

ORGANIZED ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION FOR CHILDREN FROM LOW- AND MIDDLE- INCOME FAMILIES

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Recent research demonstrates that how children spend their after-school time has implications for their development in multiple domains (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). In this regard, it is noteworthy that the after-school experiences of children from low- and middle-income families differ. A salient difference is participation in organized activities (e.g., extracurricular activities, after-school and community programs). National estimates show that children's participation in school- and community-based sports, clubs, lessons, and after-school programs increase as family income rises (Ehrle & Anderson Moore, 1999; Lugaila, 2003; McNeal, 1998). Qualitative research resonates with these estimates (Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Weininger, this volume). The after-school lives of children from middle-income families typically involve more participation in organized activities than their low-income counterparts.

The economic-related discrepancy in rates of organized activity participation has generated different concerns for children from low- and middle-income families. Although research often demonstrates benefits of organized activity participation, one concern is that such participation is excessive for children from middle-income families. As a result, it has been proposed that organized activities may contribute to an "over-scheduling" for middle-class families and that this may be detrimental to family functioning and child adjustment. By contrast, for children from low-income families, the concern is that a lack of organized activities may result in failed opportunities to build competencies developed through participation and increases risks associated with after-school arrangements that are unstructured or unsupervised. In this chapter we consider the scientific evidence surrounding these concerns.

Are Children from Middle-Income Families Over-Scheduled in Organized Activities?

[Over-scheduled child rearing] unbalances families, damages marriages, and contributes to unhappy, overstressed children being diagnosed as learning disabled, ADD, bipolar, and depressed, and to adolescents getting involved with drugs, alcohol, and premature sex (Rosenfield, 2003, p. 1).

Whether children participate in organized activities depends, in part, on the behavior of their parents. Children are more likely to become involved and to stay involved in organized activities when parents value and encourage their participation, provide the necessary material resources, and are participants themselves (Fletcher, Elder, & Mekos, 2000; Simpkins, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2005). However, there is evidence that the time budgeting and schedule commitments required of parents to support their children's activity participation can be challenging—particularly for working parents with several children (Lareau, 2003).

There has been speculation in the popular media that families managing child participation in several organized activities are “over-scheduled”, resulting in a disruption of family life and contributing to psychological distress for children (Gilbert, 1999; Noonan, 2001; Rosenfield, 2003). This contention has drawn on research showing that as children from relatively affluent families enter adolescence they may be at heightened risk for substance use, depression, and anxiety compared to their low-income counterparts (Luthar & Latendresse, 2005a). Factors such as achievement pressures and isolation from parents help to account for these findings (Luthar & Becker, 2002; Luthar & Latendresse, 2005b). Accordingly, as part of what we term the “over-scheduling” hypothesis (OS), children from middle-income families may experience a decline in parent-child relationships and an increase in psychological distress as organized activity participation increases.

In opposition to the OS hypothesis, a scientific basis exists to expect that increasing amounts of organized activity participation may be associated with incremental benefits for children and families. We refer to this as the “organized activity” hypothesis (OA). With some qualifications, the bulk of the evidence indicates that organized activity participation is linked with positive adjustment for children across a range of psychological, social, and educational outcomes and for samples diverse in socioeconomic status (for reviews see, e.g., Dubois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002; Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002; Vandell, Pierce, & Dadisman, 2005). However, only a few longitudinal studies have assessed directly whether the benefits hold for children participating in many organized activities. Moreover, little consideration

has been given to whether it is normative for children from middle-income families to demonstrate excessive participation in organized activities.

To evaluate the OS and OA hypotheses we first examine the amount of time that children ordinarily devote to organized activity participation. Then we consider developmental consequences for children and families (i.e., parent-child relationships, psychological distress, social and educational adjustment) with increasing amounts of organized activity participation.

How Much Time Do Children Spend in Organized Activities?

A review of time use studies employing the Experience Sampling Method and/or time diary approach suggests that American children experience 40–50% of their waking hours as discretionary time (Larson & Verma, 1999). This amount of time has been fairly consistent over the past century and estimates of free time are only slightly greater for children from lower-income families. On average, organized activities such as sports, art, music, and clubs consume 50–80 minutes of middle-class adolescents' free time each day (about 13–16% of free time per week). National estimates of children ages 6–12 are slightly lower (i.e., 20–30 minutes per day; 5–7% of free time per week) (Lareau & Weininger, this volume)¹. Accordingly, young persons spend the vast majority of their free time in pursuits other than organized activity participation (e.g., watching television, talking, household chores, or paid labor). Moreover, although participation in organized activities is a normative developmental experience for children (Ehrle & Anderson Moore, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, this volume; Lugaila, 2003), longitudinal investigations suggest that adolescents typically participate in about two organized activities per year (see below). Accordingly, organized activities do not ordinarily dominate the free-time experience of young persons.

Does Adjustment Decline with Increasing Amounts of Organized Activity Participation?

To address this question, we consider findings from three longitudinal studies that focus on children's organized activity participation and psychosocial adjustment. Our expectation is that increasing amounts of organized activity participation will not be associated with a decline in adjustment. The basis for this expectation derives from studies examining the mechanisms by which participation in organized activities relate to positive outcomes (e.g., Eccles & Templeton, 2002; Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005; National Research Council and Institute of

¹ Time is based on one child sampled in a given family. It may be misleading to estimate organized activity participation for all children in a family by multiplying a single child's estimate by the number of children. All children in a family do not necessarily spend the same amount of time on organized activities. It may also be misleading to assume that parents' time commitment to children's activities can be inferred from a single child's schedule. Children in the same family often have partially overlapping activity schedules and parents are unlikely to participate directly in every activity function for each child.

Medicine, 2002). Among other things, this work suggests that the organized activity context is rich with respect to: (1) structuring time in a conventional pursuit that is socially valued and that helps form linkages between family, school, and community; (2) providing opportunities for developing supportive social relationships with peers and adults; (3) creating a shared experience and point of communication for parents and children that may otherwise be unavailable; (4) facilitating parents' knowledge of child whereabouts, peer relationships, and free time pursuits; and (5) providing an avenue for identity development, initiative, belonging, and self-worth. To the extent that emphasis on any given mechanism varies, or is reinforced, across different activities, then children's positive adjustment should be expected to increase with greater amounts of participation.

To begin, the amount of organized activity participation was assessed in relation to aspects of the parent-child relationship and indicators of child psychological distress in a sample of 1,227 middle-class youth followed longitudinally across grades 8 and 9. The sample represents 92% of all students attending grade 8 from a middle-sized city located in central Sweden (population about 120,000). In both years, students reported the number of organized activities they participated in at least one day/week over the past year (e.g., sports, music, theatre, church, scouts, political, hobby clubs, etc.). At each assessment, they also responded to multi-item scales concerning *parental knowledge* of their free time (e.g., "Do your parents know what you do during your free time?"), *parent-child communication* through child disclosure (e.g., "Do you keep secrets from your parents about what happens during your free time?") and parent solicitation (e.g., "How often do your parents start a conversation with you about your free time?"), *parent-child trust* (e.g., "Do you parents trust that you will stay out of trouble during your free time?") and their frequency of psychological distress in terms of *depressed and anxious mood* (e.g., frequency of sadness, rumination, worries about the future, social anxiety). Average responses to the scales were standardized across the two assessments. The number of activities participated in at each grade was summed to create a 6-point scale (0 = no participation, 5 = participation in five activities or more). Too few participants (3.9%) reported involvement six activities or more to be considered as separate categories.

Aspects of the parent-child relationship and indicators of psychological distress were compared with the number of organized activities using an Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Descriptive information is shown in Table 13.1. With the exception of parent-child trust, all results were statistically significant ($p < .05$). As the number of activities increased, parental knowledge and parent-child communication tended to increase in a linear fashion. The trend for parent-child trust was similar ($p < .10$). Moreover, both indicators of psychological distress decreased with greater amounts of participation. Thus, during early adolescence, the results indicate that increasing amounts of organized activity participation are positively associated with aspects of parent-child relationships and negatively linked to indicators of children's psychological distress.

Table 13.1

Organized Activity Participation, Parent-Child Relationships, and Indicators of Psychology Distress (N = 1227)

	Number of Organized Activities (Grades 8 and 9) ¹ (Standardized Scores)											
	0		1		2		3		4		5+	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Parent Knowledge of Child	-.20	.78	-.05	.63	-.01	.63	.00	.61	.11	.62	.11	.52
<u>Parent-Child Communication</u>												
Child Disclosure	-.17	.77	-.09	.69	-.01	.65	.01	.61	.14	.66	.15	.57
Parent Solicitation	-.29	.61	-.09	.62	.01	.61	.11	.59	.10	.54	.11	.57
Parent-Child Trust	-.14	.75	-.02	.65	-.02	.68	.03	.68	.04	.71	.11	.58
Anxious Mood	.12	.78	.06	.76	.01	.71	-.05	.65	.01	.76	-.18	.67
Depressed Mood	.15	.59	.01	.57	-.02	.49	-.05	.47	-.04	.47	-.03	.47

¹ Average number of activities for Grades 8 and 9 were 1.3 (SD = .93) and 1.2 (SD = .95), respectively.

For a long-term accounting of organized activity participation and serious maladjustment we consider findings from the Carolina Longitudinal Study (Cairns & Cairns, 1994) that tracked 695 children annually from early adolescence through young adulthood. The socioeconomic status (SES) of this sample was approximately average for American families when the study began (1981–1982). Participation in one form of organized activities—school-based extracurricular activities—was determined from school yearbook information gathered over a six-year interval (grades 6–12). For the following analyses, we first performed a median split of SES to identify participants below and above average. Next, we categorized the total number of extracurricular activities children were involved in during the six years of secondary school along a 5-point continuum (i.e., 0 = none, 1 = 1–5 activities, 2 = 6–10 activities, 3 = 11–15 activities, 4 = 16–20 activities, 5 = 21+ activities). Again, too few participants (5.8%) were involved in 22 or more extracurricular activities during secondary school to categorize participation further. Finally, we compared these activity-based categories to rates of school dropout and subsequent criminal arrests in young adulthood as determined, in part, by school records and State Bureau of Investigation records, respectively (c.f., Mahoney, 2000; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997; Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003).

Descriptive information is shown in Table 13.2. For children from families below or above the median SES, findings from an ANOVA show that the likelihood of experiencing school dropout or criminal arrests in young adulthood decrease significantly ($p < .01$) with increasing amounts of extracurricular activity participation. Because the rates of dropout and criminal arrests decline to near zero (a floor effect) as extracurricular activity participation increases, there is no evidence

that increasing amounts of extracurricular activity participation place children at-risk for these outcomes.³ To the contrary, increasing amounts of extracurricular activities during secondary school are negatively associated with school failure and criminal offending.

Table 13.2

Extracurricular Activity Participation, School Dropout, and Criminal Arrests According to SES (N = 662)

	Number of Extracurricular Activities (Grades 6 through 12) ¹					
	0 (N = 76)	1-5 (N = 147)	6-10 (N = 55)	11-15 (N = 28)	16-20 (N = 21)	21+ (N = 14)
SES Below Average	(N = 27)	(N = 105)	(N = 70)	(N = 47)	(N = 30)	(N = 42)
<u>Proportion of Dropouts</u>						
SES Below Average	.61	.23	.02	.00	.00	.00
SES Above Average	.44	.09	.00	.02	.00	.00
<u>Proportion Arrested (ages 18-24)</u>						
SES Below Average	.34	.16	.09	.07	.06	.07
SES Above Average	.26	.07	.04	.02	.00	.00

¹ Extracurricular activity participation increases across adolescence (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997).

The average number of activities participated in across grades 6-12 was 1.3. At the peak – during Grade 12 – the average was 2.5.

Note. SES = Socioeconomic Status.

The third set of findings summarized here comes from the Michigan Study of Adolescent Life Transitions (MSALT). In this longitudinal study of working- and middle-class youth and their families in southeastern Michigan, adolescents were surveyed at school in grades 6, 7, 10, and 12 and again at ages 21 and 25 on a wide variety of indicators of psychosocial functioning, including participation in extracurricular and other out-of-school activities. Here we summarize the findings for the relation of grade 10 activity participation to adjustment and academic performance at grades 10, 11, and 12 and on post-high school educational and occupational outcomes (for full details see Barber, Eccles & Stone, 2001; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003). First, as was true in the previous two studies, virtually no adolescents could be classified as over-scheduled. The majority of the youth participated in at least one activity, with the average being a little more than 2. Girls participated in more and a wider variety of activities than boys. Adolescents whose mothers had some college education participated in more activities than adolescents whose mothers had completed high school or less.

³ Mahoney (2000) found similar results when the sample was disaggregated into homogeneous configurations differing in bio-social-academic adjustment and family economy (i.e., physical maturation, aggression, popularity with peers, academic competence, socioeconomic status).

Second, there were strong associations between activity participation and subsequent functioning, even when controlling for the adolescents' functioning at grade 10. For every type of activity participation, participants showed more improvement over time than non-participants in school achievement (GPA, high school completion, college attendance and completion), feelings of school belonging, and self-esteem. These effects were particularly strong for participation in competitive team sports but also emerged for participation in school clubs, school performing arts programs, and school leadership activities. Involvement in volunteer activities and faith based activity programs predicted higher high school achievement as well as lowered rates of drinking and drug use. All of these effects held even when grade 10 levels on the dependent measure, as well as scores on the Differential Aptitude Test and mother's education were controlled. Interestingly, high school sport participation also predicted higher income and better jobs at age 25.

Finally, there was no evidence of declines in the benefits of participation as adolescents participated in more activities. In every case except sports, there was a linear increase in the indicators of positive functioning with increasing numbers of activities. In addition, the benefits increased linearly as the range of activity types broadened. Participation in sports did show a leveling off of benefits following participation in two competitive team sports. Together, these last two results suggest that participating in a wider range of activities is more beneficial than participating in more team sports.

One troubling finding did emerge: participation in competitive athletics predicted increases in alcohol use during the high school years. This change, however, was not reflected in either drug use or cigarette smoking—both of which were less frequent among athletes than non-athletes. It is likely that the increase in drinking reflects the peer culture of athletes in U.S. high schools at the time of this study. Interestingly, this difference in alcohol consumption disappeared by two years post-high school for two reasons: the mean levels of all students going on to college caught up to the athletes' level of drinking, and the mean level of drinking declined for those high school athletes who did not go on to college.

Towards a reconciliation. The quantitative findings summarized above are consistent with the OA hypotheses suggesting that "more participation is better." How should these results be viewed in light of qualitative evidence demonstrating that the scheduling of organized activities presents a challenge for middle-class families (Lareau, 2003; Lareau & Weininger, this volume)? One obvious possibility is that the quantitative and qualitative research is not in conflict. It is entirely possible that children's organized activity schedules can be challenging—even burdensome—for some families and that such participation is beneficial nonetheless.

A second possibility is that the qualitative and quantitative methods consider somewhat different facets of the phenomenon. Quantitative research has seldom considered how activity participation affects family-level processes and the existing qualitative research provides a limited accounting of such processes across families with children who differ in their amount of participation or in terms of children's adjustment. Investigations that marry these approaches should be fruitful.

A final possibility is that parenting behaviors characterizing some middle-class families may lead to adjustment difficulties for children, and organized activities have been confused with these behaviors. For example, one recent study of affluent families (Luthar, Shoum, & Brown, 2006) shows that perceived parenting practices (e.g., criticism, achievement pressure), rather than organized activities, predict psychological distress and substance use in young persons. However, it seems reasonable to assume that if organized activities are a focus of such parenting, then participation could be a catalyst in the development of these negative outcomes. Research is available to show that for some young athletes, perceived pressure from parents to participate and meet expectations is a source of competitive stress (e.g., Averill & Power, 1995; Leff & Hoyle, 1995; Scanlan, 1984). Consistent with the idea of OS, this increased level of stress is particularly likely for children and adolescents who are participating at the highest levels of sport competition. Heightened stress and perceived parental pressure are two of the most common reasons athletes and musicians give for dropping out of their sports or music activities (Fredricks et al., 2002). However, this is not true of the majority of athletes and musicians. In fact, many high school athletes and musicians site support from their parents and peers as two of the main reasons they continue participating throughout their high school years. Other reasons for continued participation include high expectations for success, great intrinsic enjoyment of the activity, and the centrality of the activity for one's personal and social identities. Accordingly, an important direction to pursue is child and parent motivations, goals, values, and expectations concerning organized activity participation as they relate to family processes and child adjustment (e.g., Duda, 1996; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998; Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Jacobs, Vernon, & Eccles, 2005).

Is a Lack of Organized Activity Participation Detrimental for Low-Income Children?

We noted at the outset that children from low-income families are less likely to participate in organized activities. As an example, the 2000 Census shows that children in poverty are about half as likely to participate in sports, clubs, or lessons, compared to children from families at least 200% above the poverty threshold (Lugaila, 2003). Time use and ethnographic research provide converging evidence on this point (Lareau & Weininger, this volume; Larson & Verma, 1999).

Limited access, availability, and affordability of organized activities in low-income areas coupled with parents' work schedules are established barriers to participation (e.g., Casey, Ripke, & Huston, 2005; Lareau & Weininger, this volume; Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005). With reference to access and availability, for example, the gap in supply vs. demand of organized activities in low-income areas—both in terms of current provisions and the funding to sustain existing activities—is documented (e.g., Afterschool Alliance, 2005; Mahoney & Zigler, 2006). Thus, in many cases low-income parents and their children want to be more involved in organized activities but are not able (Lareau & Weininger, this volume). For instance, data from the Yale Study of Children's After-School Time (Y-CAST)—a longitudinal study of after-school time for children from poor families (Table 13.3)—shows that most parents believe their child should spend more time in organized activities (sports, clubs, lessons) (Table 13.4). Parents' belief that their child spends too much time in organized activities was nearly absent.

Table 13.3

Demographic Characteristics of Participants from the Yale Study of Children's After-school Time

Participants	1st- to 3rd-grade students from 3 public schools
Consent Rate / Sample Size	73% / N = 599
Study Design	4-year longitudinal; biannual assessments
<u>Child Race/Ethnicity</u>	
African American	36%
European American	10%
Hispanic	50%
Asian	02%
Other	02%
<u>Poverty Threshold</u> ¹	
Under 50%	22%
51–100%	35%
101–175%	27%
Above 175%	16%
Primary Caregiver Not Married	58%
Primary Caregiver Employed	54%
Public Assistance/Income Support	72%
Median Annual Household Income ²	\$16,794
Average Family Size	4.4

¹Based on poverty thresholds from the 2002 Census.

²Includes all household income (earnings, public assistance, compensation, etc.)

Table 13.4
Parent Beliefs About Child's Time Spent in After-school Activities (N = 402)

Activity	Parent Beliefs (Proportion of Parents)		
	Not Enough Time	Right Amount of Time	Too Much Time
Homework	.16	.79	.05
Watching Television	.02	.64	.34
Household Chores	.23	.74	.03
Caring for Siblings	.16	.78	.06
Religious Activities	.33	.64	.03
Organized Sports	.59	.40	.01
Organized Clubs	.56	.42	.02
Organized Lessons	.56	.43	.01

The fact that children from low-income families show relatively low amounts of organized activity participation raises two interrelated concerns. First, organized activities can provide developmental supports for low-income children with working parents through the provision of a safe and supervised context. Second, participation in such activities is linked to a reduced likelihood that low-income children will develop certain adjustment problems associated with socioeconomic disadvantage. Drawing on recent findings from the Y-CAST study, we outline an empirical base for these concerns.

Children who spend relatively large amounts of their free time in unstructured activities (i.e., "hanging out", driving in cars, congregating at unstructured youth centers) are at risk for developing antisocial and criminal behaviors (e.g., Mahoney, Stattin, & Lord, 2004; Osgood et al., 1996; Richardson, Radziszewska, Dent, & Flay, 1993). The likelihood of such outcomes is greater for children whose after-school arrangement is predominated by a lack of adult supervision (i.e., self care) and those living in socioeconomic disadvantaged areas (Pettit, Bates, Dodge, & Meece, 1999). Although the amount of self care experienced by children from low- and middle-income families is not vastly different (Ehrle & Anderson Moore, 1999; Vandell & Shumow, 1999), this arrangement may be of greater consequence for poor children.

Lord and Mahoney (2006; Mahoney, 2005) examined the interaction between neighborhood crime levels and after-school supervision in relation to the development of academic performance and aggression. Official crime reports were used to classify the census blocks in which Y-CAST participants lived as either high or average with respect to the level of crime (no areas in the city could be characterized as low crime in comparison to regional or national crime rates). Over a two-year interval, children living in high-crime areas showed significant decreases in academic performance and increases in aggression compared to those in average crime areas. This was true after controlling for multiple demographic dimensions of the census blocks and children's social-academic adjustment at the outset of the study.

However, the risks associated with living in a high-crime area were especially marked for children whose primary after-school arrangement was self-care. By contrast, children whose primary arrangement was after-school program participation were significantly buffered against the risks of living in a high-crime area. For example, reading achievement differences between children in after-school programs and those in self-care were equivalent to about two thirds of a school year in expected gains. Mahoney (2005) showed the associated buffering also applies to the development of aggression. The findings suggest that organized activities provide an important safety and supervision function for low-income working families. In this circumstance, simple enrollment in organized activities appears beneficial compared to unsupervised after-school arrangements.

Beyond enrollment, children from low-income families may benefit most when organized activity participation is a regular part of their after-school experience. For example, the benefits of after-school program participation are more apparent when attendance is consistent (i.e., more than 1 or 2 days in an average week) and sustained for a year or longer (e.g., Kane, 2004; Simpkins, Little, & Weiss, 2004; Welsh et al. 2002). An example is provided by a longitudinal study of child obesity and after-school program participation using the Y-CAST data set (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005a). Consistent with risks of poverty and minority status, 22% of children in this sample were clinically obese at age 5. By age 8, 29% of the sample was obese. However, the body mass index (BMI) of children who showed regular and sustained attendance in after-school programs increased significantly less compared to children in other after-school arrangements. The BMI difference translated into significant differences in rates of clinical obesity. The study also found evidence of a dosage-related effect whereby BMI decreased linearly over time with greater attendance in after-school programs. The explanation likely involves the controlled eating environment and/or physical exercise common to after-school programs (c.f., Vandell et al., 2005). An implication is that, for some outcomes, benefits of organized activities may not be evident *unless* participation is a regular part of children's after-school experience. On this score, the supportive role of parents seems critical (Simpkins, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2006).

Finally, the extent to which organized activities relate to positive development for children from low-income families can be expected to depend on their value and motivation for participation. To this end, discussion of a third aspect of participation—*engagement*—is pertinent. By engagement we refer to the child's level of enjoyment, interest, and effort in organized activities (and other developmental contexts) (Larson, 2000; Weiss, Little, & Bouffard, 2005). High levels of engagement (rather than psychological distress) are typical of organized activity participation; however, high engagement does not characterize the experience of all participants. Because individual differences in activity engagement predict the extent to which benefits are observed for poor children (Mahoney, Lord, & Carryl, 2005b), understanding the reasons behind this individual variability is important. Program quality and content relate to engagement for children from

low-income families (Mahoney, 2005) and children's social experiences in such programs are also important (Pierce, Hamm, & Vandell, 1999). Yet, little is known about the role of family and parenting in this process. The Y-CAST data set shows that individual differences in after-school program engagement correlate positively with the frequency of parent involvement (i.e., parent meetings and conversations with program staff, attending program events) ($r(113) = .32, p < .01$) and how well parents and staff know one another ($r(130) = .22, p = .01$). Nonetheless, the lack of information about the ways in which parents contribute to the quality of children's experiences in organized activities represents a gap in the existing knowledge base. Filling the gap will require additional longitudinal research involving qualitative and quantitative methods designed specifically to do so.

Summary and Conclusion

The data reviewed here support three conclusions. First, there is little evidence that organized activity participation contributes to an over-scheduling of children that is detrimental to their psychological, social, or educational well-being. Indeed, most of the findings show that children's adjustment becomes increasingly positive with greater amounts of organized activity participation. Second, there is merit in the concern that children from low-income families are under-involved in organized activities. For these children, a lack of participation is linked to increased adjustment problems associated with socioeconomic disadvantage. Finally, support and encouragement from parents ordinarily play a positive role in children's activity enrollment, attendance, and engagement. However, when children experience stress and perceived pressure from parents connected to their participation they are more likely to drop out of organized activities. Future research will need to provide a better understanding of how the expectations and values that children and parents hold for organized activity participation interact with parenting styles, amounts of activity participation, and child adjustment.

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DISPARITIES IN SCHOOL READINESS

How Families Contribute to Transitions into School

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