



Brock University

# Valued Activities & Positive Adjustment in Adolescence

## What is this research about?

Involvement in youth activities is associated with positive youth development. Much of the research attention to date has focused on organized activities (e.g., school clubs, sports teams, etc.), which typically involve adult supervision, goal setting, rules for behaviour, regular schedules, and/or group settings of similar-aged peers. Yet youth activities that take place in non-organized contexts (e.g., hobbies done alone at home, such as reading, writing, computer programming, and crafts; or talents and special interests, such as mathematics or astronomy), also are important as they may have a great deal of *value* for youth (i.e., high levels of enjoyment, importance, and time spent on the activities). Although activity involvement has been linked to positive youth development, the value that adolescents place on these activities has received less attention. To investigate this topic further, Dr. Teena Willoughby implemented longitudinal examinations of the association between engagement in valued activities and adolescent positive adjustment (i.e., optimism, purpose in life, and self-esteem).

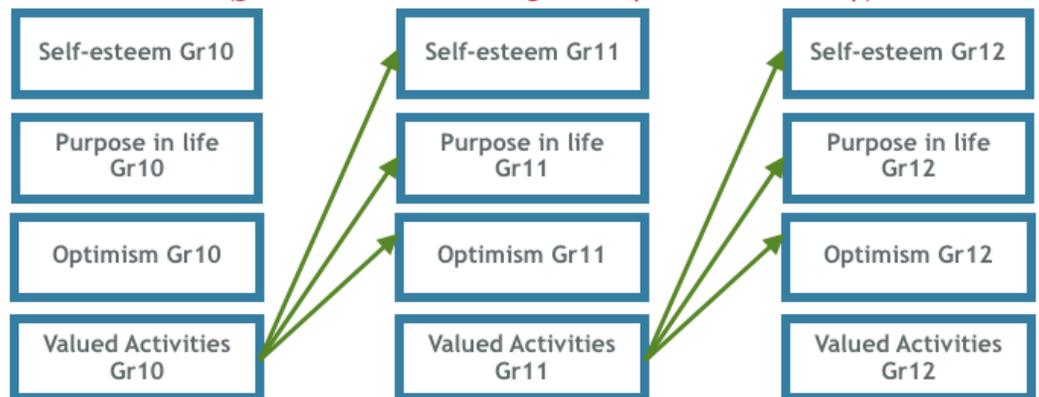
## How did they do it?

Dr. Willoughby and colleagues surveyed 2,270 adolescents (48.7% female) annually in grades 10, 11, and 12. Adolescents reported on their engagement in valued activities and measures of adolescent positive adjustment.

## Results

Results indicated that greater engagement in valued activities predicted higher optimism, purpose, and self-esteem over time among adolescents (see Figure 1), suggesting long-term benefits to engaging in valued activities. Overall, engagement in valued activities appears to be important for adolescent positive adjustment, and may help to foster thriving.

**Figure 1: Associations between valued activities and positive adjustment variables over time (green arrows indicate a significant positive relationship)**



## So what – Where can this research be used in schools?

It may be worthwhile to invest in resources to allow adolescents greater access to activities, interests, or important causes that may develop over time into valued activities. The presence of these resources can act as “affordances” that encourage engagement in these activities. Parents and educators also should actively support and encourage adolescents to consider whether they do, in fact, have valued activities, and if not, to explore available opportunities in an effort to find activities they will value.

## Want to read more on this research?

Find it online here: <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-013-9957-x>

Citation: DesRoches, A., & Willoughby, T. (2014). Bidirectional associations between valued activities and adolescent positive adjustment in a longitudinal study: Positive mood as a mediator. *Journal of youth and adolescence*, 43(2), 208-220.

Or contact: Jayne Morrish, E: [jmorrish@brocku.ca](mailto:jmorrish@brocku.ca), T: 905-688-5550 ext. 4566