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STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP & ADMINISTRATIVE STUDIES

Associations Between High School Cocurricular and Extracurricular Participation and the Self–Esteem and Subjective Well–Being of Young Adults

by

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Dedication

For my two sons, Michael and Justin – you've both tolerated this journey from the beginning. There were missed games, missed opportunities, and too many sacrifices to list. So many times, I wanted to quit, but you are my encouragement, the joy of my life, my best friends, and the greatest, most undeserved blessing God has bestowed upon me apart from the love, mercy, and grace of Jesus Christ. I love you endlessly.

Abstract

Perceived self esteem and subjective well–being are important components of adolescent and young adult development and are linked to academic, social, and occupational adjustment. This study examined whether participation in high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular activities is associated with differences in perceived self esteem (PSE) and subjective well–being (SWB) in emerging adulthood. Using a quantitative causal–comparative (ex post facto) design grounded in social cognitive theory, young adults were compared based on whether they participated in at least one school–sponsored program (JROTC, fine arts, or athletics) during high school. Participants (N = 277; ages 18–25) completed a demographic questionnaire, the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale, and the Satisfaction with Life Scale. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated a statistically significant multivariate difference by participation status on the combined outcomes. Follow–up univariate analyses showed that participants reported significantly higher self esteem and higher life satisfaction than nonparticipants, with moderate (self esteem) and large (life satisfaction) effect sizes. Supplemental chi–square analyses suggested participation was largely independent of demographic variables, with a small association observed for educational attainment. Overall, the findings indicate that participation status was associated with higher levels of self esteem and life satisfaction in emerging adulthood.

Keywords: *social cognitive theory, self esteem, subjective well–being, JROTC, fine arts, student athletics*

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Chapter One

The Problem and Its Setting

Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial period of identity formation, psychological development, and social adjustment. Self esteem, defined as an individual's overall sense of self–worth, plays a central role in determining both present and future emotional stability, academic motivation, and interpersonal relationships. Subjective well–being, which includes life satisfaction and emotional balance, is closely linked to self esteem and contributes to an individual's long–term mental health and social adaptation (Diener, 1984). The search for understanding of human happiness and well–being dates to ancient Greek philosophy and a belief that positive self esteem (PSE) emanates from a reflection of oneself and the extent to which life is considered positive and enriching (Duy & Yıldız, 2019). However, over the past two decades, there has been a documented decline in adolescent and young adult self esteem and subjective well–being, driven by increasing academic stress, digital media influence, and the erosion of structured developmental opportunities (Twenge et al., 2018; Orben et al., 2019).

This issue has been observed across various developed nations, particularly in the United States and Europe, where increased social media penetration and competitive academic environments have exacerbated the problem (Orben et al., 2019). The decline has been particularly noticeable in the last decade, with studies showing a rise in adolescent depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation that extends into early adulthood (Keles et al., 2020). Adolescents and young adults, including middle and high school students aged 12–18, are the primary demographic affected, with parental and educational

institutions also playing significant roles in influencing self esteem and well–being. A pioneer of positive psychology research, Diener (1984) explored the phenomenon of subjective well–being (SWB) as a combination of cognitive and emotional responses to life experiences. In later studies, Diener and Diener (1995) found that "life satisfaction was significantly correlated with satisfaction with the self" (p. 660). Likewise, research by contemporary scholars suggests that PSE and SWB are interrelated indicators of future life satisfaction (Coffey & Warren, 2020). When examined in the context of adolescents, high levels of PSE are positively correlated not only with SWB and overall satisfaction with the current state of one's life but also include elements of optimism for life satisfaction in the future (Caqueo–Urízar et al., 2022; Coffey & Warren, 2020; Duy & Yıldız, 2019; Kurnaz et al., 2020; Marcionetti & Rossier, 2021; Wang & Kong, 2020).

There are numerous benefits associated with PSE and SWB. Among the many positive outcomes, those who self–report high levels of PSE demonstrate a greater sense of psychological well–being and happiness than those with low self esteem (Duy & Yıldız, 2019). Adolescents with a positive sense of self esteem indicate a greater level of satisfaction with various aspects of their character, personal lives, and social identity, which research suggests is associated with greater performance, confidence, and coping skills as they age into young adulthood, and are less likely to suffer from significant depression and social anxiety (Erdvik et al., 2020). These characteristics are also relevant for assuming and sustaining roles that involve responsibility for others, such as informal or formal leadership positions in educational, organizational, and community settings.

Despite these benefits, few studies have compared the potential sources of self esteem and feelings of general well–being. Although many studies are well–documented

in the literature, the majority have only broadly investigated PSE & SWB as byproducts of various activities and programs, with little exploration of associated outcomes on levels of self esteem and well–being beyond the high school years. This research will approach the problem from psychological, educational, and social perspectives while incorporating some of the key theoretical frameworks of self esteem, well–being, and the psychosocial development of identity formation. The analysis identifies implications associated with failure to address these problems, leading to policy recommendations aimed at mitigating these adverse trends.

This study examines young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 who either participated in at least one of three school–sponsored programs (JROTC, a fine arts curriculum, or school–sponsored athletics) during high school or did not participate in any school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular programs. The primary focus is to compare levels of perceived self esteem (PSE) and subjective well–being (SWB) between binary participation/nonparticipation as self–reported by young adults.

Beyond their implications for general psychological adjustment, these outcomes are also relevant from a leadership and organizational development perspective. Many school–sponsored activities, particularly JROTC, athletics, and fine arts, place adolescents in leadership–rich environments where they regularly observe coaches, directors, and cadre, and, in some cases, assume formal or informal leadership roles themselves (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hansen et al., 2003; Lerner et al., 2005). Within such contexts, students are exposed to specific styles and levels of leadership, observe how leaders respond to challenge and success, and receive feedback on their own performance. Over time, these experiences may contribute to leadership–relevant

psychological resources, including stronger self–evaluations and more positive appraisals of one's life. In this study, self esteem and subjective well–being are interpreted as foundational resources for self–leadership and leadership readiness in emerging adulthood, even though leadership style and behavior were not measured directly. By examining whether high school–sponsored participation is associated with differences in these leadership–relevant outcomes, this dissertation positions school–based programs not merely as enrichment experiences, but as early contexts for leadership development with potential implications for how young adults later function in educational, organizational, and civic roles.

Historical Context

Contemporary self esteem research dates to the late nineteenth century, pioneered by psychologists John Dewey (1884) and William James (1892). Although Dewey discussed the importance of self–identification as a large component of free agency, it was James that first used the term self esteem within the context of self–development, adaptation, and positive feelings of self, all which James theorized to be essential elements for addressing the vulnerability of children. As a result, self esteem research experienced a rise in popularity, the findings of which emphasized the importance of self–worth and intrinsic value among adolescents (Gruenberg, 1958).

In his seminal work, Rosenberg (1965) further explored the construct to identify ways to bolster self–worth and intrinsic value by providing various enrichment activities. In doing so, Rosenberg conceptualized self esteem as a subjective measure, influenced by the external environment and an internal examination of oneself (Orth & Robins, 2022). Consistent with Rosenberg's view that self esteem is affective and subject to the influence

of external validation, scholars looked to identify potential mediators by which self esteem could be improved (Coopersmith, 1967).

Future research conducted by Campbell et al. (1976) led to the concept of subjective well–being (SWB), in which scholars identified that well–being and happiness are highest correlated with self–satisfaction and self esteem. Further, Diener (1984) abstractly defined the framework of SWB as the presence of three characteristic attributes. It is subjective, contains positive measures, and includes a personal reflection of all aspects of one's life (Diener, 1984). SWB is further theorized to have cognitive and affective elements, specifically satisfaction with life and the positive and negative effects that arise from the self–perception of that satisfaction (de la Barrera et al., 2019). Various mediators of SWB have been proposed, such as the affective elements of income, parental involvement, and access to developmental programs, as well as various demographics including age, gender, ethnicity, marital status, and individual personality traits (Diener, 1984). According to Lau et al. (2020), a positive opinion of one's well–being enriches happiness and may improve self esteem in an interdependent relationship. Similarly, social and cultural environments, particularly those encountered in a school setting, may influence self esteem and well–being well beyond adolescence (Coffey & Warren, 2020), shaping how young people perceive their capacity to contribute, take initiative, and influence others in later roles.

Historically, eligible high school students are allowed to participate in various cocurricular and extracurricular activities during their education. Although increased self esteem and well–being are not explicit outcomes, many of these activities are known to provide the cognitive and affective learning associated with PSE and SWB (Grosz et al.,

2022; Guo et al., 2022; Holzer et al., 2022; Murphy et al., 2022; Nikander et al., 2022; Sun, 2022). Participants in elective activities are generally more motivated when taking advantage of outlets of interest (Rice, 2018). Yet, studies that compare such activities that investigate for significantly different levels of self esteem and well–being among both specific activities and programs remains lacking (Chen & Bu, 2022; Grosz et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2022; Holzer et al., 2022; Kim & Ahn, 2021; Morejón, 2021; Murphy et al., 2022; Nikander et al., 2022; Sun, 2022; Vaquero–Solís et al., 2021). The problem is that much of the published research has studied development through cocurricular and extracurricular participation in a broad context, with little to no investigation of potential differences between specific programs. The need for further examination of individual programs and activities and their potential differences that influence PSE and SWB beyond adolescence into young adulthood is warranted, as that is beyond the scope of the present binary participation/nonparticipation design.

Positive psychology emphasizes adolescent competencies, strengths, and adaptability to foster a healthy self esteem perspective and promote a general sense of happiness and well–being (de la Barrera et al., 2019). Research indicates that investing in building PSE in adolescence is linked with better long term psychological health and positive outcomes for young adults and the greater community. Adolescents benefit from positive psychosocial development and demonstrate higher levels of social and school engagement, trust, empathy, and communication skills (Povedano–Diaz et al., 2019). Those who self–identify with high levels of life satisfaction and PSE are more likely to engage in positive behaviors and activities (Kong et al., 2023). Thus, as adolescents transition into adulthood, both individuals and society are impacted by positive post–

school outcomes (Clavenna–Deane & Coates, 2022), including greater readiness to assume roles that require coordination, responsibility, and leadership within families, workplaces, and communities.

In addition to the individual benefits associated with PSE and SWB, literature indicates that self esteem is an influential component of healthy social relationships (Harris & Orth, 2020). Parola and Marcionetti (2023) state that positive psychology develops a sense of well–being and drives goal attainment in academics and pursuing post–secondary careers. Positive psychology research, which supports high levels of self esteem and general happiness with life, correlates with greater community involvement beyond the high school years, and contributions to society by promoting adaptability, success, work productivity, and engagement in roles that often carry leadership responsibilities (Parola & Marcionetti, 2023). Further, access to activities, programs, and resources are required components for building psychological resilience and PSE, both associated with positive social interaction and the ability to fill a societal need in the greater community (Ungar & Theron, 2020).

With more than one of every three students actively participating in program activities such as fine arts, vocational, or academic programs during high school, there is an opportunity to address the research gap in the current body of knowledge related to individual activities and their potential outcomes on positive long–term development (Rosch & Collins, 2017). The purpose of this study is to examine the association between participating in school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular programs while in high school on the long–term perceptions of self esteem and subjective well–being into early adulthood by comparing young adults who participated in at least one such program with

those who did not.

This dissertation will investigate the association of PSE and SWB among young adults between 18–25 years of age and participation in high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular activities, examining whether participation (versus nonparticipation) is associated with statistically significant differences in long–term PSE and SWB.

Theoretical Framework

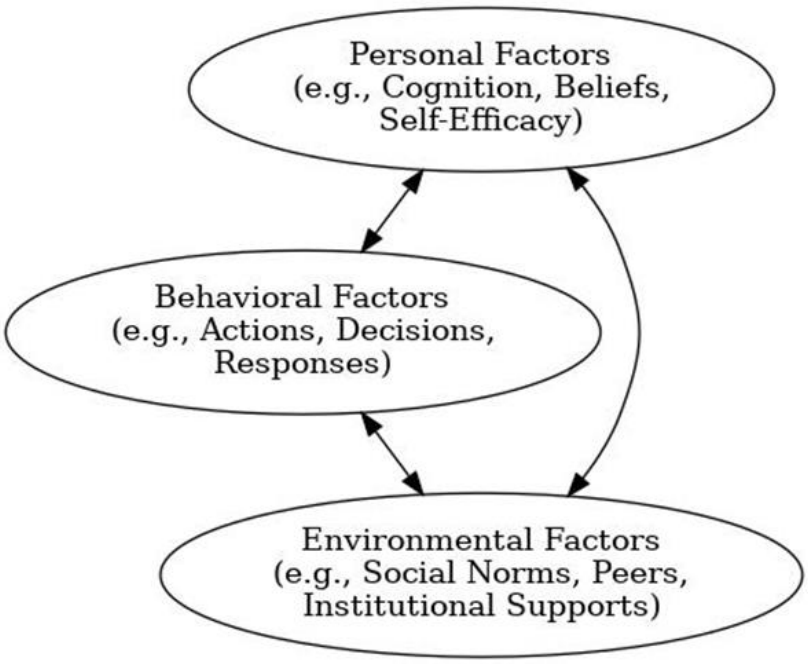
The theoretical framework for this study is grounded in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) and the relationship between its key concepts and principles as applied to the development of PSE and SWB. SCT is a comprehensive theory of behavior as influenced by observational learning and internal psychological factors, in which Bandura accentuates the interaction between persons, their environments, and subsequent cognitive development processes that structure behaviors, mannerisms, and knowledge acquisition. The theoretical framework of SCT (Bandura, 1986) accentuates the mutual and interrelated determinants of behavior based on a person’s internal (world view, cognition, etc.) and external factors in a social environment, actively shaping thought and emotional response, behavior, and the resulting deliverables by socially developed cognitive processes (Bandura, 1986).

This research posits that identity formation and character development during adolescence are correlated with both current and long–term PSE, SWB, and their resultant character and behavioral traits (Shek et al., 2019), including leadership–relevant dispositions such as confidence, initiative, and willingness to take responsibility for others (Bandura, 1982; McCormick, 2001; Harari et al., 2021). Bandura's research (1986)

acknowledged experiential learning and emphasized behavioral development by observation. SCT (Bandura, 1986) remains a relevant concept for understanding how the formation of self esteem and well–being in adolescents affects self esteem and well–being into future adulthood.

Bandura (1971) suggested that human personality and behavior could not be fully developed by external factors alone (Abbott, 2021). Rather, through observational research, Bandura (1986) theorized that external influence only explains one aspect of learned behavior, further expanding Skinner's (1963) previous research of causal factors responsible for human behavioral development. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, there is a three–way interplay between social influence, environmental context, and individual elective behaviors as fundamental yet inseparable factors of development (Bandura, 1986, p. 130).

Figure 1.1
Triadic Reciprocal Determinism



SCT (Bandura, 1986) is predicated on the influence of social interaction that drives the development of psychosocial, emotional, and cognitive abilities, each operating as a distinct determinant of behavioral causation. While each element is unique, they are interdependent in that the environment, one's behavior, and cognition each mutually influence the others. Bandura (1986) considered behaviors determined by the triadic reciprocal interplay between the three. Individuals, particularly adolescents and emergent young adults, develop and internalize individual cognition, emotion, and physiology, which affect their behavior and surrounding environments (Bandura, 1986). Further, there is a reciprocal interplay in which behavior influences others and affects their surroundings, which in turn can influence behavior (Bandura, 1986).

Key Concepts of Social Cognitive Theory

Schunk (2020) offers a concise description of the foundational tenets of SCT, stating that social cognitive theory makes assumptions about learning and performance of behaviors. These assumptions address the reciprocal interactions among people, behaviors, and environments, enactive and vicarious learning (i.e., how learning occurs), the distinction between learning and performance, and the role of self–regulation. SCT, at its core, is grounded in the assumption that cognitive development and the acquisition of learned behaviors stem from a set of bidirectional and interdependent social interactions and relationships that are mutually influential in shaping one's normative behavior, worldview, individual beliefs, and perceptions of the self (Bandura, 1986). The fundamental paradigm of SCT emanates from this context of reciprocal relationships.

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism. SCT (Bandura, 1986) emphasizes the dynamic and reciprocal interaction between individuals, their behavior, and their environment,

known as “reciprocal determinism” (Bandura, 1986), in which human functioning is not solely influenced by external stimuli or internal predispositions but is shaped by the interplay of personal factors, behavior, and environmental conditions. At the core of this theory is the concept of observational learning, where individuals learn by watching others and modeling their behavior. Bandura posited that people are active agents in their own development, not merely passive recipients of environmental forces. Another key element of SCT is self–efficacy, which refers to an individual’s belief in their ability to successfully perform a task (Schunk, 2020). Self–efficacy influences choices, effort, perseverance, and resilience in the face of obstacles. Third, Bandura (1986) highlighted the role of cognitive processes in behavior regulation, with individuals engaging in self–reflective and self–regulatory behavior, setting goals, evaluating outcomes, and adjusting actions accordingly. These cognitive processes allow people to control and adapt their behavior, aligning it with desired outcomes.

As scholars have sought to explain various aspects of human behavior and its causal elements, they "have generally been couched in terms of a limited set of determinants, usually portrayed as operating in a unidirectional manner" (Bandura, 1978, p. 344). Within the construct of SCT, Bandura theorized that it is the reciprocal interplay between behavior, environment, and person that serve as the determinants for developing a greater understanding of how learning occurs, the relationship between cognitive development and individual performance, character, and behavior, and the perception of self–efficacy, personal capabilities, and a belief in one's ability to succeed (Schunk, 2020). These mutually interactive and influential relationships are the causal elements that shape and define one another, both independently and bidirectionally, via the

interdependence of each component and the influence exerted on shaping each of the three determinate constructs (Bandura, 1986).

As learning continues to mature, competence and proficiency increase. Bandura (1999) believed motivation, self esteem, and self–awareness are products of cognitive development and personal agency. Independence and self–regulation are paramount to self–reflection and control of individual behaviors and well–being (Bandura, 1999). By exercising personal agency, each controls their thoughts, actions, and behaviors rather than simply existing as byproducts of their environments.

Bandura's (1986) model of triadic reciprocal determinism is the foundational concept that underscores the complex interplay between three core elements: personal factors, behavior, and environmental influences. This model posits that individuals are not merely shaped by their surroundings; rather, they actively engage with and influence their environment, creating a dynamic system where each component impacts the others (Bandura, 1986). Thus, a person's beliefs and attitudes (personal factors) can dictate their actions (behavior), which in turn can modify their environment, leading to new experiences that further shape their thoughts and behaviors.

Personal Internal Factors. A person's self–efficacy, or belief in their ability to succeed, can drive them to take on challenges that can result in different outcomes and environmental feedback (Bandura, 1986). Conversely, the social and cultural contexts in which individuals operate can shape their cognitive processes and behavioral choices. This reciprocal relationship emphasizes that learning and behavior are not linear processes but rather fluid and interconnected.

Environmental Influences. Environmental influences encompass the social and

physical contexts in which individuals operate, including cultural, social, and situational factors. This includes immediate surroundings, social interactions, and broader societal norms and expectations. Environmental influences can provide opportunities or constraints that shape behavior. For example, a supportive peer group can encourage positive behaviors, while a negative or unsupportive environment can lead to undesirable actions. Furthermore, the behavior of individuals can also alter their environments; for instance, a student who actively participates in class can influence the classroom dynamics and encourage a more engaged learning atmosphere.

Behavior. Behavior refers to the actions and reactions of individuals in response to their personal factors and environmental stimuli. This component represents the choices individuals make and the actions they take, which can be influenced by their thoughts and feelings, as well as by external factors. For example, a student who believes they are capable (personal factor) may study diligently for an exam (behavior), while a student with doubts about their abilities may procrastinate or avoid studying altogether. Behavior not only reflects individual decisions but also creates feedback that can influence future personal factors and environmental contexts.

Interconnectedness. The key to triadic reciprocal determinism is the understanding that these three components are not static but dynamically interact with one another. Changes in one area can lead to changes in the others. For instance, a positive shift in environmental influences, such as receiving encouragement from peers (environment), can enhance an individual's self–efficacy (personal factor), leading to increased engagement in behaviors that reinforce learning and growth (behavior). This cyclical nature highlights the complexity of human behavior and the importance of

considering multiple factors when analyzing actions and outcomes. By recognizing this triadic interaction, we gain a more comprehensive understanding of how individuals adapt to and navigate their social worlds, ultimately influencing their personal development and outcomes.

Within leadership and organizational development research, SCT has also been used to explain how observing others in positions of responsibility, receiving feedback on one's own performance, and internalizing outcome expectations contribute to leadership self–efficacy and behavior. In the context of school–sponsored programs, adolescents are frequently exposed to formal and informal leaders (e.g., coaches, instructors, captains), and SCT provides a useful lens for conceptualizing how those experiences may shape the self–evaluations and life appraisals examined in this study.

In summary, SCT (Bandura, 1986) is a highly regarded framework for examining the concepts of self esteem and well–being examined in this study. The underlying premise of this research is centered on the formation of attitudes about oneself, and their resulting beliefs as influenced by their environment. Based on SCT, engagement in school–sponsored programs can be conceptualized as occurring within environments that are theoretically positioned to support the development of self esteem and well–being as outcomes of experiential education, not only in the present–day environment but well into early adulthood.

Although social cognitive theory has been widely applied to leadership development and leadership self–efficacy, leadership constructs are not the focus of the present study. Rather, this dissertation examines self esteem and subjective well–being as core psychological outcomes associated with participation in high school–sponsored

programs. Leadership is therefore treated as a contextual and interpretive lens: participation in activities such as JROTC, athletics, and fine arts is understood as occurring in leadership–rich environments, and differences in self esteem and life satisfaction are discussed in relation to their potential implications for later self–leadership and leadership readiness, without directly measuring leadership as an outcome.

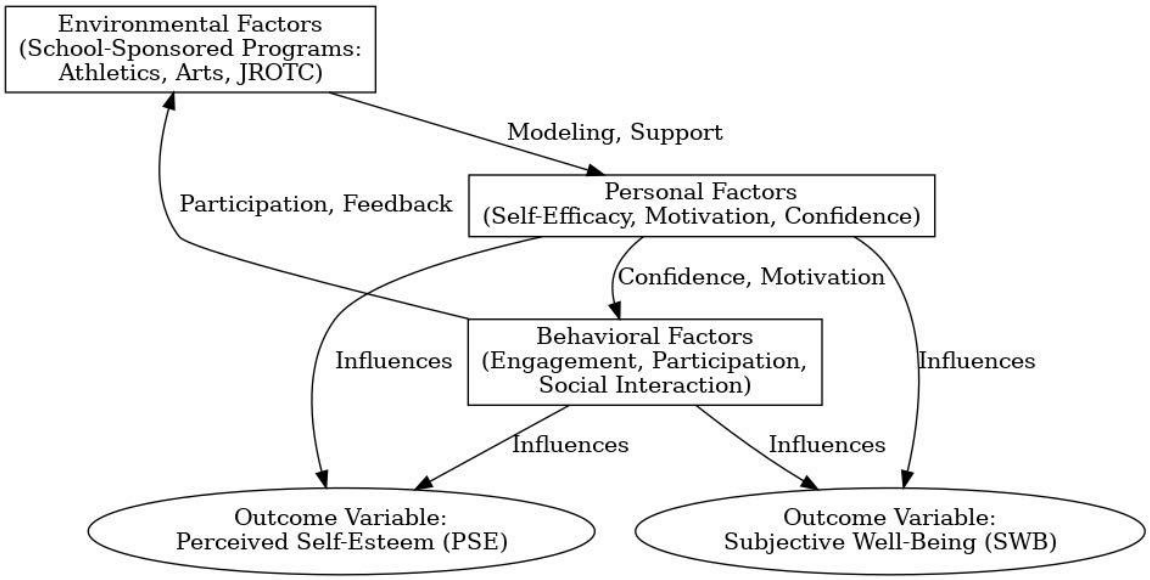
Conceptual Framework

Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) revolutionized the understanding of human development by emphasizing the interplay between individual cognition, behavior, and environmental influences. Unlike traditional behaviorist models that focused solely on observable actions, Bandura introduced the concept of reciprocal determinism, where individuals are not just passive recipients of environmental stimuli but active participants in shaping their own behaviors and experiences. Central to this theory are concepts such as observational learning, self–efficacy, and outcome expectations, which highlight how people learn from their social contexts and the impact of their beliefs on their actions.

This conceptual framework, which lays the foundation for this study, delineates key components of Bandura's (1986) theory, illustrating how personal factors, behaviors, and environmental conditions interact in a dynamic and reciprocal manner. The independent and dependent variables align with the constructs of triadic reciprocal determinism as theorized by Bandura (1986) and are interpreted in this study as capturing leadership–relevant experiences (participation context) and leadership–relevant psychological resources (self esteem and subjective well–being) (Bandura, 1982; Larson, 2000). See Figure 1.2 for a graphical illustration of the hypothesized relationships

between high school participation status (participation vs. nonparticipation) and the dependent variables of perceived self esteem and subjective well–being, along with internal factors (e.g., cognitive, affective, and biological).

Figure 1.2
Internal Factors of Triadic Reciprocal Determinism



Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of this study was to examine whether participation in school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular programs while in high school is associated with differences in young adults' self esteem and subjective well–being in the post–high school years. The independent variable is high school participation status, operationalized with two levels: participation in at least one school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program (e.g., JROTC, fine arts, or athletics) and nonparticipation in any such program. The dependent variables are participants' self–reported levels of PSE and SWB, as measured by the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, respectively. In the context of this study, these outcomes are interpreted as

leadership–relevant psychological resources, self–evaluations and life appraisals that may underpin young adults' capacity to lead themselves and others in educational, occupational, and community settings.

Research Question

What are the differences in perceived self esteem and subjective well–being among young adults who participated in at least one school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program (specifically JROTC, fine arts, or athletics) and those who did not participate?

Subproblems

1. What are the perceived self esteem scores of young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?
2. What are the subjective well–being scores of young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?
3. What are the perceived self esteem scores of the young adults who did not participate in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?
4. What are the subjective well–being scores of young adults who did not participate in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?
5. What are the differences between young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program and those who did not participate on perceived self esteem and subjective well–being?

Hypotheses

H_o: There is no multivariate difference in the combined dependent variables (self esteem and life satisfaction) between young adults who participated in a high school–

sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program and those who did not.

H_a: There is a multivariate difference in the combined dependent variables (self esteem and life satisfaction) between young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program and those who did not.

Definitions

1. *High School Student* – A high school student is defined as an adolescent enrolled in grades 9 through 12 at a public or private secondary educational institution (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). In this study, high school students were defined as any adolescent enrolled in a public or private high school in grades 9–12. Although the present sample consists of young adults (18 – 25), the term high school student is used when referring to participants' enrollment status during their high school years.
2. *Nonparticipation* – Nonparticipation is defined as young adults who were not actively involved in any school–sponsored extracurricular or cocurricular program during high school (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). In this study, young adults who did not participate served as a comparison group to evaluate differences or associations related to program participation in PSE and SWB.
3. *Participation* – Participation is involvement in a school–sponsored program during high school (Eccles & Barber, 1999). In this study, participation was defined as young adults who were enrolled in and consistently attended a high school program activity.
4. *Perceived Self esteem (PSE)* – In this study, PSE refers to an overall subjective self–evaluation of one's worth, competence, and value, encompassing global self–

judgments and beliefs about the self, particularly in relation to academic, social, and personal domains (Rosenberg, 1965; Kong et al., 2023). In this study, perceived self esteem was defined based on the score on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979). See Appendix A for a copy of the research instrument. Although leadership behaviors were not measured directly, higher global self esteem is often viewed as a foundational resource for exercising self–leadership and assuming leadership responsibilities.

5. *School–Sponsored Cocurricular Program* – School–sponsored cocurricular programs refer to officially recognized activities that are optional curricular programs for student participation, organized, funded, and supervised by the school (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). An example includes leadership development programs such as JROTC. They occur regularly and are intended to enhance student engagement, development, and achievement. In this study, school–sponsored cocurricular programs were defined as, and limited to, enrollment and participation in fine arts and JROTC.
6. *School–Sponsored Extracurricular Program* – School–sponsored extracurricular programs refer to officially recognized, optional activities that are organized, funded, and supervised by the school, but are not part of any official school curriculum (Eccles & Barber, 1999). In this study, extracurricular activities were defined as structured, high school–based activities that fall outside the realm of the regular curriculum (e.g., athletics such as football, soccer, or volleyball).
7. *Subjective Well–Being (SWB)* – SWB is defined as a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive evaluations of life satisfaction as well as affective

components such as the presence of positive emotions and the absence of negative emotions (Diener et al., 2018; Sheng et al., 2022). In this study, SWB was defined as young adults' perception of their emotional and psychological well–being. Subjective well–being was assessed based on the score on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). See Appendix B for a copy of the research instrument.

8. *Young Adult* – Young adult is defined as individuals in the transitional phase between adolescence and full adulthood (Arnett, 2000). In this study, young adults were defined as 18 – 25 years of age.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to young adults aged 18–25 in the geographical region of the San Antonio, Texas metropolitan area. It was further delimited to school–sponsored cocurricular participation in JROTC or fine arts curriculum, or participation in a school–sponsored extracurricular athletic program (e.g., football, soccer, baseball, volleyball). The study did not differentiate between cocurricular (linked to academics) and extracurricular (voluntary and non–academic) programs.

This study relied on specific, validated scales to measure self esteem (e.g., Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale) and subjective well–being (e.g., Satisfaction with Life Scale), limiting the analysis to these constructs as defined by these tools. The study focused on past participation and examined whether participation status was associated with differences in PSE and SWB in the 18 – 25 year old population, and while leadership development was not a direct focus of the quantitative analyses, it is considered in Chapter 5 as a possible implication of the observed differences in self

esteem and life satisfaction.

Assumptions

This study was based on several key assumptions that underpin the research design and interpretation of results. First, it was assumed that young adults accurately and honestly self–report their levels of perceived self esteem and subjective well–being. The validity of the findings hinges on the assumption that participant responses to surveys reflect their true perceptions and experiences regarding their self esteem and well–being. It was also assumed that the validated scales used to measure these constructs are appropriate and reliable for this age group and context, capturing the essential dimensions of self esteem and subjective well–being.

Another assumption was that participation in school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs is meaningfully associated with self esteem and well–being. The study presumed that these programs, as defined, provide meaningful engagement that can influence or be associated with psychological outcomes of young adults. It also assumed that students who participated in these programs engaged in activities that were distinct from their non–participating peers in terms of their effects on self esteem and well–being.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to enhance our understanding of how participation in school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs is related to self esteem and subjective well–being beyond high school into early adulthood. In an educational landscape increasingly focused on holistic development, it is essential to evaluate how these programs contribute to not only students' psychological and emotional growth, but to persistent PSE and SWB in young adulthood as foundations for

self–leadership, leadership readiness, and sustained engagement in work and community life (Hancock et al., 2012; Hansen et al., 2003; Lerner et al., 2005; Simonsen et al., 2014). By investigating this relationship, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into the benefits of such programs beyond high school, thereby informing educators, policymakers, and stakeholders about their potential impact on future outcomes.

Informing Educational Practices and Policies

Cocurricular and extracurricular programs are integral components of the high school experience, often providing students with opportunities for personal growth, skill development, social interaction, and exposure to leadership models and responsibilities. This study's findings can help inform educators and school administrators understand specific ways in which these programs contribute to self esteem, overall well–being, and leadership–relevant dispositions beyond high school into early adulthood. Revealing significantly positive associations may support the expansion and enhancement of such programs within schools. Conversely, findings that suggest minimal or no impact could prompt a reevaluation of how these programs are structured and implemented.

Guiding Program Development and Implementation

The study's results may also guide the development and implementation of cocurricular and extracurricular programs. By examining whether participation in school–sponsored programs is associated with higher self esteem and subjective well–being in young adulthood, schools can better justify and target investments in these opportunities. These results can also encourage schools to design cocurricular and extracurricular offerings as intentional leadership–development environments by incorporating structured opportunities for students to observe effective leaders, practice leadership

roles, and receive feedback on their contributions (Hancock et al., 2012; Simonsen et al., 2014).

Practical Implications for Student Support

This study has significance for several reasons. First, PSE and SWB are associated with positive outcomes that impact people and communities (Clavenna–Deane & Coates, 2022). Secondly, cocurricular and extracurricular activities are correlated with PSE and SWB (Clarke & McLellan, 2022; Grosz et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2022; Morejón, 2021; Murphy et al., 2022; Nikander et al., 2022; Sun, 2022). Finally, understanding how young adults respond to various programs may influence students, parents, and educators to pursue such programs, which have a positive impact on students, young adults, and society in general (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2021; Povedano–Diaz et al., 2019; Scherrer & Preckel, 2019).

The findings of this study have practical implications for supporting mental health, well–being, and leadership potential. Schools and mental health professionals can use the insights gained from the research to develop targeted interventions and support mechanisms. This proactive approach helps address issues related to stress, anxiety, and overall psychological health, and contributes to a more supportive and nurturing school environment that cultivates both personal well–being and the psychological foundations needed for later leadership roles.

In summary, this study is significant because it provides a comprehensive examination of the associations of high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs on longer–term self esteem and subjective well–being. The insights gained may inform educational practices, guide program development, address

disparities, contribute to academic research, and enhance student support, ultimately benefiting holistic development and overall psychological well–being.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review provides an introduction of the essential elements of PSE and SWB among adolescents and young adults, describes the factors that contribute to their development, and reviews the relationship between self esteem and well–being and high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs, with particular attention to how these contexts may foster leadership–relevant experiences and psychological resources. The review of relevant literature begins with an examination of the theoretical framework that guides this research, which is grounded in social cognitive theory (SCT) (Bandura, 1986), followed by a synthesis of current knowledge, related scholarship, and research findings associated with PSE and SWB among adolescents and young adults.

Theoretical Framework and Historical Context

This dissertation investigated the association of PSE and SWB among young adults and participation in high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular activities, examining whether participation (versus nonparticipation) is associated with statistically significant differences in PSE and SWB. Within this framework, participation contexts are viewed as leadership–rich environments in which adolescents observe and interact with adult and peer leaders, providing a potential mechanism through which self–evaluations and life appraisals relevant to later leadership functioning may develop.

SCT is a comprehensive theory of observational learning in which Bandura (1986) accentuates the interaction between persons, their environments, and subsequent

cognitive development processes that structure behaviors, mannerisms, and knowledge acquisition. Rejecting earlier behaviorist paradigms such as Skinner's operant conditioning (1963, 1971, 1976), the theoretical framework of SCT accentuates the mutual exchange in a social environment that influences not only individual behaviors but actively shapes thought and emotional response, behavior, and the subsequent outcomes of socially developed cognitive processes (Bandura, 1986).

Bandura (1971, 1986) and others challenged existing behavioral theories in favor of behavioral influence emanating from social learning and discernable events and, thus, is highly reliant on situational context (Schunk, 2020). Bandura was highly critical of the behaviorist model, which, in his view, "depicted behavior as impelled by inner forces in the form of needs, drives, and impulses, often operating below the level of consciousness" (p. 1). Traditional behavioral learning theories sought to avoid what Bandura (1971) considered to be inauthentic claims while neglecting to intellectually consider the cognitive functions of humanity as a causal element for learning. Like all discerning creatures, people possess the inalienable capacity and desire for independent thought, agency, and willful, intentional behavior. In its neglect of the "superior cognitive capacity" of humankind, behaviorism suggested, "an incomplete rather than an inaccurate account of human behavior" (Bandura, 1971, p. 2).

Key Concepts of SCT

In contrast to the behavioral model, Bandura (1986) theorized a comprehensive conceptual framework for learning. Schunk (2020) proffered a concise description of the foundational tenets of SCT, stating that,

Social cognitive theory makes assumptions about learning and

> performance of behaviors. These assumptions address the reciprocal interactions among persons, behaviors, and environments; enactive and vicarious learning (i.e., how learning occurs); the distinction between learning and performance; and the role of self–regulation. (p. 127).

SCT, at its core, is predicated on the assumption that cognitive development and the acquisition of learned behaviors stem from a set of bidirectional and interdependent social interactions and relationships that are mutually influential in shaping one's normative behavior, worldview, individual beliefs, and perceptions of the self (Bandura, 1986). The fundamental principles of SCT emanate within this context of reciprocal relationships. In leadership–relevant settings, such as school–sponsored activities, these reciprocal interactions among persons, behaviors, and environments help explain how adolescents internalize models of responsibility, influence, and initiative that may underlie later leadership readiness.

Triadic Reciprocal Determinism

As scholars have sought to explain various aspects of human behavior and its causal elements, they "have generally been couched in terms of a limited set of determinants, usually portrayed as operating in a unidirectional manner" (Bandura, 1978, p. 344). Conversely, Bandura theorized that it was the reciprocal interplay between behavior, environment, and person that serve as the determinants for developing a greater understanding of how learning occurs, the relationship between cognitive development and individual performance, character, and behavior, and the perception of self–efficacy, personal capabilities, and a belief in one's ability to succeed (Schunk, 2020). Bandura (1986) believed that these mutually interactive and influential relationships are causal

elements that shape and define one another, both independently and bidirectionally, via the interdependence of each component and the influence each exerts on shaping the three distinct determinate constructs. From this perspective, opportunities to take on roles, observe leaders, and receive feedback in structured programs can be understood as specific configurations of person–behavior–environment interplay that support both psychosocial adjustment and leadership–relevant development.

Self–Efficacy

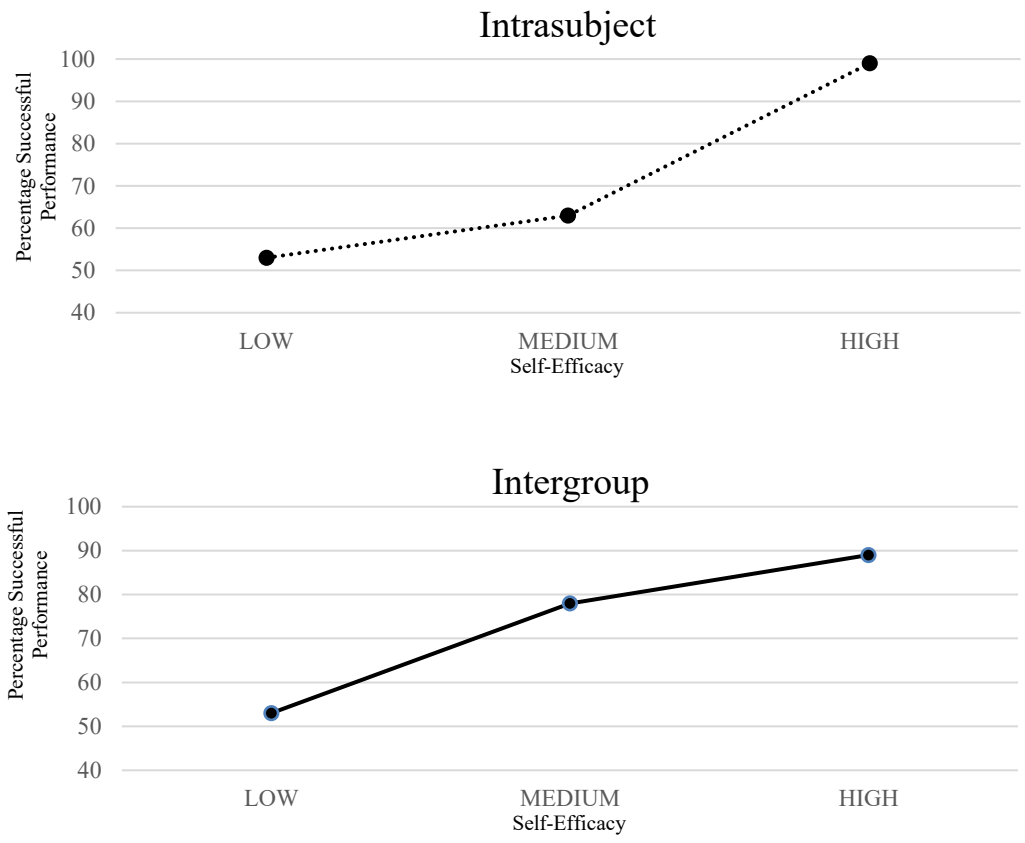
Self–efficacy refers to the perception of personal ability, competency, and belief that goal attainment is possible. Self–efficacy does not encompass knowledge but is solely responsible for understanding the capacity to apply knowledge, resources, and faculty to generate acceptable outcomes (Schunk, 2020). Bandura (1982) theorized that while self–efficacy emanates from one's environment it "is not a fixed act or simply a matter of knowing what to do" (p. 122).

In adolescence, self–efficacy has been correlated with such attributes as motivation (Trautner & Schwinger, 2020), resilience, and perseverance to overcome obstacles (Sagone et al., 2020), including being able to tolerate pain successfully (Stahlschmidt et al., 2019), anxiety (Sakka et al., 2020), career intentions (Garaika & Margahana, 2019), hope and optimism (Gallagher et al., 2020), and self esteem (Yang et al., 2019), among others. Quantitative analysis by Bandura (1982) discovered a proportional association between self–efficacy and performance levels among both groups and individuals. Greater levels of perceived self–efficacy resulted in more successful performance in both group settings and among everyone within the group (Bandura, 1982). In contrast, research indicates that limited self–efficacy and doubt are

barriers to applying the related skills required for overcoming various obstacles, resulting in greater levels of stress and uncertainty (Bandura, 1982). Perceptions of deficient self–efficacy limit the reciprocal exchange between environment and behavior (Trautner & Schwinger, 2020). Thus, self–efficacy is both context and domain–specific and has been the subject of extensive research to explore reasons for diminished self–efficacy among adolescents. Because beliefs about one's capability to organize and execute action are central to leading oneself and others, self–efficacy is also a key psychological resource for leadership readiness, even though leadership behavior itself is not directly assessed in this study. Figure 2.1 provides a graphical illustration of the self–efficacy mediation model (Bandura et al., 1961).

Figure 2.1

Performance as Mediated by Self–Efficacy



In addition to the positive effects of increased levels of self–efficacy, scholars have revealed a wide range of undesirable outcomes when perceived self–efficacy is low. Anger, depression, and poor emotional regulation significantly increase with diminished self–efficacy (Di Giunta et al., 2022). In a study conducted by Queiroz et al. (2020), the development of self–efficacy was significantly correlated with parenting style and involvement, where high levels of parental criticism, rejection, control, and over–involvement were harmful to positive self–efficacy development (Buchanan & LeMoyne, 2020; Di Giunta et al., 2022; Pavicevic & Zivkovic, 2021; Queiroz et al., 2020).

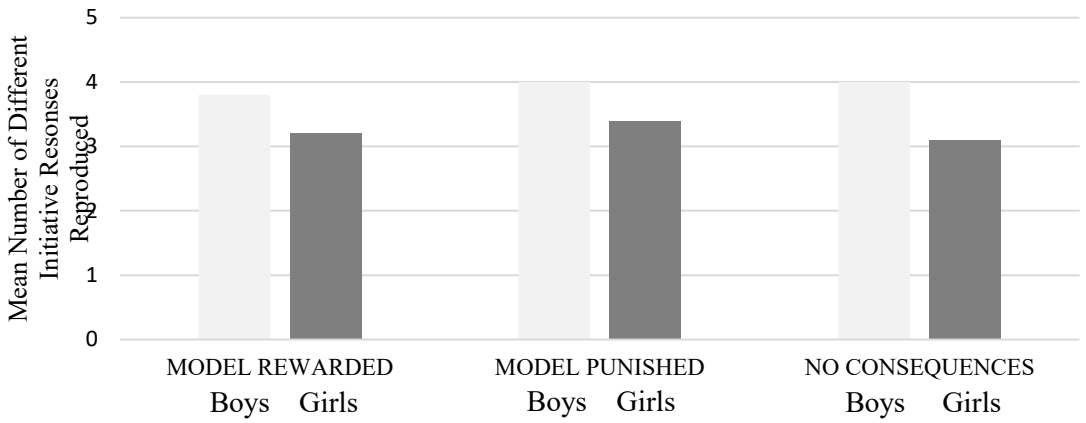
Modeling

Schunk (2020) described modeling as a central process within social cognitive theory, referring to "behavioral, cognitive, and affective changes deriving from observing one or more models" (p. 130). Observing competent others can promote cognitive growth and skill acquisition in adolescents, but the effectiveness of modeling depends on several factors, including the observer's developmental status, the model's perceived competence and similarity, expected outcomes, personal values, and self–efficacy. These conditions shape the vicarious effects of modeling—how observers interpret and internalize what they see.

Bandura (1969) theorized that modeling often produces not only the reproduction of specific behaviors but also broader shifts in character and dispositions. However, modeled behavior does not exert uniform influence; its impact differs depending on whether the behavior appears to be rewarded, punished, or ignored. As illustrated in Figure 2.2, the performance of learned behaviors through model observation is strongly shaped by the observed contingency structure: individuals are more likely to adopt

behaviors that are reinforced and to inhibit those that are punished or yield negative outcomes. In the context of school–sponsored activities, adolescents may internalize not just technical skills but also norms about effort, perseverance, teamwork, and leadership by observing how peers and adult leaders are treated when they display these characteristics, even if their subsequent leadership behavior is not directly measured in the present research (Harari et al., 2021; McCormick, 2001).

Figure 2.2
Theoretical Conceptions of Observational Learning



Influence of Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) posits that outcome expectations and perceived efficacy are constructed from prior experiences and exert strong affective and motivational influence across domains (Bandura, 1997; Schunk, 2020). As a broad framework, SCT has shaped understanding of learning and behavior through observation (Bandura, 2018), the mechanisms and outcomes of motivation (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020), the development of moral thought and conduct (Bandura, 1991), organizational functioning and management (Wood & Bandura, 1989), and self–regulatory processes in academic and nonacademic contexts (Bandura, 1997, 1999, 2005).

In education, SCT is widely applied through practices that leverage role

modeling, guided observation, and structured feedback to build competencies and adaptive behavior patterns (Hartjen, 1974). Its emphasis on self–efficacy, the belief in one's capability to organize and execute courses of action, makes SCT especially relevant for understanding the development of self esteem, confidence, and persistence during adolescence and young adulthood (Bandura, 1997). Within high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs, SCT provides a lens for conceptualizing how repeated exposure to models, opportunities to practice, and patterns of reinforcement may influence how students view their abilities and evaluate their lives. The present study draws on SCT to situate school–sponsored participation as a context in which observational learning, efficacy beliefs, and outcome expectations might jointly shape self esteem and subjective well–being in emerging adulthood, and to interpret these outcomes as psychological foundations that may be relevant for later self–leadership and leadership in educational, occupational, and community domains (Harari et al., 2021).

Mechanisms of Observational Learning

In Bandura's (1969) theory of observational learning and modeling, a clear distinction is made between the acquisition of a behavior and its performance, as each is governed by somewhat different determinants. Individuals can acquire new response patterns simply by observing models, even when those responses are not immediately expressed. As Bandura noted, "desirable response patterns developed through observational learning are not always evident," making it necessary to identify the mechanisms that facilitate the translation of observed behavior into overt action (p. 220). Thus, observational learning is not a simple matter of mimicry; it involves internal processes that determine whether modeled behaviors are noticed, encoded, retained, and

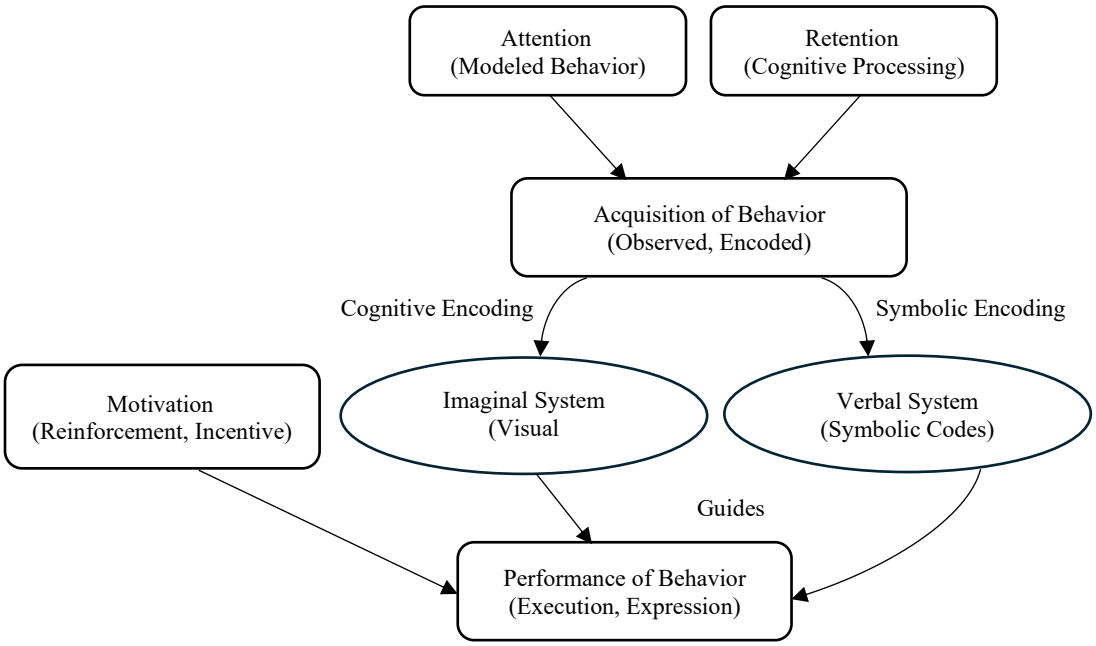
ultimately enacted.

According to Bandura (1969), observational learning engages “two representational systems, an imaginal and a verbal one” (p. 220). The imaginal system involves forming mental images of the modeled behavior, whereas the verbal system involves encoding the behavior in symbolic, often linguistic, form (e.g., self–instructions or rules). These representational codes support retention, allowing individuals to rehearse and later reconstruct modeled actions even in the absence of the original model. Building on this foundation, Bandura’s broader social learning framework describes four key subprocesses: attention (noticing relevant aspects of the model’s behavior), retention (storing and rehearsing those behaviors symbolically), motor reproduction (translating symbolic representations into coordinated action), and motivation (having sufficient incentive to perform what has been learned). Modeled behaviors are more likely to be adopted when observers attend to competent, high–status, or nurturing models, can rehearse what they have seen, and perceive that the behavior is rewarded rather than punished. In leadership–rich environments such as JROTC units, athletic teams, or performance ensembles, these processes may be especially salient as adolescents watch how leaders set standards, respond to challenges, and treat others (Abu Al–Kian, 2025; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hancock et al., 2012; Hansen et al., 2003; Simonsen et al., 2014).

Within school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular contexts, these mechanisms are particularly salient. Students routinely observe coaches, directors, instructors, and peers demonstrating skills, expressing values, and responding to success and failure. Through repeated exposure and rehearsal, whether during practices, performances, or competitions, participants may internalize not only specific behavioral

routines but also broader self–evaluative standards (e.g., what it means to be "good enough") and expectations about their own capabilities. Over time, the interplay of imaginal and verbal representations, combined with vicarious reinforcement for persistence, leadership, or teamwork, may contribute to the development of more positive self–views and life evaluations. Figure 2.3 provides an adapted illustration of Bandura's (1961, 1969) conception of how observational learning and modeling processes converge to influence behavior and, by extension, self–concept and well–being.

Figure 2.3
Theory of Observational Learning & Modeling



Imagery

Within social learning and self–regulation frameworks, imagery is viewed as a core mechanism through which modeled experiences are encoded and used to guide future behavior. Bandura (1969) argued that normal imagery development occurs as modeling stimuli are processed into mental images during memory formation. These internal representations are a critical component of retention, enabling individuals to

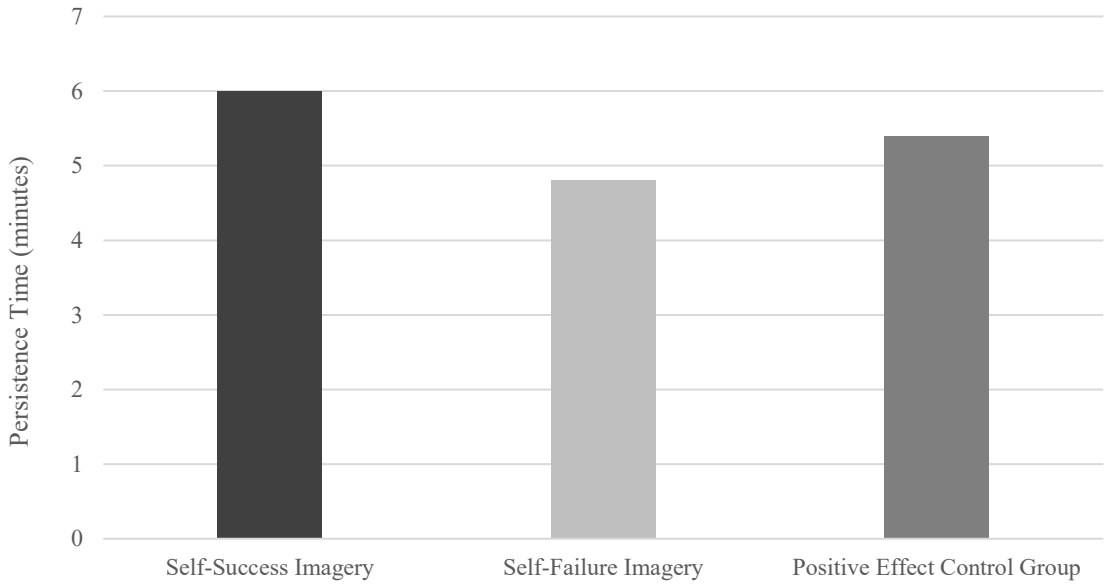
rehearse modeled acts in the absence of the original model and to generate appropriate responses in similar situations. In this sense, imagery does not merely accompany learning; it functions as a symbolic system that supports the storage and reconstruction of observed behaviors.

Imagery is also central to the formation of outcome expectations. When individuals mentally simulate themselves performing a behavior and achieving a desired outcome, they are effectively testing the plausibility and desirability of that behavior before acting. Nordin and Cumming (2005) note that positive performance imagery, vivid, controllable images of oneself executing skills successfully, is associated with more adaptive cognitions and greater perceived readiness. As individuals repeatedly imagine successful performance, their expectations of self–efficacy and positive outcomes can be strengthened, whereas persistent negative imagery may undermine confidence and readiness to act.

Empirical work supports the link between self–relevant imagery and performance. Ruvolo and Markus (1992), for example, found that imagining successful "possible selves" was associated with greater task persistence and higher performance compared to imagining failure or neutral outcomes (see Figure 2.4). As perceptions of self–success increase, individuals are more likely to persist in the face of difficulty; conversely, diminished belief in one's ability to succeed is associated with reduced effort and a greater likelihood of disengagement. In the context of school–sponsored activities, repeated opportunities to envision oneself as a competent athlete, musician, or cadet may, over time, contribute to more positive self–evaluations and higher satisfaction with one's life circumstances. Thus, imagery serves as a bridge between modeled experiences,

internal expectations, and observable patterns of motivation and performance that are relevant to both self esteem and subjective well–being, and may also support adolescents' capacity to envision themselves in roles that require initiative, responsibility, and leadership (Judge & Bono, 2011; Kort–Butler & Hagewen, 2011).

Figure 2.4
Self–Success Imagery and Task Persistence



Verbal Coding

A second representational process that supports observational learning is what Bandura (1969) termed the "verbal coding of observed events" (p. 220). Beyond forming mental images, individuals can translate modeled behaviors and outcomes into verbal or symbolic codes—such as self–statements, rules, or labels—that summarize what has been observed. This symbolic recoding allows observers to compress complex behavioral episodes into manageable units that can be rehearsed, retrieved, and applied in new situations.

Bandura (1969) argued that individuals who are more proficient at transforming

imagery into verbal and visual representations of events show better recall of modeled sequences, greater efficiency when retrieving these behaviors, and greater consistency when reproducing them. In practice, this may look like adolescents internalizing coaching instructions, team norms, or performance cues into short, memorable phrases or rules ("stay composed under pressure," "support your teammates"). Such verbal codes can then guide behavior even in the absence of the original model, reinforcing both competence–related beliefs and broader self–evaluations over time, including internal standards for what it means to act responsibly, support others, or step into a leadership role.

Attentional Processes

Attention refers to focused concentration on a limited subset of environmental information (Schunk, 2020). In SCT, attentional processes are the entry point for observational learning: individuals must first attend to a model and discriminate the relevant aspects of the modeled behavior. As Bandura (1969) noted, "it is unlikely that a person could reproduce modeling stimuli if he did not attend to, recognize, and differentiate the distinctive features of the model's responses" (p. 222). Mere exposure is therefore insufficient; learners must selectively focus on the cues that matter.

Bandura (1969) emphasized that several factors influence whether observers sustain attention: motivation, prior knowledge, reinforcement contingencies, personal characteristics (e.g., interest, arousal), and social factors such as the model's status, attractiveness, or similarity. In school–sponsored activities, students are more likely to attend to models they perceive as competent, respected, or relatable. This selective attention shapes which behaviors—effort, resilience, sportsmanship, creativity—are most likely to be encoded and ultimately incorporated into the individual's behavioral

repertoire and self–concept, including beliefs about what effective leadership looks like in practice.

Retention Processes

Retention processes determine whether attended information is preserved in memory and made available for later use. Bandura (1969) argued that the likelihood of retaining modeled behavior is influenced both by the level of reward associated with that behavior and by the extent of rehearsal. He emphasized that "the level of observational learning can be considerably enhanced through overt practice or rehearsal of modeled response sequences" (p. 222). Even when attention is sustained, long–term retention of modeling events depends heavily on repeated activation of the mental representations formed during observation.

Rehearsal can take multiple forms, including mental imagery, verbal recitation, or overt practice in structured settings. Schunk (2020) highlighted that consistent production of positive, goal–aligned behaviors is evidence that learning has been effectively retained and integrated. In the context of school–sponsored activities, repeated practice of skills in rehearsals, drills, performances, and competitions not only consolidates technical competence but may also strengthen internal narratives about being capable, persistent, or resilient. Over time, such retained learning may contribute to higher levels of self esteem and more favorable judgments of one's life circumstances.

Behavior Production

The production of behavior is the stage at which internalized knowledge and representations are translated into observable action. Conceptual understanding of appropriate responses, however, does not guarantee accurate or consistent performance.

Schunk (2020) noted that while many behaviors can be learned through simple observation, more complex skills typically require guided practice, repetition, constructive feedback, and ongoing assessment. Mastery is therefore a function not only of what has been observed and retained, but also of opportunities to refine performance in supportive environments.

Bandura (2005) extended this view by emphasizing the role of self–agency—the capacity to exercise intentional control over one's actions and life circumstances. Self–agency is expressed through self–organization, proactive behavior, and self–reflection, all of which contribute to the regulation of behavior production. Within the framework of triadic reciprocal determinism, behavior is shaped by the dynamic interplay of personal factors (e.g., beliefs, expectations), environmental conditions (e.g., reinforcement patterns, social norms), and prior behavior. Task mastery experiences are particularly influential, as successful performance strengthens self–efficacy beliefs, which in turn increase effort and persistence on future tasks.

In school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular settings, behavior production is visible when adolescents enact learned skills under real performance demands—competing in games, performing on stage, executing drills, or leading peers. Successful enactment, supported by feedback from coaches, teachers, and peers, can reinforce a sense of competence and agency. Over time, repeated mastery experiences in these contexts may contribute to more positive self–evaluations and higher subjective well–being, providing a theoretical bridge between SCT processes and the outcome patterns observed in the present study, and offering a plausible pathway through which adolescents may also develop greater confidence in their capacity to take initiative and

influence others.

Linking Self esteem and Subjective Well–Being

Self esteem refers to one's perception or feeling about their self–worth and has been demonstrated to influence well–being, while subjective well–being is best defined as the assessment of life satisfaction (Caqueo–Urízar et al., 2022; Kong et al., 2023). Studies have revealed that self esteem may solve many aspects of societal dysfunction, including crime, violence, and failure of educational and goal attainment (Orth & Robins, 2022). Research also indicates that PSE is intrinsically valuable and especially critical during adolescence as teenagers forge their independence and form distinctive identities in preparation for adulthood (Coffey & Warren, 2020). These identity processes are also foundational for how young people come to see themselves as potential contributors and leaders in their families, workplaces, and communities.

Research suggests that PSE mediates one's SWB, as individuals with PSE view themselves, their feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and abilities positively (Kong et al., 2023). SWB has been defined in the literature as "the different valuations that people make regarding their lives, the events happening to them, their bodies and minds, and the circumstances in which they live" (Sheng et al., 2022, p. 111707). Further, PSE exerts a continuous and linear effect on SWB (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2021). Several studies have determined PSE to predict SWB (Lau et al., 2020). Consistent with these findings, Kurnaz et al. (2020) indicated a significant effect between self esteem and SWB and life satisfaction, to which individuals with higher levels of PSE reported greater happiness and well–being. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2020) determined that one's level of self esteem is an important factor in influencing well–being, and a correlational study conducted by

Wang and Kong (2020) demonstrated that self esteem and satisfaction with life are positively correlated.

Therefore, as psychological and physical well–being, and positive interpersonal relationships are a critical element of adolescent development, various studies across academic disciplines of adolescent self esteem and well–being are prevalent in research literature. Both have been linked to positive perceptions of self–efficacy (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2021), cheerfulness (Lau et al., 2020), and psychological flexibility (Kurnaz et al., 2020). Studies from Harris and Orth (2020) indicated that increased levels of self esteem and well–being are positively correlated with social acceptance. Self–worth has been linked to such positive outcomes as acceptable social behavior and a positive predictor of life satisfaction (Erdvik et al., 2020), and Coffey and Warren (2020) discovered that the affective elements of positive self esteem among adolescents are positive predictors of self esteem later in adult life.

The development of self esteem and well–being during adolescence as both global and specific has also been well–explored (Rosenberg et al., 1995). While both self esteem and well–being originate from cognitive processes, global self esteem and well–being refer to the overall self–perception of the individual in totality. In contrast, specific self esteem and well–being apply only to positive or negative feelings of oneself within the confines of individual context. Although distinct, self esteem and subjective well–being are strongly interrelated, with research findings revealing that self esteem levels exert a "constant and unidirectional effect on life satisfaction" (Marcionetti & Rossier, 2021, p. 485).

The Mediating Effect of Peer Network

An important contributor to the formation of adolescent PSE is the influence of peer relationships and social engagement (Veenstra & Laninga–Wijnen, 2022). Peer influence, where one or more individuals affect or are affected by others within a social network, is a universal force that contributes to desirable and maladaptive attitudes and behaviors (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). As adolescents become decreasingly reliant on their parents or primary caregivers, the influence of peer social groups is heightened (Busching & Krahé, 2020). According to the literature, performing adequately within social groups is a key tenet of psychosocial development, contributing to such prosocial competencies as behavior, attitude, and effective communication (Caqueo–Urízar et al., 2022).

According to Maslow (1943), PSE is an intrinsically required and basic need. In their research of PSE and SWB, Leary et al. (1995) suggested a theory of Sociometry (ST) that they considered to be an extension of the work of Bandura's (1986) SCT in which they hypothesized that self esteem was a reflection, not only of one's social belonging, but also with one's perception of acceptance within their social groups. Though the inferred causal elements leading to PSE differed between Bandura's (1986) SCT and Leary et al.'s (1995) Sociometry Theory, both bodies of research confirmed the social environment as a critical component for the development of PSE and SWB. Many scholars have indicated agreement with these constructs based on their research, with an array of studies citing a statistically significant effect between social environment and relationships on PSE and SWB (Busching & Krahé, 2020; Caqueo–Urízar et al., 2022; Laursen & Veenstra, 2021; Orben et al., 2020; Sheng et al., 2022; Veenstra & Laninga–

Wijnen, 2022; Zhang et al., 2020). Peer networks in which adolescents experience support, recognition, and opportunities to contribute can also serve as informal training grounds for leadership–relevant behaviors, even when leadership outcomes are not assessed explicitly.

Influence of PSE and SWB

Academic literature has repeatedly validated the extent to which PSE and SWB are connected with functional and dysfunctional effects. Lau et al. (2020) found PSE and SWB to be highly correlated with affective and cognitive well–being. Coffey and Warren (2020) found that PSE is not only a positive predictor of life satisfaction but is directly associated with PSE and SWB as future adults. A lack of sufficient social interaction has been associated with poor mental and physical health (Orben et al., 2020), and adolescent PSE may predicate resilience and social competence (Caqueo–Urízar et al., 2022). Additionally, research indicates that higher levels of PSE assist in minimizing the deleterious effects of harmful social environments (Caqueo–Urízar et al., 2022). PSE is associated with greater academic performance (Christy & Mythili, 2020), a tendency for greater career adaptability (Parola & Marcionetti, 2023), and improved physiological and psychological health (Pazzaglia et al., 2020).

The Mediating Effect of the Educational Environment

As the day–to–day routine of adolescents typically takes place within the context of an educational school setting, it is important to examine the effects of the school setting on promoting positive self esteem and well–being. For several decades, studies on the development of life satisfaction, self esteem, and general well–being have revealed a significant link between each of these variables and the adolescent school environment

(Woodcock & Tournaki, 2023). A large body of research has demonstrated that supportive school relationships with both teachers, administrators, and peers, are associated with higher levels of motivation, less unacceptable behavior, less risk–taking and greater levels of safety, and the development of positive social skills that promote PSE and SWB (Magro et al., 2024). Such environments also provide fertile ground for students to observe and practice leadership–relevant skills such as communication, coordination, and responsible decision making.

Promoting PSE and SWB in School

Given the subsequent outcomes revealed in extant research, adolescent well–being has become an overt educational goal (Opre et al., 2018). The correlation between school–related environments, peer groups, and social influence has furthered considerable interest in understanding the role of various school–related programs and their potential to positively influence PSE and SWB, with studies having identified the positive benefits associated with adolescent participation in various school activities (Bouchard et al., 2023).

Cocurricular Programs

Cocurricular activities are structured, school–sponsored programs, such as JROTC and fine arts, taken as electives and included as part of the overall curriculum, but separate from core academic requirements. Cocurricular activities differ from extracurricular ones by being more closely tied to the curriculum or school mission and often receive direct oversight by faculty (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Participation in cocurricular settings allows adolescents to develop competence, autonomy, and social connectedness, all of which are key factors associated with positive

self–concept and psychological health (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and which also may underlie many forms of effective self–leadership and leadership practice. For example, involvement in JROTC is correlated with greater self–efficacy and perceived social support, both protective factors for self esteem (Knifsend & Graham, 2012).

Moreover, research suggests that cocurricular participation serves as a mediator between environmental influences and adolescent well–being by providing structure and meaningful engagement. Fredricks and Eccles (2008) demonstrated that students who consistently participated in school–based clubs reported higher levels of life satisfaction and lower levels of depressive symptoms than their peers who did not. These experiences offer safe spaces for self–discovery and peer validation, crucial during identity formation in adolescence (Harter, 2012). Through these interactions, students internalize positive feedback, experience achievement, and build social capital, all of which act as mediators of improved psychological well–being in adulthood, and may simultaneously cultivate dispositions, such as confidence, responsibility, and initiative, which support later leadership roles.

Furthermore, cocurricular programs contribute to adolescent well–being by fostering resilience and promoting prosocial behaviors. Mahoney et al. (2003) found that students who engaged in civic and academic organizations were more likely to develop coping strategies and emotional regulation skills, leading to greater feelings of self–worth. These environments often emphasize goal setting, collaboration, and perseverance, all skills that are directly linked to enhanced self–perception and mental health (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Importantly, these mediating effects are stronger when participation is sustained over time and when students perceive a high level of

belonging and support from adult mentors (Eccles et al., 2003). Thus, cocurricular activities serve as a powerful avenue for not only academic enrichment but also the holistic development of adolescent self esteem and well–being that extends beyond adolescence into adulthood.

Extracurricular Programs

Extracurricular activities are voluntary, non–academic, structured activities that take place outside the formal school curriculum and recognized as powerful developmental contexts for adolescents. These activities include sports teams, community service programs, and special interest clubs (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Participation in such voluntary programs promote autonomy, skill development, and peer affiliation, and have been positively associated with adolescents' self esteem and overall well–being (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005). Adolescents involved in athletic programs, for instance, often experience increased self–worth due to perceptions of competence, physical efficacy, and social recognition (Bowker, 2006). These benefits are especially pronounced when adolescents internalize a positive identity related to their extracurricular role, such as seeing themselves as a team player or leader (Eccles et al., 2003), even though the present study focuses on downstream self esteem and life satisfaction rather than directly measuring leadership behavior.

Extracurricular involvement can act as a mediator between environmental stressors and psychological resilience. Mahoney and Cairns (1997) found that those from high–risk backgrounds who participated regularly in structured after–school activities demonstrated significantly fewer behavior problems and higher levels of emotional adjustment compared to their uninvolved peers. The protective effect stems from the

provision of structured time, positive adult mentorship, and the opportunity to develop meaningful peer relationships (Fredricks & Eccles, 2008). Engagement in extracurriculars such as volunteerism or environmental clubs enhances a sense of purpose and social contribution, which in turn elevates subjective well–being and moral identity (Schwartz et al., 2010). These mediating influences help adolescents process external pressures, such as academic stress or family conflict, by reinforcing their coping skills and self–concept.

The longitudinal benefits of extracurricular participation are well documented. Darling (2005) found that sustained engagement across multiple years predicts increases in psychological well–being, academic success, and social integration. The consistency of involvement provides a developmental trajectory that promotes self–regulation, goal setting, and a sense of continuity in identity formation (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006). Importantly, the quality of the activity, such as the degree of support from adult leaders and opportunities for meaningful participation, moderates these benefits (Eccles & Gootman, 2002). As such, extracurricular activities are not just recreational outlets but essential contexts for mediating healthy development, promoting positive self esteem, and enhancing the subjective well–being of adolescents during a critical stage of their growth (Feldman & Matjasko, 2005), while also offering early opportunities to observe and enact leadership–relevant behaviors that may carry forward into emerging adulthood.

High school athletic programs have been linked with the psychological and social benefits of elevated self esteem and fewer antisocial behaviors (Zuckerman et al., 2021). Several studies have noted the effects of physical education and its positive impact on self esteem and life satisfaction (Erdvik et al., 2020; Kim & Ahn, 2021; Murphy et al.,

2022; Piñeiro–Cossio et al., 2021; Vaquero–Solís et al., 2021). In a related context, school–sponsored athletic programs are associated with positive psychosocial outcomes, including fewer incidents of depression, less anxiety, increased self–efficacy, a decline in feelings of loneliness, and higher levels of PSE and SWB (Gagliardi et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2021; Zuckerman et al., 2021). Though there is less understanding about the effects of novel or selective programs, scholars have demonstrated interest in activities, such as the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps, that exhibits a statistically significant correlation with PSE and SWB (Shao et al., 2024).

Within the framework of social cognitive theory and the construct of triadic reciprocal determinism (Bandura, 1986), higher levels of self–efficacy, self esteem, and well–being are transferrable across several sociocultural domains. For example, students that engage in a fine arts activity, whether music, theater, dance, or graphic arts, demonstrate higher levels of happiness and personal identity (Miranda et al., 2021), positive personality change (Grosz et al., 2022), increased creativity (Barbot, 2020; Du et al., 2020), improved socialization (Krasil'nikov, 2020), and a greater sense of belonging (MacGregor, 2020), and a positive sense of self esteem and well–being (Clarke & McLellan, 2022; Sun, 2022).

Conclusion

This literature review has demonstrated the interdependency of PSE and SWB among adolescents and their environment. Yet despite the breadth of research to affirm the critical role of environmental stimuli in promoting positive psychosocial attitudes and behaviors, there has been little research to assess the potential differences between cocurricular and extracurricular programs regarding their influence on PSE and SWB in

young adulthood. Although the extant body of research associating positive self esteem and well–being to school sponsored programs is plentiful, studies have been limited to examining PSE and SWB outcomes from a program–centric perspective. However, the problem is that, despite the large body of academic research on the subject, most studies focus on high school students, with relatively little research on the transitioning young adult population. To address this gap, and to increase understanding of the potential of school–sponsored programs to influence PSE and SWB, this research examined whether participation in high school cocurricular and extracurricular programs, relative to nonparticipation, is associated with higher levels of positive self esteem and well–being that extend beyond the high school years and into emerging adulthood. Interpreting these outcomes within a social cognitive framework, the study also considers how such participation may contribute to the psychological foundations that support self–leadership and leadership readiness, even though leadership constructs are not measured directly.

Chapter Three

Methodology

Research Design

The purpose of this quantitative, causal comparative study was to investigate whether high school participation status is associated with perceived self esteem (PSE) and subjective well–being (SWB) in young adulthood. The independent variable was high school participation status with two levels: (a) participation in at least one school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program (e.g., JROTC, fine arts, or athletics) and (b) nonparticipation in any such program. The dependent variables were PSE and SWB, operationalized as total scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale, respectively. Self–efficacy, core self–evaluations, and self–regulation have been empirically linked with agentic functioning, performance outcomes, and self–leadership (Bandura, 1982; Harari et al., 2021; Judge & Bono, 2001). Thus, in the context of this study, these outcomes are interpreted as broad psychological resources that are relevant for self–leadership and leadership readiness in emerging adulthood, even though leadership constructs themselves were not measured directly.

A causal comparative (ex post facto) design was appropriate for examining differences in these dependent variables between naturally occurring groups without experimental manipulation (Gall et al., 2007; Mohajan, 2020). According to Thomann (2020), a causal comparative research design is an appropriate analysis for observing potential causes for a given outcome. As a non–experimental approach, quantitative causal–comparative studies are useful for ascertaining associations between dependent and independent variables in non–randomized groups (Mohajan, 2020). While findings

cannot be used to determine causality between variables, an ex post facto analysis is useful for describing relationships between target populations within each dependent variable (Mohajan, 2020). Within this causal comparative framework, high school participation status functions as an ex post facto grouping variable that distinguishes adolescents who experienced leadership–rich contexts (e.g., JROTC, athletics, fine arts) from those who did not, allowing examination of whether such experiences are associated with differences in these leadership–relevant psychological outcomes (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Hancock et al., 2012; Hansen et al., 2003).

Because this study employed a non–experimental, retrospective design without random assignment to participation conditions, causal inferences cannot be made. Participants self–selected into school–sponsored programs during high school, and pre–existing differences (e.g., motivation, family support, baseline self esteem) may have influenced both participation decisions and later psychological outcomes.

Participants

The participants for this study were selected from a volunteer convenience sample of young adults who either actively participated in at least one school–sponsored JROTC, fine arts, or student athletics program while in high school or did not participate in any such program (nonparticipant control group). Participants were 18–25–year–old high school graduates from a mixture of urban and suburban high schools in the San Antonio, Texas metropolitan area. Young adults in this age range were selected based on both participation and nonparticipation. For many participants, the focal activities (JROTC, athletics, and fine arts) typically involve structured group work, exposure to adult leaders, and opportunities for student responsibility, which are conceptually consistent with

leadership–relevant developmental contexts even though leadership variables were not assessed in this study.

Inclusion Criteria

1. *Graduate from High School* – participants must be young adults that graduated from a public or private high school.
2. *Age Range* – young adults must be between 18 and 25 years old at the time of data collection.
3. *Consent* – participants must provide written informed consent.
4. *Availability to Complete Demographics Questionnaire* – participants must be willing to complete a questionnaire about age, ethnicity, education and familial status, income, and living arrangements.
5. *Availability to Complete Surveys* – participants must be willing and able to complete the self–report instruments: the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

Exclusion Criteria

1. *Incomplete or Invalid Survey Data* – young adults who did not give consent, complete the demographics questionnaire, or complete both the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) were excluded from data analysis.
2. *Participation in Non–School–Affiliated Programs Only* – young adults whose extracurricular participation occurred outside of high school–sponsored programs (e.g., private club sports, community art classes) and not within school–sponsored athletics, arts, or JROTC were excluded.

Recruitment

1. *Institutional Review Board (IRB)* – Marywood University's IRB approval was received (see Appendix C).
2. *Recruitment Contact* – Participants were recruited in person via flyer in various public locations (see Appendix D).
3. *Voluntary Participation* – Emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of participation, and students were assured that neither participation nor nonparticipation would have any effect on grades, participation in school activities, access to resources, or any other negative consequences.
4. *Study Distribution and Follow–Up* – The study was distributed through a QR code with a direct link to the Qualtrics study, located on the recruitment flyer. Given the nature of distribution, no identifying or contact information was collected for follow–up.

Instrumentation and Research Materials

Two instruments were used in this study: the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Appendix A) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Appendix B). Approval was obtained by the Marywood University Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct the research (Appendix C), and a recruitment flyer was created (Appendix D). Each subject was asked to read and sign an Informed Consent (Appendix E), and a demographic questionnaire was administered (Appendix F).

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale is a widely used 10–item Likert scale questionnaire designed to assess global self–worth by measuring both positive and

negative feelings about the self. The RSE is comprised of five positive self esteem and five negative self esteem questions, each requiring one response from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree. Scores range from 4 (Strongly Agree) to 1 (Strongly Disagree). Each item is scored on a 1 to 4 scale. Items 3, 5, 8, 9, and 10 are reversed scored (i.e., 1 becomes 4, 2 becomes 3, 3 becomes 2, and 4 becomes 1). Scores from all 10 items are added to obtain the total score. Scores range from 10 to 40, with higher scores indicating higher global self esteem.

Developed by Rosenberg (1965), the scale is considered a standard tool in social science research on self esteem and psychological well–being. The instrument has proven to have high reliability with Cronbach alpha coefficients consistently greater than 0.75, with studies producing alpha coefficients of 0.81 and 0.87, respectively (García et al., 2019; Rosenberg, 1979).

Satisfaction with Life Scale

The Satisfaction with Life Scale, developed by Diener et al. (1985), is a widely used 5–item instrument designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's satisfaction with life. The SWLS assesses the respondent's overall evaluation of their life circumstances according to their chosen standards, independent of affective states. The instrument requires one of 7 responses, ranging from Strongly Agree (scored as 7) to Strongly Disagree (scored as 1). All responses were scored to obtain a cumulative total ranging from 5 to 35.

The SWLS is psychometrically sound and has been validated across a variety of cultures and age groups. It is designed for use with adults and adolescents and is particularly useful for research in health, education, and psychological well–being

(Diener et al., 2013). Diener et al. (1985) report an internal consistency coefficient of 0.87, indicating excellent reliability. Several researchers have employed the SWLS with similar results and Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.90 (Gori et al., 2020), 0.84 (Şahin et al., 2019), and ranging from 0.84 to 0.87 (Jovanović & Lazić, 2020).

The measurement strategy for this study was intentionally conservative. The survey relied on two brief, psychometrically well–established instruments—the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale—to minimize respondent burden and maximize data quality. Leadership opportunities, leadership behaviors, or leadership self–efficacy were not assessed directly, as self–leadership and leader self–efficacy are distinct constructs best supported by more specific leadership–relevant measures (Harari et al., 2021; McCormick, 2001). Incorporating additional, multi–item leadership measures would have substantially increased survey length and introduced additional constructs requiring separate validation and analytic attention, which was beyond the scope of the present project and its available resources. As a result, leadership was treated in this dissertation as a theoretically grounded context and potential implication of the observed differences rather than as an explicitly measured construct.

Demographic Questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire (Appendix F) was administered to research participants. Participants were prompted to answer various questions regarding their personal backgrounds. The instrument solicited responses for age, gender, race, ethnicity, educational background, present living arrangements, annual household income during high school, and history of high school participation in the activities of interest to this

research study.

Procedures

Marywood University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received to conduct the study (see Appendix C). Recruitment was solicited via flyer (Appendix D) for young adults between 18–25 years of age. Participants that expressed interest in participation were directed to scan a QR code to access the survey hosted by Qualtrics. Upon accessing the survey, participants were directed to a detailed description of the study, requested to provide their informed consent and demographics, and informed that they may exit the study at any time. Participants that did not provide consent were routed to exit the study. Upon acknowledging and providing consent and completing the demographic questionnaire, participants were asked to complete the RSES and SWLS research instruments. No IP addresses were collected, thereby maintaining subject confidentiality.

Both raw and analyzed data were compiled and evaluated using the latest version of SPSS statistical software, which at the time of analysis was SPSS version 31. When not being utilized, all data collected were stored in a secure location with only researcher access and will be retained for three years following completion of the study.

Analysis of Data

Data analysis for this study assessed statistical significance using an alpha level of .05, a conventional threshold widely accepted in psychological and social science research (Field, 2018; Gravetter et al., 2021). This significance level was applied across all inferential analyses, including MANOVA follow–up tests and supplemental chi–square tests, to determine whether observed group differences and associations were

unlikely to have occurred by chance. The use of a .05 alpha level supported comparability with prior research in adolescent and young adult well–being and provided an appropriate standard for evaluating group differences in psychological outcomes (Cohen, 1988; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize participant characteristics and provide an overview of the primary study variables. Measures of central tendency (mean, median) and variability (standard deviation, range) were calculated for the two continuous dependent variables: perceived self esteem (RSES scores) and subjective well–being (SWLS scores). These statistics were used to describe the overall distribution and central tendencies of the outcome variables across participant groups.

Prior to inferential testing, data were screened for violations of statistical assumptions. Normality of the dependent variables was evaluated using visual inspection of histograms and Q–Q plots, as well as the Shapiro–Wilk test. Assumptions specific to multivariate analysis, including multivariate normality, homogeneity of variance/covariance matrices, and absence of problematic multicollinearity between dependent variables, were assessed. For supplemental categorical analyses, assumptions for chi–square tests of independence were evaluated by reviewing expected cell frequencies. When expected cell counts were small in some subgroup categories, results were interpreted cautiously, and conceptually similar categories were considered for consolidation to improve the stability and interpretability of estimates. These preliminary analyses supported the appropriateness of subsequent multivariate procedures.

To address the primary research question, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine whether statistically significant differences exist

between participants who engaged in high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular programs and those who did not, across the combined dependent variables of self esteem and life satisfaction. MANOVA was appropriate for this analysis as it allowed for the simultaneous examination of multiple related outcome variables while controlling for inflation of Type I error. If the overall multivariate test was significant, follow–up univariate analyses and post hoc comparisons were conducted to identify specific group differences. Effect sizes, including partial χ^2 squared for multivariate tests and Cohen's *d* for univariate comparisons, were reported to assess the magnitude of observed effects. In interpreting these effect sizes, the differences in self esteem and life satisfaction between participation groups are understood as differences in broad psychological resources that are theoretically relevant for self–leadership and leadership readiness, consistent with the social cognitive framework described in Chapters 1 and 2, while acknowledging that leadership constructs were not directly modeled in the analyses (Bandura, 1982; Judge & Bono, 2001). Supplemental chi–square tests of independence were also conducted to examine whether participation status differed across demographic subgroups.

Subproblems

Subproblem 1: PSE scores among participants were examined using frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.

Subproblem 2: SWB scores among participants were examined using frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.

Subproblem 3: PSE scores among nonparticipants were examined using frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.

Subproblem 4: SWB scores among nonparticipants were examined using frequency distribution and other descriptive statistics.

Subproblem 5: Group differences in PSE and SWB between participants and nonparticipants were examined using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA).

Supplemental Analysis

Supplemental analyses were conducted to describe the demographic characteristics of the sample and to examine whether participation status was distributed similarly across demographic subgroups. Demographic variables (age, gender, ethnicity, race, education level, living arrangements, and income) were summarized using frequencies and percentages. Crosstabulations were produced for each demographic variable by participation status, and chi–square tests of independence were conducted to evaluate associations between categorical demographics (gender, ethnicity, race, education, living arrangements, and income) and participation status (yes/no). Effect sizes were reported using Phi for 2 × 2 tables and Cramér's V for larger contingency tables. These analyses provided context for interpreting the primary results and offered insight into potential patterns of access to leadership–rich school–sponsored activities across demographic groups (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Simonsen et al., 2014). Activity type was summarized descriptively among participants and was not evaluated with chi–square tests against participation status because "none" is definitional for nonparticipants.

Chapter Four

Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analyses conducted to examine group differences between high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular participation and young adults' perceived self esteem and subjective well–being. The primary outcomes were scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES) and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). Consistent with the analysis plan, an alpha level of .05 was used for all inferential tests. Descriptive statistics are first reported for the sample and key study variables, followed by preliminary assumption checks. Results are then organized by subproblem, concluding with supplemental descriptive and chi–square analyses examining whether participation status differed across demographic subgroups. In keeping with the social cognitive framework, these analyses are interpreted with an eye toward how participation in leadership–rich school contexts (e.g., athletics, fine arts, JROTC) may be associated with broad psychological resources relevant to self–leadership and leadership readiness, while recognizing that leadership constructs were not assessed directly (Bandura, 1982; McCormick, 2001).

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

The final sample consisted of 277 young adults between 18 and 25 years of age who completed all study measures (Appendix G, Table G1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the sample, including gender, ethnicity, race, education level, living arrangements, and income). These characteristics provide important context for understanding which groups of young adults in this sample had access to, and engaged in,

school–sponsored activities that are likely to have offered structured opportunities for responsibility, coordination, and exposure to adult and peer leaders. A slight majority identified as male (*n* = 152, 54.9%), with 125 (45.1%) identifying as female. The mean age of participants was 21.27 (*SD* = 2.24), while the median age was 21 (range = 18–25).

Regarding ethnicity, 92 participants (33.2%) identified as Hispanic or Latino, while 185 (66.8%) identified as not Hispanic or Latino. In terms of race, most participants identified as White (*n* = 192, 69.3%), followed by Black or African American (*n* = 60, 21.7%).

Educationally, approximately one–third of participants reported having a high school diploma (*n* = 94, 33.9%), while 107 (38.6%) reported some college and 76 (27.4%) reported an associate or bachelor's degree.

With respect to living arrangements, just over half of respondents reported living with a parent or guardian (*n* = 144, 52.0%), with the remainder distributed across living with a spouse or partner, living with roommates, living alone, on–campus housing, or other arrangements.

Annual parental/guardian household income was well–dispersed, with most respondents (*n* = 212, 76.5%) reporting income between $50,000 and $149,999 annually.

Participation in high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular activities was reported by 167 participants (60.3%), while 110 participants (39.7%) reported no such participation (see Table 4.1 for summary of participation status). Thus, a substantial majority of respondents experienced at least one high school context that typically involves group–based tasks, performance expectations, and exposure to leadership structures, while a sizable minority did not, providing a meaningful contrast in exposure

to leadership–relevant environments (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Simonsen et al., 2014).

Table 4.1
Participation Status and High School Activity Type

Variable	*n*	Valid Percent
Participation		
Yes	167	60.3
No	110	39.7
Activity Type		
Athletics	75	27.1
Fine Arts	41	14.8
JROTC	51	18.4
None	110	39.7

Preliminary Analyses

Reliability of Study Instruments

Internal consistency reliability (see Table 4.2) was evaluated for the RSES and SWLS. Cronbach's alpha was .64 for the RSES and .60 for the SWLS, indicating modest internal consistency in this sample. Results should therefore be interpreted with appropriate caution, particularly for the SWLS.

Further examination of the SWLS indicated that internal consistency differed by participation group, with weaker inter–item correlations observed among participants relative to nonparticipants. The broader distribution of life satisfaction scores among participants may have contributed to greater heterogeneity in item responses, attenuating internal consistency estimates. Because reliability constrains the magnitude of detectable effects, the significant group differences observed in this study likely represent conservative estimates of the association between participation status and life satisfaction.

Table 4.2
Internal Consistency of Study Measures

Measure	Items	Cronbach's α
Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES)	10	.64
Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS)	5	.60

Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Across the full sample (N = 277), RSES total scores ranged from 17 to 40 (M = 27.42, SD = 4.25; Mdn = 27, range = 17–40), and SWLS total scores ranged from 12 to 35 (M = 20.28, SD = 4.51; Mdn = 19, range = 12–35). Higher scores on both measures reflect higher global self esteem and greater life satisfaction, respectively. In the context of this study, these levels of self esteem and life satisfaction are interpreted as indicators of broad psychological resources that may support self–regulation, persistence, and self–leadership in emerging adulthood, even though leadership outcomes themselves were not measured.

Assumption Checks

Assumption checks were performed prior to conducting and interpreting the multivariate and univariate analyses. Univariate normality was examined separately for each dependent variable (RSES and SWLS Total Scores) within each participation group using Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests, supported by histograms and normal Q–Q plots.

For RSES, Shapiro–Wilk tests were nonsignificant for nonparticipants, p = .067, and significant for participants, p = .001. For SWLS, Shapiro–Wilk tests were significant for nonparticipants, p < .001, and nonsignificant for participants, p = .262. Although some tests were statistically significant, visual inspection of histograms and Q–Q plots indicated approximately symmetric, unimodal distributions without severe skewness or

kurtosis in either group, while the sample sizes were adequate to support the robustness of the subsequent analyses. See Table 4.3 for tests of normality.

Table 4.3
Tests of Normality for Self esteem and Life Satisfaction by Participation Group

Variable	Kolmogorov–Smirnov *D*	*df*	*p*	Shapiro–Wilk *W*	*df*	*p*
RSES Total						
Participation	.133	167	< .001	.970	167	.001
No Participation	.102	110	.007	.978	110	.067
SWLS Total						
Participation	.065	167	.085	.990	167	.262
No Participation	.273	110	< .001	.885	110	< .001

Multivariate normality and multivariate outliers were evaluated using Mahalanobis distance based on RSES and SWLS total scores for multivariate outliers. Mahalanobis distances ranged from 0.01 to 13.61 ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 2.00$), and a critical value of χ^2 (2, $\alpha = .001$) ≈ 13.82 for two predictors at $p < .001$ was used as the cutoff. No cases exceeded this cutoff, indicating that no multivariate outliers were detected (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
Mahalanobis Distance and Multivariate Outliers for RSES and SWLS Total Scores

Panel A. Residuals Statistics for Mahalanobis Distance

Statistic	Value
Minimum	0.01
Maximum	13.61
M	1.99
SD	2.00
N	277

Panel B. Classification of Cases by Multivariate Outliers

Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Inlier	277	100.0	100.0	100.0

Homogeneity of covariance matrices across participation groups was assessed using Box's M test. The test was statistically significant, Box's $M = 77.81$, $F(3, 2{,}839{,}094.19) = 25.72$, $p < .001$, indicating that the assumption of equal variance/covariance matrices was violated. Given this result and the unequal group sizes, Pillai's Trace, which is more robust to violations of covariance homogeneity, was selected as the primary multivariate test statistic for the MANOVA (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5
Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices for RSES and SWLS Totals

Test	Value
Box's *M*	77.81
F	25.72
df1	3
df2	2,839,094.19
p	< .001

Note: Dependent variables: RSES Total, SWLS Total. Grouping variable: Participation (Yes / No). The test evaluates the null hypothesis that the variance/covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

Equality of error variances for each dependent variable was examined using Levene's test. Based on the mean, the tests were significant for both RSES, $F(1, 275) = 11.07$, $p < .001$, and SWLS, $F(1, 275) = 63.11$, $p < .001$, suggesting heterogeneity of variances between participation groups (see Table 4.6). Because Levene's tests indicated heterogeneity of variances, robust tests of equality of means (Welch and Brown–Forsythe) were examined for each dependent variable. Results remained statistically significant for both self esteem and life satisfaction under Welch's correction (RSES: $p < .001$; SWLS: $p < .001$), indicating that the observed group differences were not dependent on the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

Table 4.6
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances by Participation Group

Dependent Variable	Levene Statistic	*df1*	*df2*	*p*
RSES				
M	11.07	1	275	< .001
Mdn	8.06	1	275	.005
Mdn (adj)	8.06	1	258.60	.005
Trimmed *M*	10.93	1	275	.001
SWLS				
M	63.11	1	275	< .001
Mdn	61.52	1	275	< .001
Mdn (adj)	61.52	1	222.25	< .001
Trimmed *M*	65.01	1	275	< .001

Note: The dependent variables (RSES, SWLS) are total scores. Tests are based on the general linear model with Participation (Yes, No) as the between–subjects factor.

Given the significant Box's *M* and Levene's tests, Pillai's Trace was emphasized as the primary multivariate statistic due to its robustness to covariance heterogeneity, and the MANOVA and follow–up ANOVAs were interpreted with appropriate caution. Finally, the bivariate association between self esteem and life satisfaction was examined using Pearson's correlation. Across the full sample, RSES and SWLS were significantly and moderately correlated, $r(275) = .43$, $p < .001$, indicating that higher self esteem scores were associated with higher life satisfaction.

Subproblem Analyses

Subproblem One

What are the perceived self esteem scores of young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze RSES scores among participants. For the group reporting participation ($n = 167$), mean self esteem scores were 28.27 ($SD = 4.51$) while the median was 29 (range = 18 – 40). Scores were clustered in the upper midrange of the scale, consistent with the overall pattern of approximate normality as described. These results indicate that, on average, young adults who reported high school

cocurricular or extracurricular involvement endorsed moderately high levels of global self esteem.

Subproblem Two

What are the subjective well–being scores (life satisfaction) of young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?

Subjective well–being among participants was summarized using SWLS total scores. For the participation group (n = 167), the mean SWLS score was 22.50 (SD = 4.35), while the median was 22 (range = 13 – 35). These findings suggest that young adults who engaged in cocurricular or extracurricular activities in high school reported moderately high satisfaction with life in young adulthood.

Subproblem Three

What are the perceived self esteem scores of young adults who did not participate in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?

Nonparticipants' (n = 110) the mean RSES score was 26.14 (SD = 3.45), while the median was 26 (range = 17 – 35). The distribution was relatively compact with lower variability than the participation group, indicating somewhat lower mean self esteem among nonparticipants. Overall, young adults without high school cocurricular or extracurricular participation reported self esteem in the moderate to moderately high range, albeit at a lower mean level than their participating counterparts.

Subproblem Four

What are the subjective well–being scores of young adults who did not participate in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program?

Among nonparticipants (n = 110), the mean SWLS score was 16.91 (SD = 1.92), while the median was 17 (range = 12 – 20). The distribution was relatively constrained, with most scores in the midrange of the scale and limited dispersion, as reflected by the smaller standard deviation relative to the participation group. These results indicate that young adults without prior cocurricular or extracurricular involvement reported somewhat lower levels of life satisfaction than participants.

Subproblem Five

What are the differences between young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program and those who did not participate on perceived self esteem and subjective well–being?

A one–way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted with participation status (participant vs. nonparticipant) as the independent variable and RSES and SWLS total scores as the two dependent variables.

Multivariate Results

Using Pillai's Trace as the primary statistic due to violation of the homogeneity of covariance assumption, the multivariate effect of participation was statistically significant, Pillai's Trace = .37, $F(2, 274) = 80.51$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .37$ (see Table 4.7). Participation status was associated with a large proportion of multivariate variance in the combined dependent variables. Given the significant multivariate effect, follow–up univariate tests were conducted to examine group differences on each dependent variable separately.

Table 4.7
Multivariate MANOVA Results

Effect	Value	*F*	*df1*	*df2*	*p*	partial η^2

Participation						
Pillai's Trace	.37	80.51	2	274	< .001	.37

Univariate Follow–Up Tests

Follow–up univariate tests are presented in Table 4.8. Tests of between–subjects effects were conducted for each dependent variable using the general linear model. Based on the group means and standard deviations, Cohen's *d* values, computed such that positive values indicate higher scores among participants, were approximately 0.52 for self esteem and 1.56 for life satisfaction, respectively. Participation status had a significant effect on self esteem, $F(1, 275) = 17.76$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$, with participants ($M = 28.27$, $SD = 4.51$) reporting higher self esteem than nonparticipants ($M = 26.14$, $SD = 3.45$). The corresponding effect size (Cohen's $d \approx 0.52$) reflected a medium difference favoring the participation group. Participation status also had a significant effect on life satisfaction, $F(1, 275) = 161.35$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .37$. Participants ($M = 22.50$, $SD = 4.34$) reported substantially higher life satisfaction than nonparticipants ($M = 16.91$, $SD = 1.92$). The standardized mean difference (Cohen's $d \approx 1.56$) indicated a very large difference in life satisfaction scores between participation groups.

Taken together, these findings support the conclusion that young adults with prior high school cocurricular or extracurricular involvement report meaningfully higher levels of both perceived self esteem and subjective well–being as compared to peers who did not participate in such activities, with particularly pronounced differences in life satisfaction. Thus, the null hypothesis, there is no multivariate difference in the combined dependent variables (self esteem and life satisfaction) between young adults who participated in a high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular program and those

who did not, was rejected. There were significant differences between the groups on both perceived self esteem and subjective well–being.

Table 4.8
Univariate Tests of Between–Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable	*df1*	*df2*	*F*	*p*	partial η^2	Cohen's *d*
RSES Total Participation	1	275	17.76	< .001	.06	0.52
SWLS Total Participation	1	275	161.35	< .001	.37	1.56

Note: F–tests evaluate the effect of Participation (participant vs nonparticipant) on each dependent variable.

Supplemental Analyses

Demographic Characteristics and Program Participation

Supplemental descriptive analyses were conducted to further characterize the sample and to examine how high school–sponsored participation was distributed across demographic subgroups (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2 for overall demographics and Appendices H through O for detailed crosstabulations). Frequencies and percentages were computed for gender, ethnicity, race, education, living arrangements, and income. Chi–square tests of independence were conducted to evaluate whether participation status (Yes/No) was associated with gender, ethnicity, race, education level, living arrangements, and income, and effect sizes were reported using Phi for 2 × 2 tables and Cramér's V for larger contingency tables. Several contingency tables (particularly race, living arrangements, and income) contained sparse expected cell counts; therefore, chi–square results for these variables were interpreted cautiously, with emphasis placed on descriptive patterns and effect–size estimates rather than *p* values alone. Activity type (athletics, fine arts, JROTC) was summarized descriptively among participants to characterize the distribution of program involvement and was not evaluated with

inferential tests because nonparticipants were, by definition, coded in the “none” category.

Participation rates were very similar for men and women. Among male respondents, 60.5% reported participation in at least one school–sponsored activity, compared to 60.0% of female respondents; approximately two in five students in each gender group reported no participation (39.5% of males, 40.0% of females). The association between gender and participation was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 277) = 0.01$, $p = .929$, $\varphi = .01$.

A comparable pattern emerged by ethnicity: 62.0% of Hispanic/Latino respondents and 59.5% of non–Hispanic/Latino respondents reported participation, indicating that high school–sponsored involvement was common across both groups. The association between ethnicity and participation was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 277) = 0.16$, $p = .689$, $\varphi = .02$.

Participation was also broadly distributed across racial groups. A majority of respondents in each racial category reported participation, ranging from 57.1% of Asian students to 70.0% of Black/African American students; 66.7% of Native Hawaiian/Other Asian Pacific Islander students and 57.3% of White students reported participation, with only one respondent in the “prefer not to say” category, who also reported participation. Although these percentages suggest somewhat higher participation among Black/African American students, the association between race and participation was not statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 277) = 3.88$, $p = .422$, Cramér’s V = .12; however, expected cell counts were small in multiple categories, and results should be interpreted cautiously.

Educational attainment was significantly associated with participation status, $\chi^2(3, N = 277) = 8.15$, $p = .043$, Cramér's V = .17 (small effect). Among respondents whose highest credential was a high school diploma, 56.4% reported participation in at least one school–sponsored activity, compared to 68.2% of those with some college but no degree and 76.9% of those with a bachelor's degree. Respondents with an associate degree showed a more even split, with 49.2% reporting participation and 50.8% reporting no participation. Overall, participation was most prevalent among students with some college or a bachelor's degree.

Living arrangements were not significantly associated with participation, $\chi^2(6, N = 277) = 9.70$, $p = .138$, Cramér's V = .19; expected cell counts were small in several categories. Students living with parents or guardians and those living with roommates had the highest participation rates (65.3% and 60.0%, respectively). In contrast, participation was less common among respondents living with a spouse/partner (45.5%), living alone (42.9%), or living in on–campus housing (40.0%). Very few respondents selected "other" living arrangements, all of whom reported participation.

Participation was observed across the full range of household income levels; however, income was not significantly associated with participation, $\chi^2(6, N = 277) = 6.26$, $p = .395$, Cramér's V = .15; expected cell counts were small in some categories. Roughly two–thirds of respondents in the $25,000–$49,999, $50,000–$74,999, and $75,000–$99,999 categories reported participation (62.2%, 64.8%, and 64.8%, respectively). Participation rates were somewhat lower among respondents in the lowest (< $25,000; 33.3%) and higher income categories ($100,000–$149,999, 49.1%; >

$150,000, 50.0%), although these groups included relatively few cases. Among those who preferred not to report income, 71.4% reported participation.

Finally, among students who participated in at least one school–sponsored activity (n = 167), athletics was the most frequently endorsed activity type: 44.9% of participants reported athletics, 24.6% reported fine arts, and 30.5% reported JROTC. Nonparticipants (n = 110) were, by definition, not included in the activity–type breakdown. Activity type was therefore summarized descriptively to characterize the distribution of athletics, fine arts, and JROTC among participants, rather than analyzed as an inferential association with participation status.

Taken together, the crosstabulation patterns suggest that access to, and engagement in, school–sponsored programs was relatively widespread across gender and ethnicity, with some variation by race, educational attainment, living arrangements, and income. In the context of the present study, this means that opportunities to experience leadership–rich environments, such as teams, performance groups, and JROTC units, were not confined to a narrow demographic slice of the sample but were nonetheless uneven in certain subgroups (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Simonsen et al., 2014). These descriptive trends are important for interpreting the main findings: they imply that the observed differences in self esteem and life satisfaction between participants and nonparticipants may intersect with patterns of opportunity and constraint in adolescents' access to developmental and leadership–relevant experiences. Future work will be needed to examine these equity questions more explicitly.

Chapter Five

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine whether participation in high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular activities is associated with differences in perceived self esteem and subjective well–being among young adults ages 18–25. Self esteem was operationalized as total scores on the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (RSES), and subjective well–being was operationalized as total scores on the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). The independent variable was participation status in high school–sponsored cocurricular or extracurricular programs (participant vs. nonparticipant). The sample consisted of 277 young adults recruited through in–person outreach, of which 167 reported high school participation in at least one school–sponsored activity and 110 reported no such participation.

Guided by the primary research question and five subproblems, the study employed descriptive statistics, preliminary reliability and assumption checks, and a one–way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with RSES and SWLS total scores as the dependent variables and participation status as the independent variable. An alpha level of .05 was used for all inferential analyses. Effect sizes were reported using partial χ^2 squared for multivariate and univariate tests and Cohen's *d* for pairwise group differences. Within the broader social cognitive framework guiding this dissertation, these outcomes are interpreted as broad psychological resources that are theoretically relevant for self–leadership and leadership readiness in emerging adulthood, particularly when considered in relation to participation in leadership–rich school–sponsored contexts

such as athletics, fine arts, and JROTC, even though leadership constructs themselves were not measured directly (McCormick, 2001).

Discussion

Subproblems 1–4

Subproblems 1–4 examined the distribution of perceived self esteem and subjective well–being scores among young adults who participated in high school–sponsored activities and those who did not. For participants, descriptive statistics indicated moderately high levels of both self esteem and life satisfaction. Mean RSES scores were above the scale midpoint and displayed moderate variability, suggesting that most young adults with a history of school–sponsored involvement viewed themselves in generally positive terms rather than struggling with low self–worth (Kort–Butler & Hagewen, 2011; Feldman et al., 2021). Likewise, mean SWLS scores fell in a range typically interpreted as average to slightly above–average satisfaction with life, indicating that, as a group, participants were functioning within an adaptive, rather than distressed, band of subjective well–being. In combination, these patterns portray high school–sponsored participants as a relatively psychologically well–adjusted subgroup of emerging adults, consistent with frameworks that view structured activities as contexts that support positive development.

Nonparticipants also reported self esteem scores above the lower range of the RSES, indicating that a lack of high school involvement in cocurricular or extracurricular programs does not necessarily correspond to low global self–worth. However, their mean self esteem scores were noticeably lower than those of participants. This pattern suggests that while many nonparticipants functioned within a broadly normative range, they may

have had fewer opportunities to build or affirm positive self–perceptions through structured school–based roles and achievements. This moderate positive association is consistent with the view that the way young adults feel about themselves and how they evaluate their lives are intertwined foundations for later functioning in roles that require initiative, responsibility, and influence, underscoring PSE and SWB as leadership–relevant mediators (Harari et al., 2021; Judge & Bono, 2001).

The most pronounced differences between groups emerged for life satisfaction. Nonparticipants' mean SWLS scores, while not in the lowest possible range, were markedly lower than those of participants and fell closer to levels often interpreted as below–average satisfaction with life. By contrast, participants' SWLS scores indicated substantially higher perceived life satisfaction. Higher life satisfaction in this group can be interpreted as an indication that, on average, former participants perceive their current circumstances and trajectories in relatively favorable terms, which may bolster the motivation and psychological energy required to take on leadership–relevant challenges (Larson, 2000). Taken together, the descriptive findings for Subproblems 1 through 4 suggest that high school–sponsored participation is associated with a more favorable profile of psychological well–being in young adulthood, particularly in terms of how individuals evaluate the quality and meaning of their lives during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Diener et al., 1985; Pavot & Diener, 2008).

From a developmental and leadership perspective, these descriptive patterns suggest that young adults who spent time in structured, school–sponsored contexts, where opportunities to observe, practice, and internalize leadership–relevant roles are common, may carry forward a stronger base of self–regard and life satisfaction into emerging

adulthood (Kort–Butler & Hagewen, 2011). Conversely, nonparticipants' comparatively lower self esteem and life satisfaction may reflect fewer opportunities for structured feedback, recognition, and belonging in school settings, which are key ingredients in many contemporary models of youth leadership development, even though leadership outcomes were not directly assessed in this study. In practical terms, this lower satisfaction with life may translate into less optimism or fewer perceived opportunities, which could have downstream implications for how readily these young adults engage in roles that demand initiative and leadership (Kort–Butler et al, 2025).

Subproblem 5 and Hypotheses

Subproblem 5 and the corresponding hypotheses focused on whether there were statistically significant differences between participants and nonparticipants on the combined and individual dependent variables of self esteem and life satisfaction. The significant Pillai's Trace indicated that participation status is meaningfully related to the joint distribution of RSES and SWLS scores. Rejecting the multivariate null hypothesis suggests that high school–sponsored involvement is associated with a distinct psychological profile in young adulthood, rather than trivial or isolated differences on a single outcome. Within the social cognitive framework guiding this study, these findings are most appropriately interpreted as evidence that participation status is associated with differential exposure to structured developmental contexts that may shape self–evaluations and life appraisals, rather than as direct indicators of leadership competence or causal program effects.

The univariate follow–up analyses clarified the specific nature of these differences. For self esteem, participants' higher mean RSES scores and the medium

effect size indicate that school–sponsored involvement is associated with higher global self–worth. Participation may provide opportunities for mastery, recognition, social support, and identity exploration that collectively reinforce positive self–evaluations. These experiences could include receiving feedback from coaches, teachers, or peers, assuming leadership roles, and achieving goals in structured settings.

For life satisfaction, the magnitude of the group difference was particularly striking. The large effect size suggests that young adults who were involved in high school–sponsored activities are not only associated with greater life satisfaction but also demonstrate a pattern of a qualitatively higher levels of well–being than their nonparticipating peers, consistent with interpretation ranges and guidelines provided by Diener et al. (1985). Participation contexts may provide experiences (e.g., belonging, recognition, structured challenge) that are theoretically linked to enduring benefits, such as a stronger sense of belonging, more robust peer networks, broader skill sets, and perceived competence, that extend beyond high school and shape how individuals appraise their lives during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000).

In combination, these findings support rejection of the null hypotheses stating that no significant differences would exist between participants and nonparticipants on self esteem, life satisfaction, and the combined multivariate outcome. The pattern of results is consistent with the conceptual framework that positions cocurricular and extracurricular involvement as a developmental context that can contribute positively to psychosocial adjustment and protective effects for mental health and mood (O'Donnell et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Although leadership constructs were not measured directly, these multivariate and univariate results can be interpreted within the social cognitive

framework as evidence that exposure to leadership–rich school contexts, such as athletic teams, performance ensembles, and JROTC units, is associated with higher levels of global self esteem and markedly higher life satisfaction in emerging adulthood. From a developmental perspective, these differences suggest that participation in such programs may contribute to a reservoir of psychological resources that are relevant for later self–leadership and leadership readiness, even as causal inferences and specific leadership outcomes remain beyond the scope of the present design (Hancock et al., 2012; Simonsen et al., 2014).

Connections to Literature

The results of this study align with a substantial body of literature indicating that structured school–based activities can serve as an important developmental setting for adolescents and young adults (Kort–Butler & Hagewen, 2011; O'Donnell et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Prior research has documented that participation in athletics, fine arts, leadership organizations, and other school–sponsored programs is associated with higher self esteem, stronger school attachment, and positive psychosocial outcomes. In line with positive youth development models, the present findings suggest that activity contexts offering opportunities for contribution, skill–building, and supportive relationships may be especially beneficial (Lerner, 2005; Lerner et al., 2005; Bowers et al., 2015; Geldhof et al., 2013). The finding that participants reported higher self esteem than nonparticipants parallels prior work linking structured extracurricular involvement to more positive self–views and developmental assets (Kort–Butler & Hagewen, 2011; Feldman et al., 2021; Lerner, 2005).

The moderate positive correlation observed between self esteem and life satisfaction aligns with research and theoretical models demonstrating that global self–worth is a robust correlate of subjective well–being, conceptualizing self esteem as a foundational personal resource that shapes how individuals interpret life events and evaluate their overall quality of life (Kurnaz et al., 2020; Szcześniak et al., 2022; Du et al., 2017). At the same time, the correlation is far from perfect, underscoring that self esteem and life satisfaction are related but distinct constructs. This distinction reinforces the value of examining both outcomes simultaneously, as the MANOVA approach did in this study.

The findings also resonate with ecological and developmental perspectives that emphasize the importance of proximal contexts, such as schools, in providing opportunities for competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Cocurricular and extracurricular programs often require sustained commitment, collaboration with peers, and interaction with adult mentors. These characteristics may foster skills and relational experiences that continue to shape young adults' self–views and overall sense of well–being beyond the high school years. In leadership–oriented terms, the present findings imply that structured school experiences that embed adolescents in roles with responsibility, feedback, and mentorship may simultaneously build personal resources that matter for both psychological well–being and future leadership readiness, even though leadership outcomes were not examined directly in this study (Kim & Holyoke, 2022).

Implications for Practice

The results of this study have several implications for educators, school leaders, and practitioners who design and support school–sponsored programs. First, the robust differences in life satisfaction between participants and nonparticipants suggest that cocurricular and extracurricular opportunities may function as a protective factor for psychological well–being in young adulthood. School districts and administrators should therefore view such programs not merely as enrichments or optional add–ons, but as integral components of a comprehensive approach to student development.

Second, the moderate group differences in self esteem highlight the potential value of intentional programming that emphasizes mastery experiences, constructive feedback, and inclusive team cultures. Coaches, directors, and faculty sponsors can enhance the developmental influence of their programs by creating environments that recognize effort, normalize setbacks, and provide structured opportunities for students to assume leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to group goals.

Third, the findings underscore the importance of equitable access to high school–sponsored activities. If participation is associated with higher self esteem and life satisfaction years later, barriers such as cost, transportation, scheduling conflicts, or restrictive eligibility criteria may have long–term consequences for students who are unable to participate. School leaders should systematically examine participation patterns across demographic groups and consider strategies to broaden access, including fee waivers, late bus routes, flexible scheduling, and targeted outreach to underrepresented students.

Implications for Policy

At the policy level, the results support continued investment in, and protection of, school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs. In contexts where budget constraints or accountability pressures lead to reductions in non–core offerings, this study suggests that such cuts may inadvertently erode a key context for promoting long–term psychological well–being. Policymakers at the district and state levels should consider the broader developmental benefits of these programs when making funding and staffing decisions.

In addition, policies that frame cocurricular and extracurricular engagement as part of a holistic approach to student success may help shift the narrative from viewing such programs as tangential to academic achievement toward recognizing them as complementary supports. Integrating measures of student engagement and well–being into school improvement plans and accountability frameworks could further reinforce the importance of providing robust, inclusive extracurricular offerings. Taken together, these results support viewing high school–sponsored programs not merely as enrichment but as potential components of a broader mental health and well–being strategy (Feldman et al., 2021; O'Donnell et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). Consistent with positive youth development perspectives, programs that emphasize high–quality adult–youth relationships, a sense of belonging, and opportunities for agency may be particularly likely to yield psychosocial benefits (Lerner, 2005; Geldhof et al., 2013; Dymnicki et al., 2013).

Limitations

This study was subject to several limitations that may impact the validity and generalizability of the findings. First, all constructs were assessed using self–report

instruments. Self–report surveys are vulnerable to biases such as social desirability and inaccurate self–perception, which may distort reported levels of self esteem and subjective well–being. In addition, participation status and activity type were assessed retrospectively among young adults reflecting on their high school experiences, introducing the possibility of recall bias. Participants may have misremembered the extent, timing, or nature of their involvement, and the study did not capture intensity, duration, or quality of participation. These unmeasured dimensions of involvement could moderate the association between school–sponsored activities and later outcomes but could not be examined here.

Second, the research employed a cross–sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time. This approach precludes causal inference regarding the relationship between participation in cocurricular or extracurricular programs and subsequent levels of self esteem or subjective well–being (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Denault & Déry, 2015). Without longitudinal data, it is not possible to determine whether high school participation contributed to higher self esteem and life satisfaction, or whether students with more favorable psychological profiles were simply more likely to seek out and remain in school–sponsored activities. Selection effects and unobserved third variables therefore remain plausible alternative explanations for the observed group differences, and the design does not permit disentangling pre–existing psychological advantages from potential developmental experiences associated with participation.

Third, sampling and generalizability represent important limitations. The sample was obtained through voluntary online recruitment and reflects young adults from a particular geographic and cultural context who had access to and interest in an internet–

based survey. As such, the demographic composition of the sample represents individuals who chose to respond and met inclusion criteria, rather than a probability sample of all young adults. Several demographic subgroups (e.g., certain racial/ethnic categories and income levels) were represented by relatively small cell sizes, which makes the corresponding percentage estimates and chi–square statistics less stable. Generalizations to other populations, regions, or age groups should therefore be made cautiously.

The scope of the study was also limited to school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular programs. Community–based, faith–based, or informal activities, which may also shape self esteem and well–being, were not assessed. Moreover, the primary analyses treated participation as a dichotomous variable (any vs. no school–sponsored participation) and did not differentiate among activity types in the multivariate models. Variations in the structure, climate, and developmental affordances of programs (e.g., competitive athletics vs. fine arts vs. JROTC) were therefore not modeled, even though such differences could influence the strength or form of associations with self esteem and life satisfaction.

Relatedly, although the theoretical framing of this dissertation highlights leadership–relevant experiences and implications of participation, the study did not include direct measures of leadership opportunities, leadership behaviors, or leadership self–efficacy. Leadership in this project therefore functions as a contextual and interpretive lens: JROTC, athletics, and fine arts are leadership–rich environments, and self esteem and life satisfaction are conceptualized as foundational resources for self–leadership and leadership readiness (Harari et al., 2021). A more rigorous examination of leadership outcomes would require the inclusion of validated leadership measures and

sufficient sample size to support more complex models, which was beyond the scope of the present dissertation.

Measurement and analytic limitations should also be acknowledged. Internal consistency estimates for the RSES and SWLS in this sample were lower than those typically reported in the literature (Cronbach's $\alpha = .64$ for RSES and $\alpha = .60$ for SWLS). Although these values are acceptable for exploratory work, they suggest that measurement error may have attenuated some relationships and reduced the precision of effect size estimates. In addition, several MANOVA assumptions were violated, including homogeneity of covariance matrices and homogeneity of error variances. Robust statistics (Pillai's Trace) were used, and effect sizes were large, but these violations, although addressed through robust statistics (Pillai's Trace and Welch tests), underscore the importance of replication in independent samples using alternative analytic strategies (e.g., generalized linear models or propensity–score approaches).

Finally, the study did not statistically control for a range of potential confounding variables that are known to be related to self esteem and subjective well–being, such as family climate, peer relationships, mental health history, or broader school and neighborhood characteristics. Although demographic covariates were described descriptively, they were not included as covariates in the primary MANOVA. It is therefore possible that some of the observed differences between participants and nonparticipants reflect broader contextual or individual differences rather than associations uniquely attributable to school–sponsored participation. Taken together, these limitations highlight the need for caution in interpreting the findings and underscore the importance of future research using longitudinal, multi–informant designs and more

nuanced measures of participation to clarify causal processes and boundary conditions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Building on the findings and limitations of this study, several directions for future research are warranted. First, longitudinal designs that follow students from high school into emerging adulthood are needed to clarify whether the pattern observed here reflects selection effects, socialization effects, or both (Feldman et al., 2021; O'Donnell et al., 2024; Han et al., 2025). Tracking students over time, with repeated assessments of participation and adjustment, would help disentangle whether participation in school–sponsored activities contributes to subsequent self esteem and life satisfaction or whether students with more favorable psychological profiles are simply more likely to participate and remain involved.

Second, future work should examine the role of activity characteristics, including type, intensity, duration, quality of climate, and leadership opportunities, in shaping self esteem and life satisfaction. It is plausible that different activities (e.g., athletics, fine arts, JROTC) offer distinct developmental affordances and impose different demands. Disaggregating outcomes by activity type, considering multi–activity participation, and incorporating indicators of program quality would deepen understanding of how, and for whom, participation is most beneficial.

Third, studies using more diverse and representative samples are needed to test the generalizability of the present findings. Research that samples across geographic regions, school contexts (e.g., urban, suburban, rural), and underrepresented demographic groups, and that includes both school–sponsored and community–based activities, would help determine whether the observed associations hold across varied contexts. Attention

to equity in access and outcomes will be important for identifying whether cocurricular and extracurricular programs mitigate or exacerbate existing disparities in psychological well–being.

Fourth, improvements in measurement and design could strengthen inferences about the links between participation and adjustment. Future studies should employ self esteem and well–being measures with higher internal consistency in the target population, consider multi–informant approaches (e.g., reports from parents or mentors), and include key covariates such as family climate, peer relationships, and mental health history. Analytic strategies such as propensity–score methods, multilevel models, or structural equation modeling could be used to better account for selection effects and complex pathways, particularly if future studies incorporate validated measures of leadership self–efficacy, leadership identity, and leadership behavior alongside self esteem and life satisfaction.

Finally, mixed–methods approaches that integrate quantitative outcomes with qualitative data from students, alumni, and program sponsors could illuminate the specific mechanisms through which high school–sponsored activities influence self esteem and life satisfaction. Interviews and focus groups could capture subjective experiences of belonging, challenge, recognition, and growth that are not easily represented by standardized scale scores and could help explain why certain activities or program features are particularly protective or promotive for emerging adults.

Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between high school–sponsored cocurricular and extracurricular participation and two key indicators of psychological functioning, self

esteem and subjective well–being, among young adults. Across multiple analyses, individuals who reported participation in at least one school–sponsored activity during high school demonstrated moderately higher self esteem and substantially higher life satisfaction in emerging adulthood than their nonparticipating peers. These differences were not only statistically significant but also accompanied by medium–to–large effect sizes, suggesting that the gap between participants and nonparticipants is meaningful in practical terms rather than trivial. Taken together, the findings add to a growing body of evidence that structured, school–based activities are associated with more positive psychological profiles in the years following high school.

At the same time, the study's limitations, particularly its cross–sectional design, reliance on retrospective self–report, modest internal consistency for the RSES and SWLS in this sample, and violations of some MANOVA assumptions, require cautious interpretation. The present data cannot determine whether participation itself caused improvements in self esteem and life satisfaction, or whether students with more favorable psychological characteristics were more likely both to participate and to sustain higher levels of well–being over time. Unmeasured contextual and individual factors, such as family climate, peer networks, and mental health history, may also have contributed to the observed group differences. As such, the results are best understood as evidence of robust associations rather than definitive proof of causal effects.

Even with these caveats, the pattern that emerged is theoretically and practically consequential. Within the context studied, high school–sponsored participation appears to function as a marker, and potentially a mechanism, of more positive adjustment in emerging adulthood. For educators and school leaders, this underscores the importance of

maintaining and expanding a diverse portfolio of cocurricular and extracurricular programs that are accessible to students across demographic and socioeconomic backgrounds. For policymakers, the findings support viewing such programs not merely as ancillary enhancements to academic curricula but as developmental contexts that may bolster how young people see themselves and evaluate their lives. For researchers, the study highlights the need for longitudinal, multi–method work capable of tracing how the timing, type, and quality of participation shape trajectories of self esteem and subjective well–being.

In sum, this study suggests that the experiences young people have in organized, school–sponsored activities during high school are linked to how they feel about themselves and their lives several years later. While additional research is needed to clarify mechanisms and boundary conditions, the present findings point toward a simple but important implication: when schools create and support high–quality opportunities for meaningful participation, they may be investing not only in students' present engagement but also in their longer–term psychological well–being. From a leadership perspective, these findings suggest that the ways schools structure and support opportunities for participation may also play an important role in shaping the psychological resources that young adults draw upon when they assume leadership and self–directed roles in higher education, work, military, and community contexts (Abu Al–Kian, 2025).

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Appendix A

Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement by selecting the number that best represents your response.

Scale

1 = Strongly Agree
2 = Agree
3 = Disagree
4 = Strongly Disagree

Questions

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

6. I certainly feel useless at times.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I'm a person of worth.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

9. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.
   ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.
    ○ Strongly Agree ○ Agree ○ Disagree ○ Strongly Disagree

Reference

Rosenberg, M. (1979). *Conceiving the self*. Basic Books.

Note: This scale is in the public domain and may be reproduced for education or research purposes.

Appendix B

Satisfaction with Life Scale

Instructions: Below are five statements you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1–7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

Scale

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Slightly Disagree
4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree
5 = Slightly Agree
6 = Agree
7 = Strongly Agree

Questions

1. In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
    - ○ Strongly Disagree
    - ○ Disagree
    - ○ Slightly Disagree
    - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - ○ Slightly Agree
    - ○ Agree
    - ○ Strongly Agree

2. The conditions of my life are excellent.
    - ○ Strongly Disagree
    - ○ Disagree
    - ○ Slightly Disagree
    - ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Slightly Agree
○ Agree
○ Strongly Agree

3. I am satisfied with my life.
   ○ Strongly Disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Slightly Disagree
   ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   ○ Slightly Agree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

4. So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life.
   ○ Strongly Disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Slightly Disagree
   ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   ○ Slightly Agree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

5. If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.
   ○ Strongly Disagree
   ○ Disagree
   ○ Slightly Disagree
   ○ Neither Agree nor Disagree
   ○ Slightly Agree
   ○ Agree
   ○ Strongly Agree

Reference

Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The Satisfaction with Life Scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*(1), 71–75. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa4901_13

Note: This scale is in the public domain and may be reproduced for education or research purposes.

Appendix C

IRB Approval

MARYWOOD UNIVERSITY
EXEMPT REVIEW COMMITTEE
Immaculata Hall, 2300 Adams Avenue, Scranton, PA 18509

DATE:	November 4, 2025
TO:	Andrew Fenwick
FROM:	Marywood University Exempt Review Committee
STUDY TITLE:	[2331027-2] *The mediating effects of high school cocurricular and extracurricular activities on the positive self-esteem and subjective well-being of young adults*
MU ERC #:	
SUBMISSION TYPE:	Amendment/Modification
ACTION:	APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE:	November 4, 2025
CHECK IN DUE DATE:	November 4, 2026
REVIEW TYPE:	Exempt Review
EXEMPT CATEGORY:	45 CFR 46.104 (d)()()

Dear Mr./Mrs/Ms./Dr. Fenwick:

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials to your Exemption Request for this research study. Marywood University's ERC has **APPROVED** your submission. The project meets federal exemption criteria and involves minimal risk to subjects participating in the research. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a complete description of the study and assurance of subject understanding.

We have applied the ERC's approval stamp to the following documents, which have been uploaded with this letter in IRBNet. The stamp must appear on versions shared with subjects wherever possible. If it is not feasible to use the stamped versions online (e.g. some email

systems or survey platforms), please ensure that the language in the transmitted versions is identical to the stamped versions.

1. Informed Consent Form
2. Advertisement

Please also note that:

- **CLOSURE REPORTING:** Upon completion of the research, you must file a closure report form via IRBNet.
- **CHECK IN REPORTING:** While there is no expiration date for exempted studies, the ERC maintains oversight of open projects. If activities will continue beyond your approval's one-year anniversary of __11/04/26____, file a check in form by that date.
- **RECORDS RETENTION:** While there is no minimum retention period for exempted studies, you must retain records for the length of time stated in your application and informed consent form.
- **DEVIATION, UNANTICIPATED PROBLEM OR SERIOUS ADVERSE EVENT REPORTING:** If any of these events occur, you must file the appropriate form immediately via IRBNet.
- **REVISION REQUESTS:** If you decide to make procedural or document changes to your approved project, you must file a revision request form for review and approval prior to implementation, except when necessary to eliminate apparent, immediate hazards to the subjects. In hazardous situations, you must file the form immediately afterward.

Forms for the reports mentioned above may be found on the ERC's website or in IRBNet's Forms library. The library appears after you begin a follow-up package within your existing project and then click the Designer button on the left menu, followed by the blue "Need forms" link on the main screen (opens library under Step 1).

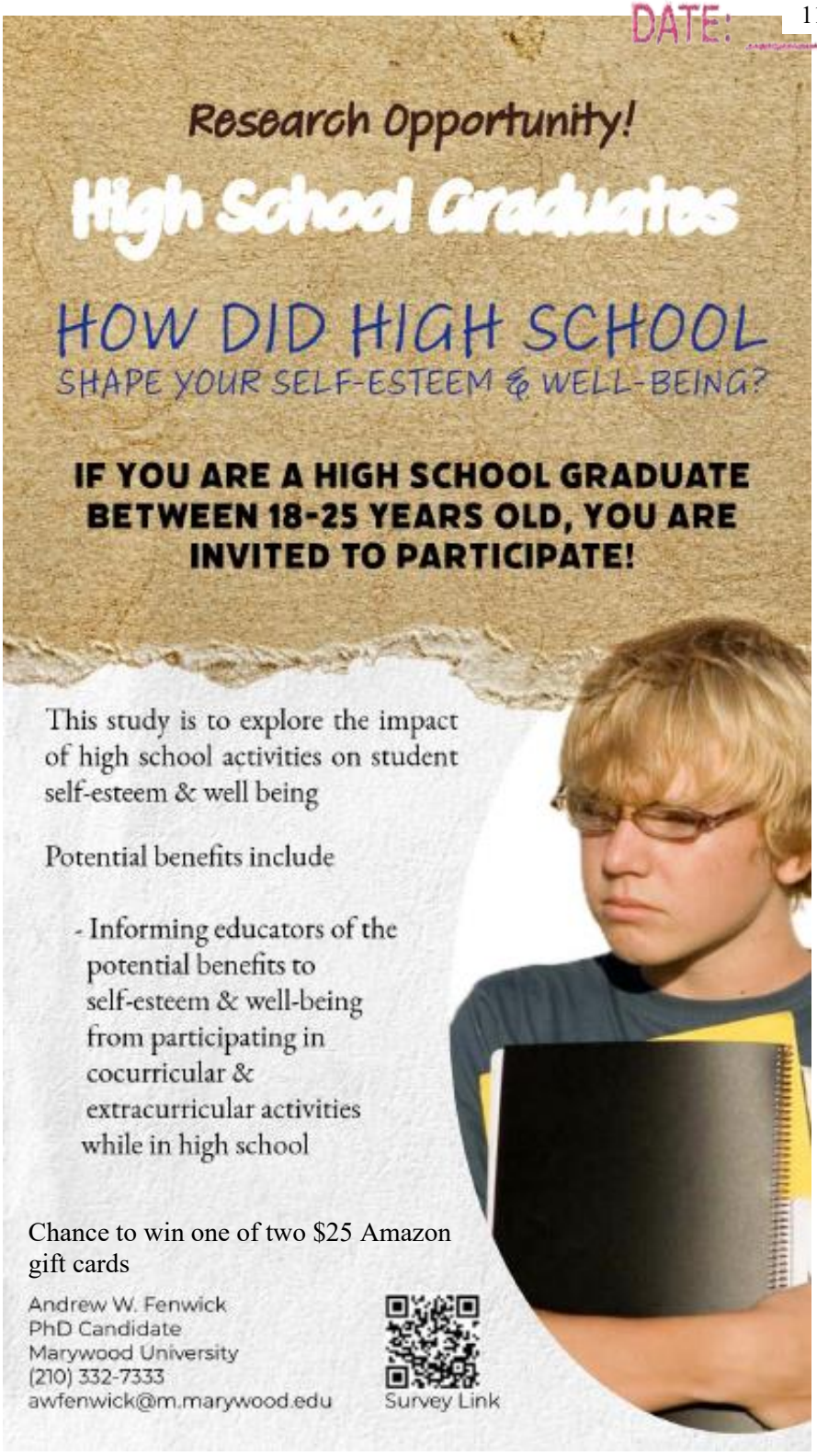
If you have any questions, please contact the Research Office at 570-348-6211, x.2418 or irbhelp@marywood.edu. Please include your study title and IRBNet number in all correspondence with this office.

Thank you and good luck with your research!

Regards,
Exempt Review Committee

Appendix D

Recruitment Literature



Appendix E

IRB Informed Consent Form

Title: The mediating effects of high school cocurricular and extracurricular activities on the positive self esteem and subjective well–being of young adults

Principal Investigator (PI): Andrew W. Fenwick, PhD Candidate, Marywood University
Principal Investigator Contact Information: (210) 332–7333 or awfenwick@m.marywood.edu
Research Advisor: Alan Levine, PhD Emeritus, Marywood University
Research Advisor Contact Information: levine@maryu.marywood.edu

Invitation for a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study about how high school cocurricular and extracurricular activities influence young adults' self esteem and well–being. To participate, you must be between the ages of 18–25 and have completed high school.

Purpose – About the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between participation in high school cocurricular and extracurricular activities and the self esteem and well–being of young adults aged 18–25. The findings may help inform educators and policymakers on the long–term value of such programs.

Procedures – What You Will Do

You will complete a one–time anonymous survey hosted on Qualtrics. The survey will include questions about your participation in high school activities (JROTC, athletics, arts), and current feelings of well–being and self esteem. The survey will take approximately 15–20 minutes.

Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks. Some questions may cause brief self–reflection. Mental health counseling is available free of charge at 866–903–3787 or mentalhealthhotline.org. There are no direct personal benefits, but your responses may contribute to broader educational and psychological understanding.

Payment or Other Rewards

Participants will be entered into a drawing for one of two $25 Amazon gift car (void where prohibited). Participation is not contingent on completing the survey.

Confidentiality

All reasonable steps will be taken to protect your data. No identifying information will be collected. Records will be kept securely for three years and then destroyed.

Taking Part is Voluntary

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may exit the survey at any time before submission. There is no penalty for withdrawal.

Contacts and Questions

If you have any questions, contact the PI at (210) 332–7333 or awfenwick@m.marywood.edu or the advisor at levine@maryu.marywood.edu. For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Marywood IRB at irbhelp@marywood.edu or (570) 961–4782.

Statement of Consent

By selecting 'I Agree' at the bottom of this page within the survey platform (Qualtrics), you confirm that you:

- have read and understood the study information.
- are voluntarily agreeing to participate.
- meet the eligibility requirements.
- understand what the study involves.
- have had the chance to ask questions.
- voluntarily agree to participate.

Purpose – About the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between participation in high school cocurricular and extracurricular activities and the self esteem and well–being of young adults aged 18–25. By exploring how involvement in these activities influences

development outcomes later in life, this research aims to provide insights into the role such programs play in fostering psychological well–being beyond adolescence.

Procedures – What You Will Do

You will:

- Complete an online survey about your experiences with high school activities (JROTC, sports, or arts programs) and how you feel about your life and yourself now.
- The survey will include questions about:
- The types of activities you participated in during high school
- How often you participated.
- Your current feelings of well–being and self esteem.
- The entire survey will be completed online using a secure platform (Qualtrics). You can complete it anywhere you have internet access.
- The survey will take about 15–20 minutes to complete.
- The survey will be completed once only, with no follow–up sessions.
- There are no experimental groups or treatments in this study. All participants complete the same online survey; later, responses will be grouped for analysis based on whether or not participants took part in school–sponsored activities in high school.
- This is a non–experimental study. It only involves answering questions. There are no treatments, interventions, or experimental procedures.

Risks and Benefits

The study involves minimal risk, though IRBs require disclosure of even low–level risks. Some questions about self esteem or personal experiences may cause minor discomfort or self–reflection.

There are no direct personal benefits. Participants may enjoy reflecting on their past experiences and current well–being. The study will help researchers understand whether involvement in cocurricular and extracurricular activities during high school is associated with positive self esteem and well–being in young adulthood. Results may inform educators, policymakers, and school systems on the value of such programs for student development.

Payment or Other Rewards

At the survey start, a unique code will be automatically assigned to each

participant. Upon completion of the survey, the code will be prominently displayed. Study participants will be entered into a raffle for an Amazon gift card in the form of a redemption code (void where prohibited).

Confidentiality

No web–based action is perfectly secure. However, reasonable efforts will be made to protect your transmission from third–party access. The records of this study will be kept confidential. Information used in any written or presented report will not make it possible to identify you. Only the principal investigator and research advisor will have access to the research records. Records will be kept in a locked file. Records will be kept for three years. Then they will be deleted (digital records) or shredded (paper records).

Taking Part is Voluntary

Participation is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the investigator. You may withdraw at any time until the survey has been submitted. There will be no penalty. To withdraw, you may exit the survey, close your web browser or notify the investigator of your intent to withdraw. Your information will be deleted or shredded.

Contacts and Questions

If you have questions about this study at any time, contact the principal investigator or the advisor at the contact information at the top of this form.

If you have questions related to the rights of research participants or research–related injuries (where applicable), please contact the Institutional Review Board at (570) 961–4782 or irbhelp@marywood.edu

You may save a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent

By selecting “I Agree” and submitting the study:

- You understand what the study involves.
- You have asked questions if you had them.
- You agree to participate in the study.

Appendix F

Demographics Questionnaire

1. What is your present age? _____

2. Which is your gender?
   - ○ Male
   - ○ Female
   - ○ Non–binary/third gender
   - ○ Prefer not to say

3. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?
   - ○ Hispanic/ Latino
   - ○ Not Hispanic/ Latino

4. Which of the following best describes your race? Please select all that apply.
   - ○ American Indian or Alaska Native
   - ○ Asian
   - ○ Black or African American
   - ○ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Asian Islander
   - ○ White
   - ○ Prefer Not to Say

5. What is your highest level of education completed?
   - ○ High School Diploma
   - ○ Some College (No Degree)
   - ○ Associate Degree (AA/AS)
   - ○ Bachelor's Degree (BA/BS)
   - ○ Master's Degree (MA/MS/Med/MBA, etc.)
   - ○ Doctoral or Professional Degree (PhD/EdD/MD/JD, etc.)

6. What are your current living arrangements?
   - ○ With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)
   - ○ With Spouse/Partner
   - ○ With Roommate(s)
   - ○ Alone
   - ○ On–Campus Housing
   - ○ Other _____

7. During your high school years, what was your *parent/guardian household* annual income?
   - ○ Less than $25,000
   - ○ $50,000 to $74,999
   - ○ $75,000 to $99,999
   - ○ $100,000 to $149,999
   - ○ $150,000 or more
   - ○ Prefer Not to Say

8. During your high school years, did you participate in any school–sponsored athletics, fine arts programs, or JROTC?
   - ○ Yes
   - ○ No

9. Which activities did you participate in? Please select all that apply.
   - ○ Athletics
   - ○ Fine Arts
   - ○ JROTC

10. Which athletic program did you participate in?
    - ○ _____

11. Which fine arts program did you participate in?

    - ○ _____

12. If you selected more than one, which was your primary activity?
    - ○ Athletics
    - ○ Fine Arts
    - ○ JROTC

13. How many years did you participate in your primary activity?
    - ○ 1
    - ○ 2
    - ○ 3
    - ○ 4

Appendix G

Table G1
Sociodemographic Characteristics of the Sample (N = 277)

Variable	*n*	Valid Percent
Gender		
Male	152	54.9
Female	125	45.1
Ethnicity		
Hispanic / Latino	92	33.2
Not Hispanic / Latino	185	66.8
Race		
White	192	69.3
Black / African American	60	21.7
Asian	21	7.6
Native Hawaiian / Other Asian Pacific Islander	3	1.1
Prefer Not to Say	1	0.4
Education		
High School Diploma	94	33.9
Some College (No Degree)	107	38.6
Associate's Degree (AA/AS)	63	22.7
Bachelor's Degree (BA/BS)	13	4.7
Living Arrangements		
With Parent(s) / Guardian(s)	144	52.0
With Spouse / Partner	11	4.0
With Roommate(s)	85	30.7
Alone	14	5.1
On–Campus Housing	20	7.2
Other	2	0.7
Prefer Not to Say	1	0.4
Income		
< $25,000	3	1.1
$25,000 – $49,999	37	13.4
$50,000 – $74,999	71	25.6
$75,000 – $99,999	88	31.8
$100,000 – $149,999	53	19.1
> $150,000	18	6.5
Prefer Not to Say	7	2.5

Appendix H

Table H1

Participation & Age

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Age	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Age Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Age	18	15	13.6	20	12.0	35	12.6
	19	20	18.2	23	13.8	43	15.5
	20	13	11.8	26	15.6	39	14.1
	21	11	10.0	22	13.2	33	11.9
	22	17	15.5	19	11.4	36	13.0
	23	10	9.1	22	13.2	32	11.6
	24	10	9.1	22	13.2	32	11.6
	25	14	12.7	13	7.8	27	9.7
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Note: Age is reported descriptively; no inferential chi–square test was conducted for age.

Appendix I

Table I1

Participation & Gender

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Gender	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Gender Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender	Male	60	54.5	92	55.1	152	54.9
	Female	50	45.5	75	44.9	125	45.1
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Chi–Square Tests

	Value	*df*	Asymptotic Significance (2–sided)	Exact Sig. (2–sided)	Exact Sig. (1–sided)
Pearson Chi–Square	.008[a]	1	.929		
Continuity Correction[b]	.000	1	1.000		
Likelihood Ratio	.008	1	.929		
Fisher's Exact Test				1.000	.513
Linear–by–Linear Association	.008	1	.929		
N of Valid Cases	277				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 49.64.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Appendix J

Table J1

Participation & Ethnicity

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Ethnicity	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Ethnicity Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Ethnicity	Hispanic/Latino	35	31.8	57	34.1	92	33.2
	Not Hispanic/Latino	75	68.2	110	65.9	185	66.8
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Chi–Square Tests

	Value	*df*	Asymptotic Significance (2–sided)	Exact Sig. (2–sided)	Exact Sig. (1–sided)
Pearson Chi–Square	.160[a]	1	.689		
Continuity Correction[b]	.073	1	.787		
Likelihood Ratio	.160	1	.689		
Fisher's Exact Test				.698	.395
Linear–by–Linear Association	.159	1	.690		
N of Valid Cases	277				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 36.53.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

Appendix K

Table K1
Participation & Race

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Race	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Race Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Race	Asian	9	8.2	12	7.2	21	7.6
	Black/African American	18	16.4	42	25.1	60	21.7
	Native Hawaiian/Other Asian Pacific Islander	1	0.9	2	1.2	3	1.1
	White	82	74.5	110	65.9	192	69.3
	Prefer Not to Say	0	0.0	1	0.6	1	0.4
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Chi–Square Tests

	Value	*df*	Asymptotic Significance (2–sided)
Pearson Chi–Square	3.880[a]	4	.422
Likelihood Ratio	4.315	4	.365
Linear–by–Linear Association	1.205	1	.272
N of Valid Cases	277		

a. 4 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .40.

Appendix L

Table L1

Participation & Education

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Education	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Education Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Education	High School Diploma	41	37.3	53	31.7	94	33.9
	Some College (No Degree)	34	30.9	73	43.7	107	38.6
	Associate Degree (AA/AS)	32	29.1	31	18.6	63	22.7
	Bachelor Degree (BA/BS)	3	2.7	10	6.0	13	4.7
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Chi–Square Tests

	Value	*df*	Asymptotic Significance (2–sided)
Pearson Chi–Square	8.148[a]	3	.043
Likelihood Ratio	8.263	3	.041
Linear–by–Linear Association	0.021	1	.886
N of Valid Cases	277		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.16.

Appendix M

Table M1

Participation & Living Arrangements

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Living Arrangements	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Living Arrangements Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Living Arrangements	With Parent(s)/Guardian(s)	50	45.5	94	56.3	144	52.0
	With Spouse/Partner	6	5.5	5	3.0	11	4.0
	With Roommate(s)	34	30.9	51	30.5	85	30.7
	Alone	8	7.3	6	3.6	14	5.1
	On–Campus Housing	12	10.9	8	4.8	20	7.2
	Other	0	0.0	2	1.2	2	0.7
	Prefer Not to Say	0	0.0	1	0.6	1	0.4
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Chi–Square Tests

	Value	*df*	Asymptotic Significance (2–sided)
Pearson Chi–Square	9.703[a]	6	.138
Likelihood Ratio	10.613	6	.101
Linear–by–Linear Association	3.013	1	.083
N of Valid Cases	277		

a. 5 cells (35.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 0.40.

Appendix N

Table N1

Participation & Income

Case Processing Summary

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	%	*N*	%	*N*	%
Participation & Income	277	100.0	0	0.0	277	100.0

Participation & Income Crosstabulation

		Participation				Total	
		No		Yes			
		n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Income	< $25,000	2	1.8	1	0.6	3	1.1
	$25,000 to $49,999	14	12.7	23	13.8	37	13.4
	$50,000 to $74,999	25	22.7	46	27.5	71	25.6
	$75,000 to $99,000	31	28.2	57	34.1	88	31.8
	$100,000 to $149,999	27	24.5	26	15.6	53	19.1
	> $150,000	9	8.2	9	5.4	18	6.5
	Prefer Not to Say	2	1.8	5	3.0	7	2.5
Total		110	100.0	167	100.0	277	100.0

Chi–Square Tests

	Value	*df*	Asymptotic Significance (2–sided)
Pearson Chi–Square	6.256[a]	6	.395
Likelihood Ratio	6.188	6	.403
Linear–by–Linear Association	0.875	1	.350
N of Valid Cases	277		

a. 4 cells (28.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.19.