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"All the World's a Stage": Parental Ethnotheories and Children's Extracurricular Activities

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“ALL THE WORLD’S A STAGE”: PARENTAL ETHNOTHEORIES AND
CHILDREN’S EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

by

Mary Annette Grove

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Family, Consumer, and Human Development

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2010

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ABSTRACT

“All The World’s a Stage”: Parental Ethnotheories and
Children’s Extracurricular Activities

by

M. Annette Grove, Master of Science
University State University, 2010

Major Professor: Kathleen Piercy
Department: Family, Consumer, and Human Development

In the United States, educators, parents, policy makers, politicians, the media, researchers, and practitioners in many academic fields have taken an interest in outcomes for children aged 6 to 14 who participate in extracurricular activities outside of school time. Very little research examines parents’ beliefs about and behaviors surrounding their children’s participation in extracurricular activities. Yet, it may be parents’ beliefs that guide choices about and persistence in extracurricular activities. This study used a phenomenological and qualitative approach toward understanding parents’ ideas and beliefs about their child’s participation in extracurricular activities. These ideas and beliefs or parental ethnotheories are what parents believe are the correct or proper way to raise a child. Interviews with 11 parents of fourth and fifth graders at a university-based laboratory school indicated that parents thought strategically about their child’s future. According to the parents, involvement in extracurricular activities produced socially adept children, who have “something in common” with other people, and are able to

interact successfully with people of any age in as many different situations as possible. From this participation they sought to improve their child's social standing among peers, with adults, and in life in general. Parents structured and guided their child toward opportunities for growth and achievement through involvement in extracurricular activities. They believed that this involvement resulted in a "well rounded" child with a broad base of knowledge about the world. Parents believed these experiences would benefit their child in any future endeavors (college, careers, and family life).

(101 pages)

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M. Annette Grove

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The amount of time children have—free from school, work, or other duties—varies considerably around the globe. This time, described as *free, play, leisure, recreation, idle, or out-of-school* time, is more limited for children in developing societies than for children in developed societies (Lancy, 2008). In developing societies demands placed on children from an early age to assist in household chores, subsistence activities, and employment limit the amount of time children have free for play and leisure (Weiner, Freedheim, Schinka, & Velicer, 2003). In the developed world, however, few such demands beyond schooling are placed on most children (Kleiber & Powell, 2005). This places children from developed societies in a unique position—able to spend one-half their waking hours in play and leisure activities (Larson & Verma, 1999). Much concern exists over how children and adolescents spend this time (Eccles & Gootman, 2001; Gordon, Bridglall, & Meroe, 2005; Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; Scarlett, Naudeau, Salonijs-Pasternak, & Ponte, 2005).

Leisure time can be divided into two general categories of activities in which children participate: organized and unorganized activities. Organized activities are those in which the child's participation is guided, planned out, or structured, as opposed to unorganized activities or free play in which the child is left to his or her own devices (Mahoney et al., 2005). This thesis examines children's extracurricular activities (EAs), further delineated as organized activities that take place outside of the hours children spend in school. In the United States, educators, parents, policy makers, politicians, the media, and researchers and practitioners in both the social and behavioral sciences have

taken an interest in outcomes for children who participate in EAs during their leisure time (Halpern, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2005). Traditionally, the existing literature examining leisure time has “focused increasing attention on the after school hours of children aged 6 to 14, coming to view this daily time period as one of unusual risk and opportunity” (Halpern, 2002, p. 178). However, another focus, that of the role of parents in their children’s lives, can be divided into three general areas of interest. First, the concern of pediatricians and scholars, who suggest that contemporary parents overschedule their children’s lives with too many extracurricular activities, resulting in negative outcomes such as stress and depression (Ginsburg, 2007; Hofferth et al., 2008; Rosenfeld, Wise, & Coles, 2001). Second, are the additional studies which suggest that contemporary parents’ choices to enroll children moderately to heavily in organized leisure-time activities result in positive outcomes, such as higher academic performance and better social relationships with peers and family (Hofferth, Kinney, & Dunn, 2008; Larson, 2000; Luthar, Shoum, & Brown, 2006; Mahoney et al., 2005). Third and conversely, is the work of Harris (1998), who suggests that the focus on parents is misguided. Parents have little if any impact—peers largely determine child outcomes. Traditionally, researchers have placed more attention on child outcomes in studying the value of EAs. However, little research examines parents’ beliefs about and behaviors surrounding their children’s participation in EAs. Yet, it may be parents’ beliefs that guide choices about and persistence in EAs. In the field of child and family studies there is growing recognition that parents’ beliefs or “parental ethnotheories are the nexus through which elements of the larger culture are filtered” (Harkness & Super, 1996, p. 9). Parental ethnotheories are parents’ ideas about what is the “proper” or “correct” way to

rear a child (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Harkness & Super, 1996; Quinn & Holland, 1987). As a result, the body of parental ethnotheory research has grown to include two new edited volumes of work (Rubin & Chung, 2006; Tamis-LeMonda & Harwood, 2002). The ways in which parents think about the nature of children's development, child care, child training, and education impact child development (D'Andrade & Strauss, 1992; Harkness & Super, 1996; Quinn & Holland, 1987). The study of parental ethnotheories may help us to understand whether or not parents are purposefully guiding their children's participation in EAs and how they think EAs impact their children's development.

The purpose of this research is to elucidate essential themes among the reasons that parents express for providing their fourth- and fifth-graders access to EAs—two of the grade levels at which children in middle childhood are most likely to participate in EAs (the other being sixth graders; Jacobs, Vernon, & Eccles, 2005). During middle childhood, mothers appear to influence their children's participation in EAs in three ways. Children are: (1) not able to become involved in organized activities without some adult's help, (2) more likely to participate in activities and to value the activities if mothers believe that those particular activities are important, and (3) more likely to participate if the mother places value on a particular activity (Eccles et al., 1983; Jacobs & Eccles, 2000; Jacobs et al., 2005). Because children place value on what their mothers believe and because mothers may be more likely to enroll their children in and transport them to and from EAs, mothers will be interviewed to determine what their beliefs and behaviors surrounding EAs might reveal.

Although this thesis will examine ethnotheories regarding EAs, it is important to

note that EAs are part of a much larger repertoire of intervention strategies or, in anthropological terms, cultural repertoires (Lareau, 2003, p. 4). These include parent-child play (Haight, 1999; Haight, Wang, Fung, Williams, & Mintz, 1999), the bedtime story (Heath, 1982), and dinner table conversations (Ochs & Capps, 1996) that provide children with opportunities to learn and practice social competence (Burns & Brainerd, 1979; Connally & Doyle, 1984; Haight, 1999), creativity (Dansky, 1980; Haight, 1999; Pepler & Ross, 1981), and technical skill (Haight, 1999; Haight et al., 1999). These all represent activities that involve cost and/or time investment and all seem to be undertaken as part of an overall strategy. Reading skills, for example, are cumulative, making the bedtime story an essential part of a cultural routine in the life of a child who grows up in a highly literate society (Heath, 1982). As with any cultural routine in which learning is cumulative as time passes it becomes more and more difficult for children who do not have access to the cultural routines surrounding literacy skills to catch up once they fall behind (Heath, 1982). So too, it may be with the cultural routines children learn while participating in extracurricular activities; not only with a specific extracurricular activity (such as the cumulative, but more proximal set of skills needed to play the piano, perform in a ballet, or play in a soccer match; McNeal, 1998), but also with the ultimate and less tangible cultural routines the child may learn in addition to those more proximal skills and behaviors required for the extracurricular activity itself. Those cultural routines may then become social or cultural capital that the child can wield in his or her life.

For this thesis, a qualitative and phenomenological approach will be used to gain an understanding of perceptions parents have of the value of investing in their

children's activities. The qualitative method provides a different lens from survey-based methodology. This approach explores essential themes in an attempt to elucidate the "essence" of parents' ideas about and behavior surrounding their children's involvement in EAs.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical and Contemporary Overview of Extracurricular Activities

Historically extracurricular activities (EAs) alternately receive labels such as *leisure, play, and recreation* to address time spent outside of school. Here too, they are used interchangeably to represent what we have come to know as extracurricular activities. The development and growth of extracurricular activities derived from roughly four sources: the progressive-reformists, schools and government, volunteer and civic organizations, and the private and commercial sector. Each influenced the growth of leisure, play, and recreational types of activities into the extracurricular activities in which children participate today.

The Progressive-Reformists

During the mid-18th and on into the 19th century, a general concern about children's leisure, play, and recreation grew. Play spaces available to children and the nature of children's play changed during the industrial revolution (Torkildsen, 2005). Urban growth resulting from the influx of families in search of work, increased leisure time for children barred from factory work by child labor laws, and the loss of play space due to rapid growth and industrialization moved children's play into the streets (Kraus, 1978). Progressive-reformers took notice.

The burgeoning urban population attracted the attention of reformers. Settlement houses were built to offer community service in the form of playgrounds for young

children. Settlement houses offered sports and social clubs for older children to keep them away from the temptations and dangers of the street and teach them the skills for more productive lives (Halpern, 2002). In Chicago, Jane Addams opened Hull House, a settlement house, which like many others offered a variety of activities, a playground with “swings, seesaws, slides, and sand bins...music, dance, and drama were all part of the total program” (Kraus, 1978, p. 182). The houses sought to offer activities “shaped by children’s interests and preferences and yet also by what adults thought children needed...encourag[ing] children toward their own interests and preferences and yet also [toward what] adults thought children needed” (Halpern, 2002, p. 179).

Joseph Lee, a lawyer, philanthropist, and one of the most influential pioneers of the movement was “shocked to see boys arrested for playing in the streets, he organized a playground for them in an open lot, which he helped to supervise” (Kraus, 1978, p. 175). Subsequently, Lee created a “model playground on Columbus Avenue in Boston that included a play area for small children, a boy’s section, a sport field, and [sand] gardens” (Kraus, 1978, p. 175). His ideas spread to other large cities including Cleveland, Chicago, Denver, Milwaukee, Minneapolis, and Philadelphia (Russell, 1996).

New ideas about the nature and necessity of play, leisure, and recreation emerged. Luther Halsey Gulick, another leading reformer, a physician by training, and promoter of programs for girls believed that “play was dynamic, demanding and creative, and covered a wide range of involvements” (Kraus, 1978, p. 176). Gulick “believed that the bulk of modern crime, as well as antisocial or degenerative behavior throughout all history, resulted from wrong play and recreation. He urged that recreation be recognized as a nationwide concern” (Kraus, 1978, p. 176). Concerns centered on the health and safety

of children and a solution for delinquency, especially for those of the working and poor classes (Chambers, 2000). The creation of playgrounds and a new attitude toward play were the solution (Kraus, 1978). Luther Halsey Gulick, Jane Addams, Joseph Lee, and others met at the White House in 1906 in an effort to bring the concerns and efforts of individual reformers into a nationwide program (Russell, 1996). The Playground Association of America was born. The Association soon offered a curriculum for training future leaders of playground recreation (Kraus, 1978).

It is interesting to note that Lee, Addams, and Gulick were viewed as radicals. Cavallo (1981) has noted that they attempted to maintain a balance between the conflicting ideas of “individuality, to give the youth creative development, and to overcome old barriers of prejudice and class distinction and the need on the other hand to maintain order and control and to indoctrinate youth with traditional social goals” (Kraus, 1998, p. 203). Proper play and leisure were a vehicle for the indoctrination of the indigent and immigrant into American society (Kraus, 1998). Reformers “attempt[ed] to educate the working class about how best to play and use leisure appropriately” (Kleiber & Powell, 2005, p. 24).

Concern existed, too, about commercially available forms of recreation. Movies, stage performances, and dance halls were seen as particularly vulgar forms of entertainment (Kraus, 1998) and came under the scrutiny of reformers who believed them to be “breeding-places of vice” (Edwards, 1915, p. 18). These concerns resulted in a national movement shaped and attended by progressive minded reformers, schools and government, voluntary and civic organizations, and the private and commercial sector (Kraus, 1978; Russell, 1996).

Schools and Government

Gulick, director of physical training for the New York public school system, viewed sports as did many of the reformers of the era. Sports promoted a set of values: citizenship, cooperation, hard work, responsibility, good health, and respect for authority (Gulick, 1920). The “worthy use of leisure” through sport was especially valuable in preparing children for their futures in the “new industrial society that was emerging” (Halpern, 2002, p. 181). It was also competitive.

As Gulick stated: “Boys compete...[and] competition is an ever-present element in their lives” (Gulick, 1920, p. 83). While director of physical training he helped establish the Public Schools Athletic League (PSAL) for all the boroughs in New York City (Gulick, 1920). His reasoning for this may well be found in a story he relays involving a football game:

After the defeat there was a moment’s silence then a cheer was given by the team...It was not merely college loyalty that prompted this demonstration A victory in debate would have aroused enthusiasm but not in an equal measure A convincing proof of the superiority of their institution to all others in scholarship the supposedly real test of a university would elicit barely a cheer. (Gulick, 1920, p. 3)

Sports elicit continued participation through the desire to achieve or defend a victory (Gulick, 1920).

Reformers such a Gulick worked to place sports in schools around the country. Schools also began offering programs after school, in the evenings, and on weekends and holidays, the times when leisure activities were in greatest demand and when “socially approved” forms of recreation and leisure, such as libraries and schools, were closed (Kraus, 1978, p. 181). Education reformer John Dewey, a leading representative of the

progressive-reform movement in schools during the first half of the 20th century stated:

Meaningful learning activity [should be] based on freedom of choice, deliberate and self-planned (rather than random or dictated) involvement, and activity which involved mental initiative and intellectual self-reliance. [Children] should move gradually from projects that yield immediate satisfaction to those that offer deferred satisfactions and require more careful planning and analysis. (Kraus, 1978, p. 177)

Education has no more serious responsibility than making adequate provision for enjoyment or recreative leisure; not only for the fact of immediate health but still more, if possible, for the fact of its lasting effect upon habits of mind. (Dewey, 1921, p. 241)

Between 1910 and 1930 school recreation programs rapidly expanded and facilities such as gymnasiums, swimming pools, assembly halls, art and music rooms, and outdoor sports areas were built. “Educating for the worthy use of leisure” (Kraus, 1978, p. 183) became “one of the seven cardinal principles [of the] National Education Association’s Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (1918)” (Kleiber & Powell, 2005, p. 24).

Volunteer and Civic Organizations

In the early years of the 19th century, youth-serving voluntary organizations and civic clubs were founded either nationally or independently on the local level. For example: Boys Clubs (now The Boys & Girls Clubs of America) were created by a church in the slums of Hartford, Connecticut (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). These organizations sought to

keep male children and early adolescents from entering a life of crime ... attendance [was] voluntary and usually on a drop-in basis...efforts were made to keep [the boys] busy and to build habits and interest that might later prevent them from getting into trouble on the streets...prevention was the major purpose of the early clubs. (Witt & Caldwell, 2005, p. 99)

Called “mass clubs,” Boys Clubs afforded little interaction with adults due in part to the large number of children they attempted to keep off the street (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). The Boy Scouts were imported from England where it was popular with the middle-class. It sought to “inculcate the habits of obedience, cleanliness, temperance, and loyalty that would best guarantee the perpetuation of the middle class, masculinity” (Rosenthal, 1986, pp. 6-7). Also, originating in England, the YMCA came to focus on the “needs of young middle-class boys... [organizers] worried that involving working-class and street boys would expose middle-class boys to negative influences” (Witt & Caldwell, p. 105-106). A growing concern over the types of activities available for boys, combined with the increasing popularity of sports, led the YMCA to invent several new sports such as basketball, volleyball, and racquetball. Sports were increasingly seen as a way to “promote middle class values, such as the willingness to follow rules and strive for rewards” (Witt & Caldwell, 2005, p.106).

Programs for girls were formed later because reformers worried less about girls. Reformers believed that girls “stayed a little longer in high school and a good deal longer in Sunday school. After classes each day, they mostly went straight home, whereas boys hung about on the street” (McLeod, 1983, p. 51). The Camp Fire Girls and Girls Guides (now the Girl Scouts) were formed with the same “primary goals...to create and/or reinforce middle-class values by keeping middle-class youth separate from those of the lower class [and to] develop...physical and moral fitness” (Witt & Caldwell, 2005, p. 5).

The Commercial and Private Sector

A clash of interests may have been the catharsis for the creation of the highly

competitive extracurricular activities we see today. Educators and recreation directors “believed that highly competitive sports harmed preadolescent development, so they did not create professionally directed programs” for them (Fine, 1987, p. 4). The growing public demand for competitive sports lead to the creation of youth sports organizations such as the Little League (Fine, 1987), Biddy Basketball (Kraus, 1998), and Pop Warner Football (Levey, 2009b). Other avenues for activity beyond sports have mushroomed in the post 1970s competitive climate. Examples include: The National Geographic Bee (National Geographic, 2009), Scripps National Spelling Bee (Scripps, 2009), and Our Little Miss (beauty pageant; Stanley, 1989). Additionally, groups and individuals “that once considered themselves as providing recreation are reconceptualizing their services as ‘informal education’ or youth development, and are more deliberate about teaching and encouraging young people to apply new knowledge, skills, and abilities” (Gordon et al., 2005) in areas as diverse as dance, tennis, swimming, martial arts, gymnastics, cheerleading, and in the arts and music.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky (1982-84, vol. 4) stressed the contributions of the historical context, social interaction, and culture in understanding development. Like G. Stanley Hall, Vygotsky understood that parents impact the developing child. In 1932 Vygotsky wrote:

It is through the mediation of others, through the mediation of the adult, that the child undertakes activities. Absolutely everything in the behaviour of the child is merged and rooted in social relations. Thus, the child’s relations with reality are from the start social relations, so that the newborn baby could be said to be in the highest degree a social being. (Vygotsky, 1982-84, vol. 4, p. 281)

The history of development of higher mental functions is thus seen to be the

history of the process by which the tools of social behavior are transformed into instruments of [the] individual. (Vygotsky, 1982-84, vol. 4, p. 56)

Some 30 years later Margaret Mead (1964) echoed the idea that knowledge or social and cultural capital is passed down from one generation to the next.

The social structure of a society and the way learning is structured—the way it passes from mother to daughter, from father to son, from mother's brother to sister's son, from shaman to novice, from mythological specialist to aspirant specialist—determine far beyond the actual content of learning both how individuals will learn to think and how the store of learning, the sum total of separate pieces of skill and knowledge which could be obtained by separately interviewing each member of the society is shared and used. (Mead, 1964, p. 79)

In subsequent years there has been a growing recognition that parental cognition, too, is socially and culturally organized (Super & Harkness, 1996), based in part on the discussion stimulated by emerging evidence of differing beliefs about childrearing and development cross-culturally (Ninio, 1979; Reid & Valsiner, 1986).

From this discussion, Super and Harkness (1996) expanded on the ideas of Beatrice Whiting's (1980) analysis of the contexts or "niches" in which children live, thus creating the idea of the developmental niche. The three main components of the developmental niche are: "(a) the physical and social settings in which a child lives, (b) culturally regulated customs of child care and childrearing, and © the psychology of the caretakers" (Super & Harkness, 1996, p. 193). Their work suggests that "parental ethnotheories are the nexus through which elements of the larger culture are filtered" (Super & Harkness, 1996, p. 9). The idea of a nexus provides a useful illustration that we can employ to understand how parental ethnotheories affect child development.

If parents' expressions of their ideas about and behavior surrounding their child's involvement in EAs do not seem to form a specific pattern, then it can be assumed that

there is not a shared belief about children's involvement in EAs. However, if parents' expression of their ideas about and behavior surrounding their child's involvement in EAs seem to converge into several statements that elucidate the "essence" behind their ideas and behavior, then it stands to reason that those ideas and beliefs are important not only to the parent and child, but also to the larger community.

The application of the developmental niche, specifically parental ethnotheories, has shown cross-cultural differences in parental beliefs about and behaviors surrounding children's sleep (Wolf, Lozoff, Latz, & Paludetto, 1996), temperament, (Shwalb, Shwalb, & Shoji, 1996), and motor development (Keller, Yovsi, & Voelker, 2002). However, to date, little research has focused on parental ethnotheories and children's extracurricular activities.

Parental Ethnotheory

Parental ethnotheories highlight cross-cultural differences in parent's beliefs about child development. In one comparative study, Robert Levy (1996) spent an extended period of time in both a Tahitian-speaking village, Piri, and in Bhaktapur, a larger city in Nepal, in an effort to understand how parents think about teaching their children and how children learn. In Piri, parents believe that teaching a child how to do something is intrusive and interferes with her ability to learn on her own. When Levy asked parents about the possibility of teaching children to learn how to crawl, walk, toilet train, or talk the response was: "[It will] just happen. We don't instruct children in walking, we just let a child alone and he walks" (Levy, 1996, p. 128). When parents were asked about teaching their children to work, parents responded similarly: "I just let

them watch. When they are ready, they will do the work” (Levy, 1996, p. 128). When Levy asked adults how they learned things, they stated that they had “learned how to do life’s tasks by themselves, by watching and by thinking things out” (Levy, 1996, p. 130).

Contrastingly, Baktapur parents believe that “the untaught child would be considered incompetent not only in his or her physical skills, but in his or her moral nature” (Levy, 1996, p. 132). Parents who failed to provide such instruction are considered negligent (Levy, 1996). When parents in Baktapur were asked about teaching a child to eat the response was:

“I say, ‘Eat rice, [*hāpu*, children’s language] grandmother will give you a plate.’ Then he will take it and eat. Then he will learn. After he begins his third year [i.e. at his second birthday] he will know how to ask for rice. ... They used to teach the same words [repeatedly] and we learned very rapidly.” (Levy, 1996, p. 133)

Parents associated learning language with learning self-mastery (Levy, 1996). While Levy’s work highlights broad differences in parents’ ideas about how children learn, some components of childrearing theory have received more intense scrutiny. Investigations have gone beyond informal interviews of parents to intervention studies designed to illuminate the actual behavior of parent’s vis-à-vis children. One such area of intense scrutiny has been parent-child play.

Haight’s (1999, 2003) cross-cultural study examined pretend play in families living in both Taiwan and in the United States. Parents interviewed in the United States lived in large comfortable homes that allowed a specially designated play space for their child. These play spaces were filled with miniature and scaled-to-child sized versions of toys for pretending. Play between these mothers and their children revolved around fantasy play. For example, a cranky toddler was enticed to have a parade with his mother

in order to distract him. Another mother challenged her toddler to a race to enlist his help in picking up toys. Parents interviewed in Taiwan lived in smaller homes that afforded less space for a child-specific play area as well as fewer toys. Interestingly, Taiwanese mother-child play was built around social routines: for example, the proper way to address or respond to a teacher. Father-child play was limited in homes in both Taiwan and the United States (Haight, 2003).

Two additional cross-national studies encompassing communities in the United States, Africa, Guatemala, Taiwan, Turkey, and India examined mother-child play (Göncü, Mistry, & Mosier, 2000; Rogoff, Mistry, Göncü, & Mosier, 1993). Mothers of toddlers were given a select group of novel toys along with instruction and encouragement to engage their toddlers with the toys. In village settings, “[mothers] would let the child play independently when novel objects were presented, while they returned to their chores” (Göncü et al., 2000, p. 322). Caregivers in India and Guatemala viewed play as something to keep children busy while they returned to their work (Göncü et al., 2000; Rogoff et al., 1993). The parents in Turkey and the United States used the setting to engage their children in language play, object play, pretend play, and games associated with sociodramatic and creative types of play (LeVine et al., 1994).

As we look at the studies of parental ethnotheories regarding the value of parent-child play, we can see an evident dichotomy. Parents are either heavily involved in their children’s play or are much less involved (Lareau, 2003). Heavily involved parents share the view that play makes significant contributions to children’s development (Lareau, 2003). How does this picture change with age? Haight (2003) found that parent-child play changes with the age of the child. Parental ideas regarding play shift in orientation

as parent-child play moves from merely parallel or object play to socializing play as the child moves into toddlerhood (Haight, 2003). But, what about older children's play such as EAs?

Two studies, Levey (2009a) and Raitt and Lancy (1988), provide insight into parental ideas about EAs. Raitt and Lancy (1988) presented an in-depth illustration of the training and gendered participation of young girls on the rodeo circuit in Utah. Mothers depicted their daughters' involvement in rodeo queen competitions as facilitating learning how to "be a lady" (Raitt & Lancy, 1988, p. 275-76), become a "well-rounded person" (Raitt & Lancy, 1988, p. 275), or "develop character, self-confidence, horsemanship, posture, coordination of their abilities, [and] how to handle different situations, ...make friends, ...[use] makeup, and ...give speeches" (Raitt & Lancy, 1988, p. 275). When asked about the cost of involvement in the rodeo queen circuit, mothers admitted it was well into the thousands of dollars in 1988 (Raitt & Lancy, 1988).

Levey (2009a) furnished two seemingly dichotomous images of children participating in different types of EAs—a child beauty contest in Atlanta, Georgia and a Kumon Math Center in suburban New Jersey. Mothers who enrolled their children in either child beauty pageants or Kumon spoke of their goals associated with, as well as the costs and benefits of, participation. When asked why they enrolled their children in pageants mothers responded, "I just want to see my daughter go somewhere in life" (Levey, 2009a, p. 204), while mothers who enrolled their children in Kumon stated that, "I always tell him a good education is what will put food on the table" (Levey, 2009a, p. 204). Although mothers who enrolled their children in the pageants said that they never

“got back the amount [they] put into it,” (Levey, 2009a, p. 205), citing expenses such as a \$300 hair and makeup job for one pageant, mothers did mention that the “physical and material prizes their daughters received for winning a pageant [were] very real and sometimes [were the] major reason for continued participation in the activity” (Levey, 2009a, p. 205). Prize money, rarely more than \$50 to \$250, was put into a bank account or used to purchase bonds toward a college education (Levey, 2009a). One mother expressed the less tangible rewards of participation, “She will be more than likely, at some point, to need to be able to conduct herself confidently in front of others—whether it be on the PTA, as a stay at home mom, or in front of a board of directors of a large corporation” (Levey, 2009a). While the children enrolled in Kumon received much smaller rewards for their performance, their mothers’ goals were less tangible—an elite education in the fields of medicine or engineering (Levey, 2009a). Mothers who enrolled their children in each of these EAs were active participants in planning and implementing goals for their children.

Much less work has been done to elucidate parental ethnotheories regarding the value or utility of EAs in middle childhood and adolescence. This is an omission, considering the cost of involving children in EAs. Bergin and Habusta (2004) studied 10- to 13-year-old boys who participated in ice hockey. They found that parents were willing to pay a hefty price in time and money to “socialize their children’s goal orientations” (Bergin & Habusta, 2004, p. 383). A boy’s participation occurred on either the house-league or travel-league level. House-league players paid \$325 for a season lasting from September to February, plus additional fees for equipment (Bergin & Habusta, 2004). The boys practiced about “1 hour for every two house-league games

played and spend about 32 hr practicing on the ice” (Bergin & Habusta, 2004, p. 387).

Travel-league players, whose season ran a month longer, from September-March, played 40 to 60 games and practiced 1 to 2 hours a week more than the house-league players. Parents of travel-league player paid “several thousand dollars and includ[ing] fees for ice time, equipment, travel, and accommodations” for their sons to participate (Bergin & Habusta, 2004, p. 388).

Even though we do not fully understand what parents’ goals are, or the basis for their reasons vis-à-vis their children’s EAs, survey-based research with children 9 to 12 years of age in the United States show that children who are heavily involved in EAs have positive outcomes (Hofferth et al., 2008). Children who were moderately to highly involved in EAs did well in school and with family, as well as behaviorally and emotionally (Hofferth et al., 2008). Conversely, children who were *not* involved in EAs were the most at risk of poor outcomes. They had lower self-esteem and were more withdrawn and socially immature (Hofferth et al., 2008). These findings appear to question the popularly held belief that contemporary children’s lives are overscheduled and full of stress, resulting in depression, anxiety, alienation, and fearfulness (Hofferth et al., 2008; Rosenfeld et al., 2001). Parents’ willingness to spend money and time on their children’s involvement in EAs, coupled with evidence that involvement in those activities may influence children’s development, leads us to believe that research into parental ethnotheories about EAs is important. Given that children who participate in EAs appear to have a developmental advantage, and that parents seem willing to invest time and money in their children’s EAs, a better understanding of what parent’s goals are vis-à-vis their children’s involvement in EAs is important. The following research

questions guided this study.

Research Questions

1. How do parents think participation in extracurricular activities will benefit their child now and in the future?
2. How do parents think their children are viewed as a result of their participation in extracurricular activities now and in the future?
3. How do parents choose to invest their time, money, and other resources in their children's extracurricular activity?

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Overview of the Research Design

The methodology for this research is phenomenological and, therefore, intrinsically qualitative. Phenomenology as a method of inquiry seeks to understand the “essence” of shared individual experiences (Creswell, 2007). In this thesis the extracurricular activities (EAs) of fourth and fifth graders were that shared phenomenon. The expression of parental beliefs and the subsequent self-disclosure of related parental behavior are encouraged through the process of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007).

Qualitative and phenomenological methodologies have a long and shared history (Creswell, 2007). Phenomenology emanates from the work of Husserl and those who followed a similar vein of inquiry (Speigelberg, 1982), and has been applied extensively in education and in behavior and social science (Creswell, 2007; Giorgi, 1985; Polkinghorn, 1989; Super & Harkness, 1996; Tesch, 1988). For example, Levy’s (1996) qualitative research questioned assumptions about learning and development using an implied phenomenological approach. He sought to understand essential contrasts in Tahitian and Nepalese parental beliefs about and to explain their behavior in relation to how “children learned and, thus...how they must be taught” (Levy, 1996, p. 28).

The use of phenomenological research helps us understand the influence of parental ethnotheories on child development. Qualitative research gives parents the opportunity to voice their beliefs and explain their behavior in relation to those beliefs. Thus, the combination of phenomenological and qualitative-based inquiry allows “the

study of [the] lived experiences of persons [and expounds] the view that these experiences are conscious ones” (Creswell, 2007, p. 58). The term, parental ethnotheories, is applied extensively throughout this thesis; however, in some of the research, including this study, only mothers were interviewed and it cannot be assumed that the mothers’ ideas and beliefs were representative of the fathers’ ideas and beliefs.

Pilot Study

Formulation of the study questions and a “test run” of those questions occurred during a spring 2009 FCHD 6900 *Qualitative Methods* class taught by Dr. Kathy Piercy. For the pilot study, two mothers (friends of the researcher) were interviewed. One mother had a daughter in the fifth grade; the other mother had a daughter in the fourth grade. After receiving approval from the IRB, the mothers were contacted by phone to set up a date for an interview. Each interview took place in the mother’s home and lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour and a half. As a result of this study, the order of the interview questions was revised as were some of the questions themselves to make them more easily understood.

Sample

Sample Recruitment and Selection

Middle-class parents of fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-graders are typically heavily involved in their children’s lives (Kleiber & Powell, 2005; Lareau, 2003; Mahoney et al., 2005). Parents of fourth- and fifth-grade children enrolled at the Edith Bowen

Laboratory School (EBLS) on the campus of Utah State University (USU) were chosen because EBLs parents tend to be highly educated and middle-class. The principal of Edith Bowen Laboratory School (EBLS), Dr. Mark Peterson, agreed to invite parents of the fourth- and fifth-graders at EBLs to participate in the research (Appendix A). Letters (Appendix B) describing the research, were mailed to parents who had children in EBLs fourth and fifth grade classrooms during the 2009 portion of the 2009/2010 school year. Parents indicated their desire to participate by return-mailing the letter in the provided self-addressed stamped envelope back to EBLs. Parents who chose to respond were contacted by phone to set a date for their interview. The interview took place in a setting of the interviewee's choice (their home, EBLs, USU campus, or their place of business). The parents were given the choice between two shorter interviews or one longer interview. All parents chose the long interview option that ranged in duration from 60 to 90 minutes. In addition to the interview questions (Appendix D) a 10-item demographic survey (Appendix E) was administered to gather additional information from each participant. This demographic data was collected to augment the interview data by providing a description of the sample.

A non-random and purposive method of sample selection was chosen given the goals of the research. Parents were selected from the pool of candidates who indicated their children were in the fourth or fifth grade and who were regularly (defined as at least twice a week for at least 2 years) involved in extracurricular activities (defined as organized activities that take place outside of the hours children spend in school). Sample sizes of at least five and up to 25 individual participants were considered an appropriate sample for phenomenological research (Polkinghorne, 1989). The target

number of parent interviews for this research was set at 8 to 12; 11 parents were interviewed.

Sample Description

The sample consisted of parents of fourth- and fifth-grade children enrolled at the Edith Bowen Laboratory School (EBLS) on the campus of Utah State University (USU). Parents of children enrolled at EBLS were chosen because research indicated that parents who have a higher level of education and socioeconomic status are more likely to place their children in extracurricular activities (Kleiber & Powell, 2005; Lareau 2003; Pedersen & Seidman, 2005; Villarruel, Montero-Sieburth, Dunbar, & Outley, 2005).

The parents reported participating in a wide range of EAs as a child (see Table 7). The children also participated in a wide range of EAs as shown in Table 1. The parents reported that their children spent between 10 and 15 hours a week in EAs, with the lowest reporting 6 to 10 hours per week and the highest 30 to 35.

Middle-class parents are usually well educated and financially secure. The participants of this study were well educated. Eighty percent of the fathers had a graduate degree; 20% of the fathers had completed a bachelor's degree. Sixty-four percent of the mothers had a graduate degree, 18% had completed a bachelor's degree, and 18% had at least some college. The participants also claimed financial membership in the middle class. Five of the mothers (45%) reported being "more than comfortable" financially, while five (45%) reported being "comfortable." One mother did not report. All of the fathers were employed and three of the mothers were not employed outside the home. Many of the participants were employed in the white-collar sector (for example:

Table 1

List of Reported EA Participation for the Child

| Mother and Child | Child's Extracurricular Activities |
|---|---|
| AnnaLisa's 5 th grade son: | soccer, swimming, baseball, skiing, chess, Boy Scouts, piano |
| Babette's 5 th grade daughter: | soccer, skiing, chess club, children's church group, violin, piano |
| Christina's 5 th grade son: | soccer baseball, ice hockey, basketball, skiing, swimming, chess club, instrument |
| Dora's 5 th grade son: | soccer, Sunday school, art classes, violin |
| Elizabeth's 5 th grade daughter: | soccer, violin and piano, theater, dance, skiing |
| Faith's 5 th grade son: | swimming, gymnastics, Aikido, skiing, Boy Scouts, Bible school, Sunday school, art classes, piano |
| Gabrielle's 4 th grade daughter: | soccer, dance, cheer, swimming, ice skating, ballet, reading club, church, violin and piano |
| Hailey's 4 th grade daughter: | swimming ballet, gymnastics, horse riding, t-ball, theater groups, chess club, student government, church youth piano, camps (art, music, science, theater) |
| Hailey's 5 th grade daughter: | swimming, ballet gymnastics horse riding, basketball, baseball/t-ball, softball, chess club, theater, student government, church group, violin, vocal lessons, camps (art, music, science, theater) |
| Ingrid 5 th grade son: | football, basketball, baseball, skiing, Boy Scouts, church group, piano |
| Jenny 4 th grade son: | soccer, football, dance, swimming, baseball, gymnastics, skiing, basketball, Boy Scouts, Bible school, church group, art classes, piano |
| Kelsie 4 th grade daughter: | soccer, football, swimming, baseball, chess club, church groups, art classes, piano, golf, basketball, skiing |
| Kelsie 5 th grade daughter: | soccer, football, swimming, baseball, chess club, church group, art classes, piano, golf, basketball, skiing |

medicine, higher education, engineering, science, technology, and business). One set of parents and one father were first-generation immigrants to the United States. The rest of the parents described themselves as Caucasian. The largest family reported having six children and the smallest a single child. The average age for fathers was 43.1 and for mothers 36.6. All were married. Each set of parents had actively sought and secured enrollment for their child at EBLS.

The sample included 11 EBLS parents and their children: six fifth-grade males (age 11) and two fourth-grade males (age 10), three fifth-grade females (age eleven) and two fourth-grade females (age 10). Two of the parents had children in both the fourth and fifth grades (one parent with two boys and another parent with two girls) which increased the sample size (for the children only) to 13.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected by means of one in-depth interview with each adult participant. Initially, two interviews were planned; however, one hour-long interview was an adequate amount of time for the parents to answer the questions. All interviews were conducted within a three-week time frame. Questions were asked about why the parent chose particular EAs, what benefits they thought their child received from participation in those EAs, and how involvement in EAs influenced their child academically and in their social relationships. Each participant was provided a copy of the IRB approved Letter of Consent (Appendix C) for their record. The Letter of Consent briefly explained the research, purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw from the process at any time. Demographic surveys were administered at the end of each

interview. The interviews were audio-taped. A transcriptionist was paid to transcribe the audio tapes over a six-week period of time. Once the interviews were transcribed, I listened to the interviews while following along with the transcript to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The participant and the participant's child were assigned a name to protect their identities and to give the transcribed data structure. Line by line analysis provided a method for tracking significant statements. In addition, field notes, memos, and a research journal were employed to help with the analysis and to help the researcher to "bracket" personal experiences with the phenomenon of extracurricular activities (Creswell, 2007).

Data Analysis Process

The qualitative data analysis process is uniquely different from quantitative data analysis, given its focus on narrative. Interview data are narrative data. Creswell (2007) suggests that the process of data analysis begins when the researcher first starts to form research questions. It is at this point that the researcher should employ Husserl's concept of *epoche* (bracketing). Bracketing is a process in which the researcher "sets aside [her] experiences, as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination" (Creswell, 2007, pp. 59-60). In addition to personal experiences, influences on our thinking can include "the conventions of our respective disciplines and professions, the advice of our mentors, and the models we have internalized from whatever we have read" (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991, pp. 141-142).

My own personal experience with EAs began when I enrolled my children in

EAs. I believe my children benefitted from their involvement in EAs. I purposively chose to involve my children in specific EAs that fit within my particular financial and time constraints and at the same time compliment their areas of interest or talent. My two youngest sons have participated in a range of EAs including gymnastics, martial arts, baseball, racquetball, tennis, swimming, and piano. As I am raising children on my own and am also graduate student, I am unable to have them participate to the degree I would like them to in all the sports both they and I prefer. My beliefs about and behaviors surrounding my children's involvement in EAs is clearly child-oriented and future-focused. Bracketing, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, is the process I employed to ensure that I did not to press my own interpretation of what involvement in EAs means onto the interview process or during the analysis of data. Instead, I listened to what the parents were saying and let their words guide me during the analysis.

The second step in qualitative analysis is *horizontalization*, a process in which the researcher will “go through the data and highlight ‘significant statements,’ sentences, or quotes that provide an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 61), in this case EAs. From these highlighted segments the researcher creates a list of the ‘significant statements’ relevant to the topic, but weighing the meanings equally (Creswell, 2007).

The third and fourth steps, the *textural description* of the phenomenon or *what* was experienced and the *structural description* or *how* the phenomenon was experienced, respectively, are gathered into “clusters of meaning” using the list of significant statements created during horizontalization (Creswell, 2007, p. 61). Here I relied on the participants' words to describe *what* was experienced or a textural description of the

phenomenon. From this I began to interpret *how* the phenomenon was experienced by the participants as a group. It is from these clusters of meaning that a researcher “writes a composite description or *invariant structure* (the essence) of the phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62).

Reliability and Validity

Given that the data for this research are narrative in nature, how those stories are told can be reasonably expected to change each time they are discussed. It would be misguided then, to attempt to empirically validate this type of qualitative data for consistency or stability (Sandelowski, 1991). Sandelowski (1991) suggested that “efforts to verify findings (for example, the use of test-retest and inter-rater reliability kinds of measure) suggest a misplaced preoccupation with empirical rather than narrative standards of truth and a profound lack of understanding of the temporal and liminal nature and vital meaning-making functions of storytelling” (p. 165). Rather the researcher and participant are more concerned at arriving at an understanding of the meaning of the experience (the essence) rather than empirically derived truth (Bruner, 1986). However, to ensure that the interview questions, the interviews, and analysis answer the research questions, we can employ methods of quality control (Gibbs, 2007). Two forms of quality control are the creation of a paper trail (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and colleague or peer review (Gibbs, 2007).

A paper trail consists of a research journal, field notes, and memos written over the course of the research project. The research journal is reflective, recording the “ideas, discussion with fellow researchers, notions about the research process, itself, and

anything else pertinent to the whole of the research project and data analysis” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 26). Field notes are recorded before, during, and after the interview, and capture “key words, phrases, and actions uttered undertaken by the [participants]” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 27). For example, during one interview the participant stated, “I think it does [EAs] give them *something in common* with the other kids. They can say, ‘Hey! I played a soccer game.’ And they can say, ‘Hey! Me too.’ You know. ‘We had a lot of fun. Let’s go play it for recess’” (italics added). I was fascinated by what this statement might mean and made note of it in my field notes. In subsequent interviews all of the parents mentioned the idea of having “something in common,” “fitting in,” being part of a “gang” or “tribe,” with the “exact same interests.” This led me to consider the idea of commonality among peers during my analysis. Memos capture the researcher’s evolving theories and comments about “thematic coding ideas and about the general development of the analytic framework” (Gibbs, 2007, p. 30). I re-read the works of Lareau (2003) and Pugh (2009) during the interview and analysis process, knowing that my research was closely related to theirs. As I began to code and develop a thematic framework, simple memos written to myself helped me track my thoughts about how the research was related and in what way. For example, all three see class-based differences in parenting beliefs and ideas that affect approaches to parenting among the upper- and middle-class. As I began my analysis I noticed those same differences and made note of them as they occurred; the most obvious similarity being that parents who reported themselves as “more than comfortable” and “comfortable” financially generally involved their children in more EAs. The research journal, field notes, and memos, in addition to the interview transcripts can be reviewed to ensure consistency.

The committee chair provided a colleague or peer review of the research process and analysis. The committee chair reviewed a portion of the taped and transcribed interviews and evolving coding schemes. Together, the student researcher and chair then discussed emergent findings. This served two functions; first it ensured integrity during analysis, and second, it helped the researcher in remaining bracketed from her own experiences with EAs.

Ethical Considerations

An ethical concern of this researcher was the confidentiality of the participants. Each participant was provided a Utah State University Institutional Review Board approved Letter of Information (Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the research, the nature of possible risks and benefits of the research, and the conditions surrounding the security of taped and transcribed interviews (in a locked filing cabinet to which only the researcher had access). Interviews proceeded only after reading a Letter of Consent to the participant. Each participant was assigned a name to protect the privacy of the families involved. The original names of the participants and assigned names were not shared with anyone.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Overview

Qualitative and phenomenological methodologies were combined to elucidate the “essence” of shared experiences of parents of fourth and fifth graders who enroll their children in extracurricular activities (EAs). As a result, commonalities among the parents’ beliefs and ideas began to emerge as they talked about their children’s activities. As they told their stories, themes emerged illuminating what drew parents and children toward this involvement. These themes appeared during the interview stage when the parents consistently used the same or similar words to explain certain aspects of that involvement. For example, many of the parents used the words “something in common” to describe one of the socially oriented reasons they enrolled their child in EAs. They wanted to ensure their child had something in common with other children, thereby facilitating social interaction. Removed from the transcribed interviews and grouped together, these significant statements began to convey the essential and shared meanings of the participants or the “essence” of the shared phenomena. The parents expressed ideas about: (1) socially oriented benefits for the child, (2) thinking strategically about the future, and (3) influences on parental investment. Once the significant statements were identified, smaller and more exact units of meaning were extracted to develop textural and structural themes.

Textural statements describe the parents’ beliefs and ideas about their child’s involvement in EAs or *what* the parents believed their child gained from the experience.

Structural units of meaning describe the context from which the child's involvement sprung or *how* choice and parental investment impacted the child's involvement in EAs. The grouping of textural and structural statements illuminated the central research question or the meanings associated with parents' beliefs and ideas about their child's involvement in EAs.

The central research question examined parents' beliefs and ideas about their child's involvement in EAs. From this central research question three second-level questions were developed: (1) How do parents think their child is viewed as a result of their participation in EAs, (2) What benefits do the parents believe the child receives from involvement in EAs, and (3) How do parents choose to invest their time, money, and other resources in their children's EAs? The answers to these second-level questions became clear as the parents responded to questions about their child's involvement in EAs. First, parents expressed ideas about the social oriented benefits they believed their child received from involvement in EAs, for example having something in common with other children and improving their child's social status. Second, parents believed that involvement in EAs would benefit their child in the future. For example, parents expressed the desire to have a "well-rounded" child who would be an attractive college candidate and well prepared for the future. Third, a pattern of parental involvement developed. For example, the choice, number, and level of involvement in EAs were determined by both parent and child. Each of these second-level research questions joined together to answer the central research question.

Central Research Question

What are parents' beliefs and ideas about their child's involvement in EAs? To answer this question, all transcribed interviews were analyzed to find significant statements. These significant statements were then summarized, creating statements that contained the essence of the parents' beliefs and ideas about their child's involvement in EAs. Tables 2-6 and Table 8 provide a summarized listing of the parents' significant statements.

Significant Statements

To arrive at the lists of significant statements shown in Tables 2-6 and Table 8, the parents' statements were edited and summarized from the longer significant statements (see Appendix E, Tables E.1 through E.6). Although the ideas and beliefs expressed by the parents answer the larger research question, their ideas and beliefs were multifaceted. During the analysis it was decided that these multifaceted statements would be grouped within three central themes: (1) socially oriented benefits for the child, (2) thinking strategically about the future, and (3) influences on parental investment. These themes were used to organize Tables 2-6 and Table 8 and the textual and structural descriptions that follow. These themes and the accompanying parents' statements illustrate the multifaceted nature of parents' ideas and beliefs about their children's involvement in EAs and the benefits they believe their child received by participating in them.

Textural Description

This level of description draws together a group of statements that describe *what* the parents believe their child gained from the experience. This group of statements, derived from interview data, addressed two research questions: (1) How do parents think their child is viewed as a result of their participation in EAs?, and (2) What benefits do the parents believe the child receives from involvement in EAs?

Within the context of these questions the parents believed involvement provided socially oriented benefits for their child. Socially, participation in EAs helped their child have “something in common” with others and improved their child’s social status. They also believed that involvement in EAs helped their child become more “well rounded” socially. Additionally, they believed that through involvement in EAs their child was taught or learned substantive values.

Research Question One: How Do Parents Think Their Child Is Viewed as a Result of Their Participation in EAs Now and in the Future?

Socially Oriented Benefits for Child: Something in Common

One of the most salient points parents expressed was that of their child having “something in common” with others as demonstrated in Table 2. Having something in common facilitated successful social interaction with many different types of people in many different situations. According to the parents, involvement in EAs provided their children with the opportunity to develop common interests that they could share or “have in common” with others who participated in similar types of activities or who had similar

Table 2

Socially Oriented Benefits: Something in Common

AnnaLisa: Being involved in sports gives them something in common and strengthens social bonds.

Babette: Soccer is the center of her social life. She is involved with people who are like minded; they are her peer group.

Christina: EAs have improved his social network. He is able to find a common ground to talk about with others.

Dora: Boys need to be part of a tribe, group, or gang.

Gabrielle: Being involved in ballet, the school newspaper, and the orchestra gives her common ground with her friends. They have something in common to talk about.

Hailey: The more experiences you have had, the more you have in common with other people. They all have these activities together. You tend to gravitate to those who are like you.

Jenny: Fitting in or having a sense of belonging is important. If he didn't have these experiences he would be limited to the friendships he could make at school

experiences. Because of these, their children were able to interact successfully with people of a variety of ages (from other children to adults) and in many different situations (from the classroom to the community). For example, AnnaLisa spoke of the interaction she saw between her son and other friends on the playground at school

I think it does give him something in common with the other kids. He said, "Hey! I played a soccer game." And they said, "Hey! Me too." You know. "We had a lot of fun. Let's go play it for recess."

Gabrielle saw her daughter's activities as a way to bond with peers in and out of school.

She stated

I think, through extracurricular activities, she does get to be with her friends, even in ballet. She bonds with them [working on] the school newspaper. She bonds with them in orchestra. There are different friends in each. You know, she gets

to know other people's personalities more on a one-on-one basis than say in a classroom. They can talk about orchestra when they are not in orchestra. They can talk about the school newspaper, when they are not working on the school newspaper. It gives her common ground with other friends.

Some parents saw their children gain access to the world outside their home and school.

Faith explains her son's interactions in the larger community as a result of his

involvement in one particular EA:

I think [skiing] is kind of a socially fun thing. He sees a lot of his friends there.... Well, there is a topic that they can talk about and have in common.

Some parents' views of social benefits were not limited to the present benefits. Some also saw potential benefits in the future to their child's involvement in EAs today. For example, Hailey saw benefit for her daughter in the future when she discussed her daughter's involvement in EAs:

The more experiences you have had, the more you have in common with other people and when they get to college, they will have met so many people from different backgrounds because they have something in common with them. They are meeting people that they wouldn't otherwise meet, and so socially, I think it is priceless.

Socially Oriented Benefits for Child: Improving Social Status

One of the direct benefits of having something in common seemed to be an improved social status among peers, with adults, and in life in general as demonstrated in Table 3. Parents explained how their child's relationships were built around their participation in EAs. They talked about how their child was able to interact more easily with adults who played an important role in their life, including their school teachers. Ingrid stated that sharing common interests and increased social status are a result of participation in EAs.

He plays with those that are interested in similar things. He enjoys doing the same things that they do as a challenge; the competition doesn't hurt. Then they have something to talk about and then that leads to something else. Yes, because he knows some children and associates with them; he loves that. He is a very popular child.

Christina saw a relationship between participation in skiing and the good relationship between her child and her child's teacher.

We see a lot of the outdoorsy teachers on the ski slopes. We see them at the ski swap. I think it makes [my child] kind of famous with the teacher.

Parents discussed how their child's relationships were created and improved through participation in EAs. Parents believed that their child was able to interact more easily with not only their peers, but also with adults who played an important role in their life, including their school teachers.

Table 3

Socially Oriented Benefits: Improving Social Status

Babette: Being involved in EAs is a positive experience. The teachers love her.

Christina: Because he is involved in EAs everyone knows him and sees him in a different light—even his teachers. I think a lot of people consider him cool; people admire him.

Dora: Because of his involvement in EAs other kids think he is kind of cool.

Elizabeth: There was a lot of popularity that went along with being involved in that EA.

Faith: Socially it helps him. He is respected.

Hailey: Other children and adults see that she is involved in these EAs and it helps with the relationships.

Ingrid: He enjoys the social and competition components of being involved in EAs and as a result he is a very popular child.

Jenny: He's a big fish in a small pond. He has a reputation in class of being a good athlete. It definitely helps him with his teacher. She comes to his events.

**Research Question Two: How Do Parents Think Participation in Eas
Will Benefit Their Child Now and in the Future?**

**Thinking Strategically About the Future:
The Well-Rounded Child**

Parents thought strategically about their children's futures in relation to the EAs in which they were involved. Parents indicated that they believe involvement in EAs would "broaden their children's horizons" creating a "well-rounded" child via the exposure to a wide range of experiences and people as demonstrated in Table 4. Parents believed that being a well-rounded individual would benefit their child in the future, for example during the college application process or when beginning their career. For example Elizabeth stated:

I think it will make her a lot more well-rounded. I do think she will be the kind of adult who looks for activities. ...I think it will broaden her horizons. I think that is one of the biggest things. If I look at kids who don't do any activities, I think maybe they are less curious about the big wide world out there, as if there is nothing. And if you really want to get long term, I have noticed adults who work and don't have a lot of activities are not as prepared for their retirement either.

Gabrielle, too, expressed the belief that her child would benefit from a wide range of experiences:

I think she is well-rounded. I think she experiences more from religious background, more economic background, more educational background, in dealing with these activities. She is going to meet more people...with different views, different backgrounds, different social, I mean socially, you think, we are in our own little valley, we don't have a lot of, it is not like New York.

Hailey extolled the benefits of exposure to a wide range of experiences and people through her daughter's participation in EAs:

Table 4

Thinking Strategically about the Future: The Well-Rounded Child

AnnaLisa: His world has expanded. He can understand more roles; relate to kids in different ways.

Elizabeth: I think EAs make her more well-rounded. It will broaden her horizons.

Gabrielle: I think she is more well-rounded. She has experience with those from varying religious backgrounds, economic backgrounds, and educational backgrounds. She has met more people with different views. She has experienced more diversity.

Hailey: We wanted to make sure that she was a more well-rounded person. The more experiences you have the more you have in common with other people.

Jenny: He has experience with many different kinds of people. He has been to many different places. He has a more connected sense of his world and how he fits into it.

Kelsie: They are used to being with all ages and types of people: adults, friends, and their teachers.

We wanted to make sure that she was a more well-rounded person, the more experiences you have had, the more you have in common with other people and just because I was telling them when they get to college, they will have met so many people from different backgrounds because they have something in common with them. They go to an art camp because they enjoy art. They have music lessons. They are meeting people that they wouldn't otherwise meet, and so socially, I think it is priceless.

Jenny looked strategically to the future when discussing her child's involvement in EAs:

It benefits you in the friendships that you have, but it can also benefit you in college, and you know a financial benefit, in job interviews, and all sorts of things, so I see, there is a fraternity that is involved with kinds of athletics, that can be very powerful and in placement of things. So I think it is a sense of belonging. Socially, I think of fitting, so I think it is a huge part of his social world. Well, he certainly wouldn't have many connections with people if he didn't do that, because that is how he has connected with a lot of people. If he didn't do any extracurricular activities, he would probably be limited to just having friendships at school.

**Thinking Strategically About
the Future: Learning
Substantive Values**

Parents indicated that learning the substantive values they and the child's coaches and teachers emphasized was important as demonstrated in Table 5. Parents believed that it was essential for their children to learn values such as self-motivation, confidence, teamwork, good sportsmanship, discipline, and competition. Parents believed that learning these values would lead to long-term benefits such as a well-paid white collar career.

AnnaLisa discussed her pleasure at having found coaches that expected the same substantive values from her child that she did:

They are really, really good coaches. What was very important to the coaches as the lifestyle that they were teaching him...learning that he can't quit half way through...so we really liked those fringe benefits so to speak.

Faith stated that her son's involvement in EAs benefitted him by giving him confidence.

When you look at the different activities he has been involved in, swimming, piano, skiing, and all the other things, you see the benefit for him...it has given him confidence.

Other parents focused on values that would enable their children to develop successful careers. Elizabeth framed the values her daughter learned through participation in EAs as important to her future career path:

I think she will have some of these qualities that we actually talked about, of determination and discipline, that will have a very definite follow-through in terms of a career path.

Teamwork and time-management also were skills prized by these parents. Several believed that their children would benefit by learning them. Kelsie thought that learning the value of teamwork would provide long-range benefits for her daughter:

Table 5

Thinking Strategically about the Future: Learning Substantive Values

AnnaLisa: He's learning that he can't quit half way through.
It increases his attention span.
He learns patience; to listen.

Babette: She learns time management and self-discipline.
She learns an appreciation for things that are well done; a sense of beauty.
She learns good sportsmanship.
She learns to work as a team; think more as a unit rather than individually.

Christina: It has increased his self-confidence
He's learning to be a team player

Dora: He is learning to work with other people on a team; to work in a group.

Elizabeth: She is gaining self-confidence
She is feeling a sense of accomplishment; not only having fun doing this, I'm getting results.
She is learning good habits of fitness; habits of health.
She is learning communication skills.
She is learning habits of discipline, of self-discipline, of self-responsibility
She is learning organizational skills.
She is gaining a life long love of music, an appreciation of music. She is becoming an educated person in that sense.

Faith: He is learning concentration.
It's a confidence builder.

Gabrielle: Ballet will teach her to have poise.
She is learning to be committed to something.
She is learning to be somewhere on time.
She is learning about teamwork and working together
She is learning to pace herself.
She is learning that she has to practice if she wants to do better.

Hailey: She has more confidence in herself.

Ingrid: He is learning that you have to work as a team, or you don't succeed.
He is learning that you need to work on it, that doesn't come without a lot of work; takes additional work

Kelsie: She is learning to not give up, that we do have to do things that we don't love, for a long-range benefit.
She is learning to work together as teammates.
She is learning how to listen.
She is learning good sportsmanship.

[She has learned] to not give up, and to keep going, and that sometimes we do have to do things that we don't love, for a long-range benefit. The other one, you

have the benefit of working with a team. Every other year, about, they have been on the team together, and so it has been good for them to also work together as teammates.

Babette talked about learning self-motivation from a developmental point of view, indicating that her older daughter had learned self-motivation through her involvement in violin and piano lessons, but her younger daughter, not yet involved in such activities, had yet to learn:

They become self-motivating. When you get good enough at something that alone is the carrot. You don't have to bribe people to do it. I mean we're at the bribery stage with [points to preschooler on her lap].

Structural Description

This level of description draws together information that describes *how* parents and children experience involvement in EAs. This information is derived from two sources, interview and survey data (Appendix D). Interview data illustrated parent-child cooperation in EA choice, while survey and interview data provided evidence of parental participation in EAs as children. This group of statements addressed the third research question: How do parents choose to invest their time, money, and other resources in their children's EAs?

Research Question Three: How Do Parents Choose to Invest Their Time and Other Resources in Their Children's EAs?

Influences on Parental Investment: Changing with the Times

Parents recognized that their child's participation in EAs was structured differently than was theirs as demonstrated in Table 6. Many parents stated that a change in children's play had taken place since they were children. The play in which they participated as children was less structured by adults—what we now call “free play.”

Babette talked of her youth as being different than her child's experience today:

When I grew up a long time ago it was very different. We'd just knock on each other's door and we'd go out and play. Just playing outside these days just isn't what it used to be.

Christina too noticed a difference in the structure of EAs when she stated:

We did a lot of things, growing up, but we never really joined a team, you know or things like that. It was not organized. We never had a coach. We just kind of learned from the neighbors.

The parents' children participated in far fewer hours of free play and instead were involved in structured activities (EAs). However, several parents implied, either explicitly or implicitly, an inner conflict between their ideas and beliefs about their child's involvement in EAs and the idea of their child having access to large amounts of time for free play.

Some of the parents framed this ideas as being one of difficulty in “calendaring” enough time for both their child's EAs and time for “free play” with friends in the form of a play date. Elizabeth described her struggles with accommodating both EAs and “free play.”

Table 6

Influences on Parental Investment: Changing with the Times

Babette: When I grew up it was very different. We'd just knock on each other's door and we'd go out and play.

Christina: We never really joined a team. It was not organized. We learned from the neighbors.

Jenny: They won't have the opportunity to be involved at a later age, because it gets so competitive. I think when I was growing up, even 40 years ago, or 30 years ago, that wasn't so much the case. You could wait until you were in junior high or high school to try something.

Elizabeth: One of the things that I'm frustrated about...there is no free play...kids should have huge amounts of unstructured time.

Faith: Play date[s]. We can't do it on Monday or Tuesday, but we can do it on Thursday or Friday, so we just have to reschedule.

Hailey: It is just play dates—the lack of [them].

Ingrid: And then, then just play dates, right now, trying to get [time] to have those.

One of the things that I'm frustrated about, because she is doing all of these activities, [is] that it requires calendaring...and there is no free play...kids should have huge amounts of unstructured time.

Several parents talked about how their own participation in sports was less structured than their children's and centered on neighborhood friends and activities. For some, this casual participation led to a competitive level of participation in high school. The parents talked about the increasingly competitive nature of participation in EAs today. They believed that this degree of competition necessitated an early start toward learning the skill sets required to participate in any given EA. They actively enrolled their children in EAs while they were young to ensure inclusion in the EA as the child grew. Jenny described her child's involvement in EAs today and her reasons for

involving him in EAs at an early age:

We are in a day and age where, whether I agree with it or not, I feel that if they don't have some level of involvement at a younger age, they won't have the opportunity to be involved at a later age, because it gets so competitive. So I think in some sports, and basketball is a good example of that, I would want him to have just enough experience every year to feel like if he does want to play it later, he will be able to. I think when I was growing up, even 40 years ago, or 30 years ago, that wasn't so much the case. You could wait until you were in junior high or high school to try something, but it is part of the society, and it is hard not to go with that a little bit.

Additionally, some parents took advantage of what they saw as precocity and individuality in their children and worked to secure special opportunities for their child. Several parents described their children as having unique personalities and abilities. For example, Jenny described her son's unique individuality:

I liken him to like a thoroughbred. He has to be raced, and if he isn't, you know, it is not good.

Babette talked about her efforts to develop child's precocious nature had resulted in their driving 180 miles (round-trip) on a weekly basis for her daughter to receive lessons from a more advanced Suzuki instructor.

The first thing that she started doing was playing the violin. She started telling us at age three. She is almost a five [level in the Suzuki Method]. It is not like she can you know, play in orchestra...at school...her [violin] teacher has told her not to. We go to the city [for lessons]. She's awfully competitive.

Influences on Parental Investment: Parent Involvement in EAs as a Child

During the interview process parents were asked to indicate the EAs in which they participated as a child by circling items on a survey. All of the parents interviewed were involved in a variety of EAs as shown in Table 7. This included involvement in EAs such as government and civic groups, music and dance, church groups and activities,

Table 7*Parents' Reported Involvement in EAs as Children (from survey data*)*

| Participant | EAs Father | EAs Mother |
|-------------|--|---|
| AnnaLisa | baseball, skiing, Boy Scouts, youth church groups, instrument | 4-H, Honor Club, Key Club, church groups, art classes, instrument |
| Babette | student government, church groups, piano | sports, church groups, instrument |
| Christina | soccer, chess club, table tennis | debate, church groups |
| Dora | football, Bible school | softball, Girl Scouts, Bible school, instrument |
| Elizabeth | swimming, basketball, baseball, card playing clubs, instrument, skiing | basketball, gymnastics, horse riding, Girl Scouts, instrument, skiing |
| Faith | football, swimming, baseball, skiing, Bible school | running, basketball, cross-country skiing, volleyball, FFA, 4-H, student government, Bible school, instrument |
| Gabrielle | soccer, horse riding, various academic activities, Bible school | swimming, student government, church groups, instrument |
| Hailey | football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, student government, 4-H, theater, band, choral groups | swimming, student government, church groups, theater |
| Ingrid | skiing | dance, horse riding, student government, 4-H, church youth groups, piano |
| Jenny | sports, social, civic, student government, Boy Scouts, arts, vocal | sports, gymnastics, social, student government, Girl Scouts, instrument, music |
| Kelsie | football, swimming, baseball, lacrosse, skiing, FBLA, debate, church groups, piano, golf, basketball | dance, cheer, swimming, gymnastics, FBLA, student government, Girl Scouts, church groups, piano |

*Mothers, who filled out the survey, indicated involvement for themselves and for their husbands. EAs noted for parents are for roughly pre-school through college years.

pageants, and sports.

When combined with parents' statements made during the interview process, this information illustrated how parents, involved in EAs as a child, valued that participation and desired a similar type of involvement for their children. For example, Jenny stated the following:

I think my husband and I have a perspective that we were pretty active in extracurricular activities as kids, and that is something that we remember and value about our childhood, and so I think we have a bias towards that [a]s a positive thing.

Kelsie discussed the involvement of not only her husband, but generations of family members in EAs:

My husband and I are both pretty active and decided we just wanted to create those opportunities for them. They play [a particular sport] with their grandpa and their dad. They play in the father-son tournament. That has been a tradition in the family for forty years that my husband has done, so I think that these traditions are carried on. You know, even down the road.

**Influences on Parental Investment:
Collaborative Relationships
Between Parents and Children**

Parent and child worked in collaboration when choosing not only the type of EA, but also the number of EAs and level of involvement in any particular EA. Many of the parents used "I" statements in reference to the EAs in which they wanted their child to participate. Parents also expressed "he" or "she" statements in reference to the EAs in which the child wanted to participate as demonstrated in Table 8. These statements demonstrate the collaborative nature of the relationship between the parent and child when deciding the type of EA as well as the number of EAs and level of involvement in any particular EA. Although parents have their own distinct ideas about EAs, they are

Table 8

Influences on Parental Investment: Collaborative Relationship Between Parents and Child

AnnaLisa: I just kind of ask Him, “What do you want? Something like this? Does this look good to you?”

Christina: Skiing is one of his best activities. He learned it the fastest; he just took off. I would love for him to join the ski team, but he is not interested in being competitive. He just wants to go and have fun. So, that’s fine.

Dora: Well, some of the activities he is involved in, I suggested and some of them he has chosen on his own.

Elizabeth: [I asked], “What kind of instrument would you like to play?” ...So the other things kind of emerged, that she said, “Oh, I want to try gymnastics.” And I go, “Okay, let’s see if you like that.”

Ingrid: He likes basketball. He likes football. We did have him in music too. But he did not like practicing. So after he fiddled around with it a little bit, I pulled out of it.

Jenny: In the beginning, he was interested in things. [I’d] say, “Do you want to do this?” and [he’d] say, “Yes.” But he is really only forced to do one thing and that’s the piano.

Kelsie: This year, they both said, “I’m done with soccer.” And so we are done. [Then I said], “Okay let’s try this out, and they were saying, “Okay.” But some of the things I have exposed them to. They have art lessons. It is like, “Hey there is this idea; do you guys want to go do art lessons?” [And they say], “Yeah! We love it.”

equally interested—often eliciting input from their child—in supporting their child’s interests.

Babette commented on her daughter’s desire to learn more than one musical instrument:

The first thing that she started doing was playing the violin. She started telling us at age three. We kinda held off until she was almost five and found her a good teacher. And then...she wanted to pick up the piano, too. We said, “Uuuh, but she’s interested and she’s pulled it off.

Gabrielle expressed a similar willingness to support her daughter’s involvement in several different EAs (her daughter is also involved in ballet, piano, and the school

newspaper):

So I say, “Okay, do you want to do ballet. Do you want to do swimming? What would you like to do? Fourth grade in school they get to start orchestra. She wanted to learn how to play the cello, so she has cello twice a week.

Jenny discussed how her son wanted to move to a competitive level of participation in his favorite sport, but in another sport, his involvement waxes and wanes. She supports her son in both decisions:

He is on the competitive team...because he wanted to. That was totally his [idea]. He got on the team, and he has really thrived on that...he loves to do the whole thing. ... He wanted to [play basketball]. He is hot and cold on basketball. In the past it has been very hot and now it is kind of cooler. ... I would say he is pretty much doing everything that he wants to. We don't limit him.

Exhaustive Description

Throughout each phase of the analysis the participants' ideas and beliefs were carefully considered. Significant statements were removed from interview transcripts. Patterns that formed essential themes were grouped together. These significant statements form the essence of the shared meanings behind parents' ideas and beliefs about extracurricular activities.

Parents thought strategically about their child's future, frequently reflecting on their own valued childhood experiences in EAs. Parents noted a change in children's play from the past to the present. In the past children's play was far more unstructured allowing for significant amounts of “free play” for children. Today, however, parents see the competitively driven necessity for children to be involved in structured play activities (EAs). Parents believed that early involvement in EAs would give their children a competitive advantage should the child choose to participate in an activity at a later age.

Parents seemed to value these experiences and wanted their own children to have similar experiences. They invested significant amounts of time, money, and energy into their child's development through participation in EAs. Parents and children approach EA choice, type, and level of involvement in a collaborative fashion. Parents had specific ideas about involvement, but were equally supportive of their children's choices.

According to the parents, involvement in EAs produced socially adept children, who have "something in common" with other people, able to interact successfully with people of any age in as many different situations as possible. From this participation they sought to improve their child's social standing among peers, with adults, and in life in general.

Parents structured and guided their child toward opportunities for growth and achievement through involvement in EAs. They believed that this involvement resulted in a "well rounded" child with a broad base of knowledge about the world. Parents believed these experiences would benefit their child in their future endeavors (college, careers, and family life).

Summary of Findings

This research applied Parental Ethnotheories to understanding parents' ideas and beliefs about their child's involvement in extracurricular activities. Interviews with 11 parents of fourth- and fifth-graders at a university-based laboratory school uncovered three themes, (1) Socially Oriented Benefits for Child (Something in Common and Improving Social Status), (2) Thinking Strategically about the Future (The Well-Rounded Child and Consistency in Teaching/Learning Substantive Values), and (3)

Influences on Parental Investment (Changes through Time and the Collaborative Relationship between Parents and Child).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Overview

This chapter summarizes the results of the present study and links its findings to other research. The limitations of the study are enumerated and avenues for further research are offered. The conclusion provides some final thoughts about the essence of the phenomenon shared by parents and their ideas and beliefs about their children's involvement in extracurricular activities (EAs).

Parental ethnotheories are parent's beliefs and ideas about what is the proper or correct way to rear a child. "Parental ethnotheories are the nexus through which elements of the larger culture are filtered" (Harkness & Super, 1996, p. 9).

Understanding parents' ideas and beliefs about childrearing is important because parents influence children's development. Parents influence children's development through their choices of the physical and social settings in which children participate.

This study examined parent's ideas and beliefs about their child's involvement in extracurricular activities (EAs). From the data analysis, broad themes emerged. The three broader themes were summarized in an exhaustive description of the meaning or essence of the parent's ideas and beliefs about their children's involvement in EAs (Chapter 4). Contained within these three broad themes were six smaller themes. Some of the smaller themes were highly salient, meaning that almost all of the parents interviewed expressed similar ideas and beliefs. This chapter will discuss those smaller themes.

Significant Findings

When reviewing the exhaustive description it becomes clear that parents in this study believe it is important to think strategically about their child's future. They believe that participation in EAs will help their child obtain benefits. The parents were actively working to develop their children through participation in EAs. Development has been defined as "a process of becoming familiar with the environment and with one's interactions with the worlds it involves; each new skill becomes submerged in consciousness with the effort to achieve it forgotten as it becomes familiar" (Rogoff et al., 2007, p. 491). The parents in this study explicitly stated that they involved their children in EAs so that they would learn substantive values, become well-rounded children, and have something in common with their peers and adults. They seemed to be actively working to develop their children

Some of the parents discussed the changes in play that occurred in their lifetimes. They believed that their child's play was more structured by adults than theirs was. However they felt that involvement in structured play activities (EAs) was important for their child. Parents believed that being involved in EAs helped their child to learn substantive values and to become a well-rounded individual.

Parents asserted that their children learned specific substantive values such as "teamwork," "self-motivation," "time management," and "self-discipline" while participating in EAs. Levey (2009a) and Raitt and Lancy (1988) found that parents also believed that their children would learn specific substantive values such as confidence from their participation in EAs. In her ethnography, Lareau (2003) studied the parenting

practices of lower- and middle-class parents of children in middle-childhood. She noticed that middle-class parents work to provide their children with opportunities to learn specific skills and dispositions. The substantive values mentioned in both this study and in Levey (2009a) and Raitt and Lancy (1988) are similar to the skills and dispositions mentioned by the middle-class parents in Lareau's study. This lends support to Laureau's idea that middle-class parents place their children in situations that enable them to learn specific skills and dispositions in an effort to cultivate and socialize them into the middle-class.

Laureau (2003) posited that thinking strategically about the future of children is part of "concerted cultivation" (p. 1-2, 39). Middle-class parents in her research engaged in the concerted cultivation of their children through a specific approach to the use of language and interaction with institutions. The middle-class parents in her study worked to develop children who would be able to interact with a wide array of people and in a variety of settings. The nature of parents' ideas and beliefs in this study adds support to Laureau's idea of concerted cultivation. The parents believed that participation in EAs would create a "well-rounded child." The parents in this study believed that a well-rounded child would be more able to interact with a wide array of people in a variety of settings and that developing a well-rounded child would provide opportunities and advantages for their child into adulthood. Parents structured and guided their child toward opportunities for growth and achievement through involvement in EAs. They believed that this involvement resulted in a "well-rounded" child with a broad base of knowledge about the world. Parents believed these experiences would benefit their child in their future endeavors (college and careers).

Rosenthal and Roer-Strier (2001) suggested that parents' attune their ideas and beliefs about how to socialize and develop their child to the changes around them. However, parents may not be aware of the changes or be able to attune their ideas and beliefs as quickly as the changes occur. Parents are more likely to first employ the ideas and beliefs inherited from their parents and the communities in which they grew up (Levine, 1980). Lareau (2003) suggested that middle-class parent's reasons for engaging in concerted cultivation centered on the parent's own anxiety that their children have access to good colleges and white collar careers. The parents knew that "institutional gatekeepers, such as college administration officers, applaud[ed] extracurricular activities. Thus, many parents [saw] (Lareau, 2003, p. 247) children's activities as more than interesting and enjoyable pastimes. They also provide[d] potential advantages for children in the sorting process" (Lareau, 2003, p. 248).

Parents in this study expressly stated that changes had occurred since they were children. They believed that those changes lead to a competitively motivated necessity to involve their children in structured EAs at an early age. They believed that their child's participation in EAs would have direct benefits for them in gaining access to and being successful at college and subsequently winning a well paid position in a white-collar career.

Parents believed that participation in EAs gave their child something in common with peers and adults thereby facilitating successful social interaction. This extends Pugh's (2009) concept of "facework." In her study of the commercialization of childhood, middle-class parents invested in specific products in an effort to provide their children with the opportunity to engage in "facework"—interacting socially—enabling

the children to access social relationships with peers, to “establish their sense of belonging in a group” (Pugh, 2009, p. 53). Children were able to more successfully interact socially with other children when they had a popular toy or saw a particular movie. Children in this study were able to have “something in common” when they participated in the same EAs as peers and other adults.

Limitations of the Research

This study of parent’s ideas and beliefs about their children’s involvement in EAs has limitations. Only eleven parents were interviewed. Although this number is acceptable for a phenomenological inquiry, generalizability of the findings to a larger population would be inappropriate.

This study was limited to parental perceptions of how their child benefits from participation in EAs. Two sources, interviews and a short demographic survey were employed to collect the data. Observations of the parent and child engaged in the settings where EAs took place would have added to the data by enabling the researchers to compare the responses from the parents with observations of their children while engaged in EAs.

Recommendations for Further Research

Current research on Parental Ethnotheories specific to parent’s ideas and beliefs about their child’s involvement in EAs is fairly new. However, it seems to indicate that middle-class parents have a future-oriented social and developmental agenda in place for their child (Lareau, 2003; Pugh, 2009). This research which appears to highlight a

parenting approach that provides positive outcomes for children is an important area that needs further research. How parents filter their child's experiences and what their child learns is often overlooked (Rogoff et al., 2007). Further exploration into how this affects a child's development is important to understanding human development.

The parents in this study were from a fairly homogeneous group. Parents from less homogenous backgrounds may provide a different set of ideas and beliefs surrounding children's involvement in EAs. If that proves to be the case then additional research into the causes of those differences might be enlightening. This research focused on the ideas and beliefs of mothers.' Future research might probe for fathers' ideas and beliefs and their role in the EAs of their children. In future studies, interviews with fathers could be added to those of the mothers.

Conclusion

The parents in this study believed that their child's involvement in EAs played a key role in the development of their children, helping them not only in the present, but in the roles they would assume later in life. This forward-thinking, child-oriented focus required incredible amounts of time and resources, but the parents willingly invested in their children. They believed the result of that investment would be children who could competitively bid for positions in good colleges and white collar careers.

Conducting this study has had a profound effect on the way I think about child development. I was continually amazed at the amounts of time and resources the parents were able invest in the development of their children. These children are very fortunate to have parents who are so invested in their futures.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Research Invitation



Department of Family, Consumer,
and Human Development
2905 Old Main Hill
Logan UT 84322-2905
Telephone: (435) 797-1501

Dear Parents of 4th and 5th graders at Edith Bowen Laboratory School,

My name is Annette Grove. I am working towards the completion of a Masters Degree in the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development at Utah State University. The study described here is my Master's thesis project. I am exploring parents' ideas about their children's involvement in extracurricular activities. I would like to talk with 8 to 12 mothers who have children in the 4th and 5th grade and who are willing to talk to me about their children's extracurricular activities.

If you participate, you will be asked to participate in two 45 minute interviews in the location of your choice. My questions will be about how your children's involvement in extracurricular activities affects their lives.

I will give you more details about the study and provide detailed instructions if you choose to participate. The project should provide valuable insight into parents' ideas about their children's involvement in extracurricular activities.

If you are willing to participate, please return this note to EBLs **with your information listed below** by November 14th, 2009.

If you have any questions, concerns, or need clarification, please feel free to call me at the email address or telephone number listed below.

Sincerely,
Annette Grove

Department of Family, Consumer,
and Human Development
Utah State University
Logan, UT
435-730-6416
annette.grove@aggiemail.usu.edu

I would like to participate.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Appendix B
Letter of Information



Date Created: May 28, 2009; Page 1 of 2
USU IRB Approval: 02/26/2009
Approval Terminates: 02/25/2010
Protocol #2340 (2275A)
IRB Password Protected per IRB Administrator

Department of Family, Consumer,
and Human Development
2905 Old Main Hill
Logan UT 84322-2905
Telephone: (435) 797-1501

LETTER OF INFORMATION

Parental Views of Their Children's Extracurricular Activities

Purpose: Professor Kathy Piercy and Student Annette Grove in the Department of Family, Consumer, and Human Development at Utah State University (USU) are conducting a research study to learn more about parental ideas about their children's extracurricular activities. Research indicates that children between the ages of 9- and 11-years-old are most involved in extracurricular activities. You have been asked to take part because you are the parent of a child between the ages of 9- and 11-years-old. There will be 8-12 total participants in this research.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this research study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. You will be invited to participate in two interviews, each about 45 to 60 minutes long, which will take place at your convenience and in a place with which you are comfortable.
2. These interviews will be audio recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks involved in this study. However, because we will discuss family relationships, there is the possibility of emotional discomfort in answering some questions. However, the interviewer has been trained to be sensitive to your emotions and to minimize any discomfort. You are free to stop the interview at any time. Also, you may refuse to answer any question that you feel uncomfortable in answering.

Benefits: There may not be any direct benefit to you from these procedures. The investigators, however, may learn more about parents' ideas about their child's involvement in extracurricular activities.

Explanation & offer to answer questions: Annette Grove has explained this research study to you and answered your questions. If you have other questions or research-related problems, you may reach Professor Kathy Piercy at (435) 797-2387.

Voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw without consequence:

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without consequence or loss of benefits.

Confidentiality: Research records will be kept confidential, consistent with federal and state regulations. Only Dr. Kathy Piercy and Annette Grove will have access to the data which will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room. To protect your privacy, your name will be replaced with a number and stored separately from the information collected for this study. To ensure confidentiality, all data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked room of Dr. Piercy. Only Dr. Piercy and Mary Grove will have access to the data. Both hard copy information, audio recordings, and the code linking you to this study, will be kept for one year and then destroyed.

IRB Approval Statement: The Institutional Review Board for the protection of human participants at USU has approved this research study. If you have any pertinent questions or concerns about your rights or a research-related injury, you may contact the IRB Administrator at (435) 797-0567 or email irb@usu.edu. If you have a concern or complaint about the research and you would like to contact someone other than the research team, you may contact the IRB Administrator to obtain information or to offer input.

Copy of consent: You have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one copy for your files.

Investigator Statement: “I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual, by me or my research staff, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions that have been raised have been answered.”

Dr. Kathy Piercy
(435) 797-2387

Mary Annette Grove (student investigator)
(435) 740-6416

Appendix C
Interview Questions

Introductory Question:

How did your child become involved in EAs?

General Questions

1. In what extracurricular activity/activities (EA) is your child involved?
2. Why (that particular) EA?

Choice of EA Questions

3. Is there another EA you would have your child participate in? Why?
4. What is the benefit of EA as opposed to EA (a different one)?
5. Why doesn't your child participate in this EA?
6. In what EAs would you not have your child participate? Why?
7. How much time a week is spent on EAs?
8. Are there special extra amounts of time devoted to EAs (games, performances, competitions)?
9. As we've discussed, there are many investments of time, energy, and money that parents put into their child's EAs. Considering the costs you've experienced, what is your opinion on making these investments and absorbing these costs?

Academic Questions

10. How do you think participating in EA affects your child's ability to enjoy school more?
11. How do you think involvement in EA affects your child's grades?
12. How do you think your child's involvement in EA affects his/her relationship with his/her teacher?

Social Questions

13. How do you think your child benefits from participating in EA?
14. How do you think your child's ability to make and maintain friendships is affected by participating in EA?
15. How does this EA affect who your child plays with or who his friends are?
16. Does your child play more with EA friends or with neighborhood friends or relatives?
17. How does being involved in EA affect your child's relationships in school?
18. What do other kids think of your child because he participates in EA (or EA as opposed to another EA)?
19. Is your child seen as more of a 'leader' or more 'popular' because of his/her involvement in EA?
20. How do you think your child's circle of friends would be different if he/she did not participate in EA: a) now and b) in the future?
21. How do you think your child's experiences at school (church, community) would be different if he/she did not participate in EA?
22. How do you think your child's ability to handle social interaction problems (i.e. bullying, exclusion by others) is affected because of his/her involvement in EA?

The Future Questions

23. In what ways do you think your child's involvement in EA will benefit him in the future?

Appendix D
Demographic Survey

This last set of questions provides information about you and your family. Please provide the following information that best describes you and your family:

→ 1. Parent's Involvement in Extracurricular Activities:

Circle the extracurricular Activities you remember being involved in as a child

| Mother | Father |
|---|---|
| Sports (soccer, football, dance, cheer, swimming, baseball, gymnastics, horse riding, lacrosse, etc.) | Sports (soccer, football, dance, cheer, swimming, baseball, gymnastics, horse riding, lacrosse, etc.) |
| Academic (debate, chess club, Kumon, etc.) | Academic (debate, Kumon, chess club etc.) |
| Social (play dates, card playing clubs, beauty pageants, etc.) | Social (play dates, card playing clubs, beauty pageants, etc.) |
| Business, Career, Civic (FBLA, FTA, FFA, student government, Girl or Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs, etc.) | Business, Career, Civic (FBLA, FTA, FFA, student government, Girl or Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs, etc.) |
| Religious (children's or adolescent church oriented groups: Bible school, Bible study, primary, young men's or young women's, etc.) | Religious (children's or adolescent church oriented groups: Bible school, Bible study, primary, young men's or young women's, etc.) |
| The Arts or Music (art classes, instrument or vocal lessons, etc.) | The Arts or Music (Art Classes, instrument or vocal lessons, etc.) |
| Other (please give an example): | Other (please give an example): |

→ 2. Child's Involvement in Extracurricular Activities:

Circle the extracurricular Activities in which your child is involved

| Child |
|---|
| Sports (soccer, football, dance, cheer, swimming, baseball, gymnastics, horse riding, lacrosse, etc.) |
| Academic (debate, chess club, Kumon, etc.) |
| Social (play dates, card playing clubs, beauty pageants, etc.) |
| Business, Career, Civic (FBLA, FTA, FFA, student government, Girl or Boy Scouts, 4-H clubs, etc.) |

| |
|---|
| Religious (children's or adolescent church oriented groups: Bible school, Bible study, primary, young men's or young women's, etc.) |
| The Arts or Music (art classes, instrument or vocal lessons, etc.) |
| Other (please give an example): |

→ 3. Number of hours per week child is involved in all extracurricular activities:

Circle the number that most closely represents the total hours of involvement per week --include time for practice, performance, and other preparatory work

| | | |
|-------|-------|-------|
| 1-5 | 21-25 | 41-45 |
| 6-10 | 26-30 | 46-50 |
| 11-15 | 30-35 | > 51 |
| 16-20 | 36-40 | |

→ 4. Age(s) of children in years:

Circle all ages that apply

| | |
|----|----|
| 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 |
| 9 | 10 |
| 11 | 12 |
| 13 | 14 |
| 15 | 16 |
| 17 | 18 |

→ 5. Parents' level of education:

Circle a level for Mother and circle a level for Father

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Mother | Father |
| High School | High School |
| Some College | Some College |
| Bachelors Degree | Bachelors Degree |
| Some Graduate School | Some Graduate School |
| Graduate Degree | Graduate Degree |

→ 6. Marital status of parents:

Circle your marital status

| |
|----------------|
| Without Spouse |
| Divorced |
| Married |
| Single |

→ 7. Your age:

**Write your age
and circle M (for Mother) or F (for Father)**

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| <input type="text"/> | M | F |
|----------------------|---|---|

→ 8. The age of your child's other parent:

**Write the age of your child's other parent
and circle M (for Mother) or F (for Father)**

| | | |
|----------------------|---|---|
| <input type="text"/> | M | F |
|----------------------|---|---|

→ 9a. "Financial comfort" level:

Circle your family's "financial comfort" level

| |
|-----------------------|
| Not comfortable |
| Comfortable |
| More than comfortable |

→ 9b. Employment:

**Please circle M if Mother is employed
Please circle F if Father is employed**

| | |
|---|---|
| M | F |
|---|---|

→ 10. Ethnicity:

Please indicate your perceived ethnicity

| |
|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/> |
|----------------------|

Appendix E
Tables of Significant Statements

Table E.1

*Textural Statements About Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Socially Oriented**Benefits for Child: Something in Common*

AnnaLisa: Sports I think is important because...there's a social inter-reaction...social bonds with kids. ... You see them [other kids involved in the same EAs] at the grocery store and can go, "Hey. Hi buddy." It gives them something in common.

AnnaLisa: I think it does give him something in common with the other kids. He said, "Hey! I played a soccer game." And they said, "Hey! Me too." You know. "We had a lot of fun. Let's go play it for recess."

AnnaLisa: I think they can maintain those friendships [into the future]. I think it would depend on if...they decide to stay with that activity year after year then they would be involved with those people year after year because they still have something in common, but if one of them chooses not to do it and the other one continues sometimes it's hard to find a common bond. You know, that the friendship will [continue].

Babette: She's *really* glomed onto soccer and it's become the center of her social life. A lot of the instruments can be sort of lonely and so she['s] just loved it. That's where she got or made friend[s] with is her soccer people. [She enjoys] involvement with other children who are like minded. I mean that's her peer group. They are also involved with things that she does in music as well as soccer. There are some peers that have a different scenario.

Christina: It has certainly improved his social network tremendously, considering we don't go to the neighborhood school. And we don't belong in more ways that one. You know, religion wise, or ethnicity, or background wise, we don't. And so it has been important, you know, for our kids to belong, to feel a sense of belonging. I think this has really helped. ... [In the future] I hope that this lesson will carry him even in his relationships in his 20s and 30s, you know, to be able to find a common ground to talk about.

Debra: And there has been some research that has been done that shows boys are different than girls and boys really need this sort of tribe group atmosphere, gang, if you want to put it that way, and that they really learn a lot in that kind of atmosphere.

Faith: I think [skiing] is kind of a socially fun thing. He sees a lot of his friends there, because we always go on Sunday. ... Well, there is a topic that they can talk about and have in common.

(table continues)

Gabrielle: I think she gets to be, through extracurricular activities, she does get to be with her friends, even in ballet. She bonds with them [working on] the school newspaper. She bonds with them in orchestra. There are different friends in each. You know, she gets to know other people's personalities more on a one-on-one basis than say in a classroom. They can talk about orchestra when they are not in orchestra. They can talk about the school newspaper, when they are not working on the school newspaper. It gives her common ground with other friends.

Hailey: The more experiences you have had, the more you have in common with other people and when they get to college, they will have met so many people from different backgrounds because they have something in common with them. They are meeting people that they wouldn't otherwise meet, and so socially, I think it is priceless.

Hailey: Maybe that is why they are friends, because they all have music lessons, they all have sports; they all have things that they are doing...because as you get older, you tend to gravitate to those that are like you.

Table E.2

*Textural Statements About Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Socially Oriented**Benefits for Child: Improving Social Status*

Babette: I think its end result is a positive one. I think it's a great thing, I mean the teachers love her. I think, I guess, if you have any student who is self motivating and successful, which I think the kids in extracurricular activities do, then so of course I think it's a great thing.

Christina: You know, sports and everyone knows him, and everyone, you know, kind of thinks that he is the sportsman or whatever. I think that it does help other people see him in a different light. ...That has been the biggest impact of these activities.

Christina: I know it is not supposed to, but we see a lot of the outdoorsy teachers on the ski slopes. We see them at the ski swap. We exchange a lot of talk about their children and our children skiing. And I think it makes them kind of famous sometimes with the teacher. And so, it is not supposed to happen, but I think inadvertently it does. And it does, and I won't mention names, but the teacher we had a couple of years ago, was very impressed that he was doing hockey, and skiing. And I thought that that teacher actually saw him in a different light. Because before that, and I won't give the sex of the teacher, because it would give it away. But before that, that teacher, thought that [my son] was this quiet, shy, little person. And then when I told the teacher the activities he does, I think she saw him in a whole different light. And maybe it was my imagination, but I think her attitude toward [my son] kind of changed after that, which is a good thing. You know. But it was inadvertent, but I think it happens.

Debra: But then the Aikido is considered kind of cool, because it is martial arts. And so you know, my son has an orange belt with a stripe, and Aikido says don't mess with him.

Hailey: [They are] trying to do all of these things, and maybe even though she is so young, she is seeing things more like an adult would. She is doing all the things that she wants to do. And it gives them something else to talk about, to build their relationship there. My kid's teachers, both the 9-year-old, and...the 11-year-old...it was something outside of the classroom that they could comment on, and talk about, and I think that helps with relationships.

Ingrid: His relationship with his teacher. I think it gives him something to talk about once in a while, that he can share with her; something that he has done. That he enjoys and then that helps her sometimes in working with him.

(table continues)

Jenny: I think he considers himself to be one of the better soccer players. In a small pond, he can feel like a big fish, and I think he revels in that. It gives him access to that world. I think it is a sense of belonging. Socially, I think of fitting. I think it is a huge part of his social world. ... But the ones that they bond to; they['d] better play sports.

Jenny: Oh, I think that is positive. ... She [the teacher] will go to their activities and talk about them. They have a joke that he is the famous Olympic athlete in the classroom. It definitely helps him with his teacher. It makes him feel special. I think it is nice to have school be something that is very important, but also not everything. So the extracurricular stuff that helps you. Who I am at school is not everything of who I am. He gets a lot of positive feedback from his class about his sport. They cheer him on. You know his teacher comes to some of his events and practices, and so there is a lot of stuff that is about his persona, now that it is about his sport. And I think, I think that is valuable. ...Well, I think that he has a reputation in class of being, you know, a good athlete. Especially this summer. All of his classmates know about his involvement in his sport and I notice that even one day, another child's mom told me, oh, you know that I heard your son did really well. You know, it had been talked about.

Jenny: It was because other kids in his class were doing it, and they were talking about it, and it became a social thing to do these clubs together; ...and because I want him to have friends. ...I noticed today he is wearing his swim team sweatshirt. He got it, and I don't think he has taken it off. And so, I think, it is who I am, what I do, and wearing that around, and you know, he enjoys when people ask him about it, and so people look at him and often say something.

Christina: I think a lot of people consider him cool, because hockey is considered a very high intensity sport. And I think just the fact that you can ice skate is impressive. So I think people admire that.

Elizabeth: When she is in the theater production there is a lot of kudos that goes along with that. ...So she really gloried in that, and she definitely had, because all of her classmates came to see it, because various schools were bused in to actually see the production. So I think that she got some admiration from her classmates, about the fact that she was doing something very high profile. It was in front of an audience, and she did a number of performances. So I think there is a difference in how her classmates view her, depending on whether, it is an activity that lots of people will see. I think there was some popularity that went along with that.

Faith: Aikido De Ju...now he does, because he has some rank, so he can be a respected elder. Socially it helps him.

Ingrid: He plays with those that are interested in similar things that you are. ... He enjoys

(table continues)

doing the same things that they do as a challenge, the competition, that's a lot, doesn't hurt. Then they have something to talk about and then that leads to something else. Yes, because he knows some children and associates with them. He loves that. He is a very popular child.

Jenny: I think he considers himself to be one of the better soccer players. He likes to feel confident on that especially at school. In a small pond he can feel like a big fish. I think he revels in that.

Kelsie: Probably just because recess is their favorite thing. [At] every recess it's sports—football and basketball. So because he has a greater understanding of the game he has kind of been the team leader. He draws out the plans and he is always kind of, you know, the captain.

Kelsie: The 5th grader yes [is popular]. I think it has made my 5th grader kind of a leader, because he is so into it and people kind of look up to him that way. But you know he is probably not that nice to people who are not.

Kelsie: You know, like sometimes they have to write down, for Valentines or something, write down a word that describes [my son], well you will get so—a majority of them that say, sports crazy, sports fan, likes sports, I mean, I think they really know that that is—I think everybody in the class, if you ask them, what are they into, they would be able to tell you. And they would know which team they like and they are pretty. So they are pretty vocal about it.

Table E.3

*Textural Statements About Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Thinking**Strategically about the Future: The Well-Rounded Child*

AnnaLisa: Their world has been expanded, so they can understand more roles. They can relate to kids in different ways.

AnnaLisa: The lacrosse [coaches] they have are really, really good coaches. What was very important to the coaches was the lifestyle that they were teaching the boys, so we really liked those fringe benefits so to speak.

Elizabeth: I think it will make her a lot more well-rounded. I think she will have some of these qualities that we actually talked about, of determination and discipline, that will have a very definite follow through in terms of a career path. I do think she will be the kind of adult who looks for activities. ...I think it will broaden her horizons. I think that is one of the biggest things. If I look at kids who don't do any activities, I think maybe they are less curious about the big wide world out there, as if there is nothing. ...And if you really want to get long term, I have noticed adults who work and don't have a lot of activities are not as prepared for their retirement, either.

Gabrielle: I think she is well-rounded. I think she experiences more from religious background, more economic background, more educational background, in dealing with these activities. You know. ...She is going to meet more people. She is going to meet more adults, more other kids her age, with different views, different backgrounds, different social—I mean socially you think, we are in Cache Valley, we don't have a lot of—it is not like New York.

Hailey: We wanted to make sure that she was a more well-rounded person, the more experiences you have had, the more you have in common with other people and just because I was telling them when they get to college, they will have met so many people from different backgrounds because they have something in common with them. They go to an art camp because they enjoy art. They have music lessons. They are meeting people that they wouldn't otherwise meet, and so socially, I think it is priceless.

Jenny: It benefits you in the friendships that you have, but it can also benefit you in college and you know a financial benefit, in job interviews, and all sorts of things, so I see, there is a fraternity that is involved with kinds of athletics, that can be very powerful and in placement of things. ..So I think it is a sense of belonging. Socially, I think of

(table continues)

fitting, so I think it is a huge part of his social world. Well, he certainly wouldn't have many connections with people if he didn't do that, because that is how he is connected with a lot of people. If he didn't do any extracurricular activities, he would probably be limited to just having friendships at school.

Jenny: I think the fact that he talks to people he knows. I think he feels more connected to the community, and in a whole physical sense, I've been to this building, I've been to this gym, I've been over here, I've been to these places, I've been to Brigham City to swim, I've been to Bountiful, so he has a more connected sense of his world, and he fits into it.. With adults, again, I think it is often the first thing he will say to—we have friends that intersect, so a friend at church whose kids also swim, you know, it is a way he can relate to them. Well, I qualified for state in this event or whatever, and so you know he has this way of talking to them, and my friends, will comment, “That the first thing that he said to me.” So I think he feels that he has something to share. He has something to contribute.

Kelsie: But I think that they are really comfortable with adults and probably maybe sometimes too comfortable because they are used to having coaches. They are used to being with parents friends. They are not shy at all, so it is very easy for them to start conversations. They are pretty comfortable with their teachers.

Table E.4

*Textural Statements About Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Thinking**Strategically about the Future: Learning Substantive Values*

AnnaLisa: They are really, really good coaches. What was very important to the coaches was the lifestyle that they were teaching him...learning that he can't quit half way through...so we really liked those fringe benefits so to speak.

Babette: They become self motivating. When you get good enough at something that alone is the carrot. You don't have to bribe people to do it. I mean we're at the bribery stage with [points to preschooler on her lap].

Babette: It makes her competitive. You know, with the soccer she's got an ultra competitive coach. And it makes her competitive.

Faith: When you look at the different activities he has been involved in, swimming, piano, skiing, and all the other things, you see the benefit for him...it has given him confidence.

Kelsie: To not give up, and to keep going, and that sometimes we do have to do things that we don't love, for a long-range benefit. The other one, you have the benefit of working with a team. Every other year, about, they have been on the team together, and so it has been good for them to also work together as teammates.

Hailey: I think she gets a lot of joy out of her extracurricular activities, and it will flow into her academic life, because she has to learn how to balance those. She has more homework and more things to balance, but she is always successful in that, but training her to be successful.

Table E.5

*Structural Statements About Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Influences on**Parental Investment: Changing with the Times*

Historically:

Babette: When I grew up a long time ago it was very different. We'd just knock on each other's door and we'd go out and play. ...Just playing outside these days just isn't what it used to be.

Christina: We did a lot of things, growing up, but we never really joined a team, you know or things like that. It was not organized. We never had a coach, we just kind of learned from the neighbors.

Today:

Jenny: We are in a day and age where, whether I agree with it or not, I feel that if they don't have some level of involvement at a younger age, they won't have the opportunity to be involved at a later age, because it gets so competitive. So I think in some sports, and basketball is a good example of that, I would want him to have just enough experience every year to feel like if he does want to play it later, he will be able to. I think when I was growing up, even 40 years ago, or 30 years ago, that wasn't so much the case. You could wait until you were in junior high or high school to try something, but it is part of the society, and it is hard not to go with that a little bit.

Faith: It has given him some life skills, like swimming which I think things that you learn when you are young are more ingrained than the things that you try to learn later, like the music. If they can learn music when they are six to ten it is more ingrained, than if you try to come at it later.

Hailey: [Gymnastics] is physically demanding. It is a physical sport. I think it is that, but also if you do gymnastics, our 9-year-old is really pushed for it, by the time she gets to high school, if she wants to [learn] dance, she can. But she can't ever, if she gets to high school and wants to do gymnastics, she won't be able to.

Individuality:

AnnaLisa: I wanted to get him involved in [to] fulfill himself. We do try to find their niche for them; their groove. I think it's just personality.

Babette: The first thing that she started doing was playing the violin. She started telling us at age three. And then she wanted to pick up the piano, too...and she's pulled it off. She gets up in the morning at five or five thirty in the morning to practice. She's awfully competitive.

(table continues)

Babette: She excels at school and she loves to work. She loves to learn she just eats it up and she goes the extra mile. Like I said she a little bit of an anomaly. I can't say all my kids are like her, but she'll go out of her way to do her homework like months in advance. Cause she's so excited about what she's going to do. It's an individual thing because I have my other kids who are in things, too and they don't necessarily, so I think it's part personality. I mean we don't get up at five. But she does, she puts her alarm clock on and she gets up and she does it. I don't have to coax her at all, but again part of that is her personality. She is almost a five [level in the Suzuki Method]. It is not like she can you know, play in orchestra...at school...her [violin] teacher has told her not to. We [will] probably go to the city [for lessons].

Babette: She does a lot of that because I think she's way more mature than most kids in her class. Just because she learning to do these things at a young age; she's just more of an interesting individual. She just, you know, because she does those things.

Christina: I think this has really helped for him to explore his talents.

Jenny: I liken him to like a thoroughbred. He has to be raced, and if he isn't, you know, it is not good. He has done sports since he was like three. I mean, I think he could get some of that outside just playing around. I think, but the difference would be he would be doing a lot of just being outside and running around as a kid. He would have kind of be limited to just this neighborhood of kids. I think it is the spice of life. You know. A certain taste to your existence.

The Trade-Off:

Elizabeth: One of the things that I'm frustrated about, because she is doing all of these activities, [is] that it requires calendaring...and there is no free play...kids should have huge amounts of unstructured time. And I think that if the extracurricular activities mean that you have very little which is unstructured, I think we need a great deal of "hang out" time, either by yourself, or with your friends. It is not school and it is not extracurricular activities. ...I think safety comes into too. I think we are very lucky in Logan, because my kids do just get on their bikes, tell me where they are going, and go.

Faith: [My daughter says], "I want a play date. I can't I have orchestra. I can't, I have this, that or the other." I mean we just rearrange. Well, we can't do it on Monday or Tuesday, but we can do it on Thursday or Friday, so we just have to reschedule.

Hailey: Because that is the biggest complaint that I hear. Not so much from the 11-year-old, but from the 9-year-old. She wants to have a play date, they have to work it out, and she doesn't get to very often because they are early out, but she still has gymnastics at the same time. It is just play dates—the lack of [them].

Ingrid: And then, then just play dates, right now, trying to get to have those. He also likes to have play dates...need...to be organized.

Table E.6

*Structural Statements about Involvement in Extracurricular Activities Influences on**Parental Investment: Collaborative Relationship between Parents and Child*

AnnaLisa: We put him in music...we've put him in soccer in the spring time. I just kind of ask Him, "What do you want? Something like this? Does this look good to you?"

Christina: Skiing is one of his best activities. He learned it the fastest; he just took off. I would love for him to join the ski team, but he is not interested in being competitive. He just wants to go and have fun. So, that's fine.

Debra: Well, some of the activities he is involved in, I suggested and some of them he has chosen on his own. ... I suggested he get involved in...music, although he is phasing out of it now, because he really doesn't want to do it. The other main thing he is involved in is basketball. ...but that was his choice.

Elizabeth: The thing that I was most serious about was music, so music started at age 6. ... [I asked], "What kind of instrument would you like to play?" And she picked the violin. ... She has been playing the violin since then. ...So the other things kind of emerged, that she said, "Oh, I want to try gymnastics." And I go, "Okay, let's see if you like that." The other activities, I didn't have any other strong feelings about. I just sort of waited to see what she came up with. I guess I personally place a lot less priority on sport-type activities.

Ingrid: He likes basketball. He likes football. [We] have him go to the football and basketball camps up at the university and then he played baseball the last two summers. We did have him in music too. But he did not like practicing. So after he fiddled around with it a little bit, I pulled out of it.

Jenny: In the beginning, he was interested in things. And...you think they are going to want to do [this] and you say, "Do you want to do this?" and they say, "Yes." Then soon you are doing a lot of things. I think that happens at the age of five. ... But he is really only forced to do one thing and that's the piano. ...Sometimes we have exposed him to something, then he has an idea, and then he wants to do that as well.

Kelsie: This year, they both said, "I'm done with soccer." And so we are done. [Then I said], "Okay let's try this out, and they were saying, "Okay." But some of the things I have exposed them to. They have been art lessons. It is like, "Hey there is this idea; do you guys want to go do art lessons?" [And they say], "Yeah! We love it."
