

“I Can’t Have My Mom Running Me Everywhere”: Adolescents, Leisure, and Accessibility

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This study examined how adolescents defined leisure and problems of accessibility encountered as they attempted to pursue their chosen leisure activities. Data drawn from semi-structured interviews indicated that regardless of location, the key issue was a shared concern about the general inability to independently access leisure pursuits. Among the causes of frustration were the lack of accessible spaces as well as the social sanctions prohibiting the use of such spaces for unstructured activities. Further constraints included gender, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity and age.

KEYWORDS: *Adolescents, leisure, accessibility*

Introduction

The central role of leisure activities in the lives of adolescents is well documented (e.g. Marsland, 1982; Meeks & Maudlin, 1990; Raymore, Godbey & Crawford, 1994; Smith, 1987; Willits and Willits, 1986). A number of studies also exist on the types of leisure activities and the time devoted to them by adolescents (Furlong, Cambell, & Roberts, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1975; Meeks & Maudlin, 1990; Moller, 1992; Poole, 1986; Smith, 1987). More recently, an emerging area of interest examines the constraints to leisure participation encountered by adolescents (Hultsman, 1993; Raymore, Godbey & Crawford, 1994; Jackson & Rucks, 1995). Jackson, however, pointed out that few leisure studies have considered the role played by “place and space as sources of variations and constraints” (1994, p.113). When geographical variables have been included in studies of undifferentiated populations they appear to be less significant than socio-demographic factors as deterrents to leisure (Jackson, 1994; Shaw, Bonen & McCabe, 1991). Yet, non-driving adolescents who lack full freedom of movement and opportunity are particularly affected by space and place effects, notably in terms of the lack of accessibility (Hultsman, 1993). This study examined the problems of accessibility and independent mobility encountered by young adolescents as they attempt to pursue their chosen leisure activities. Such problems were iden-

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tified as material causes of the frustration expressed by young people regarding their free time.

Theoretical Perspectives

The study of leisure constraints has been addressed in a growing body of interdisciplinary research (c.f., Jackson, 1988 for a review of past literature, as well as Jackson, 1991; 1994; Crawford, Jackson & Godbey, 1991; Jackson & Rucks, 1995; Kay & Jackson, 1991). Much of the research concentrated on both antecedent as well as intervening constraints (Crawford & Godbey, 1987; Henderson, Stalnaker, & Taylor, 1988; Jackson 1990). Thus, conditions which affected an individual's preference for leisure activities were identified as antecedent constraints, while intervening constraints were thought to be those influencing actual leisure participation. Further refinements by Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) and by Jackson, Crawford and Godbey (1993), led to the development of a hierarchical model of constraints, in which intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural impediments to participation in leisure activities were explored. Each level of the constraints hierarchy (such as lack of self esteem at the intrapersonal level, inability to find a friend at the interpersonal level, or structural constraint such as poverty) required successful negotiation before an individual could progress closer to their desired leisure activity. Such constraints, therefore, were not seen as insurmountable barriers to leisure participation. The negotiation process, however, could cause actual participation to be somewhat different from that originally intended. Recent research lends support to this approach (Kay & Jackson, 1991; Jackson & Rucks, 1995).

Constraints to leisure have also been explored from the perspective of social location. Shaw et al. (1991) suggested, for example, that it is not social structures *per se* that act directly as constraints, rather it is the individual's location vis-a-vis such structures—the experience of being poor or female or black or young or old—which affects the access to recreational goods and services.

Hultsman (1992; 1993) made a similar argument, drawing attention to the significant role played by adults in determining the nature of adolescent leisure participation. Her findings suggested that parental influence was important in early adolescents' decisions not to join an activity, while cessation of a leisure activity was frequently influenced by other adults. The position of young adolescents in the social hierarchy not only suggests that they may perceive constraints differently from adults (Hultsman, 1993), but it may also make any negotiation of the hierarchy of constraints more problematic.

We would argue that access to leisure pursuits for adolescents is mediated by their experience of place. Places encapsulate interactions of configured social relations, and reflect multiple levels of power and symbolism (Massey, 1993). Agnew (1994) pointed out that places combine the macro-order of location with the local social worlds, and affect the subjectively ex-

perienced sense of place. For example, where leisure opportunities are located, and whether or not they can be accessed, result from decision making processes undertaken by a combination of private and public capital. For adolescents, such decision making may impinge upon their ability to independently access leisure opportunities. It follows, therefore, that large lot zoning influences how easily friends can meet, while operating hours and routes of public transportation could deprive adolescents of the opportunity to be independently mobile. Because characteristics such as these vary from place to place, the landscape of leisure opportunity for young adolescents varies as well.

Not only do the opportunities for leisure vary from place to place, but the very definition of "what encompasses leisure is neither coherent nor consistent" (Hendry, 1983, p.21). While there have been several attempts to explore the *meaning* of leisure from the perspective of groups of individuals, the focus has usually been on adults (for example, Freysinger & Flannery, 1992; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Henderson, Stalnaker & Taylor, 1988). Recent research by Freysinger (1995), drew attention to the importance of acknowledging age in any attempt to understand definitions of leisure. She suggested that the meaning of leisure is influenced by the interaction of age and socio-cultural factors, and may well be found to vary through the life course. Thus membership of different age cohorts may result in different perceptions of the meaning of leisure. With reference to adolescents, leisure is frequently described in terms of organized activities, (for example Meeks & Maudlin, 1990; Henderson, 1991), and certainly, efforts on the part of schools and community organizations are geared towards that end.

Willits & Willits (1986) contended that, for adolescents, leisure and recreational activities were

"...not only ends, providing immediate gratification and enjoyment...(but are) part of the learning process whereby the individual seeks to establish his/her personal identity, ...practices social and cooperative skills, achieves specific intellectual or physical attainments, and explores a variety of peer, family, and community roles" (p.190).

Others suggested that to provide positive outcomes, leisure requires freedom of choice (Neulinger, 1974; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). For the purposes of this study we chose to define leisure in the broadest terms, as activities outside school and formal employment hours, including both structured and unstructured activities.

With regard to accessing leisure activities, a distinction is usually made between the terms *mobility* and *accessibility*. Mobility is conventionally used to describe a person's ability to move and varies, for example, with that person's financial resources, availability of transportation and physical attributes such as age (Bowlby, 1979). We adopted Moseley's definition of accessibility which implies movement, but incorporates the idea that some tangible benefit will accrue as a result of the movement (Moseley, 1979). Moseley explained that a person driving aimlessly around in a car is mobile, but not, in most cases,

obtaining obvious gratification from that activity. Arguably, however, in the case of adolescents, the gratification may well arise from simply being mobile.

Methodology

This exploratory research had two purposes. The first was to discover what constituted leisure for adolescents. The second was to obtain detailed information about the difficulty or ease with which young adolescents were able to access leisure time opportunities. A variety of qualitative methods were used for this study, including semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions. While the core data were obtained from the adolescents, supplementary information was collected from relevant institutions about the structured leisure activities organized for them.

Through the use of a series of interviews and focus group discussions, we were able to identify practices, contradictions in practice, and to draw on the interplay between personal experience and structural fact (Smith, Dorothy, 1987). The interviews typically lasted for an hour and a half, and the focus group discussions tended to run for two hours. We prefaced the interviews by saying we would like to discover what the participants did in their free time. We attempted to get at the participants' meaning of leisure by saying that we were interested in learning what sort of things they did when they returned from school, what they did in the evenings, on the weekends, during vacations. We then asked if there were things they felt they would really like to do but were unable. If they answered in the affirmative (and they invariably did), we asked what these things were and why they felt they could not do them.

To understand how accessible any leisure time activity was, we asked where the activities were located, how they got there, and whether they encountered any problems in being able to participate in that activity. For both groups of questions we probed for further information based on the answers we received, to make sure we fully understood what the participant was saying, and to obtain details about the activities. In addition, we asked the adolescents how they kept in touch with their friends and where their friends lived.

Both Strauss (1992) and Dey (1993) suggest that in qualitative data analysis, coding and analysis proceed simultaneously. In following their suggestions, we moved from a general statement of interest-area, through data collection, categorization, and analysis, towards a theoretical statement. The categorization process was iterative, there was continual verification, and exploration of further details of the data. The analysis was a circular process of classifying, connecting, and describing. Thorough descriptions which encompass "the context of the act, the intentions and meanings that organize the action, and the process in which the action is embedded" (Dey, 1993, p.31), added to the process of classification and making connections. Patterns emerged from the data, and these are discussed below.

The data from the interviews were transcribed and coded. Coding was done by each author, and checked across interviews. Then, the coding was crosschecked by the other author. First we coded the data according to what the adolescents did. Within the category of leisure activities, we coded activities according to structured (organized by adults) and unstructured (organized by participants and/or friends) activities. Next we looked for differences and similarities by locale, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status. Second, we coded for what the participants wished to do, following the same procedure. The commonalities and differences that we write about emerged from this coding. Similarly, on the issue of accessibility, we grouped statements by structured and unstructured activities, looked for similarities and differences by locale, age, gender, race/ethnicity, and socio-economic status.

A survey was handed to each participant after the interview. The issues were a repetition of what they had previously discussed, but this served as a tool for obtaining lists based on our classification of structured and unstructured activities, and an additional check on the interviews and focus group discussions. The surveys were also used as a crosscheck of the information gleaned from the towns and schools. As with the interviews, the personal information was coded to maintain confidentiality and added to the database.

The three groups of young adolescents (thirteen to sixteen year-olds,) participating in this study were from urban, suburban and semi-rural (rural-urban fringe) settings. Initial contact was through organizations offering structured activities to this age group. A snowball technique was then used to talk to other young adolescents who were not part of such organized groups. Thus, participants in the focus groups were asked to suggest other people of their age whom they thought would be prepared to participate in the research. This approach was seen as a way of obtaining insight to both the collective and personal experiences of adolescent leisure—from the perspective of those who belonged to groups and those who did not.

The Context and the Participants

The adolescents taking part in the study were from three communities in Southern New England. The study area provided an urban/suburban transect over a distance of some 15 miles and included an inner city, a large suburban town and a smaller rural-urban fringe town. A wide income disparity existed between the communities. The city had a 1990 median family income of \$24,774 while the other two communities recorded median family incomes of \$60,518 and \$73,154 respectively (TABLE 1). Differences also existed in the racial/ethnic composition of the communities. In the city 70% of the population were people of color, while in the suburban and rural-urban fringe community the respective figures were 6% and 3% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Table 1 also shows the proportion of young adolescents within each of the communities. The smaller proportion of youth

TABLE 1
Profile of the Study Area

Place	Population	Youth: 12-16 yrs. (% of population in brackets)	Median Family Income
City	139,739	9511 (6.0)	\$24,774
Suburb	60,110	3230 (5.4)	\$60,510
Rural Urban Fringe	22,023	1637 (7.4)	\$73,154

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census 1990.

in the suburban community reflected an aging population. In 1990, this particular community, for long a high status suburb, had the highest percentage of older adults within the metropolitan region. Concurrently, young, upwardly mobile families increasingly selected the rural-urban fringe community as their home, and this is reflected by a higher percentage of young adolescents within the general population of the town. Despite the lower proportion of young people within the suburb, its overall size enables it to provide a broad range of structured youth programs and, like the city, it is able to offer a bus service. The rural-urban fringe town is served only by a commuter bus to the downtown area of the city and a bus for NHL hockey games.

We interviewed 17 males and 21 females, of whom 18 were black, and 20 were white. There were 5 males and 6 females among the 13-14 year olds, and 12 males and 15 females among those aged 15-16. Young people have an increasing need for independence as they grow older in order to be able to explore their surroundings and establish a separate identity outside their families (Hillman, Henderson & Walley, 1973; 1976; Hultsman 1990). Because the acquisition of a driving license goes a long way towards providing this independence, we chose to study a group of *non-driving* adolescents in order to explore the constraints they faced when dependent upon others for transportation.

Results

Adolescents, Leisure and Accessibility

We had anticipated that the availability, or absence, of public transit would result in differences of mobility and accessibility for the adolescents living in the three communities. We similarly expected that the varying levels of recreational and leisure programs offered from town to town would further emphasize the inter-community differences. Although inter and intra-community differences emerged during our discussions with the adolescents,

these were overshadowed by a number of commonalities held by the adolescents in all three communities. These common themes are addressed first.

Commonalities

"Nowhere to go, nothing to do": We suggest that there is a universal belief, held by adolescents, which crosses cultural divides and persists through time. It is the belief that there is "nowhere to go, and nothing to do". Young people often believe that their communities offer little which is of interest to them, and generally fail to address their needs.

"Ain't nowhere to get to on a bus, no movie theater, or roller skating rink."

(Urban female, age 15)

"...that's why many kids call it Simsborring."

(Rural-urban fringe male, age 15)

"...they said we were going to have twin rinks and of course we didn't get that, and we were going to get a McDonald's and we didn't get that, and we were going to get a movie theater and we didn't get thatits pretty sad actually. We don't get much."

(Rural-urban fringe male, age 14)

"I'd like to go to the movies a lot more often—like once a month...they wouldn't do it for us, (*provide a bus service*) 'though they'd do it for the 'seniors' because they are respected members of the community, or something."

(Rural-urban fringe male, age 14)

The adolescents believed that their access to the things they wanted to do in their leisure time was severely limited. They also differentiated between structured, organized activities provided by the community, church or school and unstructured leisure time. Leisure, to the adolescents, quite clearly meant time spent socializing with friends. Thus the complaints about not having a place to go to, or having nothing to do, did not refer to the availability of organized activities. What the adolescents were clearly seeking was a space in which to socialize.

Unstructured activities: The adolescents in all three communities shared a common concern over finding a place, or places, in which to "hang out".

"if we had a teen center, that would be nice"

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 15)

or

"I'd like a park where people can hang out"

(Rural urban fringe male, age 14)

"Hanging out" was clearly the epitome of leisure for the adolescents and among the older age group this need was expressed more frequently, signifying their growing desire for independence. Thus, in response to our question, "What would you choose to do with your free time?", the thirteen and fourteen year-olds expressed the need to find friends with whom to play and do things, while the fifteen and sixteen year-olds simply wanted to hang out or "chill". Here, 'place' matters, because somewhat ironically, it was in the most economically deprived neighborhoods that this need was satisfied

to some extent. The existence of high density, mixed land use in the city, and to a lesser extent in the suburban town, meant that friends usually lived within walking distance and "hanging out" or "chilling" was achieved by simply walking to a friend's house. For the younger adolescents in the suburban town, neighborhoods also formed the focus for their social interaction and unstructured activities such as street hockey, soccer, and skate boarding were organized and accessed easily. For the younger suburban girls, spending time at friends' houses formed the dominant component of their unstructured leisure time.

A rather different picture emerged for the youth living in the relatively affluent rural-urban fringe community. Because of the prevalence of large lot zoning (frequently 2 acres), impromptu "get-togethers" were less common. Activity spaces became more dispersed. Neighborhoods may have had a few adolescents of the same age, but invariably by the age of fourteen or fifteen, interests had diverged and the probability of having a close friend within walking or even biking distance, was low.

"After Elementary School, I think now maybe I have one friend in the neighborhood. You get to Junior High, you lose touch with a lot of your friends."
(Rural-urban fringe female, age 15)

If it should happen that friends lived close by, the adolescents acknowledged their good fortune, but otherwise depended on formally arranged meetings which invariably meant getting a ride.

Regardless of locale, however, if the adolescents wanted to hang out anywhere but at friends' houses, a number of barriers confronted them. The most significant were the restrictions imposed against loitering in public areas.

"You're not supposed to (*loiter in front of a store*); they call the police."
(Rural-urban fringe male, age 14)

All the adolescents, irrespective of their race and ethnicity, were able to narrate incidents where either they, or their contemporaries, had been asked to leave stores or restaurants, or had been restricted from entering them.

"People at _____ thought we were too noisy, and the police came and asked us to leave."

(Suburban male, age 16)

A number of stores, particularly in the large malls, had policies which did not admit unaccompanied adolescents below a certain age. A related issue was that of town-wide curfews. Although the city we studied had recently instigated a curfew after a number of gang related shootings, adolescents from the other two communities also told us of curfews operating and narrated instances of being stopped and asked where they were going.

"They don't really enforce it, but they'll pull you over and ask you where you are going. They just don't want you on the streets after 11.30 P.M."

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 15)

Calls to the police departments, however, resulted in denials of such curfews

in the suburban and semi-rural communities. Perhaps what is important in this case is the adolescents' belief in the existence of such a constraint and their experience of being stopped and questioned.

The adaptive strategy employed by all three groups by Junior High was to place increasing reliance on the telephone to stay in touch with their friends. The broadening of their social base, particularly in the suburbs and the rural-urban fringe, created a spatial mismatch which was best overcome through the medium of the telephone. The telephone also helped the adolescents to overcome their inability to access transportation independently, as well as the restrictions placed on their meeting in arenas designated as public places. For many of the adolescents the hours spent talking on the phone were just another manifestation of "hanging out" and the following quotations vividly illustrate the significance of the telephone in their lives.

"...hours and hours..."

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 14)

"...from 8 to 11 or till my mother yells at me."

(Urban female, age 15)

"...four to six hours over the weekends....sometimes we run out of things to say in the middle and then usually one of us has 'Total Phone', so we call up another friend, but don't let them know there's another person on the phone...it's only fun!"

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 14)

While none of the males talked about being on the telephone for "hours and hours", their responses to our question, "How do you keep in touch with your friends?" indicated that it was very important to them, especially for socializing with the opposite sex. Indeed, so much phone time was taken up by adolescents' socializing that in the two affluent communities parents often resorted to second phone lines for their children or at the very least subscribed to a phone service such as "Call Waiting".

Structured activities: Despite the adolescents' views on what constituted leisure, we explored the relationship of structured activities (formally organized leisure activities) on their lives (Table 2). On examination of these activities we found, not unexpectedly, variations based on the socioeconomic status of the towns. The affluent suburban and rural-urban fringe communities were able to offer a greater variety of structured activities than the city. The number of activities offered, however, varied significantly by age group. The rural-urban fringe community was a case in point because the town stopped offering programs through its recreation department for Junior High-aged adolescents, yet there were few school-based activities for the seventh and eighth graders to compensate. As one adolescent explained,

"In fifth and sixth grades you do crafts or you learn to play sports, then it drops off; (also) there are no inter-town activities at all."

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 16)

In fact, activities such as hockey, soccer, baseball, basketball were available to these younger adolescents through privately organized sports clubs, while

TABLE 2
Structured Activities for Adolescents by Organizer

Organizer	Activities
TOWN/CITY	
a. City	Basketball.
b. Suburb	Skating, hockey, golf, tennis, basketball, baseball, softball, swimming, skating, karate, fitness programs, Bridge (diversity program).
c. Rural Urban Fringe	Golf, crew, tennis, swimming, ice hockey, skating, drop-in gym.
SCHOOL	
a. City	Varies by school, but includes golf, soccer, basketball, football, tennis. Also clubs such as Help the Homeless, computers, hiking, traveling, Black History, for high school students.
b. Suburb	A variety of varsity sports and clubs for high school students.
c. Rural Urban Fringe	22 different sports and 26 clubs at the high school level.
OTHERS	
a. City	YMCA based activities (with paid membership); Church related activities; Scouts/Guides, Boys' Club, midnight basketball.
b. Suburb	Junior Achievement, Church based activities, Scouts/Guides, soccer, football, ice hockey, baseball, basketball, summer theater.
c. Rural Urban Fringe	Summer theater, Junior Achievement, Church based activities, Scouts/Guides, soccer, football, baseball, basketball, gymnastics.

Source: Published brochures and telephone inquiries.

the churches offered a range of other activities. Evidently, the adolescents experienced gaps in information about activities that they could potentially access. This gap was particularly true for city adolescents, where even the researchers faced difficulties in obtaining information from the schools and the city about the recreational activities offered. Most of the information about leisure activities for adolescents was communicated by word of mouth, a testimony to the social nature of the activities. Adolescents appeared to participate in activities primarily because their friends did, a finding similar to that of Hultsman's (1992) study.

"If I had a car...": The second commonly expressed wish was to be independently mobile.

"In order to really have fun you have to have a car."
(Urban male, age 16)

"I'd go to clubs, I'd just be everywhere, I'd never be home."
(Urban female, age 16)

"(if I had a car) I would have fun, I'd go buy something to eat and just hang out..."
(Urban male, age 14)

Reference has been made to the availability of public transit within the study area, and for these non-driving adolescents we had expected this to emerge as a key factor in determining variations in teenage access to leisure pursuits,

given their growing need for independence. Yet, despite the availability of public transit in two of the communities, the adolescents we talked with made use of it only sporadically. The city youth complained that the bus schedules and routes did not always serve their needs if they wanted to go to the movies or the skating rink. Both of these facilities were located in adjacent towns—a reflection of the lack of activities within the city boundaries.

“Basically it gets you downtown and that’s it.”

(Urban female, age 16)

“If you go to the mall you have to pay double fees and we have to hurry up and shop or we be stranded.”

(Urban female, age 16)

For the city youth attending school across town, participation in after-school sports necessitated the use of public transit, since practices frequently extended beyond the time of the ‘late activity’ school bus. The latter operated in all three towns but always on a skeletal route which was frequently considered somewhat daunting to adolescents who had little experience in dealing with public transportation generally.

“I could take the activity bus, but on the map where they show like where all the stops are for the buses, my street isn’t on the map and I don’t want to risk the bus not coming near my house, so my dad picks me up.”

(Rural-urban female, age 14)

Due to the additional financial burden of using public transit, the city youth often chose to participate in structured activities only if they were within walking distance.

In the more affluent suburb little use was made of the public transportation either. The adolescents placed a heavy reliance on parents to transport them across town when they were involved in structured activities or returning from school after sports practices. Like the city youth, they complained that the buses ran on a very limited schedule in the evenings and weekends and, perhaps most significantly, of not wanting to travel on the public buses by themselves. They also felt that it was preferable to telephone parents rather than to spend time taking a circuitous route on the activity bus in order to get home. In this respect they had much in common with their contemporaries in the rural-urban fringe community who had no choice in the matter.

A dependence on rides was crucial to those adolescents in the rural-urban fringe if they were to access their leisure activities. These were inevitably provided by parents or by older siblings and friends with driving licenses:

“I was quite lucky this year because my friend was going out with this boy who was a junior, so he had an older group of friends and we all became friends, so usually wherever I went I had a ride.”

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 15)

For the youngest adolescents, the reliance on parents for a ride did not usually manifest itself as a problem, even though they frequently needed to wait for a time convenient to the person driving them. By eighth grade the situation was very different. Reliance on others for rides emerged as a great frustration in their lives.

“You ask for a ride and then you wait, and they got a phone call, so you are still waiting till they’re done and then of course you’re late.”

(Suburban female, age 15)

Indeed, the complaint by one teenager that, “...I can’t have my Mom running me everywhere...” clearly conveyed the frustration at both her lack of independent mobility and the way in which having her mother drive her around reflected on her personal lack of independence. There was also a concern about how this dependence was viewed by their peers—“You don’t want to be seen being dropped off at the dance by your mom”. However, older siblings serving as drivers were seen as a definite improvement on parents.

For a small minority of the adolescents living in the rural-urban fringe, bicycles and roller blades provided an alternative means of mobility, but in most cases the physical distances involved, the necessity of traveling along busy roads, and the four month winter season precluded or limited their use. As an adolescent approached fifteen or sixteen years old, riding a bicycle was often an unattractive proposition, although at the time of the study the use of roller blades constituted a fashion statement.

We had anticipated that the adolescents living in the rural-urban fringe would be severely disadvantaged compared to their contemporaries in the other two communities because of the lack of public transit. However, we were forced to conclude that for the reasons outlined above, few adolescents availed themselves of this facility and all shared the common problem of independent mobility.

Differences

Differences did exist between the adolescents. Superimposed on these two common themes of ‘access to a desired activity’ and ‘independent mobility’, were a number of other factors specific to gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and age which served to compound the main issues. We first examine these separately and then discuss the cumulative impacts. We do need to caution however, that this is a small group exploratory study, and the assessment of differences is based on a correspondingly smaller number of individual comments.

Gender: As the young adolescents discussed their leisure activities and their problems of accessibility, differences between the males and females became evident. These differences were unrelated to innate traits, rather, they were socially constructed differences between males and females which West and Fenstermaker (1995, p.9), refer to as ‘doing gender’. Gender, therefore, introduced some interesting variations. The girls we interviewed

expressed a preference for more one-to-one contact than the boys, who seemed to be more comfortable joining any group activity in the neighborhood. Due to this preference the younger adolescent girls living in a spatially dispersed community appeared to have a more difficult time socializing compared to the boys. Thus, while boys spoke of joining a street hockey game even if their own friends were not involved, for girls this was an unlikely scenario.

The idea of 'doing gender' is apparent in the following examples. The suburban girls generally felt that boys had later curfews and were allowed more independence—"Because more things can happen to girls..." Thus, as a general pattern, among the suburban adolescents, both boys and girls tended to seek rides from older boys. The girls frequently agonized over how often they could ask for rides from the same person of the opposite sex without their intentions being misinterpreted.

In the city, the gender distinctions played out in a very different way. All the adolescents we interviewed were of the opinion that the movement of boys was more restricted than that of girls. This was frequently due to turf issues among male adolescents across different sections of the city. Thus despite the boys having access to cars, their activity space was severely limited:

"When they get cars they can't go anywhere. They may not be in gangs, but its like you're from _____ so you can't go on this street."

(Urban female, age 14)

Yet another way of looking at how gender is done was the dominant expectation that mothers would drive their children to their various activities. Chauffeuring is just one more manifestation of housework. As, however, more and more mothers engaged in full time employment, the constraints on adolescents are bound to increase.

Socioeconomic: Our interest was in the relationship of socioeconomic status and accessibility to leisure activities. Meeks & Maudlin (1990, p.259) point out that

"leisure activities require the coordination of family timetables and transportation, use of residential spaces, as well as an equity of financial resources...money is...a scarce resource for most youth."

Socioeconomic stratification clearly resulted in different patterns of structured activities between the three communities. Thus, the young adolescents in the suburb and the rural urban-fringe town had a wider range of options available to them than their contemporaries in the city. In addition, given the median family income levels, the cost of participation was not generally seen as a constraint. For the city youth, however, the financial constraints frequently led to them not taking part in any after-school activity at all. Structured programs in the city that were not neighborhood-based were frequently forced to provide transportation for the youth who would otherwise not participate due to cost. Even when the adolescents wanted to simply "hang out", accessing both the money and the necessary transportation to get to places

such as the mall or the movies was dependent on their socioeconomic status. For the lower income families in the city, personal transportation was not always available and so the city youth were frequently unable to depend on their family to get them to places.

Variations in the physical and social contexts of the three communities, introduced lot size difference and therefore differences in the circumstances under which adolescents socialized with their friends. The city youth who were able to hang out with friends rarely mentioned any structured and/or after school activities as part of their leisure pursuits. On the other hand, the adolescents in the rural/urban fringe, isolated by the large lot size in the neighborhood, mentioned their structured activities, but frequently implied these acted as a context for their socializing,

“Well during the summer it was mostly through STFFY (*youth theater group*), I mean if we did not have STFFY we would’ve probably had a lot of trouble in getting together and stuff.”

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 15)

“Its really hard to meet different people, you know all your friends but you really want to meet new people but there are no contacts to meet people and talk, so you are tied to the town and the activities.”

(Rural-urban fringe female, age 16)

Race/Ethnicity: Race/ethnic variation between the communities introduced further problems for the adolescents. Because of the contrasting race/ethnic compositions of the three communities, and the absence of opportunities for the adolescents to mix socially, a feeling of “them and us” emerged from their discussions. In terms of accessing leisure it introduced geographical limits concerning where the groups from each community felt comfortable spending their time. For the city adolescents there was a shared perception of being unwelcome in the suburbs:

“In _____ (*the suburb*) they harass you too much. You be driving, they pull you over and question you. You don’t want to be questioned every time you go there.”

(Urban male, age 16)

For the black, city adolescents, their being “pulled over” was perceived as a function of their race. Suburban and rural-urban fringe youth, who also mentioned being “pulled over” by the police, perceived it as a function of their age. For the suburban youth, however, there was a similar sense of unease about driving in certain areas based on their race/ethnicity,

“ a bunch of guys sitting on a corner listening to a stereo, you don’t exactly want to stop and say, ‘Hi!’ ”

(Suburban male, age 16)

a feeling which in turn, is frequently fostered by parents:

“I have a lot of friends whose parents won’t let them drive through _____ or go to _____ Park”.

(Rural urban fringe female, age 16)

This last comment is relevant because the park to which she referred, straddling the suburban/urban boundary, is well-known locally for its rose gardens. The quote emphasizes how certain geographical areas are designated as 'off-limits' by parents and, given the fact that few structured activities are designed on an intercommunity basis, such fears are likely to be perpetuated.

Age: Despite the relatively small age range within the study participants we did find differences. The fourteen-year-olds appeared to be the group that was caught between the cracks. These adolescents had outgrown the younger youth programs but did not yet have the networks to access activities requiring a ride from persons other than family members (or their friend's family). On the one hand they were trying to prove their independence, while on the other hand, their friends did not drive and so they continued to be tied to the schedules of their parents.

Two adolescents acquired driving licenses during the course of the research. There was general agreement that reaching this socially sanctioned milestone transformed their lives,

"Your territory expands, there's a lot more things you can do, you can find places to go by yourself that you couldn't do before. You find friends for yourself."

(Suburban male, age 16)

Cumulative Impacts: Although the above discussion highlights the impacts of gender, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and age separately, in reality the four variables interact. A hierarchical ordering exists in terms of what is accessible to the adolescents. At the macro-level, race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status appear to establish the initial boundaries between groups in society. Any constraints that the adolescents might encounter is a function of their group identity, which in turn is compounded by micro-level characteristics of age and sex. As we have seen, for a white adolescent female from a rural-urban fringe community, access to the city is strongly curtailed by parents, while the perception of a black adolescent male is that he is highly susceptible to being "pulled over" and harassed by the police in the suburb.

Another way of examining this interaction is in terms of access to vehicles. For the black adolescents in the city, where vehicle ownership per household is 0.91, the likelihood of their being able to have use of a vehicle once they reach the legal driving age is arguably less than that of their contemporaries in the suburbs or rural-urban fringe, where vehicle ownership rises to 1.68 and 2.08 respectively (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1990). Thus for the adolescents in the city, the period of restricted mobility is likely to be longer than for the more affluent adolescents, who, once they reach the age of sixteen, invariably have some limited use of a family car. Furthermore, gender compounds the mobility and accessibility situation of the black urban male through the informal restrictions imposed by neighborhood turf issues.

Places, representing a complicated mesh of relations of domination and subordination (Massey, 1993) serve to confound the leisure aspirations of

the adolescents. Thus adolescents in the urban areas, who are able to hang out with friends in the neighborhood, are frustrated because they are confined to that locale. The movie theaters, skating rinks, and malls are all located out of town and difficult for them to access independently. Even when adolescents in the suburbs have such facilities within their community, they frequently have no independent means to reach them. Furthermore, the norms of social behavior typically discourage the adolescents from lingering in such public places. Thus the social relations inscribed in place are the common source of the shared experiences of frustrations expressed by the adolescents. The socio-demographic factors of gender, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, and age, simply add variations to these experiences.

Conclusions

This study drew attention to the need to disaggregate those findings based on broad groups if we are to gain a fuller understanding of both the definition of leisure and the concept of constraints to leisure activities. It also suggested that place can take on a significant role as a constraint to leisure aspirations for some groups in society.

The findings from this research provided further empirical support for Freysinger's (1995) work which suggested definitions of leisure may vary through the life course. Despite their different backgrounds, the adolescents in this study viewed leisure as unstructured time with friends. We suggest the period of adolescence, with its emphasis on group acceptance and conformity, results in common aspirations regarding leisure activities. Although we were working with a small group, their common definition of leisure emerged clearly and persistently. Such a definition is unquestionably at odds with society's increasing reliance on structured, organized activities as a legitimate way for adolescents to spend their leisure time. It follows, therefore, that there is a need to rethink the role played by structured activities in the lives of adolescents. If what the adolescents want/seek is the free space of leisure, are more and more structured activities likely to alleviate the frustrations they express?

While peer conformity is paramount, young adolescents are also influenced in their leisure decision making by parents and significant other adults, as Hultsman's work has shown (1992, 1993). This research not only lent support to Hultsman's findings concerning whether or not adolescents joined an activity, it also identified the way in which structured activities were used by the adolescents as part of a negotiation process to achieve their desired leisure objective. It further pointed to the sometimes significant role played by adults in affecting the mental maps of adolescents. This was most evident in way the geographical boundaries of adolescent leisure spaces were delimited. We suggest, therefore, that there are policy implications for the way in which structured activities are organized. Evidence from this research suggested that unless more inter-community leisure opportunities are provided, the boundaries and barriers which have been constructed between social groups are unlikely to lessen, while the public spaces that may be

accessible to any group of adolescents are unlikely to change. This area would benefit from further study.

The study also provided links with Jackson, Crawford & Godbey's (1993) and, more recently Jackson and Rucks's (1995) work calling for an appreciation of the negotiations involved in overcoming leisure constraints if we are to enhance our understanding of leisure participation. The adolescents in our study did negotiate in order to achieve their desired leisure participation. Conceptualizing such negotiations in terms of the hierarchy of constraints suggested by Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey (1991), this research suggested that at the interpersonal level, for example, such negotiation included the monopolization of the telephone and soliciting rides from family members and friends. At the institutional level it involved the use of structured activity time for socializing with friends. Thus membership of a theater group was a means of spending time with friends as much as it was a way of expressing their artistic talents.

One further implication of this study was the relevance of place and space in understanding perceived leisure constraints. Earlier studies by Jackson (1994), and Shaw, Bonen and McCabe, (1991) found place to be a relatively insignificant constraint within the general population. When, however, groups such as young adolescents are studied, places, and the spaces separating them, take on much greater importance. Thus, despite the fact that the adolescents in this study negotiated some successful strategies concerning their leisure, they largely failed to achieve *independent* access to a chosen leisure pursuit. Clearly the macro-social order which determines the location of places of interest to the adolescents, the rules and norms governing behavior in public places, zoning lot sizes, and transportation patterns, all contribute to the spatial mismatch which exists between home and where the adolescents want to be. At a time when adolescents are trying to establish new social roles in preparation for a responsible adulthood, the constraints of independent access are the source of much frustration. In addition, the availability of free spaces of leisure are integral components to this growing need for independence. However, given society's increased concern over youth deviance and (mis)use of public space, the possibilities of allocating such places for unstructured leisure appear to be limited. We suggest that further research into the meaning of leisure and the use of public space by adolescents is warranted.

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