Innovative Leisure Practices

CASES AS CONDUITS BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

EDITED BY TOM DELAMEE
Innovative Leisure Practices:
Cases as Conduits between Theory and Practice
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Preface

The World Leisure Centre of Excellence at Vancouver Island University is privileged to share its third volume of Case Studies, as part of the Innovative Leisure Practices series. Our intention, with the release of this volume, is to share examples of innovative practices in leisure and to provide a platform for the exchange of ideas and discussion around these varied examples. The cases presented in the 2018 edition of Innovative Leisure Practices are varied in nature, and represent a diverse range of relevant interests and practices.

As noted by Dr. Nicole Vaugeois, editor of the 2016 Case Volume, there are two intended audiences for these case studies including faculty and students in leisure related academic programs and leisure practitioners. Faculty and students benefit from having access to current examples where researchers and practitioners are approaching common issues, opportunities and trends. The second audience includes practitioners who benefit from having a platform to share their own innovative practices or to gain insights from practitioners in other contexts. To the second audience I would like to add community-based volunteers, board members, and community leaders who may be able to apply these best practices in their own settings, while working to develop best practices of their own.

The Mission of the World Leisure Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Leisure Management at Vancouver Island University is to “bring together established and emerging scholars from around the globe to share innovative ideas, engage in dialogue and collaborate in research and teaching.” The publication and release of Innovative Leisure Practices: Cases as Conduits between Theory and Practice (3rd Ed.) is but one means by which we encourage the exchange of ideas, dialogue, and foster the spirit of collaboration.

Tom Delamere
January 2018
Chapter Summary

Providing experiences for families has become increasingly important over the past several years. Family recreation is an important part of life for many families, but many people may not be participating in as much family recreation as they would like, or may not be enjoying the family recreation activities in which they participate. Although many organizations attempt to offer family experiences, they are often left wondering how to facilitate an experience for such diverse groups of interests and abilities.

We set out to develop a framework for providing family recreation activities that can help providers facilitate enjoyable experiences for families. We did this by conducting a collective case study that analyzed three recreation organizations. While the family recreation programming framework we developed is comprised of some general recreation programming principles, it is important to note that it includes specific components that are particularly relevant when facilitating family activities. This framework answers the call for family recreation programming guidelines from previous researchers (Edginton, Hudson, Dieser, & Edginton, 2004; Schwab & Dustin, 2015). While the principles of the framework may be familiar, viewing them in the context of family recreation offers a unique contribution to the literature, both in terms of negotiating constraints and creating affordances for various age groups and genders that compose families. The framework can also be utilized by researchers to explore specific considerations when facilitating experiences for various types of families (e.g., single-parent, LGBTQIA+, adoptive, families of different races, families with a person with a disability, multigenerational families, refugee families). Since no framework for family recreation programming currently exists, the framework presented can give recreation providers a starting point when considering how to create enjoyable recreation experiences for families. It can help them consider and address the different stages involved in preparing for, creating, and evaluating family recreation
experiences. The framework may also provide a structure for researchers to use as they seek to further develop and evaluate meaningful experiences for families.

Learning Objectives:

After reading this Chapter, learners will be able to:

1. Understand the concept of constraints and how it relates to the context of family recreation.
2. Identify the role of recreation professionals and researchers to help families negotiate constraints and create affordances.
3. Use the Family Recreation Programming Framework to develop more enjoyable recreation experiences for families.

The Issue, Opportunity or Trend

Families are an important social structure in society, and what families do together is central to family life. Roberts (1978) stated, “Family life is exceptionally closely woven with leisure” (p. 41). For over 80 years, researchers have been examining what families do together and the implications those interactions have for both individuals and families in society. Shaw and Dawson (2001) stated that family leisure is purposive in nature; through it parents seek to achieve certain goals for themselves and their children. Researchers have identified many beneficial outcomes of family recreation, including improved communication (Huff, Widmer, McCoy, & Hill, 2003), increased family functioning (Agate, Zabriskie, & Eggett, 2007), increased satisfaction with family life (Agate, Zabriskie, Agate, & Poff, 2009), strong sense of family (Shaw & Dawson, 2001), and communal coping, relationship maintenance, and growth-oriented change (Hutchinson, Afifi, & Krause, 2007). In listing the components of strong families, DeFrain and Asay (2007) pointed to family recreation activities as being an important part of family life. However, these positive outcomes that recreation can afford do not automatically occur; the activity must be enjoyable and foster a positive interaction among family members. Because of a variety of reasons, there are times when family recreation is neither enjoyable nor positive, but there are things that recreation providers can do to help manage external and structural recreational components, thus reducing the number of things that can negatively affect an experience.

Some of the most prevalent negative aspects of family recreation are work (especially for mothers (Trussell & Shaw, 2007)) and increased conflict (Eichler, 1983). Other negative aspects of family recreation include difficulty finding activities that meet the interests and skills of all members of the family (Orthner & Herron, 1984), the difficulty of
meeting idealized expectations of activities together (Shaw, 1997), and safety (Rugh, 2008). Shaw pointed out the contradictory nature of family activities: family recreation can be enjoyable and work at the same time, motivations can be a combination of intrinsic and obligatory, and both positive and negative outcomes may result from any one family recreation activity (Shaw, 1992). She stated that conceptualizing family recreation as contradictory involves expecting positive and negative outcomes to coexist (1997). Attention should then be paid to what can be done to increase the positive aspects and reduce the negative aspects of family recreation activities.

Since the family is a system (Constantine, 1986) and families progress through various stages of the family life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999), family members and life stage influence individuals’ experience when participating in recreation activities together. For example, the recreation experience of parents with young children is often focused around caregiving responsibilities and the children’s needs and interests. As children get older, they have more input in family activities and also require less caregiving from parents. Interactions among family members, personalities, interests, and abilities all influence the recreation experience of family members when they participate in an activity together. While the influence of other family members and certain stages of family life can be beneficial for experiences together, they often pose challenges for family recreation participation and enjoyment. These challenges present a variety of constraints to the family experience. However, practitioners can help family members negotiate constraints and have important implications for increasing positive benefits and reducing negative aspects involved in family recreation.

Constraints that families experience are well captured by leisure constraints theory. The goal of leisure constraints research is to “investigate factors that are assumed by researchers or perceived or experienced by individuals to limit the formation of leisure preferences or to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure” (Jackson, 2000, p. 62). Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey (1993) stated that despite experiencing constraints, people find ways to participate in and enjoy leisure, even if that participation and enjoyment is different from what it would have been without the constraints. Several researchers (Arab-Moghaddam, Henderson, & Sheikholeslami, 2007; Samdahl, 2005; Shaw & Henderson, 2005) have emphasized the need to gain a broader understanding of leisure constraints and their influences on individuals’ participation and enjoyment in leisure.

The majority of the constraints literature has examined constraints that individuals experience. Few have studied constraints as they relate to family recreation. Researchers who have addressed the negative aspects and challenges of family recreation have identified issues described above that can be viewed as constraints to participation and enjoyment of activities. Additionally, Larson, Gillman, and Richards (1997) found that mothers’ enjoyment of leisure activities is constrained by time pressures, work and exhaustion involved in facilitating family activities, making it difficult for them to enjoy the activities. Shaw and Henderson (2005) noted that despite the constraints and potential lack of enjoyment, mothers have a sense of responsibility to facilitate or be involved in family activities. The pre-
existing negative perception of family activities as obligatory and laborious contribute to external effects on the potential positive outcomes.

Mothers are not the only ones who experience constraints in family recreation activities. Shaw (1997) noted that the same family activity can have various positive and negative aspects for different family members or can occur simultaneously for a particular family member; the same is true about constraints. Constraints to and during family recreation vary from family to family, and also change as families move from one stage of the family life cycle to another. For example, parents of young children may feel exhausted from the seemingly endless caregiving responsibilities required of them from their children, but parents of adolescents may find themselves unable to find activities that appeal to the interests of their children who are seeking autonomy and not wanting to spend time with their family.

Practitioners and researchers can play an important role in helping families overcome constraints, yielding a higher likelihood for families to reap positive outcomes. Henderson (1997) claimed that constraints and helping people negotiate constraints are matters of social responsibility. Little research has explored how providers can facilitate enjoyable recreation activities for families; specifically what can be done to help families negotiate constraints to participation or enjoyment of activities. This highlights the need for researchers to not only conduct this research but also to communicate it to practitioners in an accessible way so that they can utilize the findings, and for practitioners to be open to research and able to apply it to their work.

While some people negotiate leisure constraints on their own, others may cease participation altogether or continue to participate, but not experience the enjoyment they once did. Is there a way that practitioners can help people, specifically families in this case, negotiate constraints? One of the answers to this question lies in the concept of leisure affordances. Leisure affordances are characteristics in the environment (both physical and social) that make leisure participation and enjoyment possible. Mannell and Kleiber (1997) stated that “the potential for facilitating leisure participation and enhancing experiences can be understood through the leisure constraints and leisure affordances that are present in the environment or can be created within the environment” (p. 346). By manipulating the environment, practitioners may be able to create a greater range of opportunities within a certain environment, but those opportunities will only be realized if the potential participants are aware of the possibilities (Kleiber, Wade, & Loucks-Atkinson, 2005). As leisure affordances are realized or created, and people are made aware of those affordances, more families can not only participate in, but also enjoy family recreation activities together.
Scott (2005) indicated the need for practitioners to understand the constraints people face if they are going to effectively moderate the conditions that make participation difficult. He suggested that leisure constraints research may help practitioners understand what keeps people from using services or facilities and provides suggestions regarding how to respond. Scott noted that people actively seek to negotiate leisure constraints, and practitioners are in an outstanding position to assist them in doing so.

As recreation professionals seek to provide experiences for families, many face problems such as understanding how to provide enjoyable experiences for a wide range of ages, interests, and abilities when planning something that involves an entire family. Currently, there are no guidelines for recreation practitioners to aide in family programming (Edginton, Hudson, Dieser, & Edginton, 2004). Therefore, we set out to develop a family recreation programming framework that can help recreation providers facilitate family recreation experiences that all family members can enjoy. One framework that is helpful in conceptualizing family programming can be drawn from the business literature and is called the Family Accessibility Conceptual Framework (Agate, Williams, & Barrett, 2011). Agate et al. examined three organizations that focus on being “family-friendly”: Disney (a world-wide entertainment and resort company), IKEA (an international furniture store), and Max and Cheese (a small, locally-owned restaurant). The framework they developed indicated three phases these organizations went through when planning and providing enjoyable family experiences. They suggested the framework can be utilized in a variety of settings facilitating family experiences.

In 1998, Orthner criticized parks and recreation professionals for not dedicating adequate time and resources to family programming and challenged them to focus on families. In 2001, Zabriskie noted that many recreation professionals responded to this challenge and either developed or provided new family-focused programs, but did so with little empirical direction. With an increased interest in family recreation but no guidelines for providing family recreation experiences (Edginton et al., 2004; Schwab & Dustin, 2015), a theoretically-based framework may be useful for practitioners in their attempts to provide these experiences. The family accessibility conceptual framework provides a starting point concerning how to provide an enjoyable family experience in a variety of settings, but the current study aims to address how this framework can be applied to and modified for the recreation setting. Therefore, we set out to develop a family recreation programming framework that can help recreation providers facilitate a family recreation experience that all family members can enjoy.
The Innovation

Case Context

In an effort to develop a family recreation programming framework, a collective case study was conducted. Case study research facilitates an in-depth analysis of a program or some other bounded entity (Stake 2007). Cases were explored to develop a greater understanding of family accessibility and how recreation providers can facilitate enjoyable family experiences.

A purposive sample (Stake, 2007) of three community-based recreation organizations was selected. Participating organizations were assigned pseudonyms. Spring Hill City Recreation Department was chosen because it is well-known for providing exceptional family activities; Eastport County Recreation Department and the YMCA of Orange Grove were chosen because they have a consistent schedule of family activities.

Spring Hill City Recreation Department is located in the western United States in a city of 68,000 people. It is a suburban area and is near a large military base. The median income of Spring Hill is approximately $65,000 and the population is largely Caucasian (87%), and Hispanic (11%). The Spring Hill City Recreation Department facilitates a family activity every month and partners with different organizations within the community to help sponsor their events. They do not have a recreation center, so they hold their events at different locations throughout the city each month including places like a skating rink, community park, bowling alley, golf course and town library. Spring Hill’s family events are major community events. They are well-publicized and attended and have become a pillar of the community, with families expecting and appreciating the monthly events.

Eastport County Recreation Department is located in the Southeastern United States in a historic coastal area. There are 120,000 residents in Eastport and approximately 650,000 in the metro area, most of whom are Caucasian (68%) and African American (27%). Median income is $52,000, but there is a large income disparity within the county. Eastport County Recreation Department offers various family programs throughout the year (such as family climbing and kayaking) in addition to three or four family events and festivals each year. These are large events that draw many people from the community.

The YMCA of Orange Grove is located in the Southeastern United States in an industrious, urban area. While Orange Grove has 62,000 residents (62% Caucasian, 28% African American), the metropolitan area (consisting of largely suburban and rural communities) has 450,000 residents. The median income is $43,000 ($50,000 for the metropolitan
area). They offer parent-child programs (father-daughter, “mom and tots”) and also family events for a few holidays during the year. Although their family events are open to YMCA members and non-members alike in the community, they often have poor attendance.

Multiple sources of data from each organization were collected to obtain an in-depth perspective of what each organization was doing to facilitate family activities. Printed material (i.e., flyers, brochures, information online) was gathered from each organization, photographs were taken at several locations that the three organizations facilitate family activities, and open-ended qualitative questionnaires were completed by parents that attend family activities and administrators from the organizations. Qualitative data analysis and qualitative content analysis were conducted to identify topics that were then grouped into categories. Themes were written that synthesized the topics within the categories; three main themes emerged from the data. These themes were synthesized and a family recreation programming framework was developed.

**Stakeholders Involved**

For the community parks and recreation organizations of Spring Hill and Eastport, the stakeholders include town and local governments including town boards and parks and recreation administrators. In both of these cities, local businesses are also involved in supporting and carrying out family events throughout the year. Through their involvement with the community programming, these businesses also benefit from increased foot-traffic, sales, and goodwill. As a non-profit organization, Orange Grove is less connected with the local government and their resources at their facility allow them to be less dependent on local businesses. Consequently, the local business community is less involved in their events and programming. For all three organizations, however, the community as a whole and the residents of the cities are key stakeholders. They anticipate these events and are invested in their success.

**Approach Used and the Impact**

Results from the qualitative content analysis indicated support for the stages of the family accessibility conceptual framework, though the components of each stage differed for the community recreation setting. Three main themes emerged from the data: (a) the conceptualizing process occurs before providing a program to families, (b) there are several tasks an organization must address when implementing a program for families, and (c) an evaluating process includes obtaining and utilizing feedback from participants in order to continuously improve. The main themes consisted of sub-themes that clarified specific steps the organizations were taking to accomplish the main themes and will be discussed below. The overall theme that emerged from the data was that when providing an experience for families, all three stages of the experience must be addressed to facilitate an enjoyable experience for all family members. A family recreation programming framework was formulated from synthesizing the themes (see Figure 1).
Stage 1: Conceptualizing

Set goals. Both Spring Hill and Orange Grove have not only set organizational goals, but are also taking steps to communicate those goals to their constituents. On the Spring Hill City website, there is an entire page devoted to “Family Recreation.” On that page is posted their goals of strengthening families and providing enjoyable family recreation experiences: “It is through this program that we hope to draw families closer together...The history of this program began with the age old notion that, ‘A family that plays together stays together.’ We believe strongly that not only is this true, but family recreation can provide the foundation for a healthy community. We hope you and your family will enjoy the program.” The vision of YMCA, as noted on Orange Grove’s website, is to build “strong kids, strong families and strong communities.” These goals are communicated to their participants by various signs and objects throughout their facility.

Recognize and anticipate needs of participants. On Orange Grove’s website, their desire to meet their participants’ needs is described: “Although lifestyles and family structures continue to change, the YMCA of Orange Grove’s programs will always adjust to echo the needs of the people we serve.” Needs must be recognized based on both family stage and family structure.

Preparation. Preparation included steps that need to be done before the activity. Advertising is vital to create awareness of family events. On the Spring Hill website, families can sign up to be on the family recreation mailing list where they are sent emails and e-newsletters advertising upcoming events. There is also an events calendar on Spring Hill’s website that gives the dates of family activities for the coming year. Additionally, Spring Hill advertises their family activities in the local newspaper and in a newsletter that is sent out with water bills. Not only do they advertise the dates, location, and cost of activities, but they also advertise amenities that are offered and inform people of the various activities that will be offered at an event. Eastport also has a calendar on their website of activities throughout the year. In the descriptions of those activities, they advertise specific age groups that certain activities are appropriate for.

Training staff is important in preparing for the Implementing stage. It was clear through the photographs (and observation) from activities in both Orange Grove and Eastport that the staff had been trained on their specific duties before the activity occurred. Staff members had necessary skills to help family members participate in the various activities offered at the events.
For two of the organizations, various community leaders were involved in the activities. The mayor of Spring Hill is generally at the family activities, and at a “Super Hero Night” at the local library, the Spring Hill City Firefighters led family members in “super hero exercises” and local heroes (including a fighter pilot) told their stories. At the Eastport Halloween Bash, local businesses and emergency response personnel passed out treats for the trunk-or-treat, a DJ from an Eastport radio station was emceeing the event, and police officers were mingling with families attending the activity in the park.

**Stage 2: Implementing**

**Physical accommodations.** Many physical accommodations were made at the various locations of the family activities. The seemingly most important was that of ensuring participants’ safety and health. At the Orange Grove facility, there was a fence by the parking lot and around the playground, first aid kits in employees’ offices, and prizes that were awarded to family members were non-candy. Spring Hill had fences by the creek that ran next to a walking path at a park, posted signs indicating possible dangers in interacting with ducks at the park, had easily accessible fire extinguishers at the ice rink, and posted “No Smoking” signs at the park, indicating it was a “Smoke-free outdoor public place.” Eastport had a lifeguard at the pond at the park and had police officers and emergency response personnel at the activity.

Another accommodation made by all three organizations was controlling or eliminating cost. Orange Grove family activities are free for YMCA members and non-members alike. They also offer scholarships to programs for participants who would be financially burdened by the cost. Spring Hill activities are either free or low-cost; at venues where participants are required to pay a fee, participants receive a discounted rate. The majority of the Eastport family activities are free for participants.

The organizations provided many amenities to make the activities convenient and accessible for the family members involved. Amenities offered at all locations included food and drink and rest areas. Another amenity at some of the locations were family bathrooms (including changing tables) that were within close proximity to the activity locations. Time and length of the activity were also conducive to families’ needs: all of the activities were held in the late-afternoon and early-evening so that parents could bring their children after work but before bedtime. Some of the locations had parking close to where the activities were held, and some had ramps and paved paths that made pushing strollers and wheelchairs (and walking in general) easier for participants. Another physical accommodation made by some of the organizations was cleanliness. Orange Grove’s facility was clean throughout and had cleaning supplies readily accessible for quick clean-ups as needed, the park where the Eastport event was held had garbage cans throughout, and in Spring Hill the bathrooms at some of the locations were exceptionally clean.
Steps were taken by all three organizations to create awareness of both activities and amenities that were being offered. In Spring Hill there were signs directing participants to family bathrooms at some of the locations. At the Eastport event there was a large sign at the entrance to the park notifying participants of various activities that were being offered; there was also an emcee verbally announcing different activities that were happening and directing people to amenities. Orange Grove had balloons hanging and small signs on the floor marking a path from the entrance of the facility to the various locations throughout the facility where different family activities were being held. They also had signs directing participants to their family bathroom.

**Programming considerations.** All three organizations provided activities in which entire families could participate, as well as activities that were appropriate for various ages, interests and abilities. Orange Grove’s Halloween Festival included activities such as a cake walk, making masks, digging for bugs, a fish pond, face painting, and “Critter Guy” shows. Eastport’s Halloween Bash included a bounce house “for little ones,” a lawn dance with a DJ, a tennis activity for kids, bubbles, a climbing wall, costume contest, parachute games, tractor rides, pony rides, coloring, as well as various toys and play equipment for free play. Instruction was provided at events for activities as needed by staff members.

The staff at all of the events were key in facilitating the activities. The staff members at the Eastport event were not only helpful and friendly to participants, but also easy to spot due to their bright red shirts with “Recreation Staff” written across the front. There was at least one staff member overseeing each activity at the event, with additional staff roaming the activity to help as needed.

Documenting the activity and sending something home with the families to help them remember the activity was done by one organization. At the Spring Hill events, a photographer took both candid shots of families at the activities and posed photographs of families. The posed photographs taken of families were given to families as a souvenir to help them remember their experience at the event. Photographs were posted on Spring Hill’s website following activities. Creating this type of memento allowed families to reflect on, reminisce, and continue to enjoy the experience even after it is over.

**Stage 3: Evaluating**

**Obtain feedback from participants, have process for implementation.** Only one of the organizations actively sought feedback from participants. Orange Grove had a place where patrons could leave comment cards, and a staff
member would respond within seven days. Comment cards with staff responses were posted in a display case to show that they were taking steps to implement feedback.

**Implications & Lessons learned**

In recent years, more people have begun to recognize the value of family recreation and the need for providing programs for families to participate in together. While discussing future leisure programming directions and professional issues, Edginton et al. (2004) emphasized the need to expand family-centered programs and facilities. Due to different stages in the family life cycle, organizations are faced with multiple challenges when programming for families. As noted above, there are currently no guidelines for providing recreation experiences for families. The programming framework developed in this study provides a starting point for recreation providers who seek to facilitate recreation experiences that can be enjoyable for all family members. While combining common
programming principles, it also includes certain aspects that should be addressed when attempting to meet needs of families. This framework has the potential to help recreation professionals facilitate enjoyable experiences for families by identifying and meeting the needs and challenges that families experience when participating in activities together.

As recreation professionals are able to make changes to their facilities and programs, they will be more likely to cater to the ever-growing market seeking family recreation experiences. In the past, providing family programs has too often meant inviting the whole family rather than developing programming to address and meet the needs of all family members. Too many recreation organizations simply welcome all family members to an event, but fail to recognize and address the needs of family members and do not truly plan to provide recreation experiences for the entire family to enjoy. As recreation professionals take steps to facilitate more enjoyable experiences for families, they have the potential to increase their customer base and consequently their revenue. In a time of economic challenge, small changes that can increase revenues can be valuable to organizations competing for funding and consumers.

Over the past several years, marketing has increasingly targeted individuals rather than families. Ravanas (2005) indicated that this is a mistake. He noted that not understanding family dynamics and trying to meet the needs of all family members (not just children, as he illustrates in the example of Euro Disney's initial disappointment) can be harmful to the success of organizations attempting to provide family experiences. Ravanas stressed the need of organizations to recognize the multiple participants involved in a family experience, and emphasized the importance of actually creating a family experience by recognizing and addressing the needs of all family members involved in the experience. He noted that the challenge of creating such an experience is to satisfy and meet the needs of all family members at the same time. The family recreation programming framework provides a way for recreation practitioners to conceptualize meeting family members’ needs and providing an experience for the entire family, as Ravanas suggests.

Recreation professionals have a unique opportunity and responsibility, as described by Henderson (1997) and Scott (2005), to help people negotiate the constraints they face to both participation and enjoyment of recreation activities. Recreation professionals who assume this responsibility can use the family recreation programming framework to facilitate recreation experiences that can be enjoyable for all family members. DeFrain and Asay (2007), describing the components of strong families, listed enjoyable time together as one of the ingredients to successful family life. When attempting to strengthen family bonds, simply spending time together participating in activities is
not enough. If family members enjoy the family activity and time together, the beneficial outcomes of family recreation are more likely to occur. Enjoyable family recreation activities are valuable for individuals, families, and communities. Kelly (1996) stated that, “In the chosen activities and relationships of leisure, the bonding of intimate groups such as the family and larger groups of the community takes place. In short, a society needs leisure so that people can learn to live together” (p. 12). As recreation professionals do what they can to facilitate enjoyable family recreation experiences, they will help strengthen family bonds and, in turn, society.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the steps you would take to identify specific constraints experienced by the following groups in your community when attempting to plan a family activity: single parent families, low-income families, dual-earner families, families with a child with a disability.

2. Considering the constraints you identified in Question #1, what affordances could you create (or already exist that you could help people recognize) that would help people negotiate the constraints they experience to participation or enjoyment of family activities? What would you do to help your constituents recognize and utilize these affordances?

3. Imagine that you work as a recreation programmer and you have been asked to create a family event for your community. Using the framework as a guide, create an outline for a program plan that incorporates some of the components of the framework. Discuss steps you will take to ensure the program you are planning will be enjoyable for various family members (mothers, fathers, teenagers, young children, grandparents).
References


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The Social Practice of Care Hotel Vacations

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Chapter Summary

Due to the increase in the number of elderly and people seeking medical care, the hotel market with a blend of care and leisure experiences is expected to grow in the future (Han, 2013; Karuppan & Karuppan, 2010; Laesser, 2011). The role of care hotels as an intersection between the care and the tourism sectors makes a vacation in a care hotel an interesting social practice to study. In this contribution a social practices approach (Spaargaren, 1997) is applied to investigate how demand and supply interact during a care hotel vacation. Semi-structured interviews are used to identify successful and less successful interactions or practices between senior guests and personnel in five Dutch care hotels. These interactions are related to materials (care and leisure facilities), competences (skills and empathy of the personnel) and meanings (motivations and aspirations of guests) in the care hotel practice (see Shove et al., 2012). The results show that a social practice approach combined with a qualitative research method may be more suited to analysing the complex encounters between guests and personnel during care hotel vacations than more traditional theories from service or experience quality studies. Simultaneously, this study makes clear that we need to develop alternative qualitative (and/or quantitative) research methods to study more privacy-related or intimate practices or rituals as in the case of care hotels.

Learning Objectives

After reading this Chapter, the reader will be able to:

1. Understand that a social practice approach offers opportunities to comprehensively study the complex interactions between guests and service providers in the context of a care hotel vacation.
2. Understand that the success of interactions or consumption junctions in the practice of a care hotel vacation is strongly influenced by mutually interlinked elements as materials, competences and meanings.
3. Realise that in case of privacy-related or intimate practices it is not always possible to conduct face-to-face interviews and/or participation observation, although these research methods are very appropriate for analysing social practices.

The Issue, Opportunity or Trend: Vacation in a Care Hotel

The role of care hotels

According to Goodrich (1994), care hotels are essentially tourist facilities seeking to attract tourists with a blend of health-care services and facilities and regular tourist amenities (Lee, 2010). Care hotels offer a combination of privacy, products, services and hospitality, linked to 24 hour personal care from physicians, nurses and other health-care professionals (Han, 2013). Due to the increase in the number of elderly and people seeking medical care, the hotel market with a blend of care and leisure experiences is expected to grow in the future (Hui & Wan, 2009; Hume & DeMicco, 2007; Karuppan & Karrupan, 2010; Laesser, 2011). ‘Regular’ hotels increasingly cater for guests who need a temporary replacement of care at home (respite care) and/or an adapted environment to go on vacation (Hofer, Honegger & Hubeli, 2012).

The role of care hotels as an intersection between the care and the tourism sectors makes a vacation in a care hotel an interesting social practice to study, because care hotels are confronted with the challenge of mixing professional care with a comfortable hotel environment including related services and leisure activities (Han, 2013). Nevertheless, the care hotel vacation has gained little attention from hospitality and tourism researchers, and thus has not been well studied as a facet of both the hotel industry and the care sector (Cook, 2010; Han, 2013). As these sectors have undergone a shift from supply-led to demand-led environments (Connell, 2013; Fottler, Ford, Roberts, & Ford, 2000; Setterfield, 2002), it is increasingly important for them to provide high quality service and positive guest experiences.

Research on Interpersonal Service Encounters

In recent decades service quality models have become very popular in hospitality, health-care and tourism research to examine how customers assess (health) service quality (Bakan, Buyukbese, & Ersahan, 2014; Duggirala, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2008). While in the 1980s and 1990s the focus was on studying consumers’ expectations of services related to service performance or perceived service to judge their satisfaction, in recent years links with concepts as loyalty, emotions, values, intentions and experiences of customers have been more frequently included to evaluate services or service encounters (see Dagger, Sweeney, & Johnson, 2007; McColl-Kennedy, Vargo, Dagger, Sweeney, & van Kasteren, 2012; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). According to Lemke, Clark, & Wilson (2011) the contemporary consumer demands more than just competent services, and also seeks experiences which are engaging, robust, compelling and memorable. In articles on service-dominant logics scholars study in a more holistic manner how customer experience
quality is served through and co-created by product/service usage and peer-to-peer interaction, and not just product and service quality (Karpen, Bove, & Lukas, 2012).

Even though personal aspects nowadays play a more important role in service or experience quality research and supply side and service encounters are studied more frequently in a hedonic manner (cf. concepts as ‘servicescapes’, ‘experiencescapes’, ‘services as destinations’), much research still focuses on the development of attributes or scales by using quantitative assessment measures (see Brand, Cronin, & Routledge, 1997). These studies also adopt either a customer or provider lens, even though the interaction between the two is vital in the contemporary ‘co-creation’ of experiences (Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). We argue here that a practice approach can be an interesting tool to study complex interrelationships between demand and supply in care hotels as an adapted holiday environment. In the next sections we will present a multiple case study on the practices in care hotels using this theoretical approach.

The Innovation: Care Hotels as an Adapted Environment for Senior Tourists

Case context

Care hotels with an adapted environment for senior tourists can be found in countries such as Norway, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain and The Netherlands. As already indicated by Goodrich (1994) and Han (2013), care hotels attract tourists with a mixture of care and/or medical services and facilities, linked to 24 hour personal care from physicians, nurses and other professionals, and regular tourist (health) amenities. Although care hotels focus both on (post-)care services and vacation experiences, they do not offer medical surgeries in general (Han, 2013).

These characteristics were also applicable to the five care hotels in the Netherlands we studied (Stoffelen, 2011). Because not all fourteen officially recognized care hotels in our country agreed to participate, our study can be conceived as a multiple case study with a convenience sample. Besides care and hospitality facilities, the five care hotels offered both short and long stays, and had vacation guests as an important target group. The care hotels involved were similar in terms of services (5 stars) and price range (150 - 200 Euro per night), although they had different locations (e.g., city centre, village) and sizes (number of rooms varies from 10 to 70). Our main intention was to generate a broader view of interactions between different stakeholders or actors in these care hotels, and not to compare the hotels based on their background characteristics or to generalize the results (cf. Gibbs, 2007).
Stakeholders Involved

To study the encounters between different stakeholders or actors, face-to-face interviews were held with senior guests and managers of the five care hotels. Unfortunately, in three of the five hotels it was not possible to interview hospitality and care personnel, because the management teams “did not want to disturb the services to the guests”. Therefore, we decided to interview only the managers as representatives of the supply side. Interviews with managers seemed an acceptable approach, because the five care hotels were small organizations in which the managers cooperated closely with the rest of the personnel, and were fully aware of what happens at the workplace.

Additionally, to obtain an as complete and diverse possible picture of the interactions in the five care hotels fourteen senior guests from the various care hotels participated in a face-to-face interview, outside of the care hotel. Eight out of the fourteen guests had physical or mental disabilities (e.g. need dialysis, physiotherapy, assistance because of wheelchair use) which, however, did not impair them in answering questions during the interview. The other six guests were accompanying the guest with disabilities. All interviewed guests visited the care hotel as an adapted environment to be on vacation and did not live near the care hotel.

Two topic lists were established for interviewing purposes: one for the managers of the care hotels and one for the guests of the care hotels (see Bryman, 2008; Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Voice recordings were used to register the information from the interviews. The recordings of the interviews were completely transcribed afterwards and functioned as the main data for this study. By constructing a data matrix, it became possible to detect connections and interrelationships and to compare the answers of the guests and hotel managers (cf. Bryman, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Care Hotel Vacations: A Social Practices Approach

Whereas service or experience quality studies tended to deal either with supply or demand, by using a Social Practices Approach (SPA) the concrete interaction points between senior guests and personnel in the care hotel practices could be studied from a more holistic perspective. The SPA approach was developed by Spaargaren in 1997 and adopted from the structuration theory of Giddens (1979, 1984). The application of a practice theory approach is part of a general wave of renewed interest in practice theory in consumption studies, which aims to bridge the actor-structure dualism (see Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & von Savigny, 2001; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012; Spaargaren, Lamers, & Weenink, 2016; Warde, 2014). However, in recent years practice theory has already been successfully applied by academics in studying (leisure) practices (Bargeman, Richards, & Govers, 2016; Lamers & Pashkevich, 2015; Van der Poel & Bakker, 2016; Verbeek, 2009), but to date not in the health-care tourism sector.
Practice theory centres on the social practices that people are engaged in during their everyday life (Røpke, 2009; Southerton, 2012; Warde, 2014). Social practices can be conceived as activities that are ordered across time and space, driven by routines, and shared by groups of people (Reckwitz, 2002; Spaargaren, 1997). Because the SPA does not focus on the content of the interactions between demand and supply, the theory of Shove et al. (2012) has been used to study care hotel practices more extensively. According to this theory, social practices consist of three types of elements: meanings, materials and competences. (Symbolic) meanings refer to motivations, aspirations and ideas of the actors, for example the motives and aspirations of guests to perform leisure activities in the care hotel. The materials focus on tangible physical characteristics of the practice such as resources, tools and objects. Examples related to the care hotel practice were specially-adapted facilities, leisure facilities and amenities in the physical environment of the care hotel. Understanding, skills and know-how can be conceived as ‘competence’ elements, which we related to the human resource capabilities and services provided by the care hotels. The interview items focused on an operationalization of the three elements of Shove et al. (2012) and helped us to study the crossing points or ‘consumption junctions’ (Spaargaren, 1997) in the care hotel practices. The interaction between demand and supply could either operate well, or difficulties could arise. An unsuccessful interaction suggested a ‘poor fit’ or ‘misfit’, resulting potentially in a negative outcome, while a successful interaction could be interpreted as a ‘good fit’ involving a positive outcome.

Findings

Competences and Empathy of Personnel

The interviews with guests indicated that the most important consumption junctions in the care hotels studied were the moments at which the guests met and communicated with the hospitality and care personnel. The hospitality personnel included receptionists, waitresses, cooks, hostesses, volunteers, and housekeepers. The care personnel could be divided into carers and nurses. Important fits in the care practices are related to the competences and empathy of the personnel.

For instance, several respondents were pleased with the provision of 24 hour care and mentioned that they (and their family) felt very secure thanks to the idea of having a qualified caretaker nearby at all times (cf. Dagger et al., 2007; Han, 2013). In addition, the guests interviewed pointed out that they received adequate and helpful assistance if they undertook leisure activities outside the care hotel environment. The majority of the hotel managers were keen on trying to assist guests to access these (leisure) activities in such a way that a successful experience was provided. If necessary,
hostesses and volunteers are present to assist guests with a trip outside the care hotel environment, but also to have a conversation, play a game, shop for groceries, or have a short walk with them. Referring to this, the guests indicated they were very pleased that hospitality employees are able to answer both care-related and hospitality-related questions, regardless of their function.

The interviews with the guests also identified situations in which empathy or individual attention played a crucial role in the experience.

“What I liked so much, and also found very special, is that so many people entered our room to introduce themselves, and they were all, one by one, so nice and compassionate! It made me wonder, how did they get these employees?” – Guest

According to one care hotel manager, these aspects make care hotels different from ‘regular hotels’. In addition, another manager highlighted that her care hotel focused on pampering its guests; they wanted to provide guests with a trouble free vacation and meet their wishes as well as possible.

“We just try to provide an amazing product in which the guest is centralized and regains control over his or her own life.” – Manager

Hence, to pamper their guests from time to time the care hotels treated eating and drinking as a special experience or event. In one hotel a guest was selected to decide the menu for that evening once a week. In the other hotels, for example, guests were invited to take a look in the kitchen and diner at the chef’s table.

Materials: Care and Leisure Facilities

Consumption junctions in the care hotels studied were positively facilitated by various material amenities. The interviewed guests were satisfied with the eating facilities provided in the care hotels, like a hotel bar and restaurant which provided high quality meals adapted to the wishes of the guests (including free room service). Many guests used words like ‘outstanding’, ‘fabulous’, and ‘delicious’.

The care facilities were also highly appreciated. The hotel managers indicated that specially-adapted care facilities have been provided (e.g. turning circles for wheelchairs, patient lifters, lockers at eye level, kidney dialysis equipment) in order to reduce the guests’ physical restrictions as much as possible. Most care hotels had chosen modern furniture, which was perceived by the interviewed guests as “a warm homelike atmosphere with a hint of luxury” and which “stimulated their healing process and vacation feeling” (cf. Fottler et al., 2000). Some care facilities, such as hinged arm supports, shower chairs and toilet seat risers, were only installed in the room if the guest needed them. The underlying thought with regard to this policy was that guests needed to feel that they were in a hotel environment, and unnecessary care facilities might disturb their vacation experience.
Moreover, to offer a comfortable hotel environment, the care hotels studied provided many leisure facilities, such as sports, wellness (e.g. sauna, sun bed, and whirlpool), health, beauty, media and entertainment facilities, and a small store near the front desk with souvenirs. The guests did not prefer lunch and dinner possibilities elsewhere, as they stayed in the care hotel on a full-board basis.

**Meanings: Motivations and Aspirations of Guests**

The guests interviewed exhibited a mixture of care- and leisure-related motives for staying in a care hotel, such as the possibility to escape from everyday life, the availability of care facilities and services as a relief for informal carers, and the search for rest and individual attention. The guests noted that they particularly enjoyed relatively calm individual leisure activities during their stay, such as reading a book, listening to music and watching television in the common rooms, and taking a short walk in the garden. Sports facilities were generally only used by guests who needed them for physiotherapy. Both the respondents of the demand and supply side noted that the wellness facilities were rarely used too. It seemed that the motives and aspirations of the current ‘stereotypical’ care hotel guest did not fit with the wellness facilities and services provided. In addition, one manager believed that using wellness facilities does not form an important part of the Dutch culture, as is the case in Germany for instance.

**Implications & Lessons learned**

According to Yeoh et al. (2013), care hotels have to mix care and medical services with a comfortable hotel environment including leisure facilities, to be attractive for a more diverse and growing group of elderly tourists who need an adapted holiday environment (see Han, 2013; Hui & Wan, 2009). We would argue that this mixture of care and leisure services, in combination with a focus on the practice of a care hotel vacation instead of a focus on either the guests or providers, requires a multidisciplinary and holistic research framework such as that offered by a practice approach. The theoretical framework used in this multiple case study, a combination of the SPA (Spaargaren, 1997) and the three elements derived from the theory of Shove et al. (2012), was found to be applicable in the care hotel context. The chosen theoretical framework, which was strongly linked to the interview topics, assisted us in understanding more comprehensively the specific consumption junctions that arose in the inter-sectorial context of the five Dutch care hotels.

Focusing on interactions between the interviewed personnel and guests, allowed us to focus on various successful and less successful consumption junctions. The findings indicated that the successfulness of these consumption junctions
was related to three types of elements which are strongly interlinked in the care hotel practice: materials (care and leisure facilities), competences (skills and empathy of the personnel) and meanings (motivations and aspirations of guests) (see Shove et al., 2012). The most successful consumption junctions in the five care hotels were related to the element ‘competences’. ‘Fits’ arose because several guests were very pleased with the qualified care and adequate, friendly and helpful assistance of the care and hospitality personnel who provide them a very positive holiday experience. The element ‘competences’ was strongly interlinked with the element ‘materials’ (see Shove et al., 2012), because the well-evaluated care and assistance of employees in the five hotels studies were positively facilitated by various care and leisure facilities. In addition, successful consumption junctions were found related to the ‘warm’ and comfortable environment of the care hotels and the eating and care facilities which stimulated the guests’ vacation feeling. The care hotels studied seemed to deal well with the different health conditions and dietary demands of guests. This flexibility had a good fit with the needs of different types of care hotel guests and the inter-sectorial character of care hotels (see Hofer et al., 2012). A less successful practice was identified for wellness and sport facilities, because these facilities were rarely used by the guests interviewed. Because the care hotel industry is relatively new, particularly in the Netherlands compared to countries such as Germany, Dutch people are not familiar with the various care, leisure and wellness facilities of care hotels. Due to these factors their motives and aspirations (‘meanings’) did not fit with the wellness facilities and services provided by the care hotels they visited.

It is clear that our multiple case study has some limitations. An important lesson learned or limitation is related to the fact that it was not possible to conduct face-to-face interviews with care personnel and to do participant observations, because of privacy issues of both guests and employees. As we stated before, particular participant observation is a very appropriate research method for analysing social practices. But what are the potential alternatives if we aim to study more privacy-related or intimate practices or rituals as in the case of care hotels (see Collins, 2004)? The development of new methods to collect such sensitive data would help to throw light on the nature of service encounters that are bounded by professional ethical concerns. Another limitation is that only Dutch care hotels have been studied, while a future study might include a wider variety of guests and personnel and more care hotels both in the Netherlands and abroad.

As Connell (2013) argues, more research in the emerging field of health-care tourism is needed in order to understand how this sector operates, particularly as it is likely to grow due to the aging of the baby boom generation (e.g., Hofer et al., 2012; Yeoh et al., 2013). Additionally, it is likely that the health-care industry and ancillary industries will grow even more in the future, and that care services will be increasingly integrated into hospitality environments. This will inevitably bring new challenges for the hospitality industry in adapting to the new consumption junctions that arise at the interface between health-care and hospitality. A practice perspective could be helpful to analyse the elements
which affect new interactions between guests and personnel and to disentangle the dynamics in existing consumption junctions.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Due to a further aging of the baby boom generation, which new consumption junctions would arise at the interface between health-care and hospitality both in the Netherlands and abroad, and how could the hospitality industry adapt to these new consumption junctions?

2. How could a social practice approach be helpful to analyse these new consumption junctions and to disentangle the dynamics in existing interactions between guests and personnel in the context of care hotels?

3. What are alternative qualitative (and/or quantitative) research methods to study more privacy-related or intimate practices or rituals as in the case of care hotels?
References


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Creating a Logical Model of Positive Youth Development through a Multiple Instrumental Case Study

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Chapter Summary

Though positive youth development (PYD) interventions heavily utilize recreational contexts, there has been little focus within research on examining these contexts themselves and developing knowledge on what features and processes allow for them to be conducive of positive developmental outcomes in youth. Consequently, a model of program delivery for recreational organizations to be conducive of PYD based on empirical data does not currently exist. Thus, many programs experience varying levels of success while some others are cancelled after short amounts of time. The intent of this study was to disseminate a model, through a multiple case study methodology, that acts as a framework or guide for (1) designing recreational programs to facilitate PYD and (2) evaluating and identifying these PYD outcomes. A multiple case study methodology was utilized. Data were collected from three non-profit recreational organizations, each acting as a single instrumental case, that all have a mandate in place for PYD and a reputation for success in their respective communities. Key findings were used to create the model. Qualitative data were collected on what study participants (program staff and youth) perceived as being the positive developmental outcomes experienced by youth participants and the mechanisms utilized to realize these outcomes. Several unique findings and innovative practices are presented here that can inform PYD aimed recreation organizations on methods to deal with several challenges and issues faced by them on a regular basis.

Learning Objectives:

After reading this Chapter, learners will be able to:

1. To highlight innovative practices being used by successful recreational organization to promote the positive development of youth.
2. To present a model, grounded in empirical data, to help guide the design of recreation programs around the positive development of youth based on the practices of three successful organizations.
3. To demonstrate the use of the qualitative multiple case study methodology for the creation of models in research.
The Issue, Opportunity or Trend

Positive youth development (PYD) is both a theoretical framework and a positive psychological approach to dealing with at-risk youth. PYD is concerned with teaching youth how to engage in personally and socially positive behaviours and avoid those which are health compromising and future jeopardizing (e.g., crime, drug use, gang violence). Specifically, the approach emphasizes building their innate strengths and increasing their developmental assets (Catalano, Hawkins, Berglund, Pollard, & Arthur, 2002; Lerner, Aalmerigi, Theokas, & Lerner, 2005; Small & Memmo, 2004). At-risk youth are often the targets of PYD interventions and can be understood as “a segment of the population that under current conditions has a low probability of growing into responsible adulthood” (Dryfoos, 1992, p. 128). Interventions aimed at youth based on a PYD framework provide opportunities for them to (1) acquire and practice specific social, physical, and intellectual skills that may be useful in a wide variety of settings; (2) to develop a sense of agency as a member of one’s community and contribute to its well-being; (3) to belong to a socially recognized and valued group; (4) to establish supportive social networks of peers and adults that can help in both the present and future; and (5) to experience and learn to deal with challenges (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

Park and recreation organizations are among the largest providers of PYD opportunities (Bocarro, Greenwood & Henderson, 2008). These are typically offered through the non-profit sector with some notable large scale examples including Boys and Girls Club, 4H, and Right to Play, who all have demonstrated success following their own missions, values, goals, objectives, and models of program delivery. Nevertheless, some communities with at-risk youth may not be catered to by these large scale organizations. Consequently many small scale grassroots initiatives are established to fill in this gap towards the provision of recreation-based PYD opportunities in communities in need. However, many of these programs are ineffective at bringing about positive developmental benefits in their youth participants (Danish, Forneris, Hodge & Heke, 2004). In addition, it is not uncommon to see smaller scale community-based programs cease to exist after a short amount of time (Beaulac, Olavarria & Kristjansson, 2010). As most of these are non-profit entities, such organizations often rely on donations in addition to grants from funding bodies (private, public, non-profit) with the later often requiring evidence of success in the promotion of positive development. This can be an issue for those who lack knowledge on the PYD concepts that have proliferated in the past few years in positive psychology research.

There is nothing that currently exists in terms of a comprehensive guideline which condenses and presents information on how practitioners can promote PYD through their recreational programs. Described here is a research project utilizing a qualitative case study methodology that attempts to create a comprehensive guideline of achieving PYD through recreational programming. The results of this research will be utilized to derive a logical model of program design that includes short-term and long-term positive developmental benefits as the end goal, the
contextual features and activities needed in order achieve these, and objective evaluative criteria of success. Logic models provide an explicit structure to determine the most critical aspects of a program so that the right adjustments can be made with minimal negative effects on the desired outcomes and impacts. These models are particularly useful and commonplace within recreational organizations (Wells & Arthur-Banning, 2008).

**Examples of Current Initiatives**

Some notable PYD programs that expand throughout North America include Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers and Sisters, Right to Play, and 4H. Other prominent programs that use sport as a means for teaching youth life skills and encouraging their positive development include Going for the Goal, Teaching Responsibility through Physical Education and Sport, Play It Smart, and Sports United to Promote Education and Recreation (Coatsworth & Conroy, 2007; Gould & Carson, 2008). PYD has been a very popular area of study in sport psychology research in recent years with some studies having examined the success of sport centric programs aimed at teaching at-risk youth a series of life skills to help them thrive. The First Tee is one such program that uses the sport of golf in an integrated manner using systematic and progressive lessons to build character, instill life-enhancing values, and promote healthy choices (Weiss, Stuntz, Bhalla, Bolter & Price, 2013). The LiFE Sports Summer Camp is a sport based day camp in which each day is designed to focus on the development of one of four core social competencies (i.e., self-control, effort, teamwork and social responsibility; Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012).

**Recognizing PYD Outcomes**

More than two decades of research in PYD has led to the formation of various concepts, theories, and models of program delivery. When it comes to identifying and operationalizing PYD outcomes the concepts of life skills and the Four/Five Cs have been particularly influential in the field.

**Life Skills**

Life skills are an often used indicator of positive developmental outcomes understood as competencies that help youth become more capable and thriving individuals and better at making decisions that benefit their health and future (Danish, 2002). Life skills identified in the literature include physical (fitness, positive health practices, and athletic performance), intellectual (school achievement and school engagement) and psychosocial skills (goal setting, work ethic, teamwork, communication, stress management, preparation, leadership, organization, respect, optimism, responsibility, and moral development; Gould & Carson, 2008). Life skills must be transferable, that is, useful in real life contexts outside of the environment in which they were taught (Danish, 2002; Gould & Carson, 2008; Petitpas, Cornelius, Van Raalte & Jones., 2005).
The Four/Five Cs

The 5Cs framework is also widely present within PYD research and highlights several characteristics that serve as indicators of positive development in youth (i.e., competence, connection, character, confidence, and caring; Lerner, Fisher & Weinberg, 2000). Also inherent in this framework is that youth who develop the five Cs cultivate a 6th C of contribution in which they are capable and willing to contribute positively back to their civil societies. It is worth mentioning, however, that the 5 factor form of this model has been disputed due to high factor correlations between some of the Cs (e.g., caring-character; Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Jelicic et al., 2007; Jones, Dunn, Holt, Sullivan & Bloom, 2011). This has led to propositions of a reduced number of Cs (4Cs; Côté & Gilbert, 2009; Vierimaa, Erickson, Côté & Gilbert, 2012) that combine caring and character.

The Innovation

Case Context

Three separate contexts of successful PYD-based recreational organizations were utilized in order to collect data from youth participants and junior and senior staff.

Boys and Girls Club

Boys and Girls Club is an international, non-profit organization that seeks to develop social skills in its youth participants and to build them into strong and productive community members (Boys and Girls Club, 2017a). The case under examination is a location in Eastern Ottawa that is managed and provided support services by Boys and Girls Club of Canada though, like all locations, runs independently with its own set of administrative and managerial processes and challenges. Programs and activities that are initiated and run by the Boys and Girls Club in Canada must contribute to one of the organization’s four pillars. These include Education; Physical Activity/Healthy Lifestyle; Leadership and Social Skills; and Creative Arts (Boys and Girls Club, 2017b). Though youth can choose to engage in any activity available at the location (e.g., board and table-top games, socializing with friends, physical activity in the gymnasium) staff are advised to make a strong effort to encourage members, without forcing them, to join a variety of structured programs aimed at their positive growth and life skills development. This Boys and Girls Club and all affiliated programs and activities are offered to youth members at no cost (e.g., camp trips, sports equipment, and attendance at events are all free). Youth recruited from Boys and Girls Club for interviews were in attendance at an annual leadership skills training camp offered only to members handpicked and deemed by program staff as very well
behaved or showing the most improvement over their time at the organization (i.e., shining examples). Junior and senior staff working at the eastern Ottawa location were also recruited.

Christie Lake Kids

Christie Lake Kids is a non-profit organization catering to at-risk youth in Ottawa, Ontario. Christie Lake Kids’ mission is: “to enrich the lives and prospects of economically disadvantaged children, by providing quality year-round community and camp programs to develop physical, artistic, and social skills, positive attitudes and personal qualities” (Christie Lake Kids, 2017d). All the organisation’s programs are offered at no cost with complementary meals provided at evening activities. Bus tickets are also provided to youth who have difficulties allocating transportation to program locations. The organization was established in 1922 as a lakeside summer camp outside of Ottawa, but today offers a variety of skill building recreational programs and positive afterschool environments for youth throughout several of the city’s community centers located close to social housing neighbourhoods. These community programs are called STAR (skills through arts and recreation) and run from early fall to late spring. Among the activities offered in STAR are sports, visual arts, music, cooking, yoga and other exercise, and science and robotics (Christie Lake Kids, 2017b). Youth recruited from Christie Lake Kids for interviews were members of the organizations most advanced Leaders in Training (LIT) 3 program. The three cumulative levels of LIT are aimed at developing leadership skills in youth aged 14-17 with the overarching goal of preparing them to be successful in school and employment while building their commitment to community building and volunteerism (Christie Lake Kids, 2017c). The staff recruited for this study were senior staff in charge of planning, coordinating, and delivering the organization’s programs.

Glebe Neighbourhood Activities Group

GNAG is a non-profit community group incorporated in 1975, located out of the municipally owned Glebe Community Centre in Ottawa, Ontario (GNAG, 2016). This organization is responsible for providing recreational programs on behalf of the city but following its own mission and values and reacting to its own perception of the Glebe community’s trends and recreational needs. The Q4 (Quest for Fun) program is its semi-structured neighbourhood afterschool program attended by many of the neighbourhood’s young children ages 4-12. Also offered is its own two level LIT program available to youth when they turn 12. The first level of LIT has an iteration occurring as a one day a week after school program and another occurring as a day camp, every day for two weeks during the summer. Step-up LIT is only offered as a daily camp over the course of three weeks during the summer with the middle week being devoted to a volunteer placement. This placement provides youth an opportunity to take on the role of assistant staff or counsellors. Both levels of LIT are guided by a leadership manual which outlines the skills youth are expected to learn and their usefulness in a leadership role. In order to pass each
level of LIT youth participants must earn a grade of 75%, as determined by the program leaders, which earns them a certificate. Two other volunteer based programs made available to older youth (14 and up) include CAT Squad (Community Action Team) and KITCAT (KIT standing for Kitchen and Initiative Team). CAT squad offers youth the opportunity to take part in community outreach in tandem with other organizations and partners in the city. Such activities can include visiting homes for the elderly or individuals with exceptionalities, building houses, and holding fundraisers. KITCAT engages in similar activities insofar as it incorporates a cooking component (e.g., feeding homeless shelters or providing food for fundraisers). Youth recruited for interviews were volunteering at the time for GNAG but had passed the LIT program at some point (which is typically a prerequisite for volunteering at GNAG). Junior and senior staff working at the Glebe Community Centre on behalf of GNAG were also recruited.

**Stakeholders Involved**

**At-risk Youth**

As indicated earlier, at-risk youth have a lower probability of growing into responsible adults and contributing and thriving members of society than youth considered not at-risk (Dryfoos, 1992). Many at-risk youth live in poorer socioeconomic conditions making them subject to a range of inequalities such as lower household incomes and neighbourhood segregation (Travis & Leech, 2013). They also have limited access to resources that can help them improve on their functional competencies. The costs of these opportunities presents one barrier to youth’s access in addition to the transportation needed to reach these often distant locations typically located in more affluent communities. This being the case, non-profit PYD programs are often strategically located in communities characterized by the presence of at-risk and underserved youth.

**PYD Program Staff**

Junior and senior staff (and volunteers if they are utilized by the organization) are those responsible for bringing about the positive development of the youth participants involved in their programs. Three particular responsibilities of staff of PYD programs are highlighted by Perkins and Noam (2007). First, they are to ensure that they foster positive relationships among youth and adults involved in the program in addition to providing opportunities to develop positive relationships between youth and their peers. Second, staff delivering the program should identify specific knowledge, skills, and competencies for the youth participants to develop and design activities around instilling those skills. Third, they must tailor their programs to adequately address the unique needs of the youth participating. Youth can be particularly challenging clientele for recreation providers (especially PYD programs dealing...
with at-risk youth) who may have to deal with young people who range in demographic qualities and levels of maturity while potentially possessing a variety of developmental deficiencies or temperamental and behavioural issues.

Despite good intentions, many individuals who deliver recreation programs aimed at the positive development of youth may lack practical experience in serving youth and the theoretical knowledge that has proliferated over the years in the PYD literature. This study’s logic model is built with the intention of benefitting practitioners by providing knowledge, in the form of an easy to follow program delivery guide, which helps ease the facilitation of PYD programs and helps promote their success.

**Approach Used and the Impact**

This research utilized a qualitative multiple case study methodology in order to study three distinct but successful recreational PYD organizations. This helped to ensure the model is not specific to just one organization but well informed and relevant to any seeking to adopt it into their programing. Each organization studied acts as a single instrumental case that provides insight and further understanding of how PYD is achieved and recognized in recreation programs. A purposive sample of youth involved in these organizations’ programs aged 12-18 (males and females) and the staff who deliver these activities were recruited as interview participants. Interviews were conducted with 48 participants in total including 26 youth and 22 staff. In particular, 11 youth and eight staff were from Boys and Girls Club, eight youth and five staff were from Christie Lake Kids, and seven youth and nine staff were from GNAG. Forty semi-structured, in depth, one-on-one, audio recorded interviews were conducted in total with the addition of one focus group being utilized to collect data from all eight of the youth from Christie Lake Kids (due to issues with scheduling each of them individually). The qualitative data collected through these interviews was intended to help create a logic model, thus, questions specifically asked participants to elaborate on inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

Audio interviews were transcribed verbatim for analysis. Transcripts were sent for member checking to nine participants, all of whom were senior staff. Youth and junior staff had a tendency to leave programs shortly after interviews were conducted or were only present at their organizations randomly throughout the week. Meanwhile, senior staff were still a part of the organization by the time interviews were transcribed (and many had been for long before) and were present during most weekdays. The computing based qualitative analysis program NVivo was used to store and analyse the qualitative data collected. Analysis of data resulted in a variety of themes that were selected to be in the model when addressed by various participants or explained in depth by one or more participants. A single logic model was created using the findings generated from the three different youth recreation organizations.
The Logic Model

The final logic model works as a program guide to help recreational organizations achieve PYD. The inputs section of the logic model consists of a wide variety of contextual factors (e.g., rules and expectations) that allow for a youth recreational environment to be conducive of positive development in addition to external assets (e.g., staff, family, community) that contribute to the PYD process. The use of appropriate contextual factors and external assets is consistent with previous models of PYD used in sport research (Fraser-Thomas, Coté & Deakin, 2005; Petitpas et al., 2005). The activities section, concerning the steps occurring during implementation in order to achieve a program’s desired results, were disseminated as a series of direct and indirect strategies used to bring about positive developmental outcomes in youth participants. Direct and indirect strategies have also been identified as the means to which coaches teach life skills to youth participants through sport (Gould & Carson, 2008).

Outputs were disseminated as organization specific by-products of program success which are quantifiable in some fashion (e.g., number of registered/enrolled members; youth achievements in program; youth achievements out of program; youth engagement). The short-term outcomes encompass the life skills that research participants stated they learn during programs delivered by their respective organizations. These were described as being taught through written/verbal lessons and intentionally designed fun activities on a daily basis. As youth were intended to emerge each day having learned and practiced these skills they are considered short-term outcomes for the purposes of this study. Lastly, the long-term impacts section of the model includes positive developmental changes that occur during youths’ continued engagement in these programs overtime. These include the development of positive qualities operationalized as the Four Cs of confidence, competence, caring/character, and connectedness along with the C of contribution. It is worth noting that transference, an important outcome within youth development interventions in which they learn to utilize life skills outside of the program context, is classified under the C of competence in this study. Life skills, life skill transfer, and the four (or five) Cs have been identified previously as outcomes that should be sought out through PYD interventions (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005; Gould & Carson, 2008; Hellison, 1995; 2011; Petitpas et al., 2005). The final logic model can be found in Appendix A.

Implications & Lessons learned

A guideline for program design around the positive development of youth currently does not exist for recreation practitioners. Many PYD programs are grassroots initiatives run by individuals who may lack the specialized theoretical knowledge and practical experience required to ensure the realization of their goals. The objective behind
creating this logic model is to help practitioners design sustainable recreation programs that can bring about positive developmental outcomes within their youth participants.

The model benefits practitioners by highlighting assessment criteria for program evaluation in the form of objective measures (under outputs) and more subjective short-term outcomes and long-term impacts. Number of registered youth members in the program, measures of youth’s engagement (e.g., attendance numbers), gauging youth’s achievements within the program (e.g., number of youth becoming volunteers or staff), and assessing their achievements outside of the program (e.g., report card grades) can act as objective indicators of success for a PYD program as indicated by participants from the three cases. Under outcomes, the acquisition of life skills provides a helpful indicator of short-term benefits coming out of a PYD program and further evidence of success. However, it is worth mentioning that the life skills being sought out can vary between different programs with some organizations hoping to teach youth a wide variety of life skills (e.g., The First Tee; Weiss et al., 2013) while others target the development of one or a few particular skills (e.g., LFE Sports Camp Program; Riley & Anderson-Butcher, 2012).

Lastly, the four Cs (including life skill transfer) and the associated C of contribution, work as identifiable measures of long-term PYD and are evidence that youth in a program are experiencing thriving behaviours and healthy development into adulthood. Previous research has supported the Cs model as an adequate operationalization youth’s positive development (Bowers et al., 2010; Jelicic et al., 2007; Lerner et al., 2005; Phelps et al., 2009).

Though various themes presented in the logic model have been reported before (e.g., importance of context; importance of staff, families, and communities in PYD endeavors; life skills; the Four Cs) there are several unique findings that help us further understand how recreational settings can be conducive of PYD. For instance, the role that staff, families, and communities (including schools) play in the process is further spelled out. It was found that staff are particularly effective in PYD endeavors when taking on a range of developmentally supportive qualities (e.g., being approachable, attentive, caring, inclusive, proactive, respectful). Parents are also playing an important role in the PYD process when collaborating, communicating, and cooperating with staff in order to (1) be informed on their children’s progress, (2) inform staff on any important information or needs regarding their children (e.g., what skills they should develop; if they are having a rough time lately), (3) reinforcing the values and lessons taught in the program at home, and (4) providing input or helping out the program in some capacity. The community at large is also an important external asset in a recreation program’s PYD endeavors in terms of partnerships and collaborations or through the provision of necessary resources (e.g., donations, venues, funding, volunteers).

Also elaborated on in this research are particular venues, external to the programs themselves, where youth are able to transfer their life skills. This has not been examined much in previous research but has gained recent attention (Bean, Kendellen & Forneris, 2006; Weiss, Bolter & Kipp, 2016). Contexts in which youth were able to utilize the life skills they had learned through their respective organizations included at school, in sports, at home and with their
families, at their places of employment and job interviews, within the community and during volunteering, and with other people in their lives. Study findings also imply that it would be valuable for PYD initiatives to implement transferability into their programs and teach youth how these life skills can be utilized in contexts external to the organisation. Methods to which the organizations under investigation taught transferability, coded as ‘teachable moments’ categorized under activities and indirect strategies, were also highlighted in this research. The use of role playing (i.e., having the group act out real life situations where youth must practice the life skills being focused on) and anecdotes (i.e., having program leaders tell stories of where a life skill had come in useful for them) are two such strategies.

A unique finding in this research, exclusive to the Christie Lake Kids organization, was Active Pursuit (categorized under activities and indirect strategies). During the day, before a weekly program occurs in the afternoon and evening, staff call the families of the youth enrolled to remind them of the program’s start time and reiterate to them that youth’s attendance is mandatory. According to research participants at Christie Lake Kids, calling the parents or guardians of the youth helps to increase and maintain attendance and ensure that they are gaining the most out of their PYD program by missing as few days as possible. As a result, Christie Lake Kids staff attest that attendance at their programs is very high. It is common in PYD programs for attendance to fluctuate and staff often have to deal with youth entering a program late in its session, not attending anymore, being tardy, or being absent for a few days/weeks (Forneris, Whitley & Barker, 2013; Wright, Whitley & Sabolboro, 2011). This can be very jarring for program staff since this means that youth miss out on various important lessons, especially when every day during a session typically includes something important. Many PYD programs work in a cumulative fashion and missing previous lessons may leave youth unprepared for later ones. Moreover, such endeavors often require participants to form strong relationships between their peers and staff in the program. However, a group’s sense of relatedness would be complicated by a constant flux of youth coming in and out. Active Pursuit may be one effective solution to help retain youth participants, ensure constant attendance, and discourage dropout and tardiness.

Further evidence emerged that PYD programs can encourage youth to develop a willingness to volunteer and a sense of community stewardship. One of the cases, GNAG, demonstrated the most focus towards having its youth members become interested in volunteering at the organization and the community at large. Based on testimonials from study participants at this organization, staff consistently encouraged youth to contribute (e.g., posting various volunteer opportunities around the centre). Meanwhile, various programs are also in place that provide youth members with volunteer opportunities (e.g., Community Action Team; Leaders in Training) which could help them develop an
appreciation for these experiences early on in their lives. Community contribution has been an important aspect of PYD since its early conception (Lerner et al., 2000; Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003). This focus from GNAG helps address Coakley’s (2011) concern that current PYD programs may be more fixated on youth’s individual development rather than turning them into individuals who can benefit civil society. Evidence from a study of a camp-based PYD program with a community contribution component also demonstrated the possibility of having youth become interested in, and capable of, volunteering in their communities (Mainieri & Anderson, 2015).

The intent of this study was to disseminate a logic model of recreational program design aimed towards the positive development of youth participants. The use of in-depth qualitative data collected through a multiple case study methodology allowed the study’s key themes to manifest from the perceptions and narratives of participants who regularly experience these first-hand. This research was committed to ensuring that the final model acts as a helpful guideline for practitioners, particularly those of smaller grassroots initiatives, whose program objectives include PYD. Ease of use within recreational programs was the intent of formatting the findings as a logic model which are frequently utilized to plan, design, and guide recreational program delivery. At the moment the model is untested in a real life setting and currently lacks evidence of success. Future empirical intervention research utilizing this model will help to determine its effectiveness.

Author’s Notes

The logic model shown in appendix A is an early version as depicted in an unpublished research study. The format and structure of the model may change from the publication of this paper until the publication of the research study. Further information regarding the facets of this model will be explained further in depth in an upcoming monograph dissertation research report ‘Towards a General Logic Model for Recreational Youth Development Programs’ by this paper’s first author.

Discussion Questions

1. What might prevent a recreation organization or program, intentionally designed to promote the positive development of youth, from being able to achieve its goal (taking into account the challenges and dilemmas typically faced by recreation organizations and programs)?

2. Do you believe the adoption of Active Pursuit in other PYD programs may help retain current youth members and prevent the fluctuation of active youth participants?

3. Is it important for recreation-based PYD programs to include a community service or voluntary component? Is the inclusion of volunteer opportunities and the development of a sense of community stewardship an important aspect of PYD initiatives?
References


Appendix

Fig 1: Logic Model of Positive Youth Development.

**Inputs**
- Context
  - Skill Building and Learning Opportunities
  - Community Outreach Opportunities
  - Skill Testing Opportunities
  - Contribution Opportunities
  - Interaction Opportunities

- External Assets
  - Developmentally Supportive Staff
  - Family Collaboration

**Activities**
- Direct Strategies
  - Communicate Rules and Expectations
  - Disciplinary Approach – Youth Centred
  - Mentorship/Offering Guidance
  - Logical Progression
  - 4 Step Progression of Programs
  - Teachable Moments

- Indirect Strategies
  - Developing Relationships and Trust
  - Encourage Youth to Contribute to the Community
  - Encourage Youth to Join Programs & Activities
  - Encouraged to Get out of Comfort Zones
  - Assisting with Youth’s Achievements
  - Positive Reinforcement
  - Provide Resources to Youth's Families
  - Reinforcing Positive Values
  - Role Modeling
  - Use of Key Words

**Outputs**
- Number of Registered/Enrolled Members
- Youth Engagement
- Youth Achievements in Program
- Youth Achievements Out of Program

**Outcomes**
- Life Skills
  - Leadership Skills
  - Social and Communication Skills
  - Teamwork and Cooperation Skills
  - Academic Skills
  - Responsibility
  - Positive Attitude
  - Initiative
  - Emotional regulation
  - Work Ethic
  - Ingenuity
  - Listening Skills
  - Problem Solving
  - Behavioural Management
  - Coping Skills
  - Decision Making
  - Trust
  - Self-Regulation
  - Patience
  - Self-Reflection/Assessment
  - Emotional Literacy
  - Goal Setting
  - Honesty
  - Networking

- Competence/Skill Transfer
  - At School
  - In Sports
  - At Home/With Family
  - At Job/Employment/Job Interview
  - In Community/Volunteering
  - With Other People
  - Former Members Turned Volunteer/Staff
  - Contribute to the Organization
  - Contributing Outside of the Organization

- Compassion/Caring/Character
  - Helpful Towards Others/Willingness to Volunteer
  - Kindness/Empathy/Selflessness
  - Respect
  - Role Model for Others
  - Strength
  - Reduction in Trouble and Problem Behaviours

- Confidence
  - Coming out of Shell
  - Sure of Self
  - Positive View of Self
  - Positive View of Future

- Contribution
  - Former Members Turned Volunteer/Staff
  - Contribute to the Organization
  - Contributing Outside of the Organization
Authors

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George Karlis (Ph.D.) has been a full-time professor at the University of Ottawa since 1992. He is globally recognized for his work on ethnicity, culture, society and leisure. The third edition of Dr. Karlis’ textbook Leisure and Recreation in Canadian Society: An Introduction (Thompson Educational Publishers; published in 2016) is one of the most comprehensive works in the field and is required reading in universities and colleges throughout Canada. Dr. Karlis has published over 80 articles (over 60 peer reviewed) throughout the world and has also delivered his research at over 100 international, national and local conferences, symposiums and workshops. Internationally, Dr. Karlis is a visiting professor at the International Olympic Academy (Ancient Olympia, Greece), and has conducted research on sport and recreation services in Greece and Cyprus. Dr. Karlis’ ongoing research centers primarily on leisure and recreation trends in Canadian society. More specifically, this involves the evolution, current state of conditions, and future directions of leisure and recreation in Canada. His ongoing research has also focused on community change and improvement as well as the conceptualization of sport volunteer tourism and volunteerism at mega sport events.
Organizational revitalization: A case study of a leisure professional association creating an action plan for change

Part 2

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Jana Joy James, Ph.D., Appalachian State University, U.S.A.

Chapter Summary

In 2016 North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association (NCRPA), a leisure and recreation professional association, implemented an organizational change with the hopes of becoming more relevant and vital to recreation professionals. In the Innovative Leisure Practices: Cases as Conduits between Theory and Practice – Volume 2 (2016), James and Weddell documented the initial process leading to organizational change. The NCRPA Board president tasked an Ad Hoc committee to read the book, “Race for Relevance” (2011) and make recommendations to revitalize the organization. For more details on the beginning process, see James and Weddell’s (2016) Case study “Implementing organizational change: A case study of a leisure professional association’s structural change, to remain relevant to its members as well as in its support of the profession.” Organizational change includes more than making recommendations to a board and having a unanimous board vote to implement the recommendations. Once the vote passed, the real work began. This case study continues the investigation by describing the implementation process of the recommendations leading to NCRPA organizational revitalization for 2017. The main players of innovation included the NCRPA Executive Director, its Board President, and the Executive Board as well as several committees appointed by the President. NCRPA continued to use the book “Race for Relevance” (2011) as a primer to change, requiring each committee member to read the book to understand the impact of the changes and future decisions. The impacts of this change will be examined in Part Two of this case study, revealing the building blocks from recognizing the need for change and taking recommendations to implementation to create a relevant and nimble organization that meets the needs of its members.
Learning Objectives:

After reading this Chapter, learners will be able to:

1. Review the processes that lead to organizational change.
2. Gain a greater understanding of how to structure a model of organizational change through committees.
3. Identify elements of organizational processes, recommendations, and implementations of change.

The Issue, Opportunity or Trend

Professional associations have been entrenched in traditional operational models of providing services. Traditional approaches encompassed a hierarchical organizational structure encumbered with outdated processes that undermine its ability to recruit new members and serve them effectively in a changing landscape. While some members prefer the traditional approach, evidence is mounting that change is necessary. Professional association memberships have been in decline since the 1970s (Bauman, 2008; Coerver & Byers, 2013) in unison with a changing workplace demographic. Research indicates that it is imperative to draw members within first five years of their career into a professional association making recruiting the younger generation imperative to an association’s success (Myers, 2016). Millennials (more diverse than previous generations) have grown up technologically savvy in a more globalized world with economic uncertainty (Pew Research Center, 2014). This has shifted their interest in what they expect professional associations to provide them. Specifically millennials are interested in job opportunities and networking, whereas past generations were interested in industry information and ethics (Myers, 2016). At the same time, professional associations cannot ignore other generation’s professional needs. This challenge has made it especially difficult for professional associations to adapt to the changing workforce and stay relevant.

In 2015, the North Carolina Recreation and Parks Association was not unlike most professional associations with a decline in membership (particularly young professionals), working with a more traditional model of operation and a recognition that radical change was necessary. In its efforts to address these issues, NCRPA initiated an organizational change process by tasking an Ad Hoc Committee to brainstorm change using the book Race for Relevance (2011) as a primer and to make organizational change recommendations to its board. “In April of 2015, the Ad Hoc Committee presented its recommendations to the NCRPA board: reducing from 28 voting board members to a five member board, going from elections of board members to nominations, as well as reviewing region structures and strategies for engaging the membership” (James & Weddell, 2016). For a full examination of the Ad Hoc committee’s process,
see James and Weddell’s (2016) Case study “Implementing organizational change: A case study of a leisure professional association’s structural change, to remain relevant to its members as well as in its support of the profession.” However, organizational change is not simply completed by making recommendations to a board. More steps were necessary to implement the recommendations. In this case, it took many volunteers and a participatory approach to creating the foundation for implementing the radical recommendations.

The Innovation

Case Context

The NCRPA Board accepted four recommendations for change: 1) decrease board size, 2) implementation of a nomination process for its board members rather than an election, 3) re-examine the association’s regional structure, and 4) create strategies for meeting membership’s professional development needs across the state. The NCRPA Board then created three committees to determine logistics of implementing the recommendations. This case study examines the process of this organizational change.

Stakeholders Involved

Once NCRPA decided to reorganize the association through a unanimous board vote, the process of change took place. The key stakeholders included the President, Ad Hoc Committee, past board, new committees, and new board. In April of 2015, the Ad Hoc Committee presented its recommendations to the NCRPA board which included reducing from 28 board members to five board members, going from elections of board members to nominations, as well as reviewing region structures and strategies for engaging the membership. These recommendations were unanimously approved by the board and thus began the road to revitalizing the association. Many changes were made through these recommendations with the intention of creating specific committees tasked to develop the action plan and provide a timeline for implementation. For example, current NCRPA board members were asked to remain in their positions for an additional year to ensure a successful transition and not lose the associations history. In addition there were new committees developed that selected old, new, and unengaged members to ensure everyone had a seat at the table. The three committee’s created included nominations, finance, and awards and citations. The Ad Hoc committees in charge of creating the NCRPA manual of procedures for the newly formed committees were lead by academics from the state institutions. This was a way to engage the Universities and faculty who support NCRPA to become more involved as well as provide a pipeline for student engagement. By having faculty lead Ad Hoc committees, it allowed a neutral leader to assist the reorganization process. The three new committees that were created had to wait on the Ad Hoc committee to meet in order to set the charge. This required strategic scheduling to ensure when committees met, they had the necessary information from another committee to create the new
responsibilities and by-laws. Over a year long process that included meetings, workshops, and member feedback a solid action plan for the future was created. In the following section, the committee outcomes are outlined with the processes and responsibilities for each.

**Approach Used and the Impact**

The approach to create a new organizational structure was purposeful and included a wide range of diverse members. Attention was paid to populate each committee with members from different regions of the state, engaged and unengaged members, as well as different size park employees, and years in the industry. This created a domino effect in regards to engaging a core group across the state and impacted other members as they learned of the new structure. These committees created a new system of protocols, by-laws, and organizations structure for the Association to meet future demands while engaging members. The new structure is outlined below by committee.

The Board of Directors was reduced to five members, with positions including: President, President-Elect, Past President, Professional Development and an At-Large member. Each year, the Nominations Committee selects two new board members. One of these positions is the President-Elect and the other is for the Professional Development or At-Large position. The President-Elect serves three years while progressing as President Elect, President and Past President. The Professional Development and At-Large positions serve two years on a staggered rotation. No board member may serve more than five consecutive years. Any vacancies are appointed by the Nominations Committee during one of the six required meetings each year. The three newly created committees are the nominations, finance, and awards and citations. Below outlines their purpose and structure, which was created during the yearlong reorganization process.

First, the purpose of the **Nominations Committee** is recruiting and locating qualified candidates to serve on the Board of Directors, Standing Committees, Region Leadership Teams; and other positions as appropriate and make recommendations to the Board of Directors for each of the association offices of President-Elect, Professional Development Member, At-Large Member and Standing Committee members. Additionally, the Nominations Committee creates and forwards other nominations, including nomination applications, forms, and materials, to the appropriate entities for reviews. The Nominations Committee has a minimum of three voting members. The maximum number of committee members shall be equal to the current number of standing committees. The chair of the Nomination Committee is elected by the committee membership.
Annual Nominations and Selection Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year-Round</th>
<th>The Board Nomination Committee recruits and locates qualified candidates eager to serve.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Application Period (1 month long) Application materials and instructions are available on NCRPA website. Application materials are only accepted online through the website. Individuals willing to serve must complete their own application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-August</td>
<td>Vetting Process: All completed and qualified applicants are scored individually by all members of the Board Nomination Committee, and then scores are compiled and ranked by one designated member of the committee. Top Candidates: Two references (character and professional) are checked by designated committee member(s). Personal communication/interview with designated committee members are used to confirm willingness, motivation and ability to serve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Nomination Committee presents recommended candidates to the NCRPA Board of Directors for a vote prior to the annual state conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>Board Members are installed and the Standing Committee members are recognized during the annual state conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>New Board Members and Standing Committee members take office.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Next, the **Finance Committee** is responsible for the planning and monitoring of the fiscal program – policies and procedures – of NCRPA. It is required to study the financial needs of the Association and make recommendations to the Board of Directors on matters pertaining to the budget, including the annual budget review. All budget requests and revisions are referred to the Finance committee for analysis and recommendation prior to being submitted to the Board of Directors for consideration. The Finance Committees purpose is to review recommended budget requests from Committees, Regions and Association staff relative to their budget request by December of each year prior to the beginning of a new Association year. The committee is comprised of three members, the Executive Director and one board member. Committee members serve three-year terms, with one new member yearly. No member may serve more than two consecutive terms. New members are selected through the nominations process. The chair of the Finance Committee is self-selected from amongst committee members.

Last, the **Awards and Citations Committee** purpose is to carry out the selection process of individuals to receive specific Association awards and any other general association awards and citations which may be determined by the board. The Committee is comprised of six members, all of which are past recipients of the Fellow, Meritorious Service or Young Professional Awards. One member must be a prior recipient of the Young Professional Award. Committee members serve three-year terms, with two new members yearly. No member can serve more than two consecutive terms. New members are selected through the nominations process. The chair of the Awards & Citations Committee is self-selected from amongst committee members.
Implications & Lessons learned

This case study takes a more in-depth look at a professional leisure association’s road to revitalize an organization and make it more relevant for its members. While this is focused on a leisure organization, it can be applied to academic and non-academic audiences as other associations or organizations inwardly reflect and call to action a plan for change. Part Two of this case study allows readers to understand why change was needed in the association (Part 1) and then read about the processes to create and implement an action plan. While in hindsight the need for this change seems evident, the process and outcome was uncertain. There were board members and Association members that did not support the change and was skeptical it would lead to success. With that said however, many stakeholders involved in the process stated that after they read the Race for Relevance (2011) book, the need for change was evident, especially coupled with declining Association membership. Furthermore, stakeholders said that while the process was difficult and challenging, they felt more buy in to the Association and was more likely to stay involved. This implication, perhaps not intended, is important to note. While unengaged members often noted the past the only way to get involved was through a traditional good old boy system, the new structure allows nominations and engages younger members. This building of community and open organization was created through the restricting process as committee members worked to set a new and more inclusive system. As a result association members feel more buy in and committed to the mission of the Association. In the past it was difficult to get volunteers to fill committee positions and now committees have more nominations than seats. The restricting process has created a focus on involvement and volunteering that was not present before allowing volunteers to feel they are contributing and valued. They now are part of a larger community and network of professionals that was created the actual process of restricting of the organization as much as the outcome. By NCRPA being open to new possibilities and creating a clear system for volunteering, they have created a nimble organization ready to meet the demands of members in a fast changing world.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you implement change in an organization you belong to?
2. Once board members agree to move forward with organizational change, how would you reorganize to meet the organizations and members needs?
3. What are unexpected outcomes that may be a result of an organizational change?
4. How can the committees created continue to adapt to organizational and membership changes?
5. What can you learn from the reorganization process that applies to your career?
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Work integrated learning as a tool for Therapeutic Recreation students in the first year of their undergraduate degree

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Chapter Summary

Therapeutic recreation is one field within leisure practice. Exposure to Therapeutic Recreation (TR) or Leisure studies as a future career, for most commencing undergraduate students is limited in Australia. At Western Sydney University, nested within a Health Science degree is a specialisation or ‘key program’ in Therapeutic Recreation. Some students default into the course as it has ‘health science’ in the title — with the intention of transferring during the course or completing postgraduate studies in ‘their first field’ such as physiotherapy, nursing, podiatry and other health sciences at a later date.

This case study will identify and discuss the benefits of Work Integrated Learning [WIL] in the first year of the Therapeutic Recreation (TR) degree for student retention, satisfaction, career development and how the work placement in the first year of their degree assists to develop a student's career trajectory. Whilst meeting the learning outcomes for the Professional Pathways in Health Science unit, an unexpected result has been multiple students changing their career allegiances to the leisure sciences, as well as many entering paid employment and/or seeking further volunteer opportunities as a result of the placement.

Academic audiences would benefit from this case study by considering the timing of work placements and the scaffolding of knowledge and skills throughout degree courses, particularly in specialist professional fields. Across most allied health and other professional degrees, work placements are typically scaffolded into the curriculum toward the end of their degrees and therefore fail to gain authentic exposure to the various fields of practice and contexts in which the health and leisure professional may work in the initial stages of their degree.
Learning Objectives:

After reading this Chapter, learners will be able to:

1. Understand the importance of work integrated student placement on early career decision making.
2. Identify the development of student skills for placement throughout the curriculum.
3. Develop student placements to be mutually beneficial for students, organisations and the educational institution.
4. Recognise the importance of work integrated learning in the first year of bachelor degree studies.

The Issue, Opportunity or Trend

Work integrated learning (WIL) has various names such as work placement and professional practice (McEwen & Trede, 2014), but the process of students attending a workplace environment, engaging in suitable workplace tasks and being mentored by a professional from the career they are pursuing is referred to as work integrated learning (Cooper, Orell & Bowden, 2010). Students from low SES backgrounds, indigenous students and first in family students struggle with a “lack of clarity with how university education can help students reach their professional goals” (McEwen & Trede, 2014, p.56). Experiential learning is a hallmark of WIL and provides a student with the opportunity to experience the profession from the perspective of a practitioner. This is seen as vital in enhancing a student’s academic endeavours and career prospects for employment, both during and after graduation (Bullock, Gould, Hejmadi, & Lock, 2009).

In the Australian context, the need for health, and more specifically leisure professionals, will increase exponentially over the coming years, with growth in disability, mental health and aging sectors with a projected 21% (8.4 million people) aged 65 and over by 2054, compared with 15% of the population (3.5 million people) in 2014 (AIHW, 2015). With a significant proportion of the population aging, retiring and possibly requiring aged care services, either in the community or in long term care facilities, growth in the health and leisure professions is inevitable.

Throughout the first year of the health science undergraduate degree, students are exposed to interdisciplinary practice — that is they learn generalist skills, relevant to all health professions. Skills in health communication, evidence based practice, health psychology, professional health competencies and broader issue such as population health and health promotion. Often student placements are offered in the later part of undergraduate degrees,
usually in the last year of studies. Some courses do offer WIL or student placements in the second year of studies, however across the health sciences it is fairly limited.

Western Sydney University has offered an undergraduate, three-year degree in health science (Therapeutic Recreation) since 1996 (DTRA, 2017). In 2010, the university course offerings were extended through partnership with Western Sydney University The College (The College), offering the first year of the undergraduate degree as a diploma in higher education (University of Western Sydney, 2009). The College offers direct pathways for the first year of five different health science degrees which are offered with students transitioning into their second year of studies at the main University campuses. The five direct entry courses all have placements in third year, with the exception of Therapeutic Recreation, where students can complete a placement at the end of the second year of their studies. At The College, a placement is offered towards the end of the first year of their studies (Western Sydney University, 2017). Placements are organised in a unit called Professional Pathways in Health Science and are available for students completing key programs in TR, health service management, health promotion and public health. Research on WIL for first year is limited (McEwen & Trede, 2014) with very few professions and educational institutions engaging in first year WIL, unless mandated, with professional associations which impact on registration such as Nursing.

WIL generally occurs in the latter stages of most specialised degrees, whilst developing specific professional skills. Compliance in health-related fields has also impacted on WIL, for students, the organisation and the educational institute (Craig, 2017). This includes compliance with vaccinations, national criminal record checks and working with children checks to meet the organisations’ obligations with statutory requirements, policy directives through the ministry of health and National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (HETI, 2017).

The Innovation

Case Context

WIL is the pinnacle to student learning in context. Placements are conducted in November and December each year, at the tail end of the first year of studies. Over the past two years, data has been collected through assessment submissions and the teaching staff have collected additional information as a means of quality assurance. As a capstone unit, the skills taught and learnt throughout the year in all of the units are applied through WIL by students doing a work placement. The work placement occurs one day a week, over five weeks.

WIL one day a week has many benefits. From an educational perspective, the placement is timetabled into student sets and therefore embedded into the curriculum, thus allowing for a designated day where placement occurs. For students, especially with their first experience working with health professionals, it allows time to process the
experience, and provides peer support through talking about their experiences with each other and academic staff. For organisations, an opportunity exists whereby if any issues arise, the supervisors can communicate with academic staff to resolve issues prior to the next week when the student returns. Five weeks gives students a better understanding of the different organisations where they are doing placement and the service provision that occurs in context.

Students have almost completed one third of their degree when starting their placement. The table below identifies the skills developed prior to placement.

Table 1: Skill development with curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>What skills have been developed</th>
<th>How skills are applied on placement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Health Competencies</td>
<td>Exposure to different Health professions</td>
<td>Awareness of other health professions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child protection</td>
<td>Awareness of compliance with the organisations policies and procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infection control</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Legal and ethical issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work health and safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Health and Society</td>
<td>Social determinants of health</td>
<td>Awareness of disease in context of environment including social context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues that can impact on health</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to human biology</td>
<td>How the body works</td>
<td>Body functioning and terminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication in health</td>
<td>Interview skills</td>
<td>Knowledge of various health profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
<td>Reflection on own skills and what to develop next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multidisciplinary team, roles and management.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology and Health</td>
<td>Health behaviours</td>
<td>Awareness of psychology and implications to health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conditioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and evidence based practice</td>
<td>Evidence based interventions</td>
<td>Research current intervention being used in WIL experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches to health promotion</td>
<td>Promoting health</td>
<td>Interacting with health consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Individual behaviour change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholders Involved

Organisations and workplace supervisors
Students were placed with appropriate organisations and workplace supervisors. It is important to note that there is no funding or payment received for students doing work placement. Many organisations see limited benefits in taking unfunded professional placement students; this presents additional barriers to WIL.

Professional bodies around the world such as the NCTRC and ATRA (Craig, 2017) encourage supervisors to take work placement students by providing continuing or professional education points or professional recognition for the supervisor, giving some benefit to organisations taking unfunded professional placement students. This is in contrast to professions, such as nursing and teaching, where the education institution pays to host organisations a significant fee to take professional placement students.

The University and College
The Professional Pathways unit at the University removed the WIL experience from the unit offering, mainly due to the administrative and logistical issues of the unit being offered in the students’ first semester at university as well as the evolving compliance requirements for students to attend a WIL.

The College is able to offer the unit in the students’ third term, within their three or four term pattern of study. This enables the administration and logistics of the placement to be established throughout the students’ first two terms of study, further fitting the placement within The College’s ideology of a flexible student-centred approach to teaching and learning (Western Sydney University The College, 2017, p.10.)

The students
Students are encouraged to define what they want to achieve from the experience and to suggest the possible client group they would like to work with (Knowles, 1973). To have some prior knowledge about the client group, and possible organisations that they may be placed within, encourages self-directed learning (Stagnitti, Schoo, & Welch, 2013).

Understandably, institutions have resisted engaging students in a first-year WIL due to many complex issues including: the heavy administrative and logistical burden of a work placement in first year and investment in students who may drop out within the first year of study, as is a common trend in higher education settings (McEwen & Trede, 2014). A further issue is the limited length of time of a student’s first year placement giving a limited time to understand the student’s aspirations and academic standards, professional skills and behavioural expectations within one or two semesters of study.
Importantly, it is proposed that student skillsets and prior learning are rarely taken into account, perhaps viewing the majority of first year students as recent school leavers with limited ‘life’ experience and capacity to undertake WIL. Data collected from the 2015/2016 cohort (N=102) suggests that 14.7% of the total students undertaking WIL had no previous work experience, 10.8% had experience in a health field and the remaining 74.5% of students had some form of work or volunteer experience. These roles suggest the students had a stronger capacity to engage in WIL than perhaps previously anticipated and a variety of skills that can be harnessed, in particular customer service or health related skills, that could enhance both the student’s experience of WIL and benefit to the placement organisation.

Table 2 Prior work experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=102</th>
<th>Previous Health Work experience</th>
<th>Previous Customer Service role</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No previous work experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2015/2016 student cohort</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>32.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Approach Used and the Impact**

In collaboration with the teaching team and The College timetabling team, students were given one day a week free from lectures, tutorials and other teaching activities to attend WIL. WIL opportunities are negotiated with host organisations, matching the students’ chosen professions balanced with available placements. Students were also encouraged to identify the particular services where they would like a WIL experience (Bennett & Alford, 2016).

Students began placements in week five of term with the first four weeks of content skewed toward developing a learning contract for the work placement (Knowles, 1995), deepening the students’ understanding of workplace safety, career development (McEwen & Trede, 2014; Craig, 2017), reflection and their chosen profession mapped into the curriculum (Craig, 2017).

During the placement cycle, students were encouraged to reflect on their experience by online blogging via their Blackboard Learn site and scheduled in class discussion (first 15-20 mins of tutorial class). Here the work placement student, peers and teaching team could reflect on the placement experience and, where necessary, bring to the attention of the subject coordinator any issues. Online blogging has been seen as beneficial to both health related and non-health related pedagogies to support work integrated type learning (Ladyshewsky, & Gardner, 2008; Chu &
Tiwari, 2012). Further, Ladyshewsky, and Gardner (2008) in the context of health related WIL suggests that online blogging as part of the workplace learning curricula has been seen to promote reflective practice, clinical reasoning and added value to the learning experience. Moreover, the use of online multimedia such as blogs, assists in negating many barriers to peer learning such as cohort diversity and geographical location.

Within the context of the 2015/2016 cohort (N=102) table 2 presents the various issues expressed in class discussion or online blog regarding placement as well as solutions developed in collaboration with students and the teaching team.

Table 3: Student Issues and Solutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student issues</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Issues presented in class</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity from the work placement site on</td>
<td>Student encouraged to take a more proactive approach to the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expectations of the student.</td>
<td>experience, look for opportunity to assist, request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited understanding of clinical conditions</td>
<td>information to read or develop skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presented.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty communicating with clients with specific</td>
<td>Student to request information from workplace supervisors on common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illnesses/ailments</td>
<td>conditions to research in own time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncomfortable with roles designated by placement</td>
<td>Student to request information from workplace supervisors on common</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supervisors.</td>
<td>conditions to research in own time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of learning contract</td>
<td>Subject lead to follow up with particular site, -Students to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration at being treated like an extra pair of</td>
<td>the scope/responsibility on placement and develop capacity to say no to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hands and not engaging as a student.</td>
<td>particular request much like a real workplace request.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnect from expectation to reality of placement.</td>
<td>Student to discuss with workplace supervisor, particulars of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘This wasn’t how I thought it would be’</td>
<td>contract and how they are going to attain desired learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student to develop capacity to engage in constructive conversation, ‘how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>can I develop my skills, could I assist in that task.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student to discuss this with placement supervisor, what is the typical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>role and expectations of the professional in this health context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues from online blog</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of communication from placement site on</td>
<td>Students to take a pen and paper to write information down, and verbally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>placement particulars and expectations.</td>
<td>request information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern at jobs allocated for students.</td>
<td>Student encouraged to take a more proactive approach to the experience,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration at lack of difficulty within tasks.</td>
<td>look for opportunity to assist, request information to read or develop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited support from workplace supervisor.</td>
<td>skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student to discuss with workplace supervisor, particulars of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>contract and how they are going to attain desired learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow up from Subject lead.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Further to this, students were to develop an assessed Workplace Learning Report one week post-completion of the WIL, deepening the understanding of the profession, placement site, clinical area and student role within the experience. Smith and Worsfold (2014) also identify this as an issue and suggest that WIL “is perceived to facilitate the development of graduates” (p.1072). Jackson and Wilton (2016) further the idea of WIL with the “development of career management competencies” (p.267).

For academics, consideration and planning is required to develop an appropriate curricula that is well scaffolded. WIL in first year has enhanced student retention in health science degrees (McEwen & Trede, 2014). Students also reported a clearer career trajectory which enable the University to have clearer numbers for electives units, and combinations of units leading to minor or majors in different health science fields. Whilst additional time is required to organise placements and develop relationships with workplace sites, equally important is that the WIL experience is well integrated into the curriculum and not used as an ‘add on’ to learning (McLennan & Keating, 2008). McEwen and Trede (2015) found that the experience gained through WIL was a key factor to students both staying enrolled and continuing with their learning.

Implications & Lessons learned

Students participating in placements within the first year of study have reported being more directed in future placements and more motivated about where to do their placements; this may be with a particular client group or an organisation that has different client group service provisions within the organisation. Post placement evidence suggests students have a clearer career trajectory, and are more likely to start actively seeking out opportunities to enhance their employability by graduation, mainly through volunteering. Literature corroborates this, suggesting that experience of WIL was greatly valued into later studies and subsequently into early employment (Murakami, Murray, Sims, & Chedzey, 2009).

Students in the 2015/2016 cohort reported a generally positive experience and showed a marked response in post WIL goals as discussed in their last assessment, with many seeing the importance of volunteerism or work specific learning to supplement their studies. Further to this, students from the 2015/2016 cohort reported back to the teaching team, well after the WIL, that they had attained roles as a direct result of the experience, and in two instances within their WIL. In some cases, students also harnessed their supervisors as referees or professional
mentors in their future studies, impacting on their employability. Table 4 presents data from the post unit student feedback related to the work integrated learning.

Table 4: Student feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student feedback directly related to work placement.</th>
<th>What was the best aspect of this Unit?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best part of this unit was the work experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best aspects was being able to be out in the work placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Getting to know more about the careers that the course could take in. Had the opportunity for the work placement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best aspects of this unit was doing work placement I found it very interesting I also enjoyed learning about therapeutic recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The work placement was an amazing experience and I learned so much valuable knowledge and overall this has been my favourite unit of the year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best aspects of the unit was the work placement. This allowed me as a student to experience being a health professional understanding the basic skills needed in the profession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Many discussions between teacher and students took place, making it interesting and enjoying. The content and explanation by the teacher has helped to understand the importance of volunteering, internship or workplace practice for future workplace initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best aspect of this unit was work placement which I enjoyed immensely as it allowed me to increase my skills base in areas which cannot be taught in the class room.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best aspects of this unit was the huge relevance that the unit had to further studies and education, as well as assisting in finding information on future careers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being able to have practical experience in the health field. This is important when studying so the individual gets an understanding of what they want to do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is proposed that a first-year placement has multiple benefits for students in their first year, the student learning experience and the workplace. Practitioners and organisations can also benefit from having students. This can be achieved by the development of appropriate resources through mentoring students. With limited time, practitioners often find it difficult to develop resources and research to contribute towards best practice (Stumbo, Wolfe & Pegg, 2017).

Project-based work can be developed prior to a student coming to the organisation, and a brief on the project in terms of rationale and aims can be developed in conjunction with the educational institution. Through better communication and working in partnerships on an ongoing basis with universities and students, practitioners may be assisted in the development of these projects and students can work on authentic, practical resources developing the skills required as a practitioner and utilising their research skills developed at university whilst sharing knowledge. Working in partnership with the universities and identifying a particular project to be developed, can also harness the skill-set an individual student may have and working together for further innovative projects (Schmidt, 2013) is of benefit to both organisation and student.

Idealistically, organisations embracing WIL benefit from the experience, namely through recognition of the mutual benefit for both the organisation and the student achieving positive outcomes; for students, it improves directedness of career trajectory and understanding the nature of interdisciplinary work, assisting in the development of their own professional identity; for supervisors, an opportunity to mentor and consolidate their own understanding and knowledge, whilst also being recognised as a professional development activity; and for organisations, an opportunity to develop additional resources and to also scope students that may be appropriate for future volunteering or employment opportunities within the organisation (Craig, 2017).

Overall WIL in a first-year therapeutic recreation degree can be seen as innovative as highlighted in this case study, demonstrating the benefits for WIL for the leisure sciences in a first year program. More research is required in this area, to ensure balance between knowledge delivered in higher education institutions and the application of clinical skills in practice. Developing innovative teaching pedagogy that enhances and develops skills is pinnacle for longevity in leisure and recreation higher education.
Discussion Questions

1. Can the development of a first year WIL experience increase student retention and understanding within a leisure/recreation degree?

2. What skills does a student possess prior to any work integrated learning and can this impact on their ability to undertake the placement?

3. How can supervisors across leisure professions be inspired to mentor students both in first year and throughout the undergraduate degree?

4. What level of participation should a first-year student engage in?

5. What further research is required in this area for better collaboration and communication between the educational institutions, WIL organisations and the student body?
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Western Sydney University, The College (2017). *Course Guide 2018*  
Authors

Charlise Bennett (BAppSc(DT); Grad Cert (Res St); Grad Cert (Tert Ed); MHSM) has over twenty years’ experience in Therapeutic Recreation, working in aged care facilities, in the community with the Aged Care Assessment Team, and in hospitals wards including Orthopaedic; Stroke; Drug and Alcohol and generalist Rehabilitation Units. Charlise, is currently coordinates the Health Science and Nursing curriculum at Western Sydney University, The College with more than ten years’ experience in academia. Her research interests include rehabilitation, evidence based practice, authentic assessment and professional identity.

Stewart Alford (BHsc (TR), MHsc (HSM & ACM), GCMHP) is a First Year Experience Coordinator at Western Sydney University - The College, teaching across a number of diploma of health science subjects with a focus in Therapeutic Recreation. Stewart is also completing his PhD at the University of Wollongong. Stewart has an array of clinical experience as a Therapeutic Recreation Practitioner with research interests in Mental Health, Aging, Resilience, Motivation and Lifelong Learning.
Chapter Summary

This chapter demonstrates the importance of innovative evaluation methods in visitor contexts, through a case study at a zoo. The Assiniboine Park Zoo in Winnipeg, Manitoba developed a new exhibit, Journey to Churchill. This exhibit was intended to help visitors connect with and learn about arctic animals, ecosystems, conservation and climate change. To assess whether outcomes were achieved, three different methods were used. Readers will learn about personal meaning mapping, overheard conversations, and social media analysis as effective methods for evaluating a range of visitor outcomes. Particularly, this research demonstrates that innovative and flexible methods are needed to assess a broad range of visitor outcomes such as interpretive learning, emotional connection, behaviour changes, and understanding public discourse that may not be possible with traditional survey or interview methods. The real-life impacts of this case study are discussed to demonstrate the importance of visitor evaluation for effective program planning, review, and ongoing guidance in the management of visitor experiences. By the end of this case study readers will be able to: 1) demonstrate an understanding of the importance of evaluation in visitor contexts; 2) identify three innovative methods that can be used in visitor evaluations; 3) and demonstrate an understanding of leisure experiences as potential opportunities for free-choice learning, emotional connections, and sustainable behaviour change. In general, this case study found that by using this combination of research methods that the interpretive, emotional, and behavioural goals were mostly achieved by the exhibit, but that there was a lack of public awareness about research and conservation efforts facilitated by the APZ. Additionally, this case study demonstrated that the JTC exhibit can facilitate meaningful learning about Arctic animals and climate change through emotional connections to the animals in the exhibit, especially the polar bears.
Learning Objectives:

After reading this Chapter, learners will be able to:

1. Demonstrate understanding of the importance of evaluation in visitor contexts.
2. Identify and describe three innovative methods that can be used in visitor evaluations.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of leisure experiences as potential opportunities for free-choice learning, emotional connections, and sustainable behaviour change.

The Issue

Zoos have become places for the public to learn about the interconnectedness of ecosystems, species, and our role as humans, especially in relation to climate change (Clayton, Saunders, Matiasek, & Grajal, 2013). With this in mind, the Journey to Churchill (JTC) exhibit at Winnipeg’s Assiniboine Park Zoo (APZ) was designed with interpretive, emotional, and behavioural objectives to help people learn and connect with the Arctic as a place, as well as the Arctic environment and species. Research demonstrates that well-designed and delivered interpretive experiences can have a positive effect on knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours regarding the environment and sustainability (Ballantyne, Packer, & Sutherland, 2011; Bueddefeld & Van Winkle, 2016; Powell & Ham 2013; Tofield, Coll, Vyle, & Bolstad, 2003). However, exhibit evaluations are infrequently conducted (Kelling & Gaalema, 2011) and when they are conducted, they often focus on visitor satisfaction, stay time at exhibits, while more in-depth emotional and behavioural outcomes are not often evaluated (Wilson, Kelling, Poline, Bloomsmit, & Maple, 2003). Innovations in evaluative practices are needed to move beyond static measures, which fail to capture the range of outcomes possible from leisure sites that have dual mandates to educate and to entertain visitors (Bueddefeld & Van Winkle, 2016). This case study features innovative evaluation methods to assess the complex interpretive, emotional and behavioural outcomes possible, within the Assiniboine Park Zoo case study context.

Understanding the multi-dimensional nature of visitors’ experiences is complex, so the research team decided to examine interpretive, emotional, and behavioural objectives using mixed-methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the outcomes. This case study research used a qualitative paradigm guided by the Contextual Model of Learning, which provided a framework for understanding free-choice learning experiences within personal, socio-cultural, and physical contexts (Falk & Dierking, 2000). An innovative combination of personal meaning mapping interviews,
overheard conversations, and a social media analysis were employed to understand elements of the Journey to Churchill visitor experience.

The Innovation

Case Context

In 2014, the Journey to Churchill exhibit opened at the Assiniboine Park Zoo, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. The Journey to Churchill exhibit consists of ten acres of habitat that houses Arctic wildlife such as muskox, caribou, arctic foxes, wolves, snowy owls, a variety of seals, and polar bears (see Figure 1 for an original map of the planned exhibit). The exhibit includes an interpretive centre with an active research and conservation staff (the Leatherdale International Polar Bear Conservation Centre) where orphaned polar bear cubs from Churchill, Manitoba can be cared for and integrated into the larger polar bear enclosure area. Within the exhibit there are also indoor and underwater viewing areas (including an underwater tunnel which visitors can walk through), a 360 degree theatre, and a polar theme playground attached to a cafeteria area styled to reflect the town of Churchill (Assiniboine Park Conservancy, 2017). The exhibit is described as a place for visitors to “experience a variety of naturalistic landscapes and animal viewing areas. Interpretive signage and interactive displays invite visitors to learn about biodiversity, climate change and conservation. It is an educational classroom like no other, inviting exploration, challenging thinking and promoting personal action” (Assiniboine Park Conservancy, 2017). This immersive and unique exhibit goes beyond traditional signage and interpretive displays, and is designed to engage the visitor emotionally and physically by integrating them into the space. The illusion of open spaces, which is achieved by rock walls and plexiglass wall size windows and tunnels, allows visitors to view multiple animals simultaneously (such as muskox and wolves or polar bears) that this lends itself to making the visitor feel as if they are in the landscape (see Figure 2). When visitor experiences have been planned to engage people emotionally and physically, as well as intellectually, methods for evaluation must also reflect these outcomes. Traditional methods of evaluation in interpretation, which tend to focus on surveys, interview questions, and observations need to be expanded upon to understand these complex potential visitor outcomes (Bueddefeld & Van Winkle, 2016; Wilson et al., 2003).
Figure 1: Map of the JTC exhibit. Image used with permission from the Assiniboine Park Conservancy (2017).

Figure 2: Barrier free viewing at the JTC exhibit. Image used with permission from the Assiniboine Park Conservancy (2017).
Figures 3-5: Visitors engaging with polar bears at the JTC exhibit.

Image sources (left to right): Assiniboine Park Zoo Facebook Photos (2015a, 2015b, 2015c).

**Stakeholders Involved**

The Assiniboine Park Zoo (APZ) was the primary stakeholder in this research. The APZ was keen to determine if the objectives of JTC exhibit were achieved as part of the visitor’s experience. As described, the exhibit was designed with interpretive, emotional, and behavioural goals intended to create “an educational classroom like no other, inviting exploration, challenging thinking and promoting personal action” (Assiniboine Park Conservancy, 2017). The APZ approached University of Manitoba visitor experience researchers Bueddefeld, Van Winkle, and Benbow to collaborate to gain an in-depth understanding of the visitors’ experiences. This research was then used to apply for, and subsequently win several exhibit and design awards within zoo associations and an innovation award from the provincial tourism association, Travel Manitoba.

As a non-profit organization that attracts both domestic and international visitors, the APZ also has secondary stakeholders such as the City of Winnipeg and tourism organizations such as Travel Manitoba and Tourism Winnipeg. These secondary stakeholders also have an interest in the success of the APZ as an attraction to retain and increase visitation to the area. In this way, this visitor research is also important to these secondary stakeholders as it is needed to inform both current and ongoing visitor experience management and practices.

**Approach Used and the Impact**

The innovative methods used in this research were selected for their appropriateness for the free-choice learning context (personal meaning mapping interviews: Adams, Falk, & Dierking, 2003; Falk, Moussouri, & Coulson, 1998; Falk & Dierking, 2000), the zoo context (overheard conversations: Clayton, Fraser, & Saunders, 2009; Tunnicliffe, 1996a; Tunnicliffe, 1996b; Tunnicliffe, 1998), and to provide insights into the unprompted public discourse about a place without disruption to the on-site visitor experience by utilizing social media analyses (Russo, 2011).
Personal Meaning Mapping (PMM)

PMM consists of a brainstorming activity that requires participants to write any words, images, or phrases in relation to a prompt word (Falk & Dierking, 2000). PMM is used to understand learning and visitor experiences in museums and other free-choice learning contexts – typically to compare pre- and post-visit museum knowledge and learning (Falk & Dierking, 2000; Falk et al., 1998). This innovative and flexible visitor experience measurement tool can be used both quantitatively and qualitatively, which means that it is flexible in terms of what type of research questions you are asking; it is appropriate to use with both “how much” and “why” research questions. Additionally, this method is open-ended and helps to understand more holistically the visitor experience. For example, in research related to sustainability and climate change at the Assiniboine Park Zoo the personal meaning maps highlighted not only what visitors had learned, but served to identify misconceptions as well (Bueddefeld & Van Winkle, 2016). As PMM can also include drawings it is also useful for understanding experiences of children and visitors’ whose primary language is not the same as that of the researchers.

For this study, twenty-nine visitors were asked to complete a personal meaning map of their learning related to the Journey to Churchill exhibit and were then interviewed about what they wrote or drew. The visitors were asked to complete the PMM before they entered the exhibit and then met the researcher after they had finished their visit of the exhibit to better understand immediate changes in visitor thoughts and experiences related to their visit. The PMM provided insight into what visitors learned and when paired with open-ended interview questions this was a particularly effective technique for both understanding and evaluating the visitors’ learning from their perspective. In this case, the PMM data demonstrated that visitors gained a broad understanding of concepts and created more connections between concepts related to Arctic species, conservation, and changing environments. This method was useful in providing evaluation of all three areas of concern in this case study, as it’s open ended nature meant that participants discussed interpretive, emotional, and behavioural outcomes – often unprompted.
Overheard Conversations

Overheard conversations is an unobtrusive method to capture a wide array of visitors’ responses to free-choice learning sites such as museums, zoos, and aquariums (Tofield, Coll, Vyle, & Bolstad, 2003) and consists of a researcher standing in a common area (with signage and a name tag to indicate their presence) and they then listen to conversations and make notes of how visitors interact in the exhibit (Clayton et al., 2009). The overheard conversation data was collected systematically by selecting different part of the exhibit to overhear and note conversations in 10-15 minute intervals about the visitor engagement (which includes visitor reactions, actions, and the actions of the animals – for example, were the polar bears swimming, wrestling or sleeping during this observation). Due to the high volume of people in any given exhibit, participants were randomly selected for observation (i.e. every 3rd visitor) as they entered a pre-selected part of the exhibit. Note that signage was posted regarding the observation and the researcher wore a name tag so that any person in the exhibit that may have questions or feel uncomfortable with participating in the could feel free to approach them (no such issues occurred). This particular method proved to be most insightful in evaluating the emotional objectives of this research. The reactions of visitors to seeing the polar bears swimming was most often emotional and not always verbal (such as a
gasp and then the visitor places their hand next to the polar bears paw on the glass), and provided insightful vignettes to add to the participants comments in the PMM interviews.

**Social Media Content Analysis**

A content analysis of publicly available social networking sites’ posts was undertaken to examine interpretive, emotional, and behavioural objectives. The social media content analysis consisted of examining posts or tweets from the week before the Journey to Churchill exhibit opened (June 20, 2014) until the commencement of the data collection (November 18, 2014). The social media data was collected by “capturing” the posts (Facebook) and Tweets (Twitter) of all content during the pre-determined time frame, using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo© and the web browser extension NCapture©. The social media analysis found that conservation messages are abundant on the Assiniboine Park Zoo’s social media accounts, and that comments and posts often expressed a sense of pride that this new exhibit was in Winnipeg. This data was insightful in determining the broader public discourse about the interpretive, emotional and to a lesser extent, the behavioural outcomes. For example, through this analysis the researcher could search all terms related to conservation to understand the public opinion and knowledge (or lack thereof) of conservation efforts related to the zoo. This type of evaluation is useful when wanting to understand the broader discourse around a topic.

**Implications & Lessons learned**

Through these innovative measures interpretive, emotional, and behavioural goals had largely been met by the JTC exhibit. This evaluation also identified that there was a lack of public awareness in the research that the Assiniboine Park Zoo conducts. Further, this research found that the JTC exhibit can facilitate meaningful learning about Arctic animals and ecosystems, and that this is achieved by helping visitors connect emotionally to the animals at the zoo – particularly the polar bears.

The data demonstrated that while the public was generally supportive of polar bear conservation and research, there was a poor understanding of what was already taking place and what was needed in terms of support. Specifically, this innovative evaluative research provided the zoo with feedback, which told them that their exhibit is effectively conveying the information that it aspires to and is creating meaningful connections between the animals in the exhibit and visitors. It also demonstrated that the zoo needed to improve how they communicate their conservation and research goals and efforts to the public.
Traditional methods of evaluation such as surveys and interviews would have been able to tell us what facts visitors are learning or inform some elements of the emotional aspect of the visit, but would not have been able to provide a multi-dimensional view of these outcomes. For example, emotions were both discussed in the PMMs, observed, and found in relation to the online public understanding. This helps to ensure the reliability of the data, and can provide insight into what goals are being met and why or why not. In this case, the implications of this research are that it provides support for continued investment in the visitor experience and public communication will help to better facilitate and meet the interpretive, emotional, and behavioural objectives of the JTC exhibit at the APZ. This type of evaluative research is instrumental in providing non-profit environmental education centres, such as the APZ, with supporting evidence for funding and programming. In this case, this evaluation also played a role in the APZ achieving international accreditation in the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, which requires that facilities meet certain standards in both animal care, and education and conservation. However, the PMM and overheard conversations methods allow researchers to understand the visitors’ experiences in specific moments in time, rather than in a continual or ongoing basis. An additional downside of the PMM method is that it can be difficult to find a private space in such exhibits to conduct the PMM, and as such, they are often done in public or semi-public settings. Depending upon the nature of the research, this could be a potential issue in certain research contexts that may be considered sensitive to participants. Social media analyses allow researchers to gain a broader perspective of an understanding about a topic or place, but it does not allow for further depth of investigation or clarity regarding a particular post.

This research demonstrates that through the JTC experience the APZ has an important role to play in helping visitors connect with the animals, while encouraging individuals to act in sustainably responsible ways to support the animals and ecosystems that the JTC exhibit represents. In terms of innovative evaluation the lessons learned in the case study are that multiple mixed methods, such as personal meaning mapping, overheard conversations and social media analysis can provide insight into complex visitor outcomes and play a useful role in the evaluation of interpretive programs and experiences. This case study provides an example of how innovative, engaging, and unobtrusive research and data collection methods can be used in leisure settings and will be useful and relevant to both academics, practitioners, or non-academic audiences.

Discussion Questions

1. How can each of these methods be implemented in your leisure evaluation context?
2. What questions could these methods help you to address within your organization?
3. What advantages / disadvantages would each of these methods of evaluation have in your leisure context?
References


Authors

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Christine Van Winkle (Ph.D. Associate Professor, Faculty of Kinesiology and Recreation Management, University of Manitoba) cares deeply about the role of festivals, parks, museums and interpretative centres in our community and as such has dedicated her career as a researcher to exploring visitors' experiences in these tourism and leisure settings. Christine is currently leading a Federally funded, multi-province research project that looks at the use of mobile devices in everyday and festival contexts. As well, she has recently received funds to explore how people learn about food and agriculture through tourism. Christine's work has been published widely and appears in a range of tourism, leisure and event journals, books, proceedings and reports. Christine's research has been funded with grants through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada; as well as provincial funding and funding from community and industry organizations. Christine recently received a Highly Commended Paper Award for her work published in the International Journal of Event and Festival Management and The International Travel and Tourism Research Association has honored Christine's research with multiple awards. Email: Christine.VanWinkle@umanitoba.ca
Mary Benbow (Ph.D. Associate Dean (Academic), Clayton H. Riddell Faculty of Environment, Earth, and Resources, University of Manitoba) primarily focuses her research upon the social, cultural, and environmental implications of zoos and aquariums. Her research looks at how these cultural institutions affect human perceptions of animals and conservation that in turn impact how animals are managed. This forms part of a broader field “Animal Geographies” that looks at the multifaceted roles that animals play in our lives and seeks to illuminate the complex relationships between humans and animals. Email: Mary.Benbow@umanitoba.ca
Edmonton’s WinterCity Strategy – Enhancing winter living through innovative leisure practice in a northern Canadian city

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Chapter Summary

Winter climates provide opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in a variety of leisure activities such as skating, toboganning, skiing, snowboarding and more recent introductions such as fat biking. These activities serve to animate winter cities and enhance the quality of life of residents. At the same time, winter conditions often act as a detriment to participation in leisure pursuits as people are reluctant to endure cold temperatures outdoors. Winter cities around the world are attempting to reposition winter as a season for residents and visitors to embrace and enjoy. This case documents the process used by multiple stakeholders in the City of Edmonton to celebrate its winter season and transform itself into “a World-Leading Winter City.” Initiated with a series of public consultations beginning in 2011, ten themes were identified to formulate a WinterCity Strategy for the City of Edmonton. The themes are categories divided into “Winter Life,” “Winter Design,” “Winter Economy,” and “Our Winter Story.” Since the launch of the Strategy in October 2012, City practitioners, entrepreneurs, NGO partners and members of the public have been engaged in efforts to reclaim the public spaces of Edmonton to celebrate winter living. A WinterCity Coordinator and support team at the City of Edmonton is championing these efforts. Efforts include developing a four-season patio culture; creating new winter based narratives with the City’s poet Laurette, public school writing competitions, and media outreach; expanding winter festival offerings and related special events; and, enhancing building and infrastructure design to mitigate the negative effects of cold temperatures and wind, and enhance solar access. The impact of the Winter Cities Initiative and lessons learned from the first 5 years of these efforts are described in the case. This case study aids in winter city repositioning by identifying innovative ideas for reclaiming and animating the winter cityscapes making them more attractive places to live and visit. The case also provides a “kick start” to expand the dialogue around the impact of climate on quality of life, leisure participation and community identity.
Learning Objectives:

After reading this case study, learners will be able to:

1. Describe an example of a collaborative city wide initiative to utilize winter climate assets to create innovative leisure settings and experiences for residents and visitors;
2. Identify strategies and critical success factors to enhance the attractiveness and livability of winter cities;
3. Understand the positive influence of inclusive governance models and partnership practices in multi-sectoral initiatives.

The Issue, Opportunity or Trend

While winter climates and their associated conditions such as cold, snow and ice are often perceived as impediments to leisure, they also provide opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in a variety of leisure activities such as skating, toboganning, skiing, snowboarding and more recent introductions such as fat biking. These activities can animate winter cities and enhance the quality of life of residents if the conditions to participate are actively promoted and enabled through innovative design practices, event planning and shifting people’s mindsets and behavior patterns. Winter cities around the world are attempting to reposition winter as a season for residents and visitors to embrace and enjoy. The case documents the process and approaches used by multiple stakeholders in the City of Edmonton to celebrate its winter season and transform itself into “a World-Leading Winter City.”

Insights from the literature

While we may assume that winter climates adversely impact leisure behaviour, there is little empirical evidence in the literature about the relationship between them. There is some evidence that when weather is inclement, people will substitute some of their leisure for work (Connolly, 2008). Recreationists consider weather circumstances before deciding whether or not to engage in activities (Perry, 1972; Rutty & Andrey, 2014) yet, in Alberta, adaptations in leisure during the winter months were speculated to fluctuate more based on people’s demographic and socio-economic circumstances than by the external environment during winter (Horna, 1985). In other words, people will adapt their leisure to winter environments if they are made accessible and affordable. More recent research supports the resilience of winter city inhabitants in Norway whereby researchers found that having a positive wintertime mindset was associated with greater life satisfaction, personal growth and positive emotions (Leibowitz, 2015). In northern climates like Canada, where 2-3% of people experience the “winter blues” or seasonal affective disorder (Canadian Mental Health Association, 2017) and where leisure is becoming increasingly home-centered and sedentary (Balmer, 2011), creating opportunities to develop positive winter mindsets among residents thus enabling them to
adapt to seasonal weather fluctuations is important. Similarly, creating climate responsive habitats and livable winter cities has the potential to minimize negative impacts of seasonal weather changes.

Winter has been shown to present challenges to cities that are marketing themselves as tourism destinations as well. These destinations often have to confront and change negative images of winter in the mindsets of visitors in order to attract them. Similarly, these destinations also have to work collaboratively across sectors to design attractive and animated environments for leisure to take place. In Winnipeg, the Forks National Historic Site has reframed a popular summer attraction to a cold weather attraction by highlighting and animating a frozen river using special events and public recreation offerings (Johnson & Van Winkle, 2015). These sorts of initiatives have the potential to transform winter cities into vibrant, livable and exciting places to live and visit.

At a time when cities are piloting placemaking strategies to enhance year round livability, there is a need to document and share the innovative practices taking place and the impacts that result. The WinterCity Strategy in the City of Edmonton provides a timely and instructive case study on an integrated and holistic approach to transform the winter urban environment and encourage its use by residents and visitors.

The Innovation

Case Context

Edmonton -- WinterCity Initiative: The beginnings

Edmonton is North America’s northernmost city with a metropolitan population over one million. An important trading post in the settlement of Canada, today it’s the “Gateway to the North” and serves as a staging point for large-scale oil sands projects and diamond mining, as well as serving as the province of Alberta’s capital with significant government and higher education activities. Located at 53.5°N, in the winter this northern city receives an average of 123.5 centimetres (48.6 in) of snowfall per annum and has a daytime high of -10.4°C in January, its coldest month. While Edmonton is one of Canada’s sunniest cities, winter months have fewer hours of sun; on winter solstice (Dec. 21) the day length is only 7.5 hours (Wikipedia, 2017).

Darkness and cold can inhibit Edmontonians’ from getting outside and engaging with their fellow citizens and the City’s environment. Consultations in 2011 with residents revealed that Edmontonians felt that winter could be “dull, dark, and dangerous” (Soles, 2012). Political champions and city managers set out to change this perception and lack
of winter engagement. They along with private sector, NGO and citizen partners launched the WinterCity Initiative to tackle the challenge of winter.

**Stakeholders Involved**

The WinterCity Initiative was supported by multiple political champions including city councillors and two mayors. Private sector developers, architects, planners, builders, retailers, and the hospitality sector stepped forward. NGOs with an interest in placemaking, community support, and professional services also participated. City managers and staff were integrated in initial planning and consultation and even more crucially during the implementation phases. A Thinktank was established, co-chaired by City Councillor Ben Henderson and a private sector design consultant Simon O’Bryne (Stantec). As champions the co-chairs realized that “Edmontonians are ready to make the culture shift, no longer viewing winter as something to escape from, but instead as a unique and magical season (O’Bryrne, 2012).

To implement the WinterCity Strategy developed from consultations and research performed in 2011 and 2012, an advisory group with broad sectoral representation was established. The WinterCity Advisory Council met approximately 3 times a year. Four Working Committees were established to give concrete input and guidance on their subject areas. An example of these was the Winter Design Council. These Councils were co-chaired by one City branch manager and one community organization representative, providing important opportunities to embed community ideas into the realities of city operations and procedures. A unique Winter Festival Working Group was established to deal with the special challenges of running winter events. City staff were not included in the Thinktank, but their presence on the Working Groups was critical to putting ideas into motion. Having City staff, Councillors, and community stakeholders at one table brought diverse perspectives to the table, and enabled more effective and efficient decision making.

**Approach Used**

The Initiative started with a review of best practices used in other jurisdictions, including Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Quebec City (Fricson & Ranson, 2011). Next, Edmontonians’ insights on winter living were documented (Soles, 2011). Ten themes were identified from these information sources to formulate a WinterCity Strategy for the City of Edmonton. The themes were categorized into strategic pillars: “Winter Life,” “Winter Design,” “Winter Economy,” and “Our Winter Story” (City of Edmonton, 2012).

The **Winter Life Pillar** aims to make it easier and more fun to be outside in Edmonton during the winter months. The **Winter Excitement Guide** was developed by City recreation programmers and partners to boost awareness of recreation opportunities during the winter months. Winter Fun Kits were developed and could be booked by families.
or communities. The Fun Kits encourage community recreation through portable fire pits accompanied by “how to” cook campfire snacks, and physical activity through the provision snowshoe and kick sleds with directions on how to use them (Lynn Ferguson, personal communications, 2017).

A major source of life dissatisfaction can be the daily commute to work. Encouraging Edmontonians to engage in active transportation, using cross country skis or fat bikes, has gained rapid acceptance in the City. A community led project with assistance from City program resulted in the expansion of cross country ski trails in the City’s south side, connecting commuters to a light rail transit station. A ski lock up at the station secures commuter’s skis for the day (Susan Holdsworth & Lynn Ferguson, personal communications, 2017). Fat bikes, bicycles with wide/fat tires, are designed for winter cycling. They make biking in slushy and icy conditions safer. Sales documented, as one Edmonton bicycle retailer suggests, the use of fat bikes doubled each year between 2013 and 2015 (WinterCity Office, 2017), supporting on the ground observations by recreation providers and traffic managers that winter cycling is growing quickly (Angie Blades, personal communications, 2017). This appears supported by cycling retailers who suggest they no longer have to lay off staff in the winter, as it’s just as busy in the winter (WinterCity Office, 2017). Supporting active transportation through groomed ski trails and well maintained dedicated winter cycling routes has been committed to by City managers and politicians (WinterCity Office, 2017). Weekend recreation using skis was also fostered by additional cross country trails in the River Valley, and the opening of cafes for Nordic brunches. Offering bistro-style food in the heart of the River Valley was enabled by willing private sector partners, ready to support 4-season living (Angie Blades, personal communications, 2017) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Enjoying brunch at a River Valley café after cross country skiing (Credit: Susan Holdsworth)
A second WinterCity Initiative focus is summarized in the **Winter Design Pillar.** Arguably one of the most significant challenges, as Edmonton and many cities around the world have failed to adopt building and planning approaches that suit winter environments. Winter design focuses on how the City and its businesses design and build urban places to make them more friendly and accessible in the winter and year-round. This includes considerations such as solar access, wind breaks, and using lighting to create vibrant, celebratory environments. Meetings intensively in the early years of the Initiative produced *Winter Design Guidelines* which are internationally regarded for their emphasis on placemaking and robust winter-focused best practices. Major developments, both government and private sector, must consider these guidelines as part of their planning and approval process. An example of the importance of public consultation in the review of publically funded winter recreation infrastructure was illustrated in the development of a new skating oval. Citizens demanded the oval’s building be realigned to maximize solar access by facing the main windows southward, a simple sounding consideration, but one that may not have been voiced had increased dialogue about desirable winter-focused design not been initiated. A second design example is the establishment skating trails in two Edmonton neighbourhoods along with warming huts that capture the sun’s energy and provide wind breaks encourage active recreation. The Victoria Park Freezeway is animated with colourful lighting (see Figure 2). These design examples illustrate the social licence that has been generated amongst Edmontonians to discuss and propose new ways of engaging with winter, generating a more positive views towards the season. Interviews with WinterCity’s coordinator, Susan Holdsworth reveal that the Winter Design Pillar is the most challenging of the pillars, as the City still struggles to create and identify best winter design practice and processes. Growing this expertise is a priority for the City.

Figure 2: Victoria Park Freezeway: A skating trail animated with light
The **Winter Economy Pillar** encourages Edmontonians to reimagine winter as the city’s most significant resource, drawing on its characteristics to advance Edmonton as a world leader in winter design and manufacturing, technology, services and celebrations. A focus on winter business opportunities was used to diversify the local economy. Strengthening and expansion of winter festivals in Edmonton was one approach. Figure 3 illustrates growth in visitor numbers at these festivals, especially Flying Canoë Volant (Figure 4). Many other small winter events were initiated with assistance from the City, or developed by community groups inspired by the Initiative. To reduce operating costs, a shared inventory of winter festival assets (e.g., firepit, fire-rated tents, lights) was established. A Winter Festival Working Group, a sub-committee of the WinterCity Advisory Council was established to boost winter festival’s access to opportunities. A key observation made by these veteran winter festival providers is that operating in the winter can be 30-40% more expensive than summer operations, because of snow clearing costs, equipment breakage due to cold weather, and the need for more shelter. As a result, they are advocating for great financial support.

**Figure 3: Attendance at Winter Festivals since WinterCity Initiative launch, 2014-2017 (Source: WinterCity Office, 2017)**
Developing a four-season patio culture was another main goal of this pillar. Winter patios were not a part of Edmonton’s culture prior to the Initiative. The Initiative partnered with entrepreneurs to celebrate “Farewell to Winter Patio Parties” in March 2014 and 2015, and welcomed winter in December 2016 with a “Kick-off to Winter Patio Season”. The WinterCity office worked with other City departments to arrange three-day patio permit extensions that allowed venues to create temporary outdoor patios without a permit (WinterCity Office, 2017). Each season 400 WinterCity branded blankets were gifted to participating venues and 100 seat cushions were loaned. Throughout Winter 2016/2017 venues were encouraged to open their patios on nice days. Many venues viewed the initiative positively: “The Patio Party was a great idea – my staff and myself saw lots of discussion of it on social media. It worked great” and “Our property is actually putting a business plan together to implement a full winterized patio into our 5-year capital plan” (WinterCity Office, 2017, p. 38).

In addition to established festivals and the enlivening of city streets with patios, Edmonton focused on its strength as an event destination, attracting unique large scale events such as Red Bull Crashed Ice (Figure 5) and temporary exhibits and attractions such as Ice Castles (Figure 6).
Edmonton Tourism’s efforts to promote the City as a winter destination was strengthened by the patio and festival programs. Their award winning winter destination campaign led the charge in boosting domestic and international arrivals during the winter months. Below, Figures 7 and 8 illustrate their award winning 2013/14 efforts at the beginning of the WinterCity Initiative. Their goal, to generate 12,000 unique visitors to winterinedmonton.com was exceeded, attracting 61,895 unique visitors to the site, and referring 23,183 of those visitors to their partners, including festivals, attractions, restaurant, hotels and more. Additionally #ExploreEdmonton was applied to 3,299 Instagram photos during the 3-month campaign period, followers on a new Instagram account and fans on their
established Facebook page expanded dramatically. A final goal, increased hotel occupancy during the course of the campaign was also surpassed, achieving an average increase of 1.64% equating to an economic impact of CAN$8,131,915 (Edmonton Tourism, 2014).

Figures 7 and 8: Edmonton Tourism’s award winning Winter Campaign - 2013/14.

Edmonton Tourism’s promotion efforts also addressed a fourth strategic direction, the **Winter Story Pillar**. This pillar was designed to adjust the narratives that residents tell each other about winter. To build an awareness of the opportunities that winter brings, and help locals remember the magical memories that winter time can generate, especially for those who spent their childhoods in Edmonton. It’s a call to “be honest about [Edmonton’s] climate” and celebrate the City’s “northerness” (City of Edmonton, 2012, pg. 40) This locally focused exercise, once embraced by citizens, entrepreneurs, planners, etc., can then be broadcast to regional and distant visitors, inviting them to enjoy Edmonton’s winter season.

Approaches used to advance the Winter Story Pillar included the **Winter Excitement Guide** described earlier, encouraging local media outlets and especially weather announcers to talk about winter differently, and the Winterscapes program, which promoted front yard wintertime beatification. Winterscape encouraged gardeners to introduce shrubs and plants with winter interest to their yards. Homeowners were encouraged to build whimsical features using snow, ice, lights, and paint, to create forts, slides, and sculptures. The WinterCity Office has its own Facebook and Twitter accounts which encouraged followers to share winter related information and build a community of winter enthusiasts. While detailed analytics of the success of this social media engagement is not
complete, the Facebook account “reach” grew from 824,537 in 2014-15 to 1,270,310 in 2016-17 (WinterCity Office, 2017). The winter story initiatives appear to be working as 60% of Edmontonians in an online survey (n=1869) agreed that they “take pride in winter” whereas 24% did not. Campaigns lead by Edmonton Tourism which communicate Edmonton’s unique winter offerings to external audiences appear to be succeeding as well. By tackling the winter issue head-on in 2015, the destination marketing organization has used a frank and humour-filled approach regarding the realities of winter in Edmonton and the rich experiences it can provide. Promotional efforts along with direct flights in the winter season to northern Europe has increased the overseas awareness of Edmonton’s winter charms.

A summary of actions associated with each pillar are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: WinterCity Initiative Pillars: Select actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winter Life</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Winterscaping program for homeowners and businesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Winter Fun Kits</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Winter Excitement Guide</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expanded groomed and ungroomed cross country ski trails for commuting and</td>
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<td>recreation, with ski lock ups at LRT station (Ski2LRT)</td>
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<td>• Winter “Green” Shacks, an continuation of summer recreation provision to</td>
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<tr>
<td>neighbourhoods for kids out of school</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Fostering new ways to experience winter: Fat bikes, kick sleds, etc.</td>
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<th>Winter Design</th>
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<td>• Design that maximizing solar access</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Design that reduces the impact of wind and cold temperatures</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Winter Design Guidelines</td>
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<td>• Winter design considerations become standard planning practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Public consultation on winter-specific design</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Using lighting and winterscaping to enhance aesthetic appeal and safety</td>
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<tr>
<th>Winter Economy</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Winter patios</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Winter fashion week, and designer winter fashion shows</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Edmonton Tourism regional, national and international promotional campaigns</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Support large festivals and smaller local events</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Expanded food services in River Valley and other winter venues</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Animating shared spaces, e.g. downtown square, to enhance wintertime</td>
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<td>experiences of visitors and residents.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Attracting unique events and attractions (e.g., Red Bull Crashed Ice).</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Winter Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• School outreach, working with kids change Edmonton’s winter narrative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sharing the story locally: City’s poet laureate, local media, and event promoters shape and share new winter narrative</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engaging community via social media regarding winter opportunities and what a living in a winter city means to them</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Multiple channels of storytelling, print, online, television, radio, etc. Two directional communications</td>
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Impact, Implications & Lessons Learned

“The WinterCity Strategy has done great things for this city in helping to change peoples’ mindset. People are being motivated to go outdoors. Our festival has grown from 3500 people attending five years ago, to over 40,000 in 2017. Something’s being done right. The Strategy has played a significant role in communicating that winter is a time to go outside and have fun” (Daniel Dournoyer, Winter City Strategy Year Three Report and Evaluation 2017).

The innovative approach to transform Edmonton into a WinterCity has resulted in numerous, measurable impacts that have impacted the quality of life in the city. In 2017, a three year report and evaluation was conducted by the WinterCity Office to measure the impacts and lessons learned from the first few years of implementation of the WinterCity Strategy. The evaluation was based on data that emerged from online surveys, interview, web analytics, social media analysis, attendance numbers and participation rates.

The impacts of the WinterCity Strategy has been a “story changer” to get people to shift their winter mindset to think and behave differently in winter thereby impacting quality of life. The actions undertaken have been show to change people’s perception of winter as a time to embrace, get outside and play as opposed to staying indoors and hibernating. A 2017 online survey of Edmontonians found that 44% agreed that their perception of winter has become more positive. Residents indicated that the top 5 was that the City has improved their quality of life in winter time included: 1) more winter festivals/events/things to do (31%), 2) better amenities/maintenance of infrastructure (22%), 3) better promotion and awareness of what is going on (16%), 4) more outdoor recreation activities (10%) and 5), a culture shift in public dialogue about winter (8%).

The shift in perceptions has also positively influenced behavior change as well. For example, in the online survey of residents, 36% reported that they were more active outside in the winter. Of those that cycle in the winter, 36% of them started after the introduction of the WinterCity Strategy. According to one respondent, “It’s interesting how your mindset can shift. I never really understood winter cyclists. But two years ago, I realized I didn’t want to put my bike away in the fall, so I thought I’d see how long I could keep biking in winter. The first winter I only rode to work six times. Now in my second year, I ride 3 to 4 times a week and I love it”. This quote illustrates the perception and behavior shift that has occurred for some Edmontonians as a result of the changes made through the WinterCity Strategy. A significant emphasis in the Strategy was to animate the city through winter festivals and events. The number of events and attendance has been increasing steadily since the Strategy was launched. In 2015 the City hosted 21 winter events with 116,450 attendees. In 2017, 50 events were hosted and an estimated 239,885 people attended.
The approach used has also meant that the WinterCity Strategy has been an “influencer” which has given various groups in the City social license to plan and implement initiatives independent of the WinterCity Office. The success of the Strategy has caught the attention and influenced both internal and external audiences. For example, members of the Advisory Council members and the WinterCity Office have been asked to present the strategy at numerous national and international conferences. It has also received multiple awards including two national awards from the Canadian Institute of Planners 2014 Award for Planning Excellence, the 2014 Communities in Bloom Winter Life Award, and two provincial awards including the Alberta Professional Planning Institute 2013 Award of Merit and the 2014 Minister’s Award for Municipal Excellence from Alberta Municipal Affairs. Within the city, the model that was used to create the strategy (robust community consultation, collaborative and evidence based) has influenced the design and development of other city initiatives such as the Edmonton Transit Strategy, Child Friendly Edmonton, Breathe - Edmonton’s Green Network Strategy, and the Live Active Strategy.

The development and implementation of Edmonton’s WinterCity Strategy has resulted in numerous lessons learned that can assist other winter cities to shift winter mindsets and positively impact the quality of life in winter urban settings.

1. A solid foundation

The extensive, multi-faceted consultation used to develop the strategy resulted in a strong understanding of the mental models that existed and underpinned the transformation needed in the City. This understanding allowed for the development of a Strategy that was built to shift and transform the winter mindset thus changing the story and consequently, the built environment and social behavior.

2. The holistic approach

The vision in the strategy intersected recreation, urban design and well-being and as such, facilitated intersectionality within and between City departments and numerous external partners.

3. Political champions and investment

The WinterCity Strategy has both political and resident buy in. Political buy-in has been critical to launch the Strategy and engender broad support across Departments. Some of this political support came in the form of championing the ideas and some of it came in financial investment.
4. Governance and communication structure

The multi-partner Advisory Council and its working groups ensure that the Strategy is embedded across City Departments and that its actions are integrated across departments and sectors. The regular meeting schedules ensure ongoing communication and relationship building required for forward movement on the Strategy.

5. Public buy-in

The consultative process and broad based partnerships have resulted in citizen buy in which in turn has given groups social license to initiate and implement activities during winter.

6. Partnerships

Partnerships among community leagues and community-based NGOs, City departments and programs, hospitality and leisure delivery businesses, developers, design firms, universities, and many other actors were essential for moving forward with Edmonton’s “embrace the winter” agenda. No one organization could foster the cultural shift necessary to advance real change.

7. Dream big and be opportunistic

Facilitating a change in mindset and activity requires an open mind to the ideas that already exist and to those that will come forward during the process. The WinterCity Office suggests that it is important to explore new ideas regardless of where they emerge from and to be creative in the use of existing resources and how they can be used to implement new opportunities. At the same time, ideas have been screened to ensure they align with the principles of the strategy to ensure they are authentic, attitude-changing and sustainable over the long term.

In conclusion, the Edmonton WinterCity Strategy provides an excellent example of a bold, multi-faceted approach to shift mindset and behavior in a winter city. The approaches used to develop and implement the WinterCity Strategy are innovative and impactful and as such, they merit discussion and consideration by those involved in broad based quality of life initiatives. As with other early adopters of innovative approaches, the proponents of change in Edmonton are learning as they go, evaluating their results and enhancing the strategy along the way. Within a short period of time, their efforts have had an impact on the quality of life of Edmontonians and their approach has positively influenced the design and development of additional strategies within and outside of the City.
Discussion Questions

1. Locate three cities that experience a winter climate. Do an online search of the city to determine how it highlights its climate to existing residents and to potential visitors.
   a. Is the winter climate portrayed as a positive or negative asset for the city?
   b. To what extent are outdoor leisure pursuits profiled in the images used?
   c. Do you see opportunities for these cities to enhance winter livability?

2. Do an online search of Edmonton and the WinterCity Initiative.
   a. How does the portrayal of Edmonton differ from the communities you viewed online in question 1?
   b. Does Edmonton look like an attractive place to live or visit?
   c. How are leisure pursuits utilized in the Edmonton case to make the community more livable in winter?

3. What other ideas do you have for Edmonton to continue its momentum and position itself as a World-leading Winter City?
References


City of Edmonton (October 2012). For the love of winter: Strategy for transforming Edmonton into a World-leading winter city. Edmonton, AB.


Authors

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