

DETERMINANTS OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PRIMARY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

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Participation in organized nonacademic activities has been found to provide adolescents with opportunities to socialize around shared interests (Medrich et al., 1982; Oden, 1995), build a sense of accomplishment and belonging (Gottman & Mettetal, 1986; Merry, 2000; Costello, Pickens, & Fenton, 2001), and develop a positive sense of identity and self-efficacy (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Larson, 2000; Zarbatany, Hartmann, & Rankin, 1990; Holland & Andre, 1987). We have used the term *primary supports* to refer to a wide variety of voluntary activities and programs that engage young people and support their development (Wynn, et al., 1994; Whalen & Wynn, 1995; Merry, 2000; Costello, Pickens, & Fenton, 2001). Of particular interest for this paper are the determinants of participation in primary supports. Although a great deal of “folk” knowledge has accumulated among practitioners regarding factors that influence participation, there is a need to understand the antecedents of participation in primary supports. In the design and administration of youth programs and activities, practitioners need to know how to engage the young people who can most benefit. Evaluators need to know whether *outcomes* are a function of program influences, selection factors, or interactions between program and participant characteristics. In our review of the primary supports literature and the wider literature on social participation, this question does not appear to have been addressed systematically.

The question of what determines participation in activities and institutions outside of political and voluntary associations is not well understood. Although researchers have examined participation in social service programs (see Clark & Winje, 1998; Clinton, 1992; Olds & Kitzman, 1993; Ramey et al., 1992; Daro & McCurdy, 1993), little conceptual development of

antecedents has occurred (see McCurdy and Daro, 2001 for an exception). The majority of studies have to do with the *effects* of program participation rather than what influences participation in the first place. For youth services, the paucity of research in this area is acute. With a few notable exceptions (Ngai & Cheung, 1997; Garton & Pratt, 1991), researchers have yet to examine systematically why youths engage in organized out-of-school activities such as youth groups, scouting, sports programs, or any number of extra curricular activities provided through their schools.

Conceptualizations of Participation

Participation can be conceptualized in a number of different ways, depending on the disciplinary orientation of the researcher. For example, political scientists examine participation in voting, joining political parties, engaging in protest, or getting involved in “interest group” activities (Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Sociologists on the other hand, have studied participation in voluntary associations and charitable organizations (Knoke, 1986). Meanwhile, organizational researchers and social psychologists have viewed participation as an indicator of involvement in and influence over decision-making processes in work, political, and social contexts (Chell, 1985; Richardson, 1983; Shaw, Robbin, & Belser, 1981; Vroom, 1960). In terms of youth, some researchers have explored the determinants of participation in school and extracurricular activities (McNeal, 1998, 1999; Morgan, 1980), while others have examined children’s and adolescents’ decisions about how to allocate their leisure time (Medrich et al., 1982; Fitzgerald, 1995; Garton & Pratt, 1991; Mulkeen 1992).

For this review, we looked for research that conceptualized participation as an indicator of *membership and active involvement* in voluntary and human service organizations, that is, why people *join* groups or activities. We began by taking an inventory of major sociological and

psychological variables that have been linked with participation levels. We then examined three alternative ways of examining the participation phenomenon and drew a set of lessons learned from our review of the literature.

What Variables Matter in the Study of Youth Participation?

The Demographic Perspective

The most conventional way of thinking about the determinants of participation is through the comparison of demographic characteristics of participants and nonparticipants. For reasons discussed below, knowledge of demographic factors alone sheds little light on the determinants of participation. Nonetheless, this perspective provides a convenient departure point for our investigation.

Race/ethnicity. Several studies have found lower levels of minority participation in political and other activities (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; London & Giles, 1987; McNeal, 1998). However, when socioeconomic characteristics are controlled, the effect of race diminishes or disappears (London & Giles, 1987; Medrich et al., 1982). Lower rates of participation, at least among African American adults, may have to do with intentional or perceived exclusionary practices (Phillip, 1995). Additional research has demonstrated that participation levels of different racial and ethnic groups vary widely depending on the particular activity being offered (Garton & Pratt, 1991; Medrich et al., 1982).

Socioeconomic status. Research confirms a clear relationship between participation levels and socioeconomic status (SES). Across almost every context and population studied, higher SES correlated with higher participation rates (Cohen & Linton, 1995; Evans, 1987; Holland & Andre 1987; Little, 1992; McNeal, 1998, 1999; Medrich et al., 1982; Simms, 1983; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995; Searle & Jackson, 1985; Cross, 1979; Rockhill, K.). In

addition, research on leisure constraints has consistently found positive correlations between lower socioeconomic status and the presence of various barriers to participation in selected activities (Searle & Jackson, 1985). However, other factors, often highly correlated to SES, may underlie the correlation between SES and participation rates. For example, Medrich et al. found that children in lower SES neighborhoods often cited transportation problems and the presence of fees as reasons for nonparticipation.

Community. Little research has been done on how the community context affects the likelihood of participation in organized activities. Stemming from Wilson's (1987) work on poverty effects, some researchers have suggested that such community factors as social cohesion and social capital can facilitate or inhibit involvement in human service programs and voluntary associations (McCurdy & Daro, 2001). To some degree, the gap in research has begun to be filled by two volumes of research on neighborhood effects of poverty by Brooks-Gunn, Duncan, & Aber (1997), and by other researchers seeking to mount neighborhood-oriented interventions (Berry, 1994).

Gender. Adult participation in political or other civic activities appears not to differ along gender lines (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady, 1995). Moreover, research finds little overall difference between adult males and females in participation in recreational and leisure activities (Searle & Jackson, 1985), although some research suggests that women face more barriers to participation than males (Shaw, 1994). However, Evans's (1987) review of research on youth participation in organizations in the United Kingdom reports lower participation among girls. Also, Medrich et al. (1982) and Garton and Pratt (1991) found major differences between boys and girls in the *type* of activity engaged in.

Age. Age is important in a limited and particular sense. In Evans's (1987) review of the literature on participation in the UK's youth service organizations, she notes that participation in youth services drops off precipitously among older adolescents. A number of other studies suggest that as they transition into adult roles, youth have lower participation rates in organized activities (Garton & Pratt, 1991; Holland & Andre, 1987). This may be due to jobs, greater control over free time, access to transportation, and perceptions of youth programs as less mature activities.

Beyond Demographic Factors

School achievement. Many studies have considered whether classroom performance or standardized test scores are correlated with higher rates of participation. The literature suggests that high academic achievement is generally correlated with higher levels of social participation, such as voluntarism (Hanks & Eckland, 1976; Lindsay, 1984), extracurricular activities or youth programs (Medrich et al., 1982; Littell, 1992; McNeal, 1998).

Educational history of youth and parents. In a review of research on participation in adult education, Cross (1979) argues that prior educational attainment has a significant effect on future educational participation. She notes that often what is attributed to social class is actually a function of one's *prior positive experiences* in education. Highly educated people are more likely to have had positive educational experiences and thus are more likely to participate in organized education-related activities. Whether this is helpful in terms of understanding youth participation is open to question because Cross is speculating about *adult* participation in *continuing education*, not youth participation in primary supports programs. However, since parents are often a major influence on the choices of youth (Hultsman, 1993; Maurer & Bokemeier, 1984; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995), this finding suggests that a *parent's* prior experience in

various organizational settings may affect how they influence their children's participation in similar settings, other things being equal.

Parents' attitudes and beliefs. Regardless of their origins, there is evidence that parental attitudes and beliefs impact children's participation in youth activities because parents have direct control over how their children spend their time. They have a heavy influence on their child's evaluation of opportunities before them and on their access to those opportunities. Studies of parental influences on participation in community, political and extra curricular activities, and church attendance (Hultsman, 1993; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995; Hoge & Petrillo, 1978) suggest that parents influence participation in certain activities through their own behavior modeling, (Chan & Elder, 1999), positive reinforcement of participation, (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000), and control over such resources as transportation (McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995). Research on political participation suggests that the basic orientation to participate may be one that is socialized into children (Verba, Schlozman, & Brady., 1995). Just as the children of political party volunteers are more likely to volunteer themselves, it is likely that parents who exhibit pro-participation attitudes in other domains will positively influence their children's decisions as well. Also, Evans's (1987) review of the literature on participation in out-of-school activities in Britain cited studies among working class parents whose negative attitudes toward middle class youth organizations lowered participation rates of their children.

Individual psychology. Individual variations are presumed to exist in young people's motivation to seek out and engage in organized activities. Differences in temperament, reactivity, and need for stimulation predispose individuals to greater and lesser degrees of interest in new experiences, new acquaintances, and group activities (Kagan, 1994). Some of these inclinations are innate and some are conditioned by previous experience as youth seek an optimal balance for

themselves between novelty and sameness, activity and inactivity, sociability and isolation. During times of great stress, or following disappointments and traumas, most people pull back from investing in new activities and social groups.

Peers. Coleman's early studies of peer cultures (1961) suggest that among youth in general and disaffected youth in particular, decisions regarding participation in primary support activities or extra curricular activities are heavily influenced by peers. Evans's (1987) review of participation in UK youth organizations cites a number of studies confirming the power of peer attitudes toward the notion of "joining" in general as well as attitudes toward youth organizations themselves and the values they represent. An organization's ability to tap credibly into such networks of friendship and camaraderie is considered a key aspect in assessing program quality and outreach.

Program structure. Finally, some studies have pointed out that participation is not solely determined by the individual and his or her social environment. The orientation of institutions toward potential participants also has a great effect on who does and does not participate in a given activity or program. Education research has demonstrated the role school policies play in stratifying student participation along class lines. For example, McNeil's (1998) study of high school extracurricular activities demonstrates how students of lower SES are often at a disadvantage in terms of accessing high school extracurricular activities because they lack the resources to make the kinds of sustained commitment to securing access to prized activities. Other studies have shown that structural factors like school size and teacher preferences negatively affect participation among lower SES youth (Morgan & Alwin, 1980; Barker & Gump, 1964; Lindsay, 1982; Quiroz, Gonzalez, & Frank, 1996). Finally, research on attrition in the human services has begun to draw attention to the importance of programmatic factors that

influence participation, such as recruitment strategies (Clinton, 1992), provider-participant interaction (McCurdy, Hurvis, & Clark, 1996), and provider education and training (Olds & Kitzman, 1993; Wasik, Bryant, & Lyons, 1990).

Conceptual Models of Participation

Although no specific theory of youth participation in organized activities has been articulated, our review of the literature has identified three distinct conceptual models of participation each of which is anchored in social psychology. They diverge considerably in their applications.

The Social Psychological Model

Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) social psychological model provides a general basis for conceptualizing participation as a decision-making process. It focuses on the individual as the unit of analysis and seeks to specify the cognitive process that leads to decisive action. The model views behavior as a function of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions and has been applied to a number of decision-making and behavioral situations, including participation in formal and informal activities (Grotelueschen & Caulley, 1977; Chell, 1985; McCurdy & Daro, 2001; Fishbein et al., 1997).

The model can be applied to the examination of how youth make decisions about participation in youth program activities. From this perspective, researchers are directed to inquire about youths' *beliefs* about a particular youth program that may be derived from direct experience with the program, information about it from friends, program staff, brochures, or logical inference ("it is a youth program, therefore it must be like X").

One forms an attitude toward the idea of participation in organized activities from one's beliefs about participation. One's *attitude* toward participation in the program then emerges from one's evaluation of information about each attribute of the program. An attitude, in Fishbein and

Ajzen's model, is essentially an affective disposition toward the whole program, like feeling "hot" or "cold" about the prospect of joining it.

Based on this subjective feeling toward the program, one forms an *intention* to participate or not. If one is positively disposed toward most of the attributes of the program and is not overly negative about participation in general, then an intention to attend an informational meeting or orientation to the program might be formed. However, intentions are also a product of a normative sense of how one's participation will be seen by important reference groups such as peers or parents. It is possible that although a young person might be individually drawn to participate in an activity, he or she may not do so because of external social influences.

McCurdy and Daro Model

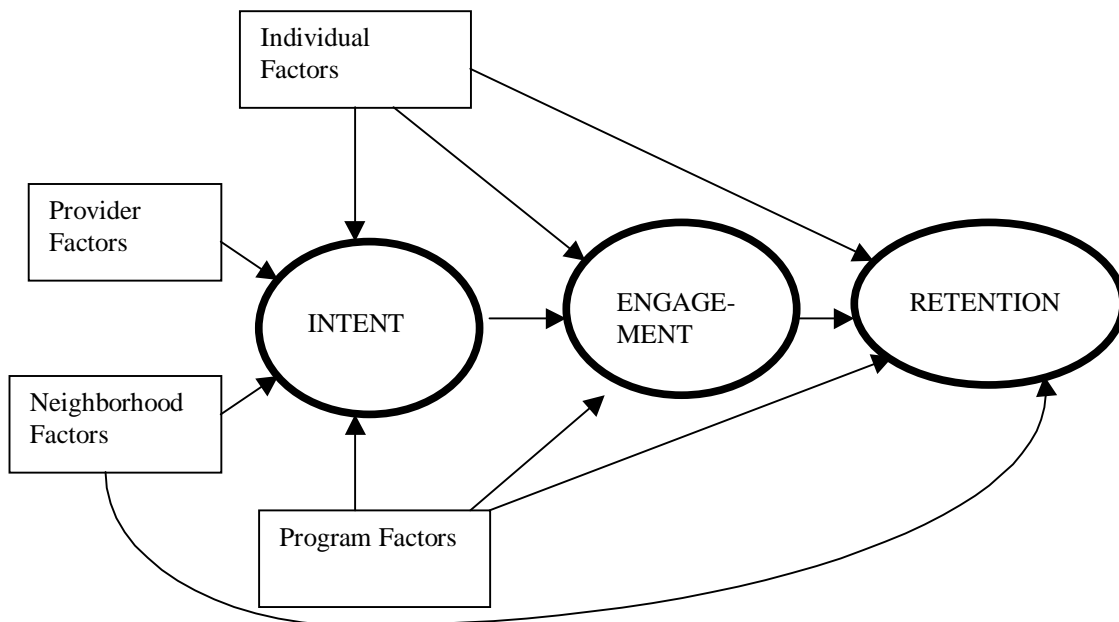
The Fishbein and Ajzen model lies at the heart of a promising conceptualization by McCurdy and Daro (2001) who have incorporated it into an ambitious attempt to build a theory of adult participation in human service programs. Although their theory does not explicitly address the question of *youth* participation in primary supports, it seeks to explain participant involvement in voluntary parenting programs, and in so doing may provide a valuable generic base from which to draw insights into youth participation.

The model defines participation expansively, breaking the concept into three sequential pieces. First, it builds on Fishbein and Ajzen's model to examine how one forms an *intention* to seek services; second, it explores engagement in services—that is, whether one actually initiates contact with a service program; and third, it addresses whether participation is maintained.

The McCurdy and Daro model also organizes the factors that influence the sequence of decisions. At each stage of decision making, the model posits influences on four ecological levels: the *individual decision maker*, the *service-providing organization*, the *program activity*

itself, and, finally, the *neighborhood or community* in which participation is located. Figure 1 below illustrates how variables in each of these ecological levels may impact individual decision making as well as how each stage may influence subsequent stages in the process.

Figure 1. Path Model of McCurdy and Daro’s Conceptualization of Determinants of Participation in Human Services Programs



For example, McCurdy and Daro posit that all four types of ecological factors contribute significantly in the first stage of the participation decision-making process: the formation of an *intention* to seek help from a service provider. At the individual level, attitudes toward the program, level of need, and readiness to change are all thought to influence the basic intention to participate. But individual traits do not act alone in the formation of intention. Provider factors, such as the reputation and auspices of the program and the timing of enrollment also matter, as do program factors, such as the competence and style of the intake worker. Finally, the type of community within which the decision is made influences intent. In places where social

disorganization is high, trust is low, and social cohesion is scarce, participation in service programs are predicted to be lower than normal, all other things being equal.

The McCurdy and Daro model is, as far as we know, the most comprehensive attempt to map the process that guides an individual's decision to participate in an organized social service. Like the Fishbein and Ajzen model, it asserts that individuals go through a sequence of decisions before becoming active participants. In terms of helping practitioners understand participation rates, the model points out that there are many points and considerations that might lead one to *not* join at all or, to *not participate* regularly. However, it also recognizes that many of these factors could come under the control of human service organizations, and thus programs could theoretically have considerable influence over demand for their services.

It should be noted that the McCurdy and Daro model may have limited applicability to participation in primary support programs because it predicts participation in human services programs targeted at adults who have pressing concerns that, we assume, motivate the individual to seek some kind of help. Primary support programs deal with considerably different circumstances in that there is seldom an urgent motivating factor for potential participants other than an interest in the activity. The choice of whether or not to participate in primary supports is more analogous to a leisure time allocation than to a decision about how to get help for a pressing personal/family concern.

The Sequential Specificity Model

A second perspective, which directly addresses voluntary participation in organized youth programs/activities, has been developed by Ngai and Cheung in a study of participation among adolescents in youth centers in Hong Kong (1997). Building on previous work by Smith (1980) on social and recreational participation, and Goel (1980) on political participation, Ngai and

Cheung apply what they call a sequential specificity approach to the question of participation in youth program activities. This perspective sees the participation decision changing considerably as one gets more and more involved in an organization or institution.

Ngai and Cheung break potential and existing youth center participants into three categories based on their level of involvement in the organization. First are the *non-participant non-goers*. These are youths who have nothing to do with a youth center at all and have not even entered it. When considering participation, these youth are assessing general information about the youth center and its basic environment (“Is this a place I want to be?”). Another group Ngai and Cheung identify are the *non-participant-goers*. They may hang out at the youth center, but they do not engage in any programs or activities. Once they become familiar with the general atmosphere of a space, the participation question hinges on a more specific set of criteria based on actual knowledge of the youth center and its programs. The final group are the *program participants*, who have a very high level of knowledge and information about the youth center in general and about a variety of particular program activities. Participation decisions made by this group are expected to be the most discerning and specific of any group. In their analysis of data, Ngai and Cheung find support for the hypotheses of the sequential specificity model and find that respondents’ attitudes toward youth programs are considerably better predictors of intentions to participate than are socioeconomic and demographic background variables. The sequential specificity approach appears to be a promising way of analyzing youth participation in primary supports. It demonstrates that participation decisions can *change* as involvement in a program deepens, giving us a more contextualized way of examining the issue of participation. On the other hand, its focus on the types of decisions may come at the expense of attention to the

content of those decisions. The model offers little insight into the role that individual background characteristics such as race or class play on decision making.

The Leisure Constraints Model

A third way of understanding participation decisions has been formulated by scholars of leisure studies who are interested in what individuals and groups do in their leisure time. Within the field, there has emerged a subfield that studies constraints or barriers to leisure activities (Jackson, 1988; Wade, 1985). Over the past 15 years, this group of scholars has developed perhaps the most sustained empirical study of recreational participation. Essentially, these studies attempt to explain why some individuals are less likely to join activities than others, as well as the characteristics of individuals who drop out of activities. Most research on constraints focuses on adults and examines not participation itself, but rather nonparticipation. However, given the paucity of research that focuses specifically on the determinants of program participation, leisure constraints research appears to be a promising base from which to approach the issue of youth participation.

The perspective has a number of strengths in comparison to the alternatives we have so far examined. First, as opposed to McCurdy and Daro's model of participation, it focuses on a set of activities that is more analogous to the study of primary supports participation than human service program participation. Participation in primary support programs and leisure activities share a common feature not applicable to participation in human services programs: both are *voluntary*. In each case, participants do not face the same pressure to participate as they normally do in problem-based human services. They are not compelled to engage with the organization for reasons beyond their own interests and desires. In this sense, leisure activities are more

analogous to primary supports than human services even though youth programs can be construed as a form of human service work.

Second, as opposed to the largely theoretical sequential specificity approach introduced by Ngai and Cheung, the literature on leisure constraints includes a body of theoretical and empirical research that offers a diversity of perspectives and a temporal arc of development (Jackson, 1988). Leisure constraints researchers have sustained a dialogue on participation over a number of years, which has led to a steady development of empirical interrogation and theoretical propositions. Like Ngai and Cheung, the most advanced leisure constraints models also see participation as a sequential process of decisions about ever-more specific things. However, leisure scholars are pushing these models further and are proposing substantive hypotheses about what constrains or facilitates participation in different activities.

A Model of Participation Constraints

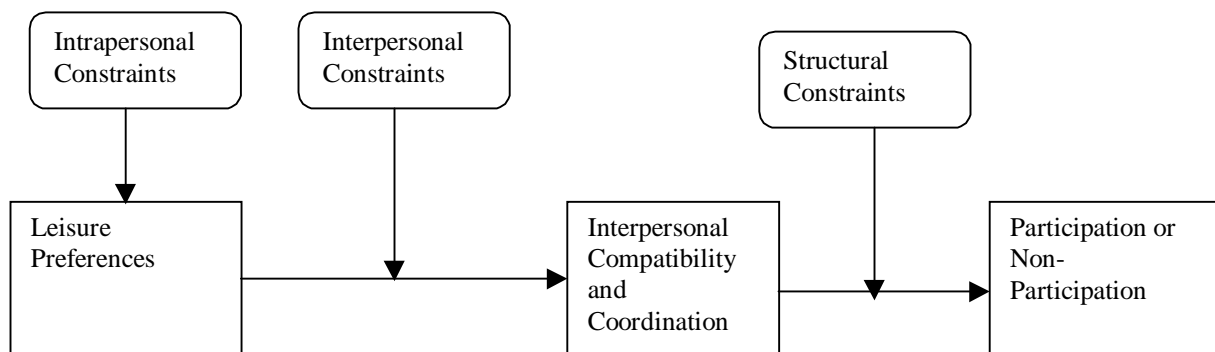
After a group of descriptive studies identified a limited set of general constraints to participation in a variety of popular activities (Jackson & Rucks, 1993; Hultsman, 1992), leisure constraints research took a major step forward with a series of articles that developed, in an iterative process, a model of how various constraints impact the likelihood of participation in organized activities (Iso-Ahola & Mannel, 1985; Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Jackson & Dunn, 1988; Crawford, Godbey, & Jackson, 1991; Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993).

Early conceptualizations of leisure constraints presented them as tangible barriers that prevented individuals from acting on their preferences (Iso-Ahola & Mannel, 1985). Crawford & Godbey, (1987) and Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, (1991) recognized the need to see constraints in a more complex light. Borrowing from social exchange theory, they reconceptualized constraints, defining them less as permanent barriers to participation and more

as movable obstacles that could be negotiated. They also recognized that constraints could operate on more than just the *structural* level. Rather than viewing them solely as tangible inhibitors of preference realization, they suggested that constraints might also represent the kinds of subtle forces that inhibit *formation* of a leisure preference in the first place.

Like the perspectives reviewed above, this model views participation as a decision-making process. It suggests that constraints impact a potential participant’s decision-making process at three levels: the intrapersonal level, the interpersonal level, and finally the conventional structural level (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2. A Hierarchical Model of Leisure Constraints (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991)



This sequence of decision making starts with the formation of preferences. At this point, *intrapersonal* constraints are thought to be the most powerful inhibitors to participation.

Empirically, the notion of constraints to forming a preference is difficult to prove. It suggests that one may have a latent disposition to, say, join a particular youth program, which then is thwarted by an internal thought process that is somehow constrained from rationally considering costs and benefits to participation. What constrains the formation of preferences are intrapersonal barriers such as “stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, kin and non-kin reference group attitudes, prior socialization into specific leisure activities, perceived self-skill, and subjective

evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities” (Crawford & Godbey, 1987. p. 122).

Interpersonal constraints come into play for those kinds of activities in which participation is contingent upon the participation or cooperation of others. Team sports, for example, demand a level of interpersonal compatibility in order for anyone to participate successfully. This kind of constraint may come in a number of forms. It may be a product of the leisure preferences of others (no one else wants to play tennis) or the quality of the relationship between activity partners or the will and whims of others (such as parents) who have power and influence over one’s participation in something (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Interpersonal constraints are generally thought to act as intervening variables on activities that demand interpersonal compatibility. That is, they interfere in one’s ability to translate preferences for engaging in an activity into actual participation in that activity.

Finally, in Crawford and Godbey’s conception, *structural* constraints are conceptualized, as “intervening factors between leisure preference and participation.” They are the easiest to investigate empirically because they are tangible and easily identified by respondents. Examples of structural barriers include: financial resources, place of residence and its accompanying climate and proximity to various resources, work schedules, availability of transportation, availability of programs and information regarding opportunities, and attitudes of reference groups concerning the appropriateness of particular activities (Crawford & Godbey, 1987).

Similar to the models discussed above, this “hierarchical” model suggests that participation is a function of a complex process by which formation of preferences, as well as actual participation in an activity, involve the negotiation of obstacles on multiple levels. According to Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991), leisure participation depends on the

successful confrontation of each constraint, whereas nonparticipation can occur because of constraints at any of several stages in the process.

In a subsequent paper, Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey (1993) extended the model to incorporate the idea of *constraint negotiation*. This alteration to the basic model acknowledged that constraints do not necessarily cause nonparticipation (Kay & Jackson, 1991; Shaw, Bonen, & McCabe, 1991). Rather, people seem to react to the presence of constraints in a number of divergent ways. Some responses to constraints are passive, leading to nonparticipation, while others are active and generally lead to continued participation, although often in altered forms (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993). What emerges is a revised model of the decision-making process that sees participation as determined by an interplay of forces that constrain, motivate, and facilitate participation as well as prompt the negotiation of constraints.

The literature on leisure constraints offers an original and insightful analysis of the participation process. Some researchers have attempted to extend the framework to incorporate issues particular to adolescent participation (Hultsman, 1993; McMeeking & Purkayastha, 1995). It appears that examining participation from the perspective of what interferes with the formation and exercise of preferences is a promising, but still nascent development.

Conclusions

Although there does not appear to be a single most appropriate theoretical perspective for investigating the question of *what determines youth participation in primary support programs*, a number of valuable insights have been gathered that merit reflection and will be helpful in the planning of future research. Participation is not a simple yes-no response to an opportunity but the outcome of a decision-making process that tends to proceed sequentially. Constraints can operate within young people, in their social skills, and in external factors such as financial or

transportation barriers. Individual resources of many types can make a difference in how individuals differ in negotiating constraints successfully. Finally, organizational and community factors can also constrain or facilitate participation. We end with a series of propositions about youth participation in organized primary supports activities.

Participation is Not a Dichotomous Choice

Participation does not end simply with the dichotomous choice of joining or not joining an activity. An important secondary stage, *engagement*, ensues, which determines whether or not one will stay in a program. For those interested in securing equitable and efficient service *delivery*, it is not very meaningful to know whether or not organizations can register a lot of people for programs, or get them in the door for a first program session. The real test is whether or not young people actually attend programs on a regular basis and participate in activities.

Participation Is a Dynamic Decision-Making Process

All three perspectives on participation reviewed in this paper model the individual's decision-making process. Each seeks to understand how individuals process information about participation, form an intention, and then act on that intention. Fishbein's and Ajzen's (1975) model of beliefs, attitudes, and intentions seems especially promising in terms of understanding how preferences to participate or not participate get formed. However, McCurdy and Daro's (2001) model and the leisure constraints model point out that there is much more to consider beyond the formation of an intention to participate. It may be fruitful to break the investigation of participation into two parts: the formation of intentions, and the process of negotiating various interpersonal and structural constraints.

The Decision-Making Process is Sequential

A basic sequence of intention and action is implied in all three models, but each emphasizes different substantive issues. To Ngai and Cheung, sequences are distinguished by the specificity of information being considered. In their view, the subject moves from general considerations about the program to ever-more particular ones as he or she gets more involved with a youth program. In McCurdy and Daro's view, what is important is how individual, organizational, and community level variables differentially impact decision making as one moves from the stage of intention to participate, to engagement with the program, to remaining in the program. Finally, from the point of view of the leisure constraints model, sequences are distinguished by the way constraints impact the potential participant as he or she moves from the intrapersonal realm of preference/intention formation, to the interpersonal realm of partnering with others to facilitate participation, to finally the structural realm of actually attending activities on a regular basis. The focus is on the tension between individuals' negotiating resources and forces of accumulated constraints at each level.

Three Levels of Influence Constrain Participation

Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey's (1991) leisure constraints model asserts that the determinants of participation are played out differently at the *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal*, and environmental or structural levels. Although the model may be limited because it focuses only on constraints and the personal assets used to negotiate those constraints, a promising next step in research would be to investigate how dynamics at each level of analysis actually affect intentions and actual participation of different types of individuals.

Participation May Be Understood By Examining the Interaction Between Constraints Faced and the Resources Possessed By Individuals

The constraints literature suggests that we can better understand variation in participation rates among different groups by looking at the number, type, and level of intensity of various constraints faced by individuals, and the number and types of resources that individuals possess to negotiate these constraints. Some have criticized this focus on constraints and constraint negotiation (Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997) as being overly narrow and not applicable to the larger question of determination of leisure participation. Others (Jackson, 1990) argue that such a model of participation, while still being developed, usefully exposes and explores the most important factors that separate participants from nonparticipants.

Organizational and Community Factors Matter

Although it makes sense to conceptualize participation in programs from the perspective of the individual decision maker, when we turn the focus to youth, and especially inner city youth, this approach risks neglecting important contextual variables that not only influence the formation of an intention or preference to participate, but also the translation of intention into actual participation. Both the McCurdy and Daro model and the leisure constraints model emphasize the importance of contextual factors. The McCurdy and Daro model explicitly directs attention toward community and organizational factors that might subtly play on individuals' likelihood of participating in primary supports offerings. To the degree that communities and organizations are adaptable, it is important to understand what features of each institution most influence whether or not young people avail themselves of primary supports programs and resources. The McCurdy and Daro model suggests that attention to each of these institutions may yield powerful results.

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