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Extracurricular Activity Participation in Elementary School Children: Links to Well-Being and Academic Achievement

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Abstract

In the current study correlations between extracurricular activity participation, parental involvement, well-being, and academic competence in elementary school children were examined. In addition, interactions between activity and parental involvement in the prediction of well-being and academic success were explored. Seventy-two children (*M age*= 10.9 years, *SD* = 0.85) and 53 parents participated. Results indicated significant correlations between support, pressure, well-being, and academic competence. Results also revealed 4 significant interactions: 1) parental pressure x activity participation in the prediction of well-being, 2) parental pressure x activity participation in the prediction of academic competence, 3) parental support x activity participation in the prediction of well-being, 4) parental support x activity participation in the prediction of academic competence. Follow up analyses were conducted to establish differences between children who participate in low versus high numbers of activities. Results are discussed in terms of how extracurricular activities and parental involvement in activities impact upon positive outcomes in childhood.

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Extracurricular Activity Participation in Elementary School Children: Links to Well-Being and Academic Achievement

Introduction

Extracurricular activities have been frequently associated with well-being and academic success for high school and elementary school children (e.g., Gilman, Meyers, & Perez, 2004; Fletcher, Nickerson, & Wright, 2003). The purpose of the current study was to investigate associations between extracurricular activity participation, well-being, and perceived academic competence in elementary school children in urban Newfoundland. A second objective of this study was to examine how parental involvement (either support or pressure) may moderate the relations between extracurricular activity participation and both well-being and academic competence.

Although a majority of the extracurricular activity research focuses on protective factors in adolescence (e.g., Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003; Mahoney & Cairns, 1997), researchers have recently been examining correlations between extracurricular activity participation and positive outcomes in elementary school students (e.g., Fletcher, et al., 2003; Powell, Peet, & Peet, 2002). However, this research is still in its infancy and much is needed to establish a solid link between participation in extracurricular activities and positive outcomes in childhood. Similarly, the role of parental influences may be an important aspect to consider. Parental involvement has been shown to be important in the initiation and maintenance of children's participation in extracurricular activities (e.g., Anderson, Funk, Elliott, & Smith, 2003). However, literature regarding the relationships between extracurricular activity participation, well-being, academic achievement, and parental involvement in childhood is insufficient at best. These four

variables have not been examined concurrently, and this examination is not only one of the major objectives of the current study, but is also timely considering the lack of inspired evidence to date.

Extracurricular Activities

For the purposes of the current study, extracurricular activities were defined as any activity that does not take place during class time, and occurs in a structured atmosphere where an adult, for instance a coach, teacher, or parent, is present (Luthar, Shoum, & Brown, 2006). The activity might take place before or after school, or at lunch or recess time. Children reported the total number of activities they were involved in per week and the types of activities. The activities were divided into five separate categories: pro-social activities (e.g., church groups, volunteering); sports (either school or recreational teams, or individual sports); performing arts (e.g., music, drama); school involvement activities (e.g., student council); and/or academic clubs (e.g., math club, science club; Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003). However, of most importance in this thesis was overall participation per average week.

Extracurricular activity involvement has been associated with positive outcomes in childhood and adolescence (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2003; Gilman et al., 2004). In a meta-analysis of the research, Gilman et al. (2004) reported a negative correlation between extracurricular activity participation and school drop-out. Here, participating in more extracurricular activities was found to be negatively related to school drop-out. However, the authors note that this particular association may not be related to extracurricular activities participation alone and other factors may come into play in decreasing the likelihood of school drop-out.

Similar results have been reported by Mahoney and Cairns (1997) in an examination of the relationship between school drop-out and participation in extracurricular activities in adolescence. The authors hypothesized that students who were less skilled in many facets of school life (e.g., academic and social areas) would benefit more from extracurricular activity participation than those who were more skilled. Using the *Interpersonal Competence Scale* (Cairns, Leung, Gest, & Cairns, 1995), the authors found that students who were drop-outs participated in significantly fewer extracurricular activities than students who were not drop-outs. For at-risk students, drop-out rates decreased as extracurricular activity participation increased. This finding was particularly relevant for the at-risk group when they were in early high school. The authors concluded that extracurricular activity involvement was a protective factor against school drop-out (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997).

Huebner and Mancini (2003) found that grade level was positively related to extracurricular activity participation. Specifically, students in higher grade levels were more likely to participate in a greater number of extracurricular activities than those in lower grades. This suggests the possibility that when examining a younger population participation in extracurricular activities will be lower. Potentially this finding can impact possible correlations associated with extracurricular activities participation in younger populations if not qualified with the aforementioned findings.

Extracurricular activity participation has also been associated with many other positive outcomes in adolescence and childhood. For example, Gilman et al. (2004) found adolescents who participated in many activities had higher life satisfaction when compared to adolescents who participated in fewer activities. Similarly, DeMoulin

(2002) found that adolescents who participated in activities reported higher levels of maturity, as well as more adaptive decision-making skills. Also, extracurricular activity participation has been investigated as a protective factor in adolescence (Mahoney, 2000). Participation has been linked to decreased criminal activity and lower arrest rates (Mahoney, 2000). There has been a body of research that links extracurricular activity involvement to increased academic achievement (e.g., DeMoulin, 2002; Fletcher et al., 2003) and well-being (e.g., Eccles & Barber, 1999; Fletcher et al., 2003). The current study specifically examined the links between these two latter variables and extracurricular activity involvement in childhood.

Extracurricular Activities, Well-Being, and Academic Competence

For the purposes of the current study, overall well-being was measured by the *Self-Perception Profile for Children* (Harter, 1985) and included six subscales: perceived scholastic competence, perceived social acceptance, perceived athletic competence, perceived physical appearance, perceived behaviour conduct, and global self-worth. The 'perceived scholastic competence' subscale (as measured by the *Self-Perception Profile for Children*; Harter, 1985) was isolated and used as the measure for perceived academic competence. While previous research has focused solely on grades (e.g., Powell et al., 2002), these may be somewhat of a subjective measure, and can be based on teacher perception.

In a meta-analysis, Gilman et al. (2004) examined the benefits of structured, supervised extracurricular activities in adolescence. The authors reported many positive correlations between participation in extracurricular activities and academic achievement in high-school students. Students who participated in some extracurricular activities were

likely to have higher grade point averages (GPA) as compared to students who did not participate in any activities. This relationship was non-linear, in that students who participated in either a high or low number of extracurricular activities often had lower GPA's than those who only participated in a moderate number of extracurricular activities.

Powell et al. (2002) examined the relationship between extracurricular activity involvement and academic achievement in grade one children who belong to families of low socioeconomic status. Like Gilman et al. (2004), Powell et al. (2002) found a non-linear relationship when comparing the frequency of participation. For children who participated in a variety of activities, grades were significantly higher for those children who participated moderately versus those who participated less. When analyzing frequency of participation from moderate to high levels, grades significantly decreased for children who participated in high levels of activities. Therefore, the authors concluded that children who participated moderately in extracurricular activities had higher grades then those children who participated in low or high levels of activities.

Furthermore, Richards and Aries (1999) examined the connections between athletic participation and academic success, well-being, and growth in college student athletes. The authors found no statistically significant differences between athletes and non-athletes with respect to GPA, even though athletes had significantly lower achievement scores in high school. However, this may suggest that student athletes made more significant academic gains during post-secondary education as compared to non-athletes. Well-being was defined in many ways, including friendship satisfaction, academic performance, physical health, and stress management. No significant

differences were found between athletic participation and well-being. Also, no significant differences were described regarding reports of students' growth as an individual between athletes and non-athletes (Richard & Aries, 1999).

Eccles and Barber (1999) and Eccles et al. (2003) investigated the longitudinal correlations between extracurricular activity participation, behaviour, and long-term outcomes in high school students. Within the two studies, the authors examined the results in terms of five different types of activities: prosocial activities, team sports, school involvement, performing arts, and academic clubs. They found that being involved in prosocial activities and performing arts were negatively associated with risky behaviours, such as alcohol and drug use, and positively associated with school enjoyment and GPA (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003). Additionally, participating in these latter two types of activities had positive correlations with attending and graduating from post-secondary education (Eccles et al., 2003). There was also a significant interaction with gender. Specifically, males who participated in performing arts had significantly more total years of education than males who did not participate in performing arts. The authors found that team sport involvement was positively correlated with risky behaviour, while participating in school involvement activities was not significantly associated with risky behaviours (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003). However, both groups of students did have increased levels of school enjoyment, higher academic achievement, and a higher likelihood of attending and graduating from post-secondary institutions, as compared to students who did not participate in athletics or school involvement activities (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003). Similarly, academic club involvement was positively associated with academic correlates, such as

grades, liking school, and future post-secondary attendance (Eccles & Barber, 1999; Eccles et al., 2003).

Similarly, DeMoulin (2002) investigated the impact of extracurricular activity participation on the personal development of high school seniors. While the author did not find significant differences between involved and non-involved students with respect to GPA, there were significant differences in social integration scores (i.e., involved students had higher scores). The author then examined three types of activities individually: leadership, music, and sports activities. Students who were involved in leadership-type activities had higher decision-making, sympathy, and credibility scores, as well as higher GPAs than those not in leadership activities. Students who participated in music activities had increased personal maturity, social integration, and academic achievement when compared to those who did not participate in music activities. Students who participated in team sports had decreased personal maturity scores and increased social integration scores when compared to those students who did not participate in sports. Here, there were no significant differences with respect to grades.

Fletcher et al. (2003) examined the associations between extracurricular activity participation and well-being in grade four students. The authors hypothesized that children who were heavily involved in different types of extracurricular activities would demonstrate more positive adjustment than children who participate in less or no extracurricular activities. Using the *Child Behaviour Checklist* (Achenbach & Edelbrock, 1981, as cited in Fletcher et al., 2003), the authors found that children who participate in clubs have higher teacher perceptions of academic competence, as compared to other students who were not in clubs. It is important to note here that academic performance

was rated by teachers, and so participation in clubs may not be related to actual academic performance. Instead, the authors reason that these children are more socially and behaviourally competent, and so warrant good teacher ratings. Also, the authors found that activity involvement was not correlated with levels of internalizing or externalizing behaviours. Additionally, Fletcher et al. (2003) observed that children who participated in sports have, as rated by teachers, higher social competence and psycho-social maturity, including increased work ethic and independence. It was interesting that sports involvement was not correlated with academic competence. The authors note that this finding for high school students may be related in part to grade requirements for school sanctioned sports teams. Students on teams in high school are required to have higher grades in order to remain on the team, and this may not be a requirement for children in elementary grades.

Some research in this area is inconsistent. It was necessary to further investigate to establish what positive outcomes might be related to extracurricular activity involvement. As well, Fletcher et al. (2003) express that a focus on school-aged children has not received adequate attention. These authors also articulate that future research in this area should include family structure and parental support variables that may be related to extracurricular activity participation.

Extracurricular Activities and Parental Involvement

Fletcher and Shaw (2000) examined the relationship between parenting characteristics and children's participation in both school and community based extracurricular activities. The authors investigated two parental characteristics: 1) parental involvement in community based extracurricular activities and 2) parental

relationships with child's peers and parents of peers, to predict children's participation in school and community based extracurricular activities. They found significant differences between boys and girls. When parents participated in community based extracurricular activities, boys were more likely to also participate in only community based extracurricular activities. However, for girls, there was a positive relationship between authoritative parenting and their participation in community based extracurricular activities. Additionally, when parents participated in community based extracurricular activities, girls were more likely to participate in both community and school based extracurricular activities. There was a third positive association between parents who held strong relationships with their child's peers and peers' families and girls' participation in both community and school based extracurricular activities. These correlations were not found in boys.

Furthermore, Fletcher, Elder, and Mekos (2000) examined the associations between parental warmth, parental reinforcement, parental involvement, and the extracurricular activity participation of adolescents in grades nine and ten. Here, the authors defined parental warmth as parents showing care, concern, and encouragement for their child, while parental reinforcement was the parents' expression of support for their child's interests and ideas. For parents who themselves were highly involved in community activities, parental warmth and reinforcement were both positively correlated with a child's involvement only in grade nine. Also, participation in grade nine was positively associated with participation in grade ten. For parents who were minimally or not involved in community activities, parental warmth and reinforcement were both positively correlated with a child's involvement in both grade nine and grade ten.

Similarly, participation in grade nine was positively associated with participation in grade ten. Fletcher et al. (2000) express that the difference between parental involvement outcomes may be due to modelling of the behaviour instead of genuine warmth and reinforcement, in that highly involved parents may model the behaviours more than actually providing warmth and reinforcement for a child's involvement.

In a similar vein, Huebner and Mancini (2003) investigated familial and peer characteristics on the impact of extracurricular activity involvement. The authors found that socioeconomic status (SES), parental support, and family structure were all positively correlated with participation in extracurricular activities. As a result, children in families with high SES, high parental support, and positive family structure were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities. In the same way, peer pressure, and the endorsement of activities by friends was positively associated with participation in extracurricular activities. Consequently, children who experience pressure from friends to participate in certain activities were more likely to participate in those activities. It may be possible that peer and family values could compete against each other. For instance, peers and family members might endorse different activities, which may cause conflict (Huebner & Mancini, 2003)

Additionally, Anderson et al. (2003) examined the relationship between parental support and pressure and children's experiences while participating in extracurricular activities. Using the *Parental Involvement in Activities Scale* (Anderson et al., 2003), the authors measured the students' perception of their parents' involvement in extracurricular activities. As well, the authors examined the children's reports of enjoyment or anxiety toward their activities. They found that parental support was positively correlated with

the number of activities in which the child was participating, and parental pressure was negatively correlated with parental support. Results also showed that children's enjoyment in sports, arts, or clubs was positively correlated with parental support and enjoyment in sports was negatively associated with parental pressure. Children's anxiety in participating in sports and clubs was negatively correlated with parental support. In other words, while participating in extracurricular activities, parental support was often associated with enjoyment and was not associated with anxiety. Conversely, parental pressure was not a significant predictor of children's anxiety, as was hypothesized.

For the purpose of this study, parental involvement was defined on two dimensions: parental support and parental pressure (as measured by *The Parental Involvement in Activities Scale*; Anderson et al., 2003). Parental support was defined as the child's perception of how well parents encourage the child's activity involvement and activity choices (Anderson et al., 2003). Parental pressure was defined as the child's perception of how much parents control activity decisions and set performance standards (Anderson et al., 2003). While the relationships between extracurricular activity participation, well-being, and academic achievement have been documented, the relationships between extracurricular activity participation and parental involvement have only been minimally discussed in research.

Extracurricular Activities, Well-Being, Academic Competence, and Parental Involvement

While extracurricular activity participation and parental involvement have been briefly discussed in the literature, the investigation of extracurricular activity participation, parental involvement, well-being, and academic achievement has been

relatively insignificant. All four variables have not been examined concurrently or in depth in the current body of research.

For example, Huebner and Mancini (2003) examined the relationship between structured extracurricular activity participation and positive outcomes in students from grades nine to twelve. The authors focussed on the ecological systems theory, where development is a function of the interaction between an individual and his/her environment. They found that extracurricular activity participation was related to many micro-system variables, including SES, family structure, and peer influences, as previously discussed. Huebner and Mancini (2003) also found that extracurricular activity participation was positively related to academic achievement. However, the parental influence was not discussed in terms of its impact on the relationship between activity participation and academic achievement. In the current study, some of these relationships between demographic characteristics and activity participation will be examined.

Furthermore, in examining the impact of extracurricular activity participation on childhood outcomes, Fletcher et al. (2003) found that children who were involved in church activities did not differ on the measure of well-being, when compared to other children. The lack of association here may be explained by parental involvement. The authors express that it is possible that parental influence make church activities involuntary, and so there may be positive associations when participation is voluntary (Fletcher et al., 2003).

It is obvious from the sparse amount of available research that a concurrent examination of all variables will assist in untangling the intricate relationships that are

presently unknown in the area of extracurricular activity participation, parental involvement, and positive outcomes in childhood.

The Current Study

The current study was designed to examine the relations between participation in extracurricular activities, well-being, and academic competence in elementary school children. It was additionally designed to investigate parental involvement as a moderator in the aforementioned associations. Specific hypotheses follow, and other exploratory analysis were conducted as well.

1) There will be a correlation between extracurricular activity participation and perceived academic competence, in that those who participate in a moderate number of activities will benefit the most;
2) There will be a positive correlation between extracurricular activity and well-being;
3) Reports of parental support will be positively correlated with well-being and academic competence, as well as the frequency of involvement in extracurricular activities;
4) Reports of parental pressure will be negatively correlated with well-being and academic success, as well as the frequency of involvement in extracurricular activities;
5) Differing levels of parental involvement will interact with extracurricular activity participation in the prediction of well-being or academic competence. For example, extracurricular activity involvement may not be associated with positive

outcomes among children who have parents low in support and/or high in pressure.

Methods

Participants

Seventy two elementary school children participated in the current study. The children ranged in age from 9 to 13 years of age, with a mean age of 10.9 years (SD = 0.85). There were 41 males and 31 females. The children were in grades four (N = 12), five (N = 28), and six (N = 32). The students completed three questionnaires: *The Self-Perception Profile for Children* (see Appendix A)*, The Parental Involvement in Activities Scale* (see Appendix B), and an extracurricular activity participation questionnaire (see Appendix C).

Fifty three parents also participated by completing a demographics questionnaire (see Appendix D). The majority of parents who completed the questionnaire were mothers. Parents ranged in age from 28 to 54 years, with a mean age of 42.7 years (SD = 4.97), but this is based only on 48 respondents. The majority of parents were married and most mothers and fathers in each family had completed post-secondary education at the Bachelor's level. Teachers were asked to allow time during a non-core subject, like health, so that participating children were able to complete the questionnaires.

The participants were drawn from a convenience sample from elementary schools in the Eastern School District of Newfoundland. Also, no incentives were offered for participation for either parents or children.

After the data have been collected and analyzed, a summary of the results will be sent to each participating school, as well as the school board. The same summary will

also be sent to parents who indicated on the consent form that they would like to see the results of the study.

Measures

The scales that were used in the current study include: *The Self-Perception Profile for Children* (Appendix A)*, the Parental Involvement in Activities Scale* (Appendix B)*,* an extracurricular activity participation questionnaire (Appendix C), and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix D).

The *Self-Perception Profile for Children* (Harter, 1985) is a measure of the child's perception of scholastic competence, social acceptance, athletic competence, physical appearance, and behaviour conduct, as well as global self worth. This scale has 36 items and uses a structure alternative format where the child is presented with two situations and must decide which situation is either "really true for me" or "sort of true for me" (Harter, 1985). This scale has been shown to have high psychometric stability (Harter, 1982; 1985).

The *Parental Involvement in Activities Scale (PIAS;* Anderson et al., 2003) is a measure of the child's perception of his/her parents' levels of support and pressure with respect to extracurricular involvement. The questionnaire has 16 items and is rated using a four point Likert-type scale, where one is "never", two is "sometimes", three is "usually", and four is "always" (Anderson et al., 2003). Using factor analysis, Anderson and colleagues (2003) found the subscales parental support (Cronbach's alpha = .70) and parental pressure (Cronbach's alpha = .71) to be reliable. The scale has been shown to have reasonable psychometric stability (Anderson et al., 2003).

The measure of extracurricular participation included a list of possible activities divided into five types: pro-social activities, sports teams, performing arts, school involvement activities, and academic clubs. Each participant was asked how many times per week he/she is involved in activities, as well as how many times per week he/she is involved in each different type of activities.

The demographic questionnaire included questions about the parents' age, marital status, and educational level. This questionnaire also included questions regarding the child's sex and age. The questions asked on this questionnaire were optional for parents, but were used to examine demographic characteristics that might impact participation in extracurricular activities, parental involvement, well-being, and academic competence.

Procedure

After receiving ethics approval from the University Review Ethics Board (Mount Saint Vincent University), a request was made to the Eastern School District of Newfoundland to perform research within their jurisdiction. Once approved, the principals of various schools in the area were approached. A letter was delivered informing them of the intent of the study and the request for their participation and cooperation (see Appendix E). After being granted consent from principals, teachers were asked to distribute a letter to parents of grade four, five, and six students, regarding the purpose of the study, as well as a request for voluntary participation. The letter also included consent to be signed and returned to the school (see Appendix F).

The children of the parents who volunteered were taken out of class during an agreed upon time with the classroom teacher. The purpose of the study was explained and verbal consent was given by each child. In a group administration, the students

completed three questionnaires: *The Self-Perception Profile for Children, the Parental Involvement in Activities Scal*e, and an extracurricular activity participation questionnaire. The group administrations took approximately 20-25 minutes. The demographic questionnaire was then sent home with each child. Of the 72 demographic questionnaires sent home to parents, 53 were returned to the researcher.

Results

The primary goal of this study was to examine the moderated pathways to children's overall well-being and academic competence, from the interactions between parental support and extracurricular activity participation and parental pressure and extracurricular activity participation. The results will be presented as follows: preliminary analysis will be presented, where assumptions are tested and relations with demographic variables are explored. Following this, results of the correlations between extracurricular activity participation, parental pressure, parental support, overall well-being, and academic competence will be presented. Finally, using multiple regression analysis, interactions between extracurricular activity participation and either parental support or pressure in the prediction of overall well-being and academic success will be examined.

Preliminary Analysis

Data Screening. All of the data were examined for outliers, linearity, and homogeneity of variance. No assumptions were violated, and so there was no need to transform the data. There were very few missing data points; therefore, missing data were estimated using the series mean method in SPSS.

A series of independent t-tests were used to examine gender differences between extracurricular activity participation, well-being, perceived academic competence, and parental support or pressure. Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 1. No significant gender differences were found. A MANOVA was used to examine grade differences between extracurricular activity participation, well-being, perceived academic competence, and parental support or pressure. Results are reported in Table 2. No significant differences between grades were found ($F(2, 71) = 2.10$, $p>.05$).

Correlations with demographic variables. The correlation between the demographic variables (e.g., parent's age, marital status, education level, etc.) and predictor variables (e.g., parental support or pressure, extracurricular activities) were examined (see Table 3). There was a significant positive correlation between the children's sex and parental support ($r(72) = .24$, $p<.05$) and positive correlations between both mothers' and fathers' educational level and activity involvement per week ($r(53) = .31$, $p<.05$; $r(52) = .33$, $p<.05$, respectively).

The correlation between the demographic variables and the outcome variables (e.g., well-being and academic competence) were also examined (see Table 3). There were significant positive correlations between well-being and both children's age and grade ($r(72) = .29$, $p<.05$; $r(72) = .25$, $p<.05$, respectively). Also, there was a significant positive correlation between academic competence and children's age ($r(72) = .24$, $p<.05$).

Table 1

Means (Standard Deviations) of Predictor and Outcome Variables for Males and Females

Predictor Variables	Males	Females
Extracurricular Activity Participation per Week	4.80 (1.91)	5.03 (1.45)
Parental Involvement		
Support	3.46 (0.52)	3.66 (0.25)
Pressure	1.85 (0.48)	1.65 (0.39)
Outcome Variables		
Overall Well-Being	3.21 (0.45)	3.20 (0.43)
Academic Competence	3.27 (0.57)	3.15 (0.70)

Table 2

Means (Standard Deviations) of Predictor and Outcome Variables for Grade Level

Predictor Variables	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Extracurricular Activity Participation per Week	5.33 (1.50)	4.40 (1.62)	5.19 (1.82)
Parental Involvement			
Support	3.32 (0.59)	3.66 (0.27)	3.53 (0.46)
Pressure	1.89 (0.52)	1.64 (0.39)	1.83 (0.47)
Outcome Variables			
Overall Well-Being	3.06 (0.33)	3.13 (.49)	3.33 (0.40)
Academic Competence	2.96 (0.44)	3.24 (0.68)	3.30 (0.63)

Table 3

Correlations between Predictor, Outcome, and Demographic Variables

	Activities/ Week	Parental Pressure	Parental Support	Well-Being	Academic Competence
Parents' Sex	.12	-.06	-.08	.09	.14
Parents' Age	-.17	-.07	-.03	-.15	-.04
Child's Sex	.07	-.22	.24*	-.02	-.09
Child's Grade	.04	.02	.10	.25*	.17
Child's Sex	.09	-.14	.21	.29*	.24*
Maternal Education	.31*	-.22	-.02	.27	.17
Paternal Education	.33*	-.07	-.02	.04	.26

* Significant at the 0.05 level

Correlational Analysis

Extracurricular Activity Participation, Overall Wellbeing, and Academic Competence. The correlations between extracurricular activity involvement, well-being, and academic competence are displayed in Table 4. There was a significant positive correlation between overall well-being and academic competence ($r(72) = .77$, $p<.01$), a significant positive correlation between activity participation per week and overall well-being ($r(72) = .27$, $p<.05$), but there was no significant correlation between activity involvement and academic competence ($r(72) = .20$, n.s.).

Parental Involvement and Student Outcomes. The correlations between parental support, parental pressure, well-being, and academic competence are displayed in Table 4. There was a significant negative correlation between parental pressure and parental support ($r(72) = -.54$, $p<.01$) and a significant negative correlation between parental pressure and overall well-being ($r(72) = -.27$, $p<.05$). Similarly, there was a significant negative correlation between parental pressure and academic competence ($r(72) = -.31$, $p<.01$), but significant positive correlations between parental support and both overall well-being and academic competence ($r(72) = .37$, $p<.01$; $r(72) = .37$, $p<.01$, respectively).

Extracurricular Activity Participation and Parental Involvement. The correlations between extracurricular activity involvement, parental support, and parental pressure are presented in Table 4. No significant correlations were found, however the non-significant correlations were in the expected directions.

Table 4

Correlations between Predictor and Outcome Variables

	Activities/ Week	Parental Pressure	Parental Support	Overall Well-Being	Academic Competence
Activities/ Week	1.0	-.16	.19	.27*	.20
Parental Pressure	- -	1.0	-.54**	-.27*	-.31**
Parental Support	- -	- -	1.0	.37**	.37**
Overall Well-Being	- -	- -	- -	1.0	.77**
Academic Competence	- -	- -	- -	- -	1.0

* Significant at the .05 level
** Significant at the .01 level

Multiple Regression Analysis

To examine the moderated (interactive) pathways in the prediction of children's well-being and perceived academic competence, interactions between extracurricular activity involvement and two levels of parental involvement were explored using multiple regression analysis. Cohen's partialed products technique (Cohen, 1978; Cohen & Cohen, 1983) was employed, whereby independent variables are first entered into the regression equation as a block, followed by the interaction terms (as represented by their multiplicative products). At each step, the R^2 change was examined to determine if significant main effects and significant interactions were present.

Interaction terms were created by combining activity involvement per week separately with both types of parental involvement (e.g., either pressure or support). Once the interaction terms were created, they were re-standardized. These interactions (i.e., extracurricular activity involvement per week x each type of parental involvement) were tested in the prediction of overall well-being and perceived academic competence.

In order to assess the moderating effects (i.e., the interaction terms), specific blocks of variables were entered into the hierarchical regression analyses. The first block included the parental involvement variable (either pressure or support). The second block consisted of the extracurricular activity involvement per week. The third block included the interaction term: the combination of either parental pressure or parental support and the participation in activities per week. These combinations yielded four significant interactions and follow-up analyses were conducted.

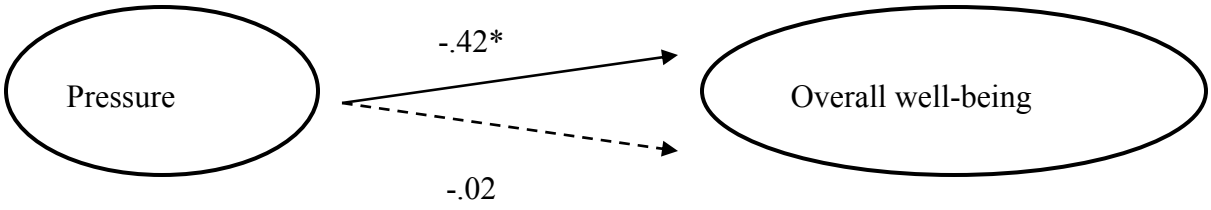
Parental Pressure. Results from regression analysis revealed significant interactions between parental pressure and activity involvement per week in the prediction of children's overall well-being ($F (3, 71) = 4.72$, $p<.01$, $R^2_{change} = .14$).

Interactions were explored by re-computing the regression analysis separately for students reporting above and below the median in terms of extracurricular activity participation (i.e., high activities and low activities). Results from the follow-up analysis indicate a significant negative correlation between parental pressure and well being for children who participated in a higher number of activities per week ($r (71) = -.42$, $p<.05$), as compared to children who participated in a fewer number of activities per week ($r (71) = -.02$, n.s.) (see figure 1). This indicates that as parental pressure increases, well-being decreases for those children who are participating in a higher number of activities per week but not for children participating in fewer activities.

Results from regression analysis also revealed significant interactions between parental pressure and activity involvement per week in the prediction of children's perceived academic competence ($F (3, 71) = 3.73$, $p<.05$, $R^2_{change} = .10$). Results from the follow-up analysis indicate a significant negative correlation between parental pressure and academic competence for children who participated in a fewer number of activities per week ($r (71) = -.49$, $p<.05$), as compared to children who participated in a higher number of activities per week ($r (71) = -.12$, n.s.) (see Figure 2). This indicates that as parental pressure increases, perceived academic competence decreased for those children who are participating in a lower number of activities per week.

Figure 1

Simple Effects Testing of Moderated Relations between Parental Pressure and General Extracurricular Activities per week in the Prediction of Overall Well-Being

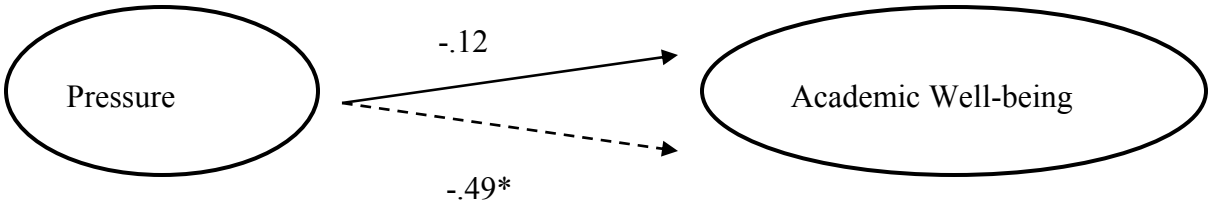


_____ High activities _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Low activities

* p< .05

Figure 2

Simple Effects Testing of Moderated Relations between Parental Pressure and General Extracurricular Activities per week in the Prediction of Academic Well-Being



_____ High activities _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ Low activities

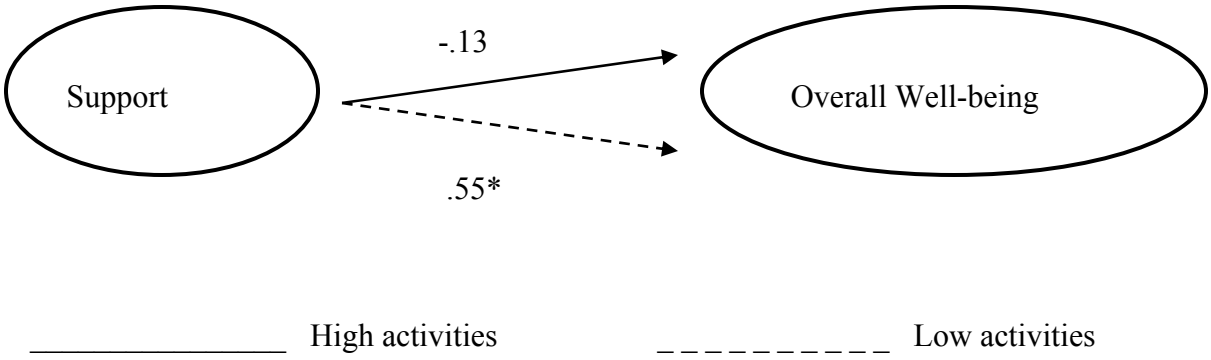
* p< .05

Parental Support. Results from the regression analysis then revealed significant interactions between parental support and activity participation per week in the prediction of children's overall well-being ($F (3, 71) = 5.40$, $p<.01$, $R^2_{change} = .16$). Results from follow-up analysis indicate a significant positive correlation between parental support and well-being for those children who participated in a fewer number of activities per week ($r (71) = .55$, $p<.05$) as compared to those children who participated in a higher number of activities per week ($r (71) = .13$, n.s.) (see Figure 3). This indicates that as parental support increases, overall well-being also increases for those children who are participating in a lower number of activities per week.

Additionally, results revealed significant interactions between parental support and activity participation per week in the prediction of children's perceived academic competence ($F (3) = 4.37$, $p<.01$, $R^2_{change} = .13$). Results from follow-up analysis indicate a significant positive correlation between parental support and academic competence for those children who participated in a lower number of activities per week ($r (71) = .39$, $p<.05$), as compared to those who participated in a higher number of activities per week ($r (71) = -.09$, n.s.), (see Figure 4). This indicates that as parental support increases, perceived academic competence increases for those children who are participating in a lower number of activities per week.

Figure 3

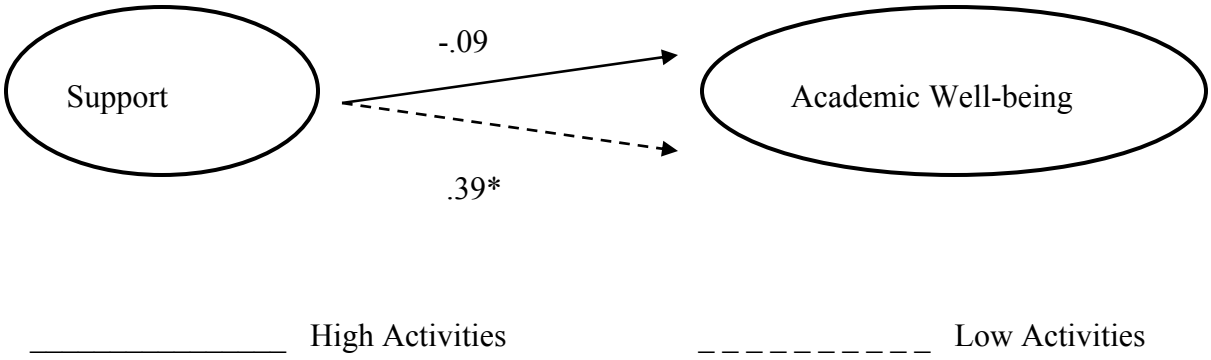
Simple Effects Testing of Moderated Relations between Parental Support and General Extracurricular Activities per week in the Prediction of Overall Well-Being



* p< .05

Figure 4

Simple Effects Testing of Moderated Relations between Parental Support and General Extracurricular Activities per week in the Prediction of Academic Well-Being



* p< .05

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine the correlations between extracurricular activity participation, well-being, perceived academic competence, and parental involvement among elementary school children. A secondary purpose was to examine the interaction between activity involvement and parental involvement (e.g., support or pressure) in the prediction of well-being and academic competence. The results of the current study revealed many interesting correlations and interactions between the variables. The discussion will begin with an explanation of correlations followed by discussion of each individual hypothesis.

Demographic Correlations

A significant positive correlation between child's sex and parental support indicates that female children report higher levels of support from parents during extracurricular activities. Alternatively, Anderson et al. (2003) found no significant gender differences with respect to parental support. The authors did, however, report a significant gender difference with respect to parental pressure, where boys reported increased levels of parental pressure. It is possible that boys and girls are experiencing differing levels of parental involvement, either support or pressure, during extracurricular activities. Often, parents use differing parenting styles based on the sex of their child, which espouse certain gender roles and stereotypes (Benokratis, 2002, as cited in Putnam-Walls & Karuppaswamy, 2004). Parents may feel that boys and girls should be treated differently while participating in activities. A belief might exist, suggesting that boys respond better to pressure, due to masculine stereotypes, and girls respond better to support during activities, due to feminine stereotypes.

A significant positive correlation was found between a child's grade level and reports of overall well-being. This indicates that as a child's grade increases, he or she reports increased levels of well-being. It is possible that children in lower grades, such as grade four, have more difficulty identifying and expressing their feelings and perceptions about themselves, as compared to children in higher grades, such as grade six. This identification often requires abstract thinking and reasoning, a skill that most children in grade four are only just developing (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). Piaget argued that at approximately age nine children are just beginning to enter the concrete operational stage of cognitive development (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). In the onset of this stage, egocentrism begins to diminish and operational thinking begins to develop (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). By age 11 or 12, children are moving into the more mature stages of concrete operational thinking (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). Some of these children might even be moving into early stages of the formal operational thinking, where abstract reasoning is starting to develop (Huitt & Hummel, 2003). By grade six, reasoning around self-perception may be more developed and so could account for an increase in reported well-being with grade level. Similarly, there was a significant positive correlation between a child's age and reports of overall well-being, indicating that as a child becomes older, he or she reports higher levels of personal well-being. This could also be due to reasoning abilities surrounding self-perception as children increase in age.

There was a significant positive correlation identified between a child's age and his or her perception of academic competence. Harter (1982) argues that children under the age of eight years have not yet developed the abilities to correctly identify personal academic competence. Past the age of eight, however, children's ability to correctly

identify academic competence increases with age, and the discrepancy between perceived and actual academic competence decreases (Harter, 1982). It is interesting that the same correlation did not exist between grade and reported academic success. It is possible that children within each grade level differed on perceived academic success based on their age. For instance, within the group of grade six's, ages ranged from approximately 11 to 13 years, and so the perception of academic competence increased among this group as age increased, even though all children were still in the same grade.

Significant positive correlations were found between parental education levels and extracurricular activity involvement. As both maternal and paternal education levels increased so did a child's participation in extracurricular activities per week. It may be that parents with high levels of education are well-informed regarding the potential benefits of activities in a child's life. These parents may be more likely to encourage their children to pursue interests outside of school time. It could also be possible that parents with higher education levels hold more demanding jobs, with more demanding hours. In this case, children may be enrolled in activities to keep them busy while parents are at work.

Additionally, activities that are not affiliated with the school are often associated with large costs and time commitments. It is conceivable that parents with lower education levels do not have the financial means to send their children to a variety of activities outside of school. Transportation could also become an issue for some of these parents, in that they may not have the means to provide transportation for the child.

In related research, Huebner and Mancini (2003) investigated the impact of familial characteristics on children's activity involvement. The authors reported a

significant positive relationship between socioeconomic status (SES) and participation. This may be a reflection of parental education, as in the current study. Often higher SES is a direct result of higher educational attainment, indicating that families with more resources frequently enrol their children in more activities. The correlations between the demographic and main predictor and criterion variables have shed much light in a rather dimly lit area. Further to these intriguing findings are those of the main hypotheses.

Addressing the Hypotheses

In the following section each specific hypotheses will be addressed. The format will be to first restate each hypothesis and then discuss the related empirical findings.

Hypothesis 1: *There will be a correlation between extracurricular activity participation and academic competence, in that those who participate in a moderate amount of activities will benefit most.* This hypothesis was not supported. In the current study there was no significant correlation found between activity participation and academic competence, although the correlation was in the expected direction. This statistically non-significant finding differs from previous research. Gilman et al. (2004) reported a relationship where children involved in a moderate number of activities had higher levels of academic success when compared to children involved in lower or higher numbers of activities. Powell et al. (2002) reported a similar relationship in grade one students from low SES backgrounds. Moreover, Eccles and Barber (1999) and Eccles et al. (2003) found that different varieties of activities, including academic clubs, sports, performing arts, prosocial activities, and school involvement, were all positively linked with academic success.

Frequently, the measure used in past research for academic success has been either a number or letter grade, normally a child's grade point average (GPA, e.g., Gilman et al., 2004; Powell et al., 2002). GPA is a teacher's perception of the student's performance. As Fletcher and colleagues (2003) suggest, children who participate in activities outside of school are often more socially and behaviourally skilled than children who are not involved in activities. These children may then be given a higher rating by the teacher, as they are perceived as 'good' students. Children involved in many activities may also possess qualities that contribute to higher grades, such as good work ethic, good decision making skills, maturity, and independence (DeMoulin, 2002). These characteristics could make these students seem more desirable in the classroom, and so they receive higher grades on subjective elements of the curriculum.

The current study used an alternative measure of academic competence. Instead of examining GPA, the children who participated in this study rated themselves and judged how they felt they were achieving academically. For example, the student would have decided which of the following two statements was either 'really true for me' or 'sort of true for me': "Some kids feel that they are very good at their school work, but other kids worry about whether they can do the school work assigned to them" (Harter, 1985). This and other similar statements accounted for the perceived academic competence score. It is possible that the students in the current sample rated themselves as less successful in school than their teacher might have (perhaps a more realistic picture of academic success), and therefore no significant correlation with activity involvement was found. It is also possible that younger children in the sample were not accurately recognizing their actual academic performance, as this ability increases with age (Harter,

1982), and so a link with activity involvement was not evident. Future research may want to compare children's perception of academic ability to actual ability, as measured by a standardized grading system.

The links between academic achievement and activity participation have been investigated frequently in past literature. Past results have not been replicated in the current study, most likely due to measurement differences. Extracurricular activity participation has correspondingly been associated with many definitions of well-being in the past. Following is a discussion of this relationship as found in the current study.

Hypothesis 2: *There will be a positive correlation between extracurricular activity participation and well-being.* This hypothesis was supported. There was a significant positive correlation between activity involvement and a student's overall well-being. This indicates that as a child participated in more activities per week outside of school, his or her well-being increased. It could also indicate that as a child's well-being increases, he or she is more likely to participate in more activities throughout the week. It is possible that these relationships exist due to the supportive environment of most activities. Continuing to improve in an activity may increase self-confidence and motivation. These may positively impact upon children's well-being.

This finding is a consistent replication of Fletcher et al. (2003), who reported similar correlations in a grade four sample. While the same measure of well-being was not used, similar constructs were examined. The authors found that children who participated in activities did not show signs of internalizing or externalizing behaviours; were more behaviourally and socially skilled; and were more independent and mature, as compared to children who participated in only a few or no extracurricular activities.

Similarly, DeMoulin (2002) examined well-being and extracurricular involvement in high school students. Here, well-being was defined somewhat differently than in the current study, but analogous constructs were of interest. Students who participated in activities were more mature, socially skilled, and sympathetic. These students also had more adaptive decision making skills, as compared to their counterparts who participated in few or no activities outside of school. Additionally, Eccles and Barber (1999) and Eccles et al. (2003) reported a positive relationship between activity involvement and school enjoyment in adolescents.

Alternatively, Richard and Aries (1999) found no correlation between sports activities and well-being in a sample of college students. It may be that other activities or a variety of activities contribute to well-being, as compared to only sports; or that a high level of well-being increases the likelihood that students will participate in a variety of activities other than just sports. The discrepancy between these authors' results and other authors, who have found positive relationships, could be in part due to the sample populations studied. It is a possibility that college students have other factors contributing to their sense of well-being that may hold more influence than extracurricular activities, such as living expenses, employment, and/or relationships with partners. These life stressors do not, for the most part, exist for elementary children or even high school students; and so may influence well-being in college students in such a way that extracurricular activities are not a protective factor.

In addition to the importance of these novel findings, parental support was also found to be related to some of the variables of interest.

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Hypothesis 3: *Reports of parental support will be positively correlated with well-being and academic success, as well as the frequency of involvement in extracurricular activities.* This hypothesis was partially supported. First, there was a significant positive correlation between parental support and well-being. This indicates that as children perceive higher levels of parental support during activities, they will report higher levels of well-being. Support requires encouragement, reinforcement, and dedication from parents. These parenting techniques will likely lead to increased confidence and motivation, which can contribute to a child's overall feeling of well-being. Anderson et al. (2003) examined children's enjoyment and anxiety in activities. While enjoyment and anxiety during activities are not exact operational definitions of the current construct of well-being, they do contribute to a child's general overall reported well-being. The authors found an analogous positive correlation between parental support and enjoyment. They also established a significant negative correlation between support and children's anxiety during activities.

Second, there was a significant positive correlation between parental support and perceived academic competence. In an investigation of factors affecting children's achievement in school, Lee-Corbin and Evans (1996) found that children who were labelled 'achievers' by their teachers had higher levels of support from parents, as compared to children who were labelled as 'underachievers'. The authors reported a significant negative relationship between support and underachieving children, indicating that general parental support influences academic success. While there is evidence to suggest that parental support, in general, is positively linked to children's academic success (e.g., Lee-Corbin & Evans, 1996), the current examination of these two variables

was mainly exploratory. Current findings suggest that an increase in support in activities is associated with an increase in reported academic success. It may be that a parent's support during activities is indicative of support in other facets of a child's life. It is possible that this support is suggestive of a child receiving support in academic areas, thereby increasing competence scores. Huebner and Mancini (2003) reported a positive relationship between support and activity involvement and a secondary relationship between activity involvement and academic success; however, the direct link between support and academics was not made.

Finally, there was no significant relationship established between parental support and extracurricular activity participation. Parental involvement in activities has been found in the past to be positively correlated with activity involvement. Fletcher et al. (2000) found inconsistent results between grade nine and grade ten girls. In grade nine, parents who participated in activities were more likely to have children who also participated in activities, but this correlation did not exist for girls one year older. However, parental warmth and reinforcement (comparable constructs to the current 'parental support' variable) were each positively correlated with activity participation in both grade levels. Fletcher and Shaw (2000) also found similar relationships in girls, where authoritative parenting, often linked with a supportive family environment, was associated with activity involvement. Huebner and Mancini (2003) too reported a parallel relationship between support from parents and activity involvement in elementary school children.

Anderson and colleagues (2003) developed the *Parental Involvement in Activities Scale* to examine the impact of support or pressure from parents on a child's involvement

in activities. The authors (2003) found that parental support was positively correlated with extracurricular activity participation. While the same measure was used to examine parental involvement in the current study, these results were not duplicated. The participants in both studies were approximately the same age; however, participants from the study by Anderson et al. (2003) were taken from large schools in a suburban area of the Midwestern United States. These children, as well, had access to a variety of extracurricular activities within the school setting, which the current sample may not have had. These differences between the samples may account for the competing results.

There are positive associations between parental support and both well-being and academic competence. In addition to these findings, there were significant negative associations found between parental pressure and both well-being and academic competence.

Hypothesis 4: *Reports of parental pressure will be negatively correlated with well-being and academic competence, as well as the frequency of involvement in extracurricular activities.* This hypothesis was partially supported. There was a significant negative correlation between parental pressure and well-being. This indicates that an increase in parental pressure is related to a decrease in a child's well-being. Anderson et al. (2003) reported a similar negative correlation between parental pressure and children's enjoyment in activities, but parental pressure was not significantly correlated with anxiety during activities. The current study reinforces the idea that as parental pressure increases, children's well-being decreases. In this instance, it is possible that pressure to do well contributes to decreased self-esteem and, in turn, decreased overall well-being. There may also be a cyclical pattern that has not yet been

identified. As an example, an increase in pressure is linked to decreased well-being, which in turn is linked to a decrease in performance, which is then associated with another increase in parental pressure. Future studies may be able to tease apart these interesting relations.

Next, there was a significant negative relationship between parental pressure and academic competence. Children may feel stress from parents, contributing to a decreased sense of ability to perform. Academic success may then be negatively influenced. Children might spend more time practicing in order to please their parents and, in doing so, spend less time on their school work. This hypothesis was exploratory but followed an intuitive path whereby using pressure as a parenting technique has been linked to negative outcomes in childhood. Georgiou (1997) investigated the impact of general parental pressure on grade six students. Results indicated that parenting with pressure had a significant negative relationship with school achievement, as reported by teachers. Also, Lee-Corbin and Evans (1996) identified a lack of support from parents as a factor that may inhibit a child from achieving in the classroom. While these do not look specifically at pressure during extracurricular activities, it is a possibility that parenting with pressure will extend into all facets of a child's life.

No significant links were found between parental pressure and extracurricular activity involvement. Correspondingly, Anderson et al. (2003) found that parental pressure was not a significant predictor of activity involvement. It is possible that parents exert pressure when a child is already committed to an activity and, subsequently, the child's participation may not increase. It could also be likely that parents who exert pressure do not allow their child to quit an activity and, therefore, involvement does not

decrease. Also, this child may not want to become involved in new activities because of past pressure from home. These factors do not lead to either an increase or decrease in participation and so no correlation could be established.

The importance and implications of the aforementioned correlations allow for a broader understanding of the links between extracurricular activities, parenting variables, and children's well-being. In the next section, more advanced interactions between differing levels of parental involvement and extracurricular activity participation in the prediction of well-being and academic competence will be discussed.

Hypotheses 5: *Differing levels of parental involvement will interact with extracurricular activity participation in the prediction of overall well-being and academic competence.* This hypothesis was supported. Through hierarchical multiple regressions, four interactions were identified and will be explained in sequence:

1. Parental pressure x activity involvement in the prediction of well-being;
2. Parental pressure x activity involvement in the prediction of academic competence;
3. Parental support x activity involvement in the prediction of well-being;
4. Parental support x activity involvement in the prediction of academic competence.

Parental pressure x activity involvement in the prediction of well-being. There was a significant interaction between parental pressure and extracurricular activity involvement to predict overall well-being in children. When activity involvement was separated into high and low categories, follow-up analysis revealed a negative relationship between pressure and well-being for students who participate in high numbers of activities, and

not for those who participate in low numbers of activities. This indicates a detrimental impact from parental pressure on well-being for children involved in many activities, as compared to those involved in a few or no activities.

It is a possibility that students who participate in many extracurricular activities possess specific characteristics that may impact their response to pressure. These students may want to please their parents, they may want to do well in a specific activity, or they may want to be part of a group. Children sometimes join many activities to fulfill personal needs but, when they experience pressure from parents to improve or to never quit, feelings, stress, and worries about consequences may become internalized, thereby decreasing a child's overall well-being.

Another possibility could be that students are in many different venues of the same activity, for instance, if a child plays hockey, he or she may participate in multiple practices and games per week, may be on more than one team, and may be involved in adjunct activities, such as speed skating. Hockey could be a large part of this child's life. These children may experience pressure from parents to be the best and to continue improving. It is possible that hockey may be a key part of this child's future in the minds of the parents and, therefore, the child receives a lot of pressure. As these children may be outgoing, socially skilled, and well behaved, it is likely they will internalize the pressure, which may contribute to decreased well-being.

This specific interaction was exploratory and not yet examined in the literature. However, Mahoney and Cairns (1997) examined the role of extracurricular activities as a protective factor. The authors reported that activities could act as a protective factor against negative outcomes in adolescence, specifically school drop-out. They also

reported that adolescents who had lower life skills benefited more from some extracurricular activities, as compared to those students who had higher life skills and participated in many activities. This suggests that students participating in many activities may not benefit as much as students participating in fewer activities. When parental pressure is taken into consideration, the children participating in many activities experience a decrease in well-being. It is possible that children in fewer activities are experiencing other negative influences in their lives and, subsequently, pressure does not significantly impact well-being. Fletcher et al. (2003) indicated that activities that are involuntary for children, such as church, are not associated with well-being. Instead, activities that are voluntary (i.e., no parental pressure to participate exists) will be linked to increased well-being.

Luthar and Becker (2002) examined the relationship between pressure and outcomes in children in grades six and seven from high socioeconomic households. The authors expressed that these children experienced high levels of pressure to achieve in all aspects of life from their parents. The pressure to achieve was positively linked to internalizing behaviours, distress, and substance use in girls. While this does not examine a link with activities, children from high SES families are likely to participate in many activities. The pressure they experience may negatively impact that area of their life as well.

In all, it may be that parents who are overly attentive may dictate a child's activities in their best interest (Lagacé-Séguin & Coplan, 2005), which may in turn lead to a decline in a child's well-being. Lagacé-Séguin and Coplan (2005) investigated differences between emotion coaching and emotion dismissing parenting styles. They

found that children who were already skilled in the area of emotion regulation were negatively affected by maternal emotion coaching. These children experienced more anxiety than children who were not skilled in emotion regulation. This indicates that children who demonstrate abilities in activities and well-being will be more negatively affected by parental pressure than those who do not already possess such high level abilities. The message taken from the current finding is for parents to exert less pressure on children who are participating in many extracurricular activities. If they do not, their children's well-being may be at-risk.

Parental pressure x activity involvement in the prediction of academic competence. There was a significant interaction between parental pressure and activity involvement in the prediction of academic competence. Follow-up analysis revealed a negative correlation between pressure and academic competence for those children who participate in low numbers of activities, and not for those who participate in high numbers of activities. This indicates that for children in a fewer number of activities, pressure from parents is having a negative impact on the child's perceived academic skills. This interaction has not yet been examined in the research.

This relationship is different from the previous interaction predicting well-being. Children who participate in a low number of activities per week likely have different characteristics than those who participated in many activities per week. These children may be quiet, shy, or less outgoing. They may have lower self-esteem or less developed social skills. They may feel that they are only good at one or two activities outside of school. These children may already question their abilities in other areas of their lives. For these children, parental pressure is going to negatively impact self-esteem. As

elementary students spend a large portion of their time in the school setting, pressure may impact a child's perception of how well he or she is performing academically. Children who participate in low numbers of activities may come from low SES backgrounds. Children in high SES backgrounds may be participating more frequently. Luthar and Becker (2002) examined the impact of pressure on well-being and academic achievement of students from high SES households. While pressure was negatively associated with well-being, it did not significantly influence academic grades. This may suggest that children, who are participating in many activities, have other protective factors that mediate the impact of pressure on academic performance, such as study skills or teacher support.

Georgiou (1997) investigated the impact of parental involvement on school achievement in grade six children. It was reported that receiving high levels of pressure from home was negatively associated with actual school achievement. Similarly, Lee-Corbin and Evans (1996) reported that a lack of support from parents negatively impacted academic success in children who were classified as 'underachievers' by their teachers, suggesting that children participating less in school were not receiving support at home. Pressure in extracurricular activities may carry over indirectly into other important areas of life, including self-perception. It is possible that there are other areas these children feel inadequate, but these were not examined in the current study. The message then taken from the current results is for parents to exert less pressure on children who are participating in low numbers of activities. If they do not, their children's perception of personal academic competence may be harmed.

Parental support x activity involvement in the prediction of well-being. There was a significant interaction between parental support and activity involvement in the prediction of overall well-being. Follow-up analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between well-being and parental support for children who participate in fewer numbers of activities, and not for children who participate in high numbers of activities. This interaction has not been examined to date in the literature.

It is intuitive that support would combine with activity involvement to predict well-being as both are positive influences in a child's life. The idea that children who participate in low versus high numbers of activities may benefit more is interesting. It is possible that parents with children in only a few activities can devote more time to supporting their child in those activities, as compared to parents with children in many activities. In the latter instance, parents may have to spread support over many activities, for instance they may not be able to attend all games, practices, or performances. This might decrease a child's sense of support from their parents.

Additionally, children who participate in high versus low numbers of activities may have different characteristics. Children in high numbers of activities may be outgoing, mature, independent, and socially skilled (DeMoulin, 2002; Fletcher et al., 2003). These children may not benefit as much from parental support because they already possess many adaptive skills that can be linked with increased well-being. Children involved in lower numbers of activities may need that extra support from parents to contribute to increased well-being during and outside of activities. These children may not possess the adaptive skills, like high self-confidence or independence, which children who participate in many activities might have. Instead, they need outside

encouragement from parents to feel confident during activities. This confidence, instilled by parents, may increase a child's sense of overall well-being. As indicated by Lee-Corbin and Evans (1996), children who are underachievers, but identified as able, frequently lack parental support. These children may not possess the adaptive skills that achieving children have already acquired. Instead, children who receive support from home may excel in areas of well-being (e.g., Lee-Corbin & Evans, 1996). The message taken from these current findings is for parents to show more support for children who are participating in low numbers of extracurricular activities. While support will benefit all children, these children require external support to increase their overall well-being.

Parental support x activity involvement in the prediction of academic competence. There was a significant interaction between parental support and activity involvement in the prediction of academic competence. Follow-up analysis revealed a significant positive relationship between support and academic competence for children who participate in fewer numbers of activities, and not for children who participate in high numbers of activities.

Dearing (2004) examined the correlations between supportive parenting and academic success across neighbourhoods differing in SES and quality. The author reported a positive relationship between supportive parenting and academic success. Follow-up analyses revealed that supportive parenting was more beneficial to children in low quality, low SES neighbourhoods. As previously discussed, there may be a tendency for children from low SES families to participate in fewer activities, due to the expenses associated with activities. For these children, parental support will have a greater impact

on academic success than for children who participate in greater numbers of activities (i.e., children from high SES families).

As mentioned formerly, parents may be able to provide seemingly more support to children in lower numbers of activities because they are able to attend all practices, games, and performances. Also, children who participate in fewer activities may exhibit characteristics that require extra support from parents to increase their sense of self, such as low self-esteem. These positive influences of support will impact multiple areas of a child's life, and schooling takes precedence in elementary aged children. Therefore, support will specifically impact upon a child's perception of his or her academic competence.

Lee-Corbin and Evans (1996) examined the difference between children who are achieving and children who are underachieving in the classroom. Both groups of children were able to achieve, based on standardized testing. Achieving children had support from parents at home, while under-achieving children lacked support. The current study indicates that children who lack support from home would benefit more from participating in a low number of activities, as compared to children who already have support from parents. These activities could act as a supportive environment and increase academic success in these able, but underachieving children.

While the interaction between support and activity participation has not been directly examined in the research, Huebner and Mancini (2003) note the positive impact of parental support on extracurricular activity involvement, as well as on academic success. While connections between the variables were not made directly, they provided a building block for the current study. If the connections had been made, it is possible

they would reinforce the current conclusions. The message then is similar to that of the previous interaction discussed. Parents should show more support for children participating in lower numbers of activities. Support will benefit all children, but these children require that outward expression of support to increase positive self-perception, particularly in the area of academic competence.

In general, value is placed on involvement in many varieties of extracurricular activities. Parental support and parental pressure may play an important role in how children perceive their abilities in different areas of their lives. How children understand their abilities will impact upon their overall well-being, as well as their academic competence. Unfortunately, because of the increased value of these activities, some children may be experiencing increased pressure from parents to succeed. This pressure will negatively affect well-being, for children involved in many activities, and perceived academic competence for children involved in a low number of activities. However, increased parental support during activities will positively affect a child's well-being and academic success, particularly for those in fewer activities who may require extra encouragement from parents.

Implications

The results and conclusions of the current study hold multiple implications for real world application to the field of School Psychology. A positive relationship was established between extracurricular activity involvement and well being in elementary school children. It is important that all children in this age bracket have equal opportunity to be involved in activities outside of school time. Children's access to activities may be restricted for many reasons, including family finances, transportation,

availability, or adult supervision. These results have the abilities to influence school policy to help create activities that are available to all students. A school psychologist could be responsible for educating schools and administration about the importance of extracurricular activities for elementary school children. In this role, a school psychologist may become the link between schools and the school board, supplying valuable information to both, as well as making informed suggestions about how to overcome obstacles, such as bussing or adult supervision. Additionally, a school psychologist may be instrumental in designing and implementing new policies for schools regarding extracurricular activities.

As transportation and bussing can often be difficult obstacles, it then becomes the communities' responsibility to offer activities close to home. Here, a school psychologist might again act as an educator for community officials. He or she might additionally act as a link between school and community outlets for information and resource sharing. To encourage activity participation in children, it is likely the school and community will have to work cooperatively to provide appropriate venues, supervision, and variety.

The current study, as well, holds implications for parental education surrounding parental practices during extracurricular activities. It is important to educate parents on the differences between pressure and support. For example, the manifestation of each of these parental variables may be defined and discussed, as well as techniques to increase support and decrease pressure. It is also important to educate about the possible impacts pressure and support may have on children. As a school psychologist, this education may be carried out in group or individual settings. While counselling for families and parents may not be the primary responsibility of a school psychologist, there are many other

instances during the school year where he or she could provide such education. During parent-teacher meetings, individual parent meetings, or school open house meetings, a school psychologist may act as an educator for parents. Similarly, extracurricular activities may sometimes be used as a therapeutic recommendation for children with low self-perception. In discussing this recommendation with parents, school psychologists can educate regarding the importance of support for children.

Limitations and Future Research

The current study investigated links between extracurricular activities, parental involvement, well-being, and academic competence. However, the results cannot be generalized to all elementary school children. While an attempt was made to obtain data from a diverse population, by approaching rural, suburban school, and inner city schools, volunteer bias was still evident. The demographics of the sample indicated that the majority of the respondents were from intact families, living in middle to upper class homes. The majority of parents, both mothers and fathers, had obtained at least post secondary education at the Bachelor's level. Additionally, the children were mostly in either grade five or grade six. While the sample did not indicate differences between grades, it also did not equally represent all elementary grades.

The measurement used in the study, while not a limitation as such, may impact upon the generalizability of the results. The current study used children's self-reports of well-being and academic competence. Self reports can have inherent biases. It is possible that children gave more desirable answers than their true opinions. Future research should attempt to compare a child's perception to outside perceptions, particularly for academic success. It would be interesting to investigate the

discrepancies, if any, between the current measure of academic success and the actual grade a child would receive in the classroom.

The interactions established in the current study were exploratory. It will be important for future research to try to replicate the results. Similarly, inconsistencies among past research still exist surrounding the correlations that were examined, for instance the correlations between parental involvement and extracurricular activity participation. Future researchers should attempt to duplicate these relationships in differing samples of elementary school children. Similarly, replication of the results is also important with specific at-risk groups of children. The current study focussed solely on the normal-developing population. Future research could examine if analogous correlations and interactions exist for at-risk populations, such as children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. This may provide further evidence for all children to have access to a variety of extracurricular activities.

While many correlations between activity participation and positive child outcomes have been investigated, a causal link has not yet been established. The investigation of a causal link is important to establish if activity participation causes increased well-being and/or academic competence. If this is the case, then it could provide further evidence for school-wide activity initiatives in the elementary grades.

Conclusion

The current study has made some important additions to the literature base. Some past findings have been replicated and new perspectives have been offered on topics lacking support in the current literature. For instance, while extracurricular activity participation and well-being have positive associations with each other, correlations with

academic achievement may only be supported when grades are used as a measure of academic success. Further, the thesis built upon previous research to establish interactions that have not yet been examined. Interactions between parental involvement (e.g., either support or pressure) and extracurricular activity participation in the prediction of both overall well-being and perceived academic competence have been found to be significant. There is an indication that support and pressure can have differing relationships with well-being or academic competence, based on the frequency of activity involvement. These significant interactions provide a foundation for future research in the area of extracurricular activity participation, well-being, academic competence, and the moderating connections with parental involvement during participation in activities.

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Appendix A

The Self-Perception Profile for Children

What I Am Like

Name: _____Age:_____Grade: _____
Please circle: Boy or Girl

Sample Sentence

	Really true for me	Sort of true for me				Sort of true for me	Really true for me
(a).			Some kids would rather play outdoors in their spare time		Other kids would rather watch T.V.		
1.	☐	☐	Some kids feel that they are very good at their school work	BUT	Other kids worry about whether they can do the school work assigned to them.	☐	☐
2.	☐	☐	Some kids find it hard to make friends	BUT	Other kids find it's pretty easy to make friends.	☐	☐
3.	☐	☐	Some kids do very well at all kinds of sports	BUT	Other kids don't feel that they are very good when it comes to sports.	☐	☐
4.	☐	☐	Some kids are happy with the way they look	BUT	Other kids are not happy with the way they look.	☐	☐
5.	☐	☐	Some kids often do not like the way they behave	BUT	Other kids usually like the way they behave.	☐	☐
6.	☐	☐	Some kids are often unhappy with themselves	BUT	Other kids are pretty pleased with themselves.	☐	☐
7.	☐	☐	Some kids feel like they are just as smart as other kids their age	BUT	Other kids aren't so sure and wonder if they are smart.	☐	☐
8.	☐	☐	Some kids have a lot of friends	BUT	Other kids don't have very many friends.	☐	☐

9.	☐	☐	Some kids wish they could be a lot better at sports	BUT	Other kids feel they are good enough at sports.	☐	☐
10.	☐	☐	Some kids are happy with their height and weight	BUT	Other kids wish their height or weight were different.	☐	☐
11.	☐	☐	Some kids usually do the right thing	BUT	Other kids often don't do the right thing.	☐	☐
12.	☐	☐	Some kids don't like the way they are leading their life	BUT	Other kids do like the way they are leading their life.	☐	☐
13.	☐	☐	Some kids are pretty slow in finishing their school work	BUT	Other kids can do their school work quickly.	☐	☐
14.	☐	☐	Some kids would like to have a lot more friends	BUT	Other kids have as many friends as they want.	☐	☐
15.	☐	☐	Some kids think they could do well at just about any new sports activity they haven't tried before	BUT	Other kids are afraid they might not do well at sports they haven't ever tried.	☐	☐
16.	☐	☐	Some kids wish their body was different	BUT	Other kids like their body the way it is.	☐	☐
17.	☐	☐	Some kids usually act the way they know they are supposed to	BUT	Other kids often don't act the way they are supposed to.	☐	☐
18.	☐	☐	Some kids are happy with themselves as a person	BUT	Other kids are often not happy with themselves.	☐	☐
19.	☐	☐	Some kids often forget what they learn	BUT	Other kids can remember things easily.	☐	☐
20.	☐	☐	Some kids are always doing things with a lot of kids	BUT	Other kids usually do things by themselves.	☐	☐
21.	☐	☐	Some kids feel that they are better than others their age at sports	BUT	Other kids don't feel they can play as well.	☐	☐

22.	☐	☐	Some kids wish their physical appearance (how they look) was different	BUT	Other kids like their physical appearance the way it is.	☐	☐
23.	☐	☐	Some kids usually get in trouble because of things they do	BUT	Other kids usually don't do things that get them in trouble.	☐	☐
24.	☐	☐	Some kids like the kind of person they are	BUT	Other kids often wish they were someone else.	☐	☐
25.	☐	☐	Some kids do very well at their class work	BUT	Other kids don't do very well at their class work.	☐	☐
26.	☐	☐	Some kids wish that more people their age liked them	BUT	Other kids feel that most people their age do like them.	☐	☐
27.	☐	☐	In games and sports some kids usually watch instead of play	BUT	Other kids usually play rather than just watch.	☐	☐
28.	☐	☐	Some kids wish something about their face or hair looked different	BUT	Other kids like their face and hair the way they are.	☐	☐
29.	☐	☐	Some kids do things they know they shouldn't do	BUT	Other kids hardly ever do things they know they shouldn't do.	☐	☐
30.	☐	☐	Some kids are very happy being the way they are	BUT	Other kids wish they were different.	☐	☐
31.	☐	☐	Some kids have trouble figuring out the answers in school	BUT	Other kids almost always can figure out the answers.	☐	☐
32.	☐	☐	Some kids are popular with others their age	BUT	Other kids are not very popular.	☐	☐
33.	☐	☐	Some kids don't do well at new outdoor games	BUT	Other kids are good at new games right away.	☐	☐
34.	☐	☐	Some kids think that they are good looking	BUT	Other kids think that they are not very good looking.	☐	☐

35.	☐	☐	Some kids behave themselves very well	BUT	Other kids often find it hard to behave themselves.	☐	☐
36.	☐	☐	Some kids are not very happy with the way they do a lot of things.	BUT	Other kids think the way they do things is fine.	☐	☐

Appendix B

Parental Involvement in Activities Scale

Directions: **Below are 16 questions about how your parents are involved with activities you participate in outside of school. Please circle 1 if the sentence never applies to you and your parents, please circle 2 if the sentence sometimes applies to you and your parents, please circle 3 if the sentence usually applies to you and your parents, and please circle 4 if the sentence always applies to you and your parents. Please try to answer all the questions as best you can.**

1) When I tell my mom or dad that I want to sign up for an activity or lesson, they think it's a good idea.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

2) My mom or dad push me to sign up for activities or lessons that I'm not sure I want to.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

3) My mom or dad try to make sure that I get to my games, practices, lessons, or performances.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

4) My mom or dad listen to me when I say I want to sign up for an activity or lesson.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

5) My mom or dad let me decide which activities or lessons to sign up for.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

6) My mom or dad get upset when I don't do as well as they would like me to in my activities.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

7) My mom or dad try to make sure I get what I need to be in activities or take lessons, like a uniform or instrument.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

8) My mom or dad sign me up for activities or lessons without asking me if it's okay.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

9) My mom or dad care about all of my activities.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

10) My mom or dad want me to be in too many activities.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

11) My mom or dad might be mad at me if I don't sign up for certain activities or lessons.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

12) My mom or dad pay attention to only some of my activities.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

13) My mom or dad would be upset if I dropped out of an activity.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

14) When it comes to my activities, my mom or dad expect too much of me.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

15) When it comes to my activities, my mom or dad think that the most important thing is that I have fun.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

16) My mom or dad want me to spend too much time in activities outside of school.

Never	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1	2	3	4

Appendix C

Extracurricular Activity Participation

In general, how many times per week do you participate in extracurricular activities?

Please circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Please indicate the types of prosocial activities, if any, in which you participate?

Volunteering
Bible Study
Girl Guides
Cadets
Church
Youth Group
Boy Scouts
Other

How many times per week, if any, do you participate in prosocial activities?

Please circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Please indicate the types of sports, if any, in which you participate?

Basketball
Swimming
Track and Field
Hockey
Football
Figure Skating
Curling
Cheerleading
Tennis
Martial Arts
Soccer
Baseball
Volleyball
Gymnastics
Rugby
Speed Skating
La Cross
Badminton
Golf
Other

How many times per week, if any, do you participate in sports?

Please circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Please indicate the types of performing arts, if any, in which you participate?

Drama/Theatre
Instruments
Dancing
Band
Other
Singing
Musical Theatre
Choir
Improv

How many times per week, if any, do you participate in performing arts?

Please circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Please indicate the types of school involvement activities, if any, in which you participate?

Student Government
Chess Club
After-School Clubs
Public Speaking
Pep Club
Peer Tutoring
Debate
Other

How many times per week, if any, do you participate in school involvement activities?

Please circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Please indicate the types of academic clubs, if any, in which you participate?

Science Club
English Literature Club
Enrichment Programs
Math Club
Second Languages
Other

How many times per week, if any, do you participate in academic clubs?

Please circle one: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 or more

Appendix D
General Information

The questions on this form are optional, but please answer as many as you can.

Your gender (please circle one): Male Female
Your age:
Your child's name:
Gender of your child: Male Female
Age of your child: _____(Years)_____(Months)

- Your marital status (please check one):

  - Single _____
  - Married _____
  - Common-Law _____
  - Divorced _____
  - Separated _____
  - Widowed _____
  - Other _____
    Please specify: _____

For the following questions please complete either one or both.

- Mother's educational level obtained (please check one):

  - Some grammar school _____
  - Completed grammar school _____
  - Some high school _____
  - Completed high school _____
  - Some post-secondary education _____
  - Completed post-secondary education (Bachelor's level) _____
  - Completed graduate school _____
  - Other _____
    Please specify: _____

- Father's educational level obtained (please check one):

  - Some grammar school _____
  - Completed grammar school _____
  - Some high school _____
  - Completed high school _____
  - Some post-secondary education _____
  - Completed post-secondary education (Bachelor's level) _____
  - Completed graduate school _____
  - Other _____
    Please specify: _____

Appendix E

Free and Informed Consent Form

Extracurricular Activity Participation in Elementary School Children: Links to Well-Being and Academic Achievement.
Emily Case

Dear Principal and Teacher,

I am masters' student in the Department of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. In partial fulfilment of my graduate degree in School Psychology, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Lagacé-Séguin, and I am inviting you to participate in my study in which I am examining Extracurricular Activity Participation in Elementary School Children: Links to Well-Being and Academic Achievement. The purpose of the study is to examine the relationships between parenting and participation in extracurricular activities on children's well-being and academic achievement.

If you should decide to participate, teachers in your school will be asked to provide time for the researcher to come into the classroom and administer three questionnaires with the children who are participating. This would take approximately 20 minutes. In addition, you will be asked to distribute information sheets and questionnaire packages to parents, and collect the completed packages. You will be provided with a summary of the results and the implications of the results.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. School services and programs will not be affected by participation.

All information collected for this study is completely confidential. Questionnaires will be kept in the strictest of confidence. Study results will be reported in ways to ensure complete confidentiality of all participants. Also, we will not be analyzing the data on any one response; instead we are focusing on average responses from all participants. No individual participants will be identified without their permission.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Emily Case, by phone at [redacted], or by e-mail at [redacted], or Dr. Daniel Lagacé-Séguin by phone at (902) 457-6460, or by e-mail at daniel.lagace-seguin@msvu.ca. This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have any questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board, by phone at 902-457-6350 or by e-mail at research@msvu.ca. As well, if you would like a summary of the results at the end of the study please complete the information at the end of this information sheet.

Yours very truly,

Emily Case, B.Sc (Honours),
M.A.S.P. (Candidate)

Daniel Lagacé-Séguin, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, MSVU

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study.

_____ _____
Participant's signature **Date**

_____ _____
Researcher's signature **Date**

One signed copy to be kept by the researcher, one signed copy to the participant.

Please check one:

_____ I do not require a summary of the results

_____ I would like a summary of the results at the end of the study

Name:_____

Email address: _____

Or

Mailing address: _____

Appendix F

Free and Informed Consent Form

Extracurricular Activity Participation in Elementary School Children: Links to Well-Being and Academic Achievement.
Emily Case

Dear Parent,

I am masters' student in the Department of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. In partial fulfilment of my graduate degree in School Psychology, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Lagacé-Séguin, and I am inviting you to participate in my study in which I am examining Extracurricular Activity Participation in Elementary School Children: Links to Well-Being and Academic Achievement. The purpose of the study is to examine the relations between parenting and participation in extracurricular activities on children's well-being and academic achievement.

If you should decide to participate, you would be asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which would take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your child will also be asked to complete three questionnaires. These questionnaires will ask questions about your child's participation in extracurricular activities; about parental involvement in extracurricular activities; and about his/her well-being, for example how he/she feels about how he/she is doing in school and how he/she gets along with friends. These questionnaires will be administered during class time and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. If you would like a summary of the results at the end of the study please complete the information at the end of this information sheet.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. Your child's grades, school services, and school programs will not be affected if you or your child decides not to participate or withdraw from the study.

All information collected for this study is completely confidential. Questionnaires will be kept in the strictest of confidence. Study results will be reported in ways to ensure complete confidentiality of all participants. Also, we will not be analyzing the data on any one response; instead we are focusing on average responses from all participants. No individual participants will be identified without their permission.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact me, Emily Case, by phone at [redacted], or by e-mail at [redacted], or Dr. Daniel Lagacé-Séguin by phone at (902) 457-6460, or by e-mail at daniel.lagace-seguin@msvu.ca. This research activity has met the ethical standards of the University Research Ethics Board at Mount Saint Vincent University. If you have any questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact the University Research Ethics Board, by phone at 902-457-6350 or by e-mail at research@msvu.ca.

Yours very truly,

Emily Case, B.Sc (Honours),
M.A.S.P. (Candidate)

Daniel Lagacé-Séguin, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology, MSVU

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you fully understand the above information and agree to participate in this study, and allow your child to participate in this study.

_____ _____
Participant's signature **Date**

_____
Child's name

_____ _____
Researcher's signature **Date**

One signed copy to be kept by the researcher, one signed copy to the participant.

Please check one:

_____ I do not require a summary of the results at the end of the study

_____ I would like a summary of the results at the end of the study

Name:_____

Email address: _____

Or

Mailing address: _____