Long Routes to School?

School Travel and Activity Participation among High School Students

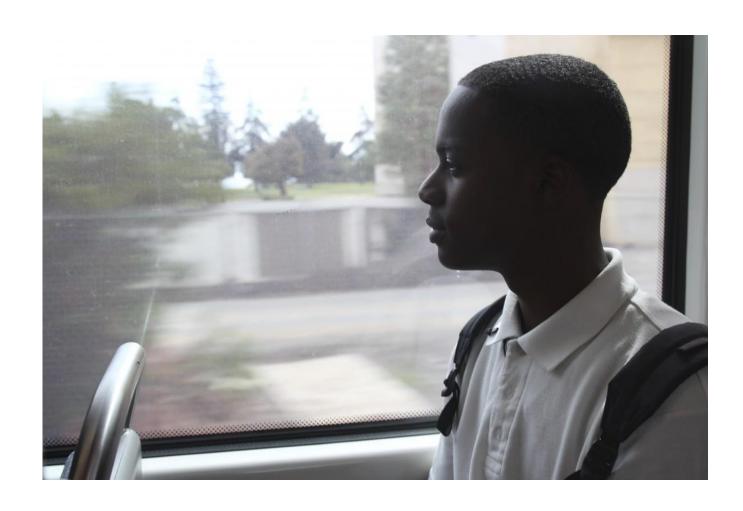
INTRODUCTION

Since the early 20th century, policies encouraging school and school district consolidation have sought to increase educational quality in rural areas.

Since the early 21st century, policies encouraging public school choice have sought to increase educational quality in urban areas.

Both trends increase the distance that some students travel to school. How might these longer commutes relate to student engagement outside of school?





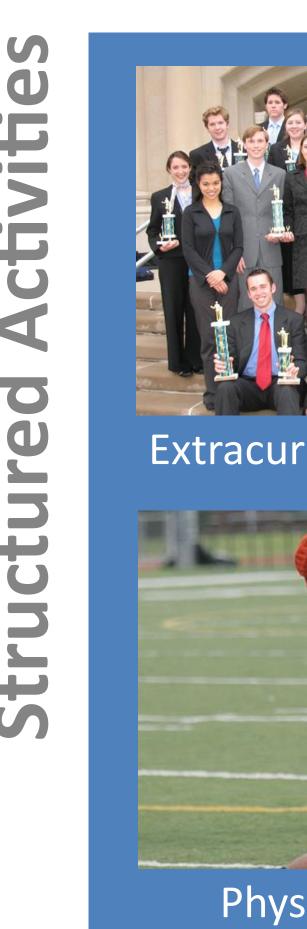
AIM

To determine how the activity participation patterns among students with long commutes differ from those of their peers.

We also seek to understand which students are most likely to feel the effects of a long commute on their ability to participate in other activities.

METHODS

Using data from the American Time Use Survey, we use hierarchal cluster analysis to classify 2,301 students' overall time-use patterns, based on the amount of time they spend participating in each of the following activities:



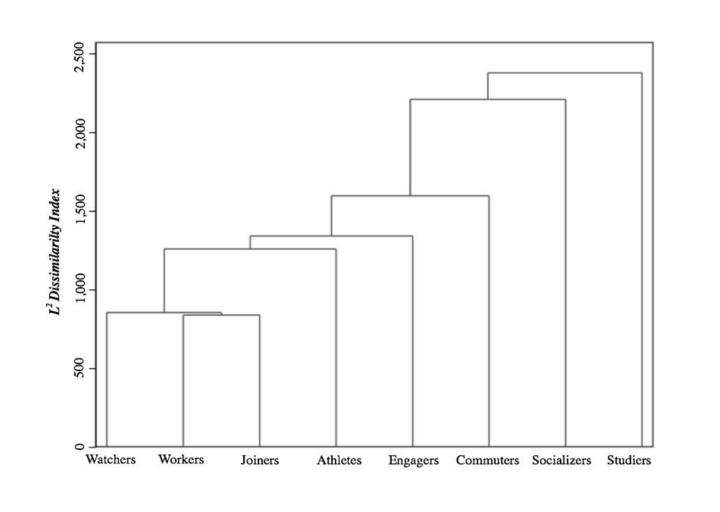






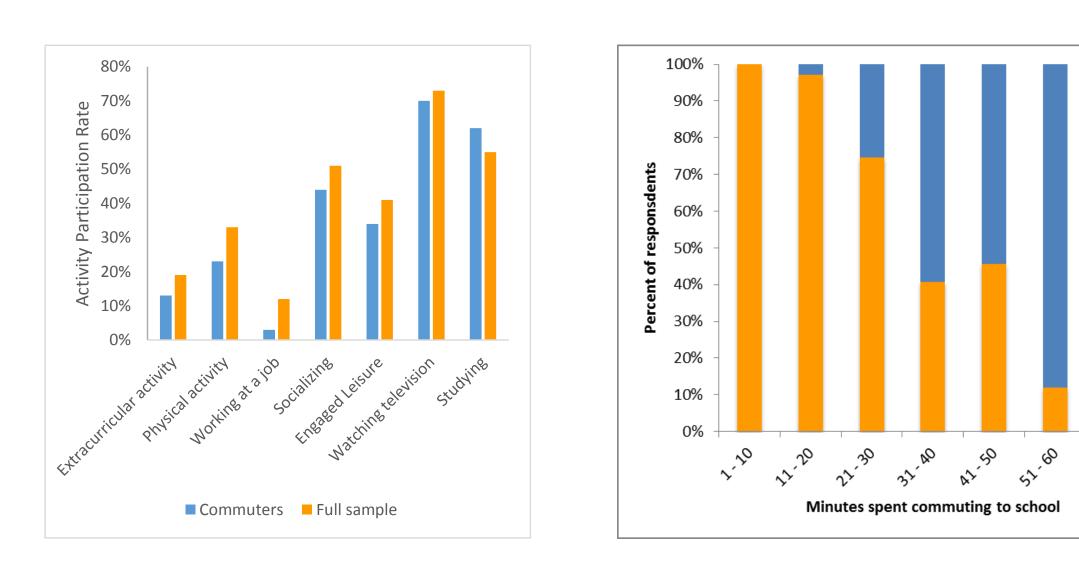
RESULTS

Eight clusters emerged, each describing a pattern of activity characterized by high participation in one of the eight activities included in the analysis.



The Commuters cluster was characterized by long commutes to school and relatively low rates of participation in most activities, particularly structured activities

The likelihood that a students' activity pattern would be characterized by a long commute increased with commute duration.



Among students with commutes to school lasting longer than 30 minutes, the likelihood of an activity pattern that is characterized by a long commute is

- 1.27 times greater for Hispanic students
- 1.18 times greater for students in the lowest income quintile
- 1.17 times greater for students who commute by transit or school bus

CONCLUSIONS

Education reforms that increase the duration of trips to school have a downside: long journeys to school leave less opportunity for participation in structured activities.

Commute duration alone does not explain low activity participation rates of commuters: many students with long commutes still find ways to participate in a variety of structured activities.

It is poor, Hispanic, and transit-dependent youth whose activity patterns are most affected by the duration of their commutes.



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