

Skating to Success: What an Afterschool Skateboard Mentoring Program Can Bring to PUSD Middle Schoolers

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Executive Summary

The following report discusses the potential of an afterschool skateboard mentoring program that pairs college students with middle schoolers in Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD). It explores the divide between the cultures of skateboarding and academia with the goal of creating a more positive relationship. It attempts to explain the harmful effects prohibitory bans on skateboarding in schools have on young skateboarders, and illuminate the unique benefits of skateboarding and their applicability to positive youth development. The research questions include: What potential benefits could an afterschool skateboard mentor program bring to middle schoolers? What are the current obstacles to the creation of afterschool skateboard programs? What can skateboarding bring to the field of afterschool programming? Would college skateboarders be interested in participating as mentors? What are the characteristics of a successful afterschool program? How successful are the current afterschool programs at Wilson Middle School?

This study utilized interviews with college skateboarders, administrators and school personal in PUSD, and professionals involved in skateboard advocacy. Wilson Middle School in PUSD was selected as the case study site based on its demographic/socioeconomic makeup and its average performance on Statewide testing.

The findings from this study exhibit the flaws in the characterization of skateboarding as a dangerous or anti-social activity for youth. They show how prohibitory bans on skateboarding, specifically prohibitions by institutions of higher education, can alienate the surrounding youth community from the campus and inhibit the development of a college oriented culture. The findings also demonstrate that a skateboard mentoring program could positively impact the academic aspirations of middle schoolers, as well as provide an essential outlet for physical activity and community building.

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Introduction

Despite the popularity of skateboarding among youth and its historic ties to Los Angeles it has never been fully embraced as an acceptable outlet for youth activity. Skateboarding is painted as dangerous and stigmatized as a delinquent youth behavior, which has put constraints on its participants often from a young age.¹ The negative relationship skateboarding has with the academic institution not only has the potential to adversely affect young skaters' educational performances and aspirations, but it may also work to reinforce the gender barriers already present in skateboarding. This study analyses how a different, more positive relationship between academia and skateboarding can be achieved through the installation of a gender inclusive afterschool skateboard mentorship program. The research questions answered include: What potential benefits could an afterschool skateboard mentor program bring to middle schoolers? What are the current obstacles to the creation of afterschool skateboard programs? What can skateboarding bring to the field of afterschool programming? Would college skateboarders be interested in participating as mentors? What are the characteristics of a successful afterschool program? How successful are the current afterschool programs at Wilson Middle School?

Public school systems often contribute to the societal rejection of skateboarding. Current LAUSD policy states, "skating or skateboarding is not allowed on school property. Paving and other site structures such as raised planters, benches, and low walls shall be designed, or have

¹ Ocean Howell, "The 'Creative Class' and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia's Love Park," *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-) 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42

skate deterrent devices installed to discourage such use.”² Pasadena Unified policy states, “because of concerns about the risk to student safety, the principal or designee shall not permit skateboarding on campus or during school-sponsored events unless the activity is properly supervised, students wear protective gear as appropriate, and each participant has insurance coverage.”³ As skateboarding requires a venue, the exclusion of the sport from schools often serves to force youth who are interested in skateboarding into more unsafe situations without the supervision of adults. The prohibitions could also contribute to, and reinforce, the severe gender barriers women face in skateboarding by discouraging young girls from becoming involved. Without a secure space where they know they will be celebrated for their skills and their efforts, girls are forced to learn either alone or at skate parks, which have been historically unwelcoming to females. Restricting the availability of learning in a guaranteed safe setting, the ban from schools provides disincentives to any girl who is interested in learning how to skate. Because of the potential impacts on youth skateboarders this negative relationship must be examined more closely.

Background

Skateboarding was created in the late 1950’s in Southern California.⁴ The pioneers of the sport were young surfers seeking the thrill of the waves when the conditions were bad.⁵ The Lords of Dogtown, credited by many as the founders of modern skateboarding, were a group of young skaters from Venice, California that included cultural legends such as Tony Alva, Stacey

² LAUSD 2013-2014 Facilities Security and Safety Provisions: “Design Guidelines and Standards Requirements” http://www.laschools.org/documents/download/asset_management%2Fstudies_and_reports%2FDesign_Standards_Security_and_Safety_Requirements_-_March_2013.pdf?version_id=310975973

³ PUSD Administrative Regulation 5142: “Risk Management and Insurance”, Revised: June 2014

<http://www.pusd.us/cms/lib011/CA01901115/Centricity/domain/48/policies/5141-5999/AR%205142%20-%20062014.pdf>

⁴ Tony Owen, “The Evolution Of Skateboarding – A History From Sidewalk Surfing To Superstardom,” March 5, 2013, <http://www.skateboardingmagazine.com/the-evolution-of-skateboarding-a-history-from-sidewalk-surfing-to-superstardom/>.

⁵ Ibid

Peralta, and Jay Adams.⁶ They revolutionized the world of skateboarding with their rebellious attitudes and incredible talent, and spread the popularity of skating across the world.

Despite the initial excitement that the Lords drummed up, the popularity of the sport dropped drastically in the mid-1960s. The sport was revived in the 70's thanks to the invention of the urethane wheel by Frank Nasworthy in 1972, which made skateboards more comfortable and safer to ride than the previous models, which had clay wheels.⁷ By 1975, California had around two million skateboarders.⁸ Skateboarding remained outside of the mainstream until the 1980's when the emergence of televised extreme sporting events helped broaden the audience.⁹ The first televised X-Games in 1995 catalyzed this rise in popularity and by 2011 "the X-games had an estimated U.S. viewership of 37 million and a world-wide audience of 232 million people in 192 countries."¹⁰ In 2002 the estimates for the number of skateboarders in the U.S ranged from 12 million to 20 million and are likely much higher today.¹¹

Though skateboarding draws high levels of interest from youth nationwide, afterschool programs have been slow to incorporate skateboarding as a formal activity. Afterschool programs that make use of sport as a method for positive youth development have been shown to provide a myriad of benefits for children. The sports offered, however, are largely limited to the so called "traditional sports" (baseball, basketball, football, etc), and the programs have traditionally been centered on boys.¹² Encouragingly, skateboarding has been gaining some

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Tony Owen, "The Evolution Of Skateboarding – A History From Sidewalk Surfing To Superstardom," March 5, 2013, <http://www.skateboardingmagazine.com/the-evolution-of-skateboarding-a-history-from-sidewalk-surfing-to-superstardom/>.

⁸ LaVada Weir, *Skateboards and Skateboarding: The Complete Beginner's Guide* (New York: Messner, 1977).

⁹ Tessa Walker, "Skateboarding as Transportation: Findings from an Exploratory Study" (Portland State University, 2013), http://oatd.org/oatd/record?record=oai%5C%3Apxscholar.library.pdx.edu%5C%3Aopen_access_etds-2515.

¹⁰ Nielsen, "Skateboarding Is Still a Crime, But the Sport Is Admirable : Northwestern University News," accessed September 11, 2016, <http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2013/04/opinion-huffington-post-nielsen.html>.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Jennifer E. Bruening, Brianna S. Clark, and Michael Mudrick, "Sport-Based Youth Development in Practice: The Long-Term Impacts of an Urban After-School Program for Girls," *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration* 33,

popularity within physical education curriculums and non-profit organizations. Skate Pass, a company from Boulder Colorado, created the first skateboarding program to be approved at the state and national level and offers a short curriculum that teaches skateboarding to physical education classes during school hours.¹³ This program does not include a goal of gender equity or social justice but caters to the “New P.E” movement by giving students an opportunity to participate in alternative activities in a non-competitive, individual sporting environment.¹⁴ Other NGO’s such as Skate After School in Phoenix and Skate Like a Girl have emerged in the past few years and implemented after school programs that cater to underserved youth and marginalized populations. Although the number of after school skate programs is limited, pioneering programs like Skate Like a Girl present a model for future efforts.

Literature Review on Skateboarding

This study identifies five broad categories of topics that encompass most academic research involving skateboarding: 1; the culture of skateboarders through ethnographic studies, 2; the gender divisions within the sport, 3; the role skateboarding can play in adolescent identity formation, 4; the way skateboarding is perceived by society at-large, and 5; using skateboarding as a mode to examine struggles for public space. Recent academic studies have investigated skateboarding’s role as a method of transportation, but nothing to constitute a significant body of research.

Culture of Skateboarder

There are many studies that have explored the subculture of skateboarders. These have typically focused on the commodification of skateboarding through music and fashion, which exploit the rebellious image of a skateboarder. These ethnographic studies have often presented

¹³ “Skateboarding,” *Skate Pass*, accessed March 27, 2017, <http://www.skatepass.com/programs/physical-education/>.

¹⁴ Ibid

skateboarders as “other,” i.e. independent from mainstream society. In her book “*Skate Life*” Emily Chivers argues that skateboarders “imagine and experience skateboarding as a practice through which they can experience their authentic or true selves unmediated by responsibilities or the pressure to obey or conform to rules or social norms,”¹⁵ and Beal (1995) depicts skateboarding as a “cultural site of social resistance that challenges dominant norms and value.”¹⁶

Sexism in Skateboarding

Social scientists have also explored the gender biases that have been historically prevalent within skate culture. Women have experienced marginalization within skateboarding since its inception. They are often labeled as inauthentic and aren’t granted the same opportunities of access or acceptance as male skaters. In a study of California skateboarders, Matthew Atencio found that “the skateboarding subculture still reinforces ideologies of male superiority,” and that girls were often “harassed, intimidated, or chased away from street spaces.”¹⁷ In a study of the “Park Gang,” a group of young female skaters in Vancouver, BC, Shauna Pomerantz found that “girls have to work much harder and overcome many more obstacles than boys to gain legitimate skater status.”¹⁸ Sexism within skating has also been reflected and reproduced through both the lack of representation and the objectification of females by skateboard media. A 2003 study found that “women have been marginalized and objectified in specialist skateboarding magazines such as *Transworld Skateboarding*, *Thrasher*

¹⁵ Emily Chivers Yochim, “Skate Life: Re-Imagining White Masculinity,” *Technologies of the Imagination*, 2009, p.165

¹⁶ Francisco Vivoni. “Spots of Spatial Desire. Skateparks, Skateplazas, and Urban Politics” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* (2009)

¹⁷ Matthew Atencio, Becky Beal, and Charlene Wilson, “The Distinction of Risk: Urban Skateboarding, Street Habitus and the Construction of Hierarchical Gender Relations,” *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 3–20

¹⁸ Shauna Pomerantz, Dawn H. Currie, and Deirdre M. Kelly, “Sk8er Girls: Skateboarders, Girlhood and Feminism in Motion,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 27, no. 5–6 (November 2004)

and Skateboard, which have the most currency amongst skateboarders,”¹⁹ and that young male skaters avid consumption of these media representations led to them implementing exclusionary and marginalizing gendered practices themselves. In his influential novel “*Skateboarding, Space and the City*” Iain Borden found that “despite inevitable defenses on the grounds of humor and general irreverence skateboard companies and magazines have increasingly used misogynist treatment of women as a way of selling skateboards,” thus enforcing “male, heterosexual, and sexist attitudes towards women.”²⁰ More recently, and encouragingly, there have been studies and news stories documenting the resistance of the new wave of feminist skaters who are challenging the status quo. With the advent of social media it has become much easier for female skaters to access an audience, and with this newfound position of influence many are using social media to critique and change the culture. The New York Times published a feature article about female skate “crews” such as the Brujas, a New York based group of women skaters engaging in social resistance through skateboarding, and studies have shown that “the subject position of skater girl is a social category that holds the possibility for a feminist politics.”²¹

Adolescent Development

Another significant body of research has been devoted to the role skateboarding can play in adolescent identity formation. “Adolescence is a critical development stage in the bridge between childhood and adulthood,”²² and it has been shown that participation in sport for adolescents “is associated with beneficial outcomes, including higher educational aspirations,

¹⁹ Matthew Atencio, Becky Beal, and Charlene Wilson, “The Distinction of Risk: Urban Skateboarding, Street Habitus and the Construction of Hierarchical Gender Relations,” *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* 1, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 3–20

²⁰ Iain Borden “Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body,” *Berg Publications* Oxford, England (2001)

²¹ Shauna Pomerantz, Dawn H. Currie, and Deirdre M. Kelly, “Sk8er Girls: Skateboarders, Girlhood and Feminism in Motion,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 27, no. 5–6 (November 2004)

²² Newcomb, M. D., and Bentler, P. M. “Impact of Adolescent Drug Use and Social Support on Problems of Young Adults: A Longitudinal Study.” *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1988, 97, 64–75

educational attainment, and grade point averages.”²³ Despite this relationship between participation in sport and positive youth development, skateboarding has often been mistakenly associated with detrimental youth behavior. In a recent study on skateboarding in Montreal, however, Alex Dumas found that “as health-enhancing environments, skateparks enable youth to benefit from social participation and to create relationships which otherwise might not have been possible through other sports.”²⁴ In Graham Bradley’s study of skateboarders in Australia, several respondents spoke about how skateparks are important for “developing social skills, self-esteem, cooperation, and respect for self, for other park users, and for the park itself,” and that they are “central to social networking and social integration.”²⁵ While skateboarding has been shown to promote positive developmental behaviors, the public perception of skateboarding remains that of a dangerous and undesirable activity.

Public Perception

In a case study on Love Park, a popular and historic skateboarding site in Philadelphia, historian Ocean Howell, a former professional skateboarder, found that “to outsiders, skaters are thought of as rebels, social deviants, or simply different.”²⁶ Howell argues that skateboarding is often misrepresented in the public's eye as a pernicious, and even a “destructive act for delinquents.”²⁷ Other studies have documented similar perceptions towards skateboarding and skateboarders. One study on skateparks found that non-skateboarders held negative attitudes regarding “the parks’ unattractiveness, the users of the park, and the frequency of antisocial

²³ Tonya Dodge and Sharon F. Lambert, “Positive Self-Beliefs as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Adolescents’ Sports Participation and Health in Young Adulthood,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38, no. 6 (December 9, 2008): 813–25,

²⁴ Alex Dumas and Sophie Laforest, “Skateparks as a Health- resource: Are They as Dangerous as They Look?,” *Leisure Studies* 28, no. 1 (January 1, 2009): 19–34,

²⁵ Graham L. Bradley, “Skate Parks as a Context for Adolescent Development,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 25, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 288–323,

²⁶ Ocean Howell, “The ‘Creative Class’ and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia’s Love Park,” *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42.

²⁷ *Ibid*

behavior.”²⁸ A study of skateboarding in the UK found that societal perceptions “conflate skating with drug use, gang activity, homelessness, or behavioral issues,”²⁹ and Helen Woolley found that skateboarders in public spaces are often “perceived as a problem by other users, the authorities and the business community.”³⁰ While for society at large skateboarding and skate parks still hold negative connotations associated with delinquent behavior, recent studies have offered a different story. In 2009, the Tony Hawk foundation conducted a survey of 102 police officers across 37 states who had skateparks in their municipality. This study found that 90% (92/102) of the officers surveyed believed the skatepark is an asset to the community, and 47% (48) actually noticed a decrease in overall youth crime since a skatepark opened in their municipality.³¹

In an Op-Ed for the Huffington Post, sociologist Laura Nielson stated that “Rebellion is part of the allure of skateboarding,”³² and while it is undisputable that some skateboarders desire the “outsider” label, Howell argues that the undiscerning and popularized view of skateboarders as outsiders and delinquents “has put several constraints on its members.”³³ One result that has been widely discussed in urban, architectural, and sociological studies is the widespread prohibition on skateboarding in public areas and the struggle for contested urban space.

²⁸ Graham L. Bradley, “Skate Parks as a Context for Adolescent Development,” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 25, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 288–323,

²⁹ Belinda Wheaton and Mark Doidge “Exploring the Social Benefit of Informal and Lifestyle Sports” *International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education* feature bulletin, Accessed 10/28/2016 <http://eprints.brighton.ac.uk/14458/1/doidge.pdf>

³⁰ Helen Woolley and Ralph Johns, “Skateboarding: The City as a Playground,” *Journal of Urban Design* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 211–30,

³¹ Tony Hawk Foundation “2009 Law Enforcement Study” 2009

³² Nielson, “Skateboarding Is Still a Crime, But the Sport Is Admirable : Northwestern University News,” accessed September 11, 2016, <http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2013/04/opinion-huffington-post-nielson.htm>

³³ Ocean Howell, “The ‘Creative Class’ and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia’s Love Park,” *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42.

Contested Urban Space and Place-Based Struggles

Most research asserts that skateboarding is a reappropriation of the urban built environment. Woolley argues that “skaters exploit the ambiguity of the ownership and function of public space.”³⁴ In his dissertation on skateboarding and public space, Francisco Gallart argued that “skateboarding thrives in modern cities as an intricate spatial tactic with meaningful political consequences.”³⁵ The urban spaces that are optimal for skating such as college campuses, business plazas and public squares were designed for a mainly consumerist, mainstream society and “the social reproduction of tourists and local elites who can afford leisure.”³⁶ In her study on skateboarding as a mode of transportation, Tessa Walker argues that the “energetic presence of skateboarding” causes tension and stresses the “dynamic of coexistence between skateboarding and other uses in public space.”³⁷ In his study, Howell argues that as a result of this tension skateboarders are not allowed to experience public spaces as “psychologically accessible” or “transparently public.”³⁸ The exploitation, appropriation and reinterpretation of urban spaces inherent in skateboarding coupled with the generally negative societal perception towards skateboarders has manifested into a myriad of prohibitions and attempts to limit the performance of skateboarding in urban centers.

In “*Skateboarding, Space, and the City*” Borden argues that since the mid 1990’s “skateboarding has been ever-increasingly repressed through a pervasive tightening of

³⁴ Helen Woolley and Ralph Johns, “Skateboarding: The City as a Playground,” *Journal of Urban Design* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 211–30.

³⁵ Francisco Salim Vivoni Gallart “Contesting Public Space: Skateboarding, Urban Development, and the Politics of Play” (Doctoral thesis, Graduate College of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010)

³⁶ Kevin Fang, “Skateboarding as a Mode of Transportation: Review of Regulations in California Cities and College Campuses,” 2013, <https://trid.trb.org/view.aspx?id=1242068>.

³⁷ Tessa Walker, “Skateboarding as Transportation: Findings from an Exploratory Study” (Portland State University, 2013), http://oatd.org/oatd/record?record=oai%5C%3Apxscholar.library.pdx.edu%5C%3Aopen_access_etds-2515.

³⁸ Ocean Howell, “The ‘Creative Class’ and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia’s Love Park,” *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42.

geographically dispersed localized conventions, laws, and reactions.”³⁹ Corroborating this claim, Woolley found that “attempts to move skateboarders on from their adopted spot are commonplace,”⁴⁰ and a study by Kevin Fang found that 90 % of cities in California “prohibited skateboarding in specific locations,” while 53 % of cities had “behavioral regulations such as prohibitions on reckless riding or policies requesting that skaters ride with caution.”⁴¹ Borden argues that skateboarding is a “false crime,” classified to “legitimize conventional orders and power, and consequently legislated against to help validate the business and commodity-oriented city.”⁴²

Aside from outright prohibitions on skateboarding, another strategy to deter skateboarders is the usage of “defensive architecture” in designing and altering the urban landscape. Citing the property damages caused by skateboarding, many architects and urban planners have employed the use of “skate stopper” designs such as: rough-textured surfaces, spikes and bumps added to handrails, blocks of concrete placed at the foot of banks, chains across ditches and steps, and new, unrideable surfaces such as gravel and sand, to discourage skateboarding on these spaces. Researchers have compared this to the treatment homeless people receive when they are rejected from business and retail areas by designed features such as curved bus benches, window ledge spikes, and doorway sprinkler systems,⁴³ and Howell even posited that “skateboarders were, like the homeless, compared to rats and cockroaches.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Iain Borden “Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body,” *Berg Publications* Oxford, England (2001)

⁴⁰ Helen Woolley and Ralph Johns, “Skateboarding: The City as a Playground,” *Journal of Urban Design* 6, no. 2 (June 1, 2001): 211–30,

⁴¹ Kevin Fang, “Skateboarding as a Mode of Transportation: Review of Regulations in California Cities and College Campuses,” 2013, <https://trid.trb.org/view.aspx?id=1242068>.

⁴² Iain Borden “Skateboarding, Space and the City: Architecture and the Body,” *Berg Publications* Oxford, England (2001)

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ Ocean Howell, “The ‘Creative Class’ and the Gentrifying City: Skateboarding in Philadelphia’s Love Park,” *Journal of Architectural Education (1984-)* 59, no. 2 (2005): 32–42.

While there is a substantial amount of academic research available on the topic of skateboarding, there is a noticeable lack of information on skateboarding's relationship *within academia* itself. Despite the popularity of skateboarding among youth, especially in Los Angeles, school policies prohibit skateboarding, and afterschool skateboard programs are virtually non-existent. Often skateboarding bans extend into higher education institutions. On college campuses around Los Angeles, including here at Occidental College, restrictive policies prohibit skateboarding and frequently result in negative interactions between skaters and campus security personnel. There is a significant gap in the existing research that explores how these prohibitions impact young skaters' perceptions of authority, educational aspirations and academic performances. This gap in the research has effectively compounded mutual misunderstanding between academic institutions and skateboarders.⁴⁵

Literature Review on Mentoring and Afterschool Programs:

To contextualize recommendations and analysis this study reviewed an extensive body of literature in the field of afterschool programming and mentoring. The three categories of research within those fields most pertinent to this study encompass the social, physical/health, and educational benefits of afterschool programs, specifically with regards to their effects on low-income children.

Afterschool programs began to emerge as a tool for shaping positive youth behavior in the beginning of the 20th century.⁴⁶ The specific role and form afterschool programs have taken has evolved throughout their history, but most research has associated youth participation in

⁴⁵ ⁴⁵ Barker, Thomas. "How USC's Skateboarding Business Class Is Fostering the Next Crop of Industry Leaders." *Transworld.Business*. GrindTV.com, 05 Feb. 2016 <http://www.grindtv.com/transworld-business/features/usc-skateboarding-business-class-fostering-next-crop-industry-leaders/#7BJ12hkyF5rOkx7F.97>

⁴⁶ Robert Halpern, "Making Play Work: The Promise of After-School Programs for Low-Income Children" *Teachers College Press*, (2003) P.37

afterschool programs with numerous beneficial outcomes. One such impact of participation in afterschool programs has been evaluated using the Social Capital Theory.

Social Benefits

The Social Capital Theory is a method of evaluating the social relationships people have and the personal benefits they receive from those relationships. Social capital has been defined as an “investment in social relations with expected returns,”⁴⁷ and strong social capital “permits group members to utilize each other’s resources, through their assistance or aid of another’s connections.”⁴⁸ In a study on Sports Based Youth Development, Jennifer Breunig found that the strength of someone’s social capital has “a significant effect on educational and professional trajectories.”⁴⁹ Breunig presented three requisite components that must be present in order for social capital to be utilized. The first is trust. She asserts that stronger levels of trust lead to stronger relationships. The second component is that norms must be present and established through the rules within the relationship. The last component is the existence of information channels which are the “human networks that can be utilized by individuals to produce desired outcomes or reach desired goals.”⁵⁰

The Social Capital Theory is especially relevant for low income children because “low-income children have fewer opportunities to develop prosocial behaviors and are at a higher risk for delinquent behavior.”⁵¹ Also, “children can suffer ‘toxic stress’ created by poverty especially

⁴⁷ Nan Lin, “Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action” *Cambridge university press*, 2002,

⁴⁸ Troy D. Glover and John L. Hemingway, “Locating Leisure in the Social Capital Literature,” *Journal of Leisure Research* 37, no. 4 (October 1, 2005): 387.

⁴⁹ Jennifer E. Bruening, Brianna S. Clark, and Michael Mudrick, “Sport-Based Youth Development in Practice: The Long-Term Impacts of an Urban After-School Program for Girls,” *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2015): p.89.

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

when they do not have a relationship with an adult who can help them feel safe and emotionally connected.”⁵²

Much of the literature on afterschool programs and mentoring has explored their potential for improving youth’s social capital. In Robert Halpern’s book “*Making Play Work*” he argues that “afterschool programs are supportive of the social dimensions of children’s learning,”⁵³ and that quality afterschool programs “can afford to provide the children the social space they need for spontaneity, physicality, and unrestricted movement.”⁵⁴ Breunig’s study referenced research by Mahoney and Stattin which found that participation in afterschool programs can “spur progress in social environments.”⁵⁵ Breunig’s own findings showed that “through sport engagement participants can benefit from social inclusion, which, in turn, can positively influence a desire to be involved in community improvement,”⁵⁶ and that “sport aided the fostering of a sense of community that was lacking in those whom initially felt socially neglected.”⁵⁷ The Middle School Matters Institute (an offshoot of the Bush Institute) in a study of dropout prevention strategies corroborated these findings, stating “participation in outside activities helps create a stronger sense of engagement in the community.”⁵⁸

⁵² Mary Bruce, John Bridgeland, “The Mentoring Effect - Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and availability of Mentoring,” *Civic Enterprises* (2014) p. 20 <http://www.mentoring.org/program-resources/mentor-resources-and-publications/the-mentoring-effect/>.

⁵³ Robert Halpern, “Making Play Work: The Promise of After-School Programs for Low-Income Children” *Teachers College Press*, (2003) P.116

⁵⁴ Robert Halpern, “Making Play Work: The Promise of After-School Programs for Low-Income Children” *Teachers College Press*, (2003) P.116

⁵⁵ Jennifer E. Bruening, Brianna S. Clark, and Michael Mudrick, “Sport-Based Youth Development in Practice: The Long-Term Impacts of an Urban After-School Program for Girls,” *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2015): p.89.

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

⁵⁸ MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS "Dropout Prevention " *The George W. Bush Institute*, <https://greatmiddleschools.org/download-view/dropout-prevention/>

Educational Benefits

Afterschool programs have also been studied as a method for improving educational outcomes. As urban school districts are dealing with the increasing overcrowding and underfunding of their schools, many students aren't receiving the individual attention they need to succeed. For his senior thesis at Occidental College, Eli Reisman found that "afterschool programs that offer academic help are able to help fill this gap in overcrowded schools by giving students the one-on-one attention they need."⁵⁹ Participation in sport oriented afterschool programs has also been shown to be associated with "higher educational aspirations, educational attainment, and grade point averages."⁶⁰ The Aspen Institute's Project Play shows that "physical activity in general is associated with improved academic achievement, including grades and standardized test scores. Further, such activity can affect attitudes and academic behavior, including enhanced concentration, attention, and improved classroom behavior."⁶¹ Breunig's study exemplified that afterschool programs and mentoring partnerships also facilitate crucial interactions between low-income youth and college students. These relationships carry the potential to dispel many of the perceived barriers low-income youth associate with college and thus can help to develop a college-going culture that is often absent in public secondary schools with greater concentrations of student poverty. The assessment on the current state of mentoring in the U.S reflects this conclusion, finding that youth with mentors "report setting higher

⁵⁹ Eli Reisman, "After School Matters: A Study of After School Programs in Pasadena and Options for the Future" (Bachelor of Arts Thesis, Occidental College, 2006) p.15

⁶⁰ Tonya Dodge and Sharon F. Lambert, "Positive Self-Beliefs as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Adolescents' Sports Participation and Health in Young Adulthood," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38, no. 6 (December 9, 2008): 813–25

⁶¹ "Facts: Sports Activity and Children." *Project Play-The Facts*. Aspen Institute, 2015. Web. 12 Feb. 2017.

educational goals and being more likely to attend college than those who did not have mentors.”⁶²

Physical/Health Benefits

Afterschool sports programs have also been studied as avenues for reducing adolescent obesity and improving the physical and mental health of teenagers. In a study on physical activity in elementary schools, McKenzie and Kahan show that physical inactivity is a serious public health problem associated with numerous preventable diseases. A 2015 CDC study found that “levels of physical activity inadequate to meet current guidelines are associated with a significant financial burden for the U.S. healthcare system, as much as \$131 billion a year.”⁶³ McKenzie and Kahan assert that today with our more sedentary lifestyle “the need for schools to provide and promote youth physical activity is now far greater.”⁶⁴ In this time of greater necessity, however, schools nationwide have often been failing to provide opportunities for adequate physical activity. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education recommends 225 minutes of physical activity a week for middle- and secondary-school children, but only 6 % of middle schools nationwide are meeting that standard.⁶⁵ A partial result of this failure, the Project Play report found that “fewer than half of children ages 6 to 11 meet the U.S. Surgeon General’s recommendation for engaging in at least 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week.”⁶⁶

⁶² Mary Bruce, John Bridgeland, “The Mentoring Effect - Young People’s Perspectives on the Outcomes and availability of Mentoring,” *Civic Enterprises* (2014) p. 17 <http://www.mentoring.org/program-resources/mentor-resources-and-publications/the-mentoring-effect/>.

⁶³ “Facts: Sports Activity and Children.” *Project Play-The Facts*. Aspen Institute, 2015. Web. 12 Feb. 2017.

⁶⁴ Thomas L. McKenzie and David Kahan, “Physical Activity, Public Health, and Elementary Schools,” *The Elementary School Journal* 108, no. 3 (2008): 171–80

⁶⁵ Mary Story, Karen M. Kaphingst, and Simone French, “The Role of Schools in Obesity Prevention,” *The Future of Children* 16, no. 1 (2006): 109–42.

⁶⁶ “The Problem.” *Project Play: Playbook*. Aspen Institute, 2015. Web. 12 Feb. 2017

Over the past thirty years adolescent obesity rates have more than quadrupled for youth ages 12-19, and currently 21 % of adolescents nationwide are suffering from obesity. In a comparison with 16 other peer countries, the U.S. recorded the highest percentage of overweight/obese children age 5-17; 39.5% of females and 35 % of males.⁶⁷ The startlingly high rates of adolescent obesity are exacerbated in poor and minority communities. In a study on obesity in Los Angeles County, the department of public health found that Latinos (27.5%) and Pacific Islanders (37.1%) have the highest obesity rates among school-age children and that high obesity rates were “strongly correlated” with economic hardship.⁶⁸

In his study, John Spengler found that “for those living in underserved communities, both the prevalence of physical activity and opportunities for physical activity in a safe environment are lacking.”⁶⁹ Afterschool programs that incorporate physical activity or sport have thus been widely studied as “the importance of physical activity as a means of fostering positive youth development has gained considerable attention.”⁷⁰

In her study on youth participation in sports, Dorothy Schmalz found that physical activity has been associated with “a number of positive developmental outcomes such as leadership, altruism, and independence.”⁷¹ The CDC has identified exercise as one of the least expensive ways to stay healthy, and studies have shown that “participation in sports during childhood and adolescence is associated with higher levels of physical activity in adulthood.”⁷² The Aspen Institute’s Project Play identified a correlation between regular exercise and

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ County of Los Angeles Public Health, “Obesity and Related Mortality in LA County” *Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology* (Sep. 2011) http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/ha/reports/habriefs/2007/obese_cities/obesity_2011fs.PDF

⁶⁹ John O. Spengler et al., “Policies to Promote the Community Use of Schools A Review of State Recreational User Statutes,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 39, no. 1 (July 2010): 81–88

⁷⁰ Dorothy L. Schmalz and Kirsten Krahnstoeber Davison, “Differences in Physical Self-Concept Among Pre-Adolescents Who Participate in Gender-Typed and Cross-Gendered Sports,” *Journal of Sport Behavior* 29, no. 4 (December 2006): 335–52.

⁷¹ Ibid

⁷² Tonya Dodge and Sharon F. Lambert, “Positive Self-Beliefs as a Mediator of the Relationship Between Adolescents’ Sports Participation and Health in Young Adulthood,” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38, no. 6 (December 9, 2008): 813–25

improved mental health among students as they move into the teenage years,⁷³ and in Brandon Stogsdill's study on action sports as a tool for reaching troubled youth, Stogsdill found that "physical activity for youth decreases depression and anxiety symptoms."⁷⁴ Within the study of participation in sport and physical activity, Sports Based Youth Development programs have become objects of increased interest.

Sports Based Youth Development Programs (SBYD) have been defined as "activities that occur outside of school hours and utilize sport as a moderator for education and advancement of life skills."⁷⁵ SBYD programs use a variety of sports as a context to cultivate leadership, communication, and respect.⁷⁶ Many studies have discussed the benefits of SBYD programs. In Daniel Perkins study of the characteristics of SBYD programs, he found that if appropriately managed "sports provide opportunities for youth to learn some of life's important lessons and can potentially provide them a physical activity."⁷⁷ Jessica Fraser's study on youth sports programs found that, "sport and physical activity offer youth opportunities to experience challenge, fun, and enjoyment, while increasing their self-esteem and decreasing their stress."⁷⁸ Research has shown that SBYD programs "are beneficial to youth, especially in low-income environments" and that successful SBYD programs "give opportunities to make personal connections that can be used for social gain."⁷⁹ While participation in sports can provide a myriad of benefits to youth, most sports have seen major drop-offs in participation over the past

⁷³ "Facts: Sports Activity and Children." *Project Play-The Facts*. Aspen Institute, 2015. Web. 12 Feb. 2017.

⁷⁴ Brandon Stogsdill, "Social Work Today - Action Sports Reach Troubled, Resistant Youths," *Great Valley Publishing Co* accessed September 28, 2016, http://www.socialworktoday.com/news/enews_0614_1.shtml.

⁷⁵ Daniel F. Perkins and Gil G. Noam, "Characteristics of Sports-Based Youth Development Programs," *New Directions for Youth Development* 2007, no. 115 (September 1, 2007): 75-84

⁷⁶ Rhema D. Fuller et al., "Positive Youth Development: Minority Male Participation in a Sport-Based Afterschool Program in an Urban Environment," *Research Quarterly for Exercise & Sport* 84, no. 4 (December 2013): 469-82

⁷⁷ Daniel F. Perkins and Gil G. Noam, "Characteristics of Sports-Based Youth Development Programs," *New Directions for Youth Development* 2007, no. 115 (September 1, 2007): 75-84

⁷⁸ Jessica L. Fraser-Thomas, Jean Côté, and Janice Deakin, "Youth Sport Programs: An Avenue to Foster Positive Youth Development," *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2005): 19-40

⁷⁹ Jennifer E. Bruening, Brianna S. Clark, and Michael Mudrick, "Sport-Based Youth Development in Practice: The Long-Term Impacts of an Urban After-School Program for Girls," *Journal of Park & Recreation Administration* 33, no. 2 (Summer 2015): p.

decade; since 2008, Basketball, Soccer, Football, Track, Baseball, and Softball have experienced a combined decrease of 2.6 million kids.⁸⁰ This can be partly attributed to the increased competitiveness and pressure to win in youth sports, which Fraser has linked to negative outcomes such as low self-confidence and low self-esteem.⁸¹ The decline in participation could also be traced back to the increased financial burden youth sports impose on families. While the decline in overall participation is concerning, youth sport programs have historically not been accessible for all children, and the lack of equitable access has been widely discussed in social science literature.

In Breunig's study on SBYD programs for girls in urban areas, she highlighted an unfortunate characteristic of these programs, which is that they have traditionally centered on boys, limiting girls opportunities for participation. The Project Play fact sheet posited that "despite major gains among girls over the past four decades delivered by Title IX legislation and enforcement, in 2012, the sports participation rates for girls remained 2-5% lower than for boys,"⁸² and that this gender gap increases with age.⁸³

Other studies have discussed the increasing cost and elitism of youth sports finding that, "socioeconomic status, race, gender, and environmental factors can all limit youths' opportunities."⁸⁴ The State of Play Report found that family income is the strongest differentiator for youth activity in sports. It clarified that "in today's youth sports landscape, those who have the greatest opportunity to continue playing into adolescence are those who can afford the club

⁸⁰ Aspen Project, "Facts: Sports Activity and Children | Project Play," accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/the-facts>.

⁸¹ Jessica L. Fraser-Thomas, Jean Côté, and Janice Deakin, "Youth Sport Programs: An Avenue to Foster Positive Youth Development," *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2005): 19–40

⁸² Aspen Project, "Facts: Sports Activity and Children | Project Play," accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/the-facts>.

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ Jessica L. Fraser-Thomas, Jean Côté, and Janice Deakin, "Youth Sport Programs: An Avenue to Foster Positive Youth Development," *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2005): 19–40

teams, training, and equipment required to advance through the system.”⁸⁵ Travel-team parents spend an average of \$2,266 annually on their child's sports participation and at the elite levels, some families spend more than \$20,000 per year.⁸⁶

Sports participation rates among youth living in households with an income of \$25,000 or less are about half that of youth from wealthier homes (\$100,000+)—16 % vs. 30 %.⁸⁷ This disparity is intensified when considering participation in team sports: In 2015, only 38 % of kids from homes with \$25,000 or less in income played team sports, compared to 67 % of kids from \$100,000+ homes.⁸⁸ While afterschool sport programs are essential for promoting positive youth development and encouraging educational achievement many children still are unable to access these benefits.

Methodology

Research Questions

This study explores the potential impacts of a skateboard oriented mentoring partnership between Wilson Middle School and colleges in the area. The research questions to be answered include: What potential benefits could an afterschool skateboard mentor program bring to middle schoolers? What are the obstacles currently in place to the creation of afterschool skateboard programs? What can skateboarding bring to the field of afterschool programming? Would college skateboarders be interested in participating as mentors? What are the characteristics of a successful afterschool program? How successful are the current afterschool programs at Wilson Middle School?

⁸⁵ Aspen Project, “Facts: Sports Activity and Children | Project Play,” accessed January 24, 2017, <https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/the-facts>.

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Ibid

⁸⁸ Ibid

Participants

Participants in this study are grouped into three different categories: 1. Pasadena Unified School District administrators and afterschool program coordinators at PUSD schools, 2. college skateboarders over the age of 18, and 3. people involved in skateboard advocacy, and assigned a set of interview questions accordingly. All participants in this study are volunteers.

Materials

Informed consent forms were used containing information about procedures, benefits and risks of participating, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the contact information of the researcher. The objective of the study and the researched questions were also included on the consent forms.

Design and Procedure

To answer the research questions this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining structured and semi-structured interviews with secondary data. The study builds upon an extensive literature review in the fields of skateboarding and afterschool programming with structured and semi-structured interviews and a case study of Wilson Middle School in Pasadena Unified School District. To identify a school this study used data from the California Academic Performance Index which provides reports on academic performance and student demographics for each district and school within the state. Some of the data factored into the selection included: 1. The demographic makeup of student bodies, 2. The average performance on Statewide testing, and 3. The socioeconomic makeup of the student body.

Case Study Introduction

While many public-school districts nationwide are struggling with issues of over enrollment and an insufficient budget, over the past 15 years the Pasadena Unified School District (PUSD) has grappled with a significant drop in public school enrollment. This decline

has been caused by both the displacement of poorer residents pushed out of the city by rising housing costs, as well as the choice on behalf of the wealthier residents to enroll their children in private schools: a third of PUSD-eligible students are enrolled in private schools.⁸⁹ Of the students that remain in PUSD public schools, the majority come from low-income families. Economically disadvantaged students made up 71.4 percent of students tested in the district.⁹⁰ Low enrollment means less public funding and a strained budget has negatively impacted PUSD schools performance. In 2015, only 25.3 % of high school graduates in the district were accepted to, and attended a 4 Year University.⁹¹

Table 1 PUSD Students High School Graduation Rates and College Acceptance Rates

2015	CIS academy	Rose City	PHS	Blair	Muir	Marshall	District
2 Year Colleges	12	27	187	50	67	73	416
	11%	18%	42%	39%	36%	30%	29.3%
4 Year Colleges	2	4	178	36	69	103	392
	2%	3%	40%	28%	37%	42%	25.3%
Graduated with Standard Diploma	71	46	419	107	166	217	1026
	63%	30%	94%	83%	89%	88%	75%
Total Students	112	154	447	129	187	247	1276

Source 1 Pasadena LEARNs, "College Access Plan- A Community Opting in to Post-Secondary Success (2014-2015)

Pasadena Unified School District has 22,669 students who are enrolled in K-12th grade.

7,571 of those PUSD students attend afterschool programs daily. PUSD offers 40 afterschool

⁸⁹ Pasadena LEARNs, "College Access Plan- A Community Opting in to Post-Secondary Success" *PUSD Program Evaluation* http://pasadena.schoolwires.net/cms/lib011/CA01901115/Centricity/domain/1228/documents/Information%20and%20Forms/PasadenaLEARNs_2014-15_College_Access_Plan_Program_Evaluation.pdf

⁹⁰ Robert Niles, "An Increase in Poverty Leads to a Decrease in School Test Scores," *Sensible Talk*, accessed November 15, 2016, <http://www.sensibletalk.com/journals/robertniles/201308/118/>.

⁹¹ PUSD, "LCAP Snapshot" 2015-2015 file:///C:/Users/Jasmine/Downloads/LCAP_Snapshot_11_2015.pdf

programs, but only 15 of the 40 are free or have a sliding scale so that students of all economic backgrounds can afford them.⁹² Additionally, not all programs are offered at every school. PUSD has been directly involved in the provision of afterschool programs since 1999, when after a 20-year hiatus they started their own Pasadena LEARNs (“Leading Educational Achievement Revitalizing Neighborhoods,”) program.⁹³ Pasadena LEARNs is funded by various grants from 21st Century and the California State Welfare Office. The afterschool education and safety program grant for LEARNs, provided by the California State Welfare Office, is its largest and is worth \$1,942,902 per year.⁹⁴ LEARNs also receives an annual grant of \$370,841 from the 21st Century Education Foundation.⁹⁵

Pasadena LEARNs differs from city run afterschool programs in that it emphasizes a focus on academics in addition to providing opportunities for physical education.⁹⁶ It aims to use academic and enrichment programming to improve academic performance, strengthen youth leadership and service opportunities, and reduce drug use and violence among school age children during after-school hours.⁹⁷ Pasadena LEARNs operates on a sliding scale which allows anyone who qualifies for free and reduced lunches at school to bypass the registration fee. Pasadena LEARNs currently serves approximately 3,000 students daily at 23 different locations.⁹⁸ One of the schools where the LEARNs after-school program is offered is at Wilson Middle School, the focus school chosen for this study.

⁹² Eli Reisman, “After School Matters: A Study of After School Programs in Pasadena and Options for the Future” (Bachelor of Arts Thesis, Occidental College, 2006) p.23”

⁹³ Ibid

⁹⁴ Eli Reisman, “After School Matters: A Study of After School Programs in Pasadena and Options for the Future” (Bachelor of Arts Thesis, Occidental College, 2006) p.23

⁹⁵ Ibid

⁹⁶ Ibid

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ *LEARNs After School / Department Home*. Pasadena Unified School District <http://www.pusd.us/Page/117>

Wilson Middle School is majority Latinx/Hispanic, and most students come from socio-economically disadvantaged situations.⁹⁹ In a 2013 statewide Academic Performance Index (API) report, Wilson Middle School recorded an enrollment of 652 students. 450 of those students (69 %) identified as Latinx/Hispanic, 74 students (11%) identified as Black or African American, 68 (10%) identified as White, 27 (4%) identified as Asian, and 13 students (2 %) identified as Filipino.¹⁰⁰ In the 2013 study, nearly 85 % of the students at Wilson Middle School were classified as socioeconomically disadvantaged.¹⁰¹ In the report, PUSD as a district recorded an API score (used to measure the year-over-year growth in academic performance for California schools) of 751, under the average API score statewide for middle schools of 800. Wilson Middle School not only recorded an API score below the statewide average but also underperformed within the district-receiving a score of 703 in 2013.¹⁰² These weak performances in the API report have led the California Student Aid Commission to classify Wilson Middle School a low performing school.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *Academic Performance Index (API)*. CA Dept. of Education <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/>

¹⁰⁰ Ibid

¹⁰¹ Ibid

¹⁰² *Academic Performance Index (API)*. CA Dept. of Education <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/ac/ap/>

¹⁰³ "California Low Performing Schools" *The California Student Aid Commission*:
[//www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/lowperformingschool.pdf](http://www.csac.ca.gov/pubs/forms/grnt_frm/lowperformingschool.pdf)

Findings

Eleven interviews were conducted in total: four college skateboarders, four professionals involved with skateboarding, and three PUSD administrators.

Overview

Legend: Interviewees

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Skateboarders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cassius Wilkinson --- Occidental College, Senior ○ Ben Knobel --- Occidental College, Senior ○ Thibault Clairis --- University of Southern California, Senior, President of USC Skate Club ○ Dimitri Melendez --- University of Southern California, Graduate
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skateboard Professionals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Neftalie Williams --- Professor at USC Annenberg School of Media and Communication, first lecturer on Skateboarding Business, Media, and Culture in the United States. Chairman of Cuba Skate ○ Kristin Ebeling --- Director of Skate Like a Girl Seattle ○ Ryan Lay --- Executive Director of Skate After School. Professional Skateboarder for Welcome Skateboards ○ Ben Wixon: Founder of Drop In to Skateboarding, Author of <i>Skateboarding: Instruction, Programming, and Park Design</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PUSD Administrators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Esperanza Munoz --- PasadenaLEARNS site coordinator at Wilson Middle School ○ Sarah Rudchenko --- Principal at Wilson Middle School ○ Maria Toliver --- PasadenaLEARNS district coordinator

The topics of conversation that were discussed with college skateboarders and skateboard professionals were similar. These included the benefits of skateboarding, issues of sexism within skateboarding, skateboarding's relationship with academia and higher education, and what skateboarding can bring to afterschool programming. The skateboard professionals also were asked to address the obstacles hindering the creation of school related skateboard programs. Topics within the School Administrator category touched on the benefits/role of afterschool programs, their components and structure, and their opinions towards the idea of an afterschool skateboard program for middle schoolers centered on mentoring.

Benefits of Skateboarding

In every interview with skateboarders, interviewees discussed the abundance of physical, emotional, and social benefits reaped through their experiences skateboarding. Skateboarding develops core strength and cardiorespiratory fitness, improves balance, and increases flexibility. Ben Wixon, the founder of Drop In to Skateboarding, identified the increasingly sedentary lifestyle in the United States, and the corresponding negative cost of obesity as “essentially the new cancer.” Wixon averred that skateboarding was a great way to stay physically fit. In a separate study, Ronald Heltzer found that:

“30 minutes of skateboarding 3-5 times a week on a level surface would provide an adequate stimulus for increasing cardiorespiratory endurance and would expend enough energy (617.2 kcal/hr) to be considered an adequate exercise to include in a weight loss/weight management program.”¹⁰⁴

Although like other sports in that it is physically demanding and a form of exercise, skateboarding is unique for its ability to provide a creative outlet and cultivate individual identity. Ben Knobel, a student at Occidental College, said that “I can’t really think of another sport like it where you have the freedom to express yourself.” Cassius Wilkinson, also a student skateboarder at Occidental College, said that because of its freedom “you find a unique personality through skateboarding that a lot of sports don’t have an open enough structure for.”

College skateboarders and directors of afterschool skateboard programs alike praised skateboarding for teaching them the value of goal setting and persistence. Ben Wixon said that

¹⁰⁴ Ronald K. Heltzer et al., “Selected Metabolic Responses to Skateboarding,” *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport* 82, no. 4 (December 1, 2011): 788–93, doi:10.1080/02701367.2011.10599816.

skateboarding “really does teach you to organically set goals and see your progress.” This sentiment was echoed by Thibault Clairis, a college student and president of the USC skate club, who said that skateboarding is a “great mechanism to learn how to set goals and achieve them, and to learn from failure because you never really get everything first try skateboarding.” Kristin Ebeling, the director of Skate Like a Girl Seattle, contended that this benefit is distinct to skateboarding, “In skateboarding it is cool to fail and suck at something. if you slam in skateboarding it’s not like ‘dude you suck’ but it’s like ‘dude you went for it, that's sick’ which contrasts with other sports where if you don’t achieve right away or don’t score you are a mess up.”

Most interviewees also mentioned the social benefits they have accessed through skateboarding. Neftalie Williams, Professor of Skateboarding, Business, Media and Culture at the USC Annenberg Institute of Sports, Media and Society, stated that community building is an integral part of the “ethos” of skating. Ben Knobel agreed with this notion, saying “skateboarding is social, first and foremost. It is a really easy way for people to connect.” Ryan Lay, a professional skateboarder and the executive director of Skate After School in Phoenix Arizona, said “in becoming a skateboarder you are part of this larger community, which I think is really valuable.”

While most respondents identified the valuable social and community aspects of skateboarding, the only woman interviewed had a different response. Because of the gender biases in skateboarding and the patriarchal exclusivity, Kristin Ebeling did not feel accepted into the skateboarding community. Contrary to other responses, for Ebeling the “social and emotional stuff before I found ‘Skate Like a Girl’ was really hard. I felt like I really had to push myself because everyone always thought I would be the weaker one.”

Sexism in Skating

All the interviewees involved with skateboarding identified sexism and gender bias as problematic within skate culture. While some expressed confidence in skateboarding's potential as a culture to move past these gender biases quickly, others spoke more skeptically to the significant barriers to acceptance that women face. For one, there is a dearth of female skaters. Cassius Wilkinson recounted experiences growing up where he "would go to the skatepark and there would be no girls." Kristin Ebeling said that "if I read a magazine, I am not going to see anyone that looks like me in there, and when I go to the skateparks after like 15 years of skating, I am still going to feel like I have to prove myself. There is still this macho culture." Ben Knobel alluded to conversations with female skaters who related experiences where they felt "like a target on a skateboard. Like it kind of singled them out for harassment."

Many respondents considered the sexism in skateboarding within the larger context of a patriarchal society's objectification and marginalization of women. Ben Knobel posited "with misogyny and patriarchy generally prevalent in the world it becomes a hard environment for women to breach." Neftalie Williams said that the inequities in skating reflect the biases of the larger heteronormative society. He believes that while skate culture does have its discriminatory attitudes, "it doesn't have the built in and institutionalized gender inequity like football and other more conventional male dominated sports," and thus leaves the door open for change to take place.

The final theme that emerged within this topic touched on the conflicting opinions regarding how skateboarding needs to change to become more equitable. Some respondents expressed confidence that gender biases will soon become obsolete as more and more attention is given to women in skateboarding, while others expressed skepticism that simply giving women

more media coverage will lead to an equitable culture. Ben Wixon and Neftalie Williams both emphasized that while women have been involved in skateboarding since its inception, increased attention to their participation is the key catalyst for cultural change. Wixon discussed the importance of incorporating skateboarding into the 2020 Olympics. “When it is in the Olympics with women competing on an equal level and in every event as their male counterparts, women are going to get a platform which I think is going to change things.” Thibault Clairis emphasized that it is merit based and a lot is changing with the increased attention women are receiving in terms of commercial advertising and representation in the professional ranks. “A lot of brands have girls on their team. Adidas is working on an all-female video. I don’t think we need to change anything, we just need to let more people skate.” Ryan Lay believes the problems of sexism are more structural. “All the graphic designers and company people are white males. While every company has their one girl skater no one wants to commit to more than that”. Similarly, Kristin Ebeling thinks it is going to take much more than just increased attention and the platform of the Olympics to push the culture.

“We women need to build our own scene. We need to connect with each other, make our own content. We need to be part of creating a culture and once we make a legit culture then guys skateboarding and girls skateboarding will be more able to merge into one culture. Unfortunately, right now I think it’s going to have to be two separate things.”

Skateboarding and Higher Education

Within the topic of skateboarding and its relationship with higher education, the following themes emerged: the benefits of being a skateboarder in college; the perception of skaters verse students; the lack of a historical precedent for skateboarders in academic

institutions; and the lack of institutional support for skateboarding. Cassius Wilkinson said that in his time at Occidental College, skateboarding “has been awesome as a way for me to balance my time and get rid of stress.” College skaters explained how identifying both as a college student and skateboarder can change the societal perception of who is a “skater” and who is a “student.” Ben Knobel described an experience at a local high school where he was skating with some friends and “there were some younger kids skating there too and they were super surprised we went to Oxy.” Wilkinson’s experiences as a volunteer in schools shore up this shift in perception. “As a college counselor at a low resource high school, skateboarding has been a common denominator between me and the kids there. That has been a really good thing for both of us to prove that you don’t have to choose one or the other. You don’t have to choose going to college or doing something you like.”

While some respondents spoke to the advantages and positive aspects of skateboarding and its presence in higher education, others remarked on the lack of connection between skateboarding and academia. The people interviewed for this study were struck by the meagre representation of skate culture in higher education. Neftalie Williams said that “most skaters haven’t gone to college so there is no reason why they should feel any ties to academia or cultural institutions because we aren’t there,” and Ryan Lay expressed frustration that “for whatever reason there are so few pro skaters who have college degrees.” Lay attributed this to there being “a really low bar” for academic success within skating. Kristin Ebeling echoed this sentiment stating, “you don’t have to be good in school to pursue skateboarding.” Ben Wixon disagreed, saying that the idea that skaters don’t go to college is a dated concept. He knew “tons of skateboarders in college,” which seems to contradict what most interviewees said regarding the meager presence of skateboarders in higher ed.

Finally, interviewees discussed the support, or lack thereof, for skateboarders in college. Neftalie Williams argued that skateboarders “don’t have access to the same resources, nor have the same bandwidth as traditional sports,” which results in marginalization. Cassius Wilkinson said that “I can’t think of a single time that skateboarding has been even OK in the academic sphere. People will assume you are not a student if you are skating.” Thibault Clairis shared his emotional response to this dynamic. “I am kind of stuck in the middle between being a college student and a skateboarder. It is hard to be both at the same time, because people on this campus don’t understand skateboarding.”

Skateboarding and Afterschool Programs

The final overall topic in interviews with college skateboarders and skateboarding professionals covered skateboarding and afterschool programs. The discussions touched on the benefits of skateboarding afterschool programs and the obstacles to their creation.

One of the most common benefits that was mentioned was skateboarding’s accessibility and practicality, specifically in urban environments. Kristin Ebeling, the director of Skate Like a Girl Seattle, pointed out that skateboarding thrives in urban environments, “A skateboard in an urban environment can be taken anywhere. That’s your transportation, that’s your activity, skateparks are free and open to the community for the most part which is another huge advantage.” More conventional sports are forced to contend with limited access to field space and other program resources. Ben Wixon, the founder of Drop In to Skateboarding, stressed “In our sport you just show up and skate. You don’t even need a skatepark you just need a piece of concrete.” Ebeling also emphasized that while the initial overhead cost of a skateboard is more expensive than a soccer ball, “if you are a young person that wants to pursue soccer, overall that is going to be way more expensive once you consider coach, uniform and travel fees.” Some

respondents cited the anti-corporate sensibility of the skate industry as an important aspect of skateboarding culture that allows skate programmers to overcome the startup and equipment costs. Ebeling stated that “for the most part all the companies are small and core and they give back so much, which allows skateboarding to be self-sustaining.” Neftalie Williams, however, argued that skate culture “needs to improve upon their support to the non-profits and youth skateboard programs because those are the people who act as advocates for them later on.”

Ryan Lay, the executive director of Skate After School, stated that an additional benefit skateboarding can bring to afterschool programming is that it is seen as “cool” which “is really attractive because you get immediate buy-in from kids,” and allows for unique opportunities for mentorship.

“They are going to think of you as cooler adults and there is a really profound opportunity there for mentorship because you have influence over them.

Typically, when they see a grownup they kind of automatically disconnect and withdraw but when they see you as a cool skater who also goes to college and you are there spending time with them I think there is a huge difference.”

This could also serve to change the stereotype of a college student and make the idea of college more relatable for non-traditional college track kids. Cassius Wilkinson said that a skateboard mentoring program “would broaden the definition or identity of a college student and make it less stereotypical. It would be a great way to make community bonds between academic institutions and kids not normally accepted in those institutions.” Ben Knobel surmised that “role models who are in college but don’t fit the stereotype of college students could be really powerful. Especially if you are skating together and sharing that experience because then the kids could maybe imagine themselves as a college student.”

The final benefit of an afterschool skateboard program that was discussed had to do with making skating more accessible to kids who are interested. Ben Wixon contended that “of all the different sports skateboarding was the biggest sport in terms of the number of people who were interested in it and weren’t participating,” and because the culture of skateboarding can be intimidating these kids “need an icebreaker.” Ben Knobel, an Occidental College senior, thought that an afterschool skateboard mentoring program could be a good way to introduce skateboarding. “For kids who might have thought someway about skateboarding, having it introduced in a more formal setting would give them an opportunity to try it out,” and would make the learning process less intimidating. “It is such a steep learning curve for everybody so trying and failing with all your classmates could make it easier.”

The main barriers to the creation of afterschool skateboard programs that were identified through the interviews fell into three categories: safety and liability concerns, misperceptions of skateboarders, and funding constraints. Skateboard professionals identified safety and liability concerns as the most critical limiting factor for afterschool skate programs. Ben Wixon said, “working in public education I know that the administrators’ priority is to avoid any risks or liabilities that could lead to legal culpability.” Fittingly, the PUSD interviewees were insistent about the difficulty that would be encountered in trying to meet the safety standards and liability requirements of a public-school district. Sarah Rudchenko, the principal at Wilson Middle School, said that in order to get an endorsement “you would have to make sure kids have all the safety procedures in place.” Esperanza Munoz, the PasadenaLEARNs Site Coordinator at Wilson Middle School, articulated that “waivers make districts nervous. A skateboarding program is going to entail liability issues that the district doesn’t normally entertain because there is such a high probability for injury. The district can’t see past a potential lawsuit.” Munoz said that a

skateboard program would likely have more success run through an NGO or non-public-school district affiliated entity because they have a higher threshold for liability concerns.

Societal perception of skaters is another limiting factor. Kristin Ebeling said that her organization “still battles stereotypes of who is a skateboarder. A lot of people still think skateboarders are still graffitiing and doing heroin. This has been a major obstacle in terms of securing funding.” The misperception of a lack of racial diversity in skateboarding also poses a problem. Neftalie Williams, a professor of skateboarding at USC, said “people think that only young white guys are involved in skateboarding so why would it appeal to a parent/organization/institution because don’t black kids just play basketball, or football or whatever.” Finally, a lack of available information and reputable research advocating for the relative skateboarding and the correlated difficulties with securing funding hinders skateboarding making inroads in established academic settings.

Benefits/Role of After School Programming

In interviews with PUSD administrators, two views on the role of afterschool programs emerged. Maria Toliver, the district coordinator for PasadenaLEARNS, and Esperanza Munoz, the PasadenaLEARNS site coordinator at Wilson Middle School, both embraced the view of afterschool programs as an expansion of the school day. They believe afterschool programs should “expand the horizons” of the students through exposure to new experiences and opportunities for “disguised learning.” According to Toliver, afterschool programs as an “expanded school day” should focus on fostering skills “not accessible in the classroom.” Alternatively, Sarah Rudchenko, the principal at Wilson Middle School, seemed to endorse the view of after school programs as an “extended school day”. When discussing the benefits of after school programs she identified homework help as one of the primary benefits, and didn’t

mention the new experiences that can be provided. Esperanza Munoz and Sarah Rudchenko both mentioned the sport league component of LEARNs as a benefit, which Munoz said “builds leadership skills, discipline, teamwork.” Munoz also praised afterschool programs for their ability to keep kids occupied after school and prevent them from getting involved in other potentially risky activities.

Components/Obstacles to Successful After School Programs:

All the responses identified staffing as both a critical component to a successful program, and a major obstacle due to the lack of consistency. Sarah Rudchenko credited the success of LEARNs at Wilson, which she called an exception within the district, to Esperanza Munoz and the other staff, saying that “it is all about the people. If you have good people, then they are on their job, here on time, maybe they have some experience. The better the people the better the program.” While having qualified and consistent staffing is a critical component of a successful afterschool program it is also one of the biggest challenges. Esperanza Munoz reflected

“from 2009-2014-15 I had solid teams. I was carrying over 3-5 people so I never had to start from scratch and could consistently start strong. Last year I was so short staffed that I had to act as a youth leader on top of supervisor duties. The amount of people applying to work at these jobs is constantly decreasing and the turnover rate is making people walk away. I can only be so passionate and invested, but, I can’t do it by myself I am the face, but I am not the machine.”

While Munoz, and PUSD after school programs in general, have had their struggles, PasadenaLEARNs has been successful in improving educational achievement within the district by increasing attendance. District wide in the 2009-2010 school year there was a 10 % gap between the percentage of frequent LEARNs participants (69%) and the non-frequent

participants (59%) who attended school 96 % of the time, and that gap is even wider when limiting the inquiries to just middle schoolers.¹⁰⁵

Attitudes Toward Skateboard Mentoring Program:

The final umbrella topic in the interviews with PUSD administrators concerned their opinions on an afterschool skateboard program centered on mentoring at Wilson Middle School. Within this topic, the major themes were the potential benefits this program could bring and the safety/liability concerns that would need to be addressed.

Respondents identified the popularity of skateboarding among the students as a key component of this program. Afterschool programs must be able to capture and retain the interest of students. For Esperanza Munoz, this requires “a constant grassroots effort. I always need to be marketing something that the students will be attracted to.” Munoz thought that skateboarding would be a great mechanism to increase and retain participation. She reflected on a time before skateboarding was prohibited on campus, when “I had so many skateboarders that they were asking for a skateboarding class.” Another benefit respondents envisioned was associated with the college mentoring aspect. Munoz acknowledged the skill building and exercise aspects but saw the potential for greater impacts.

“Not only could they expand their horizons through exposure to a new skill, see themselves progress, and develop a technical mastery of a craft, but you could also do so much with that time through skateboarding. You have the potential to be that inner link.”

The final benefit mentioned by respondents was the program’s ability to make skateboarding more approachable for youth. Maria Toliver conjectured “for kids who are interested in skateboarding, the program would provide them with the support and instruction needed to

¹⁰⁵ Pasadena Unified School District “LCAP Snapshot 2014-2015)

minimize the risks and learn in a safe way.” This would increase participation in skateboarding and “open it up to girls” because the intimidating aspects of skateboarding would be diminished.

Analysis

The findings from this study offer two major insights. The first demonstrates the potential of an afterschool skateboarding program that pairs middle school students with college age mentors. This would mutually benefit the participants, the culture of skateboarding and the field of afterschool programming. The second illustrates the obstacles that must be overcome to create such a program.

Skateboard Mentoring Programs and Benefits for Middle Schoolers

At the individual level a skateboard mentoring program would provide middle schoolers a safe opportunity to try skateboarding, thus “expanding their horizons”. In the past, most formalized skateboarding instruction has been reserved for more advanced skaters who can afford specialized lessons and camps.¹⁰⁶ An open and free mentoring program would allow access to safe and effective instruction that was previously unavailable for many poor urban children. Moreover, it would allow them to do so while establishing an encouraging community of peers at school. When discussing the benefits of Skate After School, Ryan Lay who acts as the executive director stated:

“for the kids in our program that have limited access to resources, Skate After School gives them access to a sport where they can push themselves both independently of others and in collaboration with others. By learning skateboarding they become part of this larger community”

¹⁰⁶ Ben Wixon, *Skateboarding: Instruction, Programming, and Park Design* (Human Kinetics, 2009).

This could be especially pertinent to PUSD where a school climate survey found that “students feel they have limited opportunities for meaningful participation and that there is a relatively high level of disconnection from school and community.”¹⁰⁷ This program would also encourage physical activity which is desperately needed: fewer than 55% of PUSD students meet the State’s Physical Fitness Test (PFT) minimum requirements for body composition.¹⁰⁸

While skateboarding indisputably involves cardiovascular exercise, balance, and core strength, the specific biological responses and health benefits that adolescents gain from skateboarding have yet to be thoroughly documented. Ben Wixon, the founder of Drop In to Skateboarding lamented that “in academia nobody is out there doing research on skateboarding.” This lack of scientific research has been a liability for its inclusion in school districts which look to more conventional, proven, and tested forms of exercise.

The impacts of a mentoring program have the potential to extend beyond the individual participants and spur cultural change within the skateboarding community, especially with regards to sexism and low academic expectations. Multiple interviewees acknowledged that the idea of skateboarding can be intimidating to beginners. This natural fear is exacerbated for young women by the prevalence of cultural gender biases. When factoring in the hyper masculine ambience of skateparks, the default environment for learning the sport, which has historically been unwelcoming to women,¹⁰⁹ skating becomes all but unapproachable. The security of having a mentor or coach who will take precautions for their safety can reduce the element of intimidation and act as an icebreaker for anyone interested. Additionally, by bringing the venue

¹⁰⁷ City of Pasadena “Year 2 School/City/Community Work Plan 2014-2015” Feb 24, 2015

¹⁰⁸ Ibid

¹⁰⁹ Shauna Pomerantz, Dawn H. Currie, and Deirdre M. Kelly, “Sk8er Girls: Skateboarders, Girlhood and Feminism in Motion,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 27, no. 5–6 (November 2004)

to the students rather than vice versa, girls who are inclined to skate are not forced to deal with the oppressive environments of skateparks or feel a sense of marginalization.

By facilitating the simple interaction between middle schoolers and college mentors who skate, this program would help cultivate a college going culture that is critical, especially within skateboarding. Currently, with so few known professional skateboarders holding college degrees, underrepresentation of skateboarders in higher education, and campus skate bans, to young skaters the worlds of skateboarding and academia can appear in opposition. Thibault Clairis, the president of the USC skate club, related that due to the current environment surrounding skateboarding he feels “stuck in the middle between being a college student and a skateboarder, it is hard to be both at the same time.” By demonstrating that it is possible to pursue both skateboarding and academic achievement, a program like this would give middle schoolers an example they can follow and thus make the idea of attending college more relatable.

This program model could also solve many of the issues facing afterschool programs in general. One of the most difficult aspects of running good after school programs is attracting and retaining qualified staff. In a skateboard mentoring program for middle schoolers much of the formalized skateboard instruction will be at the fundamental beginner level. Because of this, the skills taught in these lessons are “generally second nature to any proficient or intermediate skateboarder,”¹¹⁰ which allows for a larger pool of qualified potential mentors. Additionally, once a program partnership has been established, after school programmers do not need to worry about constant recruitment of new staff because as long as there are skateboarders in college there will be a consistent supply of mentors and many will participate for multiple years, thus

¹¹⁰ Wixon. *Skateboarding, Instruction, Programming, Park Design*. Human Kinetics, 2009

providing the students and the coordinators with a semblance of stability that has historically been missing within after school programs.

Obstacles to Afterschool Skateboard Programs: Risk and Liability

The major obstacle to an afterschool skate program that was cited in almost every interview concerned safety and liability issues. The notion that skateboarding is unsafe seems anecdotal and misinformed by stereotypes. A 1996 study undertaken by Susan Kyle, found that skateboarding was a “comparatively safe sport” and actually had a rate of emergency department-treated injuries (8.9/1000 participants) that was less than half of the rate for basketball (21.2/1000).¹¹¹ Moreover, according to the National Safety Council the most dangerous time for skateboarders is during the first crucial weeks of learning skateboard basics.¹¹² In “*Skateboarding: Instruction, Programming, and Park Design*” Ben Wixon concludes that “the majority of skateboarding injuries are preventable if skateboarding is taught properly and practiced in a controlled environment.”¹¹³ Thus, not only are the safety concerns unfounded, but the restrictions can work to compound the legitimate safety risks for beginning skaters by limiting opportunities for proper instruction.

As most of the injuries in skateboarding are acute abrasions, sprains, and fractures affecting the upper extremities (55-63% of skateboard injuries)¹¹⁴ and lower extremities (17-26%),¹¹⁵ the citing of safety concerns appears especially arbitrary due to the much higher, and far more serious potential for concussion and head trauma in “traditional” contact sports. The impact

¹¹¹ Susan B. Kyle et al., “Skateboard-Associated Injuries: Participation-Based Estimates and Injury Characteristics,” *The Journal of Trauma* 53, no. 4 (October 2002): 686–90.

¹¹² Wixon. *Skateboarding, Instruction, Programming, Design* Human Kinetics, p.14 (2009)

¹¹³ Ibid

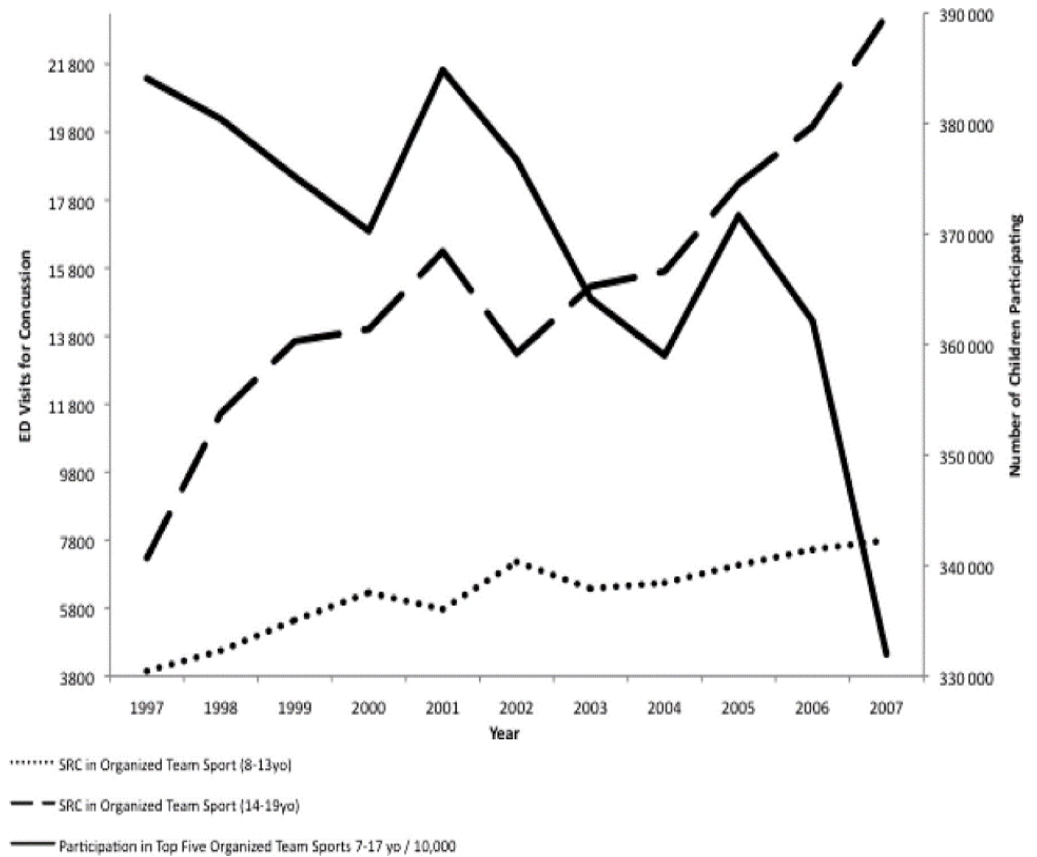
¹¹⁴ Ibid

¹¹⁵ Ibid

of traumatic brain injuries has received increased attention as of late, and has become a major public health problem.

The graph on the right shows that while adolescent participation rates in traditional team sports (football, basketball, baseball, hockey, and soccer) decreased by 13% from 1997-2007, emergency department visits for sports related concussions in these sports more than doubled in the same year period.¹¹⁶

Figure 1 Estimated ED visits for SRC for ages 8 to 13 (dotted line) and ages 14 to 19 (dashed line) and participation for ages 7 to 17 (solid line) in the top 5 OTSs



Source: (Bakhos et al. 2010)

Moreover, it has been shown that the competitive nature of team sports increases the incidence of injuries and head traumas. In the table on the below epidemiological data from a

¹¹⁶ Lisa L. Bakhos et al., “Emergency Department Visits for Concussion in Young Child Athletes,” *Pediatrics* 126, no. 3 (September 1, 2010): e550–56, doi:10.1542/peds.2009-3101.

study of high school sports injuries shows that the rate of injury per 1000 athlete-exposures was higher in competition (4.63) than in practice (1.69).¹¹⁷

Table 2 Practice and Competition Injury Rates, High School Sport-Related Injury Surveillance Study, United States, 2005–2006

Sport	Injuries		Exposures		Rate of Injury (per 1000 Athlete-Exposures)	Rate Ratio* (95% Confidence Interval)
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage		
Overall	4350		1 730 764		2.51	
Practice	2110	48.5	1 246 499	72.0	1.69	
Competition	2240	51.5	484 265	28.0	4.63	2.73 (2.58, 2.90)
Boys' sports	3293		1 148 698		2.87	
Practice	1638	49.7	851 591	74.1	1.92	
Competition	1655	50.3	297 107	25.9	5.57	2.90 (2.71, 3.10)
Football	1890		431 242		4.36	
Practice	888	47.2	349 183	81.0	2.54	
Competition	992	52.8	82 059	19.0	12.09	4.75 (4.34, 5.20)
Soccer	372		153 400		2.43	
Practice	164	44.1	104 106	67.9	1.58	
Competition	208	55.9	49 294	32.1	4.22	2.68 (2.18, 3.29)
Basketball	412		218 342		1.89	
Practice	228	55.3	156 679	71.8	1.46	
Competition	184	44.7	61 663	28.2	2.98	2.05 (1.69, 2.49)
Wrestling	415		166 279		2.50	
Practice	257	61.9	126 059	75.8	2.04	
Competition	158	38.1	40 220	24.2	3.93	1.93 (1.58, 2.35)
Baseball	214		179 435		1.19	
Practice	101	47.2	115 564	64.4	0.87	
Competition	113	52.8	63 871	35.6	1.77	2.02 (1.55, 2.65)
Girls' sports	1057		582 066		1.82	
Practice	472	44.7	394 908	67.8	1.20	
Competition	585	55.3	187 158	32.2	3.13	2.62 (2.32, 2.95)
Soccer	334		141 581		2.36	
Practice	108	32.3	98 166	69.3	1.10	
Competition	226	67.7	43 415	30.7	5.21	4.73 (3.76, 5.95)
Volleyball	196		119 235		1.64	
Practice	112	57.1	75 544	63.4	1.48	
Competition	84	42.9	43 691	36.6	1.92	1.30 (0.98, 1.72)
Basketball	374		186 161		2.01	
Practice	182	48.7	132 836	71.4	1.37	
Competition	192	51.3	53 325	28.6	3.60	2.63 (2.15, 3.22)
Softball	153		135 089		1.13	
Practice	70	45.8	88 362	65.4	0.79	
Competition	83	54.2	46 727	34.6	1.78	2.24 (1.63, 3.08)

* Practice is used as referent group.

Source: (Rechel, Yard, and Comstock 2008)

In this study, Rechel also finds that the injuries suffered in competition were more likely to be severe with long term impacts. As discussed in the interviews with skateboarders, skateboarding doesn't entail the same competitive nature nor the competitive situations that other sports require. It doesn't involve the same exposure to increased intensity head-to-head collisions and high-risk activity and could be in fact significantly less risky than other traditional sports.

¹¹⁷Julie A. Rechel, Ellen E Yard, and R. Dawn Comstock, "An Epidemiologic Comparison of High School Sports Injuries Sustained in Practice and Competition," *Journal of Athletic Training* 43, no. 2 (2008): 197–204

Recommendations

This research has illuminated the various benefits that afterschool skateboard programs can bring to youth. It has also made evident that the entrenched barriers preventing the spread of such programs are uninformed and outdated. This paper seeks to simplify and streamline the process of creating afterschool skateboard mentoring programs in PUSD public schools and thus makes the following recommendations for further consideration.

Amend PUSD School Policy to Remove Skateboarding from “Activities with Safety Risks”

The first recommendation is to amend Section AR.5142 of PUSD Policy on Student Safety by removing skateboarding from the list of “Activities with Safety Risks”. The biggest hurdle facing the possibility of an afterschool skateboard program in PUSD and public school districts in general is the perceived safety and liability risks attached to skateboarding. In the list “Activities with Safety Risks,” a subsection of PUSD Policy AR5142 on Student Safety, skateboarding is second on the list. Glancing at many of the other activities that warrant higher precautions: Sailing, boating, or water skiing; Snow trips Motorcycling, Target shooting, Horseback riding, and Rodeo, intuitively skateboarding seems to be of a completely different character. Most of the other activities are unfeasible for PUSD middle schoolers (motorcycling, target shooting), and the others

require specific environments inaccessible to after school programs in Pasadena (Sailing, Snow Trips, Rodeo). Moreover, skateboarding simply doesn’t have a high probability for injury. As

Table 3 Total Injuries Ranked by Sport

SPORTS INJURY STUDY Total Injuries Ranked by Sport				
Sport Total	Numbers are in thousands (000)			
	Total Sport Participants	Injured Participants	% of Total Injuries	Injuries Per 100 Participants
TOTAL INJURIES	211,202	20,145	100.0	9.5
Basketball	36,584	2,783	13.8	7.6
Running/Jogging	35,866	1,654	8.2	4.6
Soccer	17,641	1,634	8.1	9.3
Football (tackle)	5,783	1,084	5.4	18.8
Baseball	10,402	602	3.0	5.8
Bicycling (recreational)	53,524	445	2.2	0.8
Tennis	16,353	415	2.1	2.5
Ice Hockey	2,612	415	2.1	15.9
Skateboarding	12,997	399	2.0	3.1
Walking (recreational)	84,986	384	1.9	0.5
Golf	27,812	291	1.4	1.0
Hunting	16,471	207	1.0	1.3
Gymnastics	5,149	149	0.7	2.9
Ice Skating	14,530	105	0.5	0.7
Swimming (recreational)	92,667	73	0.4	0.1
Bowling	53,160	50	0.2	0.1
Paintball	8,679	21	0.1	0.2
Shooting (trap & skeet)	3,696	16	0.1	0.4
Archery	6,650	16	0.1	0.2
Canoeing	10,933	11	0.1	0.1

Source: American Sports Data, Inc. - A Comprehensive Study of Sports Injuries in the U.S.

Source: familiesafeld.org (2006)

shown on the right, traditional non-contact sports such as basketball, soccer and baseball, have a much higher probability for injury, yet they are seldom considered “risky.” Surprisingly, even running/jogging, which is offered at Wilson Middle School as a sponsored after school activity has a higher likelihood of a participant suffering an injury. Removing skateboarding from this list would allow for the adaptation of the existing PUSD Joint Use Policy framework to a skateboard mentoring program.

Adapt School Policy on Community Partnerships to a Skateboard Mentoring Program

The recommendation that follows is to adapt PUSD Policy AR 1330.1 on Community Relations and Joint Use Agreements to a skateboard mentoring program. The PUSD Governing Board policy on joint use agreements (BP 1330.1) recognizes that, “ the vitality of the district depends on family and community engagement” and, “encourages schools to pursue partnerships that increase access to academic and non-academic supports such as early learning, leadership and citizenry, fiscal literacy, the arts, social and emotional supports, health, college readiness, tutoring, mentorships, vocational experiences and other areas that link to school and District goals.” It stipulates that “partnerships must have measurable outcomes related to the mission of Pasadena Unified School District and the goals of the individual school site,” and, “services and programs offered in the partnership must be accessible and affordable to students, families, and the school community.” A skateboard mentoring partnership appears to be a perfect fit for its ability to promote healthy behavior and physical activity, make the idea of college more accessible through interaction with college mentors, and open a challenging and engaging activity to all those who are interested. Moreover, the existence of the correlated PUSD Policy AR 1330.1 would allow for easy adaptation and implementation.

AR 1330.1 outlines the guidelines for establishing program and service partnerships for students and schools. It outlines the necessary steps for establishing a partnership, the required parameters for establishing a partnership, and the different categories of partnerships that are possible. AR 1330.1 also specifies the options and requirements for providing before-and-after school activities at schools (see appendix 1 for description). Adapting this framework, a skateboard mentoring program would easily fit into a “medium intensity partnership” under Option 1 of the types of after school programs: “School Related” Activities Provided by Private Organizations. A skateboard mentoring program that is open to all and encourages participation from groups that have historically been marginalized and discouraged from skateboarding goes beyond meeting the requirement of openness stipulated in Option 1. Also, as discussed in the findings and analysis section skateboarding is a fundamental way to develop persistence, creativity and cultivate a sense of community. Because of this, and critical to the possibility of a skateboard mentoring program due to the funding limitations, the program could qualify to have the rental fees waived. A skateboard mentoring program for PUSD middle schoolers could afford a wealth of educational, social, and health benefits and do so in a manner that is innovative and engaging.

Remove Skateboarding from the List of Prohibited Activities at Occidental College

Another step that should be taken is removing skateboarding from the list of prohibited activities at Occidental College. As discussed in the previous recommendations, the risk of skateboarding simply is not that high, which questions the need for campus wide prohibitions based on “well-documented risk and liability issues.”¹¹⁸ Additionally, there is inconsistent

¹¹⁸“Student-Handbook: General Policies: Skateboarding (Rollerblades, Longboards, Razors, Hoverboards, Etc.)” *Occidental College*. Accessed April 4, 2017. <http://www.oxy.edu/student-handbook/general-college-policies/skateboarding-rollerblades-longboards-razors-hoverboards>.

enforcement on behalf of Campus Safety. The policy stipulates that skateboards, longboards, rollerblades, and razor scooters are banned,¹¹⁹ but it often seems that young skateboarders are the only group being targeted. In an email conversation last year discussing the ban and inconsistent enforcement, a high-ranking dean said, “the officers are empowered to use their judgement about which activities present safety concerns.” However, when accounting for the well documented negative stereotypes towards skateboarding, the lack of clearly delineated policy leads to arbitrary enforcement. Besides being unwarranted and unfair towards skateboarders who attend Occidental College, the campus ban also alienates the youth community in Highland Park.

Skateboarding is hugely popular among youth in Highland Park/Eagle Rock. Just taking a walk down York Boulevard and counting the number of kids with skateboards will make this evident. By creating the possibility of negative interactions with campus safety based upon their subjective judgements of what constitutes a safety risk, the skateboarding ban can make the campus unapproachable and create negative perceptions towards college within young Highland Park residents. As “Community” is one of four cornerstones of Occidental’s Mission Statement,¹²⁰ it seems contradictory to have a policy that essentially singles out one group of people and restricts their ability to be accepted by the college.

Expand the Skateboard Industry’s Support to NGO’s

The fourth recommendation is to formalize stronger methods of support from the Skateboard Industry to NGO’s to build a stronger skating community. The skateboard industry needs to establish a norm of giving and support to skateboarding NGO’s to create a sustainable culture and push for progress. According to Neftalie Williams, professor of Skateboarding, Business, and Media at USC, the stereotypes of skateboarding that are prevalent in the cultural

¹¹⁹ Ibid

¹²⁰ “Mission | Occidental College |.” *Occidental College*. Accessed April 4, 2017. <http://www.oxy.edu/our-story/mission>.

zeitgeist were chosen from outside the culture. Because of these negative stereotypes, as experienced by Kristin Ebeling, the director of Skate Like a Girl Seattle, it can be hard for skateboard programmers to secure funding from non-skate oriented sources. Therefore, the skateboarding industry needs to strengthen and diversify its methods of support to non-profits such as “Skate Like a Girl”. One way this can be done is by establishing more formal methods for supplying equipment to organizations. The already functioning International Association of Skateboard Companies (IASC) has started fledgling skateboard recycling programs in various cities, and could be a great resource on the industry side. However, they are currently only operating in one city at a time, donating 1,000 complete boards a year.¹²¹ It is essential for the IASC and other industry leaders to expand on this model. They must direct more board donations to organizations who are serving underprivileged youth and working to transform the culture and perception of skateboarding. For real cultural change and sustainability, however, donating boards cannot be the only role of the industry. Other ways in methods of support include partnering directly with organizations as corporate sponsors, convening summits with NGO’s to identify the most pressing needs, and funding research that promotes the positive aspects of skateboarding and the proliferation of more skateboarding nonprofits.

Expand Availability of Certification Methods for Skateboard Programmers

The final recommendation is to expand the availability of instructional certification for skateboard programmers and coaches. Partly due its relative youth as a sport, there are very few accreditation programs available to certify skateboard instructors.¹²² Certification is important for ensuring that programmers are using the safest and most effective methods possible in

¹²¹“Just One Board.” IASC | *International Association of Skateboard Companies*, January 24, 2013. <http://theiasc.org/just-one-board/>.

¹²² Ben Wixon. *Skateboarding: Instruction, Programming, and Park Design* Human Kinetics, p. 14, (2009)

coaching youth. It is also important for changing the image around skateboard programming. It has been difficult for skateboard programmers to prove their legitimacy due to a lack of trust and the cultural stereotypes discussed in earlier sections. Ben Wixon, the founder of Drop In to Skateboarding, related his struggles in expanding his program saying that “people think skateboarders are dirt bags they don’t trust you, because it is not like baseball there, are no uniforms.” Because skateboard programs aren’t given the same cultural acceptance they are stigmatized as dangerous and often seen as illegitimate. Providing accreditation programs is a tangible mode of establishing legitimacy for skateboard programming. The Streetwise program, sponsored by the Australian Government and Skateboarding Australia (SBA) demonstrates how a national coaching instruction and certification program can be coordinated (See appendix 2 for specifics). While adapting this program to the U.S would entail significant structural and logistical maneuvering due to unavoidable differences in the scale of the program, there is the possibility of incorporating the skateboard specific instruction such as supplied by SBA into the already existing National Association of Youth Sports (NAYS) framework for certification. NAYS has provided training for more than 3 million coaches since 1981, offering certification courses both online and in-person at more than 3,000 sites in all 50 states.¹²³ NAYS Coach Training features two components: Coaching Youth Sports and a sport-specific training and offers certification.¹²⁴ Incorporating skateboard specific instruction into the options of sport-specific training would certainly be feasible. The current omission of formalized skateboard coaching standards and the risk that entails, seems to require this innovation. Skateboard

¹²³ “NAYS Coach Training & Membership Program.” *National Association of Youth Sports*, 2017. <http://www.nays.org/coaches/>.

¹²⁴ Ibid

programmers need certification measures to establish credibility and ensure acceptance in academic settings.

Conclusion

This study fills a gap in the literature on skateboarding and its relationship with academia. It explicitly demonstrates the harmful effects prohibitory bans have on youth skateboarders. Policies that restrict skateboarding contribute to the mutual misunderstanding between skateboarders and academic institutions. They perpetuate the separation between the worlds of skateboarding and education, and reinforce negative stereotypes. Specifically, prohibitions by institutions of higher education can alienate the surrounding youth community from the campus and inhibit the development of a college oriented culture.

This paper also contributes to the field of study that supports afterschool programming in public schools by demonstrating the unique characteristics of skateboarding and their applicability to positive youth development. It shows that a skateboard mentoring program could positively impact the academic aspirations of middle schoolers, as well as provide an essential outlet for physical activity and community building. Additionally, this paper exhibits the inherent flaws in the characterization of skateboarding as a risky and antisocial activity. It advocates for its inclusion, opening and expanding possibilities for the future of after school programs.

It is important to note that under the new administration of President Trump the field of afterschool programming and public education in general is subject to drastic change. It is likely that funding for public school districts nationwide will suffer unprecedented cuts as President Trump has pledged to reduce governmental spending on various social, educational, and non-

profit programs nationwide.¹²⁵ As related by many interviewees, when public funding for education is cut, afterschool programs are among the first to see significant reductions in their operating budgets. This can be seen in President Trump's recent proposal to eliminate the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program and its \$1.2 billion in grants for after-school and summer programs.¹²⁶ Because of this, the future of afterschool programs and their ability to expand in scope and character is extremely precarious. However, the need for innovation, and targeted inclusion in youth development programming is vital. Adding afterschool programs that cater to the millions of young skateboarders is one such innovation that could be implemented with relative low cost and potential alterations to life course decisions. Skateboarding is a unique and untested pathway to expand outreach to youth.

¹²⁵ Emma Brown "Trump Budget Casualty: After-School Programs for 1.6 Million Kids. Most Are Poor." *Washington Post*. Accessed April 11, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/trump-budget-casualty-afterschool-programs-for-16-million-kids-most-are-poor/2017/03/16/78802430-0a6f-11e7-b77c-0047d15a24e0_story.html?utm_term=.0b437e7c298a

¹²⁶ Ibid

Appendix # 1: Complete List of Interviewees and Titles

College Skateboarders:

Cassius Wilkinson: Occidental College, Senior

Ben Knobel: Occidental College, Senior

Thibault Clairis: University of Southern California, Senior, President of USC Skate Club

Dimitri Melendez: University of Southern California, Post-Grad, Former President of USC Skate Club

Skateboard Professionals:

Ryan Lay: Founder and Executive Director of Skate After School, Professional Skateboarder for Welcome Skateboards

Neftalie Williams: Professor of Skateboarding Business, Media, and Culture at the USC Annenberg School of Communications and Journalism, Chairman of Cuba Skate, Team Manager of the Citystars Skateboarding Time, Academic and Skateboarding Envoy to the Netherlands

Kristin Ebeling: Director of Skate Like a Girl Seattle, Sponsored Skateboarder for Meow Skateboards

Ben Wixon: Executive Director of Drop In to Skateboarding, Director of Development, Programming, and Instruction for Skaters for Public Skateparks, Author of “Skateboarding: Instruction, Programming and Park Design”, Teacher in the Portland School District

PUSD Administrators

Esperanza Munoz: PasadenaLEARNS site coordinator at Wilson Middle School

Marie Toliver: PasadenaLEARNS District Coordinator for PUSD

Sarah Rudchenko: Principal at Wilson Middle School

Appendix # 2: PUSD POLICY ON JOINT USE AGREEMENTS

Table 4 Categories of PUSD Joint Use Agreement Partnerships

Low intensity	Medium intensity	High intensity
Little to no direct contact with students	School based programs or services; one site or multiple sites	Significant contact with students and schools; one site or multiple sites
Agreements with school or district staff; documentation as appropriate	Documented partnership with school and central office; often linked to individual school goals	Documented partnership with school and central office. Directly linked to school and district goals
Examples: school assemblies, donations, guest speakers etc.	Examples: Volunteers, tutors, mentoring programs, etc.	Examples: Lead Partners, Community Learning Center sites; Full Service Community Schools; City partners, etc.

Source: PUSD policy AR 1330.1

AR 1330.1 includes four options for the types of programs: 1. “School Related” Activities Provided by Private Organizations, 2. “Non-School Related” Activities Provided by Private Organizations, 3. PTA Sponsored Activities, and 4. School –Sponsored Activities. To be considered a “school related” activity, and thus have the rental fees waived, Option 1 requires a program to provide a “youth character building activity” or other organized youth club activity that be “open to all interested participants.”

Appendix # 3. SBA Program Specifics: In this program, aspiring coaches submit their information to the national database and then are assigned to a SBA teaching course in the region where they live. To achieve a Level-1 certificate as a beginner coach applicants are required to attend two-four hour sessions taught by SBA professionals and pass a competency exam, as well as complete and log 10 hours of supervised instruction and 30 hours of unsupervised instruction.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ “Skateboarding Australia Coaching,” *Skateboarding Australia*, March 4, 2014, <http://skateboardinaustralia.com.au/coaching/>.

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