



Literature Review: Initial Findings

Exploring Supply and Demand for Out of School Opportunities in Minnesota

Mary Marczak and Ann Lochner
Applied Research Collaborative at the Center for 4-H and Community Youth Development
University of Minnesota Extension
www.extension.umn.edu/AppliedYouthResearch

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Study Overview

The 2005 Commission on Out of School Time Report, *Journeys into Community: Transforming Youth Opportunities for Learning and Development*¹; the 2005 Rand Report, *Making out of School Time Matter*²; and recommendations put forth by participants in the Applied Research Collaborative on Youth Development December 2005 retreat (See Appendix A). All concur that understanding what is and can be known about the supply and demand of out of school opportunities for youth in Minnesota are critical research questions to be addressed in assessing Minnesota out of school time capacity.

The Applied Research Collaborative on Youth Development at the Center for 4-H and Community Youth Development partnered with Youth Community Connections and their Minnesota Youth program and funding collaborators to design a study that would systematically explore issues related to the availability of out of school and after school opportunities for Minnesota youth, specifically:

- What can be known about the current supply of out of School opportunities.
- How adequately the current supply of out of school time opportunities meeting the needs of Minnesota's youth and families.
- What is known about how Minnesota young people are currently spending time during their out of school hours.
- To what extent can key factors affecting demand for and access to out of school opportunities be identified.

Focus of this Report

This report summarizes initial findings of a literature review conducted to learn what can be known about supply and demand of out of school opportunities from currently available Minnesota and national research. Select information from quantitative data analyses of the Minnesota Student Survey over the past three years is included to explore what can be known from survey results about Minnesota youth involvement in out of school and after school activities. The interplay of factors affecting supply and demand is explored through research findings in the field of out of school youth development and time more broadly.

Introduction: The Value of Out of School Time Opportunities for Youth

There is growing evidence that organized out-of-school time (OST) activities benefit young people socially, emotionally, and academically³. Given the potential benefits of OST activities as contributors to the development of youth, it is imperative to gain a broader understanding of who participates and why. Such an understanding is “crucial to address issues of access and equity and to document service gaps and to target resources accordingly”⁴.

Status of Supply and Demand Research

The review of the literature revealed a dearth of systematic documentation of supply and demand for Out of School Time (OST) programs. On the supply side, some community mapping strategies were used to profile different OST program resources available to youth and families. Some efforts also tracked private and public funding sources and where funds were going in terms of OST opportunities. Yet others attempted to account for the supply of opportunities by tracking major deliverers of youth programs, such as Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, YMCA/WYCA and 4H. However, variations in definitions of programs and OST opportunities and the processes for “counting” such opportunities were as numerous as there were studies, hindering a valid accounting of supply of OST opportunities.

Upon investigating the issue of demand, the scholars at Rand Corporation found many assertions, but few empirically based studies (surveys or historical data analysis) of current or projected demand.² Our own review of the literature on the demand side of the equation showed that studies were typically advocacy driven, and akin to opinion polls rather than studies. A current example of a study of demand getting much public press nationally is the After School Alliance --Household Survey of After School in America.⁵ To make the case that supply falls short of demand in terms of after-school programming, the study asked questions about after-school care for K-12 youth from 18,000 families across the nation. Questions around what young people are doing after-school most of the time, and how many are in self-care for some of the hours after school were asked to determine numbers of youth K-12 in self care. They determined that 34%, or 14 million K-12 children spend some time in self-care. However, the breakdown of youth in some self-care is as follows: 8-11% K-5, 34% 6-8th, and 51% 9-12th.

To determine demand, they asked those who are in self care...if a quality after-school program were available, how likely would you participate? While only 26% said they would likely participate, they multiplied that percentage by the census estimate of children, and determined that 22 million children would want to participate if a quality after-school program were available. Since they determined that only 6.5% of K-12 children in some self-care are currently in after-school programs (even though 66% of K-5 are in after-school programs), supply falls short of demand. One troubling limitation of the study is the fact that the K-12 age-span is too broad to understand the actual incidence of self-care and after-school participation. Another is the faulty logic that goes something like: self-care is uniformly detrimental for K-12 children and if more after-school programs were available, there will be fewer children in self-care. There is no evidence that if youth do participate in after-school programs, they still don't do some self care, nor that for older adolescents “self care” may have an entirely different meaning.

As has become evident through this literature review, understanding supply and demand of out of school opportunities is a much more complicated process than balancing available opportunities against the number of youth who are potential participants or consumers. Part of the challenge in calculating supply and demand is the variability across types of out of school settings in which programs exist, differences across program approaches and quality, access to programs, preferences of youth participants as well as the amount of time they attend-- all of which confound calculation of supply and demand.

Youth Participation as a Proxy for Understanding Supply-Demand

At present, most estimates of out of school supply and demand are derived by working backwards from patterns of participation in various types of programs in specific locations by demographic characteristics of youth.

Thus, arguably the best proxy for determining supply and demand for OST structured activities currently available in the field is data on patterns of youth participation. While not the most direct way of assessing supply and demand, existence of numerous national and state representative sample databases provides a fairly comprehensive assessment of youth participation in organized out-of-school activities. In a market-driven society, the fact that most young people have been and/or are currently involved in organized activities confirms there is demand for such opportunities.

Absolute participation: The most basic estimation of participation is “absolute participation,” a binary; yes/no type response to participation (the term was coined by scholars at the Harvard Family Research Project, HFRP)⁶. An often confusing array of numbers is thrown around when discussing how many youth are involved in organized activities. The review of the literature revealed that basically, the number depends on how the question has been asked. The most frequent ways of framing the question asks about youth participation in a designated time frame, like, “Over the past year (or some other extended time frame), in which of the following activities were you involved?” Both nationally and statewide, when the question is asked this way, the answer is anywhere from 80-95% participation. For example, the National Survey of America’s Families⁷ found that 82% of youth are involved in OST activities. The National Longitudinal Study of Positive Youth Development, led by researchers at Tufts, put the number at 90%⁸. A study in Minnesota that looked at participation in five very demographically diverse communities across the state showed nearly 95% participation⁹. The MN Student survey showed overall participation of 78% -- even when they restricted participation to band, music lessons, school-based sports, and organized clubs/programs outside of school.

In contrast, when you restrict absolute participation to what youth are involved in currently rather than over a more extended time frame, current involvement in organized activities after-school and outside of school drops to approximately 60%. What these numbers tell us in terms of absolute participation is that most youth are involved in some OST activity for some of the time at some point over the year. But at any given time, approximately 40% of young people are not involved.

Participation Intensity and Breadth: Heather Weiss and Pricilla Little at Harvard Family Research Project have led the field in articulating the distinctions of participation⁶. They note that absolute participation is only one, and the most basic way to understand the significance and impacts of participation. In addition to absolute participation we must also look at this in terms of intensity (frequency, duration, hours/day) and breadth (range of activities and opportunities).

In one study, they explored the intensity and breadth of participation by examining two major longitudinal datasets—the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) which included the Child Development Supplement, and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS)¹⁰. Both followed families for many years, and include multiple waves of data. For example, the Panel Study began collecting data in 1968—and followed the families where now the youth are the parents! Data collection for the Child Development Supplement began in 1997 and added some key features which can help frame our understanding of participation. For example, a sample of families were asked to document through a journal—an accounting for every minute over a 24 hour period, the time spent by the targeted child in the study. They were asked to do this over one week day and one weekend day. The NELS followed a representative sample of 8th graders from whom data were first collected in 1988. Four waves of data collection followed the base year in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2002.

When exploring the data, the authors found that the majority of youth spends about 5 hours per week in organized programs/activities. Only about 3-6% of youth spend 20 or more hours on organized activities. These findings are consistent with the data from the MN Student Survey. According to the most recent MN Student Survey data (2004)⁹ in which half of the students surveyed reported spending 5.5 hours or less/week in organized activities. While 10% of MN students reported spending 20 hours or more, students reported by recall rather than journaling about how they actually spend their time.

In terms of breadth of participation, the authors examining the national datasets found that on average, youth participate in about 3 organized activities per year. In the national longitudinal study of positive youth development by Tufts University, over half the students reported that they participate in 2-3 types of organized activities (reported over 5th, 6th, and 7th grade)⁸.

In 2006, Joe Mahoney, Angel Harris and Jackie Eccles published findings of a study where they looked at organized activity participation and the notion of over-scheduling hypothesis¹¹. To explore whether participating in organized activities has become excessive for youth, they looked for evidence from published studies focused on regional, historical, or limited samples. In addition, they reviewed findings from a very recent nationally representative sample of America's 5 to 18 year olds that includes time use data. They too found that on average, American youth spend about 5 hours/week participating in organized activities. They also found that at any given time, about 40% of young people do not participate in organized activities.

Factors Contributing to Participation

If data on participation are to act as a proxy for understanding supply and demand for OST opportunities, we must also better understand factors contributing to participation. In examining published findings of organized activity participation, Mahoney, Harris and Eccles¹¹ found that

the primary motivations for participation in organized activities are intrinsic (e.g., young people are excited about the topic, they enjoy it, they want to build skills in their interest areas). They also found that involvement and getting in the door have as much to do with the behavior of parents as the young people—for organized activity schedules can determine the pace of life for all family members.

Issues of access and equity as factors in participation may help document gaps in service and needs for OST opportunities. The Harvard Family Research Project team, led by Suzanne Bouffard, explored demographic differences in patterns of youth OST activity participation¹². Again they analyzed two national datasets, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics-Child Development Supplement (PSID) and the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS), and explored four key demographic variables including parental education, family income, ethnicity and gender. Controlling for other demographics, they found that family income was the single most powerful predictor of youth participation-- youth in higher income categories were more likely to participate in a variety of activities, greater numbers of activities, and they do so at a higher intensity levels. Unlike family income, both ethnicity and gender differences existed but not systematically across all these areas. And when family income was added to the mix, these factors (ethnicity and gender) couldn't explain the relationship over and above family income.

Interestingly, the MN Student survey data showed consistent and systematic differences by ethnicity/race in participation across all activities. For example, 85% of white youth versus 68 to 70% of youth of color participate in at least one OST activity (the percentage range for youth of color represent different ethnic/racial groups). However, the lack of family income data did not allow us to determine how much of that relationship can be explained by income.

Implications

Despite growing evidence of the positive effects of participating in organized OST activities, it seems there is a missing link in connecting youth with quality programs. That link is a more holistic picture of the youth programs are intended to serve. Focusing on the young person and the many factors associated with whether or not they participate in out of school time activities would create a useful picture of demand around which to customize supply. Factors linked to the likelihood of youth participation in out of school activities (as noted by Heather Weiss and colleagues)⁶ include characteristics, interests, age and developmental stage of the youth in addition to the contexts within which youth development occurs: families, schools, communities and neighborhoods to name a few.

How these factors- family, child, school, and neighborhood characteristics- influence who participates and why has not been thoroughly explored.

Perhaps the starting place for understanding supply and demand is best reflected in the findings of Mahoney and colleagues³ whose research suggests that young people are intrinsically motivated to participate—it is perhaps the meaning of intrinsic motivation for individual children in combination with the interplay of contextual variables that hold the real key to estimating OST supply (activities/programs) in light of demand.

Next Steps

As the Rand Study findings indicate², in the absence of more rigorous empirical research, the most reliable methods for attempting to predict demand may be reviews of historical records and surveys. Taken together, the three phases of this research project: Literature Review, Quantitative Data Analysis and Parent/Youth Surveys will provide as much knowledge as is currently available regarding the supply and demand of out of school opportunities for Minnesota youth. This information provides a useful starting place for the short term.

In the long term, it is essential to create the on-going data collection capability to capture essential information about youth in relationship to out of school time opportunities as fundamental contributors to their healthy growth and development. As has been said previously, these opportunities are unlike, yet interact with other developmental contexts in the lives of youth—schools, families, etc. Robert Halpern notes that while out of school programs have historically been characterized by the visions of providers as influenced by societal concern about particular groups of children, they are in today’s society, uniquely positioned to provide the types of developmentally supportive experiences other institutions can no longer provide.¹³

Viewing out of school programs as coined by Halpern a discrete “child development institution”, the youth served by these programs will benefit from a systematic effort to regularly collect data that connect a statewide vision for youth outcomes with youth characteristics and the factors that influence their participation in out of school time activities.

¹ Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. (2005). *Journeys into community, transforming youth opportunities for learning and development*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota. (Also available at <http://www.mncost.org>.)

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³ Lerner, R. M., Lerner, J. V., Almerigi, J., Theokas, C., Naudeau, S., Gestsdottir, S., Naudeau, S., Jelicic, H., Alberts, A. Ma, L., Smith, L., Bobek, D., Richman-Raphael, D., Simpson, I., Christiansen, E. D., von Eye, A. (2005). Positive youth development, participation in community youth development programs, and community contributions of fifth grade adolescents: Findings from the first wave of the 4-H study of positive youth development. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 25(1), pp. 17-71.

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⁴ Wimer, C., Bouffard, S. M., & Caronongan, P., Dearing, E., Simpkins, S. D., Little, P. M. D., & Weiss, H. B. (2005). *What are kids getting into these days? Demographic differences in youth out-of-school time participation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.

⁵ After School Alliance. (2004) *America After 3PM*, National Household Survey. Available from http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/america_3pm.cfm

⁶ Harvard Family Research Project. (July, 2004). *Attracting and sustaining youth participation in out-of-school time programs*. Retrieved March 28, 2006 from <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/content/projects/afterschool/resources/issuebrief6.pdf>

⁷ The Urban Institute. (2002). *National Survey of America's Families*. Available from <http://www.urban.org/center/anf/nsaf.cfm>

⁸ Lerner, R.M., Lerner, J.V., Phelps, E. (2006). The 4-H study of positive youth development: Implications of developmental change across grades 5, 6, and 7. Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development, Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development. Tufts University.

⁹ Marczak, M.S. (January, 2004). What young people are doing with their time. Presented to the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. University of Minnesota.

¹⁰ Institute for Social Research. *Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)*. University of Michigan. Available from <http://psidonline.isr.umich.edu/>

U.S. Department of Education. (2002). *National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS)*. Available from <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/els2002/>

¹¹ Mahoney, Joseph, Angel L. Harris, and Jacquelynne S. Eccles (2006). *Organized Activity Participation, Positive Youth Development, and the Over-Scheduling Hypothesis*. Social Policy Report, 10, 4.

¹² Bouffard, S. M., Wimer, C., Caronongan, P., Little, P. M. D., Dearing, E., & Simpkins, S. D. (2006). Demographic differences in patterns of youth out-of-school time activity participation. Harvard Family Research Project. *Journal of Youth Development*, 1(1).

¹³ Halpern, Robert, Ph.D. (2006). *Confronting the Big Lie: The Need to Reframe Expectations of Afterschool Programs*. Partnership for After School Education, Erikson Institute.