Rural Adolescent Occupations

Ashleigh Fairbairn
Skills for Kids, Sydney

Dr Linda Wilson, Otago Polytechnic
Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Honours)
Presentation Overview

- Research Context
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Findings
- Discussion
- Implications and Future Research
Adolescence
- Individuals between 12-18 years of age (Passmore & French, 2003)

The health of New Zealand Adolescents
- The New Zealand Youth Development Strategy (Ministry of Youth Affairs, 2002)

60% of NZ secondary school students drink regularly,
- 34% regularly binge drink
- Rural adolescents rate of binge drinking is 42% (Adolescent Health Research Group, 2008)

Rural New Zealand: “there’s nothing to do, so we drink”
- Adolescent occupational patterns in rural New Zealand
Literature Review

- Occupation
  - Occupation is an essential component of life (AOTA, 1997; Townsend, 1997)
  - Occupation is one of the key determinants of health (Law, 2002)

- The occupation of leisure
  - The nature of leisure in adolescence (Fasoli, 2008; Passmore and French, 2003)

- Factors influencing adolescent occupation
  - Family (Anderson, Holstein, & Due, 2007)
  - Peers (Passmore and French, 2003)
  - Environment (Reijneveld, et al., 2010; Fragar, et al., 2010)

- Adolescent Development
Identified Gaps within the literature

› Occupational patterns of individuals without particular medical diagnosis.
› Adolescent occupational patterns in rural, tourist communities.

Overarching research question

“What are the opportunities for occupation in a rural tourist community, as perceived by local adolescents?”
Methodology

- Research Design
  - Qualitative Descriptive Approach

- Ethics
  - Vulnerable population
  - Researcher safety

- Recruitment
  - Mt Ardmore College
  - Nineteen Participants

- Data Collection
  - Three Individual Interviews (3 Participants)
  - Three Focus Group Discussions (16 Participants)
Findings
Finding One

Adolescents choose to participate in many different occupations.

Six categories of occupation:

- Social (19/19): Alcohol-based, Occupation-based & Relaxed
- Sporting (18/19): Adventure, General & Team Sports
- Time-out (15/19): Computer, Reading, Relaxing & Television
- Employment (6/19): Cafes, Local Industry & Petrol Stations
- Cultural (6/19): Church, Music & Theatre
- Family (6/19): Family holidays, Household activities & Relaxing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Category</th>
<th>Individual Activities</th>
<th>Local Students (n7)</th>
<th>Boarding Students (n12)</th>
<th>Total (n19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>Alcohol-Based</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Occupation-Based</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporting</td>
<td>Adventure</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Team Sports</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time-Out</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The occupational choices that adolescents make are influenced by many factors.

1. Environment Influences
   - Opportunity vs. Barriers and Restrictions

2. Family Influences
   - Occupational Upbringing

3. Peer and Social Culture Influences
   - Peer Pressure
Adolescents’ social and occupational perceptions differ, and influence the occupational opportunities they choose to take part in.

1. Social Perceptions
   – Social Groups
2. Occupational Perceptions
   – There’s nothing to do vs. There’s plenty to do
Perceptions around alcohol and alcohol-based activities differ between particular groups of adolescents.

- The way in which adolescents perceive a specific drinking culture and the drinking habits within that culture influences the way they respond to it.
  - Local
    - Small Towns → Drinking less concealed, but no different to the rest of New Zealand → Decreased response to drink
  - Boarding
    - Small Towns → Expected drinking culture → Response to Drink
Finding Five

Rural adolescents experience multiple barriers that influence their ability to engage in occupations.

1. Transport Barriers
2. Financial Barriers
3. Population Barriers
4. Boarding Hostel Barriers
Adolescents perceive a need for the upgrade and development of occupational facilities.

- Both local and boarding students felt that the current facilities were adequate for a small rural town.

- **Upgrade vs. Development**
  - Local: Upgrade of current facilities
  - Boarding: Development of new facilities for entertainment
1. Adolescents’ perceptions of occupation are shaped by the environments which surround them.

- **Family Environment**
  - Families foster patterns of occupational engagement shaping occupational perception

- **Home Environment**
  - Promotes and pushes particular patterns of occupation

- **Social Environment**
  - Peer interactions shape notions of occupation - challenging and affirming.

- **Physical Environment**
  - Occupational choices relate to the resources and occupations available.
2. Engagement in occupations which require commitment deepens an adolescent’s connection to the environment contributing to positive and healthy development.

- Occupation enables adolescents to develop connections with family, peers, and the environment.
- The strength of the connection is determined by the commitment.
- Committing to an occupation enables the development of life skills.
Implications & Future Research

- Recommendations
  - Mt Ardmore College
  - Social Policy
  - Early Intervention

- Future Research
References


