Peer-Reviewed Articles

*Turning monsters into people: A reflexive study of sex offenders and leisure*

*Doctrinal beliefs as a determinant of sin associated with select leisure activities*

*Benefits of hiking: A means-end approach on the Appalachian Trail*

*Pigskin and black belts: Can martial arts provide insight for competitive and aggressive sports like American football?*

*Board member competency: A Q methodology approach*
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TURNING MONSTERS INTO PEOPLE: A REFLEXIVE STUDY OF SEX OFFENDERS AND LEISURE

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This arts-based study serves two interrelated purposes. First, it draws from multiple tales to illustrate reflexivity (and its benefits) between the author, research topic, and participants. Different forms of tales show multiple and diverse human interconnections and the complexity of understanding potential leisure among sex offenders. The importance of prioritizing reflexivity should not be underestimated, particularly when conducting research with populations that commonly are “othered” and sometimes demonized. Within a reflexive context, a poetic transcription from structured interviews with five sexual offender parolees is included to explore the possible essence of leisure as experienced by these men. The inclusion of evocative representations emphasizes commonalities of the human condition, yet also illustrates differences between people.

Although (postmodern) developments in understanding may seem opposed to psychological science, they are not.

My goal is to displace, not simplistically discard, classic forms of representation like scientific tales and realist tales.

Laurel Richardson (2000, p. 5):
Evocative representations… offer multiple ways of thinking about a topic…

Sherry Dupuis (1999, p. 46):
I propose that we adopt a reflexive methodology in leisure studies.

The above thoughts from prominent contemporary scholars provide methodological background for postmodern/poststructural contexts. Their views are philosophically consistent and each is important. From Gergen (2001) we learn that postmodernism and psychological science (indeed, all science) are capable of logical coexistence. Scientific methods remain extremely beneficial, even if traditional positivist assumptions behind them are rejected. Both traditional methods and their fruits are deserving of postmodern critique and interpretation. Similarly, Sparkes’ (2002) postmodern/poststructural view is that various research methods simply produce stories or “tales.” The particular research method used shapes the type of tale that is told. No research tale is neutral or objectively real, but each privileges different things depending on the context and parameters that produce it. Finally, while Richardson (2000) reminded us that various evocative representations (or artistic tales) generate new insights, Dupuis (1999) has shown that we are always tightly connected to our research in multiple, but often unseen, ways. These perspectives point to new possibilities in understanding complexities of leisure, leisure science, and ourselves.

This paper draws from these perspectives in order to move us toward the exploration of leisure among a neglected population—convicted sexual offenders. This topic evokes strong emotions, and many people seem to have strong beliefs in how sexual crimes should be addressed by society. U.S. social policy is becoming harsher and more punitive in addressing sexual offenses. Few, if any, topics compare to sexual offending regarding how “us vs. them” boundaries are constructed and reinforced among people. Indeed, traditional research methods emphasize differences, rather than commonalities of human beings, within correctional research (see Williams & Hanley, 2005).

Postmodern/poststructural perspectives question how boundaries are constructed and understood. Such approaches may enlighten how sexual offenders and their leisure experiences are understood, and how leisure scholars are linked to intricate psychosocial processes that shape research into this controversial but neglected area. The field of critical criminology often emphasizes commonalities of human experience when dealing with important criminal justice issues. Thus, an initial purpose of this paper is to bring to light reflexivity between the researcher and the topic, introducing readers to common personal and social tensions inherent to sexual offender issues. By illustrating reflexivity, I hope to show how we might begin thinking about the potential essence of leisure among sexual offenders. Hopefully, this unconventional project will provide insights into how leisure scholars might intersubjectively approach sexual offenders and their potential leisure while investigating scholars’ own complex relationships and personal tensions to the topics and participants they study.

In order to highlight multiple social spaces and personal identities with them, this project is a limited compilation of different types of tales (personal/confessional, scientific, and poetic). Each tale positions the researcher in different ways, and each provides a unique contribution to better understanding sexual offender issues. Leisure as it may or may not relate to sexual offenders cannot be understood unless researchers become more aware of how they relate to these people and their broader social issues. Particularly, this small collection of tales considers the struggles and complexities of how people, including leisure professionals, perhaps might change their relationship with a largely despised population. The tales shared here echo how us vs. them boundaries are problematic, which can be significant in how leisure among sexual offenders is approached.

MY BEGINNING: A CONFESSIONAL TALE

I remember the experience well, and I doubt I’ll ever forget it. It was autumn in the year 2000. I had been working for three months in a new job as a forensic social worker assessing and treating adult...
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Sexual offenders. Although I had worked with offenders in a similar capacity for the previous four years, those were men who had ended up in the correctional system for committing violence, property, or drug-related crimes. My new clientele were more difficult. Sex offenders were, and still are, not only despised by much of the general public, but also the rest of the prison population. Apparently, even many clinicians cannot work with them. It seems to be common knowledge that sexual offenders are horrible—they are monsters incapable of change. They cannot be trusted. A part of me knew that, and I wasn’t sure that I could work with them either. However, the pay at this new job was excellent and I needed money. Cautiously, I decided that I would give it a try.

Over three months at my new job had passed and I began to feel a change within me. Something was happening to me that I could no longer ignore. First, it was simply an irritation, but it quickly grew until it tore at my heart and kicked with my head. “I shouldn’t feel this conflicted,” I would remind myself. As a clinical trainee, I knew that I needed to talk about it with my supervisor, Teri. Fortunately, Teri was a warm and compassionate woman with considerable experience working with a variety of offenders. I had, and still have, a high respect for her.

Mustering what courage I could, I brought up my problem at our next supervision meeting. It was a little difficult to begin, and my words were awkward. “I… I’m having kind of a hard time with this,” I began. “Something is happening to me. I’m connecting with some of my clients. This is different than working with other offenders. In my previous job we didn’t work with offenders this extensively or for this length of time. Their transitioning process was much quicker, and I didn’t get to know them this well. But now with sex offenders, it seems I have to know so much more about them. We dig deeper into their lives. I feel like I’m maybe starting to know them, really know them.”

Part of me felt like I shouldn’t be connecting this emotionally with offenders, but another part of me felt, strangely, that I should. How was I supposed to feel? Was there something wrong with me if I was beginning to feel empathy for them? Feeling empathy didn’t mean I approved of sexual violence and victimization, did it? I already knew there was a difference between people and their behavior, but this difference seemed more difficult to live by when it came to sex offenders. Did it still apply? I felt a catharsis as I shared my feelings with Teri. Of course, in hindsight it is easy to see how socialized I was about the supposed nature of these so-called predators.

Teri listened closely. She seemed to follow each of my words carefully. When I finished my brief confession, Teri nodded. A few seconds passed, but those seconds became an eternity. Finally, Teri smiled gently. “Congratulations—you are just beginning to understand. Yes, you should care about your sex offender clients and empathize with them! Their crimes are unacceptable, some truly tragic, but our job is to work with them as human beings to help them to not re-offend. Your difficult feelings are a sign that you are capable of becoming an effective clinician with these people.” Wisely, she then shared a similar story of her own personal struggle and transformation when she began as a novice practitioner working in the same field. Sometimes treating people like people can be a difficult learning experience.

**AN ESSENTIAL PART OF US: TRADITIONAL RESEARCH TALES**

My experience coming to terms with developing empathy for sex offenders profoundly shaped my career and eventually contributed to an interdisciplinary research agenda that includes sex offender treatment issues. At that time I didn’t realize how little I knew about sexual offending, and my knowledge mostly came from various popular myths. The scholarly literature includes other important tales, and many are in stark contrast to the popular tales I previously believed. In considering sexual offender issues, including leisure for this population, it is important to explore the diverse tales by which these people are perceived.

Quinn, Forsyth and Mullen-Quinn (2004) provided an excellent summary of the origins and some of the results of sex offender myths. The media sometimes misinterprets research and almost exclusively focuses on the few, most violent cases. There also has been an increase in media outlets, and thus far more attention now is given to unusual crimes.

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**DO EMPATHY AND CARING MAKE A DIFFERENCE?**

Teri was a wise and experienced clinician. She knew that the therapeutic alliance, which includes empathy, warmth, and respect for clients, was important to therapeutic process for her clientele. She was ahead of her time. In the field of sex offender treatment we have been slow to consider therapeutic alliance, but recent scientific tales have supported Teri’s clinical values and beliefs. These research tales have told us that the therapeutic relationship corresponds to improved treatment outcome (see Drapeau, 2005; Marshall, 2005; Marshall & Serran, 2004).

Interestingly, social policy regarding the management of sexual offenders seems to rely less on scientific tales and more on popular cultural tales rooted in fear. In the

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U.S. mandatory reporting laws (Megan’s Law) were developed in response to a horrific case that included both sexual assault and murder. Too often, sex offenders as a whole remain monsters or predators in the eyes of many of us, even when offenders have completed years of treatment programming. As a result, many sex offenders feel isolated and fearful upon re-entry into the community, sometimes subject to harassment, discrimination, and violence that may increase their risk for re-offense (Burchfield & Mingus, 2008; Levenson & Cotter, 2005). Some states recently made laws where child molestation itself, without additional violence, is punishable by death (Gibeaut, 2007). However, the first such case of child sexual assault (without murder) that resulted in a death penalty sentence (Kennedy v. State of Louisiana) was deemed unconstitutional in an appeal to the United States Supreme Court.

It is not the purpose of this article to include a comprehensive summary of the many scientific and realist tales on the subject of sexual offending. Nevertheless, the scientific stories cited herein illustrate an important point and should be helpful to many who are unfamiliar with this topic and its issues.

Leisure, Crime and Rehabilitation

We know very little about the relationships of leisure to crime and rehabilitation among adult offenders from a leisure perspective. Some crimes may be viewed as forms of deviant leisure (see Gunn & Cassie, 2006; Rojek, 1999; Stebbins, 1996). However, the process of distinguishing between leisure and deviant leisure is framed by social discourses (dominant tales) and is thus highly problematic (Rojek, 1999; Williams, 2009; Williams & Walker, 2006). Regarding cases of repeated sexual offending, what might commonly be considered positive leisure experience, in contrast to deviant leisure, may function in conjunction with other cognitive-behavioral processes to further sexual offending (Williams, 2005). Regarding cases of repeated sexual offending, what might commonly be considered positive leisure experience, in contrast to deviant leisure, may function in conjunction with other cognitive-behavioral processes to further sexual offending (Williams, 2005). On the other hand, although some people may believe that offenders do not deserve leisure, positive leisure experience is compatible with existing offender rehabilitation theory in helping to prevent recidivism (Williams, Walker, & Strean, 2005). In summary, it seems that leisure could be important to both criminogenesis and rehabilitation. Research on this neglected topic is needed, potentially contributing to crime prevention thus benefiting many people.

CO-AUTHORING LEISURE AND LIVES: A POETIC TALE

Scientific and realist tales often counter widespread myths that demonize sexual offenders. Nevertheless, relying exclusively on traditional research tales unintentionally reinforces constructed boundaries and classifications. To supplement existing knowledge we need richer emotional accounts of offenders’ leisure experiences that draw us into the worlds of others commonly perceived to be far different from ourselves. The inclusion of artistic research tales can help in recognizing human commonalities and stirring empathy for others, which may lead to improved collaboration on important social issues. For professionals it may be possible to understand better the intricacies of offender leisure in complex social spaces, and how leisure may be harnessed to help reduce and prevent sexual offending. Hopefully, such accounts will help readers to see leisure in new ways.

Through reflexive methods, bridges can be built and new doors opened to understanding ourselves and our leisure. Is it possible to welcome evocative tales to feel what leisure experience might be to offenders? What might we learn from such methods? How might our understanding of leisure in various social spaces be enriched?

To begin addressing these questions and in light of sexual offender issues represented in the previous tales, I have included a poetic tale to point us toward how sexual offenders may experience leisure. Poetic tales emphasize feeling with a text and may be used to merge readers’ experiences with an account by others. Because sexual offenders commonly are assumed by many to be different from the rest of us, a poetic tale that merges experiences and acknowledges the commonalities we share with marginalized people may be particularly useful in understanding an essence of leisure.

For the poetic account here, five adult male sex offender parolees at the final stage of sex offender psychotherapy voluntarily agreed to provide written responses to the following items:

1. How do you define leisure?
2. Describe your leisure at the time you offended. Was there a connection between your leisure and your crime? If so, describe that connection.
3. Describe your leisure now. Is there a connection between your leisure and your therapy? If so, describe that connection.

Four participants were Caucasian while one was Hispanic, ranging in age from 37 to 65 years old.

These men were selected for several reasons. Each had been convicted of at least one serious sexual crime, which resulted in serving a long prison sentence (range = 4 to 13 years). Upon release from prison, each had completed sexual offender treatment at a halfway house. All participants were nearing the end of approximately one year of aftercare sexual offender therapy. Participants had worked with the researcher in the latter therapeutic setting for several months, and a good relationship seemed to have developed between us. Overall, these men had completed an average of five years of specialized sexual offender therapy. The best clinical judgment of the sexual offender treatment team suggested that these men had changed over time, and that they had progressed from being classified as high risk to re-offend to a status of low risk.

There are additional considerations in conducting research with sexual offenders, which include unique confidentiality issues, intent to cause violence, and the potential for disclosure of further unreported illegal activity (Cowburn, 2005). Regarding the latter, utilizing a structured format of a few carefully selected questions (in contrast to unstructured and semi-structured formats) reduces but does not completely eliminate the possibility of disclosure of illegal activity. Cowburn reminded researchers are obligated to report direct threats of violence to the appropriate correctional authority. Also, researchers should be aware that some participant responses could, if identities are known to those outside the study, intentionally or unintentionally lead to a variety of possible adverse consequences by others, including other offenders or correctional staff. Confidentiality for this group remains a priority, which is why further detailed demographic information is not provided. The development of this poetic account followed current research recommendations with regard to offender populations (Brunswig & Parham, 2004; Cowburn, 2005; Megargee, 1995).

Participants did not seem to be completely ignorant of the concept of leisure, yet they were not well versed in understanding professional perspectives on leisure. Current sex offender psychotherapy relies heavily on cognitive-behavioral techniques, and leisure programming had not been a core component of their treatment. I was interested in their perspectives of leisure, which are shaped by their broader life...
experiences and the social discourses in which they participate.

Participants’ responses to the above items were disaggregated, coded, and analyzed to uncover patterns and themes before being rewritten via a process that Glesne (1997) calls poetic transcription. Poetic transcription recently has been used by social scientists to emphasize commonality of human experience, reflexive process, spirituality, recognition that texts are socially constructed (and subjectively interpreted by readers), and generation of new ways of understanding (Baff, 1997; Glesne, 1997; L. Richardson, 1992, 1994; M. Richardson, 1998; Sparkes, 2002; Szto, Furman, & Langer, 2005).

Like Glesne (1997), in drafting a poetic tale from participants’ written responses I restricted myself to using their words, not mine, to convey essences of themes embedded in the text. Nevertheless, I remained free to pull words from various places within the text and to highlight particular words, if needed (using capital letters or boldface print). The goal was to select particular lines of written text that seemed to powerfully capture and reflect the overall theme(s) embedded in that text.

Poetic transcription involves reducing large amounts of text to capture broader essences, yet allowing readers to insert their own experiences and meanings into essences contained in the result. For the researcher, this form of data analysis and representation requires substantial questioning and reflection. The researcher must consider how and why particular phrases or lines of text were selected, which includes a judgment about how specific phrases and combinations of phrases are likely to evoke powerful emotion and reflection within readers. The final product of this short poetic tale is a combination of participants’ voices and my own. The task was to draw creatively from the words of participants to merge their voices (text content) with mine (interpretation and creative poetic arrangement) in a way that invites and facilitates human connection with readers’ own experiences and meanings. Through this process, voices merge, barriers are lowered, and human compassion is nurtured. We are moved to a clearer appreciation of our common human-ness, yet also a greater awareness of how each of us is unique.

**Leisure Then; Leisure Now**

*Leisure is time—*
*A time of freedom*
*Time that I can relax*
*Or do something fun.*

I can act like someone else
And be happy
Before the stress comes back.

**Leisure was time—**
*A time spent isolating myself.*
*I felt worthless*
*And wanted acceptance.*
*It was drinking,*
*And lots of drugs.*
*It was camping*
*In order to get close to my victims.*
**Leisure was picking up women**
*Just for sex.*

**Now, leisure is time—**
*A time with friends*
*Taking walks, hiking, going to church,*
*Playing the guitar.*
*I keep myself from isolating*
*For I am with healthy people.*
*And this keeps me from re-offending.*
*I am bettering myself.*

**Leisure—a time of freedom,**
*A release,*
*An escape*
*From the reality of life?*
**Leisure—was and is,** *very important.*

**A Concluding Tale: Fragmented Reflections**

As in the autumn of 2000, I once again find myself in the midst of transformation. In this poetic co-authorship, there are important similarities between how my participants and I understand leisure, yet there are differences. We occupy different sets of social spaces, and we have different roles and experiences in the spaces we do share. These are framed by various tales about who we are and how lives are understood. These differences shape how we understand ourselves and others, as well as the complexity of human experiences such as leisure.

Nevertheless, a concept of time seems to be the centerpiece in how these participants view leisure. For them time seems to be where various activities can take place. The previous tales I tell herein purposely make reference to time and specific metaphors, which helps weave together a fragmented whole. Yet, it is now much clearer to me that I cannot understand time, freedom, and the relationship between the two in the same way that these participants do. These men have spent hour after hour, day after day, month after month, and year after year behind prison walls. Prison changes people forever. No doubt it also changes their current and subsequent leisure experience.

Following incarceration, these participants have reflected on life experiences through years of sex offender therapy. Their understandings are different from mine, yet I feel with them. My richer understanding of their experiences then becomes a part of me.

Not only is leisure time, but it is also “a time.” Perhaps not only is it possible for the essence of leisure to be present across or through time in human lives, but personal experiences of substantial socio-cultural significance carve into us—deeply and forcefully—newly constructed time periods, segments, of how storied lives and leisure are, and be will, be understood. For people in locked spaces, these segments are profound. And for many of us, these segments result from scars of violence that serve simultaneously to separate and connect all life experience to those profound occurrences. Still, I learn here that the essence of leisure is stable, yet leisure also fluctuates, sometimes markedly, in its texture, flavor, and morality of action. Leisure appears capable of helping to prevent re-offense; yet it also can contribute to sexual crime occurring in the first place. This poetic tale nudges us once again toward a realization that human beings can change and improve themselves, and leisure may be important to this transformation.

When considering how we understand leisure, like knowledge of other concepts and issues, I have tended to separate—probably far too much—dimensions of time, activity, and inner experience based on traditional tales that have produced my knowing. Rather, these concepts, like the human beings who experience them, are much more intricately and tightly woven together.

Consistent with positions of scholars like Gergen (2001) and Sparkes (2002), traditional research tales are important and should not be discarded; this should be especially obvious in matters of community safety. Such tales often privilege generalizations over details and provide valuable information. However, artistic research tales that lower barriers and open doors, thus bringing fallible human beings together also have much to contribute to the scholarship of both leisure and criminology. It is both possible and desirable to weave together scientific and artistic research tales, as I have tried to illustrate here, despite that every tale is necessarily partial and incomplete. Still, through welcoming multiple tales, knowledge can expand, lives may be enriched, and more people can be integrated into community.

To conclude, it is refreshing to see new research strategies, writing practices,
and ways of thinking enter the field of leisure (see Dupuis, 1999; Fullagar & Owler, 1998; Glover, 2003; Giles & Williams, 2007; Lashua & Fox, 2006), including an entire special issue of Leisure Sciences devoted to creative analytic practice (Henderson & Bialeschi, 2007). Indeed, through knowledge gained from a wide variety of carefully crafted research tales, the realization that “leisure cannot be separated from the rest of life,” (Henderson, Presley, & Bialeschi, 2004, p. 422) takes on richer meaning. May we use this knowledge to lower boundaries, expand our exploration of potential leisure among underserved populations, and make continual progress in turning ourselves into better people.

REFERENCES

**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 186 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 (Godfrey, 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 18th 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 Americans, converting 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 20th 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 congregations 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 Christian- ity 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 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 concerning 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 activitiesimpinged 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...
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 affect 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. Livengood’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 Credal 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 catechism 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 belief. Among congregants reporting “no,” 20.7% cited scripture, 16.8% cited 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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leisure Activity</th>
<th>Bible</th>
<th>Doctrinal Teaching</th>
<th>Personal Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>28 (14.9%)</td>
<td>48 (25.5%)</td>
<td>112 (59.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>28 (14.9%)</td>
<td>14 (7.4%)</td>
<td>146 (77.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling</td>
<td>37 (19.7%)</td>
<td>16 (8.5%)</td>
<td>135 (71.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing bingo for money</td>
<td>9 (4.8%)</td>
<td>9 (4.8%)</td>
<td>170 (90.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing cards</td>
<td>32 (17.0%)</td>
<td>16 (8.5%)</td>
<td>140 (74.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching R-rated movies</td>
<td>18 (9.6%)</td>
<td>12 (6.4%)</td>
<td>158 (84.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching television shows with nudity and inappropriate language</td>
<td>20 (10.6%)</td>
<td>26 (13.8%)</td>
<td>142 (75.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending sporting events on Sunday</td>
<td>42 (22.3%)</td>
<td>28 (14.9%)</td>
<td>118 (62.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a comedy show</td>
<td>8 (4.3%)</td>
<td>15 (8.0%)</td>
<td>165 (87.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to secular (non-church) music</td>
<td>15 (8.0%)</td>
<td>17 (9.0%)</td>
<td>156 (83.0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

** $p < .01$.  
*** $p < .001$.
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 ($f = 0.37$) 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, 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**

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

* $p < .05$.  
** $p < .01$.  
*** $p < .001$.
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 congregation affiliates with a local church, the more religious socialization occurs and doctrinal beliefs are internalized. Additionally, longer membership affords the congregation 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 choices and behaviors (Livengood, 2006; Scanzoni, 1965). Findings of this case study are consistent with those of Marcum (2002) who studied Presbyterian congregations and summarized 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. Ianacone 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 activity. Anonymity of respondents, no queries were made into frequency of participation in any activity. 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 Shinew, Floyd and Parry (2004) about the need for relevant race analysis and development of theory that factors in race. Optimal, 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 selective 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 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 increasing complicated when religious beliefs and doctrine are intertwined. Researchers such as Stoddolka and Livergood (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.

**References**


Sociological Review, 30, 862-875.
The purpose of this research was to examine the outcomes prompting hiking along the Appalachian Trail (AT). By using means-end theory, linkages between attributes, consequences, and values of the AT hiking experience were made. The researchers conducted forty-three interviews of AT hikers. Self-fulfillment, self-reliance, fun and enjoyment of life, and warm relationships with others were some of the values that emerged. Specifically, strong links existed between hiking and exercise, exercise and health, health and fun and enjoyment of life. While this area of research on the AT is new, results of this study can be used by recreational professionals that work with the AT or other hiking trails to promote appropriate use of natural resources.

Escalation of sedentary lifestyle health issues in the United States create a need to encourage and promote physical activity; and research suggests that participation in exercise and recreation may help to mitigate many of these health issues (Kern, 2007). Outdoor recreation, such as hiking, is a growing segment of the U.S. physical activity market with almost 70 million people participating during 1999-2003 (National Survey of Recreation and the Environment [NRSE], 2003). During those same years, nearly 57 million people camped in a national forest, national park, or state park (NRSE). Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthome (2007) suggested, "National parks will be part of the solution to reduce obesity, chronic illness, and adult-onset diabetes" (p. 12).

America’s first National Scenic Trail, the Appalachian Trail, is a component of the National Park Service that affords millions of Americans the opportunity to engage in a variety of physical activities; these activities range from a short walk or run to a complete “thru” hike of the entire trail (Appalachian Trail Conservancy [ATC], n.d.; Nisbett & Hinton, 2005). The Appalachian Trail, colloquially referred to as the AT, consists of approximately 2,175 miles of continuous footpath spanning 14 eastern states (National Park Service [NPS], 2007). The AT is also known as the People’s Path because nearly two-thirds of the American population is within a day’s drive of it (NPS, 2007).

In 2006, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated over 299 million people were living in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). Despite the fact that 200 million people reside reasonably near the AT, the National Park Service (NPS) estimates that only four million people, or two percent of the population within a day’s drive, visit the trail each year (NPS, 2007). Society is plagued with health issues directly correlated with sedentary lifestyles, and local and national trails (e.g., AT) could be used to endorse physical activity. Thus, it is important to realize the potential use for these resources. Research geared toward helping this diverse group of natural resource managers decide how best to market, maintain, and develop the trail is sparse.

In addition to affording the opportunity to be physically active, the AT offers the opportunity to directly experience nature; direct experiences with nature may offer additional benefits. The Benefits Movement, within the recreation profession, was launched in the 1990s and included three components: management, programming, and awareness (Allen & Cooper, 2003). The movement assisted in the advocacy of evidence-based research among recreation professionals in areas such as environmental benefits. As highlighted in Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children from Nature-Deficit Disorder by Richard Louv (2007): A widening circle of researchers believes that the loss of natural habitat, or the disconnection from nature even when it is available, has enormous implications for human health and child development. They say the quality of exposure to nature affects our health at an almost cellular level...many studies credit exposure to plants or nature with speeding up recovery time from injury. (p. 43-46)

Direct experiences with nature, such as hiking on the AT, are also beneficial in that participation in outdoor activity may lead to a connection with the environment. This connection may be useful in promotion of environmental stewardship. As Louv asserts, “The protection of nature depends on more than the organizational strength of stewardship organizations; it also depends on the quality of the relationship between the young and nature – on how, or if, the young attach to nature” (p. 154). Thus, for this reason too, it is important to realize the potential use for resources such as the AT.

Literature Review

The Appalachian Trail

The Appalachian National Scenic Trail was designed, structured, and marked by a conglomerate of volunteer hiking clubs brought together by the Appalachian Trail Conference (Manning et al., 2001). The first section of the AT was planned in 1921. The trail was completed in 1937 and designated as our nation’s first official National Scenic Trail in 1968 by the National Trails System Act (ATC, n.d.; Manning et al.). Within the path’s borders are eight national forests, six national parks, numerous state and local forests, many state and local parks, and more than 2,000 plant and animal species that are deemed rare, threatened, endangered, or sensitive (ATC, n.d.). Consisting of approximately 2,175 continuous miles of footpath, stretching from Georgia to Maine (ATC, n.d.; NPS, 2007), the AT is considered to be a natural crown jewel (Sinclair, 2000).
The AT is a component of the NPS (ATC, n.d.; Nisbett & Hinton, 2005). While the NPS is the official administrator of the trail’s protection, the NPS does not manage all of the properties within the trail’s domain. Routine management of the footpath is mostly entrusted to the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, formerly known as the Appalachian Trail Conference (Nisbett & Hinton). Management of the AT is rather unique in that several public and private sectors, such as the NPS, USDA Forest Service, several state agencies, ATC, and thirty trail maintaining clubs work collaboratively to manage the footpath (ATC, n.d.). However, research geared toward helping this diverse group of managers decide how best to market, maintain, and develop the trail is sparse.

After reviewing the literature on the AT, very few evidence-based studies were found. In fact, the most significant study was from data less than ten years old. In this study, Manning et al. (2001) explored use and users of the trail. After surveying nearly 2,000 hikers, Manning and colleagues found that nearly 37% of those that visit the AT were day users, approximately 32% were overnight users, slightly more than 15% were section hikers (users hiking a substantial portion of the trail), and roughly 16% of users were thru-hikers. These groups averaged 7.2 hiking days and 71 miles of hiking. The vast majority of users were male (69%); nearly 97% of users were White; users averaged the mid-to-upper thirties in age; and nearly 70% of all typologies of hikers had completed college.

Yearly visitation by those who live reasonably near the AT equals two percent, but usage of the People’s Path has increased dramatically since its inception. In particular, thru-hiking – hiking the entire length of the approximately 2,175 mile trail – increased twenty fold from the 1960s to the 1970s, doubled from the 1970s to the 1980s, and more than doubled again from the 1980s to the 1990s (ATC, n.d.). While thru-hiking has increased, thru-hikers compose a small percentage of trail users in most areas along a National Scenic Trail, as primary use of the AT is for short hikes (Sinclair, 2000). Understanding outcomes or benefits of all those who do choose to utilize the trail may be instrumental in marketing to the AT user population and encouraging trail use by a more diverse population.

Regardless of the amount of use throughout its eighty-year history, research on the AT is limited. Much of the research on the AT focused on place attachment (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2004; Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004) and safety (Burns, Lee, & Graefe, 1999; Manning et al., 2001). Although Kyle and colleagues (2003, 2004) extended the investigation of place attachment in order to include an examination of how AT hiking trip motivation and setting motivation correlated to place attachment, the only motivation focused study found was Nisbett and Hinton’s (2005) study which explored the motivations for AT hikers with disabilities. This exploratory research uncovered five motivational themes: knowing one’s self, importance of people as support, determination, viewing the AT as a challenge, and adaptations. However, it should be noted that this study only interviewed seven individuals.

Given the current lack of literature and contemporary challenges of leisure behavior on trails, a need for further research was evident. Use of means-end theory as a theoretical framework for this research aligned well with both the need to increase the amount of theory-based research on the AT and the need to encourage physical activity, stewardship, and usage of trails by diverse populations.

### Means-End Theory

Gutman (1982) linked research findings concerning marketing, values, benefits, and means-end in order to produce a viable, theory-based methodology for approaching marketing of a product. Gutman founded his theory on Rokeach’s (1973) principles associated with values. Gutman’s theory makes a connection between Rokeach’s value systems and consumer choice of products. A company would be better able to market a product after understanding the connection between the customer’s value system and a product’s physical attributes because the company could relate the product to a desired consumer benefit and/or consumer’s goal orientation, also known as desired end-state (Gutman).

Thus, Gutman (1982) developed means-end theory as a method of analyzing factors driving a consumer’s purchasing behavior. Means-end theory links physical objects or services and means with outcomes and personal values of the individual (Klenosky, Frauman, Norman, & Gengler, 1998). The theory focuses on interrelationships among attributes, consequences, and values as three levels of abstraction (Goldenberg, Klenosky, O’Leary, & Templin, 2000). It views consumers as goal-oriented decision makers who are motivated to choose behaviors that will lead to specific desirable outcomes (Costa & Dekker, 2004). This is not unlike expectancy-value theory; expectancy-value theory states that consumer actions produce consequences and learn to associate specific consequences with particular aspects of a product (Gutman & Miaoulis, 2003). Both theories examine the process of how consumers develop an opinion about a product or service and how that process leads to the intended outcome. Yet, means-end theory looks beyond direct consequences and continues to more abstract values associated with those consequences.

Attributes within means-end theory are physical objects, services, or experiences of the individual and are viewed as being relatively concrete (Goldenberg, Klenosky, McAvoy, & Holman, 2002). Goldenberg and colleagues examined Outward Bound courses to understand outcomes associated with participating in a wilderness experience. Attributes, consequences, and values emerged from the study that could be similar to a study associated with hikers on the AT. Attributes of an outdoor education experience could include length of time, methods of transportation, group size, or activities such as hiking or backpacking. An attribute such as hiking could be a concrete example of why one would be interested in the activity of backpacking.

Consequences, either positive or negative, are the direct result of attributes. Negative consequences are referred to as costs or risks; whereas, positive consequences are frequently referred to as benefits. Some examples of an outdoor experience’s positive consequences may include developing technical skills, learning leave no trace principles, or developing interpersonal skills. Some possible negative consequences of the same experience may include injury, loss of social connection, or physical exhaustion.

In means-end theory, values are defined as the participants’ desired end-state. In other words, values are the participants’ end destination as they travel up the means-end ladder of abstraction from more concrete attributes to highly abstract value-states (Klenosky, Gengler, & Mulvey, 1993). Klenosky et al. explored attributes, consequences, and values for ski destination choice. Strong links were made of the attributes hills and trails, to the consequences of ski variety and challenge, resulting in the values of fun and excitement and achievement. Ski resorts could use these values as they design promotional materials. In addition, knowledge of such values could assist leisure professionals in gaining insight of a participant’s perspective and how that may or may not differ from the organization’s mission or vision, eventually leading to more effective leisure services.

Linkages between attributes,
consequences, and values are described as means-end chains. Each link in the means-end chain describes how a participant’s thoughts have progressed from either attribute to consequence or consequence to value. In this way, the thought process of the individual can be followed from start to finish. For example, a means-end chain for an AT experience may include the attribute trail. This attribute may then be linked to the consequence awareness, which may be linked to the value self-fulfillment. These elements would form the means-end chain, which illustrates that this participant’s ladder response has indicated that the trail experience itself increased their awareness and was personally fulfilling.

Means-end chains are constructed by a data collection technique known as laddering. Laddering was first conceived by Olson and Reynolds (1983) and further developed in theory and application by Reynolds and Gutman (1988). The application by Reynolds and Gutman assisted means-end researchers with a variety of information including two main problems with laddering. One such problem occurs when participants do not know the answer. In other words, they may not have given prior conscious thought to their response, resulting in the inability to provide an answer. This could, at times, be problematic for the interviewer, especially if the participant is not skilled at the laddering technique of interviewing. One technique that can be used is to rephrase the question in a specific context. The second potential problem with laddering is when information becomes too sensitive, resulting in a participant stating, “I just don’t know.” One common approach, identified by Reynolds and Gutman, is to make a note of concern and revisit that question later in the interview.

Laddering builds means-end chains by asking a participant why an attribute is important; the response will either be another attribute or a consequence. The researcher then repeatedly asks the participant why each subsequent response is important until the participant eventually gives an answer reflecting a value state or can no longer give a response. In this method, each response is similar to a rung on a ladder. Each rung leads the researcher to the top level of the participants’ thinking, the end states (i.e., values). This technique facilitates the arguably redundant process of having participants reflect in order to respond to the underlying value associated with the experience.

While means-end theory has been used repeatedly and with much success in the field of marketing (e.g., Klenosky et al., 1993; Mulvey, Olson, Celsi, & Walker, 1994; Walker & Osln, 1991), the theory has other pragmatic applications not yet fully explored including a practical framework for researching outcomes produced in outdoor adventure experiences. Understanding the relationship between program attributes, consequences, and values can help programs or hiking clubs to better market an experience (Goldenberg et al., 2002). Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the attributes, consequences, and values associated with AT hikers?
2. What is the strength of the relationship between attributes, consequences, and values associated with AT hikers?

**METHODOLOGY**

**DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

Data were collected using a convenience sampling method during fall 2006. Researchers presented the potential project at the Tidewater Appalachian Trail Club (TATC) officers’ meeting. The meeting was used as a forum to determine if the TATC was interested in having their members participate. Officers were very supportive and set up a date and time for researchers to present at one of the general meetings. Immediately following the researchers’ presentation at the general meeting, interested participants were asked to sign up with a preferred day of the week. Approximately 65 TATC members attended the meeting, of which 50 agreed to participate in the study. Afterwards, contacts were made in order to set up specific dates and times for interviews with all interested members. Most interviews took about 5-10 minutes and were conducted over the telephone. Interviews were conducted with five levels of AT hikers: day hikers, weekenders, multi-use hikers, section-hikers, and thru-hikers.

After collection of initial demographical data, the researcher asked each participant to identify motives of their AT experience that they felt were most meaningful. Most participants listed between one and three components. The researcher then selected the first component mentioned and asked the participant, “Why was that important to you?” Once the participant gave a response, the researcher would ask again, “Why was that important to you?” repeatedly until the participant essentially exhausted his or her reasons. Through this interview method, the researcher was able to discern and record the participants’ thought process associated with the component mentioned. Typically a respondent would start with an attribute or consequence and by answering “Why is that important to you?” would eventually provide another consequence and/or a value. If participants started with a consequence, they were asked “What part of the AT led you to this?” to try to understand the attribute. See Appendix A for the interview script.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

Data were entered into LadderMap, a software program that creates a value map of the attributes, consequences, and values (Gengler & Reynolds, 1995). As data were entered into LadderMap by the researcher, each comment from the participants was given a content code by reviewing and grouping all responses. Once coding was completed and a complete list of codes compiled, 50% of the data was stripped of its codes and given to another researcher to blindly code. After the second coding was completed, the two coded-versions were compared to determine intercoder reliability. Once initial intercoder reliability was determined (88.82%), researchers worked together to resolve differences in coding of the data.

The next step in data analysis was to utilize LadderMap in the creation of an implication matrix. The implication matrix is an extensive matrix that shows every association made by participants between different attributes, consequences, and values of the study. The implication matrix is an extremely useful tool for showing frequency of certain associations. In order to simplify results and provide a visual that is easy to follow, a hierarchical value map (HVM) was produced. The HVM can convey an
understanding of the thought processes of participants, for a HVM provides a graphical summary of linkages that emerge across participants’ ladders. This tool could be used for programming within related fields. In this case, managers of the AT could view a HVM to determine what people gain from their participation on the AT, or they could view the HVM to discover what it takes to obtain certain values from the AT. HVMs provide a clear understanding of both the thought processes of participants and what the experience ultimately means to them.

Results

A total of 43 participants were interviewed. Seven interested participants were unable to be reached during the course of the study. Descriptive statistics were run to determine demographics of the sample. The sample consisted of 41% (n = 17) weekenders, 27% (n = 12) day hikers, 16% (n = 7) thru-hikers, 12% (n = 5) section hikers, and 4% (n = 2) who classified themselves multi-use hikers. Atypical of many hiker studies, females represented the majority of this sample (65%, n = 28). Participants were 98% (n = 42) Caucasian, with only one African American participant. Occupations held were diverse; however, the largest single group was retired individuals (23%, n = 8). Ages ranged from 21-75 years.

HVMs can be thought of as a road-map of participants’ thoughts on any given attribute. HVMs visually depict means-end chains by linking attributes of focus to consequences and values associated with each. Chains are formed utilizing lines of varying thickness representing frequency of linkages between two items connected via the line. In this structure, linkages appearing more frequently are represented by thicker lines; conversely, thinner lines join less frequently occurring linkages. To aid in differentiation, attributes, consequences, and values on the HVM appear in different colors. Attributes are white circles, consequences are light gray circles, and values appear in black circles. Thickness of lines and coloration help to clearly distinguish between different components and understand frequency of the component’s associations.

An HVM was created for all 43 participants’ responses and indicated what components of the AT experience were the most meaningful and why those components were important (Figure 1). Attributes that emerged from the data included being outdoors, hiking, the trail, and survival. Consequences that emerged included environmental awareness, physical challenge, camaraderie, and exercise. Self-fulfillment, self-reliance, fun and enjoyment of life, and warm relationships with others are some of the values that emerged. Specifically, strong links existed between hiking and exercise, exercise and health, and health and fun and enjoyment of life. Other strong links existed between outdoors and environmental awareness, and outdoors and self-awareness. Interactions were strongly linked with camaraderie, and camaraderie was linked with fun and enjoyment of life. Generally, data indicate that people hike the AT for fun and enjoyment of life and to develop warm relationships with others. Predominant attributes mentioned by individuals were hiking, the outdoors, and the trail in general. The most referred consequences were environmental awareness and camaraderie followed by health, exercise, and overall awareness. This means that these attributes and consequence were most often identified regardless of their relationship to certain values. Although not a link to any other attribute, consequence, or value in the HVM, survival was found to lead to self-reliance. One last interesting finding was revealed in the HVM. Four attributes were linked directly to a value, thereby skipping the mediating variable of a consequence. These were scenic beauty linked to fun and enjoyment of life, outdoors linked to self-awareness, hiking linked to satisfaction, and survival linked to self-reliance. This is consistent with means-end literature. Some individuals are able to identify their underlying motive or value without being taken through the second step of a consequence. As an illustration, when a participant was asked to identify a list of outcomes received from hiking on the AT she responded with scenic beauty. When she was asked “Why is scenic beauty important to you?” she responded with “It provides me fun and enjoyment of life.” Her response was a value; therefore, that ladder was complete.

Discussion

The recreation profession has been criticized for lacking empirical evidence and ineffectively communicating intended benefits to constituents (Driver & Moore, 2005). The need to justify, in terms of tangible outcomes, utility of public services receiving tax funds has been an ever-growing demand of the general populace (Allen & Cooper, 2003; Moore & Driver). This need to justify recreation and leisure experiences led to the Benefits Movement, an “ongoing process of leisure service providers to identify desirable individual, social, economic and environmental benefits derived from recreational experiences” (Allen & Cooper, p. 30).

This current study addresses the need to identify specific benefits gained from hiking. Information gathered about specific benefits hikers perceive to gain by hiking the AT may be useful in benefits-based marketing, programming, and management. Further research in regards to the motivation for and benefits of hiking the AT is necessary so that trail managers, natural resource managers, and recreation professionals associated with the trail can disseminate evidence of the benefits.

While recent research has explored the meaning of the trail (Kyle et al., 2004) and trail usage among people with disabilities (Nesbitt & Hinton, 2005), an even more recent study was conducted on energy expenditure while hiking on the AT (Hill, Swain, & Hill, 2008). Noting the trend of recent AT research, one could speculate that interest in the use, diversity, benefits, and impact of the trail usage is growing.

ATC, land managers, and other organizations attempt to promote and protect the AT as the trail is a living catalog of hundreds of rare, threatened, and endangered species and is internationally reputed as a recreational resource (ATC, n.d). Thus, promotion and protection of this great national resource is appropriately timed. Protecting our limited natural resources will help ensure that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy them as well. One way to educate, and thereby protect, is by encouraging the first person experience. The successfulness of a promotional campaign for the first person experience of AT hiking may be improved by understanding motivations of past and current AT hikers.

Data from this study revealed a number of concrete attributes among hikers such as the trail, being outdoors, scenic beauty, and interactions. These basic motives are what initially attract hikers, as the means-end literature indicates. The hiker then hopes to gain by-products or consequences such as health, peace, physical challenge, and environmental awareness. Finally, data from this study explored values or underlying motives for one to hike on the AT such as self-fulfillment, appreciation, and self-esteem. An interesting and timely finding from this study was that participants strongly link the attribute of the outdoors to the consequence of environmental awareness. Further research is needed to provide additional empirical evidence of this finding. This portion of the data also
parallels Louv’s (2007) notion of the need for a primary experience with the outdoors and environmental stewardship. Louv claimed:

For a new generation, nature is more abstraction than reality. Increasingly, nature is something to watch, to consume, to wear – to ignore. Reducing that deficit – healing the broken bond between our young and nature – is in our self-interest, not only because aesthetics or justice demands it, but also because our mental, physical, and spiritual health depends upon it. The health of the earth is at stake as well.

Yet another method of educating and, thus, promoting protection of this natural resource is by intentionally programming for desired benefits and outcomes. One educational program exemplifying outdoor education’s use in promoting both conservation values and healthy lifestyles is “A Trail to Every Classroom,” which brings together teachers, trail managers, and children in order to engage in physical exercise, explore nature, and learn about the AT as a natural and cultural resource (A Trail to Every Classroom, n.d.). Programs and partnerships such as the one aforementioned are critical in allowing for future generations’ usage and enjoyment of trails.

Another way to educate, and thereby promote protection of the trail, is by advertising perceived benefits of trail usage. Data from this study supported that participants strongly associated hiking with social interactions, camaraderie and fun, and enjoyment of life. Further research should be conducted to validate these findings. By advertising benefits (i.e., Benefits-Based Awareness), we can better offer scientific knowledge on results of recreation participation. Potential trail users may be encouraged to hike because the hiking experience has been linked with an outcome found to be desirable, such as the development of self-reliance.
As society is concerned with leisure behavior and sedentary lifestyles, hiking on city, state, and national trails can be more beneficial than may be realized by both current users and potential users. This data supports hiking as an activity leading to perceptions of a healthier lifestyle. Physical activity, such as day hiking, is not only physically healthy but psychologically beneficial as well. New research is being conducted to further investigate physical benefits of exercise through hiking (Hill et al., 2008). Hill and colleagues found that backpacking might allow an individual to use an excess of 5000 k/cal per day. Moreover, participants in this study did not maintain body mass. This research may be useful in motivating individuals seeking activities for weight loss or weight management with promotional material geared towards increasing new users and frequency of use by current hikers and addressing community health concerns. Thus, this research line needs to continue.

Not everyone is motivated to hike for the same reasons. As hypothesized by means-end theory, persuading an individual to buy into the value of the recreation experience will be more successful if the recreation experience can be correlated to outcomes valued by the potential participant. Therefore, efforts by recreation professionals to encourage hiking may be more successful if researchers collaboratively address psychological benefits as well as physiological benefits. Results of the current study indicated self-fulfillment, self-reliance, fun and enjoyment of life, and warm relationships were several of the psychological values, or underlying motives for hiking. This is also an ideal opportunity to use tactics such as Benefits-Based Awareness. According to means-end theory, consumer-purchasing behavior (or in this case consumption of a recreational experience) may be increased by linking the product or experience with consumer’s values. This marketing approach is used to effectively deliver potential benefits to constituents. The process of promoting intended or potential benefits can be used by administration, programmers, and other professionals within recreation to address U.S. society’s current concern with health related illnesses and disability associated with lack of physical activity. This study provides evidence of numerous health benefits achieved from hiking. For example, strong linkages exist between peace, relaxation, and health, with health being the dominant benefit. Marketing materials should use results from this study to communicate with potential users.

Results of this study suggest that hikers of the AT are motivated largely by fun and enjoyment of life and warm relationships with others. This suggests that the social component of the experience is meaningful, and hiking is not purely sought after as an individual experience. Other individual values were significantly present, such as self-fulfillment and self-esteem. An examination of the extent to which hikers are motivated by social factors may provide for interesting comparisons with other long distance hikes such as the Pacific Crest Trail (PCT), which receive far fewer visitors and travels through mostly isolated wilderness. An expansion of the current study, along with research on the PCT, could provide recreational professionals with another perspective on benefits for using trails and information helpful in management of those trails. Knowing the differences and values associated with differences may allow for better advertising and promotion geared toward attracting a more diverse population of users.

Finally, supporters of rail-to-trails and greenways movements could benefit from this study. More counties, towns, and cities are seeking funding and communities in support of building such trail systems. Results from this current study indicate that fun and enjoyment of life and warm relationship with others are potential outcomes from hiking. Using these results as evidence could be helpful in securing recreation additions such as rail-to-trails. Leisure professionals can use knowledge of attributes, consequences, and values from this study to move forward with evidence-based practices within their community. Knowledge that hiking on a city trail or path can offer such values of fun and enjoyment of life could, in fact, be motivation for a recreation participant to modify his or her lifestyle. This scientific knowledge can assist leisure professionals as we continue to offer experiences that positively impact quality of life.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

One of the most significant limitations of the study was the sample size. With only 43 participants, it becomes difficult to generalize. In addition, the majority of this sample was limited to members of one trail club (i.e., TATC). Using a larger sample size would assist in the development of key values or outcomes for hiking. Future researchers should also use various methodologies of data collection. The personal interviews approach (i.e., why is that important to you) is time consuming and can create frustration among participants. During the course of the interviews, at least two participants were observed becoming frustrated. At that point, the interview was terminated and resulting data were not used. This limitation could be even more problematic if a large sample was used. One potential solution would be to create a quantitative scale. Although slightly biased, using a predetermined set of attributes, consequences, and values (based on previous research) could afford a quasi-qualitative scale. A scale of this type could also be used as an online option. Finally, the last limitation is that of skewed distribution of females in the study. The majority of this sample was female, which is atypical of many AT hikers studies and users of the AT.

Suggestions for future research also include examination of specific sub-groups (e.g., youth and older adults). As leisure professionals address such trends as encouraging youth to become re-active in nature (e.g., Richard Louv’s Last Child in the Woods) and other trends are targeting older adult participation in non-traditional activities (e.g., hiking), this study provides a platform for current recommendations. In addition, The Leave No Trace (LNT): Center for Outdoor Ethics has pursued more urban environmental stewardship programming and evaluation. This is another avenue that could provide potential for partnerships in future research. Current research (e.g., Hill, Hill, & Freidt, 2007) has demonstrated effective partnerships between State Parks, LNT, Boys & Girls Clubs, and universities when attempting to encourage inner-city youth to use urban trails for both physical activity and education.

Future studies should also begin to explore physical and psychological benefits of hiking associated with other trails. Although many people can access the AT, other local trails may be even more accessible and less intimidating to some. The researchers propose that benefits similar to those attained while hiking on the AT may be gained from hiking other trails such as local greenways and footpaths. This supposition should be explored.

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates the potential use of means-end theory in the examination of outcomes of a hiking experience. Research should continue by expanding the knowledge of hiking experience outcomes and examining different subsets of AT hikers (such as day-hikers) and users of other trails and pathways. This should be accomplished to
assist large land management organizations at the national, state, and local level to understand their users and educate the public about both benefits of their work and services they provide (e.g., fun and enjoyment of life as a value).

Positive values that individuals obtained (e.g., self-fulfillment, fun and enjoyment of life) parallel much of the recreation benefits movement. Many would argue that these outcomes are highly valuable and would benefit users that have not yet experienced hiking on the AT. Information from this study can add to the body of recreation literature as recreation professionals continually strive to increase awareness of benefits of outdoor recreation while implementing programs that specifically target development of those benefits. Finally, this type of research can serve as a partnership model between recreation agencies and academia to foster evidence-based practices such as promoting healthy lifestyles through physical activity.

Acknowledgement

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References


York: The Sagamore.

Means-end Approach of an Appalachian Trail Hiker

Participation Number:__________________  1. Male or Female

Introduction: Good morning/afternoon/evening. I’m XXXX, talking to you on behalf of XXXX. I am interested in understanding what you got from your participating hiking on the AT trail. Would you be willing to participate in a 10-minute interview?

As you know the purpose of this interview is to find out what your outcomes are from hiking on the AT trail. There are no right or wrong answers to these questions. I want you to feel comfortable talking with me and answering my questions. Please be assured that all of your responses will remain completely confidential. Also, when answering a question please refer only to your most recent AT trail experience rather than any other previous outdoor experiences you might have had. Any questions for me? OK, let’s begin?

SECTION 1 – General Questions

2. How old are you? ______________

3. Which of the following best describes you? (please circle one)
   White or Caucasian   Black or African American   Asian or Pacific Islander
   American Indian/Native American   Hispanic or Latino   Other: ______________

4. What is your hiker type? (please “X” one)  Student   Self-employed
   weekender ____ day hiker _____ thru-hiker _____ section hiker _____multi-use hiker_____

5. How many miles have you hiked on the AT trail?
   a. ____________ miles/this trip
   b. ____________ miles/per year
   c. ____________ miles (total miles)

6. I am interested in what you feel you have gotten from hiking the AT trail. That is, I would like you to think about the things you learned and the outcomes you received from hiking on the trail. Please tell me some of the outcomes that you received. Any others? (TRY TO GET AT LEAST 3-4… BUT ALLOW FOR MORE)

List of Outcomes: ____________________________  Ranking:____________

   ____________________________   _____________
   ____________________________   _____________
   ____________________________   _____________

7. Now, I want you to think about the importance of each of these outcomes. Which of the outcomes you mentioned would you say is the most important to you? Which is the next most important? (REPEAT TILL ALL ARE RANKED)

SECTION 2 – Laddering the Outcomes

Now, I am going to ask you about some outcomes that you mentioned. You should know that some of my questions will seem obvious or repetitive to you. It is not that I don’t understand the obvious, it’s just that I need to hear things in your own words to know exactly what you mean. Are you ready to begin?

OUTCOME #1:
Now you mentioned that (outcome #1) ____________________ was something that you got out of your AT experience. Why is ____________ important to you? …And why is that important to you?

ATTRIBUTE  ➔ CONSEQUENCE  ➔ VALUE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!!
Pigskin and Black Belts: Can Martial Arts Provide Insight for Competitive and Aggressive Sports Like American Football?

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Competitive and aggressive sports provide recreational sport contexts for youth and adolescents across the globe. One of the most popular recreational sports worldwide is martial arts, a sport characterized as aggressive yet backed in the traditional form of the sport by a principled philosophy. The researchers engaged in naturalistic inquiry through full participant observation in a traditional martial arts club. The purpose of the research was to closely examine the teaching of traditional martial arts to determine whether lessons could be derived for competitive and aggressive sports like American football. Philosophical and psychological themes emerged from the research, including a counterbalanced ethic of nonviolence and restraint and achievement orientations reflective of the researchers' sport backgrounds, respectively.

Over the course of the last fifty years, coinciding with what could be characterized as the communication and entertainment revolution, the professional model of sport has evolved to be ubiquitous through television and electronic media. Twenty-four hour broadcasts detail every aspect associated with professional and intercollegiate sports. Interscholastic sports have increasingly been targeted, as intercollegiate sport fans thirst for information and air time on their school's athletic recruits. Grassroots youth sports, most notably Little League baseball and Pop Warner football, even have their respective championships broadcast on national television. American culture celebrates and lifts high these titans of the gridiron, diamond, or hardwood. The message being broadcast into our living rooms on a daily basis is aligned with the professional or business model of sport. Winning and athletic success is the ultimate goal. Yet, these televised sports figures at all levels of competition represent a tiny fraction of overall sport participants.

According to the National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA, 2007), approximately 64 million youth ages 7-17 participate in the ten most popular team, dual, or individual sports. Many of these children are introduced to various sports at developmentally sensitive ages. With the pervasive nature of sport entertainment coupled with overzealous adults reliving their sport successes or failures vicariously through children, sport settings for youth and adolescents are increasingly in need of an underlying ethic to support more of a balanced approach to sport programming. For aggressive contact sports like American football, the need is heightened. The purpose of our research was to closely examine a seemingly aggressive recreational sport setting in martial arts that teaches a principled philosophy concurrently with physical skills to determine whether lessons can be extrapolated and applied to competitive and aggressive sport settings such as American football.

Literature Review

Socialization of Aggression Through Sport

The operationalization of socialization is best described for the purposes of this research in the context of sport. McPherson (1981) described socialization into and through sport as:

…a learning process wherein a novice, through observation, imitation and interaction with significant others (role models) within social systems such as the family, school, peer group, mass media and sport team, acquires the affective, cognitive and behavioral components of a social role. (p. 266)

For high contact sport settings such as American football, ice hockey, and lacrosse, where aggressiveness is considered an attribute for participants, aggressive behavior may not be limited to the playing field. The culture surrounding the sport and resulting socialization may influence participants on and off the field. Since the call by Gaskell and Pearton (1979) and others for an increased emphasis on sport as a social structure to study aggression, research on sport and aggression has exploded across multiple disciplines (e.g., Bredemeier, 1983; Conroy, Silva, Newcomer, Walker, & Johnson, 2001; Gagnon, 1997; Guivernau & Duda, 2002; Leizman, 1999; Rees, 2001; Russell, 1981, 1993).

Empirical evidence on contact sport settings has suggested an association with aggressive tendencies in participants. Some findings were dependent upon numerous contextual factors. Two significant results emerged out of a study conducted by Guivernau and Duda (2002) into socialization of aggressive tendencies in 194 adolescent male and female European American soccer players. Players who judged their team climate to be pro-aggressive and players who believed their coach supported aggression reported significantly higher scores on the self-
likelyhood-to-aggress (SLA) measure. Endresen and Olweus (2005) found participants engaging in power sports (e.g., boxing, wrestling, weightlifting) exhibited higher levels of violent and non-violent antisocial behavior outside the sport context. The "macho" culture surrounding these sport environments was postulated as serving an enhancement effect for aggression. Similarly, Miller, Melnick, Farrell, Sabo, and Barnes (2006) found that adolescents self-identifying with the "jock" label were more likely than other subjects to engage in nonfamily violence. Gagnon (1997) conducted qualitative research, interviewing ten men prone to conjugal violence, ten non-violent men, and ten practitioners working with either violent men or female victims of violent men. The central purpose of the research was to examine sport culture as it relates to the socialization of violence. Gagnon concluded:

If one admits that sport culture is one of the last male bastions, if one demonstrates that this bastion is in fact one of the central places for the apprenticeship of hegemonic models of violence, is it not time to carefully reconsider, confront, and analyze not only the place sport culture occupies but the manner in which it reproduces itself? (p. 68)

These findings on socialization of aggressive behavior through sport highlight the need for increased research. When examining tenets associated with sports at all levels, the degree of competition manifested for each context is a critical component and may hold the key to an increased understanding of socialization of aggression through sport.

**Competition**

From the playing field to the boardroom, competition is omnipresent in American society manifested in either a structural (i.e., extrinsic, won/loss) or intentional (i.e., intrinsic, desire to be the best) manner (Kohn, 1992). According to Kohn, competition is a learned rather than an innate behavior. This form of learning is obviously highly valued within a free market system like capital-ism. Therefore, limiting the competitive fire in sport may be viewed as limiting a competitive business spirit. However, providing youth with a counterbalance to pervasive competitive influences should not be viewed as a limitation but rather as a potential strength.

Status and attention afforded competitive sport in American society enhances the emphasis on competition and winning. Whenever likeable coaches are fired for failing to lead the team to victory, some fans and sport commentators will inevitably deplore the overemphasis placed on winning. Yet, these same fans and commentators continue their support and rarely call for changes. A potentially dangerous cycle has been created at all levels of American sport. Despite a coach's best intentions, players realize the ultimate bottom line is their win-loss record. The message is clear, "Win or else!" This can cloud indirect developmental themes people normally associate as perceived benefits of competitive team sport. Robert Gass (as cited in Utne, 2006), a world-renowned leadership coach, stated:

When I am called in to work with organizations or coalitions, it almost always comes down to a problem with people not being able to work together. It’s competition rather than cooperation. Fear rather than trust. "Me" rather than "we." (p. 50)

Scholars who decry competition in favor of cooperation may have noble ends of peace and harmonious society in mind. However, elimination of competition from American society is a lost cause even the most progressive thinkers would have difficulty realistically envisioning. In promoting a counterbalance to the socialization processes of competition and aggression through infusion of developmental teaching into American sport, particularly at the recreational level, we believe an alternative paradigm is not only plausible within current structures of American sport but also realistic from a competitive standpoint. Recognition that competition does not separate us along territorial or adversarial lines is a powerful socializing message essential to counterbalance the perspective of children like nine-year old Diamond Pless of the Greater Miami Pop Warner football league who stated, “I get to hit the person, then I get to mash 'im, [sic] then I get to slam 'im and make 'im run to their daddy for advice. When you hit somebody, they get afraid of you” (as cited in Powell, 2003, p. 120). Youth development through aggressive and competitive sport is one step in this critical process.

**Youth Development & Sport**

The study of developmental processes of children and adolescents has commenced for centuries, but youth development as the buzzword for this field of study evolved over the last two decades within psychology and related fields such as education and leisure studies (Pittman, Irby, & Ferber, 2001). A wealth of foundations, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies have funded and driven research and created a vast array of resources during this time period. Numerous definitions of youth development have emerged from these organizations and researchers associated with these organizations. These definitions provide rich contexts in which to frame research and practice, but MacDonald & Valdivieso (2001) summarized the central mission of youth development in stating, “what we want our children to acquire is a rich array of social and intellectual knowledge, attitudes, and competencies that will enable them to be caring people and productive citizens” (p. 172).

Youth development through sport in the United States has historically revolved around the notion that sport prepares children and adolescents for life (Danish, Forneris, Hodge, & Heke, 2004). The overarching assumption of sport advocates is that social learning obtained through sport is overwhelmingly positive, with participants being taught such life lessons as teamwork, motivation, work ethic, and competitive spirit (Coakley, 2002; Tutko & Bruns, 1979). Athletes, coaches, administrators, and academicians promote these benefits in an effort to justify participation and encourage interest in sports. Yet, people accept these purported
benefits as fact without rigorous empirical evidence to back the claims. Ewing, Gano-Overway, Branta, and Seefeldt (2002) stated:

Comparative research has revealed that being involved in sport alone is not sufficient to ensure that participants will learn sportsmanlike [sic] attitudes and behaviors. In fact, sport may be a domain that suspends moral obligations or encourages unethical behavior for strategic gain in competition particularly when winning is overemphasized. (p. 38)

Further, even when youth learn positive lessons through sport, transferability of these lessons to other domains is believed to be rare when lessons are indirect (Petitpas, Van Raalte, Cornelius, & Presbrey, 2004). Youth development through sport provides an opportunity to directly teach life lessons that may be transferred into academic and personal domains. The difference lies in overt versus implied delivery of these life lessons. Many traditional martial arts programs are representative of this overt delivery of life lessons by offsetting physical and aggressive aspects of teaching with a philosophical ethic of non-violence and self-control.

Martial Arts as Context

Leizman (1999) proposed a future direction for diminishing socialization of competition and aggression through sport by advocating for infusion of Eastern philosophy in Western sport. Martial arts are most closely associated with Eastern philosophy. Although research into developmental benefits of martial arts is limited in sport and recreation research, several studies have utilized martial arts as a context for social science research. Chami-sather (2004) found significant transference of principles from Taekwondo teaching into the academic domain.

The most poignant research supporting our current efforts came from Trulson (1986), who found significant differences in propensity for continued juvenile delinquency between two experimental groups and a control group. Juvenile delinquents in the two experimental groups received training in either the traditional Korean martial art of Taekwondo with an underlying philosophical ethic and teaching or a "modern" offshoot of the martial art without an underlying ethical and teaching philosophy. Participants in the traditional group exhibited decreased aggressiveness and numerous other positive developmental benefits, whereas participants in the modern group displayed the exact opposite tendencies and exhibited more aggressiveness than traditional and control groups.

Based on results of these studies and targeted research on specific participation opportunities, we elected to conduct naturalistic inquiry through participant observation in a traditional martial arts setting. Similar to the delineation made by Trulson (1986) in assigning labels of modern versus traditional to the comparison of martial arts settings, King and Williams (1997) described the difference between martial arts settings as contest-oriented versus traditional. Contest-oriented martial arts is naturally more focused on preparing participants for competition, whereas traditional martial arts is more focused upon self-defense and includes a principled ethic based on Eastern philosophy (King & Williams).

Method

Different types of observation have been defined along a continuum from complete observer to complete participant (Henderson, 2006). For the purposes of closely examining a martial arts setting, we decided upon full immersion as participants in a Cuong Nhu oriental martial arts club. The practice of Cuong Nhu can be characterized as a traditional martial arts setting. Further details of this setting will emerge through the interpretive inquiry. We joined the Cuong Nhu martial arts club at a large state university in the southeastern United States. Approval from instructors and leadership of the club was contingent upon fully unobtrusive measures of observation only. The only individuals associated with the club who were aware of our study were two instructors and the club president. Since our aim was not to extrapolate meaning from actual participants but rather to study the recreational sport setting and philosophical teaching, we elected to move forward with the study. We paid our club dues and began training with the club. Upon completion of 1-3 two-hour training sessions per week (attendance at training sessions was dependent upon various factors including academic course load as graduate students, holidays, gym schedules, etc.), each researcher recorded field notes for 10-15 minutes. Each researcher recorded notes for eighteen different training sessions, and the study was concluded after one academic semester or approximately four months. Open and axial coding was conducted to analyze themes emerging from the field notes.

Interpretation

Philosophical Basis

To those people unfamiliar with the underlying philosophy of traditional martial arts, the practice may be misconstrued as a violent form of sport that socializes aggression, but advocates for traditional martial arts such as Cuong Nhu would argue for the exact opposite. One of the core tenets of traditional martial arts is unity of mind and body. Ethics and philosophy are seamlessly integrated into the teaching of Cuong Nhu oriental martial arts.

One of the instructors was a twenty-five year, black-belt veteran of martial arts training who believed balance was the key to offsetting competitive sport training that may potentially be interpreted by students as aggressive in nature. This particular instructor philosophized during one of the first training sessions:

"Why, or rather what is one reason that we teach both philosophy and practice? Because if I am going to teach you how to break a person’s arm or neck in self-defense, I better also teach you balance with a philosophy of betterment of self to prevent making you into an animal.

I could make you into an animal, no problem, but providing a balance,
hard/soft, ying/yang, that is way more challenging.

The teaching of Cuong Nhu for this particular club was predominantly non-competitive. Although opportunities did exist to compete in tournaments, this aspect was not emphasized, and the prevailing ethic was to treat the opponent as a dance partner rather than as an enemy. This mentality balanced the realization that techniques being taught could be used in self-defense to physically hurt and thwart an attacker. This realization required students to look within and develop an ethic that the techniques be used only when absolutely necessary.

**Personal Meaning Through Participation**

In addition to the added benefit of two observers, the respective sport backgrounds of the two researchers were vastly different and provided an intriguing juxtaposition that produced richer psychological data than originally anticipated when the study was commissioned. The primary sport background of researcher A consisted of competitive team sport (American football and baseball), dual sport (wrestling and racquetball), and individual sport (snowboarding) environments; whereas, researcher B’s sport background consisted primarily of individual sport (swimming) and sport fitness (jujitsu, karate, yoga, Pilates) environments.

Although initially excited about the prospect of training to learn a new sport or physical skill, researcher A suffered a calf injury during an unrelated physical activity that limited participation in martial arts training only a week into the study. Researcher A continued to participate but fell behind other participants in physical skill acquisition. This setback, while frustrating from a physical perspective, did not diminish the philosophical teachings derived from training sessions, and these life lessons were more evident in the field notes of researcher A than actual physical skills. Researcher A stated:

> The sensei spoke of five pillars of Cuong Nhu as living, giving, caring, sharing, and loving. Live your philosophy, give to your philosophy, care about your philosophy deeply, share your philosophy in deep commitment, and love your philosophy with all your heart and soul.

This statement provides a glimpse into the philosophical reflections taught by the instructors and repeated by both researchers in field notes. Yet, perhaps more telling from a research perspective was the psychological reflection by each researcher in examining our respective inner drives towards achievement.

The original intent of the study was, as stated previously, to closely examine a seemingly aggressive recreational sport setting in martial arts that teaches a principled philosophy concurrently with a physical skill. Yet, qualitative research is by its very nature more inductive, and personal psychological themes emerging from each researcher provided insight into the achievement orientation associated with sport participation. We fully recognize limitations inherent within this mode of research, as despite intentions to the contrary, researcher A was in the midst of studying achievement-oriented variables. This factor contributed to the potential for a deductive rather than inductive nature to the research, as researcher A looked for explanation to psychological constructs being experienced firsthand. Nevertheless, the orientation of researcher B was reflected in the following statement from field notes:

> I think one thing this class has been great with is helping me be less critical of myself...or less embarrassed by what other people think...maybe both. I just know that class is so much more enjoyable when I let my mistakes slide off my back.

Researcher A responded less favorably after suffering the initial calf injury, and this final entry in field notes showed the evident frustration. Researcher A stated, “Negativity crept in and swelled, overcoming me and creating a dark chasm difficult to stem. I despise the feeling of being less competent than others. I dread every minute of martial arts.”

Training in traditional martial arts such as Cuong Nhu promotes an inward orientation in which participants strive to accomplish personal goals. The ultimate accomplishment is earning a black belt, which signifies that a student has reached a certain level of personal mastery. Yet, researcher B responded favorably to this setting, whereas researcher A did not. What was the primary difference? We believe the preceding statements were reflective of one of the themes emerging from the research, one represented by a dichotomy of intrinsic motivation or task-oriented achievement orientation (researcher B) versus extrinsic motivation or ego-oriented achievement orientation (researcher A). This psychological interpretation of achievement has been researched extensively in sport settings and termed achievement goal theory (AGT).

The core principle of AGT, as it relates to sport, is an individual’s perception of competence and subjective meaning placed on success and failure (Nicholls, 1989). Individuals have been shown to possess varying degrees of both ego and task orientations towards goal motivation in achievement settings. In task orientation, the individual is more likely to engage in adaptive achievement strategies that promote mastery of the task, and improvement is the goal rather than normative ranking. King and Williams (1997) found support for task orientation being fostered through traditional martial arts with results reflecting a positive correlation between task orientation and both satisfaction and performance with the sport. As demonstrated in field notes of researcher A, ego orientation emphasizes the display of competence or demonstration of ability with more of a focus being placed on normative ranking compared to peers (Roberts, 2001). The relevance of the difference

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1With two researchers serving as participant observers, we recognize that anonymity is neither possible nor necessary. However, utilizing the labels “Researcher A” and “Researcher B” allowed not only for blind peer review but more of a natural flow to the interpretation.
between task orientation versus ego orientation relates to the developmental outcomes and beliefs associated with each and was summarized succinctly by Duda and Ntoumanis (2005):

Task orientation is related to the belief that sports participation should foster cooperation, the value of striving for mastery, skill development, and lifetime health. In contrast, ego orientation is positively related to beliefs that sport should enhance social status, self-importance and career mobility, and is negatively related to the view that sport should foster good citizenship. (p. 319)

Most of the research on AGT has centered on youth and adolescents. Although the researchers for the current study were adult participants, an examination of our respective sport backgrounds and orientation toward achievement in a sport setting such as traditional martial arts provides potential relevance for youth sport settings. We are not suggesting extrapolation based solely on this participant observation, but rather that the potential exists for lessons learned to be applied to youth settings in an effort to further understand and promote exploratory research with youth sports.

**Discussion**

Four major themes emerged from interpretive inquiry into traditional martial arts: 1) importance of a philosophical and principled ethic underlying an aggressive sport; 2) power of leadership in conveying ethics and lessons; 3) intentionality with connection between physical skill and life lessons; and 4) state of the participant (i.e., motivation, pre-existing conditions, sport background, etc.). These themes individually and collectively provide insight that may help recreational and athletic administrators reform the structure of aggressive or high contact sport settings such as American football. Yet, any mention of reform comes with a potentially defensive stance from some sport advocates who decry efforts at reform as veiled attempts to change the competitive nature of sport. These advocates must be convinced that reform can impact sport in a positive manner if implemented properly.

If research shows increased retention and developmental benefits for individuals with task-oriented achievement motivation, a focus on task orientation may be one component to counterbalance competitive sport. Yet, promotion of task orientation alone may not provide that counterbalance without an underlying and intentional philosophical ethic. For competitive and aggressive youth sport settings such as American football, that ethic would involve teaching non-violence, non-aggression, cooperation, and physical restraint. These principles are seemingly at odds with the very nature of the sport and western ideals propagated by a capitalistic society. However, on and off field violent episodes have marred sports at all levels, and coaches have the opportunity to be effective leaders in working to counterbalance these aspects.

Potential benefits may be manifested both on and off the field of play. For example, an American football coach who teaches aggressive play while counterbalancing that lesson with one of self-restraint and judgment could apply lessons both on and off the field. Referees penalize football players who tackle an opposing player after their whistle or after the opposing player steps out of bounds. Therefore, self-restraint and good judgment are rewarded in those situations. An effective coach could apply that lesson to real life using any number of scenarios where an individual is faced with a decision to resort to violence but instead practices self-restraint. A closer examination is warranted and begs the following question: If the very nature of the sport lends itself to on-field violence, aggression, competition, and unbridled freedom, is it irresponsible and potentially destructive to teach these tenets without an intentional counterbalance? We believe that answer is clear, but a singular focus on winning is the message that often overrides all others.

As noted by Leonard (1998), “In Western sport, *winning* is synonymous with *success*” (p. 125). This statement represents the prevailing philosophical ethic for most competitive team sport environments in the United States. Nonetheless, success in life is much more complex than winning or losing. Likewise, success on the playing surface is often more complex than the respective talent levels of the teams. Many times the best sport teams exhibit what is commonly referred to as *team chemistry*. In essence, team chemistry is the development of a counterbalance between competition and cooperation. Competition exists within teams, not only between teams. With virtually every team and every sport, players compete against each other for the most favorable positions on the team – the starting positions. The best coaches convince each and every team member that their role is vital, whether the player “wins” the position that was most desired or not. By doing so, the coach is integrating positive competition and cooperation within teams. The basic lesson of teamwork is pervasive when sport advocates assert sport’s place in development, yet the lesson may have become somewhat lost in the pressure to win.

Shields and Bredemeier (1996) supported integration of competition and cooperation in advocating for a more counterbalanced approach to the delivery of sport and lamented the antithetical notion of the two constructs that has evolved in 21st century sport.

One problem with the way that competition is usually understood by competitors and spectators is that competition is thought to exist in a simple bipolar relation with cooperation: If a situation is competitive than [sic] it cannot also be cooperative. But competition can be viewed as a process whereby competitors seek to enhance their own performance and enjoyment through meeting the challenge posed by a worthy competitor. The root meaning of competition is “to strive with” not “to strive against.” (p. 379)

This interpretation of competition aligns perfectly with the traditional martial arts ethic taught through Cuong Nhu. As participants on the first day of practice were taught by the instructor,
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“The word ‘arts’ is included in ‘martial arts’ for a reason. Without our partner, we would be lost. Martial arts is a dance, not a fight.”

Dichotomies are omnipresent in American and global society and take many forms – Democrat versus Republican, religious versus secular, Carolina versus Duke. Social science research is no exception. Scholars are not immune in grappling with polarized perspectives or paradigms – positivism versus interpretivism, communism versus capitalism, competition versus cooperation. As denoted in these examples, most of the time dichotomies are described with the word versus, which symbolizes a fight or struggle. The connotation is antagonistic and promotes defensiveness, fear, and/or division on both sides of the issue or debate. This notion stems from a world believing that competition is inherent to our existence as humans. In this world, war is inevitable as people are forced to choose sides rather than learn to respect differing opinions, religions, cultures, constructs, and even rival football teams.

When these dichotomies are highlighted on the playing surface, particularly with competitive and aggressive team sports such as American football, the underlying message is one of the opponent as enemy. That enemy stands in the way of winning; and therefore, must be defeated by any means necessary. Don McPherson (as cited in Whiteside, 2006), executive director of the Sports Leadership Institute at Adelphi University, reflected upon high-profile violent episodes during intercollegiate football games:

“If you go into a football game and you’re there to have a healthy competition, then when faced with confrontation, you’re more likely to say, “Let’s move on, I want to get back to playing.” As opposed to if you’re there to protect your turf and win at all costs, then you’re going to be more likely to succumb to the challenge of a cheap shot or trash talking. Then it’s not about the game, it’s about winning the masculinity battle, the tough-guy battle, and when that becomes more important than the game, that’s when those things [fights] happen. (¶ 5)

A different system is possible and plausible and may indeed be the path towards world peace, as greed is replaced by cooperation and humanity often seen on a widespread basis only in times of crises. If this ideal is ever to approach reality, we must begin a conscious and widespread effort devoted to teaching all children universal principles related to intrinsic motivation, cooperation, character, and caring in a more overt manner. The type of paradigmatic shift necessary to foster such a vast and dynamic undertaking has been in motion and gained considerable traction in the last decade through the study of youth and developmental psychology or youth development. The next step must be industry-driven, as sport administrators at all levels make a commitment to change and begin balancing the ethic of competition and aggression taught through sports like American football. The traditional teaching of martial arts may very well be a model for development of just such an ethic.

REFERENCES


Board Member Competency: A Q Methodology Approach

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The purpose of this study was to use developed competencies to examine their importance to current public parks and recreation board members. This was done using Q methodology to determine profiles of public parks and recreation board members and the perceived value they assigned to specific competencies. A principle components analysis was used to factor analyze an 11 x 11 Q sort matrix. The results indicated there are three types of board members including participatory, community representative, and conceptual nonpolitical. These three types had similarities and differences that demonstrated a better understanding of what competencies are important for board members to function efficiently and effectively.

Leisure services management practices are dependent on a multitude of variables including staff, corporate culture, and the governing or advisory board. The influence of the board is sometimes overlooked when in reality it can have a major impact on operations, decision making, and general management issues. Depending on the type of board it may have power to set policy, hold title to land, approve budgets, hire the chief executive officer, and raise funds, among others. Because of the power and responsibilities of boards, it is important to have a thorough understanding of boards and their operation. The knowledge base on boards in the nonprofit sector is well developed and continues to grow. However, the literature on the public and commercial sector is limited (Fokken, 2003; Hurd, 2004). In particular, research on parks and recreation – independent, semi-independent, and advisory. The independent board, found in all three sectors, is the most powerful of the three types having more responsibility than the other two. The independent board has the power to set policy, hold title to land, and adopt a budget. In a public agency independent board members are elected by the public, whereas nonprofit and commercial board members are elected or appointed by shareholders, members within the organization, or by current board members.

The second type of board, semi-independent board, is found only in the public sector. Board members are appointed, usually by the city council or mayor. This group has limited authority over operating policies and general administrative practices. Semi-independent boards ultimately are accountable to an independent board, such as a city council. The independent board has the final decision making power, but relies on the semi-independent board for direction.

Lastly, the advisory board is most common in nonprofit and public sectors but is also found in the commercial sector. These boards are advisory in nature and not policy setting. Members may be elected or appointed and oversee their own affairs, but they have little power over decision making and financial issues. These boards are a means of community involvement for members and a way for staff to receive input on important issues from a citizen perspective. Regardless of power differences between the three types of boards, each has its own abilities to influence agency activities that drive administrative practices. Because of this power and influence, boards are instrumental in agency effectiveness making them worthy of scholarly study.

The purpose of this study was to: 1) use developed competencies to examine their importance to current public parks and recreation board members; and 2) determine board member types working in public parks and recreation. Individual board members have any number of reasons for serving their communities, and this study examines what competencies board members felt were important to their role as a board member. Once important competencies emerged a Q methodology (further detailed later) allowed for the creation of a profile of board members based on their ratings. The result is a picture of different types of board members in terms of how they value and view their role on the board. Understanding the values of individual board members may aide staff in working with the board.

For the purpose of this study competencies were defined as the skills, knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics that are needed to effectively perform a job (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). This definition of competencies encompasses so called “hard skills” such as the ability to set goals and objectives as well as “soft skills” such as being diplomatic and having patience. Competencies have a long history in the management literature. They were first discussed in the commercial sector and then in the nonprofit sector in the mid 1990s (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration [NASPAA], 2006). The public sector is just beginning to
value competencies as a means to organizational effectiveness evidenced by the growing body of literature (i.e., Cederblom & Pemer, 2002; Greer & Virick, 2008). The commercial sector views competencies differently than public and nonprofit sectors. The commercial sector follows the premise that because of the diversity of businesses in the sector, competency models should be developed for each individual business rather than as an entire sector (McLagan, 1997). The nonprofit sector has taken a different approach in that a set of competencies has been developed that applies to the entire sector (NASPAA). These competencies are now used to drive graduate curricula in many nonprofit management programs. The public sector competency literature is not developed enough to determine if it will follow the commercial sector or the nonprofit sector.

Competencies have a multitude of uses in management and human resources in particular. Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) posited competencies are used for such things as setting benchmarks for employees to measure their own skills against; developing a plan for professional development; and developing job descriptions, screening candidates, structuring interview questions, and evaluating potential job candidates. Furthermore, once hired employees can be evaluated based on expected competencies for the job. The variety of uses of competencies for important management practices serves as a justification for the body of literature that is growing in this area.

**Literature Review**

**General Competencies**

This study was influenced by past literature from two perspectives—competencies and boards themselves. Competency research has been a mainstay in the commercial (e.g., Cooper, 2000; O’Neill, 1996) and nonprofit sectors (e.g., Hofer, 1993; NASPAA, 2006) for a number of years. The public sector, on the other hand, has lagged behind in realizing the importance of competencies to organizational effectiveness. This is true particularly for public parks and recreation as the literature is just beginning to be developed by researchers and used by practitioners. Preliminary studies in the field have established competencies for resorts and commercial recreation (Hammersley & Tynon, 1998), recreational sports (Barclona & Ross, 2004), entry-level public parks and recreation (Hurd, 2005), and CEOs in public parks and recreation (McLean, Hurd, & Jensen, 2005).

The literature on competencies has been tied to an agency’s ability to change, improve, and become more efficient. Traditional bureaucratic organizations are coming under scrutiny because of their inability to change quickly and adapt easily to the environment. Bureaucratic organizations are mired by a high degree of specialization, division of labor, formal rules and operating systems, and a hierarchy of authority. Traditionally, public parks and recreation agencies are bureaucratic in nature, which can make them somewhat slow to change. Although one best organizational structure has not been determined, Lawler and Ledford (1997) suggested that rather than continuously restructuring to find the most workable agency, focusing on competencies may improve an organization’s effectiveness. Competencies have always been a part of bureaucratic organizations in that managers in these agencies focus on finding people who have the best skills for a job (Lawler, 1996).

Ulrich and Lake (1990) and Lawler (1996) posited that a set of core competencies allows an organization to perform in certain ways that are critical to its success. In this case, competencies are not individually directed but are applicable for the entire organization. This idea bodes well with systems theory in that an organization is a system that relies on the sum of its parts to function optimally. If an individual or part of a system is weak, the rest of the system will adapt to this weakness. Optimal performance occurs when all parts are functioning properly (Thompson, 1967).

There are two prominent competency models in the literature that have their foundation in systems theory. First, Boyatzis (1982) indicated that organizational effectiveness within a system is comprised of individual competencies, job demands, and organizational environment. If one of these areas is weak, ineffectiveness will occur. There may be times when the organization can be effective, but it is not consistent when one element is not where it should be. Lawler and Ledford (1997) took this one step further and argued that organizational effectiveness is a result of “having a good fit among its strategy, competencies, capabilities, and environment” (p. 234-235). Dubois’s (1996) model merged systems theory and a competency based approach to human resources management to manage productivity and increase efficiency. He thought systems theory correctly represented the impact people have on the organization and that by building individual competencies the organization would be stronger.

In addition to systems theory, strategic human resources management (SHRM) has gained attention in terms of competency use. SHRM has been defined as “ongoing efforts to align an organization’s personnel policies and practices with its business strategy” (Tompson, 2002, p. 95). SHRM’s relationship to competencies is based on the premise that organizations need to determine essential knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employee as well as those needed for the job the employee is doing. This process identifies the competency gap between what current skills are and what is needed. From here a training and development plan is created to close the gap between what the employee has and what is needed to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. SHRM is recommended to: (a) increase individual and organizational productivity and organizational productivity and effectiveness (Daley, Vasu, & Weinstein, 2002); (b) reduce employee turnover; and (c) increase organizational performance through management of human capital (Richard & Johnson, 2001). SHRM has received significant attention in terms of employees, but SHRM falls short with boards as little is known about the link between the two.

**Board Competencies**

Board competency research predominantly has focused on the nonprofit sector with negligible research in the other two sectors. This line of research began with Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989) when they developed six competencies for board effectiveness. Subsequently, Jackson and Holland (1998) and Holland and Jackson (1998) sought further refinement of board competencies and extended the literature on what was known about nonprofit boards and their effectiveness. The resulting Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire (BSAQ) focused on six competency areas of board effectiveness including strategic, analytical, contextual, political, educational, and interpersonal. Each area had several competencies within them such as board requests input from persons to be affected.
by the decision and the board makes use of long range priorities in dealing with current issues. In addition to the BSAQ these studies resulted in a demonstrated relationship between performance and competencies. Those organizations that had high scores on performance indicators were also rated high on effectiveness.

The 65-item BSAQ represented the overall best case scenario for measuring board competencies. Because these studies were completed on nonprofit agencies and universities, generalizability to public agencies – including parks and recreation – was an issue. Fokken (2003) tested the BSAQ to determine its applicability to public parks and recreation boards and found that four of the six competency areas could be confirmed after modification indices were added. Only educational and strategic indices could not be confirmed. Three other studies focused specifically on public parks and recreation board competencies. Flickinger (1992) identified 10 key skills board members needed. These skills were derived from the literature but not from empirical research. Galloway (1999) developed 42 competencies board members needed to be successful using a Delphi technique. CEOs rather than board members, developed these competencies that included such skills as planning, fiscal management, and ability to work as a team.

A more recent study used board members and a Delphi technique to develop 56 competencies board members felt were important to their performance (Hurd, 2004). Like Galloway (1999), these competencies were a mix of characteristics and skills and knowledge. The Board Member Competency Framework (BMCF) resulted in eight general competency categories and 56 specific competencies. The competency categories included advocacy, board effectiveness, community relations, decision making, education and experience, finance and planning, interpersonal characteristics, and staff relations. The highest rated specific competencies were studying issues before making decisions; participating in committee and board meetings; understanding the purpose of the board; and having the ability to make decisions. It was the BMCF that was used as the basis of the current study.

When comparing results of Galloway (1999), Fokken (2003), and Hurd (2004), several common competencies emerged from at least two of the three studies. They included such competencies as the ability to make decisions and solve problems, ability to listen, and desire to serve the public. It was clear that the Galloway and Hurd studies were most similar in the competencies they discovered even though one was developed using CEOs and the other using board members themselves.

The foundation of boards as an area of study is built on systems theory, the nonprofit sector, and most recently public parks and recreation boards. This literature is just scratching the surface on what is needed on the topic; however, it serves as a solid foundation for continuing competency research.

**Methodology**

Q methodology was used in this study to determine competency profiles of board members in public parks and recreation. Q methodology was first introduced by psychologist/physicist William Stephenson (1953) as a means to study human subjectivity. This methodology uses an established set of statements about a topic (Q sample), and subjects are asked to sort statements from positive to negative such as most like them to least like them, agree to disagree, or most important to least important. Statements can be derived from either naturalistic or ready-made samples. Naturalistic samples are often derived from qualitative interviews with study participants. Ready-made samples come from sources such as literature reviews, existing scales, or standardized items (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

Sexton, Snyder, Wadsworth, Jardine, and Ernest (1998) outlined several strengths to using Q methodology including: (a) results can be used to develop and test theories regarding people’s beliefs, judgments, and attitudes; (b) fewer research participants are required thus reducing costs while maintaining power; (c) Q methodology controls issues of interview bias and socially desirable responses; and (d) novelty of the process increases a participant’s willingness to rank order a large number of statements. In addition to the strengths of this methodology, there have also been several concerns raised about Q methodology. Bolland (1985) questioned a person’s cognitive ability to sort a large number of items into too many categories with too fine a distinction between the categories. Some critics of Q methodology suggest that the small sample size makes the results less generalizable (Austin, & Pinkleton, 2000). However, Q proponents rebut that this criticism comes from a fundamental misunderstanding about the method. McKeown and Thomas (1988) suggested “the purpose is to study intensively the self referent perspectives of particular individuals in order to understand the lawful nature of human behavior” (p. 36). It is not the number of people who sort the statements, but the relative position of each statement that is valuable to understanding subjective behavior.

Since Q methodology is rarely used in recreation research, it is easy to question its usefulness – especially when on the surface R methodology, or Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), will do the same thing. Both methodologies could be applied to this research topic; however, the results would be different as they analyze different things. For instance, Q methodology seeks to understand how individuals think. Results of Q methodology identify how people with common views understand an issue, whereas R methodology describes the characteristics of a population that are “associated statistically with opinions, attitudes, or behaviors being investigated” (Brown, Durning, & Selden, 1998, p. 602). Q methodology is an in depth examination of how a few people think and feel about an issue. This intense evaluation requires a careful selection of subjects. R methodology, on the other hand, is designed to obtain understandings of samples that are representative of the population (Brown et al.). To understand the value of Q methodology it is essential to separate it from R methodology since the study is not rating competencies on a pre-determined Likert type scale and comparing responses based on demographic variables. This study investigates competencies in relation to each other rather than a set scale and results in a pattern of inter-correlations between subjects (McKeown, Hinks, Stowell-Smith, Mercer, & Forster, 1999).

The impetus for using Q methodology was that board members come from a multitude of perspectives in terms of experiences, education, political structures, and agency cultures, among others. As such, they perceive competencies from different frameworks and a single importance ranking of competencies may not best serve boards. Rather, it was important to uncover whether a subjective view of competencies provides a clearer understanding of the complexity of competencies for this group (McLean et al., 2005). While the results of Q methodology can be statistically analyzed and in this regard is objective, it is also a subjective way to look at individual’s opinions and attitudes (Austin & Pinkleton, 2000).

This study used a ready-made sample rather than a naturalistic sample as it was derived from previous competency research on board members (Hurd, 2004). Seventy-seven competencies were used as the Q
sample that the participants were asked to sort. Although 77 may seem like a large number, Kerlinger (1973) posited that 60 to 90 statements were ideal to increase the validity of the results.

The sample size in Q methodology is derived differently because the focus is on sorted statements in relation to each other rather than the number of subjects. Thus, the sample size is determined by multiplying the Q sample and P sample, or number of people completing the sort. The sample size for this study was 847, calculated by multiplying 77 sorted statements (Q sample) by 11 participants (P sample). The 11 participants came from a randomly generated list of 50 citizen branch members of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Members of this branch are most likely to be elected or appointed board members for public parks and recreation agencies.

McKeown and Thomas (1988) argued that rigorous sampling methods are not as relevant in Q methodology as other methods since subject selection is driven by theoretical or pragmatic considerations. Theoretical considerations assume that the person is selected because of their specific relevance to goals of the study whereas pragmatic considerations assume all participants are equal. For the purpose of this study, subjects were selected based on theoretical considerations as all subjects were public parks and recreation board members within their community and members of NRPA.

Once the Q sample was determined, the Q sort board was developed. The Q sort board is a distribution of spaces labeled with conditions of agreement from positive (5) to negative (-5). Subjects sort the Q sample through an alternating (positive/negative) systematic process and place statements on the board with the most important competencies placed in columns on the left and least important competencies for board members placed on the right side columns.

Once participants completed the Q sort, data were entered into PQ Method, a Fortran program designed specifically for Q methodology data analysis. Even though the focus is on human subjectivity, correlation and factor matrices emerge during data analysis. This is where quantitative and qualitative methodologies merge. In addition to matrices, factor arrays are also produced. These factor arrays determine a “profile” for subjects. These profiles list statements that are viewed as most and least important by individuals most identifying with the profile. Those identifying with one of three profiles are assumed to share common viewpoints (Dennis, 1986).

RESULTS

All respondents in this study were over 45 years of age with 64% being over 55, and have served an average of 10.6 years on the board. Community size was measured using NRPA Gold Medal population standards, and all five categories were represented with 63% (n = 7) of respondents being in the 20,000-100,000 population categories (Table 1). Study participants were also asked to indicate the type of board on which they served, and 46% (n = 6) were on independent boards.

A principle components analysis was used to factor analyze an 11 x 11 Q sort matrix. Each statement has a factor loading that represents its correlation with the factor (Table 2). The defining sort indicates which of the factors the individual most identifies and where participant viewpoints of important/not important competencies are most likely associated. In addition to factor loadings, each competency has factor scores indicating level of agreement. The number of columns on the Q Sort board drives the minimum and maximum scores. For example, “be enthusiastic about parks and recreation” has factor scores of 4, -2, and 1. The factors scores indicate that factor 1 (4) felt this was highly important, factor 2 (-2) did not view this as important, and factor 3 (1) felt it was somewhat important compared to other statements.

In reviewing Table 2, keep in mind that each of the three factors has two or more defining sorts. This means that these individuals identified strongest with that particular factor. Although factor three had only two defining Q sorts, that factor, accounting for 13% of the variance, is created by the ranking of the entire sample and not just the two who most identified with that factor.

Results of the Q methodology indicate there are three types of board members including participatory board member, community representative, and conceptual nonpolitical board member. Much like qualitative research, these labels were derived through a thorough examination of competencies that were highly valued as well as those that were considered largely unimportant.

FACTOR 1: PARTICIPATORY BOARD MEMBER

The participatory board member (PBM) works to make the board better by being willing to participate on committees and in board meetings; they study issues before making decisions; and they understand the role of the CEO relative to the board (Table 3). They also have an interest in and enthusiasm about parks and recreation. The participatory board member is willing to listen to the public and strives to be objective and fair. This type of board member focuses more on making the board work well together and less on technical skills such as having sound financial management skills, the ability work with the media, and raising funds. Overall these types of board members are involved in making the board function better through their participation. They value each others’ opinions and needs of the community and work well with staff without overstepping their boundaries. This type of board member finds a balance between their roles on the board, the agency, and the community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Under 25</td>
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<tr>
<td>26-35</td>
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<tr>
<td>36-45</td>
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<tr>
<td>46-55</td>
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<td>Over 55</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Over 250,000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Board Type</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Semi-independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advisory</td>
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TABLE 2. Defining Q Sorts

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Loadings: 2</th>
<th>Loadings: 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.52*</td>
<td>0.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.74*</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>0.55*</td>
<td>0.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.50*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.54*</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.69*</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.73*</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.65*</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.21</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>0.22</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.76*</td>
<td>0.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.78*</td>
<td>0.13</td>
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</table>

Variance Explained

25% 21% 13%

Note: * indicates a defining sort

TABLE 3. Participatory Board Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>PBM</th>
<th>CRBM</th>
<th>CNBM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Be willing to participate in committee and board meetings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Be willing to study issues before making decisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>Understand the role of the executive relative to the board</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Read and understand supplied information prior to board meetings</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Understand the purpose of the board</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Have an interest in parks and recreation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Be enthusiastic about parks and recreation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PBM = Participatory board member; CRBM = Community representative board member; CNBM = Conceptual nonpolitical board member

**Factor 2: Community Representative**

The community representative board member (CRBM) feels it is important to give time to the board. They value the ability to accept other board members’ opinions. They want to serve in the best interest of the agency and study issues before making decisions. Table 4 illustrates how these statements compared to the other two factors. This group, however, did not feel it was important to have an interest in parks and recreation whereas the other two did.

Unlike the PBM they did not value being enthusiastic about parks and recreation, and none of the groups felt it was important to network within the profession or learn about the field. This type of board member was willing to give their time and wanted to do what was in the best interest of the agency.

The community representative board member was willing to work hard and spend time in their duties as a board member. However, they do not necessarily feel it is important that they be interested in, enthusiastic about, or willing to learn more about parks and recreation. It can be argued that this type of board member wants to serve the community, but how they do it, such as through parks and recreation, is not as important.

**Factor 3: Conceptual Nonpolitical Board Member**

The conceptual nonpolitical board member (CNBM) highly values seeing the “big picture” through a focus on planning, goal setting, and decision making. They have a vision for where the organization will be in the future. Furthermore, they are interested in parks and recreation and are users of the services. Like the PBM, they remain nonpolitical while helping guide the organization in the right future direction. CNBMs do not feel the need to understand the roles of the CEO and staff or be able to work with the staff. Like the PBM and CRBM, they feel technical skills such as the ability to work with the media, knowledge of construction and the bid process, computer skills, and fundraising are not important for them to possess (Table 5).

This group of board members wants to examine where the organization is and where it can go and then guide it in that direction. They remain detached from political aspects that can be prevalent on some boards by disregarding political contacts and devaluing working with political units.

**Factor Comparisons**

When looking at all three types of board members as a whole, there are several similarities among them. In this study, all three factors had 14 specific competencies that were rated negatively as not being important and included such items as being outgoing, learning duties of the chair, and the ability to raise funds. There were also ten competencies that all factors rated positively. They included such items as the willingness to study issues before making decisions, participating in committee and board meetings, and understanding the purpose of the board.

Results of this study demonstrate different perspectives on competencies needed by board members. Although board members are often perceived as being community servants and having a passion for parks and recreation, the results of this study indicate otherwise.

**Discussion**

Research on competencies has focused on understanding what competencies can mean for an agency, which is to improve individual functioning resulting in organizational effectiveness. As evidenced here, literature regarding public park and recreation board members is in its infancy. Researchers are just beginning to understand and value competencies of board members.
members. This study took predetermined competencies one step further by ascertaining what competencies board members value. The literature demonstrates an objective development of competencies, but has not examined board competencies from a subjective perspective. This study did that by having board members rank the importance of competencies thus gaining perspective of management behavior and values rather than just providing a list of competencies.

This study was undertaken to achieve a different perspective on board competencies in public parks and recreation. It resulted in three profiles or types of board members with a picture of their valued and devalued competencies. The question remains as to why practitioners and researchers should care about the results. Probably the best answer comes in terms of strategic human resources management. Much focus in human resources management has been on hiring the right people for the job who has the competencies needed for effective job performance. Systems theory emphasizes that effective job performance is a key component to organizational effectiveness. However, in most cases an organization does not choose its board members, so why should anyone care about competencies when control is lost?

While a CEO cannot hire board members who are most qualified and who make the organization strongest, there are other strategies to enlist to improve performance. A few of these strategies assist the CEO in working with his/her board while the other is a means for board members to improve their own performance. First, for the CEO and upper management, gaining an understanding of why a person is a board member gives those working with him or her insight into what they deem important and why they are there. Generally speaking, the PBM (Factor 1) has a true interest and enthusiasm about parks and recreation and does not want to be involved in technical aspects of the organization, whereas the CRBM wants to be the face of the board and make good decisions for the community. They really do not care that they are doing it through parks and recreation. This has been a misconception on the part of many practitioners and researchers that board members serve in their role because of a passion for this profession. For these people there are other more important motivators to serve.

When discussing important board issues, these two types of board members could approach issues from fundamentally different perspectives – what is best for parks and recreation and what is best for the community as a whole? Having an understanding of this difference aids in rationally discussing issues and solving problems for the benefit of all involved. Furthermore, CEOs can get a more lucid picture of why board members are advocates for different projects facing the agency. Thus, CEOs can ask individual board members to oversee issues that are of most interest to them.

Secondly, an understanding of what competencies board members feel are important aid in explaining board dynamics to themselves and the staff. For example, the CNBM (Factor 3) does not feel it is important to accept the opinions of other board members, while the other two types feel this is very important. Having a board member of each type on the same board can bring challenges to board effectiveness. In another example, the CNBM values innovation much more than the other two. This could impact decision making by the board in that those who value innovation will want new programs and opportunities for the agency, while those who do not value innovation as much may seek to remain consistent in service provision. Knowing the competencies each board member values contributes to a better understanding of how he or she thinks, behaves, and reacts to issues. This increased understanding leads to better board dynamics and allows the entire group to move in the same direction. Furthermore, CEOs can develop a better working relationship with individual board members as well as the board as a whole by emphasizing common priorities.

According to the literature, systems theory, and Boyatzis’ (1982) model, a competency driven board creates a more efficient and effective board and ultimately an efficient and effective agency. This study further outlines what competencies are important to public parks and recreation

| Table 4. Community Representative Board Members |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>PBM</th>
<th>CRBM</th>
<th>CNBM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ability to accept other board members’ opinions</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Be prepared to give time to the board and agency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Serve in the best interest of the agency</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Be willing to study issues before making decisions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Understand the purpose of the board</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>Be open minded</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
<td>Be supportive of staff</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Have an interest in parks and recreation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Have an interest in serving others</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PBM = Participatory board member; CRBM = Community representative board member; CNBM = Conceptual nonpolitical board member

| Table 5. Conceptual Nonpolitical Board Members |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>PBM</th>
<th>CRBM</th>
<th>CNBM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Understand the purpose of the board</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Have the ability to set goals and objectives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Have effective long range planning skills</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Have the ability to build consensus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Have the ability to make decisions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Have an interest in parks and recreation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Have sound financial management skills</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PBM = Participatory board member; CRBM = Community representative board member; CNBM = Conceptual nonpolitical board member
board members. Established competencies for board members work much like they do for employees. With this examination of competencies board members can assess their own strengths and weaknesses and map out a means to improve and benefit the organization by attending training and development workshops or conferences.

In addition to training, the idea of being competency driven can start even before the individual becomes a board member. Staff can manage some board aspects by writing board member job descriptions. Once accepting a board position, an orientation should be done to acclimate the newest members to the board and its inner workings. Board effectiveness evaluations can be conducted to measure performance, and a realization of the strong ties between a board and how well it functions can be gained.

All of these improvement initiatives are able to be used to direct the actions of the board and help board members have a unified understanding of what is expected of them. The challenge here is that some board members do not want to learn, improve, and grow as board members. Because they are not employees, the CEO is limited in what they can do with board members since they cannot be reassigned, disciplined, or fired. Realistically, in this situation all of the knowledge on board efficiency and effectiveness may be wasted on particular board members.

The last contribution this study makes to the literature is expanding what is known about competencies in public parks and recreation. Since the study used the BMCF (Hurd, 2004) as the ready-made sample, it is important to make comparisons to the original study. The original Delphi study eliminated competencies that were not rated as significantly important. The current study used the eliminated statements in order to determine if they rated low again. Of the 14 competencies all three factors rated negatively, only three were rated at 3.5 or above in the original study. This 3.5 mean signifyed that the competency was seen to have significant importance. These three competencies were to advocate groups and service organizations, read publications on parks and recreation, and have the ability to work hard and smart. However, in the Delphi study they were the lowest scoring competencies to remain in the study, thus giving credence to questioning their importance to boards.

In addition to having a consensus on negatively rated competencies, there were 10 competencies that all three factors rated positively. When compared to the original Delphi study, only one of these competencies (i.e., have the ability to build consensus) was not ranked in the top 10 and was somewhat of an outlier ranked at 48. Making these comparisons to previous knowledge on board competencies supports the work done so far in this area. However, looking at both studies together raises several questions for further research as well.

Competency research in parks and recreation is limited and still a relatively new topic of study, yet it is vital to improve organizational effectiveness. Further research should examine boards based on structure and authority. Additionally, research should focus on what competencies CEOs feel are important for board members rather than targeting what board members think, as board members and CEOs may have different perspectives. Research into whether a board is more or less effective if they all value the same competencies would be valuable. It would also be beneficial to ascertain how board members’ perception of competencies changes with time and with experience. This may answer the question how this sort of public service changes a board members perspective on their duties to the agency and the public. Lastly, a qualitative inquiry into board motivation and values could examine why people serve on boards, how they see their role in the community, and what makes a board efficient and effective. It would be most interesting to determine why those who were not interested in parks and recreation served as board members.

The three factors are a representation of subjective perceptions of the importance of identified board member competencies. This study reinforces the complexities of competencies and demonstrates that there is still disagreement on the importance of specific competencies for board members. Hopefully, it will serve as another piece of knowledge and understanding of the role of the board member and lead to more studies in an area of parks and recreation that desperately lacks sufficient research.

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Dennis, K. E. (1986). Q methodology: Relevance and application to nursing research. Advances in Nursing Sciences, 8, 6-17.


