

## DOCTRINAL BELIEFS AS A DETERMINANT OF SIN ASSOCIATED WITH SELECT LEISURE ACTIVITIES

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*The purpose of this case study was to investigate the association between religious doctrine and perceived sinful nature of 10 leisure activities identified by the congregation under study. A questionnaire was completed by 188 congregants of a predominately African American, Protestant church located in southern Ohio and results indicated a significant association between the source of belief — personal beliefs, scripture, and religious doctrine — and the belief that certain leisure pastimes are sinful. Results of the study suggest: (1) religious doctrine influences beliefs about the sanctity of leisure activities at the individual and congregational levels; (2) personal beliefs are the greatest determinant of perceived sin associated with select leisure pursuits; and (3) length of membership in a congregation influences beliefs about leisure.*

For many practicing Christians, religious beliefs impinge upon their attitudes and choices about leisure. Globally, there are more than two billion Christians (wholesomewords.org, 2007), with approximately 164 million practicing Catholics (65 million), Mormons (5 million), and Protestants (94 million) residing in the United States. This cadre of adherents is affiliated with more than 230 different denominations. Among Protestant Christians an estimated 25 million are African Americans that affiliate with one of the eight historically Black denominations: African Methodist Episcopal, African Methodist Episcopal Zion, Christian Methodist Episcopal, Church of God in Christ, National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., National Baptist Convention of America, National Missionary Baptist Convention, and Progressive National Baptist Convention. Taken together, these denominations form what Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) called the "Black Church" and encompass more than 65,000 churches across the United States (Linder, 2008).

Religion and leisure in the Christian tradition are inextricably tied together in ways that are not always readily apparent. Both involve critical elements of celebration, free will, integration, personal-well being and self-realization, search for the authentic, and ritual (Godbey, 2003). Leisure activities are often the catalyst for building community and healthy lifestyles within a faith

tradition. Dahl (1972) and Johnston (1985) suggested that play and leisure are vastly important to human development and play is essential to the theological development of Christians because it alludes to important biblical-theological doctrines of creation, grace, and liberty. In Christianity, leisure is central to the spiritual practice of worship (Dahl; Oswalt, 1987). Pieper (1963) noted that worship is at the core of an appropriate concept and use of leisure, while Volf (2001) argued that the development of spiritual disciplines such as contemplation, meditation, and reflection stem from constructive use of leisure.

Social aspects of leisure are also important in Christianity. Ryken (2002) argued that the social dimension of leisure provides an opportunity for relating to oneself and others, crafting meaningful friendships, and enjoying fellowship. Healthy leisure pursuits are vital to both family and congregational dynamics (Frederickson, 1997; Ryken, 2002), and healthy spiritual attitudes about leisure play an important role in empowering people to live balanced lives through proper stewardship of both work and leisure (Hansel, 1987; Oswalt, 1987; Ryken, 2002). Helldorfer (1995) suggested that a proper understanding of the value of leisure and its role in Christianity could help one avoid "work fixation" and enjoy the "good life."

The interface between religion and leisure has a well-documented yet bittersweet

history. Typically, religion is tied to the sacred while leisure is associated with the secular, thus creating tension and conflict (Kelly, 1982). This tension has created an uncomfortable synthesis of the virtuous and that which is perceived to be vice-laden. Despite gains in religious freedom to pursue leisure pastimes, the practical truth is that "some people's religious beliefs intentionally and fully shape their recreation choices, while others express beliefs that unintentionally and partially shape their recreation choices" (Byl, 2006, p. 210).

Condemnation of select leisure activities such as theatre, music, art, dance, gambling, and sports began with wide-spanning influence of the Catholic Church in its opposition to Roman culture (Kraus, 1994). Protestantism followed suit by condemning the same series of leisure pursuits, but added to the list prohibition of amusements on Sunday, hunting on lands of wealthy landowners, and use of public lands for recreation purposes. The impetus of these prohibitions was to promote the idea of "purity of conduct." Many of these restrictive ideas related to leisure carried over into contemporary times, especially among more conservative denominations within Protestant Christianity, and prohibitions against most morally sensitive leisure pastimes went beyond racial and denominational lines.

Researchers have speculated how Christian religious teachings influence leisure attitudes and choices among practitioners of this faith tradition (Emard, 1990). The purpose of the present case study was to examine how biblical and doctrinal teachings about recreation influence leisure attitudes of congregants within a mainstream, African American, Protestant church. Previous scholars (Basden, 1982; Ernce, 1987; Ogden, 1978) have examined the role of leisure and recreation in the Protestant, Southern Baptist Convention that is primarily comprised of Caucasian members. In each study, the focal point was a scrutiny of the function and delivery of church-based recreation programs. No attention was given to the role of religious doctrine in shaping leisure attitudes and choices. To date, few attempts have been made to examine the relationship between religion, leisure, and doctrine in historically African American denominations. This present study represents an attempt to address that void by examining the role religious doctrine

plays in potentially constraining leisure choices within the congregational ethos of an African American church in the Baptist denomination. The primary intent was not to conduct a critical analysis of race, religion, and leisure – despite the merit and need for such an endeavor – but to provide a “snapshot” into a little known phenomenon. Doctrinal beliefs theory, which has been seldom used in leisure research but illustrates the power of religious socialization in the life of the individual and congregation, provided the theoretical foundation for the study.

## A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE BLACK CHURCH

The term African American or Black Church refers to Christian churches that serve predominantly Black congregations in the United States. Typically, the Black Church has been conceptualized as a unified entity despite the reality that there are many different Black churches that serve African American communities. Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), authors of the seminal study on the Black Church in America, traced the history of Black churches back to the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. During the colonial period, the Christianization of slaves was erratic and generally ineffective. Around 1740, evangelical revivals began to attract significant numbers of African American converts largely because they enabled the lower classes, including slaves, to pray and preach in public. Baptists and Methodists licensed Black, male clergy to preach, and by the 1770's predominately Black congregations began to emerge (Gravely, 1997).

African American churches in the South were subject to restrictions intended to prevent unsupervised slave assemblies. Despite periodic persecution southern African American churches survived and provided a limited religious independence. In the antebellum years, Christianity spread gradually among slaves. Some attended church with Whites or under White supervision, but the majority had little, if any, access to formal church services. Nevertheless, slaves often conducted their own religious meetings, with or without their owners' consent.

In the North, abolition of slavery gave African Americans more latitude to exercise their religious preferences. Prompted by discriminatory treatment in Caucasian-dominated churches, African Americans in Philadelphia founded two influential churches in 1794 – Bethel African Methodist and St. Thomas African Episcopal. Over the next

decade, separate African American congregations emerged in free African American communities across the North. In 1816, the first major African American denomination, the African Methodist Episcopal church, was formed. Because the church was the only institution that African Americans controlled, it served as the primary forum for addressing their social, political, and religious needs (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990).

Historically African American churches were overwhelmingly Protestant primarily because African Americans had little contact with Roman Catholicism outside of Maryland and Louisiana (Sernett, 1999). Following the Civil War, northern missionaries headed South in the wake of Union armies to organize schools and churches among former slaves. The increase in southern members enlarged the size of northern African American denominations and made them national in scope. Most African American denominations, particularly Methodist churches, multiplied rapidly following the war. The African Methodist Episcopal and African Methodist Episcopal Zion churches organized congregations throughout the South and the Christian Methodist Episcopal denomination formed around 1870. Northern White Methodists allowed Blacks to structure their own conferences but kept a watchful eye on their activities and exercised continual guidance over the Black churches.

Southern Blacks who attended Presbyterian churches prior to the Civil War did so because their owners did. After the Civil War, Black membership in Presbyterian churches dropped dramatically. Cumberland Presbyterians did not allow the formation of separate Black congregations until after 1874. That year, Blacks formed the Colored Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Significantly, other Presbyterian bodies produced no corresponding Black churches (Mamiya & Lincoln, 1990).

Many African Americans gravitated toward the Baptist church although many worshiped with Whites for years before forming their own congregations. African Americans in Virginia established a separate African American Baptist church by 1867. This group later became the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. African American conventions began multiplying rapidly after that and, subsequently, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, National Missionary Baptist Convention, and National Primitive Baptist Convention of the USA emerged.

In the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Holiness and Pentecostal churches like the Church of God in Christ disrupted

older African American denominations by emphasizing doctrines of sanctification and speaking in tongues. In 1906, the Azusa Street Revival in Los Angeles gave rise to Pentecostal churches across the nation (MacRobert, 1997). During this era, the Black Church also ushered in the first iteration of the “mega-church” in cities such as New York and Chicago. Larger city churches (e.g., Abyssinian Baptist in New York and Olivet Baptist in Chicago) developed extensive social services including social recreation programs designed to assist African Americans that had migrated from the South.

The Black Church remains one of the strong voices of morality, social justice, and hope in the United States. Through the conveyance of moral teachings, doctrine, history, and tradition the Black Church continues to be the epicenter for spurring moral, social, political, and economic self-help among its congregants and within Black communities. Thompson and McRae (2001) argued that because African American churches are heavily grounded in religious tradition they provide a forum to reinforce values, norms, and behaviors conducive to creating a sense of “relatedness” and community. Ellison (1993) contended that the Black Church offers an interpersonal context where individuals are evaluated and respected by others in terms of their social performances (e.g., congruency between what is believed and the lived experience) and spiritual capital (e.g., morality, wisdom, insight). Moreover, a stringent moral code exists within many African American churches.

Despite positive influences of social leisure experiences provided by early African American churches, some “worldly” pursuits continued to be heavily scrutinized. In their analysis of the moral fabric of the Black Church, Paris (1985) and Taylor (1994) noted that many Black churches across denominations expressly prohibit “pleasure-filled” leisure activities on Sunday, gambling, drinking, smoking, dancing, and sexual promiscuity. An examination of the religious tradition among Holiness-Pentecostals led Taylor to surmise, “the only dancing allowed in the church was dancing to praise the Lord” (p. 56). The evolution of the Black Church ushered in the infusion of leisure pursuits (e.g., dancing, gambling, listening to secular music) into the social ethos and doctrinal statements of churches aligned with mainstream, historically Protestant denominations. Holland (2002), commenting on the influence of the Black Church in shaping attitudes about leisure, stated:

The church was governed by a moral code that called for a certain level of control over the character of recreation [leisure] in the church. The Methodist and Baptist churches, to which most blacks belonged, imposed stringent rules of moral conduct. For example, certain activities were generally not allowed in churches: card-playing, dancing, gambling, some sporting activities, and some picnics. As such, individual recreational and leisure preferences might be missing from the church's agenda. (p. 168)

The Black Church is rich in its heritage and a religious tradition anchored in social justice and morality. Despite the value of leisure that accompanied the development of the Black Church, restrictive aspects of doctrine and religious tradition have constrained leisure choices of some congregants.

## LEISURE CONSTRAINTS

Leisure constraints research has grown steadily over the past two decades. During its maturation a heightened understanding of broader influences that shape people's everyday leisure behaviors has been manifested. Three categories of constraints comprise the general theoretical framework – intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural. The connection between these categories of constraints has been conceptualized in a hierarchical model (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991; Jackson, 2005) and a series of propositional statements about operational aspects of the model. Each category of constraint is vital to the study of religion and leisure. On the whole, research has proven that constraints to leisure seldom exist in a social vacuum, but are immersed in political, ideological, religious, and power structures surrounding people's lives (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). Moreover, recent scholarship has shown that constraints to leisure are not insurmountable and can be successfully negotiated on multiple levels (Alexandris, Tsorbatzoudis, & Grouios, 2002; Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007). The body of research that examines constraints to leisure among practitioners of Islam has gained prominence in scholarly literature (Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, & Sheikholeslami, 2007; Livengood & Stodolska; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006), while constraints research focusing on Christianity is still emerging.

Research exploring effects of Christian beliefs on leisure behavior began more than two decades ago (Heintzman, 1987, 1994,

2006; Heintzman & Van Andel, 1995). Much of that work focused on biblical-theological aspects of leisure. More recently, emphasis has been placed on examining doctrinal beliefs of Christianity and Islam and how they influence leisure choices and behaviors. Livengood (2006) examined perceived barriers to leisure among members of New Paradigm churches in Illinois. Four major themes emerged from interviews with congregants: (1) personal spirituality was not considered a constraint to leisure participation; (2) faith was considered as an impediment to leisure in various stages of their life but not presently; (3) Christian faith was a persistent constraint to leisure pursuits; and (4) participation in some leisure pursuits was considered un-Christian (Findings section, n.d., para.1). Some interviewees discussed the struggle they had interpreting the appropriateness of leisure activities based on their faith, legalism espoused in previous congregations in which they had been active, and attempts to negotiate perceived barriers to leisure subsequent to chronological and spiritual maturity. Results of this study are important because they illustrate the transition of people's thinking regarding religious beliefs, leisure, and the ethos of a congregation. In addition, findings suggest that greater emphasis is being placed by African American and Caucasian congregations on spirituality and faith convictions as opposed to "bad" doctrine and religious traditions when making leisure choices.

Livengood (2004) conducted a study that examined the role of leisure in the lives of Pentecostal Christians. Grounded theory was utilized as the framework to interpret themes that emerged from 13 semi-structured interviews. Multiple themes emerged from this study. First, participants defined participation in religious services as leisure and enjoyable. Second, social relationships were developed through church activities and these relationships catalyzed relationships external to the church. Moreover, leisure activities were used as an evangelistic tool to attract non-Christians to the faith. Third, interviewees indicated that their relationship with God was the primary determinant of appropriate leisure activities. This investigation further revealed how Christian faith affects leisure behavior, which continues to be an under-researched area of leisure research.

Melson (1995) investigated two major components of leisure over the lifespan of elderly African Americans: segregation and religiosity. Semi-structured interviews and observations revealed that social interaction, often experienced at church, was a

positive and popular leisure experience for participants. Data also revealed that interviewees were concerned about how their church would feel about their participation in leisure pursuits that were deemed "unholy" (e.g., gambling, dancing). This finding illustrates the constraining effect of religious beliefs acquired over the lifespan.

In a historical study of African American churches in Brooklyn, New York, Taylor (1992) found that churches played an important role in providing leisure services for their congregants and communities. African American churches formed church clubs and auxiliaries and with their involvement in dances, bazaars, and fashion shows blended the secular with the sacred. Taylor proposed that these churches were responding to a changing African American community that invested heavily in modern leisure activities. Nevertheless, some of these African American churches used stringent church doctrine and religious tradition to constrain leisure choices of church members.

Each of the previously cited studies helps to broaden the understanding of the relationship between Protestant Christianity and leisure, especially potentially constraining denominational beliefs. The Melson (1995) and Taylor (1992) studies specifically illustrated the role of religion as a constraint to leisure among African American congregants.

## INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZED RELIGION ON LEISURE

Godbey (2003) suggested that organized religion shapes behavior in a number of ways. Ideals and beliefs of a religion define, to some extent, the relation of humans to a supreme being and delineate those human qualities and behavior worthy and those sinful. All those beliefs shape leisure values and behavior of followers of the religion. Organized religion heavily influences what forms of leisure pastimes are acceptable (Abiante, Robb, & Smith, 1995).

Religious institutions continue to play a major role in shaping attitudes about leisure and leisure behavior. Russell (2005) noted that doctrine taught by religious organizations can be useful in promoting constructive forms of leisure. Furthermore, Kelly (1982) noted that incremental growth in secular leisure activities impinged upon the sanctity of Sunday and inevitably produced conflict between recreation and religious institutions. Churches assumed that if they could not control the morals of an entire community, they should at least maintain

jurisdiction over remaining sacred times.

Over the span of modern history, organized religious institutions have sought to ban some forms of leisure behavior and promote others. Those activities that remain on the “condemned” list within mainline Christianity include: (a) theatrical productions, (b) consumption of alcohol and drugs, (c) dancing, and (d) games of chance and gambling (Godbey, 2003). Eitzen and Sage (2003), further commenting on the power of religion at the institutional level, stated:

At the institutional level religion serves as a vehicle for social control; that is, religions tenets constrain the behavior of the community of believers to keep them in line with the norms, values, and beliefs of society. In all major religions, morals and religion are intertwined, and schemes of otherworldly rewards and punishments for behavior, such as those found in Christianity, become powerful forces for morality. The fear of hellfire and damnation has been a powerful deterrent and control in Christian societies. (p. 165)

#### RELIGIOUS SOCIALIZATION AND BARRIERS TO LEISURE

Religious socialization encompasses the process by which an individual learns and internalizes attitudes, values, and behaviors within the context of a religious system of beliefs and practices. Religious socialization can be viewed from at least two perspectives; the first being from the perspective of the individual, which scrutinizes processes by which individuals develop a self-consciousness regarding religion, learn to evaluate their own behavior, and relate to others from a religious perspective. The second perspective is that of the group or society, and it examines the process through which social and cultural continuity is achieved as a function of religious institutions. It is further assumed that religious socialization occurs over the course of one’s lifespan, beginning in childhood and continuing into adulthood (Neugarten, 1977). To the extent that individuals are involved in a church or religious belief system and exposed to doctrine, a socializing influence is exerted upon them (Brown & Gary, 1990). The process of interacting with others as well as exposure to religious scriptures, rituals, and fellowship activities tend to influence formation of values, attitudes, and behaviors that may effect individuals not only in a church setting but also in various secular endeavors.

Religious socialization is deeply rooted in doctrine and tradition. Both play a major role in shaping attitudes about leisure and

leisure behaviors within contemporary society. Russell (2005) noted that religious organizations are generally concerned with teaching doctrine that promotes healthy expressions of leisure and use leisure as an agent to promote their specific creed and doctrine. *Doctrine* is the written body of teachings of a religious group that are generally accepted by that group. *Tradition* is an established pattern of thought, action, or behavior associated with religious practice. Ibrahim (1982) suggested that leisure and religion have developed structures for their accommodation in the social milieu, regardless of its level of sophistication, while their functions have remained constant over the years. Religious doctrine and tradition are vital parts of the structure of organized religion. Furthermore, Ibrahim stated, “While religion has served, and is still serving, to stabilize the existing social order by endowing the accepted traditions with sacredness, leisure serves as a vehicle of human expression. Herein lies the inevitable link between leisure and religion: which form of human expression is acceptable, and which is not? That is, where does sacred end and profane begin” (p. 197). The unavoidable tension between religion and leisure has its genesis in religious socialization, which includes the propagation of doctrine and tradition among followers.

#### SIN AND LEISURE PURSUITS

Sin, in the Protestant Christian context, is defined as, “the act or thought that deliberately violates divine law and offends holiness or falling short of the mark of righteousness required of a believer [practitioner of the Christian faith tradition]” (Kurian, 2005, p. 634). A common typology used in Protestantism places sin in two key categories – commission and omission. Sins of commission are those willful acts that deliberately violate divine law. For example, lying, assault, and slander are considered sins of commission. Sins of omission are those acts that illustrate a failure to exercise one’s duty (Portman, 2007). Driving by an injured cyclist without summoning medical help constitutes a sin of omission. Sins of commission that are associated with leisure time and leisure pursuits have typically been the focal point of organized religion.

Ryken (2001) posited that the evidence of human sinfulness often manifests itself in leisure. For centuries, theologians and church officials have noted that leisure has the potential to degenerate into immorality. The apostle Paul in Galatians 5 provided a listing of things that constitute “works of the flesh,” including immorality, impurity, licentiousness, drunkenness, carousing, and

the like (5:19-21, NIV). Traditionally, leisure pursuits that were considered sinful and worldly were tied to this passage of scripture. Purveyors of religious thought such as Pagitt (2007) contended that participation in sinful activities leads the individual down the path of “dis-integration,” away from participation in the “integrated” plan that the Creator has for the world. In other words, sinful activities lie in tension with the divine plan for righteousness and sanctity that the Creator intended for humanity.

Perhaps the most striking example of a common leisure pursuit that has a weighty “sin label” assigned to it is gambling. In the opinion of some, gambling is construed as sinful and immoral, which is the reason some religions forbid or strongly advise against it. For example, most Protestant faiths (including Mormonism) advise members to avoid gambling because it is sinful and can potentially blossom into other forms of sin. Diaz (2000) conducted a study on religiosity and gambling among residents of Las Vegas, Nevada. One of the key findings was that frequency of attendance at religious services, importance of religion in the life of the individual, and religious affiliation all affected perceptions of gambling as a sinful activity and how often they gambled. Furthermore, the direction of the effect can be established in cases of frequency of attendance at religious services and level of importance of religion in the life of the individual, where both inversely affected the frequency of gambling. Overall, attitudes about the sinful nature of gambling and frequency of gambling were affected by their religious denomination.

An awareness and avoidance of sin is part of the ethos of organized religion at the denominational and congregational levels. Perceptions about sin associated with a leisure pursuit can be transmitted within culture of religious institutions for extended periods of time.

#### CONGREGATIONAL INFLUENCES ON LEISURE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

A substantial amount of religious learning transpires in congregations. Historically, clergy are responsible for espousing church doctrine. The pastor generates resources used for religious socialization utilizing the Christian Bible, doctrine, and other denominational resources (Oswalt, 1987). Exposure and adherence to messages of religious elites (i.e., clergy) is thought to result in changes in attitudes of believers who find religious messages credible due to the connection of specific messages with a generally-accepted

theological basis (Jelen & Chandler, 1996). Ryken (2001) persuasively argued that the contemporary church has both spiritual and social dimensions to it that cannot be ignored. Both dimensions play a major role in shaping leisure attitudes and behaviors at the congregational level.

Beeghley, Bock, and Cochran (1990) suggested that congregations serve as a reference point for their membership. The degree to which a group or collectivity serves as a reference group for an individual is a positive and additive function of several factors namely the degree of similarity between the individual and other members; shared values and beliefs and their clarity; sustained interaction with other group members; and whether an individual defines group leaders as significant others. Furthermore, Beeghley et al. argued that many religious groups meet these conditions and serve as important reference groups. These groups profess adherence to a specific doctrine as a condition of membership. The faith group's doctrinal beliefs and behavioral directives are espoused by clerics and congregants alike on a regular basis and remain stable over time. Liven-good's (2006) examination of perceived constraints to leisure among New Paradigm church members epitomizes the power of espoused doctrine over time and its role in individual leisure choices.

Institutionalization of beliefs based on conveyance of religious doctrine through religious socialization shapes beliefs about non-religious activities. Moreover, shared beliefs are an important facet of living in community with other Christians, particularly within congregations. Overall, tension remains between espoused Christian beliefs about the sanctity of certain types of leisure pursuits, secularization of Sunday, and personal choices to participate in leisure pastimes that collide with congregational beliefs.

#### DOCTRINAL BELIEFS THEORY

Doctrinal beliefs theory focuses upon religious beliefs that reinforce personal behaviors and hinges upon acceptance and internalization of religious doctrine. Religious doctrine is commonly defined as a codified set of beliefs, body of teachings, instructions, or taught principles/positions in a religious belief system. McGrath (1990) further stated, "[religious doctrine] implies reference to a tradition or community . . . entails a sense of commitment to a community, and a sense of obligation to speak on its behalf . . . it is an *activity*, a process of transmission of collective wisdom of a community, rather than a passive set

of deliverances" (pp. 10-11). In the case of Christianity, doctrinal teachings are anchored in the Christian Bible. Erickson and Heflin (1997) pointed out that these teachings are essential to the development of a relationship with a "higher power" or God in the Christian tradition. Doctrinal beliefs impact attitudes, values, beliefs, and actions.

Doctrinal beliefs theory includes the premise that church participation and commitment will be weak or strong depending on the individual's religious beliefs, especially personal beliefs about the church. Subsequently, if the individual holds orthodox beliefs, participation will be high. Additionally, if the individual believes that the church is necessary for salvation, participation will be higher (Hoge & Carroll, 1978). If the person also believes that their church and no other has the "Creator's Truth," their participation will be even higher. This theory is supported by all research on dimensions of religiosity (e.g., King & Hunt, 1972; Stark & Glock, 1968). To effectively test this proposal, models should be assessed which observe: (a) church participation as intervening between social influences and doctrinal beliefs, and (b) doctrinal beliefs as intervening between social influences and church participation. The theory is supported to the extent that an association between beliefs and church participation is found.

Hoge and Polk (1980) used nationwide survey data from fifteen denominations to test doctrinal beliefs theory of church participation and commitment. Because of the importance of denominational theology in theorizing, researchers utilized the *Creedal Assent Index* and *Growth and Striving Index* to determine whether respondents were liberal, moderate, or conservative in their congregational theology. Analysis of the data indicated doctrinal beliefs strongly predicted church participation and commitment, even when other factors were controlled. Belief in central Christian creeds predicted both church participation and commitment to the denomination and congregation (King & Hunt, 1972; Lofland & Stark, 1965; Stark & Glock, 1968). Results also indicated that doctrinal beliefs frequently are the products of early socialization, evolve during the course of "church life," have long-term effects for behavior, and prove association but not causation.

Tamney (2005) explored how two conservative, Protestant congregations infused doctrinal teachings about sinful leisure pursuits – drinking alcohol, gambling, social dancing, movies, and television shows produced by non-believers – into

congregational life. One church was Pentecostal and the other Free Will Baptist. Queries were made to the congregation pastors about importance and frequency of conveyance of doctrinal teachings on each activity which yielded four responses: It is a major teaching of the congregation; it is one of the teachings of the congregation; it is mentioned once in a while; or it is never mentioned. Both pastors placed little emphasis on giving up movies or television programming produced by non-believers. The pastor of the Free Will Baptist church indicated that doctrinal teachings on not drinking, gambling, and social dancing were major teachings of the congregation. The previously referenced study accentuates the manner in which religious doctrine influences perceptions about leisure activities at the congregational level.

## CONGREGATIONAL PROFILE

The congregation in this study is located in a city in central Ohio. The church is a conservative, predominately African American Baptist church affiliated with the 8,000,000 member National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. This organization is the oldest and largest denominational convention representing African American Baptists. Arguably, it is one of the most conservative strands among African American Baptists, with Primitive Baptist being slightly more conservative. The church is seventy-five years old and has approximately 500 congregants, with an average attendance of 350 on Sunday morning. Many of the congregants are second or third generation members. More than 50% of its members are age 50 and older. There is a smaller cohort of congregants ages 35-50. Finally, there are members between the ages of 18-34 who have young families and are often in transition.

This congregation was selected as the focal point for this case study for three reasons. First, its pastor had a reputation for being progressive and a staunch proponent of leisure. According to congregants, he frequently espoused the virtues of leisure in his preaching and Christian education teachings. Second, the church was involved in the construction of a new Family Life Center that contained several recreational amenities. The primary motivation for opening the new building was to enhance opportunities for congregational fellowship by providing a place to engage in Christian leisure pursuits. Finally, the congregation had a longstanding history of being one of the most conservative African American

Baptist congregations in the city. Throughout the course of its history, adherence to doctrine and tradition were the hallmarks of its reputation.

Traditional and conservative theological underpinnings of the church are frequently determinants of leisure choices and behaviors, including spectatorship on Sunday, the Sabbath Day. Based on doctrinal beliefs, congregational theology is such that leisure activities that lie in tension with perceived or actual biblical teachings are labeled as sinful. Activities such as games of chance, playing cards and/or bingo for money, consumption of alcohol, dancing, watching television shows containing sex, violence, or abuse language (curse words), attending R-rated movies, listening to secular music with morally questionable lyrics are all considered to be sinful and congregants have historically been persuaded to refrain from participation. Despite the perceived sinful nature of the aforementioned leisure activities, Portman (2007) assigned their place in the typology of sin as sins of *commission* as opposed to sins of *omission*.

#### CONGREGATIONAL THEOLOGIES

In order to examine nuances associated with religious life in mainstream religious organizations, empirically examining congregations is necessary (Welch, 1989). The congregation is an irreducible unit of religious socialization in American culture (Jelen & Chandler, 1996). Congregations have both official and unofficial ideas about what constitutes sin and how to operate within the world (Ammerman, Jackson, Dudley, & McKinney, 1998). These ideas or theologies are shaped by a variety of sources namely sacred scripture, creeds, prayers, doctrinal teachings, sermons, and an assortment of catechistic materials. Congregational theologies are either explicit or implicit. *Explicit theology* refers to the official doctrinal position of the congregation. The Bible, *Baptist Beliefs*, *Baptist Articles of Faith*, and *Busy Pastor's Guide* serve as primary source material for the congregation's explicit theology. *Implicit theology* is defined as the genuine but fragmented theologies members of the congregation believe. Implicit theology reflects beliefs of individual congregants.

The Christian Bible is the primary source of the congregation's explicit theology. The second source from which the congregation's explicit theology has evolved is the book, *Baptist Beliefs*, written by E. Y. Mullins (1925). Doctrinal beliefs espoused in this book serve as the foundation of the church's covenant and denominational *Articles of Faith*. Within this congregation,

*Baptist Beliefs* are reviewed quarterly to insure understanding and adherence to doctrine.

The third source from which the congregation draws its explicit theology is the twenty-four *Articles of Faith*. As a member church of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc. the *Articles of Faith* are taught regularly. Article Fifteen, entitled *Of the Christian Sabbath*, suggests the following for practicing Baptists:

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath; and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and *sinful recreations* [italics added]; by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public; and by preparation for the rest that remains for the people of God (Jordan, 1997, p.30).

Despite theological importance of this Article in daily living of congregants, it remains a source of tension. Serious questions surface when attempts are made to operationalize the phrase "sinful recreations." First, what is a sinful recreation? Second, does this mandate apply only to Sunday or should it be complied with each day? Traditionally, interpretation of this Article and associated doctrine pertaining to Sabbath observance serve as a barrier to participation in leisure pursuits on Sunday. An understanding of implicit theology is important because it demonstrates how the beliefs of individual members differ from beliefs of the congregation. Therefore, the present study examines the following questions. First, is there an association between perceived sinfulness of select leisure pursuits named by congregants and the source of belief (scripture from the Christian Bible, doctrinal/church teaching, or personal)? Second, is there an association between perceived sinfulness of select leisure activities identified by congregants and length of congregational membership?

## METHODOLOGY

### QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION

A written questionnaire was developed to ascertain respondents' beliefs about 10 leisure activities congregants deemed sinful. The list or inventory of sinful forms of leisure was also based on the conveyance of congregational history by members, comments from pastoral sermons, and doctrinal beliefs as expressed in the *Church Covenant* and *Baptist Articles of Faith* (Jordan, 1997). Leisure activities included drinking alcoholic beverages, playing cards, playing bingo for money, gambling, watching

R-rated movies, dancing, watching television shows that included adult content and inappropriate language (curse words), attending a sporting event on Sunday, listening to secular music, and attending a comedy show at a comedy club. For each activity respondents were asked to indicate whether they believed the activity was sinful by answering "yes" or "no." Finally, each respondent was asked to indicate whether the primary source of their belief about the 10 leisure activities was scripture, church doctrine, or a personal belief.

Reliability of the inventory of leisure pursuits was assessed using the Kuder-Richardson (K-R20) coefficient, which is the equivalent of Cronbach's alpha for dichotomous items (Garson, 2008). A K-R20 coefficient of .77 was obtained for the inventory with scores on the 10 items ranging from .68 to .86. Thus, it appeared that the internal consistency of the inventory was acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003). Content validity was achieved by administering a pilot survey to 20 congregants of another church from the same denomination located within the same geographic area from which revisions were made.

### SAMPLE SELECTION AND DATA COLLECTION

A stratified sample of 200 congregants was drawn from the church's active membership list. To accurately reflect the composition of the congregation, stratification was conducted by gender, age group, length of membership in the church, employment status, and level of education (Gay, 1996).

Data were collected over a four-week period. Two-hundred surveys were distributed to congregants prior to the Sunday school period and collected immediately afterward. All surveys were assigned code numbers and checked against the master list of participants. A total of 188 completed inventories were returned for a response rate of 94%. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated to assess demographic characteristics of the sample. Pearson's chi-square was used to examine research questions. A sequential Bonferroni correction to adjust for effects of multiple testing was utilized. Additionally, Cramer's V (V) was used to measure the strength of association between variables.

## RESULTS

### SAMPLE PROFILE

Respondents consisted of 115 females (61.2%) and 73 males (38.8%). The highest percentage (42.6%) was in the 50-59 year

category and the majority of congregants participating in the study were married (84.0%). Nearly fifty-percent (48.9%) of respondents earned masters degrees and reported earnings of \$30,000-39,999 annually (46.8%). The majority of the sample (71.3%) indicated they were employed in professional occupations. The mean length of membership in the congregation was 12.3 years and 61.2% of respondents held membership for 10 years or more.

**BELIEFS ABOUT SIN, LEISURE ACTIVITIES, AND SOURCE OF BELIEF**

The first research question addressed the association between perceived sinfulness of select leisure pursuits named by congregants and source of the respondent's belief (scripture, doctrinal/church teaching, or personal). Table 1 provides a summary of responses to perceived sinfulness of 10 leisure activities by the source of belief. Results of chi-square tests ( $X^2$ ) revealed no significant association between drinking beverages containing alcohol, playing bingo for money, playing cards, watching R-rated movies, or attending sporting events on Sunday as leisure pursuits and the source of belief (see Table 2). However, significant associations were found for the following leisure pursuits.

The majority of respondents (61.7%) indicated they believed dancing was a sin while the remaining 38.3% did not. Data analysis revealed a significant association between belief that dancing is a sinful form of recreation and the source of belief,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 13.72, p < .001$ . Additionally a moderately strong association ( $V = 0.27$ ) was found between the belief that dancing is a sinful leisure activity and the source of belief. Of those responding "yes," 19.0% cited scripture as their primary source of belief, 31.9% cited church doctrine, and the remaining 49.1% noted their belief as personal. For congregants that did not consider dancing to be a sinful leisure pursuit, 8.3% cited scripture, 15.3% selected church doctrine as their source of belief, and the remaining 76.4% indicated a personal belief as their primary source.

The majority of respondents (79.8%) believed that gambling was not a sinful leisure pursuit while the remaining 20.2% of the sample believed that gambling was a sinful activity. Data analysis revealed a moderate association ( $V = 0.22$ ) between gambling as a perceived sinful form of recreation and the source of belief,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 9.00, p < .01$ . Of those refuting the belief, 36.8% based their stance on scripture, 5.3% on doctrinal teachings, and 57.9% on personal beliefs. For those

supporting the belief, 15.3% cited scripture, 9.3% church doctrine, and 75.3% on personal beliefs, respectively.

Respondents were closely divided over whether watching television that included nudity and inappropriate language was sinful. Approximately fifty-four percent (53.7%) of the sample indicated "yes," while slightly over forty-six percent (36.3%) indicated "no." Analysis of the data revealed a strong association ( $V = 0.31$ ) between the two variables,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 17.73, p < .001$ . For respondents reporting "yes," 2.0% cited scripture, 16.8% church doctrine, and 81.2% a personal belief as their source of their belief. Among congregants reporting "no," 20.7% cited scripture, 10.3% church doctrine, and 69.0% personal belief as the source of their position.

For this activity, a lower percentage

of respondents (30.9%) believed it was a sin than those who did not (69.1%). Data analysis revealed a very strong association ( $V = 0.43$ ) between the respondent's belief and the source of belief,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 34.65, p < .001$ . For respondents answering "yes," 13.8% reported scripture as their source, 19.0% church doctrine, and 67.2% a personal belief. Of those responding "no," 3.1% cited church doctrine as the source of their belief while the remaining 96.9% indicated it was based on a personal belief.

Respondents were closely divided over whether listening to secular (non-church) music was sinful. Slightly fewer (45.2%) indicated "yes" while 54.8% indicated "no." Data analysis revealed a significant, very strong association ( $V = 0.38$ ) between the belief and source of belief,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 26.66, p < .001$ . For congregants

**TABLE 1. Frequencies and Percentages of Beliefs Regarding Sin Associated with Select Leisure Activities by Source of Belief**

Leisure Activity	Bible	Doctrinal Teaching	Personal Belief
Dancing	28 (14.9%)	48 (25.5%)	112 (59.6%)
Drinking alcoholic beverages	28 (14.9%)	14 (7.4%)	146 (77.7%)
Gambling	37 (19.7%)	16 (8.5%)	135 (71.8%)
Playing bingo for money	9 (4.8%)	9 (4.8%)	170 (90.4%)
Playing cards	32 (17.0%)	16 (8.5%)	140 (74.5%)
Watching R-rated movies	18 (9.6%)	12 (6.4%)	158 (84.0%)
Watching television shows with nudity and inappropriate language	20 (10.6%)	26 (13.8%)	142 (75.5%)
Attending sporting events on Sunday	42 (22.3%)	28 (14.9%)	118 (62.8%)
Attending a comedy show	8 (4.3%)	15 (8.0%)	165 (87.8%)
Listening to secular (non-church) music	15 (8.0%)	17 (9.0%)	156 (83.0%)

Note. Percentages for each source of belief reflects the total number of respondents regardless of their belief about the perceived sinful nature of the activity. N = 188.

**TABLE 2. Perception of Leisure Activity as Sinful by Source of Belief**

Leisure Activity	$X^2$	df	V
Dancing	13.72***	2	0.27
Drinking alcoholic beverages	1.36	2	0.09
Gambling	9.00**	2	0.22
Playing bingo for money	3.21	2	0.13
Playing cards	2.81	2	0.12
Watching R-rated movies	4.32	2	0.15
Watching television shows with nudity and inappropriate language	17.73***	2	0.31
Attending sporting events on Sunday	1.36	2	0.09
Attending a comedy show	34.65***	2	0.43
Listening to secular (non-church) music	26.66***	2	0.38

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

responding in the affirmative, 17.6% cited scripture, 14.1% church doctrine, and 68.2% personal belief as their source, respectively. Of those responding “no,” 4.9% indicated church doctrine and the remaining 95.1% designated personal belief as their source.

#### BELIEFS ABOUT SIN, LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP

The second research question addressed the association between length of church membership and beliefs about the sinful nature of leisure activities identified by congregants. The percentage of responses to perceived sinfulness of 10 leisure activities by the source of belief remained constant (refer to Table 1). Results of chi-square tests revealed no significant association between drinking beverages containing alcohol, playing bingo for money, attending sporting events on Sunday, and length of congregational membership. However, significant associations were discovered between the seven remaining leisure activities and length of congregational membership (see Table 3).

Analysis of data revealed a moderate but significant association ( $f = 0.22$ ) between belief about dancing and length of membership,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 9.41, p < .01$ . Of respondents indicating “yes” to the belief that dancing is a sinful leisure activity 46.6% held membership for less than 10 years, while 53.4% held membership for 10 or more years. For congregants responding “no,” 9.6% were members less than 10 years while the remaining 28.7% were members for 10 or more years. Overall, beliefs regarding dancing as a sinful leisure pursuit differ with length of membership. Congregants holding membership for 10 or more years are more likely to believe the

activity is sinful.

Data analysis revealed a mild association ( $f = 0.15$ ) between gambling as a sinful form of recreation and length of congregational membership,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 4.14, p < .05$ . Of the 20.2% of respondents that believed gambling is a sinful leisure pursuit, 52.6% held membership less than 10 years, while the remaining 47.4% were members for 10 or more years. For the balance of the sample who expressed “no” on the belief that gambling is a sinful recreation, 34.7% held membership for less than 10 years and 65.3% were members for 10 or more years.

For the activity of playing cards, analysis of data revealed a mild ( $f = 0.20$ ) significant association between the two variables within this congregation,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 7.39, p < .01$ . Of the 30.4% of respondents that supported the belief held membership for under 10 years while the remaining 69.6% were affiliated with the congregation for 10 or more years. For those that did not support the belief, 50.0% were members less than 10 years and the remaining 50.0% were congregants for 10 or more years.

Data analysis indicated a strong significant association ( $f = 0.34$ ) between watching R-rated movies and length of congregational membership  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 21.81, p < .001$ . Among congregants that supported the belief, 67.4% held membership for less than 10 years while 32.6% held membership spanning 10 or more years. Of respondents indicating “no,” 28.9% were members less than 10 years while 71.1% were members for 10 or more years.

Analysis of data revealed a moderately strong association ( $f = 0.26$ ) between the belief about television viewing and length of congregational membership,  $X^2(2, N =$

188) = 12.34,  $p < .001$ . Among congregants supporting the belief, 26.7% were members for less than 10 years while 73.3% held membership for 10 or more years. Among congregants that indicated “no” to the belief, 51.7% were members for less than 10 years and 48.3% were members for 10 or more years.

Data analysis showed a strong significant association ( $f = 0.45$ ) between the activity and length of congregational membership,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 37.24, p < .001$ . Of respondents that indicated “yes” to the belief, 70.7% were members less than 10 years while 29.3% held membership 10 or more years. Among congregants that stated “no,” 23.8% were members for less than 10 years, while the remaining 76.2% of the sample held membership for 10 or more years. Congregants with 10 or more years of membership are less likely to believe that attending a comedy show at a comedy club is a sinful recreational pursuit.

Finally, data analysis revealed a very strong significant association ( $f = 0.37$ ) between listening to secular (non-church) music and the source of belief,  $X^2(2, N = 188) = 24.58, p < .001$ . Among congregants supporting the belief, 57.6% were members for fewer than 10 years and 42.4% 10 or more years. Of respondents indicating “no” to the belief, 22.3% were members for less than 10 years while the remaining 77.7% were members for 10 or more years.

#### SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Additional analyses were conducted to determine if demographic variables of age, marital status, highest degree earned, and occupational category impacted perceived sinfulness of select leisure pursuits named by congregants in the study. Further analysis of the demographic variables yielded no statistically significant results, warranting no additional discussion.

#### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this case study was to determine whether an association existed between beliefs about 10 leisure activities perceived to be sinful and source of the belief (i.e., scripture, church doctrine, or personal beliefs) and length of congregational membership. Doctrinal beliefs theory served as the theoretical framework for the study. Data provided a portrait of how one mainstream, African American, Protestant congregation operationalized their beliefs about leisure activities based on their interpretation of the Christian Bible and church

TABLE 3. Perception of Leisure Activity as Sinful by Length of Church Membership

Leisure Activity	$X^2$	df	V
Dancing	9.41**	1	.22
Drinking alcoholic beverages	1.69	1	.09
Gambling	4.14*	1	.15
Playing bingo for money	2.34	1	.11
Playing cards	7.39**	1	.20
Watching R-rated movies	21.81***	1	.34
Watching television shows with nudity and inappropriate language	12.34***	1	.26
Attending sporting events on Sunday	.01	1	.01
Attending a comedy show	37.24***	1	.45
Listening to secular (non-church) music	24.58***	1	.37

\*  $p < .05$ .

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

doctrine. The study also provided a foundation for future research about relationships among leisure choices and religious doctrine. Many of the findings of the present study were consistent with previous research.

Data generated from this study affirmed that religious belief systems influence leisure choices and behaviors (Reysen, 2006; Russell, 2005; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006) and shared religious beliefs ultimately become engrained in congregational culture (Ammerman et al., 1998). Results of this study were consistent with the work of Wilson, Keyton, Johnson, Geiger, and Clark (1993), who after studying a comparable United Methodist congregation concluded, "the social praxis of local churches are such that its core beliefs are produced and reproduced. Members know the philosophy and can communicate the philosophy, even when there are areas of disagreement" (p. 285). Findings also reveal the depth of religious tradition and conservative theology that exist within some Protestant congregations. The fact that the study congregation labeled 10 leisure activities as sinful based on their congregational history and espousal of doctrine affirms the long-standing belief that the historic plentitude of vices remain associated with leisure (Bacchiocchi, 2005; Judson, 2003; Kraus, 1994). This also suggests that conservative, Protestant theology remains intact and is a powerful influence in shaping leisure attitudes and behaviors among practicing Christians (Doohan, 1990; Hansel, 1979; Shamir, 1988).

Religious socialization, inclusive of transmission of beliefs over duration of congregational membership, played a significant role in individual and congregational beliefs about the perceived sinful nature of select leisure activities. The recurrent, corporate recitation or "confessing" of doctrinal statements such as the *Church Covenant* and *Baptist Articles of Faith* coupled with constant encouragement to live within the bounds of the faith tradition reinforced congregational beliefs regarding sinful types of recreation and hallowedness of the Christian Sabbath. These actions support doctrinal beliefs theory. Reinforcement of beliefs generates congregational loyalty and commitment. Shamir (1998) argued that internalized individual and corporate beliefs regarding leisure impact commitment to religious organizations. Furthermore, Mohler (2005) and Tamney (2005) contended that strictness in beliefs and practices lead to heightened commitment on the part of members and are a hallmark of growth for conservative, Christian congregations such as the one examined in this case study.

Results of this case study also illustrate the efficacy of individual beliefs in contrast to alignment with scripture or church doctrine. Across all 10 leisure activities contained in the inventory, the most frequently cited source of belief was personal. Inherently, congregants are cognizant of the scriptural and doctrinal basis for beliefs about the perceived sinful nature of leisure activities, but ultimately the truths associated with the belief reside with the individual (Hoge & Polk, 1980). In part, this may explain why no significant association was found between 5 of 10 leisure activities when the source of belief was considered. In the case of the congregation under study, shared theology and beliefs did not supplant personal beliefs. As Tamney (2005) concluded after interviewing members of a conservative congregation, "the pastor and church may not want the membership to do such things as drink, smoke, gamble, but they cannot make people do things" (p. 296).

Length of membership within the congregation played a significant role in determining beliefs about the perceived sinful nature of leisure activities presented in the inventory. As noted in the findings, significant associations were found between beliefs about 7 of 10 leisure activities and length of membership in the target congregation. Generally, the longer a congregant affiliates with a local church, the more religious socialization occurs and doctrinal beliefs are internalized. Additionally, longer membership affords the congregant the opportunity to evaluate the merit of congregational beliefs grounded in tradition and religious doctrine and make personal choices about how both influence their leisure attitudes and behaviors (Livengood, 2006; Scanzoni, 1965). Findings of this case study are consistent with those of Marcum (2002) who studied Presbyterian congregants and summarily concluded that views on the Christian Sabbath and Sunday activities were more conservative among congregants with longer affiliations with the local church, while members with shorter terms of membership had more liberal views about Sunday. Congregants generally experienced a greater freedom of choice and wider participation in a variety of once-spurned leisure pursuits. Iannacone and Everton (2002), after studying an American Baptist congregation and their attitudes about leisure and Sunday sports participation, affirmed the previous statement when they noted, "it is not a lack of leisure but rather an abundance of alternatives that most frequently tempt members to deviate from religious systems" (p.13).

Godbey (2003), commenting on

religion, leisure, and post-modern culture, observed that truth is heavily grounded in what people believe. In modern society the realization is that there are multiple conflicting belief systems. In other words, beliefs systems are social constructions. One's personal beliefs system may invariably clash with institutional and group belief systems. The reality of the conflict has forced a shift in thinking about the constraining nature of doctrine and its impact on leisure attitudes and choices. Moreover, Cross (1990) surmised that contemporary churches should place less emphasis on reinforcing doctrine and perpetuating tradition and continue to focus on provision of a leisure programs for its members. As a result, educational initiatives implemented within the congregation emphasizing abundant living, inclusive of the joy associated with the gift of leisure, have allowed people to strategically move beyond religious constraints. Doctrine and religious tradition gradually become invalid as tools to impede morally acceptable forms of leisure.

## LIMITATIONS

There were some key limitations to this research endeavor. First, the unit of analysis was one conservative, Protestant, African American congregation heavily embedded in religious tradition. The study of two or more congregations within the same denomination or alternative Protestant congregations less entrenched in conservative religious tradition may have yielded different results. Second, the use of a Likert-type scale to determine strength of belief and importance of the source of belief would have provided additional useful information. Third, activities contained in the inventory of perceived sinful leisure pursuits, while supported by literature, is not all-inclusive. There may be other leisure pastimes that are viewed as taboo among congregants. Fourth, to create an air of comfort and protect anonymity of respondents, no queries were made into frequency of participation in any of the activities deemed sinful. Establishing trust was important in creating additional opportunities for future research. Fifth, this investigation targeted one African American congregation, which does not allow for a critical and comparative analysis of beliefs about religion and leisure by race. Religious beliefs of study participants were the focal point of inquiry. A study that includes race as a key variable may offer interesting inter- and intra-denominational insights into how congregants embrace their faith and leisure. In theory, there are predominately

Caucasian congregations within the same denominational family that abide by similar doctrinal beliefs that have not been studied. The author wholeheartedly concurs with Floyd (1998), Glover (2007), Henderson and Ainsworth (2001), Phillip (1995), and Shiness, Floyd and Parry (2004) about the need for relevant race analysis and development of theory that factors in race. Optimally, this study will catalyze subsequent research that explores the complexities of leisure, religious doctrine and socialization, congregational dynamics, and race. Sixth, utilization of cultural consensus analysis may have proved useful in determining to a greater degree whether an underlying pattern of agreement on the perceived sinful nature of select leisure pursuits existed among respondents. A cultural consensus model tests the extent to which knowledge is shared among subjects, provides an estimate of cultural congruence (the extent to which an individual's perceptions about the topic agrees with others) for each person in the sample, and provides estimates of the content of the cultural domain under consideration (Caulkins & Hyatt, 1999). Finally, results have limited generalizability in that they may only be relevant to congregations of similar composition.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Additional research is needed to further explore relationships between religious beliefs, especially denominational doctrine, and taboo leisure pursuits. Replicating the study utilizing multiple congregations within the same denomination and utilizing congregations across multiple denominations would yield useful data in helping to further understand the relationship between Christian religious doctrine, tradition, and leisure attitudes and behaviors. This line of research can be extremely valuable to secular and faith-based leisure service providers. Utilization of doctrinal orthodoxy and liberal belief scales (Kaldestad, 1992) will be useful in quantitatively assessing strength of doctrinal beliefs among congregants.

Furthermore, an examination of the role of group outings, inclusive of sport spectatorship on Sunday, as a catalyst for congregational fellowship, loyalty, commitment, and church growth is warranted. Research conducted by Wilson et al. (1993) suggested that congregational programming including community outreach, evangelistic efforts, and fellowship in small groups fosters member identification and commitment. Outings to sporting events, theatrical

productions, and other group activities are commonly used to accomplish this purpose and can play a role in congregant decisions to remain within a congregation or switch to another church due to inadequate spiritual and social opportunities (Loveland, 2003). Alternative theoretical frameworks such as theory of planned behavior (Walker, Jackson, & Deng, 2007), rational choice theory (Koopmans, 2005; Warner, 1993), and deprivation theory (Glock & Stark, 1965) may prove useful in examining the relationship between religious beliefs and how leisure choices are made. While a more intensive and extensive examination of the role Christianity plays in shaping leisure attitudes and behaviors is warranted, a more balanced approach to examining issues is mandated. Considering the wide range of issues related to religion and leisure, an assortment of methods and analyses should be employed to delve deeper into the issues including quantitative, qualitative, and action research methodologies. Very little inquiry has been done in examining religion as an interpersonal and intrapersonal constraint (Walker et al.). Withstanding the number of mainstream Protestant denominations and their respective congregations that embrace traditional teachings about leisure (Bacchiocchi, 2005), deconstructing doctrinal impediments to leisure is a worthwhile endeavor. Finally, withstanding powerful influences of religious socialization and personal relationships within the community of faith (Cornwall, 1987), an examination of key strategies congregants employ to move beyond doctrinal barriers should be undertaken. Constraints negotiation has evolved into a growing area of leisure research (Alexandris et al., 2001; Hubbard & Mannell, 2001; Loucks-Atkinson & Mannell, 2007) and is invaluable in our quest to understand how people transcend barriers to leisure. Negotiation of constraints to leisure participation is complex, and the process becomes increasingly complicated when religious beliefs and doctrine are intertwined. Researchers such as Stodolska and Livengood (2006) argued that more in-depth studies are needed in order to further our understanding of how Christians, as well as followers of other religions, spend their leisure time and how religious doctrine affects their leisure behavior. Furthermore, as religion and leisure continue to intersect the need for coordinated interdisciplinary research becomes crucial. It is at this intersection that meaningful knowledge is found that will empower people to embrace their religious beliefs and enjoy leisure pursuits.

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