

## Leisure and Identity Formation in Male and Female Adolescents: A Preliminary Examination

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Identity formation is thought to be one of the major developmental tasks of adolescence. However, relatively little attention has been paid to the role of leisure activities in this critical developmental process. This study provides an initial examination of the relationship between participation in various categories of leisure activity and level of identity development for male and female adolescents. Survey ( $n = 73$ ) and interview ( $n = 20$ ) data were collected from a sample of grade 10 students (mean age = 15.8 years). The questionnaire included measures of time use, identity development status, and self esteem, while the interviews focused on attitudes towards self and towards leisure activities. Analysis showed that level of participation in sports and physical activities was positively associated with identity development for females ( $r = .45$ ,  $n = 35$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but not for males, even though females were less likely than males to self identify as "physically active". Time spent watching television was negatively associated with identity development for males ( $r = .41$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $p < .05$ ), but not for females. Participation in social and other free time activities was not significantly associated with identity development for either gender. The findings suggest that different leisure activities can have either beneficial or detrimental effects on the identity formation process. Moreover, the relationship between leisure and identity development seems to depend on both gender and the gendered nature of leisure activities.

**KEYWORDS:** *Leisure participation, adolescence, identity development, gender.*

### Introduction

Almost thirty years ago Erikson (1968) suggested that the formation of a strong and coherent sense of identity was *the* crucial developmental step associated with the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In the period since Erikson's book, researchers such as Marcia (1980) and Waterman (1985) have refined the concept of identity formation and examined the different psycho-social pathways and patterns associated with it in adolescent development. It has been acknowledged that identity development may be a difficult and complex task for many adolescents, and that difficulties with this process may be associated with psychological stress and anti-social behavior (Adelson, 1980; Wires, Barocas & Hollenbeck, 1994). Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been paid to social or lifestyle factors which may affect this developmental process. One important component of adolescent lifestyle, which may potentially facilitate or complicate the formation of per-

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sonal identity, is that of leisure and free time use, including participation in leisure activities. Analysis of the relationship between leisure participation and adolescent development, therefore, is important for both practice-related and theoretical reasons. A better understanding of this relationship can provide a basis for the development of programs and opportunities designed to alleviate some of the problems associated with adolescence, and to encourage positive psycho-social development. In addition, examination of the role of leisure in adolescence can contribute to advances in the theoretical understanding of identity formation for this developmental group.

### *Identity Development Theory*

According to developmental theory, the development of personal identity or sense of self includes the dual processes of individuation and social relatedness (Josselson, 1980). While individuation refers to the need to separate self from others (especially one's family of origin), and to develop a sense of agency and autonomy, social relatedness refers to the need for group identification, to develop relationships with other people and to see oneself as someone located in a particular social world. Both individuation and social relatedness involve the exploration of options and alternatives. Eventual identity achievement is thought to be reached once those alternatives have been adequately explored and there is a relatively stable commitment to a particular sense of self (Waterman, 1985).

Some theorists have tended to conceptualize the pathway to identity formation as a linear progression closely associated with general psycho-social development (e.g., Rosenthal, Gurney & Moore, 1981). That is, at any one time, an individual can be characterized as having reached a particular level of identity development or psycho-social maturity. This developmental process is thought to continue throughout the life cycle. However, the main identity crisis typically occurs at adolescence, and rapid developmental change is expected during these years (Erikson, 1959 and 1968).

Other theorists, notably Marcia (1980), have elaborated on the different ways in which adolescents deal with the "identity crisis" as ego-identity statuses or stages. The initial stage (identity diffusion) is one of confusion, in which alternatives are not examined and no commitment to any particular identity is made. Exploration of alternatives but without commitment, or putting off any decisions about self, is called "moratorium", while "foreclosure" refers to premature commitment to an unsatisfactory identity without prior consideration of alternatives. True identity achievement is thought to occur only when alternatives have been fully explored and a commitment made to one particular set of options. Adolescents may go through one or more stages in different identity statuses before they reach identity achievement, or they may become "stuck" at a particular stage (Waterman, 1985). Furthermore, identity development may occur differentially for different domains (e.g., political ideology, religious orientation and work orientation) (Lavoie, 1994).

In both theoretical conceptualizations, however, the initial stage experienced by adolescents is one of confusion, lack of sense of self, and low identity development. The final successful "stage" of identity formation (a stage not necessarily achieved by all adolescents) is characterized by psychosocial maturity and a coherent sense of self as an independent person.

It is also important to note that the developmental process is thought to be context specific (Lavoie, 1994), and affected by the environment. That is, life experiences, including everyday activities and interactions with others, may well affect the developmental process. These experiences can provide adolescents with opportunities to test out different skills, to evaluate different outlooks and perspectives and thus to "try out" or explore different identities (Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991). In this sense, identity development can be seen as a social construction of self (Tait, 1993).

### *The Influence of Sports and Other Leisure Activities*

Because free time and leisure activities consume a considerable amount of adolescents' daily time (Csikszentmihayli & Larson, 1984), it seems likely that leisure participation may have some effect on the identity development process. Despite the lack of systematic analyses of this relationship, there are indications in the literature that suggest that such a relationship may exist.

According to Kleiber, Larson and Csikszentmihayli (1986), the kinds of free time activities that may be beneficial developmentally for adolescents are those which involve challenge, effort and concentration. This is because these kinds of activities may represent important transitional situations for adolescents that bridge the gap between childhood play and adult work. The notion of challenge also implies personal involvement and the testing of alternatives.

It is further suggested that sports may be an important type of transitional activity for adolescents. Not only do sports represent physical and mental challenge, but they also may play a role in adolescent development by providing an identity (e.g., as a soccer player or a skater) based on a sense of competence and/or identification with a social group (Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991). To date there have been few studies which have attempted to test these suggested relationships empirically. Using the Rosenthal, Gurney and Moore (1981) measure of identity, Kleiber and Roberts (1990) showed a modest positive relationship between sport involvement and identity development. Another study of male college athletes (Malmisur, 1976), however, found that athletes had lower rather than higher levels of ego development compared to their non-athletic counterparts. This suggests the possibility that "arrested development" (Berzonsky, 1983) or foreclosure might be occurring related to the narrow range of experiences in some athletic environments.

There is also a lack of empirical research on the effect of other leisure activities on the identity development process. Free time activities such as hobbies or music might logically be expected to contribute positively to identity development, since they can be "involving", provide challenge, and de-

mand effort. Larson (1994) suggests further that participation in youth organizations as well as hobbies may have developmental benefits in terms of helping to inculcate a resistance to delinquent behavior. Television, on the other hand, would seem to have little developmental potential since it rarely involves challenge or effort (Kubey & Csikszentmihayli, 1990). Although television does present images of possible adult roles, the images presented are often limited by stereotypes (Signorielli, 1989), and adolescents watching television are not involved or participating in the social settings and interactions they are viewing. Social activities, which constitute a large component of adolescent free time (Garton & Pratt, 1987; Poole, 1986), might be expected to be beneficial because they may facilitate the social relatedness aspect of identity formation.

Overall, analysis of the literature on identity formation and the relationship between leisure participation and adolescent development suggests that further empirical research is needed to explore this relationship. Moreover, since different kinds of activities may have different effects on identity development, the need to distinguish sports and physical activities from social activities and from passive activities such as television watching is evident. It should be noted, too, that the relationship between leisure participation and developmental change could be bi-directional. That is, leisure activities may be influenced by developmental change as well as having an impact on the developmental process itself. Nevertheless, the main thrust of the theoretical literature is on the role of leisure as a causal agent affecting development. It is this theoretical formulation that clearly has implications for recreational practice and for the allocation of resources for adolescent leisure participation, since it suggests that some types of free time activities may be more beneficial, developmentally, than others.

### *The Influence of Gender on Leisure and Development*

Any analysis of the relationship between leisure and identity development needs to take gender into account. The literature provides clear evidence that variations in leisure participation and interests are associated with gender (Poole, 1986) and that many adolescent activities are characterized by their gender stereotypical nature (Eder & Parker, 1987; Garton & Pratt, 1987). Thus the relationship between participation and development may be different for male and female adolescents. In an ethnographic study of extracurricular activities in middle school, Eder and Parker (1987) found that social status was associated with stereotypic male (sports) and female (cheerleading) activities, and that those activities in turn reinforced such characteristics as toughness, aggressiveness, achievement orientation and competitiveness for males, and appearance management and emotional control for females. This is consistent with the notion of identity development being socially constructed and dependent upon environmental influences.

Apart from differences in activity participation and gender socialization, though, it has been suggested by Gilligan (1979; 1982) that female developmental processes may differ from those of males in some fundamental ways. Gilligan argues that developmental theory as proposed by Erikson and others is androcentric, is based on research with males only, and ignores the fact that females may proceed along a different developmental pathway and have different developmental needs. Specifically, research by Gilligan and others (Gilligan, 1982; Gilligan, Ward, Taylor & Bardige, 1988; Miller, 1976) suggests that intimacy, connectedness with others, and caring is more central to the identity formation of women than men. Accordingly, women's sense of self through relationships with others may precede, or proceed along with, the autonomy and individuation aspects of identity development which are more central to male identity.

Research that has looked at gender differences in identity development has found that the traditional measures of identity development (i.e., those based on Erikson's original conceptualizations) reveal few differences between male and female adolescents in terms of their pathways towards maturity (Archer, 1989; Streitmatter, 1993). The traditional measures used in these studies emphasize the autonomy and independence aspects of development rather than social relatedness or connectedness. Accordingly, Streitmatter (1993) suggests that these individuation components of identity development may be relevant and important to both male and female adolescents. She also suggests that identity development may be more complex for females than for males because females live in a male-dominated society, and because their developmental processes are closely tied to their sense of connectedness with others as well as their independence and separateness from others. Currently there is a lack of measure or scales which incorporate both the intimacy and the autonomy aspects of identity development.

The discussions of how adolescent development may vary by gender have implications for the analysis of leisure and identity development. For adolescent girls, the need for activities which encourage independence and autonomy may be particularly great, since many of the activities they are involved in during their free time tend to emphasize connectedness and social relationship (see Garton & Pratt, 1987). In addition, since girls live in a male-dominated world it may be important for them to challenge traditional "feminine" roles through participation in non-traditional activities. Indeed, this would seem to be consistent with the notion of identity development being enhanced through challenging activities and through the exploration of alternative ideas and alternative identities. This latter argument about non-traditional activities could also be made about male development. That is, there may be potential developmental benefits for young males of challenging traditional male roles and participating in more "feminine" activities. The recent finding that male college students are more "conforming" than female students, and that this may interfere with their ego devel-

opment (Mabry, 1993) further reinforces the idea that non-traditional activities (i.e., activities that are not stereotypically male) may be beneficial for males if they are able, initially, to resist sanctions against such participation.

Since sport has traditionally been a male preserve, the suggestion that traditional versus non-traditional activities may have differential effects implies that sports may affect male and female developmental processes differently. For males, while sports provide young men with a set of challenging and involving leisure activities, they also tend to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity (Messner, 1989; Messner & Sabo, 1990). The "narrowness" of the male sports environment with its emphasis on authoritarianism and instrumental achievement may also act to reduce the extent to which male sport can provide a real exploration of alternative ways of thinking about self for young males. This is consistent with Kleiber and Kirshnit's (1991) contention that while sports may be an important factor in positive identity development for some, they also run the risk of contributing to premature "foreclosure" in male athletes.

For female adolescents, on the other hand, sports may provide both physical and mental challenge, while at the same time also provide a new way of thinking about self which challenges traditional notions of femininity (Archer & McDonald, 1990; Kane & Snyder, 1989). Thus the potential developmental benefits of sports and physical activities for adolescents and young women may be particularly strong.

In terms of other leisure activities, it could be argued that social activities, since they are more identified with "feminine" roles (e.g., see Kostash, 1987) might be more beneficial for males and represent more of a challenge to males than to females. Other free time activities, such as music and hobbies, by providing involvement and challenge, may also be developmentally beneficial for adolescents of both genders. Television, on the other hand, might be expected to have few developmental benefits for either males or females.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to provide an initial examination of the relationship between identity development in adolescence and participation in leisure activities. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data, the study provides descriptive information on adolescent time use patterns and on level or stage of identity development for both males and females. It then analyses the relationship between identity development and level of participation in categories of leisure activity: specific categories being sports and physical activities; social activities; television watching; and other free time activities. Based on the literature on gender differences in identity development, and the suggestion that specific types of activities may affect male and female development differentially, these relationships are analyzed separately for males and females. The expectations were: first, that sports and

physical activity participation would be positively associated with identity development level, especially for females; second, that social activities would also be positively associated with identity development, especially for males; third, that free time activities (other discretionary activities excluding sports, television and social activities) would be positively associated with identity development for both genders; and fourth, that time spent watching television would be negatively associated with identity development for both genders. Since self esteem may be associated with both identity development (Josephs, Markus & Tafarodi, 1992), and with participation in specific types of leisure and sports activities (Hall, Durburow & Progen, 1986; Wankel & Berger, 1990), self esteem is also taken into consideration in the study and is used as a control variable in the analyses.

## Method

### *Sample Selection and Procedures*

The study involved the collection of survey and interview data with a sample of grade 10 students from one particular school in southwestern Ontario. The school was located in a mixed industry town (population 90,000) approximately 100 km from Toronto. The school serves an area of the city which is primarily Euro-Canadian, working class, and characterized by low to middle income suburban housing developments.

The survey part of the study was conducted first. The students who participated were all enrolled in Grade 10 English. Since English is a compulsory subject, this class was selected to ensure a representative sample of grade 10 students. The school worked on a semester system under which only half the students (randomly assigned) were enrolled in English classes at any one time. With the permission of the Head of the English department and the English teachers, students in all English classes running at the time of the study were invited to take part in the survey. This included students in three advanced level classes and one general level class. None of the students (nor the parents of the students) refused to participate, and on the date when the survey data were collected all students present filled out the survey instrument. This resulted in a sample size of 74. A number of students were absent from the school on the data collection day, and these students were thus excluded from the study. In addition, one questionnaire was unreadable, and this too was excluded from the analysis, resulting in a final sample of 73 students (38 males and 35 females).

### *The Survey*

The survey instrument included questions on students' time use patterns. The respondents were asked to estimate the amount of time they spent on different pre-determined categories of obligatory and non-obligatory, or leisure, activities. The four categories of obligatory activity were time spent at school ("at school"), doing school work after school ("homework"), home

chores, and paid work ("job"). The non-obligatory, or leisure, activity categories were sports and other physical activities ("sports"), watching television ("television"), spending time with friends ("social activities") and other free time activities ("free time"). This last category ("free time") was designed to be a residual category for all other discretionary activities such as hobbies, reading, music and crafts as well as clubs and youth organizations. The four activity categories were selected, based on previous time use and beeper studies (e.g., Csikszentmihayli & Larson, 1984), to represent the most common types of activity for adolescents, and to be inclusive by incorporating all non-obligatory time use except for sleeping and other personal care activities. Television was included as a separate activity because it is ubiquitous and represents the most common discretionary activity for adolescents as well as other age groups (Kubey & Csikszentmihayli, 1990).

Students were asked to provide time estimates (i.e., hours and minutes per day) in three separate ways: first, thinking about yesterday; second, thinking about time on a typical weekday; and third, thinking about time on a typical weekend day. The responses to the second and third questions (typical weekday and typical weekend day) were then used to calculate level of participation (i.e., time spent in each type of activity). This was because recall time use estimates were thought to be a better measure than data on yesterday's activities given the small sample size and the possibility of atypical days affecting time scores (see Cospers & Shaw, 1985). Mean time spent on each category of activity was calculated by weighting weekday time by a factor of 5:7 and weekend time by a factor of 2:7. A "standardized" measure of daily time use was then developed for each respondent by summing total time reported, and indicating time in each category of activity as a percentage of total time for each individual. This standardized measure was thought to be more accurate, and thus more valid, than absolute time since there were some inter-individual differences in total time reported. The first measure of time use (i.e., time spent yesterday) was also correlated with the standardized time measure as a further reliability check. The correlation coefficients between time yesterday and standardized time were all statistically significant, ranging from  $r = .30$  for sports activities to  $r = .66$  for television watching ( $n = 73$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The primary measure of identity development in the survey questionnaire was the psycho-social development scale developed by Rosenthal, Gurney and Moore (1981). This is a ten item instrument with Likert scale response categories, and measures the degree to which the respondent has a clear and coherent sense of self as an independent and autonomous individual. Previous research has shown this scale to have a high level of reliability ( $\alpha = .78$ , Rosenthal et al., 1981). Examples of items include, "I've got a clear idea of what I want to be", and "I change my opinion of myself a lot".

Other measures of identity development were included in the questionnaire for descriptive purposes. A shortened version of Marcia's (1980) ego-identity status instrument consisted of four Likert items with each item representing one of the ego-identity status groups (i.e., diffusion, moratorium, foreclosure and identity formation). Since only a short version was included,



this measure was not used for hypothesis testing, but to indicate the extent to which there was evidence of support for each of these status groups. Two Likert-style items were used to indicate whether the adolescent saw his or her identity as being more closely associated with work (including school work) or free time activities. Two additional questions asked students whether their self image included the idea of self as physically active, and the extent to which physical activity was valued.

Self esteem was measured using the Rosenberg (1965) scale, which has been found to have high levels of reliability (Wells & Marwell, 1976). Both this scale and the psycho-social development scale contain a mix of negatively and positively worded questions designed to avoid problems with response set. Finally the survey also included questions asking age and gender.

### *The Interviews*

After completion of the survey questionnaires, interviews were carried out with a subsample of 20 students. All students who completed the questionnaire were asked, at that time, if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview. The survey contained a separate card for students to complete if they were willing to do this. The twenty students who filled out the cards were all interviewed during the six week period following questionnaire completion. They were contacted individually by one of the research assistants on the project and the interview times were arranged to be convenient for them, i.e., during free periods or lunch breaks at the school. All interviews were tape recorded and later transcribed. The interview subsample included eight males and twelve females, and seemed to be representative of the larger sample in terms of level of identity development (mean identity development level for interview sample = 4.78,  $n = 20$ , for non-interview sample = 4.92,  $n = 53$ ;  $F = 0.32$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

The interviews were used to collect qualitative data pertaining to time use and free time activities. Examples of specific questions include, "What are your main leisure activities?", "Which one do you enjoy the most, and why?", and "What kinds of sports and physical activities do you do?". Another section of the interview schedule gathered qualitative information on personal identity, including self descriptions ("How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?"), and a series of questions asking about the importance of various aspects of their lives (i.e., "how important to you is your school work/free time activities/sports and physical activities/friends/family/appearance?"). The individuals' interview responses were connected to their survey responses through the use of birth dates as an identification number.

### *The Analysis*

The survey data were initially analyzed descriptively to examine sample characteristics such time use patterns, personal identity descriptors, and self esteem. One-way analysis of variance was used to examine possible gender

differences for these variables. Correlational analysis (Pearson correlation coefficients) was then used to examine the relationships between level of identity development and time spent in various categories of discretionary activity; namely sports and physical activities, social activities, television viewing and other free time activities. These analyses were done separately for males and females. Partial correlations were employed to look at the relationship between identity and activity participation while controlling for self esteem. The interview data were used to further describe and help explain the relationships between personal identity and participation in leisure activities.

## Results

### *Patterns of Time Use*

The grade 10 students (mean age = 15.8 years, SD = .48) who participated in the study reported spending approximately half of their daily time (excluding sleep and personal care) in obligatory activities (51.58%,  $n = 73$ ) and the other half of their daily time (48.52%,  $n = 73$ ) in non-obligatory or leisure activities (see Table 1). There was a statistically significant difference in obligatory and non-obligatory time between males and females, with females spending more time than males in obligatory activities (55.41%,  $n = 35$  vs 48.10%,  $n = 38$ , respectively;  $F = 6.57$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

There were also significant gender differences in the time spent in different categories of obligatory activity, with females spending more time than

TABLE 1  
*The Distribution of Time to Obligatory and Non-Obligatory Activities for Females and Males*

Type of Activity	Percentage of total daily time			F
	Females ( $n = 35$ )	Males ( $n = 38$ )	Total ( $n = 73$ )	
<b>Obligatory Activities:</b>				
At school	36.24	29.30	32.63	14.20*
Home work	7.53	4.03	5.71	19.22*
Home chores	6.34	3.65	4.94	10.27*
Paid Job	5.24	11.12	8.30	6.40*
Total Obligatory	55.41	48.10	51.58	6.57*
<b>Non-obligatory Activities:</b>				
Sports and physical activities	8.59	13.28	11.03	8.87*
Social activities	14.45	15.31	14.90	0.13
Television	11.41	14.68	13.11	4.73*
Free time	10.19	8.63	9.38	1.10
Total non-obligatory	44.64	51.90	48.42	6.57*

\*Analysis of variance,  $p \leq .05$

males at school (36.24%,  $n = 35$  vs 29.30%,  $n = 38$ ;  $F = 14.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ), doing school work at home (7.53%,  $n = 35$  vs 4.03%,  $n = 38$ ;  $F = 19.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and doing home chores (6.34%,  $n = 35$  vs 3.65%,  $n = 38$ ;  $F = 10.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Males were more likely than females to have a paid job (60.53%,  $n = 38$  vs 40.00%,  $n = 35$  respectively), and they also spent more time in paid work activities (11.12%,  $n = 38$  vs 5.24%,  $n = 35$ ,  $F = 6.40$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

In terms of non-obligatory activities, the highest proportion of time, for both females and males, was spent in social activities with friends (14.90% of total time, 30.77% of non-obligatory time,  $n = 73$ ), followed by television watching (13.11%,  $n = 73$ ), participation in sports and physical activities (11.03%,  $n = 73$ ), and participation in other free time activities (9.38%,  $n = 73$ ). While there were no statistically significant gender differences in time spent with friends or in free time activities, males spent more time than females in sports and physical activities (13.28%,  $n = 38$  vs 8.59%,  $n = 35$ ,  $F = 8.80$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and watching television (14.68%,  $n = 38$  vs 11.41%,  $n = 35$ ,  $F = 4.73$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

The interview data provided some information about the kinds of sports and free time activities that were most common among the students. For the males, the most commonly reported sports activity was hockey, with soccer, basketball, biking, weight lifting and baseball being frequently mentioned as well. Participation in many of these activities was informal and casual, such as pick up games, as well as organized sporting activities. The females also participated in soccer and basketball, but were more likely than the males to report participation in gymnastics, aerobics and jogging. Within the "other free time" category, the most frequently reported activity was music (including listening to music, playing music, singing in the choir), with various games (video games and board games) also being mentioned by several respondents. Social activities involved visiting, "hanging out" with friends, and talking on the phone, as well as parties. Although television watching was a frequent activity, in many cases it did not seem to be considered the activity of choice. Rather, it was done when there was nothing else to do, and the adolescent was "stuck" at home with nowhere to go. The males were particularly likely to talk about television as "boring".

### *Identity Development and Self Esteem*

The identity development scale measure showed that responses tended, on average, to be more positive (indicating a strong sense of self) than negative (indicating a confused sense of self), with the mean score being 4.88 ( $n = 73$ ; possible range being from a low score of 1 to a high score of 7). Consistent with earlier research (e.g., Adams & Fitch, 1982; Streitmatter, 1993), there were no significant differences in identity development level between males and females (4.96,  $n = 38$  vs 4.79,  $n = 35$  respectively,  $F = 0.62$ , n.s., see Table 2).

In terms of Marcia's (1980) ego identity status groups, there was some evidence for diffusion, moratorium and identity formation (mean scores be-

**TABLE 2**  
*Identity Development and Self Esteem Scores for Females and Males*

Scale Measure	Mean Score			F
	Females (n = 35)	Males (n = 38)	Total (n = 73)	
Identity Development Level	4.79	4.96	4.88	0.62
Ego-identity Status Scores (Marcia):				
Diffusion	3.34	3.37	3.36	0.00
Foreclosure	1.63	1.50	1.56	0.16
Moratorium	3.11	3.45	3.29	0.45
Identity Formation	3.99	3.79	3.88	0.12
Personal identity in:				
Work / school work	3.94	4.24	4.10	0.44
Free time	4.91	5.42	5.18	1.71
Physical activity:				
Self as physically active	4.71	5.90	5.33	9.97*
Physical activity as important	5.10	6.05	5.67	5.10*
Self-esteem	5.11	5.52	5.33	3.62*

\*Analysis of Variance,  $p \leq .05$

ing 3.36, 3.29 and 3.88 respectively on a 1 through 7 scale), but little evidence for the existence of foreclosure (mean score for foreclosure being 1.56). Again, there were no significant gender differences in any of the ego identity status levels (Table 2).

The questions on work versus free time identity showed that for both females and males, personal identity was reported to be somewhat more closely tied to their free time and leisure activities than to their paid work or school work (free time identity being given a mean rating of 5.18 out of 7, with work identity being given a mean rating of 4.10). There were significant gender differences, though, in terms of the extent to which self image included an image of self as physically active, and in terms of the importance of being active. The males were more likely than the females to consider themselves to be active (5.90,  $n = 38$  vs 4.71,  $n = 35$  respectively,  $F = 9.97$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and to value physical activity (6.05,  $n = 38$  vs 5.10,  $n = 35$  respectively,  $F = 5.10$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This is consistent with the participation data which showed males to spend significantly more time than females in sports and physical activities.

In terms of self esteem, the analysis indicated, as expected, that the self esteem scores were higher for males than for females (5.52,  $n = 38$  vs 5.11,  $n = 35$ ,  $F = 3.62$ ,  $p < .01$ : possible range 1 through 7). This finding supports previous research in that self esteem scores have consistently been shown to

be low for young adolescent women (e.g., Jackson, Sullivan & Rostker, 1988; Lerner & Karabenick, 1974).

### *Identity Development and Leisure Participation*

The correlation coefficients between identity development (Rosenthal's identity development scale) and the amount of time spent in each category of non-obligatory activity are shown in Table 3. Participation in sports and physical activities was positively and significantly associated with identity development level for females ( $r = .45$ ,  $n = 35$ ,  $p < .05$ ). For males, however, the equivalent correlation coefficient was not significant and was negative ( $r = -.18$ ,  $n = 35$ , n.s.). Thus, the initial expectation that sports and physical activities would be positively associated with identity development was confirmed only for the females.

Time spent in social activities was not found to be significantly correlated with identity development for either males or females. In addition, no significant relationships were found for participation in free time activities and developmental level for either gender. This may have been because the free time category, as a residual category, was too broad and included too diverse a set of activities for any definitive relationships to emerge. Time spent watching television was not found to be related to identity development

TABLE 3  
*Correlations and Partial Correlations between Identity Development Level and Activity Participation for Females and Males*

Type of Activity	Pearson's Correlation Coefficients	
	Females ( $n = 35$ )	Males ( $n = 38$ )
Sports and physical activities	.45*	-.18
Social activities	-.27	.13
Television	-.01	-.41*
Free time	.11	.00
	Partial Correlation Coefficients controlling for Self Esteem	
	Females ( $n = 35$ )	Males ( $n = 38$ )
Sports and physical activities	.31*	-.06
Social activities	-.16	.09
Television	-.16	-.41*
Free time	.13	-.10

\*Correlation coefficient,  $p \leq .05$

for females. However, for males, this relationship was both negative and statically significant ( $r = -.41$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Since analysis showed self esteem to be associated with identity development ( $r = .64$ ,  $n = 38$ ,  $p < .05$  for males and  $r = .52$ ,  $n = 35$ ,  $p < .05$  for females) and with gender ( $F = 3.62$ ,  $n = 73$ ,  $p < .05$ , see Table 2), partial correlations were run between identity and activity participation while controlling for self esteem. These partial correlations coefficients can also be seen in Table 3. They show that the positive relationship between developmental level and sports and physical activity participation (i.e., time spent in sports) for females remained significant even after controlling for self esteem. Thus sports participation, for these adolescents, is shown to be related to identity development independent from, or in addition to, any influence of self esteem. The negative correlation between identity development and time watching television for males also remained significant after controlling for self esteem. Television watching, then, has a negative association with adolescent development independent of any self esteem influences. No other partial correlations were found to be significant.

The qualitative data provided some further insight into the relationships between identity and time involved in various leisure activities. One of the interview questions asked "How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?" The responses to this question indicated some clear gender differences, with males being much more likely than females to describe themselves in terms of the sports in which they participated. This tendency for the males to describe themselves as sports oriented was evident among both frequent and infrequent participators in physical activities and among those with both high and low identity development scores. One male for example, who scored high on both identity development level and on sports participation level, in response to the self description question, said:

I guess, sports minded, fun. I like to do things. . . If we play sports then I'm right into it, but if we go to someone's house, and I don't know the person, then like I'm sort of shy I guess. I don't talk much. But if I'm with my friend then I'm like I won't stop.

(Which sports or activities do you like in particular?)

Well, hockey, that's probably my number one sport . . . and we play soccer and we hack a lot - hackey sack in the park.

This response was not very different from another self description by a male student who was relatively low in both sports participation and in identity development level.

(How would you describe yourself to someone who doesn't know you?)

Kind of shy, I guess, not too shy, but not like the most basic shy person . . . Fun, I like doing a lot of stuff, playing sports.

(You mentioned hockey, what other things do you do?)

Mostly just hockey and weight lifting, working out.

In comparison, one of the female students interviewed, who had reported a high level of participation in sports and physical activities and had

a high identity development score as well, said, when asked to describe herself:

Well, I think I'm motivated and I think that I'm a pretty busy person. And I think I'm probably . . . although I like to get good grades and if I work for them I do manage them, I think that I'm probably more arts oriented than sort of the mechanical or academic things. . . So probably just an ambitious, motivated to do well person. . . I'm more interested in a lot of my free time activities than I am in what I'm doing in school. I have so many of them, especially to do with music, like singing in different choirs and playing different instruments ..

(What about sports and physical activities? How important are those?)

Well, I like to run and I like stuff like tennis and swimming and volleyball, but I'm not really a winter sports person.

In fact, none of the females interviewed described themselves initially in terms of their sports, although some admitted, when questioned further, that sports and physical activities were indeed important to them.

The qualitative data, therefore, tend to indicate that the relationship between sports participation and identity development for females is not because of a conscious self identification as an athlete or a participant. This suggests that the relationship may be more indirect, for example through the provision of a sense of self as strong, or independent. Moreover, the more conscious self identification of males in terms of their athletic and sports participation does not seem to be positively associated with developmental level.

The interview data were not able to shed much light on why television might be negatively associated with developmental level for males. Television watching was clearly not part of any of the adolescent's sense of self. None of the adolescents mentioned television when asked to describe themselves. Moreover, the fact that television was frequently described as boring, especially by males, serves to reinforce the view of television as lacking in challenge and in involvement.

### Conclusions and Discussion

This study was based on a small, relatively homogeneous sample in terms of class, geographic location and race, and represents an initial exploration of the relationship between activity participation and adolescent psychosocial development. It also relied on associational data which limits the inference of causality. That is, selectivity factors influencing adolescents' level of participation in the first place mean that causal inferences must be tentative (Spreitzer, 1994). Nevertheless, the findings do suggest that leisure activities may have both beneficial and detrimental effects on the identity formation process of adolescents. Furthermore, the nature of this relationship between participation and development may depend both on the type of activity participated in and on the gendered nature of the activity. Although the relationships found in this study are associational rather than

causal, theoretical considerations about the effect of life experience and environment on identity formation suggest that the main effect is that of activity participation on developmental processes rather than vice versa.

The findings reported here suggest that, for young women, level of participation in sports and physical activities is positively associated with psychological maturity and identity development. This is despite evidence from the interviews that females did not tend to consider sports participation to be a central part of their identity. This positive relationship with identity development may be because of the challenge and potential for involvement that sports and physical activities can provide, including both the physical and mental aspects of challenge. Challenging and involving physical experiences may be particularly important for young women whose socialization influences tend to encourage caring, fitting in, and concern for others rather than strength and independence (Streitmatter, 1993). This explanation is also consistent with the idea that developmental benefits accrue from participation in non-traditional activities. That is, female participation in sports (which still have male rather than female or gender neutral connotations) may help them to challenge restrictive gender-based prescriptions about appropriate behaviors for women. Thus sports activities, as suggested previously by Kleiber and Kane (1984), may allow females to explore alternative options in the process of determining their own independent sense of self.

For the young men in this study, participation in sports and physical activities did not seem to have an overall beneficial developmental effect. One explanation for this is that sports may have both positive and negative developmental outcomes for young men (cf. Kleiber & Kirshnit, 1991). That is, while sports clearly provide a challenging and involving leisure-time activity for many males, they also tend to reinforce traditional male gender roles (Eder & Parker, 1987; Messner & Sabo, 1990). Thus sports may function to narrow rather than to expand the adolescent male's possibilities for exploration of alternative identities. The idea of sports as a "compulsory" activity for males also supports this explanation by suggesting that young men feel they have to "prove" themselves through sports (Sabo, 1989), rather than feel the freedom to use sports as an exploration of alternative activities and identities (see also Messner, 1989; Wearing, 1994).

The negative association between television viewing and identity development was consistent with the initial expectations of the study, although it is not clear why this effect was evident for males but not for females. The interview data suggested that males may react more negatively than females to television watching and find it to be more boring, and thus less involving. The fact that the males also spent, on average, more time watching television may also help to account for this gender difference in the relationship between this form of activity and identity formation.

The study did not find support for the initial expectation that both social and other free time activities would be associated with identity development. These types of activities may be less important than sports or television in terms of psycho-social development in adolescence. Alternatively,



specific types of free time and social activities may have different effects on development which need to be explored in more detail in future research.

It should be noted that the findings with regard to identity development in this study refer to the individuation, autonomy and independence aspects of identity. Unfortunately they do not include the social relatedness, connectedness and caring aspects of personal identity which may be particularly relevant for young women (Gilligan, 1982; Streitmatter, 1993). If measures were developed which took these aspects of identity into account additional benefits (and detriments) of leisure participation might be revealed. In particular, social activities might be expected to have a greater effect on the social relatedness component of identity than on the individuation component (cf. Grieves, 1989).

Another limitation of this present study was that it only measured level of participation in broad categories of leisure activity, namely sports and physical activities, social activities, television viewing and other free time activities. The collapsing of all non-obligatory activities into these four categories meant that more detailed analyses about the impact of specific types and contexts of activity on developmental processes were not possible. In particular, the collapsing of "other free time activities" into one category may explain why participation in this group of activities did not show a statistically significant relationship with identity development. Different types of methodologies are needed, such as time budget techniques or experiential sampling methods (ESM), to provide more detail on specific kinds of leisure activities participated in by adolescents, and their differential impact on developmental change. Given evidence from this study of the overall positive relationship between sports and physical activities and developmental level for females, and the lack of such a relationship for males, it would seem particularly important to look more closely at this relationship. For example, there is a need to distinguish between different forms of sports and physical activities to see if the relationship with identity development varies according to such factors as type of activity, social context, level of competition, or level of success. The results of this study also indicate a need to distinguish between traditional male and traditional female activities, since they also may have differential impacts on adolescent development.

Although this study did not gather details on the specific nature and context of leisure activities, it does provide support for the contention that some types of leisure activity may indeed have important developmental consequences for adolescents, and that leisure lifestyle may be a component of adolescent development that is worthy of further attention. Furthermore, the findings serve to underscore the need to take gender and the gendered nature of specific leisure activities into account in understanding the relationship between leisure and development.

In terms of implications for practice and for the development of policies and programs for youth, the findings suggest that sports and physical activities are developmentally beneficial for females. Moreover, if the benefit that accrues to females is related to the nature of sports as a "non-traditional"

activity for females, this further implies that other non-traditional activities for both males and females may provide possibilities for the exploration for alternative opportunities, which may in turn facilitate the developmental process. Apart from the positive development benefits of some leisure activities, the fact that high levels of television watching are related to low levels of development suggests that recreation programs in general may be beneficial. If such programs reduce the time spent in this non-involving and "boring" activity, such programs may have indirect developmental benefits, especially for males.

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