

Linda CALDWELL

lindac@psu.edu

EDWARD SMITH

Pennsylvania State University



Conceptualizing Boredom in Leisure among Adolescents

Adolescence is a critical time for identity formation and the adoption of healthy behaviors and activities. Leisure offers many opportunities to achieve this; however, it also provides a context (time, place and space) for boredom. This is concerning as previous research has shown a correlation between boredom and risk behavior. In this paper, we offer a conceptualization of boredom in leisure by drawing on insights obtained from various research projects conducted over the last fifteen years involving school-going youth in South Africa. Primarily we focus on the HealthWise program, which is a comprehensive, evidence-based, prevention intervention that reduces risk behavior, and promotes healthy leisure through addressing boredom (among other things) in school-going youth. We provide research findings about the associations between boredom and risk behavior including substance use, sexual risk and school dropout. We share perspectives from young people about their experiences of boredom using photoelicitation. We highlight the importance and influence of the environment on adolescent development, boredom and risk behaviour, and address the challenging issue of measuring boredom in different cultural contexts. Finally, we offer evidence-based strategies for assisting young people to overcome boredom. This paper provides insights into adolescent boredom and the relationship with leisure for anyone working with young people in various contexts.