Do Peer Characteristics Mediate the Association Between Adolescent Extracurricular Activity Participation and Positive Academic Engagement?

Deanna C. Scott
Murdoch University

This thesis is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (Honours), Murdoch University, 2013
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary educational institution.
Copyright Acknowledgements

I acknowledge that a copy of this thesis will be held at the Murdoch University Library.

I understand that, under the provisions of s51.2 of the Copyright Act 1968, all or part of this thesis may be copied without infringement of copyright where such a reproduction is for the purposes of study and research.

This statement does not signal any transfer of copyright away from the author.

Signed ……………………………..

Full Name of Degree: Bachelor of Psychology with Honours

Thesis title: Do Peer Characteristics Mediate the Association Between Adolescent Extracurricular Activity Participation and Positive Academic Engagement?

Author: Deanna C. Scott

Year: 2013
Abstract
Adolescent participation in extracurricular activities is associated with positive academic engagement measures, yet the mechanisms responsible for this link remain relatively unknown. The current study had two goals; first to investigate the association between participation across different types of structured activities and indicators of positive academic engagement for Australian adolescents; and second, to examine if these associations were mediated by the affiliated activity peer group. A sample of 1850 year 8 and year 11 students (mean age 14.6 years) from government and private schools across Western Australia completed the self-report survey. Extracurricular participation was positively associated with measures of school liking, school attachment, school grades and university intentions, particularly for students who participated in non-sport activities or a mixed portfolio of sports plus activities. In addition, peer characteristics were found to partially mediate the association between the mixed sports plus activities group and academic engagement indicators.

Keywords: adolescence, extracurricular activities, peers, academic engagement
Acknowledgements

In preparation of this thesis, thanks go especially to my supervisor Professor Bonnie Barber, who gave me guidance and support throughout the year and her invaluable encouragement and genuine enthusiasm has made the thesis manageable and enjoyable.

Thank you to Corey Blomfield Neira, for assisting me with the data collation and analysis. Thank you also to the staff in the YAPS office, Melanie Coleman and Gabriel Heaslip for helping with the data collection and for their advice and support.

Finally, and most importantly, thanks to my husband Adrian and my sons James and Daniel for giving me the love, support and time to complete my degree.

Also many thanks to my friends and family, particularly my Mum and Dad, for your encouragement and support throughout this year.