they assume that creating and implementing instructional goals will cause intended consequences. Rothwell and Kazanas' model could possibly mislead an organization, unless the end-results are considered when the needs assessment is performed.

Kaufman, Oakley-Brown, Watkins, and Leigh's (2003) proposed Organizational Elements Model (OEM) differs from other needs assessment models due to the attention

to the connections between levels of results; societal, organizational, small group and individual. The OEM framework begins with societal results and drills down to organizational and individual results. OEM is a functional framework that is both preemptive and practical at all levels. The fault in the OEM is that there is no distinction made between individuals and small groups. However, Kaufman, Oakley-Brown, Watkins, and Leigh's OEM stands justified as a good determinant of results based on all levels.

Harless, Hannum, Hansen, Rothwell, Kazanas, and Kaufman all build upon each other's work to develop a process for needs assessment. That development has been in creation since the mid 1970's and built the foundation for this study. This study is a needs assessment for a new youth program.

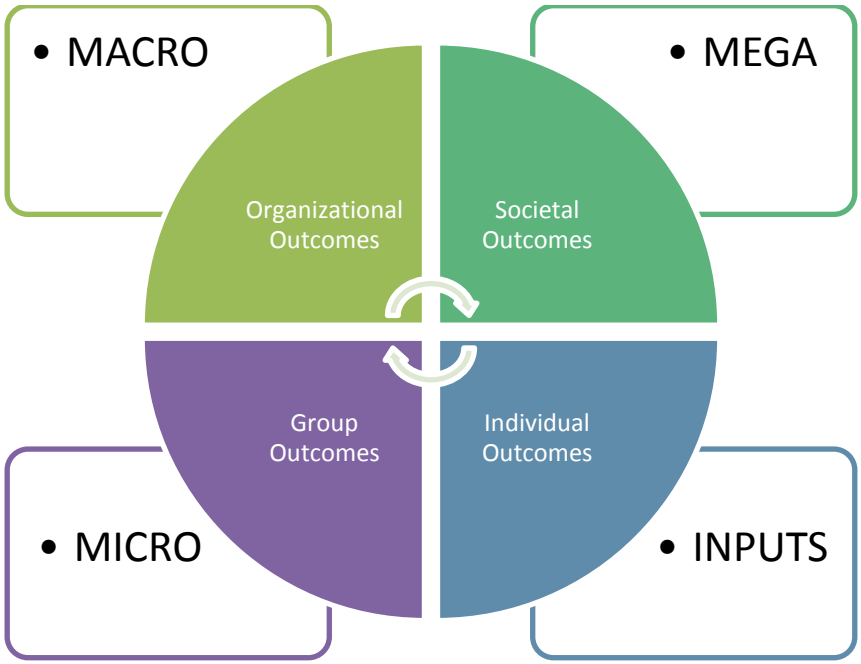

Figure 2.3 – Adapted Needs Assessment Model for This Research

Needs assessment plays a major role in this study by generating the information to construct a substantial case for starting a youth program in a small city school. The needs assessment will be used in the future for program design, development, HR system design, employee selection, and training design. The program design and development will be better suited for the target audience by taking the needs assessment findings into consideration. The overall HR system, employee selection requirements, and training design will be developed based on the program design. This connection is key to the purpose of this study. Not only will the activities and mentoring parameters be determined, but the entire HR system, employee selection requirements, and training will be designed from the information found in this study. Chapter five will provide suggestions for the proposed youth program.

Theoretical Framework

The theories used as the groundwork for this study make up the theoretical framework. The theoretical framework depicts the "smaller connections" within the "big picture" conceptual framework. Figure 2.2, the theoretical framework, is an exploded view of the learning theories gear.

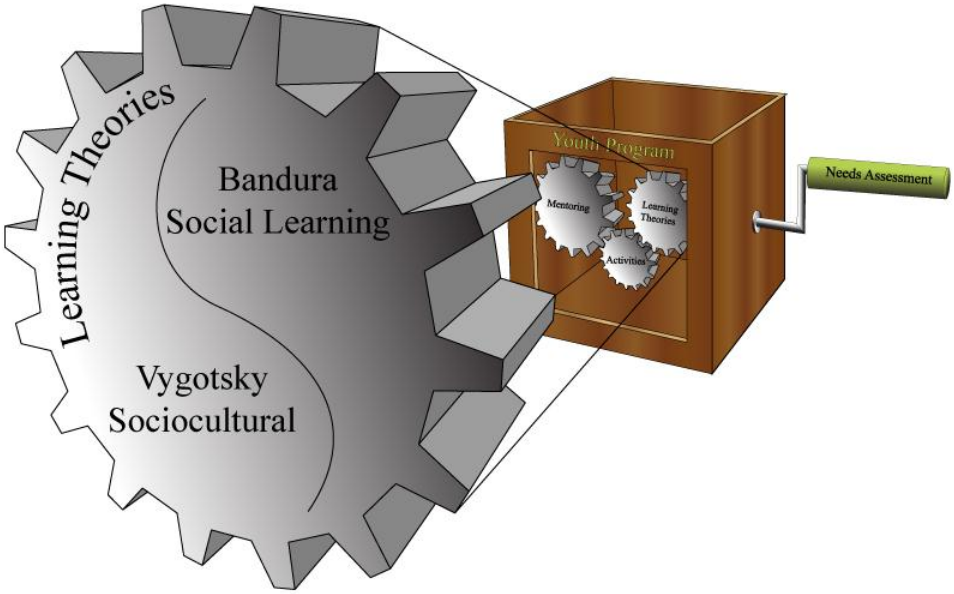

Figure 2.4 - Theoretical Framework

Figure 2.4 illustrates how Vygotsky's (1930) theory, along with Bandura's (1977) theory, collectively compose the "learning theories gear." The theoretical framework is grounded in Vygotsky's sociocultural theory and Bandura's social learning theory in order to explain how humans learn in different environments. Bandura's social learning

theory is based on how people learn through social interaction and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory explains how communities affect learning.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

Vygotsky (1987) states that there are multiple and different processes used in learning a new skill. While learning, one utilizes meanings that are already well known in other forms. The higher the level of knowledge of a similar subject, the easier learning becomes. For example, a child playing softball for the first time may learn the game easier if he or she is familiar with baseball.

Vygotsky (1987) argues that in order for a child to think and use the skill at hand, he has to understand the content that is being taught by the instructor. Meanings change as children mature through each step of development. The child must match a connection between thought and action. The inward reflection of action creates thought.

Zone of proximal development. Vygotsky (1987) claims that children cannot be taught by memorization and repetition alone. Children need exposure to new concepts that challenge them at their level. The child's current level does not always show the big picture of performance that can be achieved. Adults can facilitate the process of bringing the child up from a lower level to a higher level of mastery for an activity.

Vygotsky (1987) defines the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as the difference between a child's actual learning level and the level that a child could possibly reach, with support, when problem solving. Education's intention is to encourage children by using experiences within their ZPD. An instructor should encourage students

to problem solve by providing the necessary tools to accomplish the task alone. Activities that may be thought of as too difficult for children can be accomplished with the aid of an adult or with a significantly more mature "other." The instructor's position is to preserve the child's learning tasks within their ZPD. In a youth program, for example, adult mentors or older more mature children provide support for participants learning hand-eye coordination. The adult mentors/older children would guide the participants through the activity by giving support as needed. The human interaction that takes place while an adult/ older child mentors a child spurs thought. Social interactions spark human thought as a process (Vygotsky, 1978).

Scaffolding. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of ZPD has been expanded since Vygotsky's original conception. Vygotsky did not coin the term himself, but scaffolding is directly related to ZPD. Applying Vygotsky's ZPD to instruction, the teacher (or more educated mentor) provides support to the learner within his/her ZPD, and as necessary, decreases this support as the learner progresses closer to the mastery level. Mentors in a youth program would follow the same pattern to ensure that the youth's learning needs are met within their ZPD.

Modeling. Vygotsky's (1930-1931/1998g) work expresses teaching as a method involving a child's collaboration with adults. Modeling, asking questions, and clarifying helps the instructor bring about inquiry within the student (Vygotsky, 1934/1987a). The school age child, commonly targeted for a youth program, uses examples to answer questions (Vygotsky, 1930-1931/1998b). Involving students with techniques, such as

modeling, makes them part of the learning process and in return creates better comprehension.

Tools. Vygotsky (1960, 1997q) explains that psychological tools control the brain and alter the course of thinking, causing the adaptation of human consciousness. Vygotsky proposed four phases for learning when mastering thinking. Those four phases are the primitive, naïve psychology, external use, and mastery stage. The primitive stage is when the child tries, but fails. Then, in the naïve psychology phase, the child tries to utilize supplemental stimuli. It is not until the third stage when the child makes the connection between the stimulus and the action. The final phase is mastery when the child internalizes their thoughts.

Well-designed instruction leads to better learning and in turn guides development. Vygotsky (1934/1962, 1934/1987a) explains how instruction prompts development. Instruction and imitation both are key to children's development. The skills a child can only achieve with the aid of a teacher one day will be the skills he/she can achieve alone the next day (Vygotsky, 1934/1962).

Transfer of learning. Transfer of learning happens when simple behaviors are translated internally into an intellectual process (Vygotsky, 1978). This process proposed by Vygotsky is composed of three steps. These three steps can be described using basketball as an example. The first is the utilization of a symbol system for communication, such as hand signals to go one direction or another. The next step involves a more complicated use of signals. This can be described as when the coach calls out a play and gestures. The third builds upon the first two by using the signals to

regulate remembering and thoughts. The basketball player may just recall plays from voice commands alone.

Vygotsky describes culture and interaction as two characteristics of the social situation that are the basis for the nature and scope of children's cognitive development. The culture instilled in the child is first and the interaction with educated individuals is second. Interaction can be altered to gain better results, whereas culture can limit a child's development drastically. This theory of the two characteristics of culture and interaction shows the interest in youth programs to increase the quality of interaction, since culture, most times, cannot be improved.

Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory

According to Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, what people perceive and participate in, progresses in a social environment. Bandura (1973) previously discovered that patterns can be learned more quickly and easily through a social interaction. When peers are participating in an activity, others pick the action up more quickly.

A youth program will foster this growth through social peer interaction. Activities, such as sports, games, lock-ins, arts activities, and homework help get-togethers will provide the connection for peer-to-peer interaction. For example, in a game of soccer, one participant may successfully kick the ball with the top of his or her foot. Through social learning, another participant would learn to do the same through observing the action (Bandura, Social Foundations of Thought and Action, 1986).

Bandura (1986) defines learning as the "acquisition of knowledge" and obtaining directions to perform a skill (p. 107). Knowledge and skill are two levels of learning and

are essential for performance. Knowledge must be translated into action. Encoding is the intake of knowledge and decoding happens via performance.

Modeling. Bandura (1977) explains that according to social learning theory (also referred to as social cognitive theory), modeling influences behavior. Learners observe the modeled activities, which aid in developing appropriate behaviors. Observational learning is overseen by the four processes of attentional, retention, motor production, and motivational processes.

Attentional, Bandura's first observational learning process, determines the observed action in modeling and what is derived from observing the behavior. The benefits gained from modeling are determined by how well the observer processes the information. Observers benefit from the modeling during the retention process. Bandura (1977) connects a change in behavior to a better capacity to accept modeling as a learner.

Motor reproduction is the third principal of modeling (Bandura, 1986). Motor reproduction is the process by which the learner correctly mocks the action that was modeled. Appropriate replication is achieved by mocking the modeled behaviors. Since the exact modeled behavior is often not mocked, social cognitive theory divides acquisition from performance.

The mind processes actions and possible consequences as a process of learning (Bandura, 1971b). A school age child may hide a bad report card to avoid consequences from their parents. This is where self-efficacy comes into play. If the child had high self-efficacy, he or she would have higher confidence and in return, may possibly have

higher grades. Self-efficacy is one's belief in one's own abilities (Bandura, 1997). Mentors in a youth program can provide support needed to help participants gain higher self-efficacy.

There is a great importance to recognize suitable models for instruction, determine the value of different behaviors, and support the sense of self-efficacy. These considerations need to be taken into account when developing a youth program. Models for instruction need to be designed with the participant in mind. The value of different behaviors needs to assist the design phase. Training for employees on modeling correct behaviors and creating a better sense of self-efficacy with participants needs to be built into the design of the program for youth.

Triadic Reciprocality. Bandura (1977) proposed a model called "triadic reciprocality" that includes actions, cognitive factors, and environmental factors. The triad works as interconnected elements to explain human operation. The effect of each part of the triad varies for different individuals completing different activities (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1977, 1978) included behavior (B), the environment (E), and perception (P) is his explanation of human behavior. There is a connection between each for social learning to occur.

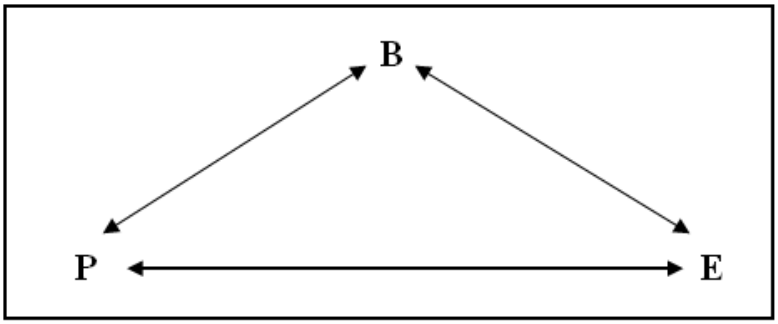

Figure 2.5 - Bandura's Triadic Reciprocality

Figure 2.5 is an illustration of the connections between the triad of determinants in triadic reciprocal causation. B denotes behavior, E the environment, and P is human behavior (Bandura, 1986, p.24). The majority of human behavior is obtained through observation (Bandura, 1986). Observations within their environment cause knowledge transfer and develop new behaviors and skills. Observers can obtain cognitive skills and new ways of behavior by observing the behaviors of others. Social cognitive theory stresses that there is a self-regulatory function, where internal principles guide action and behavior. In turn, future behavior is altered based on experiences (Bandura, 1986).

Capabilities. Capabilities are another explanation for how people socially learn (Bandura, 1986). The first capability is the ability to convert experiences into knowledge. Symbols make this possible. For example, when participants in a youth program are being tutored in math, their mentor may use counting blocks as a symbol for the numbers. The participant's math skills become stronger by use of the counting blocks.

Bandura's second capability, the forethought capability, states that by using forethought, people anticipate reactions and consequences and behave accordingly (Bandura, 1986). Forethought takes into consideration that people do not simply react to stimuli. People also do not solely rely on past experiences. It is also understood that future experiences cannot effect current actions. The mentors in the youth program can work with participants to develop their forethought capability.

Observational learning is yet again important to Bandura's (1986) theory. Many learn by watching and translate their observations into actions and behaviors. Bandura calls this "vicarious learning". There are many instances when learning by observation can happen. The participants in the youth program can watch a sports activity and pick it up or mock their mentor's actions for conversation and stance from observations.

Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) evaluate the observational/ self-regulated learning process as a result of self-generated thoughts. Their work also took into account the behaviors concerned with the attainment of personal learning goals. Schunk and Zimmerman identify major theoretical concepts on self-regulated learning, including social cognitive theory. A correlation between self-regulation and achievement is made with specific examples of how to improve self-regulation. Perry, Philips, and Hutchinson (2006) also speak to the topic of observational/ self-regulated learning when student teachers are mentored. Since student teachers' work resembled that of their mentors, the intricacy of the tasks that mentors and student teachers designed was predictive of opportunities for students to be engaged.

Synthesis of Sociocultural and Social Learning Theories

Vygotsky and Bandura both focus on the social and cognitive aspect of learning (Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1987). When learning through social interactions, the instructor must consider the learner's needs. Attitudes of both the instructor and the learner have a role in the environment of social learning. Vygotsky and Bandura provide the foundation for the theoretical framework for this study. The program design for a youth program will be based on both theories.

Situated Cognition

Situated cognition plays a smaller role in this study, but is still important to include. Much learning takes place in communities and early studies discovered the connection between learning and doing (Lave, 1991; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). That connection between learning and doing ties directly to a youth program focusing on activities, because it not only gives the youth an opportunity to learn a new sport or refine their motor skills, but it also gives them a place to collaborate with their peers.

Upon examination of Lave (1991) and Lave and Wenger (1991), situated cognition is a general theory of knowledge acquisition and can be applied to contexts that involve problem solving. Lave's argument is that learning occurs in context and culture, and hence, is situated. There is contrast with activities in classrooms that only encompass abstract content that is out of context. Situated learning is commonly involuntary rather than planned. Lave and Wenger (1991) call this process "legitimate peripheral participation."

Later researchers further established the theory of situated cognition. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) highlight the concept of cognitive apprenticeship. Cognitive apprenticeship enables students to attain, develop, and utilize cognitive tools within the actual setting. Social interaction constructs knowledge, according to Brown, Collins, and Duguid. Vygotsky's theory on social learning is an antecedent of situated cognition.

The opportunity for knowledge transfer through community activities, taught through the adults at the youth center, will play a more silent role in the eyes of the youth. The behind-the-scenes work from the staff will ensure the safety of the youth, while providing a shoulder to lean on and emotional assistance during the emotional rollercoaster ride of an adolescent's life. The staff will also provide activity-based learning workshops, focusing on sports, the arts, and other topics of interest to the youth. The youth will be learning the activity of interest, but at the same time, unknowingly building team skills and problem solving skills (Barrows, 1986; Orr & Barley, 1996; Savery & Duffy, 2001). Look to the final chapter for suggestions based on situated cognition. The following section examines youth programs, activities, and need.

Youth Programs

Research suggests that out of school time can significantly affect how successful a child is during the school day (Hirsh, 2005; Warren, Jackson, & Sifers, 2009). However, statistics show that after school programs can have mixed effects on a child's academic performance (Presnell, 2009). Schools and school systems are under pressure with greater accountability by the government to meet annual yearly progress (AYP). Under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act passed by President Bush in 2001, schools are

pressed to satisfactorily support each individual student by meeting the state and federal guidelines for academic achievement. This is not only costly, but also makes providing additional learning opportunities more and more important.

Many schools have added learning opportunities after school for low achieving students. The 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) provides grant money for after school programs. Funding increased with the addition of the NCLB Act from 40 million in 1997 to 1 billion in 2002 (Fry, 2008). The increase in funding caused more services to be implemented and by 2001, many schools were able to offer after school programs. The target school in this study receives 21st CCLC funding for the after school LEAP program (see Table 1.1).

After school programs are trending toward steep increases in demand and are expected to continually increase as NCLB requirements climb (Choice, 2004). This increased demand makes it very important to assess program outcomes to meet participant needs and increase academic achievement. It is essential to assess how after school programs assist schools with meeting AYP.

According to a recent report, approximately seven million school-aged children spend time alone after school (Durlack & Weissburg, 2007). An earlier study showed that 36% of children report spending time alone after school at least once a week, 16% spend three to four days unsupervised a week and 13% reported spending five days a week alone at home (National Institute on Out of School Time, 2006). It was estimated that in 2001, 51 hours, or the equivalent of 30 percent of a child's week, were spent

unsupervised. Children are spending more time after school alone. Children who care for themselves for four or more hours a week are more likely to have behavioral issues, as well as social and academic difficulties (Pettit et al., 1997).

After school programs are promoted as a way in which to help children achieve better academically (Fry, 2008). Poor academic outcomes have been associated with unsupervised after school hours in several studies (Balsano et al., 2009; Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007; Congress 99th, 1986; Hirsch, 2005; Walker, & Arbreton, 2001; Warren, Feist, & Nevarez, 2002; Zarrett, 2009). Educational achievement is now of more concern to schools with the increasing NCLB Act requirements levied on school systems. Skills related with academic success can be acquired from quality after school programs, i.e., feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, positive school attitude, and positive social behaviors (Durlack & Weissburg, 2007).

Activities

Some studies show that academic achievement is not always influenced by participation in after school activities (Balsano et al., 2009; Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007; Hirsch, 2005; Walker, & Arbreton, 2001; Zarrett, 2009). Since there is conflicting research, school systems have a difficult decision when implementing after school programs. Since NCLB was passed, after school programs have the sole intention of facilitating academic achievement for failing schools. Only academically related after school programs are allowed in most schools currently. Meeting academic standards is the goal of each school system, school, and classroom.

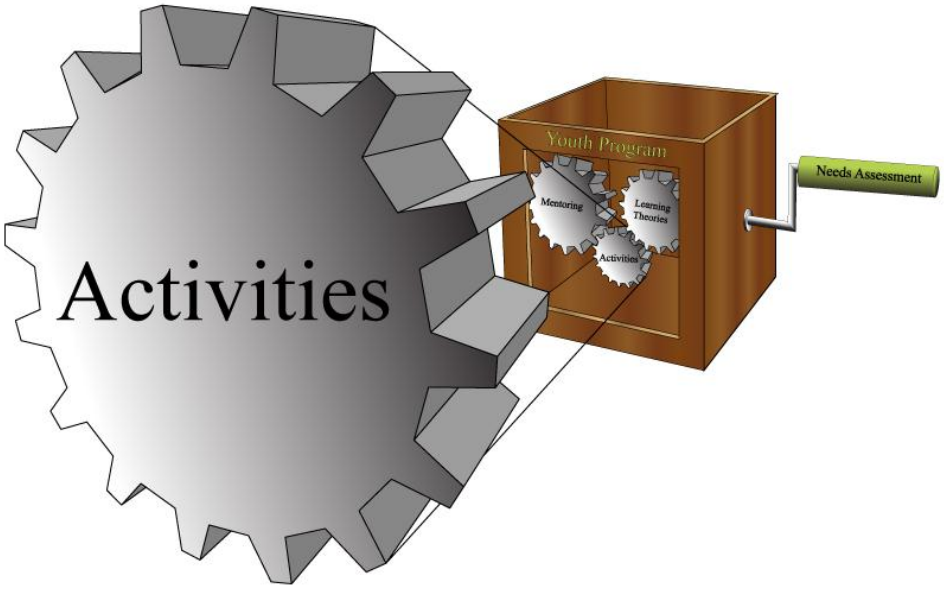

Figure 2.6 – Activities

Figure 2.6 shows the "activities gear" in relation to the rest of the Youth Program Machine. The youth program that is the focus of this study should concentrate on mentoring to facilitate the activities. Activities are the basis for contact with participants, and through mentoring the outcomes will be achieved.

Mentoring

Recent research suggests that mentoring has become increasingly popular (Brown, 2004; Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Manning, 2005; She Gives, 2009). It is a primary aspect of orientation training in many professions (e.g., the fields of business, teaching and nursing). Mentoring has also become a key part of government and educational initiatives. In the US, the largest national mentoring program, Big Brothers Big Sisters, used over a million volunteer mentors in 2000, and is targeted to double in

size (Miller, 2002). Academic literature on the topic of mentoring began to appear in the 1970's, at first sporadically, but then showed mentoring as an official system, not just a phenomenon (Brown, 2004; Eby et al., 2008; Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Manning, 2005; She Gives, 2009).

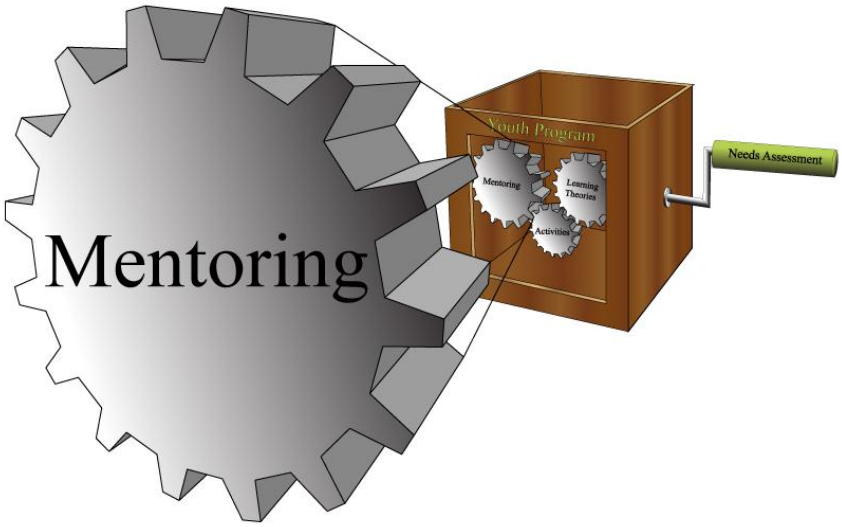

Figure 2.7 – Mentoring

Figure 2.7 displays the connection mentoring has to the other inner workings of the youth program. The "mentoring gear" symbolizes the many small actions and behaviors adult mentors have with youth. The next section goes into depth about when and where mentoring magic happens.

Mentoring in schools. Mentoring takes place in schools as peer-to-peer practice between teachers (Eby et al., 2008). This mentoring can be either informal or formal. Informal mentoring refers to connections that teachers make with each other without

being required to do so. Formal mentoring may be mandated by a school or school system or just simply requested by the mentor or mentee.

Informal mentoring involves a reciprocal connection between at least two people. Mentoring was once believed to only benefit the mentee, but studies have suggested that both the mentor and mentee gain from the relationship (Brown, 2004; Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Manning, 2005; She Gives, 2009). This symbiotic relationship is the basis for mentoring.

The symbiotic relationship is also true for formal mentoring. A school system or individual school may mandate formal mentoring, in order to place more emphasis on team building and collaboration (Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Manning, 2005). Mentoring increases collaboration among teachers (Healey, & Welchert, 1990; Manning, 2005).

Adult – child mentoring. The same concepts of mentoring adults can be used for mentoring children. A child and adult are paired, usually for the benefit of the child. However, even in child-adult mentoring relationships, studies have shown mutual benefits (Brown, 2004; Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Manning, 2005; She Gives, 2009).

Peer-to-peer child mentoring. Taking the mentoring dyad one step further, peer-to-peer mentoring is becoming increasingly popular in schools (Pamuk & Thompson, 2009). Teachers pair students for support and the benefit of having extra helping hands. The classroom setting today includes a diverse group of students at different levels being managed by one teacher. Having students mentor each other

provides help to students in need that the teacher would otherwise not be able to reach while assisting low-level students (Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004). Peer time gives the youth support from their peers during the years that it matters most (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005).

Seminal Studies

Most studies have focused on evaluating youth programs and the effects of youth programs for troubled youth in large cities, instead of the actual attitudes of the youth in the centers (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Zarrett et al., 2009). Hirsch (2005) directed a four year study of six urban after school clubs associated with the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. The mixed methods study was mostly ethnographic with interviews and a large survey, which was conducted over four days. The sample of 300 ten to eighteen year-olds was taken from a population of approximately 3,000. Even though the study was aimed at improving the programs for the female attendees, the study was fundamentally like the research study at hand in the fact that it focused on the actual attitudes of the youth (both male and female). In particular, the focus was on: 1) how much fun the youth had in different programs, 2) what was the level of fun in comparison to students' attendance, 3) what was the level of new attendance from recruited youth, and 4) what was the level of retention. The present research study, which examines the attitudes of youth toward youth programs, is similiar to Hirsh's study in nature and scope, with one important exception. The current research study was conducted prior to openning a new program in a small city school, as opposed to an urban area.

Hirsch's study examined the relationships of the youth between peers and with the staff. The staff would verbally express their liking of the activities in order to bond with them and gain their trust. Through this trust, mentoring could take place; unstructured as youth prefer (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Zarrett et al., 2009).

Hirsch's study is unparalleled in the field of youth mentoring for the reason that it focuses on unstructured, clandestine mentoring, opposed to structured programs that turn youth off from being assisted by mentors. However, Hirsh (2005) failed to recognize the importance of recording which students frequented the club, whether they were troubled, and in providing a uniform definition for the word "troubled". Other studies had similar flaws (Eby, Allen, Evans, Ng, & DuBois, 2008; Rhodes & Lowe, 2008). However, Hirsch's study is the most germain to the purpose of this study; to discover the attitudes of youth toward youth programs. Yet, the actual opinions of the students toward the programs was not taken into account (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Walker & Arbreton, 2001; Warren et al., 2002).

Relationships are the hub for youth, where comfort and well-being converge. Youth are centered around their peers and take comfort when accompanied by them. Motivation to succeed often stems from peer approval, which may seem shallow, but this peer approval can cause youth to blossom to their fullest potential. Peer relationships are the magnet to draw youth in and bring them together with better activities to occupy their out of-school time (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Menestrel & Perkins,

2007). The evaluation of popular clubs provides insight into the development of youth through relationships (Walker & Arbreton, 2001; Warren, Feist, & Nevarez, 2002).

Gano-Overway et al. (2009) conducted a study of the effect of the "Influence of Caring Youth Sport Contexts on Efficacy-Related Beliefs and Social Behaviors." Pro-social and antisocial behavior through efficacy-related beliefs was the dependent variable in the study. The study went into depth about positive and negative affective self-regulatory efficacy (ASRE) and empathic self-efficacy (ESE). The mixed methods study was mostly quantitative with a questionnaire that measured perceptions of the caring climate, ESE, ASRE, and social behavior. The sample was comprised of 395 multiethnic youth.

Structural equation modeling (Gano-Overway et. al, 2009) was used to test the relationship between caring and social behaviors. Findings from the study revealed that perceptions of "caring" positively affected ASRE and ESE. The results suggested that "caring" impacts pro-social and antisocial behavior due to childrens' monitoring, managing, and controling factors and increases empathy. This research affects this study's focus on mentoring in a youth program and the benefits that follow.

Participation in other youth development programs, along with sports, increases the liklihood of positive development and a greater contribution from the youth (Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Perkins & Noam, 2007; Zarrett et al., 2009). Linver, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn (2009) studied the patterns of participation in sports in adolescents,

which is directly related to this study as it, too, focuses on discovering what activities youth like to attend. Through the use of a survey instrument, a sample representative of national demographics was taken from ten to eighteen year-olds in fifth through twelth grade. The research found that the youth enjoyed sports, arts, and/or peer activities.

Denault and Poulin (2009) conducted a five year longitudinal study of the growth curves of youth participation in sports, arts, and clubs. The sample of 272 youth in seventh through tenth grade was taken by convenience. The population was not described in the study. The study supported the correlation between activities and participation over time. The research found a connection between what inspires and motivates youth to participate. Specific predictors were determined to be individual, friend, and family factors.

Presnell (2009) evaluated an after school program on participation. The context was based on student academic achievement as a way of helping schools meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standards required by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. The study divided after school programs into academic and traditional programs. Tests measured student achievement in Language Arts and Mathematics. The study took place in a small urban school district. Students who participated in the after school programs were matched with students who did not participate. Several background characteristics including socioeconomic status, English language proficiency status, school area, race, gender, and guardianship were examined.

The impact of participation in an after school program was compared to student

test scores. The study (Presnell, 2009) found that Mathematics test scores were not affected by participation. However, Language Arts test scores decreased. Also, academic after school program participants test scores were not substantially different from traditional program participants. Overall, the study suggested that after school programs are not an operative way to raise student academic achievement to meet AYP. The study did not take into consideration the nationwide decreasing Language Arts test scores due to the NCLB Act (Choice, 2004).

Table 2.1 – Seminal Studies

Author (Date of Publication)	Post-Evaluation vs. Pre-Assessment	Data Collection Method	Activities in Youth Program Studied
Hirsch (2005)	Post-Evaluation	Mixed Methods	Mentoring
Gano-Overway et al. (2009)	Post-Evaluation	Mixed Methods	Sports
Liner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn, (2009)	Post-Evaluation	Quantitative	Sports
Denault and Poulin (2009)	Post-Evaluation	Quantitative	Sports, Arts, & Clubs
Presnell (2009)	Post-Evaluation	Quantitative	Academic
Cave (2011) *This Study	Pre-Assessment	Quantitative	Sports, Technology, & Mentoring

Tangentially-Related Studies

Studies related tangentially to this research are composed of youth program research in terms of sports, arts, and other activities, as well as studies on mentoring (Burgstahler & Crawford, 2007; Dodge & Lambert, 2009; Eby et al., 2008; Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Gano-Overway, 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Liner, Roth, and Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Menestrel & Perkins, 2007). These include studies related to the effectiveness of youth programs in sports, arts, and other activities. These studies include multiple publications by the aforementioned authors with the chief aim of evaluating the effectiveness of programs that aid in the development of youth. All utilized a qualitative approach through ethnographic research. They are tangentially related to this study because of difference in methodology. All of the studies universally agreed that youth programs benefit development (Balsano et al., 2009; Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Zarrett et al., 2009).

Balsano et al. (2009) looked at the patterns of adolescents' participation on their development, but the focus was not the actual participation or reasoning for participating, as is the case in the research at hand. Brown (2004), Eby et al. (2008), Fritzberg and Alemayehu (2004), McCluskey et al. (2004), and Zand et al. (2009) all studied the effects of mentoring through qualitative approaches by means of observation and case study analyses. In the opinion of this researcher, all of the current studies suffer from the same weakness - a lack of focus on the participants' opinions toward the programs.

Research also shows that participation in sports during out-of-school time is directly related to youth well-being (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Zarrett et al., 2009). Participation in after-school activities fosters motivation and in later years, leads the youth to attend college. It even plays a role in encouraging future young adults to vote (Hirsch, 2005; Menestrel & Perkins, 2007).

Motivation to attend college can be down-played by the need to survive in the lives of many youth. Ambition is not present due to the need to attend to more important, urgent situations from day to day. Looking into the future is either very difficult for these youth, or doesn't even cross their minds. Youth centers are desired to provide shelter for youth from their physical and emotional worries, so they can focus on the fun aspects of life, relax, and eventually receive emotional assitance from staff members once trust is secured (Hirsh, 2005).

The well-being of youth is directly related to their home life (Walker & Arbreton, 2001; Warren et al., 2002). Most studies evaluate the effects of troubled youth in youth centers in urban areas, but even rural areas and small cities have many troubled youth who come from the same types of poor home environments. These youth are ignored by most studies, not to mention by many large youth organizations. Youth organizations are needed in the smallest of cities to provide a place for mentoring and development (Burgstahler & Crawford, 2007; Dodge & Lambert, 2009; Eby et al., 2008; Fritzberg & Alemayehu, 2004; Gano-Overway, 2009).

Interest for Program

At this point, literature has been reviewed showing the interest for youth programs in general. The needs assessment literature provides a basis for the setup of this study, and the literature on learning theories aids in the design of a program. The literature on activities and mentoring supports the need for a more in-depth study that targets youth interests prior to the program's creation. However, this chapter has not identified the specific demographics of the area where the proposed youth center will be located. The attitudes of parents, high Hispanic population, low socio-economic status of families, and the dynamics of first generation college students will be discussed next.

Attitudes of Parents

Parental attitudes play a vital role in this study. The attitudinal views of parents toward youth programs determine if their child will be allowed to participate (Attitude, 2010; Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Parents will keep their child from participating in activites that they do not believe are beneficial. Parents may also keep their child from participating for less important reasons, such as a callous attitude toward a teacher or coach. The basis for the survey was to find out what specific activities parents had positive attitudes about and interest in. Parents would, in turn, be more inclined to have their child participate.

Hispanic/Latino Population

The high Hispanic/Latino population in the small city school used for this study is a key factor for not only the design of this study, but also the design of the proposed

program. Latinos comprise the largest and fastest-growing group in the U.S., escalating from 12% of the population in 2000 to 14% of the total U.S. population in 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Hispanic school-aged children, children under 18, are the chief demographic group, only surpassed by the Caucasian group.

Many schools have already large and exponentially growing numbers of English Language Learner (ELL) students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). School systems are under pressure to provide effective learning for ELLs (Grogan-Kaylor & Woolley, 2010). Studies suggest the current, most challenging aspect of America's public schools is to support ELLs (Choice, 2004; National Institute, 2004; Stechuk, & Burns, 2005).

In the classroom, ELLs are held to the same increasing academic standards set for everyone by the NCLB Act (Choice, 2004). ELLs have the additional task of learning a new language. Some ELLs read and write above grade level in their own language; others have had limited schooling (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006). Each student has a unique story or background that changes how he or she learns. The need to succeed is ingrained in some ELL students who go to school highly motivated to learn because of family support, while others have had negative experiences that overpower motivation to achieve academically. A further discussion on reasons for lack of motivation is based on first generation college students in the next section.

First Generation College Students

First generation college students are students who are the first in their family to attend college (VanderVen, 2004). This group also includes those who have the potential to be the first to attend college in their family, but may not necessarily be in college, yet.

First generation college students do not have the same support from a parent or guardian that a second or more generation college student would have. Children who have parents that attended college gain knowledge from stories and insight into the skills that need to be developed in K-12 schooling.

Tips and tricks little known to non-college parents are shared with children of college alumni (VanderVen, 2004). For example, in order to get into competitive four-year institutions, students should have taken Calculus in their senior year. Preparation to make that possible begins with the level of math taken in middle school. Mentors in a youth program can inform and prepare students to make academically sound decisions.

Low Socio-Economic Status

Families with low socio-economic status statistically do not have the opportunities that other students are exposed to (Jeter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007). Parental attitudes towards school may be lower due to their financial situation. Many people believe that if you do not have the money to attend college, that college is unobtainable. That myth prevents countless students from furthering their education each year (Choice, 2004; Congress 99th, 1986)

The target participants for this study are from low socio-economic backgrounds and would benefit greatly from mentors who not only teach them that college is obtainable, but also interact with their parents (Jeter-Twilley, Legum, & Norton, 2007). A recent study in a high school with similar demographics to the target population for this study showed that 63% of participants improved their chances of attending college

by increasing their grade point average (GPA) (Deaton, 2011). The percentage of students' likely to attend college was based on statistics that showed that students in the after school program increased their GPAs and carried more challenging class loads after working with mentors for four months.

Conceptual Framework Revisited

Now that the learning theories and previous research has been covered, it is essential to revisit the connection between needs assessment, learning theories, activities, and mentoring. This section synthesizes how the conceptual framework was the foundation for this study. Figure 2.8, illustrated next, is the conceptual framework that undergirds this study.

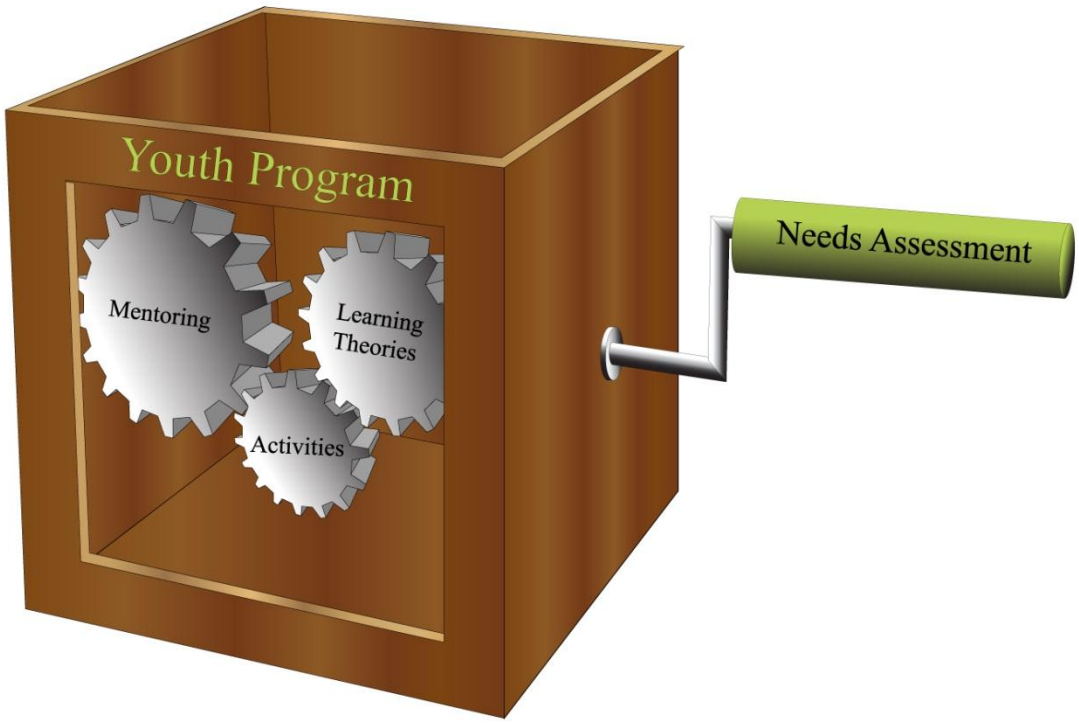

Figure 2.8 - Conceptual Framework, Revisited

The simultaneous and mutual workings of the gears illustrate how mentoring does not revolve, or evolve, without the practice of learning theories through activities. The teeth of the "learning theories gear" represents the solid foundation that learning theories allow when practiced through activities. The slightly smaller "activities gear" illustrates the activities' unnoticed facilitation of mentoring. Finally, the largest "mentoring gear" exemplifies the importance of mentoring to this study and has the biggest teeth to reveal that many actions can make a significant difference.

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to discover the attitudes and preferences of parents toward youth programs that offer activities and mentoring programs, as well as the interest for youth programs. The main objective of this study was to discover the activities to focus on in a proposed youth program. For this reason, survey research was chosen as the best means to study the problem (see Appendix E). The first section of the survey was designed to gather demographic information, as well as activities the parents felt their children enjoy the most and to collect parent's attitudes toward each activity. The second section of the survey was aimed at pinpointing the interest in mentoring programs.

The survey was administered by convenience sampling to parents at the school's "Back-to-School" event in an elementary school in a small city in Northwest Virginia. An important design aspect of this study was the use of the “Back-to-School” night at the school. The Institutional Review Board in this university is very strict when research involves the use of minors. This issue was avoided by surveying parents. Not only would participants be available, but they would have their children with them and their children would be able to answer questions posed by the parents.

Timeline

Preparation to design this study began in June of 2009. Within six weeks, the researcher designed the outline for the study, including the purpose, significance, and the survey questions. In July 2009, the survey was piloted with a group of six Master of

Education students and two subject matter experts (SME). Changes were made to the research design based on data received from the pilot. After those changes were implemented all data derived from the pilot was destroyed. The current study contains no data from the pilot. The research proposal was submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in early August 2010 and approval was received on August 9th, 2010. On August 26th, 2010 the survey was administered at the elementary school's "Back-to-School" night. Descriptive statistics were performed during the months of November 2010 through January 2011. The final research report was submitted on April 18th, 2011. Figure 3.1 provides a timeline of the events associated with the present study.

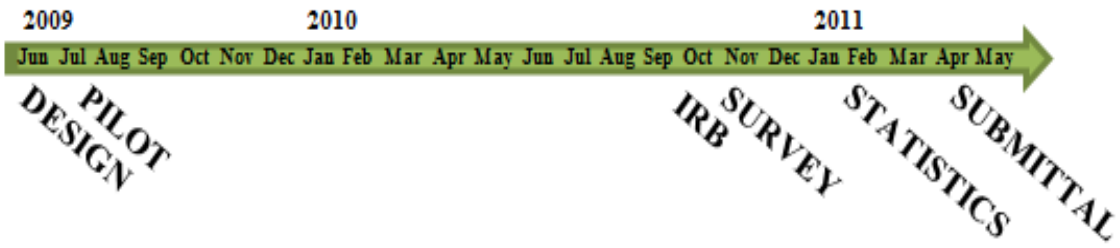

Figure 3.1- Timeline of Study

Letter of Consent

On the night of August 26th, 2010 at the school's "Back-to-School" event, the researcher approached parents as they entered the first of two hallways in the school. Each parent or guardian was read only what was contained in the letter of consent (see Appendix C). The letter of consent described the research project and purpose and the details of the survey. Once the parents gave their consent, they proceeded to a laptop.

Laptops were aligned on tables, with the screens facing the wall in the hallway. The intent of facing the screens toward the wall was to protect the participant's answers from being seen by others. The parent then proceeded by clicking on a link to the survey from the desktop of a laptop. Once the link was clicked, it directed the participant to the survey where they anonymously completed the questions. When the parents were finished with the survey, they continued with the "Back to School" event.

Parent Participants

The actual number of participants who took the survey was 64. The number of participants could have ranged from 50 through 400. The total population of 400 parents was estimated by taking the total number of students and multiplying by two. Some students may have had only one parent, but others may have had multiple parents due to re-marriages, etc. Since many parents may not be technically savvy, the researcher was present to answer questions about the survey or electronics. The school translator was also present to answer questions for Spanish-speaking parents.

Background on Area Population

Few national organizations have been interested in building a recreational after school center in the area under study (U.S. Census, 2010) as the population size of 98,000 is relatively small. Many attempts to organize programs have fallen through the cracks (M. Perry, personal communication, May 14, 2009; W. Valentine, personal communication, July 30, 2009; B. Wubbe, personal communication, July 30, 2009). The potential market for a youth facility is vast, with 25% of the estimated population under the age of 18, (Frederick County, Virginia, 2009; U.S. Census, 2008; Winchester city, Virginia, 2000).

There are approximately 24,500 students in local public school systems (Cave, 2009). Students are 52% female and 48% male on average, fluctuating slightly from year to year. Students with disabilities make up approximately 3% of the population.

Even though only 10% of the total area population is Latino, more than 30% of students entering school each year speak only Spanish (Frederick County, Virginia, 2009; Winchester city, Virginia, 2000; Cave, 2009). These school-aged children come from migrant families. Large numbers of migrant worker families come into the area for apple harvest season each year.

Students in sports make up a hefty 38% of the population (Cave, 2009). This figure includes those who are on school teams and/or recreational teams. Club members consist of 16% after school clubs and 19% after school and/or organizational clubs.

Survey Population

Statistics on the demographics of the school were collected via the school system's reporting software, with the assistance of faculty members. The school has a 51% Minority population, consisting of 34% Latino, 13% African American, 3% Asian-decent, and 1% Pacific Islander. According to the school reporting software, the majority of Latino students' parents speak only Spanish. 29% of the school's parents speak only Spanish.

The remaining 7% reported "Other" for language to the school system The reporting software did not indicate what language these groups of students or their parents spoke, but according to faculty, only one student spoke a language other than English (T. Cave, personal communication, Aug 24, 2010).

Sample

The survey instrument helped to determine what sports and mentoring programs are most needed. The sample taken from the population was through convenience sampling. Parents who took the survey were only English and/or Spanish speakers. No other languages were represented. Some parents spoke both English and Spanish.

If a parent was unwilling to participate, another person was selected from the remaining "Back to School" attendees in the school. Consent forms were read to the parents and discussed at length and the researcher answered any questions the parents posed about the research.

The potential sample size for the survey could have ranged from 50 through 400, based on the total population of 400 parents. With the subject characteristics threat in mind, the final sample size was estimated at fifty. The actual number of participants was 64.

The "Back-to-School" event hosts approximately 100 to 120 parents each year (T. Cave, personal communication, Aug 24, 2010). There is no way to tell how many parents attended the event on August 26th, 2010. There are multiple entry points and the school does not count attendance for the event. However, participation in the survey was very high for parents who came down the first hallway where the survey was being administered. Out of 66 parents or guardians that passed the survey station, 64 agreed to the consent form and to complete the survey. From the remaining two, one gave the reason of being late for work. The other spoke Spanish, discussed it with the translator, and decided not to participate. The faculty member sponsor later indicated that many Hispanic families do not have legal status (T. Cave, personal communication, Aug 24, 2010).

Ratio of Spanish Surveys

The survey was offered in both English and Spanish. Parents could choose to take the survey in English and select that they also spoke Spanish or take the survey in Spanish if they only spoke Spanish or were more comfortable speaking Spanish. Parents who chose to take the survey in Spanish were the majority at 54%. A copy of the survey in Spanish can be found in Appendix E. English surveys totaled the remaining 46%. Of

that 46%, 76% selected English, 8% selected Spanish as their main language and 16% selected by English and Spanish. Table 3.1 shows these statistics together in chart form.

Table 3.1 – Ratio of Spanish Surveys to English Surveys

Main Language	Spanish Survey – 54%	English Survey – 46%
Selected Spanish Option	100%	8%
Selected English Option	0%	76%
Selected Both English and Spanish Option	0%	16%

Rationale

What are the attitudes of parents toward youth programs? What are the interests of parents for youth programs? With those research questions in mind, the hypotheses respectively are: parents have a positive attitude toward youth programs when activities are the focus, as compared to mentoring programs, and parents have an interest in mentoring programs to some extent. Survey research was the best option for this study because it appropriately measured which activities the youth's parents are interested in and what mentoring programs they need to access.

Instrumentation

The survey was administered via Qualtrics™ software. Qualtrics™ is an online survey tool provided by James Madison University. The first section, the activity section, was designed to uncover what activities parents believe their children enjoy the most and to collect their attitudes toward each activity. The second section, the mentoring section, was aimed at pinpointing the actual interest in mentoring programs. Questions were straightforward and directly related to activities that the participant's child may enjoy and how the parent feels about the activity.

The researcher scheduled the survey during the "Back to School" event in a hallway using laptop computers; screens facing the wall. The researcher read a script to the parents explaining the details of the survey and instructions for taking the survey. In

the event that the participant only spoke Spanish well, the school translator read the same script in Spanish.

Questions

The first question in the survey asked: "what language do you speak on a daily basis?" Percentages for this question are listed in Table 3.1. Statistics from the other questions can be found in Chapter 4. The participant had four options to choose from: 1) English, 2) Spanish, 3) Both English and Spanish, and 4) Other.

The second question on the survey was a matrix question with 14 separate options to report about their children. The question was, "how many of your children enjoy the following activities?" Age ranges from 0 through 18 were labeled across the top in groups of 2; i.e., 0-2, 3-4, etc. The participant was instructed to type in the number of their children that liked each activity under each age range. The options for the activity selection can be seen in Figure 3.3.

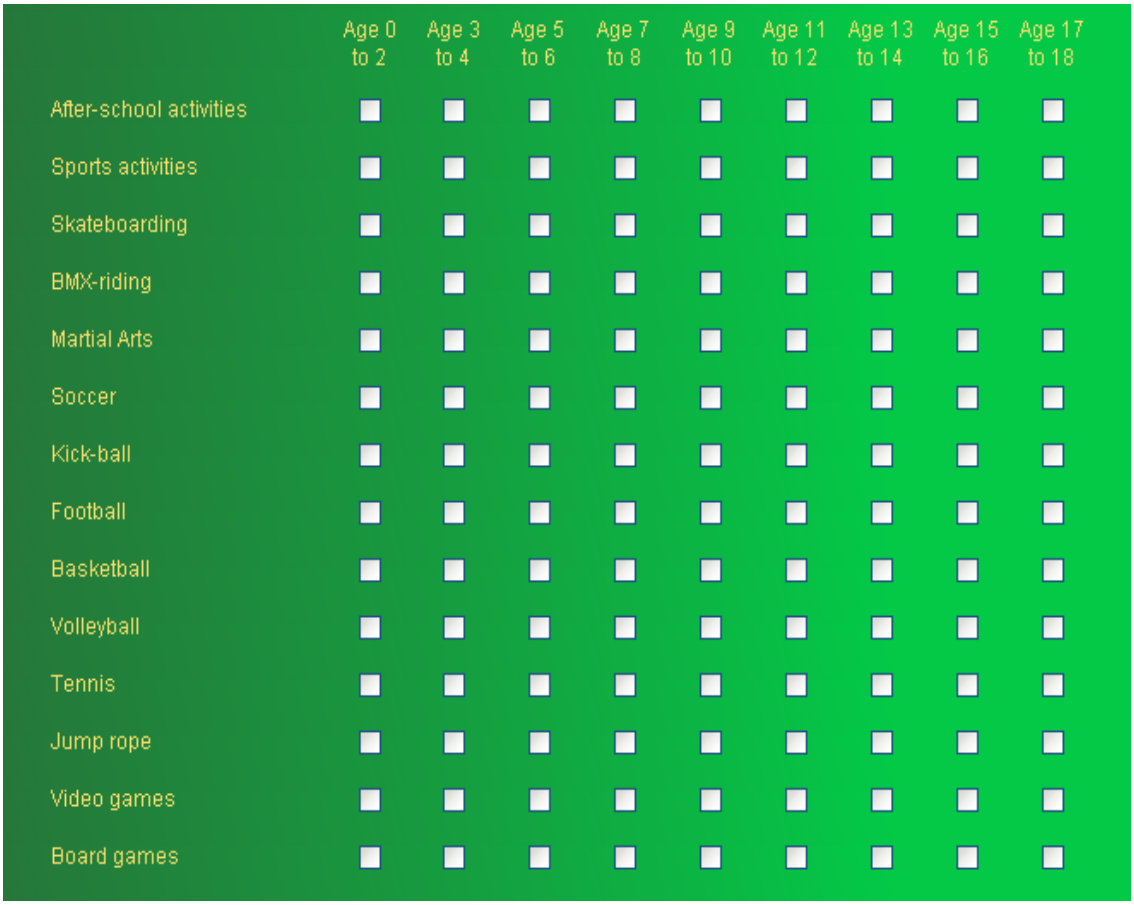

Figure 3.3 – Question 2 Options

The third question asked: "would your children benefit from the following mentoring activities?" Age ranges were also across the top in the same fashion as question number two. The mentoring activities the parents decided upon included:

The fourth and final question pertained to current programs at the school, compared to other programs. The parent participant could rate the program on a Likert scale which included: Dislike Very Much, Dislike Slightly, Like Slightly, Like Very Much. The question was worded as the following: "please check the boxes that describe

how you feel about the following current program categories." The two options were: Programs at Quarles and Other Programs.

Validity

Most youth development program studies have solely utilized a qualitative approach to examine the effectiveness of the program and/or center (Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009). It is likely that quantitative studies have been conducted to discover which programs are most needed by businesses looking to open in that area, but information is usually kept proprietary.

The honesty and integrity of the researcher outweighs the lack of reliability of the survey instruments in this study (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Although, to ensure validity, appropriate measures were taken by having experts in the field review the surveys. If validity could not be established, the survey was revised until the experts were in agreement. The quantitative survey instrument utilized in this study was appropriate and backed by use in other studies (Denault & Poulin, 2009; Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Schuman & Presser, 1996).

Threats to validity. Threats to the validity of this research included instrument decay, subject characteristics, data collector characteristics, data collector bias, location, history, maturity, and mortality (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). Instrument decay was controlled by administering the surveys over a time period of a few hours. Subject characteristics, data collector characteristics, and data collector bias could not be completely controlled, but steps to assure that the characteristics were kept similar were

put in place. Specifically, subject characteristics were kept similar because the sample was taken by convenience. Data collector characteristics were consistent and data collector bias was avoided, because the same script was read by the researcher and translator and the same conservative clothing was worn to avoid differing views of the subjects toward the researcher.

The threat of location differences was minimized because all parents participated in the survey in a school hallway with computer screens facing the wall (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). History and maturity threats were minimized by the short time frame for administration of the surveys. Mortality was minimized by administering the survey during the "Back-to-School" event. This study could be generalized to small cities with few options for youth development programs. The only expected limitations were large cities and other places that do not fit the description of the area in this study.

Data Analysis

Data collected was anonymous. No identifying data were collected. All data were collected via a survey using the JMU sponsored Qualtrics™ electronic survey database system and data were analyzed via Qualtrics™ software and SPSS. The identity of the participants was completely anonymous. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the parent's surveys. Categorical data were displayed through bar graphs and pie charts. Inferential statistics were used by way of chi-square tests.

The correlation between what sports students selected was analyzed through cross tabulations. For example, the correlation between parents who selected skateboarding as an activity and whether they also selected another action sport, such as BMX-riding was found through cross tabulations.

Since there are nine scale options and twenty activity options, there are 3,600 relationships within each activity option that can be correlated to search for significant results. Within the help-related questions, there are 125 correlations that could be studied and within the mentoring questions, 3,125 relationships that could be studied. In total, 10,575 relationships could be analyzed to search for significant results. The next chapter describes the results in detail.

Results

Introduction

This study was carried out with the intention of aligning parents' specific interests to the actual creation of a new youth program. A survey to collect data was given at an elementary school in a small city in Northwest Virginia. The survey focused on the interest in youth programs and the attitudes of parents toward youth programs. A sample of 64 parents contributed to the data set. This research used the following questions:

Table 4.1 – Research Questions and Hypotheses

Research Question	Hypothesis
1. What are the interests in specific youth programs?	There would be an interest in programs focused on sports and video games.
2. What are the attitudes (positive or negative) of the parents of youth toward youth programs?	Parental attitudes would be positive toward youth programs.

In reference to the first research question, the researcher hypothesized that youth programs that focus on sports and/or video games will be of interest. The hypothesis for the second question was that parent attitudes toward youth programs would be positive. Both hypotheses were supported by the data collected. The quantitative data obtained for this study were collected using Qualtrics™, an online survey database system. Out of the

66 parents asked to participate, 64 completed the survey. The response rate was 97%. No surveys were abandoned and all surveys were completed in their entirety. The survey consisted of four questions pertaining to the parent's language spoken on a daily basis, the interest in different activities, and the parent attitudes toward programs.

Data Analysis

Inferential statistics were used to analyze the data collected from the parents' surveys. The chi-square correlation was used to show the correlation between different sports selected. For example, the correlation between parents who selected skateboarding as an activity and whether they also selected another action sport, such as BMX-riding. The results section, next, shows the descriptive statistics for each question, followed by significant findings from statistical correlations.

Child to Parent Ratio

The survey instrument was completed by 64 parent participants with a total of 119 children. The survey allowed the parent to enter the total number of children that they have under respective age category columns. Many parents had multiple children, while some only had one. The average number of children per parent was 1.86.

Results: Survey Questions

Data results from survey question 1. What language do you speak on a daily basis?

***Spanish to English survey ratio*.** As previously referenced in the preceding chapter, the survey was offered in both English and Spanish. Parents could choose to take the survey in English and select that they also spoke Spanish or take the survey in Spanish if they only spoke Spanish or were more comfortable speaking Spanish. Table 4.2 shows these statistics together in chart form.

Table 4.2 – Ratio of Spanish Surveys to English Surveys

Main Language Spoken	Spanish Survey – 54%	English Survey – 46%
Selected Spanish Option	100%	8%
Selected English Option	0%	76%
Selected Both English and Spanish Option	0%	16%

Data results from survey question 2. How many of your children enjoy the following activities? Please check all that apply under the correct age columns.

This question was provided as a matrix asking the parent to select all of the options that their child/children enjoy. Fourteen options were provided for the parent to answer. There were age ranges across the top of the matrix and the activities were listed

down the left-hand side. At the points where the columns and rows intersect, there were boxes that the parent could type in the number of children that they have that like that activity.

For example, if a parent has three children and they are 6, 9 and 10 years old, the parent could enter all children into the same survey, without having to take multiple surveys. If the 6 year-old likes soccer and the 9 and 10 year-olds like video games, the parent would enter 1 under the 5-6 age column where soccer intersects and 2 under the 9-10 age column where video games intersects. The layout of the "age range" columns and the "activity" rows is shown in Figure 4.1. It is also important to note that Table 4.3 shows the aggregate data from the survey results for question two.

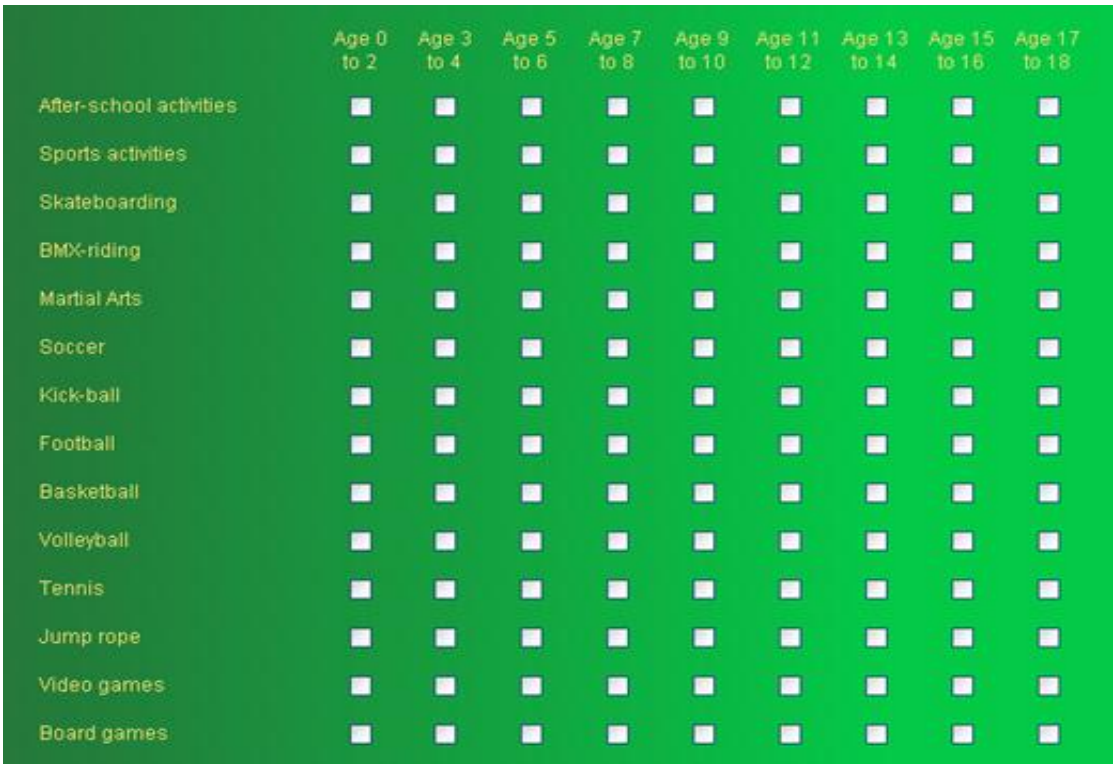

Figure 4.1 – Matrix from Question 2

Table 4.3 – Aggregate Data for Question 2

#	Question	Age 0-2	Age 3-4	Age 5-6	Age 7-8	Age 9-10	Age 11-12	Age 13-14	Age 15-16	Age 17-18	Responses
1	After-school Acitvities	1	15	21	39	33	4	1	0	1	115
2	Sports Activities	3	15	22	40	33	4	1	0	1	119
3	Skateboarding	1	1	4	10	5	1	0	0	1	23
4	BMX-riding	1	4	13	26	19	1	0	0	1	65
5	Martial Arts	1	3	2	14	4	0	0	0	0	24
6	Soccer	3	16	22	39	30	4	0	0	0	114
7	Kick-ball	3	8	15	36	31	3	0	0	0	96
8	Football	1	2	2	10	12	4	0	0	1	32
9	Basketball	3	11	17	36	32	4	0	0	1	104
10	Volleyball	1	0	2	8	7	1	0	0	0	19
11	Tennis	0	0	1	6	2	0	1	0	0	10
12	Jump Rope	2	7	12	14	3	0	0	0	0	38
13	Video Games	3	16	21	40	33	4	1	0	1	119
14	Board Games	1	12	15	23	15	2	1	0	0	69

The following section will describe the results for each activity from question two and illustrate those results with descriptive statistics. Also in this section, correlations are discussed, such as the correlation between how many parents selected soccer and video games for their child. The focus will be placed on ages up through the "9-10 age range," which are the majority of ages at the elementary school where the survey was conducted.

For the age range of 0-2, After-school Activities had 1 child selection entered and Sports Activities had 3 children entered. Parents who entered a number for children ages 5-6, who like After-school Activites entered 21 responses, yet this number was 22 for Sports Activities. The age range of 7-8 was also off by one for the number of children.

After-school Activities had 39 and Sports Activities had 40 children filled in to the question.

Skateboarding was most popular with parents who had children ages 7-8, but tapered off quickly for the age 9-10 range. This may be due to children age 7-8 trying skateboarding for the first time, but interest may die by 9-10 years old. Only the more serious skateboarders may continue with the sport. For those who selected both skateboarding and BMX-riding, the correlation degrees of freedom was 64 and the test of independence was found using the degrees of freedom figure. The chi square of 324.32 shows that the categorical data is independent. So, in essence, because a parent selected skateboarding and selected BMX-riding, there was no correlation shown in the statistical analyses discussed above. All other chi-square tests were run, but the data showed no significant results of correlating values.

BMX-riding, had the most shocking results, as compared to the interest in skateboarding. BMX-riding showed a large interest by 7-8 year olds with less of a decrease for 9-10 year olds, as compared to skateboarding. However, almost no results were shown for older age groups. This may have been due to the fact that the survey was given in an elementary school. Parents of young elementary students may not have had older students (11-18 years-old). Martial Arts also had the issue of no data for ages 11-18, seen in Figure 4.6. Martial Arts was most popular with 7-8 year olds.

Soccer was the overall top pick by parents for children's enjoyment. Among 7-8 year-olds, parents entered a total of 39 children that enjoy the sport. This number was only one lower than the most-selected activity for 7-8 year-olds. All of the other age

ranges had the maximum number of parents select Soccer as an activity their children enjoyed.

Kick-ball showed an interesting climb through the age ranges, with increasing values as the ages increased. The interest increased from ages 7-10, which may be due to the students going on to middle school where they do not have outdoor recess, but rather have a more structured gym class, instead. Basketball's interest had an overall increase through the age ranges. This occurrence is very similar to the results from the interest for kickball. Basketball may become more popular with children as they develop hand-eye coordination.

The sport of jump rope had become very popular at the survey site, so high interest was predicted. However, parents did not select Jump Rope as an option for most children. This may suggest that parents do not keep up with their child's changing interests. Jump Rope interest increased as age increased, which may suggest that hand-eye coordination and practice are vital.

Football had low interest compared to other, more popular activities. The most uncommon result occurred with football; the age range of 7-8 was actually out-selected by the 9-10 age range. Volleyball and Tennis both had extremely low interest based on parents' answers on the survey. Volleyball had only a total of 8 selections by parents. Tennis had an even lower interest, with only 6 selections by parents.

The overall most popular activity from question two was Video Games. Every parent selected that every child has an interest in Video Games. This statistic is not surprising, based on the known interest of youth for video games (Papastergiou, 2009).

The researcher hypothesized that there would be an interest in Video Games. The results for all of question two showed significant interest in sports and video game activities for youth.

Data results from survey question 3. Would your children benefit from the following mentoring activities? Please check all that apply under the correct age column.

Mentoring, peer mentoring, and homework help all had similar percentages for each age group. Class selection help rung true with parents of older children. No parents selected "other" or provided examples for the "other" category. Since none of the parents selected "other," the results are not shown in a graph.

The interest in mentoring, peer mentoring, and homework help was shown to be the greatest. Homework help actually showed an increase in need within the 3-4 age range, compared to mentoring and peer mentoring. Class selection was greatest with those over 8 years of age, due to the students' admittance to middle school within the next year. Table 4.4 shows the responses for question 3.

Table 4.4 – Responses for Question 3

#	Question	Age 0-2	Age 3-4	Age 5-6	Age 7-8	Age 9-10	Age 11-12	Age 13-14	Age 15-16	Age 17-18	Responses
1	Mentoring	0	11	22	40	33	4	1	0	1	112
2	Peer Mentoring	0	11	22	40	33	4	1	0	1	112
3	Homework Help	0	16	22	40	33	4	1	0	1	117
4	Class Selection Help	0	0	0	0	6	4	1	0	1	12
5	Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Data results for survey question 4. Please check the boxes that describe how you feel about the following current program categories.

Table 4.5 – Question 4 Data

	Dislike Very Much	Dislike Slightly	Like Slightly	Like Very Much	Total Responses
Programs at this school	0	0	0	64	64
Other programs	2	10	29	23	64

Of all parents surveyed, 100% selected “like very much” in regard to existing programs at the school. Table 4.1 illustrates that statistic well. The majority, 29, selected “like slightly” for Other Programs, compared to those that selected “like very much.”

Discussion/Analysis/Recommendations for Future Research

This study was designed as a needs assessment for a youth program in a small city school in Northwest Virginia. The literature reviewed pointed toward sports-oriented programs for youth. The results obtained via this study's survey indicated interest in sports programs for students at the site school. The research looked into the interest in specific activities and mentoring, as well as the parent's attitudes toward programs. The over-arching research questions were:

1. What are the interests in specific youth programs?

2. What are the attitudes (positive or negative) of the parents of youth toward youth programs?

The researcher's hypothesis that there will be an interest in youth programs that focus on sports and video games was supported by the data. The researcher also hypothesized that parent's attitudes toward youth programs would be positive. This hypothesis was also supported by the data. The findings, researcher's experience, limitations of the study, recommendations for future research, implications for practice, and recommendations for action will be discussed next.

Attitudes of Parents

Parental attitudes were found to be positive toward youth programs in this study. Since, the attitudes of parents toward youth programs determine if their child is allowed

to participate, this needs assessment is a necessity (Attitude, 2010; Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). This needs assessment study balanced parent preferences with child wants. The study was designed to take place at the "Back-to-School" event in August 2010. Parents were asked to participate in the survey, answering questions that were designed to spark conversation with their child. Their child/children were present at the event, based on the nature of a "Back-to-School" event.

Results from the survey supported the hypothesis that parental attitudes would be positive. Out of 64 participants, 100% selected that they "Like Very Much" the programs at the school. Less support was shown for positive attitudes toward "other" programs.

Hispanic Population

Hispanics comprise the largest and fastest-growing group in the U.S., escalating from 12% of the population in 2000 to 14% of the total U.S. population in 2004 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). This study showed that 54% only spoke Spanish on a daily basis. Of the remaining 46% who filled out their survey in English, 76% selected English as their main language, 8% selected Spanish, and 16% speak both languages daily. Recommendations for future research on the Hispanic/Latino details of this study will be discussed later.

Researcher's Experience

The researcher is the coordinator for a youth-centered program that serves Virginia schools in different cities around the state. The quality of the researcher's work can be tied back to her position with the youth program. The other side of experience is

the researcher's experience within this particular study. The researcher had the study examined and evaluated by subject matter experts. The evaluators scrutinized the study to ensure all data were supported (Creswell, 1998). The external evaluators were identified early on in the design phase. The study's design phase began in June 2009, the survey was conducted in August 2010, and the final report was submitted in April 2011. The evaluators had familiarity with the study by way of many weekly meetings over the course of the project timeline, described in Methodology.

The researcher faced challenges throughout the study. The first challenge was having the Institutional Review Board at the researcher's university approve the survey for minors. To avoid other issues surrounding this concern, the researcher redesigned the study and the survey to target parents. However, parents may be unaware of what their changing child's mind prefers at any given moment. To accommodate this issue, the parents were targeted at the "Back-to-School" event where they would bring their child/children to for teacher conferences. The next challenge involved having the school system, director of instruction, and school principal approve the research. An unneeded few demographic questions and one section of a matrix question (on teen pregnancy) was rejected by the school system.

Limitations

This survey of parents assumed that parents in small cities are aware of and have experienced their children's participation in activities and mentoring programs. There is an assumption that parents are aware of mentoring programs, their availability, and the

needs of their children. It may seem that parents must be aware of what their child is doing, but this is not the case for many children (Stechuk & Burns, 2005).

The small city school location is also a limitation of this study. The survey data were received for students mostly in elementary school, significantly less in middle school, and very few in high school. However, the scope of this survey was intended for elementary-aged students. The results obtained may not be valid for slightly older students. It is not assumed that the results would generalize to slightly older children even though parents said their children were less likely to be interested in some of the choices. Children's interests change as they get older.

Implications for Practice

This study strongly supports the need to take into consideration parental preferences in after school activities early on; when programs are in the initial planning stages. Taking youth needs into consideration is also supported by this study, but is not a new idea. Most programs claim to meet the needs of the youth they serve. However, the difference with this study is the priority placed on needs assessment for youth programs. The literature review, study design, survey design, and results all provide support for taking both parental and child preferences into reverence when designing a youth program.

Teachers and school administrators should consider mentoring within their schools, not just between teachers, but also with students. This includes teachers mentoring students and peer-to-peer student mentoring within the classroom. The implications for county and city administration and elected officials when planning are

vast, including the need for social workers, increased police involvement, and costs of student retention, translators, and teacher turn-over. This study shows the high need to provide better support for ELLs both in and out of the classroom. The current program focused on ELLs is funded by the 21st Century Community Learning Grant, which is due to end this upcoming year. There is a substantial need for instruction provided in a context and language appropriate to their experience for these students. If the need is not addressed now, city administration, elected officials, and taxpayers will eventually pay by way of increased costs in social services, police enforcement involvement, and costs of student retention, translators, and teacher turn-over.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study should be replicated in other parts the State of Virginia where a more balanced demographic population exists to see if there are changes. The population of the small city in Northwest Virginia has fewer minorities than the large cities of Virginia (U.S. Census, 2010). The elementary school where the survey was administered has an extremely high ratio of minorities and free and reduced lunch population (T. Cave, personal communication, Aug 24, 2010). The school is considered an inner-city school, equal to those in large cities, such as Norfolk, Virginia.

Given the explosive growth of the Latino population across the state, more research needs to be conducted on the impact of culture, family values, and employment arrangements on parental views of after school programs (U.S. Census, 2010). This study showed support for more after school programs for the strong Hispanic population in the small city school in Northwest Virginia.

More research attention needs to be given to the issue of helping parents choose appropriate classes for their children. This study clearly shows that parents want help with class selection as their children move on to middle school (Balsano et al., 2009; Gano-Overway et al., 2009; Hirsch, 2005; Linver, Roth, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009; Zarrett et al., 2009). This was a small convenience sample. Future research should include a much large sample, spread across elementary, middle, and secondary schools. Some thought should be given to conducting a longitudinal survey looking at changing perception of parents and children year-after-year.

Interest in Program

In conclusion, this study exposed strong support to conduct a needs assessment prior to beginning a youth program. No matter how obvious the need may seem, a needs assessment will provide the foundation from which to build an outcome and results driven program (Rossi, Lipsey, & Freeman, 2004; Harless, 1975; Hannum & Hansen, 1989; Rothwell & Kazana, 1992; Kaufman, Oakley-Brown, Watkins, & Leigh, 2003). In support for more youth programs, the attitudes of parents, high Hispanic population, and low socio-economic status of families was discussed in this needs assessment for a youth program in a small city school in Northwest Virginia.

Appendix A

IRB Approval Documents

Full Board or	*James Madison University* **HUMAN RESEARCH REVIEW REQUEST**	*Expedited*

Investigators: This form is required for Full Board or Expedited review for all JMU research involving human subjects. If you are eligible for an exemption request, please use the alternate form at: **http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irbExemptRequest.doc**

FOR IRB USE ONLY:
Protocol Number: IRB- 11-0037

Received: 06/30/10 1st Review: _____
2nd Review: ____ ___
3rd Review: ____ ___

Reviewer:

Reviewer:

☒ **Approved** Date: _____

☐ **Disapproved** Date: _____

☐ **Exempt** Date: _____

External Funding: ☐ YES ☒ NO If YES, Sponsor(s):

Project Title: An Attitudinal Study of Parental Preferences toward Programs for Underprivileged Youth in a Small City School

Project Dates: From: 08/24/10 (MM/DD/YY) To: 04/04/11 (MM/DD/YY)

Minimum Number of Participants 50

Maximum Number of Participants 400

Responsible Researcher(s): Jessica Marie Cave

Department: LTLE COE

E-mail: cavejm@jmu.edu

Address and/or (MSC): 6913

Telephone: 540-336-9056

Please select: Visiting Adjunct Research Administrator/ Undergrad Graduate

☐ Faculty ☐ Faculty ☐ Faculty ☐ Associate ☐ Staff Member ☐ Student ☒ Student (if Applicable):

Research Advisor:	Dr. Jane Thall	**Department:**	LTLE COE
E-mail:	thalljb@jmu.edu	**Address**	
Telephone:	540-568-5531	**and/or (MSC):**	6913

Investigator: Please respond to the questions below. The IRB will utilize your responses to evaluate your protocol submission.

1. ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** Does the James Madison University Institutional Review Board define the project as ***research?***

The James Madison University IRB defines "research" as a "*systematic* investigation designed to develop or contribute to *generalizable knowledge*."

All research involving human participants conducted by James Madison University faculty, staff, and students is subject to IRB review.

Some, but not all, studies that involve human participants are considered research and are subject to full or expedited IRB review, including those:

- intended to satisfy the academic requirements for Independent Study, Bachelor's Essay, Honors/Senior Thesis, or the Master's Thesis;
- intended or expected to result in publication, presentation outside the classroom, or public dissemination in some other form;
- conducted outside the classroom and/or departmental research participant pool if they involve
  - -- external funding
  - -- minors (*i.e.*, persons under the age of 18),
  - -- a targeted population of adults whose ability to freely give informed consent may be compromised (*i.e.*, persons who are socio-economically, educationally, or linguistically disadvantaged, cognitively impaired, elderly, terminally ill, or incarcerated),
  - -- pregnant women and/or fetuses who may be put at risk of physical harm,
  - -- a topic of a sensitive or personal nature, the examination or reporting of which may place the research participant at more than minimal risk, or
  - -- any type of activity that places research participants at more than minimal risk.

Other studies are eligible to *request* exemption from IRB review, including those

- conducted solely within the confines of the classroom or within a departmental research participant pool if they
  - -- are a general requirement of a course,
  - -- have the sole purpose of developing the student's research skills, and
  - -- will be overseen by a faculty member;
- conducted outside the classroom and outside departmental research participant pools, provided they do not involve minors, do not target special adult populations, do not pose a risk of physical harm to pregnant women and fetuses, do not deal with a topic of sensitive or personal nature, or do not involve any type of activity that places the participants at more than minimal risk (see details above); and provided the investigator does not intend to publish the results or share them with others in a public forum (i.e. conference presentations, senior theses).
- that are part of a larger research project that has current James Madison University IRB approval; or
- that are part of a larger research project that has current approval of a registered IRB at another institution, provided that, if research participants are to be recruited at James Madison University, the University's IRB has given permission for such on-campus recruitment.

2. ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** Are the human participants in your study ***living*** individuals?

3. ☒ **YES** ☐ **NO** Will you obtain data through ***intervention*** or ***interaction*** with these individuals?

"Intervention" includes both physical procedures by which data are gathered (*e.g.*, measurement of heart rate or venipuncture) and manipulations of the participant or the participant's environment that are performed for research purposes. "Interaction" includes communication or interpersonal contact between the investigator and participant (*e.g.*, surveying or interviewing).

4. ☐ **YES** ☒ **NO** Will you obtain ***identifiable private information*** about these individuals?

"Private information" includes information about behavior that occurs in a context in which an individual can reasonably expect that no observation or recording is taking place, or information provided for specific purposes which the individual can reasonably expect will not be made public (*e.g.*, a medical record or student record). "Identifiable" means that the identity of the participant may be ascertained by the investigator or associated with the information (*e.g.*, by name, code number, pattern of answers, etc.).

5. ☐ **YES** ☒ **NO** Does the study present ***more than minimal risk*** to the participants?

"Minimal risk" means that the risks of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. Note that the concept of risk goes beyond physical risk and includes psychological, emotional, or behavioral risk as well as risks to employability, economic well-being, social standing, and risks of civil and criminal liability.

CERTIFICATIONS:

For James Madison University to obtain a Federal Wide Assurance (FWA) with the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, **all** research staff working with human participants must sign this form and receive training in ethical guidelines and regulations. "Research staff" is defined as persons who have direct and substantive involvement in proposing, performing, reviewing, or reporting research and includes students fulfilling these roles as well as their faculty advisors. The Office of Sponsored Programs maintains a roster of all researchers who have completed training within the past three years.

By signing below, the Responsible Researcher(s), and the Faculty Advisor (if applicable), certifies that he/she is familiar with the ethical guidelines and regulations regarding the protection of human research participants from research risks. In addition, he/she agrees to abide by all sponsor and university policies and procedures in conducting the research. He/she further certifies that he/she has completed training regarding human participant research ethics within the last three years.

Test module **at OSP website http://www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irbtraining.html**

Name of Researcher(s)	Signature of Researcher(s) and Faculty Advisor (if applicable)	Date	Training Completed
Jessica Marie Cave		**07/29/10**	☒
			☐
			☐
Signature of Faculty Advisor also required (if Student protocol) ⇨		**07/29/10**	☒

For additional training interests visit the National Institutes of Health Web Tutorial at: *http://cme.nci.nih.gov/*

To Submit a Complete protocol, this document should include the following:

- Human Research Review Request form (i.e. *the questions above*)
- IRB Checklist (included on this form)
- Research Narrative (use the categories indicated below. 10 pages maximum, do *not* include your literature review)
- Additional relevant research materials (i.e. letter of consent, questionnaire, survey, where used)

PLEASE SUBMIT AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF YOUR **ENTIRE** PROTOCOL TO JMU_GRANTS@JMU.EDU PLEASE PROVIDE A **SIGNED** HARD COPY OF THE RESEARCH REVIEW REQUEST FORM TO: OFFICE OF SPONSORED PROGRAMS, MSC 5728, JAMES MADISON ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEX, BLDG #6, SUITE 26

Appendix B

English and Spanish Letter of Consent

English | Español

Purpose of Study and Identification of Investigator
You are being asked to participate in a confidential research study conducted by Jessica Cave, a student at James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of parents toward youth programs. Ultimately, the data collected from this study will help interested parties to better understand values and attitudes of parents.

Potential Risks & Benefits
The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study. Potential benefits from participation in this study include helping assist in the opening of a new youth center.

Research Procedures
This study consists of an online survey that will be administered to individual participants using a secure online survey tool; Qualtrics. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of multiple choice questions related to sports, activities, mentoring programs, and other related issues. Your time investment is expected to be approximately five to ten minutes.

Anonymity
The results of this research will be aggregated and no individual participants will be identified in any way to anyone. Individual responses will be anonymously obtained and recorded online through a secure online survey tool (e.g., Qualtrics), and data will be kept in the strictest anonymity. The results of this project will not include the respondent's identity. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. All data will be stored in a secure location. Final aggregate results will be made available to participants upon request.

Participation & Withdrawal
Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions
You may have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion. If you have any questions about the study, contact Jessica Cave at cavejm@jmu.edu.

Giving of Consent
I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age. By clicking on the following survey link, I am consenting to participate in this research.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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English | Español

Propósito del estudio e identificación del Investigador

Se le pide participar en un estudio de investigación confidencial llevada a cabo por Jessica Cave, un estudiante de la Universidad James Madison. El propósito de este estudio es examinar las actitudes de los padres respecto de los programas para jóvenes. En última instancia, los datos recogidos en este estudio ayudará a las partes interesadas a comprender mejor los valores y las actitudes de los padres.

Posibles riesgos y beneficios

El investigador no percibe más que la minimización de riesgos de su participación en este estudio. Los beneficios potenciales de la participación en este estudio incluyen ayudar a contribuir a la apertura de un nuevo centro para jóvenes.

Procedimientos de Investigación

Este estudio consiste en una encuesta en línea que será administrada a los participantes individuales utilizando una herramienta de encuesta en línea seguro; Qualtrics. Se le pedirá dar respuesta a una serie de preguntas de opción múltiple relacionadas con los deportes, actividades, programas de mentores, y otras cuestiones conexas. Su inversión de tiempo se espera que sea aproximadamente de cinco a diez minutos.

Anonimato

Los resultados de esta investigación serán agregados y los participantes individuales se identificarán en modo alguno a nadie. Las respuestas individuales se obtuvieron de forma anónima y grabado en línea a través de una herramienta de encuesta en línea seguro (por ejemplo, Qualtrics), y los datos se mantendrán en la más estricta el anonimato. Los resultados de este proyecto no incluirá la identidad del entrevistado. El investigador se reserva el derecho a utilizar y publicar los datos no identificables. Todos los datos serán almacenados en un lugar seguro. Los resultados de la Final se pondrá a disposición de los participantes a su petición.

Participación y Retiro

Su participación es totalmente voluntaria. Usted es libre de optar por no participar. Si decide participar, usted puede retirar en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo.

Cuestiones

Usted puede tener preguntas o preocupaciones durante el tiempo de su participación en este estudio, o después de su terminación. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, comuníquese con Jessica Cueva en cavejm@jmu.edu.

Dé su consentimiento

He leído este formulario de consentimiento y entiendo lo que se pide de mí como participante en este estudio. Doy mi libre consentimiento para participar. El investigador me proporcionó una copia de este formulario. Certifico que soy mayor de 18 años de edad. Al hacer clic en el enlace siguiente encuesta, estoy dando mi consentimiento para participar en esta investigación.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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Appendix C

English Survey

English | Español

Purpose of Study and Identification of Investigator
You are being asked to participate in a confidential research study conducted by Jessica Cave, a student at James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of parents toward youth programs. Ultimately, the data collected from this study will help interested parties to better understand values and attitudes of parents.

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Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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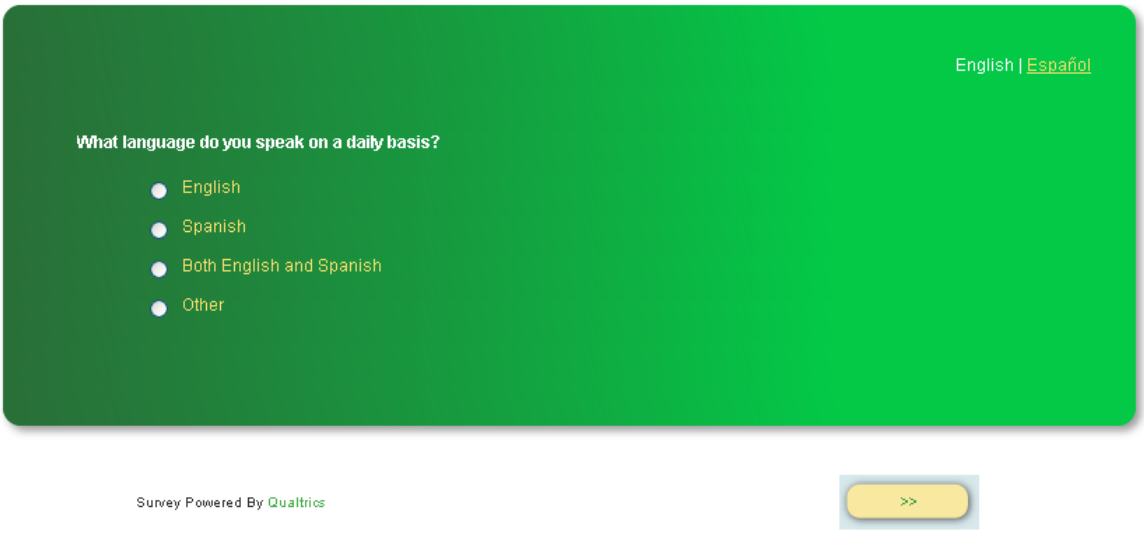
English | Español
What language do you speak on a daily basis?
English
Spanish
Both English and Spanish
Other
Survey Powered By Qualtrics
>>

English | Español

How many of your children enjoy the following activities? Please check all boxes that apply under the correct age columns.

	Age 0 to 2	Age 3 to 4	Age 5 to 6	Age 7 to 8	Age 9 to 10	Age 11 to 12	Age 13 to 14	Age 15 to 16	Age 17 to 18
After-school activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sports activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Skateboarding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BMX-riding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Martial Arts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Soccer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kick-ball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Football	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Basketball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Volleyball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tennis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Jump rope	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Video games	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Board games	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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English | Español

Would your children benefit from the following mentoring programs? Please check all boxes that apply that would benefit them under the correct age columns.

	Age 0 to 2	Age 3 to 4	Age 5 to 6	Age 7 to 8	Age 9 to 10	Age 11 to 12	Age 13 to 14	Age 15 to 16	Age 17 to 18
Mentoring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peer mentoring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Homework help	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Class selection help	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please check the boxes that describe how you feel about the following current program categories.

	Dislike Very Much	Dislike Slightly	Like Slightly	Like Very Much
Programs at Quarles	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other Programs	☐	☐	☐	☐

Thank you for taking this survey. Once you click the next button, your survey will be submitted.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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Appendix D

Spanish Survey

English | Español

Propósito del estudio e identificación del Investigador

Se le pide participar en un estudio de investigación confidencial llevada a cabo por Jessica Cave, un estudiante de la Universidad James Madison. El propósito de este estudio es examinar las actitudes de los padres respecto de los programas para jóvenes. En última instancia, los datos recogidos en este estudio ayudará a las partes interesadas a comprender mejor los valores y las actitudes de los padres.

Posibles riesgos y beneficios

El investigador no percibe más que la minimización de riesgos de su participación en este estudio. Los beneficios potenciales de la participación en este estudio incluyen ayudar a contribuir a la apertura de un nuevo centro para jóvenes.

Procedimientos de Investigación

Este estudio consiste en una encuesta en línea que será administrada a los participantes individuales utilizando una herramienta de encuesta en línea seguro; Qualtrics. Se le pedirá dar respuesta a una serie de preguntas de opción múltiple relacionadas con los deportes, actividades, programas de mentores, y otras cuestiones conexas. Su inversión de tiempo se espera que sea aproximadamente de cinco a diez minutos.

Anonimato

Los resultados de esta investigación serán agregados y los participantes individuales se identificarán en modo alguno a nadie. Las respuestas individuales se obtuvieron de forma anónima y grabado en línea a través de una herramienta de encuesta en línea seguro (por ejemplo, Qualtrics), y los datos se mantendrán en la más estricta el anonimato. Los resultados de este proyecto no incluirá la identidad del entrevistado. El investigador se reserva el derecho a utilizar y publicar los datos no identificables. Todos los datos serán almacenados en un lugar seguro. Los resultados de la Final se pondrá a disposición de los participantes a su petición.

Participación y Retiro

Su participación es totalmente voluntaria. Usted es libre de optar por no participar. Si decide participar, usted puede retirar en cualquier momento sin consecuencias de ningún tipo.

Cuestiones

Usted puede tener preguntas o preocupaciones durante el tiempo de su participación en este estudio, o después de su terminación. Si usted tiene alguna pregunta sobre el estudio, comuníquese con Jessica Cueva en cavejm@jmu.edu.

Dé su consentimiento

He leído este formulario de consentimiento y entiendo lo que se pide de mí como participante en este estudio. Doy mi libre consentimiento para participar. El investigador me proporcionó una copia de este formulario. Certifico que soy mayor de 18 años de edad. Al hacer clic en el enlace siguiente encuesta, estoy dando mi consentimiento para participar en esta investigación.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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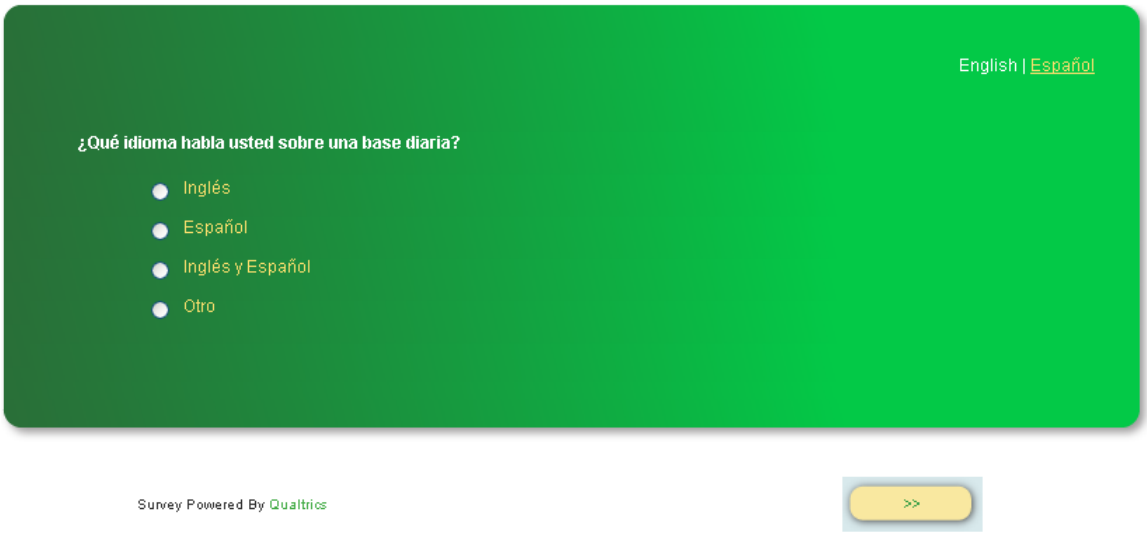
English | Español
¿Qué idioma habla usted sobre una base diaria?
Inglés
Español
Inglés y Español
Otro
Survey Powered By Qualtrics
>>

English | Español

¿Cuántos de sus niños disfruten de las siguientes actividades? Por favor, marque todas las casillas que correspondan en las columnas edad correcta.

	Edad 0 a 2	Edad 3 a 4	Edad 5 a 6	Edad 7 a 8	Edad 9 a 10	Edad 11 a 12	Edad 13 a 14	Edad 15 a 16	Edad 17 a 18
Después de las actividades extraescolares	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Actividades deportivas	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Patín embarque	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
BMX-equitación	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Artes Marciales	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fútbol	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kick-ball	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fútbol de Americana	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Baloncesto	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Voleibol	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Tenis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Saltar la cuerda	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Video juegos	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Juegos de mesa	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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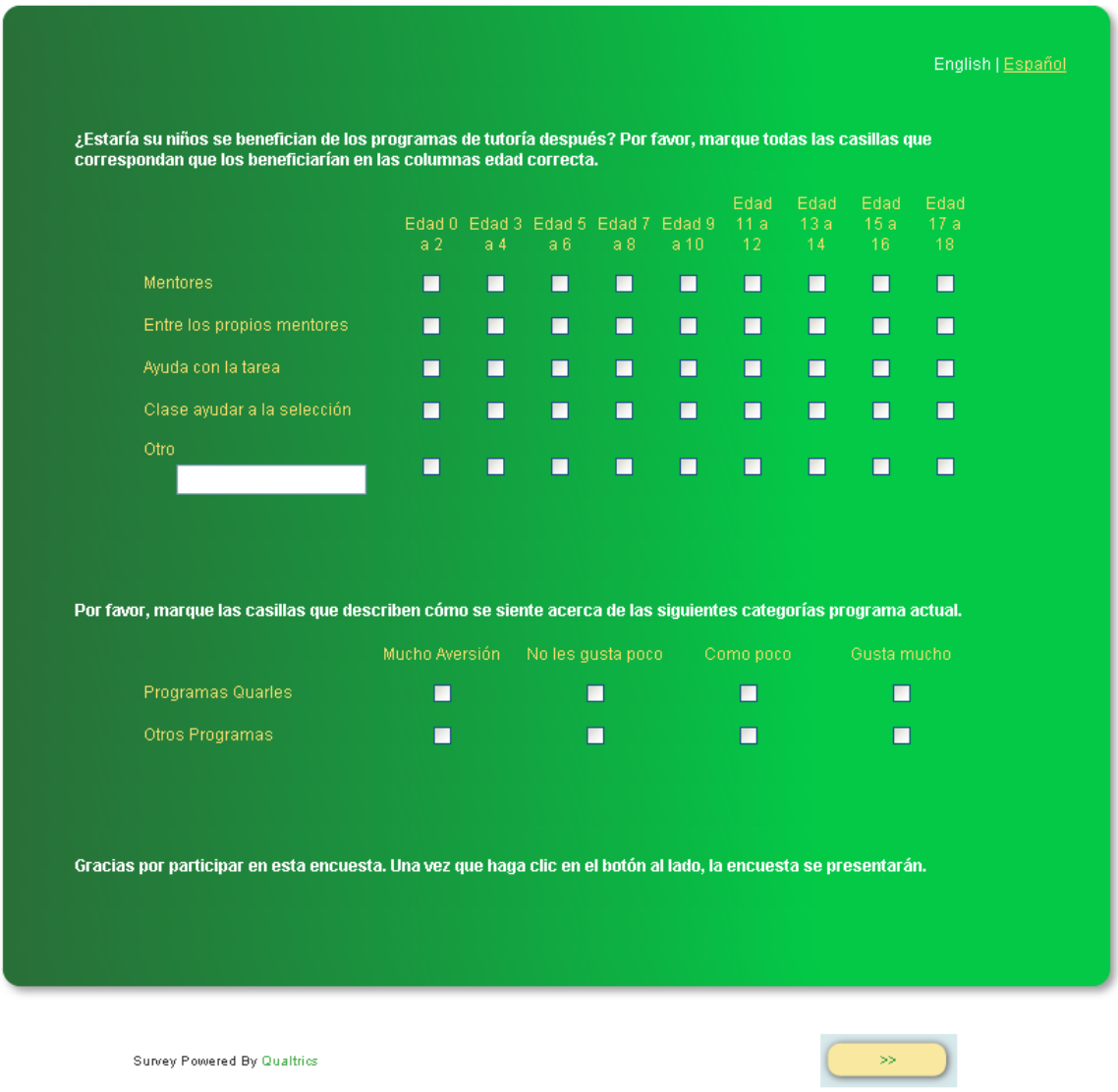

English | Español

¿Estaría su niños se benefician de los programas de tutoría después? Por favor, marque todas las casillas que correspondan que los beneficiarían en las columnas edad correcta.

	Edad 0 a 2	Edad 3 a 4	Edad 5 a 6	Edad 7 a 8	Edad 9 a 10	Edad 11 a 12	Edad 13 a 14	Edad 15 a 16	Edad 17 a 18
Mentores	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Entre los propios mentores	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ayuda con la tarea	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clase ayudar a la selección	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Otro	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Por favor, marque las casillas que describen cómo se siente acerca de las siguientes categorías programa actual.

	Mucho Aversión	No les gusta poco	Como poco	Gusta mucho
Programas Quarles	☐	☐	☐	☐
Otros Programas	☐	☐	☐	☐

Gracias por participar en esta encuesta. Una vez que haga clic en el botón al lado, la encuesta se presentarán.

Survey Powered By Qualtrics

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