

Recreation and trauma: An exploratory study of how specialized recreation organizations address
the needs of their unique clientele

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Abstract

Recreation and trauma: An exploratory study of how specialized recreation organizations address the needs of their unique clientele

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This study investigates how recreation organizations impact people who have experienced traumatic events by understanding how these organizations create curriculum and determine success. This exploratory research used Interpretative Description design to create results with practical implications. Using a snowball sampling, participants engaged in semi structure interviews to understand the process by which organizations were created, how organizations meet the needs of their constituents with emotional and physical trauma and how each program defines and measures success. Results connect with theories of coping and provide building blocks for future research.

INTRODUCTION

Many leisure or recreation based interventions, whether it is through the arts, team athletics, individual sport or other leisure-based activities, have been linked to positive mental health effects on participants (Aria et. al, 2008). Many organizations that provide this intervention indirectly help individuals coping with trauma—they do not program specifically to help people cope with trauma, but data (both qualitative and quantitative) suggest that many of these organizations, regardless of intervention type, provide some mental health benefit to their participants. These specialized recreation organization use recreation organizations to program for a group of individuals with common experiences. Examples include summer camps for youth who have lost a parent to cancer, outdoor recreation (i.e. skiing, snowboarding, kayaking) for people with physical disabilities and camping retreats for families of war veterans. This undefined impact, begs the question, what are the common characteristics these organizations share that allow them to provide these benefits.

Very little research has been done on how leisure or recreation based interventions differ in helping an individual. For example, how does participating in a sports team differ from a snowboarding intervention? How do these organizations address the traumatic needs of their participants to get their desired results? Essentially, as this field grows and develops, it is important to understand: how do these programs fit into the current field of research, how should we measure their success, and are they providing their client base with optimal healing opportunities?

This is an exploratory research project that studied specialized recreation organizations whose participants included individuals that have experienced trauma. Using a snowball sample, I conducted interviews with program directors and coordinators to understand how these

organizations created programs for their constituent base and what benefits (i.e. self determination, independence, etc), they see themselves offering to their clientele, specifically those who have experienced trauma. Using the transcripts from each interview, I coded the interview transcripts to pull out thematic commonalities and differences between each organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

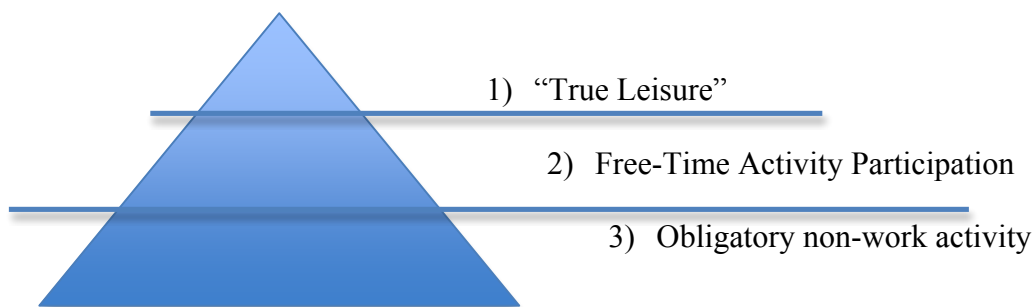
Framing Leisure

Leisure, recreation, physical activity and sport have become important tools to combat emotional trauma and illness. This study focuses on these four categories as a singular unit—thus will be used interchangeably in this paper. This stems from the recognition that recreation acts as an interventive form of social work—benefitting individuals psychologically through increased pleasure, body awareness and acceptance, and interactions with others. This work utilizes Stebbin’s framework (2013 as modified from previous works) to define leisure within three key concepts: 1) as an activity participated in during free-time, 2) the participant must have an internal desire to partake with no external pressure to do so, and 3) participation must produce satisfaction and/or fulfillment in the participant. Within this definition exists an array of activities that can constitute leisure based on how a participant views it—simply, leisure is in the eye of the beholder (Iso-Ahola, 1999; Iwasaki, et. al 2013; Kleiber et al, 2002; Manell, 1999; Stebbins, 2012). At the core of this definition is the understanding that leisure’s impact and influence on a person is defined by a participant’s self-determination and intrinsic motivation (Iso-Ahola, 1999) with positive self-rewards. Optimum intrinsic motivation within leisure is defined as participation based on autonomous and self-determined motivation. The activity in

turn facilitates optimal sensory stimulation, promotes personal competence, and produces enjoyment and satisfaction for the participant (Iso-Ahola, 1999).

True Leisure

Iso-Ahola (1999) conceptualizes a pyramid scale for his three levels of free-time or leisure activity (see figure 1). The three levels include: a) obligatory non-work activity participation; b) free time activity participation; and c) true leisure. The following section will provide examples to illustrate Iso-Ahola's three levels. As an activity's motivation is more self-determined, and intrinsically motivated, the further it distinguishes itself from work. At the bottom of the pyramid is "obligatory non-work activity participation" (Iso-Ahola, 1999). This includes activities such as doing dishes or cleaning the house—activities someone may not want to partake in, but must for functional purposes. Adding a little more self-determination and intrinsic motivation produces "free time activity participation (Iso-Ahola, 1999, pg. 37)" which is the second level of activity. This activity is something that may not meet all of the intrinsic motivating factors or the self-determination factor, such as going on a hike with your family. This is an activity you were encouraged to go on and enjoyed, but ultimately was not self-determined and autonomous. At the top of the pyramid is "true leisure," which is defined as an activity motivated by optimal self-determination and intrinsic motivation. Within this level of activity four key benefits are experienced: 1) full autonomy, 2) intrinsic rewards, 3) a flow that matches the skill level and challenge need of the participant, and 4) social experience.



Iso-Ahola (1999) argues that through a process of identification-internalization and escape, a participant is able to turn an obligatory non-work activity into a self-determined “true leisure” activity. For example, a person may see cleaning the house as an obligatory activity that needs to be done by external rewards (i.e. approval of friends and family who visit). However, if the individual identifies this as a non-work activity and uses it as an escape from work (i.e. mindless activity with an ultimate sense of accomplishment that helps one forget about his or her day), the activity itself has been reframed as something approaching “true leisure” and reaps the psychological benefits that come with it. Iso-Ahola’s distinct definition allows little wiggle room for “true leisure” from day to day activity. For example, on a certain day, running may be a “true leisure” activity while the next it is begrudgingly an “obligatory non-work” activity. However, conceptually both days’ worth of activity contributed to an overall leisure lifestyle that is both fulfilling and enjoyed, as defined by Stebbins (2013).

Serious Leisure

To include leisure endeavors that provide more purpose than Iso-Ahola’s model, it is also important to understand Stebbins concept of “serious leisure”—a pursuit of a hobby (i.e. painting, knitting), amateur (i.e. college athlete) or career volunteer (i.e. consistent staff at a homeless shelter) that engages an individual due to its challenges (Stebbins, 2001). Serious leisure offers an opportunity to engage in something more meaningful and stimulating than casual leisure, which was seen as a low skill activity used to pass the time. This is akin to Iso-Ahola’s framing of cleaning the house as leisure. Stebbins (2013) outlined six qualities that mark a serious leisure activity: 1) perseverance, marked by the ability to stick with an activity

through hard times to attain a goal; 2) career, defined by the desire or ability to create a career out of a leisure pursuit; 3) significant effort to achieve or attain a certain entitlement; 4) durable benefits that manifest for the participants, including intrinsic rewards; 5) ethos or a community surrounding the serious leisure endeavor; and 6) strong identification due to the five previous qualities (Gallant et. al, 2013; Stebbins, 2012; Stebbins, 1992 as cited by Lee & Payne, 2015).

The combination of Iso-Ahola's motivation pyramid and Stebbins' concept of serious leisure builds a framework for a leisure and recreation-based intervention that enhances the psychological well-being of an individual. By participating in a leisure activity a person can be provided with such individual and social benefits as personal enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, as well as social attraction, and group accomplishment (Stebbins, 2013).

Coping Strategies

Leisure, as described above, is typically used as a means to circumvent stress and psychological illnesses (e.g. depression), helping individuals create a balanced life. A recent addition to this discourse is how leisure impacts and helps a person cope with a traumatic event (Kleiber et. al, 2002, Aria et. al, 2008). Trauma is an acute form of stress brought on by a particular event in a person's life (e.g. death of a loved one, car accident, abuse, cancer diagnosis). Aria et. al (2008) adds that trauma is "beyond the scope of normal human experience and causes immense psychological and physical stress" (pg. 38) on the individual. Kleiber et. al (2002) mentions that negative life events causes a disruption of roles in a person's life including, relationships, leisure, and views of the future.

When a traumatic life event occurs the person must change their behavior and cognitive patterns to address the "internal and/or external demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, pg. 141). Coping is an

important aspect for people to adapt to their new life circumstances. One example of coping is emotion-focused coping, which are processes and techniques aimed at changing the level of emotional distress a person feels (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Predominately, emotional-coping tactics are used to lessen emotional distress (i.e. saying to oneself “it could be a lot worse”), while some tactics are aimed to more acutely feel the distress (i.e. an athlete psyching themselves up before a game). Kleiber et. al (2002) defined two specific ways leisure can be used as an emotion-focused coping process for individuals coping with negative life events. First, leisure distracts a person from emotional turmoil. Kleiber et. al (2002) goes as far to say that this is a benefit even if the act is not one of “true leisure.” Distraction is an essential aspect of leisure, as it means the act engages the participant’s mind. This is true of many leisure activities such as casually watching television or participating in a serious leisure endeavor, such as amateur soccer. Leisure further acts as an emotion-focused coping technique by generating optimism about the future. Positive beliefs are great strengths when coping with stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Leisure can act as this conduit by providing a participant with a light-hearted experience with the use of humor (Kleiber, et. al, 2002).

A second form of coping is problem-focused coping, which helps an individual adapt to acute stress by identifying a problem, generating and weighing options, and then moving forward and acting (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Leisure acts as a tool to help an individual move through this process by creating a present life story that is continuous with the past (Kleiber et. al, 2002). This is a process that helps an individual who has experienced a traumatic event re-integrate their lives into their new reality. Furthermore, leisure acts as a conduit for personal transformation—proving that all is not lost after a negative life event (Kleiber et. al, 2002). This

problem-focused coping technique demonstrates that leisure's role can change in a person's life (Aria et. al, 2008).

Kono's (2015) phenomenological research on Japanese and Japanese-American survivors of Hurricane Katrina reinforced Kleiber et. al's (2002) assertions of how leisure can help cope with trauma. Through in-depth interviews, the study showed that Japanese Americans were deeply concerned about issues such as the uncertainty in their lives (e.g. will there be another hurricane), the interruption to their children's education, and lasting damage to their property. The in-depth interviews revealed that participants' leisure was valuable in helping them cope with the lasting effects of the hurricane. Specifically, Kono (2015) found that leisure provided individuals with a positive distraction, a source to maintain normalcy both individually and as a community (e.g. housework regardless of relocation, son playing baseball), a way to be optimistic about the future, and a venue to make positive inner changes.

Littleton et. al (2007) researched previous studies that quantitatively explored coping techniques of individuals who had overcome trauma. Their work tentatively argues that problem-focused coping is beneficial toward adaptive healing. This tentative conclusion brings forth important questions about the relationship between these two coping strategies. Emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies are intertwined entities that can aid and impede each other in helping someone adapt to new life circumstances (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Empirical evidence on recreational interventions for trauma

Presently, this work has laid out how leisure theories and coping can be intertwined to help individuals adapt to a traumatic event. Current research in the field of leisure and coping includes examinations of an individuals' understanding, and use, of leisure in the context of adapting to the aftermath of negative life events. Griffin (2005) examined leisure and coping

strategies in the context of a psycho-educational group focused on educating individuals about the role leisure plays in coping with trauma and provided them an opportunity to discuss this information and its meaning for their journey. Griffin (2005) started and adapted a Leisure Connection psycho-education group for childhood survivors of trauma, often with co-morbid diagnoses of depression and addiction.

The last pertinent theme that runs through these three studies is the ability to acknowledge the pitfalls of recreation in order to intentionally seek coping benefits found in leisure (Griffin, 2005, Aria et. al, 2008 and Nimrod, 2012). At the core of understanding these benefits or maladaptive behaviors is understanding the motivation behind one's participation (Griffin, 2005, Aria et. al, 2008). Aria et. al (2008) found that reclaiming their past and current leisure pursuits helped create an understanding of their own motivation and infused fun and playfulness into their routine (Aria, et. al, 2008). Furthermore, leisure and healing were, anecdotally, more strongly connected with those who had transformed their recreational lifestyle, in order to create a transformative future (Aria, et. al, 2008). These data demonstrate the importance of both the emotion-focused (creating optimism through playfulness) and problem-focused (creating an adapted future) coping.

Research Questions

This research study answers the following research questions:

- 1) What principles, concepts, or theories do organizations draw from to determine/design of the program?
- 2) What are the commonalities and differences amongst the therapeutic strategies used in specialized recreation organizations that serve participants who have experienced emotional or physical trauma? (Such organizations are defined in the sample frame).

3) How do these organizations define “making a difference” in their participants’ lives?

METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative research study used an exploratory framework to investigate the three research questions through interviews with key informants from organizations that offer recreational and leisure activities to people with some form of trauma. An exploratory framework was suited to this research because there is little scientific knowledge about the concepts surrounding an organization’s programming towards trauma experienced by participants (Stebbins, 2012). To avoid this drawback, the researcher coded the interview transcripts multiple times, and took all identifying information out of the interviews.

In order to use theoretical foundations to understand and inform practical applications of the research study, this project used an Interpretive Descriptive (ID) design (Thorne, 2008). This study’s research questions outline the two integral characteristics necessary for a successful ID study. First, a practice-based goal, which can be found in the query of how sports based organizations frame services to individuals who have experienced trauma. Second, comprehension of what is known and unknown in the research landscape (Thorne, 2008), an objectively small literature covers the present field of study. The strength of an ID design is its ability to bridge the gap between scientific research theory and applied practice to the field through its focus on descriptive research techniques framed in ways that allow for applied interpretation (Thorne, 2008; Hunt, 2009). ID strays from the theoretical credibility of descriptive frameworks such as grounded theory, phenomenology, and ethnography to embrace the simplified methodology of describing a phenomenon (Thorne, 2008). ID also roots its interpretation method in ‘hermeneutic tradition’ without theoretically formalizing its findings.

At its core, ID uses descriptive techniques and the interpretations of social context and patterns with the described phenomenon to draw practical results. In laying the foundations of ID from informal practical research practices, and grounding it in theoretical practices, this design offered the best way to yield results that can help directly guide practice and future research. In order to collect theoretically reliable results, this research carefully based itself on published recreation, and coping theory literature. This will help yield results that have logic rooted in theoretical integrity.

In order to elicit a top-down analysis of the target organizations' running and programming, this study utilized in-depth, expert interviews (Padgett, 2008). The study used an interview guide (as seen in Measurements) to help guide the conversation (Padgett, 2008, Steiner, 1997, Seidman, 1998). The researcher planned interviews with individuals who acted as programming managers in an organization serving the sample population. The use of open-ended questions allowed for responses along similar domains and yielded concepts that did not occur to the researcher (Padgett, 2008). Exploration, or probing questions, helped ensure that the respondents answer within the domains set by the research questions of this study (Padgett, 2008, Steiner, 1997, Seidman, 1998). To ensure the tone and approach of the interview did not skew results, the primary researcher was the only individual conducting interviews. The interview guide was tested and peer reviewed by members of the University of Washington School of Social Work. In addition, through testing the interview questions, the primary researcher reflected on her interviewing technique. This was done to ensure the researcher was not leading the conversation towards pre-determined data, interrupting the interviewee, or becoming over-familiar with the participants' responses.

This study utilized a cross-sectional format studying a sample at one point in time. This gave an understanding of what is currently happening amongst organizations that connect clientele who have experienced trauma with recreation programs. Since there is little research on the topic, the cross-sectional format used concepts and frameworks with which to further investigate the connection between specialized recreation organizations and people coping with trauma.

Key Concepts

Trauma is defined as a specific event that emotionally or physically affected an individual. As a result of a negative life event, the person has been permanently altered. This is not limited to physical changes, but also emotional changes. For example, a person who has lost use of her legs or arms from an accident will spend time adjusting to his/her new physical functionality. They also need to adjust to the emotional impact of the accident, as their everyday functioning has been altered due to this loss. A person who has experienced abuse will have a skewed way of interacting with others. A person who loses a parent or loved one has to restructure their coping network to fill the void.

Leisure will be defined through the top two tiers of the pyramid in Iso-Ahola's recreation motivation pyramid. This includes "true leisure" and "free-time participation." Both terms are distinguished by a certain amount of self-determination and intrinsic motivation, which results in positive effects from participation.

Recreation is defined as an activity that requires physical exertion, like team sports, outdoor recreation, hiking, etc.

Protection of Human Subjects

This research, study #50991-EJ, was approved by University of Washington's IRB on December 18, 2015.

The focus of this work is to identify how organizations define and measure success, how the organization approaches participants who have experienced physical and/or emotional trauma, and how organizations created programming for their clientele. In exploring these three areas based on the three research questions, the researcher developed a framework to engage these target organizations in trauma-informed programming.

This study poses minimal risks to organizational representatives. Individual representatives of each organization (interviewees) were read a full description of the study and its purpose prior to scheduling a time for an interview. Each organization was also provided an opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the study, its purpose, and how the findings will be shared and used. One organization raised concerns about issues of programmatic struggles, as well as human resource capacity, as a result of participating in the study, which were discussed until resolved. To address the primary concern, I did not record any organization's name along with data, but automatically assigned them a number, which is sorted by program type for data collection and analyses purposes. This is to assure that organization's names would not be linked to their responses. I also assured organizations that the data analysis process and status of the research study (accepted for publication, asked to be reviewed etc.) would be shared with each participating organization. Since there is very little research in this field, organizations were happy to have access to the findings to help justify and explain their missions and apply for continued funding support.

Measurement

The interview guide consisted of five semi-structured questions that encompassed the themes of the main research questions of the study. Within each primary research question, I was looking to elicit an organization's relationship to the over-arching themes (distinct techniques in addressing physical and emotional trauma, definition of healing, articulation of success, and program creation). The main research questions, including the probing questions are as follows:

1) What principles, concepts, or theories do organizations draw from to determine/design of the program?

- What is the process by which the program was created?

2) What are the commonalities and differences amongst the therapeutic strategies used in specialized recreation organizations that serve participants who have experienced emotional or physical trauma? (Such organizations are defined in the sample frame)

- How do you ensure the needs of those who have experienced physical trauma have been met, on both the individual and program level?
- How do you ensure the needs of those who have experienced emotional trauma have been met, on both the individual and program level?

2) How do these organizations define and measure success?

- What is the experience of your ideal client? What do they receive from your program?
- How do you measure the success of your program?

The use of open-ended questions gave respondents the opportunity to answer honestly, and to explore ideas beyond what I had assumed. The semi-structured interview led to both short and direct answers and tangential conversations, depending on the passions and interests of the

speaker. I used different types of probes to ensure richness, deepness and comprehension of the participants' experiences and meanings (Padgett, 2008; Seidman, 1998; Steiner, 1997). As the speaker reached a pause or a natural end to their answers, I either went deeper with probing questions, went back to questions or concepts from earlier in the interview, clarified an unclear phrasing, steered the conversation back to the research aims, or contrasted their answers to better understand the context of their answers (Padgett, 2008). This process of probing was important to ensure I was creating a set of interviews that could be compared to one another, while simultaneously allowing for variability and diversity in the responses from participants.

Sample Plan

For the purposes of this study, the traumatic event must have occurred at a distinct point in time, and have altered the person's life. To clarify, a person must be able to pin point the traumatic moment in time that changed their life. For example, a cancer survivor, or a person who witnesses a shooting, can identify when the negative life event that changed the course of their life occurred. In contrast, a condition like autism spectrum disorder manifests in early childhood and continually affects an individual for the course of their life and is therefore not within the scope of this study.

Organizations were the unit of analysis in this study. Organizations included in this study met the following criteria:

- Non-profit organization with at least one paid staff member.
- Provide recreation/sports based programming – defined as physical activity that engages the senses of the participant and provides them with a social opportunity based on common interest.

- Program must target a population that has a high percentage of people who have experienced a traumatic life experience (eg. Athletics for people with a who develop a disability through an accident, summer camp for youth who have lost a parent to cancer, and so on).
- Organization located within the United State of America.

Snowball sampling was used because no directory of recreation programs currently exists (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2008). Snowball samples operate by starting with an organization or two that fulfill the inclusion criteria and each organization provides a recommendation of an organization that does similar work. The sample started with two organizations and each of these organizations identified 1 – 3 other organizations who provide leisure/recreation services to people with trauma histories. By asking the organizations to provide their network contacts, I was able to get a broader scope of recreation-based interventions and practices that have been created to adequately address the needs of this clientele. Since the consent form dictated confidentiality for participating organizations, each subsequent organization was a cold contact. I aimed to interview 10 organizations, but eight eligible organizations participated in the study, giving me an 80% response rate.

Setting for the Study

Organizations within the Seattle area were interviewed in person (n=1). For reasons of resources, I used my computer and cell phone to conduct the interviews with participants located elsewhere in the United States.

Data

I emailed potential organizations a description of the study, including information outlining individual privacy and confidentiality concerns (i.e. use of a tape recorder).

Organizations that participated scheduled 15-30- minute time slots for the interview and had an opportunity to ask any additional questions regarding the study. An outline of the five focus topics and questions were sent to respondents prior to the interview so that they could collect information as needed to provide detailed responses to the questions.

Data was collected through interviews conducted over the course of 15 weeks. Phone interviews allowed me to talk directly with potential participants, to hear their perspectives on the interview questions being asked, to clarify responses, and to ask for further information. Phone interviewing did have the drawback of missing vital non-verbal cues, or mis-recording data. With the interviewee's permission, all interviews were tape recorded to augment notes taken during the interview.

Each interview was listened to twice and fully transcribed. This process served two main functions – 1) to familiarize me more deeply with the interview content and, 2) to create a written transcript that I can use to identify key topics. All data transcripts were stored in Dedoose—an online research tool that stores textual data and assists the researcher with coding passages and organizing qualitative data units, including the demographic data collected. Through an inductive coding process —using observations to determine themes—and content analysis process—coding concepts and terms in the qualitative data to look for patterns and frequency—I looked at the data “trying to find different angles with which to gaze upon the whole collection of data bits” (Thorne, 2008, p 147).

RESULTS

Sample

The sample of this study consisted of organizations providing the following activities: outdoor recreation (n=4), camping/group retreat (n=3) and team sport participation (n=1). Of

these organizations, four focused on individual services for people ranging from youth to older adults, two focused on primarily serving family units, one focused on individual adults and one primarily focused on youth. 75% (n=6) of the population offered specific programming for either active military or veterans and/or their family. Of these six programs, two primarily offered programs to military members and their families while four expanded their services to include military-specific programming. 25% of the organizations (n=2) had a Certified Recreation Therapist on staff.

The following section will highlight the findings groups according to the primary research questions driving the study.

Programmatic Roots

The first question asked each participant to describe the process by which their program was created. This was to help understand the commonalities and differences that develop within this field and to understand what drives their distinct missions. From this question five common themes arose as building blocks for these programs.

Saw a need

All eight programs stated that they began because their founder(s) saw a need in the community. Specifically, someone saw the community need within a specific recreation view. This premise is exemplified in one organization's story:

“So our founder was doing an internship in California ... and they do day trips, rafter trips and she came back and though there was a need here...so I guess...somebody saw a need” (RT 2)

This example demonstrates how the founder returned to her home state and recognized that her area lacked opportunities within a specific sport (in this case outdoor recreation) and fulfilled that specific need.

This theme of seeing the community need was articulated as a sentiment that was a driving force behind the start of an organization in 75% of the organizations (n=6). While 25% (n=2) of the sample only described addressing this “need” when expanding their programming to include a military specific track. As one organization states:

And then with the current conflicts that are going on with the global war on terror, obviously there was a higher need for recreation with veterans who are returning. So we started a partnership with the Warrior Transition Battalion at Joint Base Lewis McCord, the Wounded Warrior project and now, and Disabled Sport USA –war fighter sports (RT1).

It is important to note that this theme arose for half of the programs that expanded their original programming to meet the needs of military members and their families. These two organizations, however, only described their programming for this population as their programming developed to “meet a need.” For the base of their organization they identified other factors as the driving force behind their mission. These other factors included subsequent themes (recreating a program they had experienced, basing on a particular sport, and so on).

Recreated Programming

Over half (N=5) of the participating organizations were created based their founder’s experience, or connection with a similar program in another geographic area. This can be seen as a theme in the primary quotation from the first code in this section—as the founder had come back from a professional internship in another state and then recreated that experience in her

current locale. This can also be seen with the confines of the same state, but slightly different geographic locations, and a transition of programming:

And [seed organization] was a Nordic skiing organization for people with visual impairment. So [seed organization] was going on every year and people were interested in helping out with that. And those people got together and said ‘well why can’t we do something here?’ ... So they basically put their heads together and their wallets and basically got everything started where we could start offering Nordic and downhill skiing and eventually summer programming for people with disabilities. (RT 6)

This organization demonstrates how a person’s (or in this case peoples’) experience with one organization dictated and helped create the grass roots campaign needed to develop a similar program in a different locale. This theme deeply interconnects with respondents who described the need they saw in reference to the experience and services of another organization.

Activity Driven

Half of the programs (N=4) recounted how their organization’s started based on a sport and then expanded to a population in question. These organizations were typically created based on the recreation passion of the founder and then adapted to meet the need of a specific population. One organization representative described this process:

I think the outline first was kind of, let’s setup a rowing team, that’s the sport, the vehicle because [the executive director] was a rower and was at the time coaching rowing at a high school. You know, what if we set up a rowing team that specifically serves breast cancer survivors to meet that or encourage that goal of exercise. (RT 5)

This quote demonstrates how the founder's passion was the vehicle by which she decided to make a difference. Surprisingly, none of these organizations were developed to include mental health specialists as part of a component of their programming. Three of these four organizations (with the exception of the one quoted here) have since grown their programming to include other sports to appeal to a large segment of the population. This demonstrates the tendency for these programs to focus on the activity and physical experience for their clientele and not on other characteristics of their clients.

External Partnership

Half of the participating organizations (N=4) developed their programming based on a partnership with an outside organization. Out of these organizations, two were military based organizations that created programming based on an external partnership:

We really started getting and going after grants and stuff that allowed us to do programming for wounded warriors. And so now a majority of that is done through groups doing fundraising. Unfortunately, the Wounded Warrior project is no longer doing programs but other various groups that are either local or national, that raise money so they can offer adventures for wounded military veterans and their families (RT 6)

These external partnerships helped define the parameters of the programming and the direction that the organizations took in their programming. Often times, (like in the case of RT6) this model helps not only create credibility for their organization, but also provide the seed money to start their programming.

Serving participants with physical & emotional trauma

Each organization was asked how they ensured they met the needs of participants' who experienced physical and emotional trauma (these were separated into separate questions). Respondents demonstrated how they approached this collectively (addressing both types of trauma simultaneously) and how their efforts specifically addressed each type of trauma. This process created five codes, one that addressed both physical and emotional traumatic needs and four that addressed them separately (two physical, and two emotional).

Adapting Programming

Seven organizations expressed some form of adapting their model to meet the needs of the trauma their clients' expressed. Three of these organizations adapted their program on the front end by providing intensive medical screening:

[S]o we perform an intake assessment for every client that comes through and that is basically a baseline of where their health and wellness is currently at and where are their needs—where are the barriers forming to their health and wellness. So we learn to gather as much information as possible on the front side, before the intervention as we can. And then with that information we then customize the programs for each individual and we—they come together with other individuals who come together with a very similar health or wellness status and based on their interest of activity. 'Cause we do an interest based inventory as well in that intake process. And then we bring people together for week-long treatment interventions that are customized programs that are the prescription basically for each of those people within the group. (RT8)

This quote illustrates how organizations use pre-program screenings to create each curriculum around the needs of their constituents. Other organizations used a continual review process as one organization states:

During each retreat we will meet every morning at 7 AM and we will discuss how the retreat is going for each individual family and then we will tweak the retreat experiences to meet their needs. (RT 4)

These two approaches required the program curriculum to be flexible. The theme of adaptive programming was present in all but one of the participating organizations. This organization did not necessarily dictate that this was not a part of their programming, rather they did not emphasize it as a point in their approach to working with individuals who have experienced physical and emotional trauma.

Adaptive Equipment

Five organizations used physical and human resources to get the adaptive equipment and staff necessary to offer programming to people with various physical trauma symptoms. Two organizations had the equipment and trained staff in house to run this particular type of programming. These organizations are designed specifically for adaptive recreation opportunities—including adaptive skiing, kayaking, bicycling, and so on. This service is the central point of their programming:

With winter skiing it's with the use of sit skis, mono skis, hand skis, and that kind of thing...so equipment that helps support [the clients] to their maximum ability...so mainly what physical adaptations and physical traumas is dependent on the equipment that we have. (RT 1)

Three of these organizations partnered externally, as one organization simply put, “[For] People with physical trauma we tend to partner with other organizations that do that well” (RT 4).

These three organizations all fell within the retreat/camping model. Since their focus was largely on the group activity, they partnered with organizations, like the two that have equipment internally, to give people who have suffered from physical trauma the ability to participate in their programming. As seen in these quotations, the ability to make this organization’s programming successful was dependent on the availability of the physical equipment and staff training necessary to assist the clientele. This is a very individualistic approach, as each individual is assessed for their needs and then given the tools and volunteers necessary to be successful in that aspect.

Focus on Accessibility

Of the five organizations that emphasized providing adaptive equipment, three organizations directly stated that it was their organization’s perspective and goal to make any activity accessible. This is distinct from adaptive equipment as this code describes how these organizations approach their programming, rather than how they implement it. As one organization said, “We partner with [outside organizations] so [participants with physical disabilities] can have the same recreational activities (RT 4).”

Emotion-based Sessions:

Four organizations used a workshop, therapy session, or group engagement activity that helped create a program beneficial to the participant’s emotional needs. One organization shared,

I think the difference [from working with physical trauma] ... is some of the emotional trauma, like with speaking distinctly with the groups we specifically worked with, we are doing a lot of work with counselors per say—where they will

go and meet with groups before they even come to [our program] and so they have a really good grasp on folks and what's going on with them and how this can best be beneficial to them. So that when we set the whole group goals, all of those things are kind of already in mind. And then once folks get here, we are doing a lot of sharing sessions, we are doing a lot of networking sessions, we are doing a lot of sitting down with counselor sessions and stuff, where folks can really kind of get down to the nitty gritty of it. (RT 6)

This organization demonstrated how the use of counselors addressed the emotional needs of the participants. This type of therapeutic work was used during the course of the recreation trip. This participating organization went on to demonstrate how less formal, but still emotion-focused, interventions (sharing sessions, networking sessions) are utilized to check-in with clientele throughout the course of their experience to keep participants emotionally balanced.

Other organizations used educational workshops focused on the emotional trauma, or an opening circle, to set expectations and address participant limits in order to support the emotional needs of the program's clientele. RT2 offers one such example of how this process offered an emotional safe place and push the limits of their clientele:

[W]e always go around a circle and do an opening circle and talk about who we are and what our goals are for the day...we set out kind of frontload the day of what it looks like and say 'you know we are going to push your limits, we are going to put you...you know if you go climbing this will be new to you and it will be scary for you but here are all the things that are in place.' So we frontload it that way. And then again, challenge by choice, we will push people to a point and then if they choose not to, that's fine. 'Ah I don't want to go climbing,' 'Okay

that's fine. We ask that you wear the helmet for safety. And try putting on the harness. And maybe tie in if you want ...' And usually with that progression, folks...kind of go from there. (RT 2)

The two organizations quoted here are two of the three organizations that emphasized goal setting as a primary way to combat emotional trauma. As seen in these quotations, setting goals is a way for the individual to approach the intervention with co-participants as a community, while simultaneously providing each participant the ability to determine what success is for their own participation in the program. The final organization that utilized goal setting addressed emotional needs but not necessarily in a therapeutic way, which can be seen in the next data point.

Not clinical but therapeutic:

Two organizations clearly indicated they have no therapeutic staff so they are unable to clinically address their clientele with traumatic experiences. However, they run programs they believe are therapeutic and healing to the participants.

We ensure that our program isn't necessarily a therapeutic program. It's therapeutic but it's not therapy. I guess in that sense of the word. It's not us sitting the kids down and asking them how they feel or what it goes through. (RT 3)

This organization demonstrated how they focused their programming on emotional aspects through the programmatic intervention rather than offering formal therapeutic interventions. RT 5 demonstrates how socialization is an important part of this theme:

I mean directly I would say no, we don't hold any sort of support group sessions in terms of sitting and talking and facilitating discussions like that. The emotional

needs are met often times by virtue of survivors or patients who join the team. It's met by joining the team and being involved in a team activity. And also a team that when they walk through the door, they are not 'the breast cancer survivor' on a rowing team. They know that everyone in the room or in the boat has been through something similar to what they've been through. It's almost like they can hang that up at the door and not have to think about that for a while. So that is something that we have certainly found to be a benefit. As well as the fact that [the sport] itself as a sport that people talk about as the ultimate team sport, and it's true because of the nature of it. So the sport lends itself to feeling connected to your teammates and bonding in a way that it's kind of unspoken and you wouldn't kind of get...I would say it's almost an alternative support group.

This quotation demonstrates how the programmatic experience of people with similar traumatic histories and symptoms offered a therapeutic experience without the inclusion of professional interventions.

Organizational Impact

In order to comprehend how each organization understands its own impact, each respondent was asked what they would like their clients to experience as a result of participating in their programming, as well as how each organization currently measured their success. As a result, this research question was broken down into two code categories: 1) the experiential goals of each organization, and 2) the measurement points of each organization.

Experience

The experiential codes focused on the qualities and characteristics each organization wants their clientele to walk away with. These codes do not discuss the means of collecting these as data points, rather the organization's hope for those who attend their program.

Independence. Six organizations reported that they want their clients to carry the mission (either explicitly stated or implicit in the actual activity) of the program (i.e. independence in participating in sport, independence in taking charge of their healing) after their participation is complete. These organizations want to teach individuals the tools to be able to participate in the specific programmatic activity by themselves and/or take the coping mechanisms learned in their intervention and be able to replicate those tools at home. As RT 8 states:

That they are leaving with the skills and abilities and accessibility to the resources that they need to go home to their own communities and families and directly implement the coping mechanisms and continue the journey, the adventure of using recreation and leisure as a tool in their lives with great intention. So they can essentially fix themselves, and they can utilize these things that we initiate with them so they can see a way that they can move and navigate through life and find greater levels of satisfaction, greater levels of independence, reduce the symptomology of the injuries—essentially kind of recreate themselves with a new purpose and vision to live out the rest of their days. If we do that, that's our ultimate measure of success, in my opinion.

As seen in this quotation, these organizations want participants to take these lessons to create a positive, independent mode of being after their traumatic event and participating in the activities.

Activity Driven. Three of these six organizations directly spoke about the desire for people who come into contact with their organization to be independent in their recreational activities and consequently, more active. RT 5 sums up this sentiment up perfectly:

Our ultimate goal is to inspire any breast cancer survivor or patients and survivors both, to become more active. So, we hold open houses and events through invite any potential members. So any survivor or patient who is interested to come to practices and see what it is like...[O]bviously that doesn't mean they necessarily stick with the program but, ideally we want someone to be inspired or motivated enough to become active physically to help them reduce the risk of recurrence.

RT 5 demonstrates how their program wants to impact everyone who comes into contact with them, not necessarily those who participate on a regular basis. This is an anecdotal theme that comes up across the spectrum of surveys. Whether holding open house (as RT 5 does) or one-day equipment trials at parks (as RT 1 discussed in their interview), these organizations tried to expand their reach of their mission and impart an independent need to participate in more physically active interventions, whether this happened within or external to the organization.

These three organizations also tied achievement of personal goals into their discussion of independence and greater activity. RT5 went on to say:

But as far as those who join the team really what we are looking to do is, our mission is first and foremost that they are active and they become active, to and meet whatever physical goals they want to meet. That might mean coming to all six of the practices that we offer a week or mean coming once a week or whatever it is. But as long as it is kind of they are becoming active more so than they were before this traumatic event. Then I think that's the goal of the program.

While setting of personal and program goals was a tool used in emotion-based settings, these three organizations were the only research participants that clearly stated this as an ideal client experience. As seen here, this personal achievement was greatly tied to the organization's mission of greater activity.

Interpersonal Connection. Four organizations reported that through program participation they hope their clientele would build therapeutic, lasting connections with people who had similar experiences. This process of networking helps individuals hang up the baggage at the door because they are not the only person in the group with their traumatic experience. This also gives people a foundation to talk:

We would love networking to happen, whether it would be friendly networking—just making new friends and that sort of thing, or be it, you know be it, you know we have groups with people with brain injuries, all this kind of stuff. And they just get a chance to kind of be themselves and not be in a doctor's office. And they get to do a lot of congressing and network and well 'who do you use and what is your diet,' and you know and that kind of thing. (RT6)

RT 6 describes this networking as almost a psycho-education, social support group. The underlying goal of this theme is socialization—to make friends as you recreate in new ways. This passage demonstrates how this type of networking can also lead to a sharing of resources as groups deal with similar experiences.

Healing. Three organizations ideally want this intervention to give clientele the opportunity to heal. RT 3 discussed this fact:

We like to give the family the opportunity to heal as a family and meet other families who are going through the same thing. Imagine that your

child has cancer, entirely traumatic, and your friends maybe before the diagnosis don't seem to understand anymore and um, a lot of the siblings especially, are um, feeling pretty left out and they are not getting much attention. Understandably so, but taking them out together as a family, getting them to do outdoor activities together. I think healing together is a really important part of our program.

As seen here, organizations focus on how the experience of their recreation programming can take them out of their day-to-day lives and help heal the trauma they are experiencing. Along with this, other organizations tied healing to independence factors as RT 8 shared, they want to give their clients the ability to go “fix themselves” as they complete their program.

Hope. Three organizations ideally want their program to foster optimism about the future for participants.

I want them to walk away with a renewed sense of hope—a set of tools that they can use immediately, whether that is financial or communication or relationship tools. And know that they have additional tools and support later. (RT4)

Much like healing, hope is tied to other parts of the ideal client experience. RT 4 discussed how hope was tied to independence—the confidence to use the tools provided them to move forward with their new normal. Though hope is not discussed directly in all of the research participants, taking tools to foster future success was a common theme throughout the study.

Outcomes

This parent code reflects the specific tools organizations used to gauge feedback from their constituents (staff, directors, participants and when appropriate, their families). This data

set reflects how the data was measured and how specific organizational benchmarks were measured.

Business-minded feasibility. Five organizations reported that they judged the success on their programs based on the effectiveness and the financial feasibility and sustainability of their programming. Simply put, over half the organizations stated that they measure the outcomes and success of their program from a business perspective:

Part of our organization is mission driven; business minded. So, some of the success we measure is how many participants we were able to reach with a certain program and how we are able to sustain a program--if it's financially feasible, logistics workout to make things easy for our staff to keep that schedule, and the capacity of our programs to keep delivering, is one of the things we look at for the business driven side of things. (RT 2)

Or as RT 1 put it “We are mission-driven and business minded”. These five organizations discussed the need to create program feasibility when carrying out their mission, so their measurements are tailored towards financial sustainability.

Research Based Outcomes. Five organizations focused their use of standard measurements to base data on either current research studies that they are participating in, or past research that has been completed. In some cases, this causes a rather intensive survey process, as RT 7, an organization deeply involved in a current study with a major university, stated:

We survey them to death. No we do pre and post surveys. It's limited to—we are trying to cut it down this year. A prior university had all these behavioral questions and the darn thing was like six pages long and we lose them. You can tell they get irritated after 10 minutes. So, the last

day they are ready to do other stuff, not sit there and answer these questions. The first day it's thought provoking. Some of the questions I thought were offensive, and they really thought were offensive. And they let me have it. So we've narrowed it down, 4 or 5 different categories. I think we settled on 22 questions.

RT 7 discusses how the process of participating in research-based outcomes (which is usually more financially feasible) can disillusion the program participants. Also, creating surveys based on the research needs of an external organization can provide valuable benchmarks, but also may not be conducive to the needs and state of being of the people completing the survey. As a result, RT 7 created a survey based on benchmarks they felt appropriate. This is a similar technique that organizations using past research, and best-practice models used. For example, one organization shared:

[The] biggest question is how we measure up against the enrichment of quality of life. We ask that question, we also use the five domains of therapeutic recreation, and we ask enough questions in each domain to come up with a holistic view on their well-being and health. (RT1)

This organization, which does not run by therapeutic recreation standards, however, used this as a guideline to create the statistical measurements to measure their impact.

Anecdotal Observations. Half of the organizations utilized stories and observations to describe, and evaluate their program. RT2 described this qualitative measurement by responding when asked how they measured their program's success:

[W]ith words...the more words people can put towards their survey the better...I can honestly say, it's those anecdotal little stories. We were just talking about a

kid who has been in our indoor climbing program for at least five years. And he is recently retired on his own accord cause he just turned 18 and, you know he has been speaking up more in closing circle. He's been climbing more than he's usually done, so those kinds of things is how we measure the success of those programs.

These stories, and observations are how organizations know they are making an impact. RT7 does this as their program is in session:

We sit in the back of the room and we watch the couples who are sitting side-by-side. And sometimes they are not speaking when they get there because they have been sitting in the car for 8 hours driving here. And they get there and they won't speak, well by the end of the first day, we notice that's there is communication. The second day, it's interesting to sit behind them and watch this, the second day, they are leaning in towards each other, maybe their shoulders are touching. And we notice there is a little bit of hand-holding. The third day usually the husbands have the arm around the back of the—you know their arm around their wife's chair. So they are not quite hugging them, but by day four they are hugging them. They might be stealing a kiss here and there. So we watch this physical transformation that's like "yes"—it's working.

These two examples demonstrate how anecdotal stories and observations let the organization know it is on the right track—however, there are limits, because neither of these studies provided measureable data.

Programmatic Goal Effectiveness. Half of the organizations (N=4) measured the extent to which they met their mission and goal. This code differentiates itself from Business-minded

Feasibility, in that these organizations do not necessarily measure the sustainability of their program, only on the job they did:

Essentially did the program accomplish and do what we said it was going to do and did the program meet their needs, their goals and objectives and are they in a place where they feel more empowered to start taking on these concepts and start implementing them into their lives? So we have a self-report evaluation at the end of the program and it's one of the ways we measure impact or success of outcomes. (RT 8)

This theme basically measures the program's goals and mission. Housed within this are many of the experiential benchmarks. Essentially, these programs ask is our mission measuring up—do we provide the experience we say we are going to?

Analysis

Each organization has its own unique approach in providing a strong foundation to understand how these organizations work and also provided a launching pad to continue to study their impact on people who have experienced trauma.

Question 1: What principles, concepts, or theories do organizations draw from to determine/design of the program?

While most of these organizations did not outline research-based theories as a source of their recreation, it was apparent that these organizations drew connections to previous literature within the field. Surprising to me, while the question under this measurement provided the basic structure of how these organizations connected to previous research, this question was answered primarily by the subsequent measurement markers.

Fostering Serious Leisure

Within the first research questions' codes, a common thread arose in which organizations **were created** within Stebbins (2013) criteria of making leisure a career. This was especially prevalent under the "Recreation Program" and "Activity Driven" codes. RT 5's, which fell within both codes, exemplifies how their creation was a serious leisure endeavor for their founder:

[The founder] had previously come from [another state] where she volunteered with, such a team. And well she thought "I'm moving to [a major city], I'll just volunteer with THAT team. Cause a metropolitan area like [this major city] should probably have something like that and low and behold there was no rowing team. So she said, 'well, I'm just going to start one'.

This quotation demonstrated RT 5's founder's ability to take a leisure activity she loved and make it into a career. As seen in the results section, volunteering with another program helped RT 6's founders create their programming. Through founding each of these organizations as a serious leisure endeavor, there was potential to build the foundation so that the programs can act as serious leisure for the clientele.

The thematic analysis, especially within the codes that focus on client experience and emotional and physical trauma, demonstrated that these organizations have set up a framework that can foster many of the necessary characteristics of serious leisure (Stebbins, 2013) endeavors for their participants—specifically that of perseverance, significant effort, and community.

Perseverance. Organizations lay the groundwork for their clientele to achieve perseverance through the "Adapting Programming" code under *Addressing Physical and Emotional Trauma*. Organizations discussed how they create programs that meets the needs and

abilities of their clientele. This realistic base provides clients opportunities to gain the skills in a certain area, in order to persevere later on. When discussing “Emotion-Focused Sessions” (again, under *Addressing Physical and Emotional Trauma*), RT 2 discussed helping clients to push their limits and show perseverance as they developed these new skills. This was also seen in the “Independence” code under *Program Impact—Experience*. Within this code, organizations focused on giving their clientele the ability and drive to reap the benefits of this program on their own. This required an immense amount of perseverance, because sticking with a program after the intervention ends can often times be hard.

Significant Effort. This was a common theme and overlapped with *perseverance* in many ways. Significant effort can be seen under the “Emotion-based sessions” in the *Addressing Physical and Emotional Trauma*. In this section, organizations focused on providing a space to let their clientele make both group and individual goals. This allowed their program participants to be able to put in significant effort in order to reach a certain level of achievement. This characteristic was reinforced in the data under the “Activity Driven” code under *Organizational Impact—Experience*. Here three organizations focused on the importance of clientele completing their own goals—to work for this personal achievement.

Community. Communal experiences were the focus of many of these organizations. Under *Addressing Physical and Emotional Trauma*, both the “Emotion-based sessions” and “Not clinical but therapeutic” codes provided the structural groundwork for people to network. The former does this in a more formalized setting, providing a specific venue whether it be an opening circle, as discussed, a therapeutic session or a workshop, these programs set up specific times for their clientele to understand the ways in which they are similar to their co-participants. The latter of these two codes were populated by organizations that believe the experience of

being a group where they are not the only person with a negative life event is therapeutic. This allows them to foster a community where they are not defined by their trauma. This was reinforced in the *Program Impact—Experience* parent code under “Interpersonal Connection,” which inferred that these organizations have a mission to create a community based program, one foot in trauma and one foot in communal recreation experience.

Leisure as a coping strategy

The entirety of this data set provides the foundation to connect these specialized recreation organizations and theories of recreation as a leisure coping mechanism to previous work.

Emotion-focused coping. As earlier stated, emotion-focused coping can be broken down into two factions: 1) Distracting a participant from emotion turmoil, and 2) Fostering optimism about the future (Kleiber et. al, 2002). The thematic analysis regarding *Program Impact--experience*, demonstrates the ways in which these organizations structure themselves to meet these client needs. To address the first faction, organizations focus on the “interpersonal connection” piece as important (this is also reinforced by the “Not clinical but therapeutic” code under *Addressing physical and emotional trauma*). By participating in a program with people who have had similar experiences, there is a sense that you get to hang your baggage at the door and just exist. This is emphasized by RT 5’s earlier quotation. This can also be seen in RT 3’s quotation under “Healing”. By allowing a break from normal routine within a traumatic experience with people who understand and thus do not need your situation explained, these specialized recreation organizations provide a powerful distraction.

The second faction of emotion-focused coping can be clearly seen under the “Independence” and “Hope” codes. Organizations strongly focused on these factors as important

to their ideal experience for their clientele. For organizations, “Independence” gives their clientele the tools to go home and create a recreation therapy that allows them to fix themselves. This is compounded with the “Hope” code, as these organizations focused on the ability for people to take these tools they have become independent in and immediately use them to address their needs—essentially using “Independence” to spur their “Hope” (optimism about the future).

Problem-Focused Coping. As earlier stated, problem-focused coping can be broken down into two factions: 1) Creating a present continuous with the past and 2) Acting as a conduit towards personal transformation (Kleiber et. al, 2002). Unlike Emotion-focused coping, the data does not as directly tie to these codes. Part of this is because problem-focused coping focuses primarily on the individual participant’s experience, which is beyond the scope of this study. That being said, the “Adaptive Equipment” and “Adaptive Programming” codes demonstrate how organizations can address the former of these two factions. Much like the example in the literature review, RT 1 utilized adaptive equipment to help people access most outdoor activities. This can allow someone who once cycled, but lost the use of his or her legs in a tragic accident, to find a new way to participate in the sport. Adaptive programming worked similarly but on different levels. For example, by addressing the needs of all the clients on a certain trip every morning, RT 4 helped a participant who loved camping find a new way to enjoy camping by incorporating a physical, or psychological, intervention.

The latter of these two factions is hinted at under the “Independence” code in *Program Impact—Experience*. These organizations had the goal of providing new tools and resources for individuals to participate in recreation and subsequent activities (workshops, support groups, etc.) and go into their own communities and use these tools to thrive. This codes demonstrated

how most of these organizations provided the framework for people to transform their post-trauma lives.

Recreation as a negative impact on trauma

Beyond the scope of this study is the discussion of recreation and its potential to have a negative impact on trauma. As seen in the literature review, this is an important discussion to have, but beyond the scope of this study.

Question 2: What are the commonalities and differences amongst the therapeutic strategies used in specialized recreation organizations that serve participants who have experienced emotional or physical trauma?

Within this study's data set, there were more commonalities than differences amongst the codes. Seven organizations focused on a camping trip/retreat, or a variety of activities focused on the ability to adapt the programming based on their clientele needs. This was often done by working with each individual and creating a curriculum and/or a group based on their specific needs. Five organizations dictated the importance of utilizing adaptive equipment to meet the needs clients with physical trauma by providing adaptive equipment. Of the three organizations that did not discuss the use of adaptive equipment, two talked about their intensive and individualized screening process. Within this conversation was mentioning of adapting programming for individuals based on their needs and interests (as seen under the "Intensive Screening" code). Two organizations appeared to find a way to make activities accessible for their clients, possibly through the use of adaptive equipment, yet it was not directly stated, and thus not assumed. Six organizations discussed the ways they addressed emotional trauma in their program. Four discussed focusing on emotion-based, while two described the programs as "not clinical but therapeutic". Of the two organizations not included in these codes, one utilized

volunteers to address one-on-one needs as they arose, while the other organization did not directly discuss their emotional trauma approach, but provided deep insight into their “Intensive Screening” process. This organization (RT 8), used their screening process to create a curriculum that met the “cognitive, physical, social, emotional, [and] spiritual” needs of the clients.

Within the *Addressing Physical and Emotional Trauma* data set, two organizations proved themselves as outliers based on how their program creation and structure influenced their approach. First, RT 5 was a team sport-based organization that operated within a league. This is in stark contrast to the other organizations that offered multiple athletic or recreation interventions. This limits their ability to adapt their programming and the extent to which they can address physical trauma specifically. As part of the “Not clinical but therapeutic” code group, they focused their energy on addressing the emotional needs of the team, and the communal experience of surviving a similar negative life event. The organization’s energy mostly focused on running a team first, and a team full of trauma survivors second. This is distinct and unique from the rest of the organizations.

The second outlier is RT8, which runs through a strictly therapeutic model. While other organizations operate based on Recreation Therapy research, this organization was a strict recreation therapy organization. This difference is best described by their quotation:

[Utilizing] various different modalities within recreation therapy that are evidenced based are essentially the prescription for the week leading to helping them to alleviate these conditions that they came to us and leave them more empowered, more knowledgeable, and more functionally independent by the end of their time with us. And it doesn’t end when they leave our program. When

they leave our program physically with us, we also have a follow up program that involves these people kind of assuming locus of control, and getting some self-determination. And creating a plan of action for themselves, so there is transferability for what they have experienced with us and direct implementation into their daily lives, when they get home so they can continue to basically protect and promote their health.

This demonstrates how this program is run from a more medically-minded perspective with a greater number of specialized staff. As a result, RT 8 seems to be run completely based on addressing the emotional and physical needs of their clientele, rather than starting with an activity and adapting to the needs of a program's participants.

The commonality of the six problems, in conjunction with these two outliers and their distinct characteristics, lays a possible future foundation for three distinct categories of organizations. 1) Organizations that offer a variety of recreation and retreat programming targeted towards individuals who have experienced trauma. 2) A focused team-sport, within a league, for individuals who have experience similar negative life events. And 3) recreation therapy organizations that offer prescriptive programming from a medically-minded perspective.

Question 3: How do these organizations measure success and healing?

Overwhelmingly, organizations measured their success from a business-minded philosophy. Most of the outcome measurements discussed the sustainability of the program outcome versus resource use. This was also prevalent in the number of organizations that focused on "Research-based outcomes". By participating in studies and using research to evaluate their program, organizations made themselves more viable to grants and funding sources. This is a reality of the non-profit world.

Organizations did not overwhelmingly discuss the data points by which they measured their success. Furthermore, depending on the studies they were a part of, or mission they were measuring, there was a wide range of quantitative data collected. This made it difficult to discuss commonalities. Rather, organizations discussed how they collected the data and what they essentially looked for. The greatest understanding of how they measured healing and success from less practical level stemmed from the codes under *Program Impact—Experience*, and their discussions on the power of anecdotal stories. RT 8 put this perfectly when discussing their wish for clients to gain independence from their program:

Because if all they do is come to our program and the day they leave it just became an isolated one week treatment experience with no transferability over their activities of daily living. Then in my opinion as an organization we have failed in our mission. So you have to have adoption, you want them to start taking control of their own lives and direct their own lives with intention and do that with the support of their broader community. But they have to be able to self-actualize uh what they experienced here and continue onward with practice in their own lives.

CONCLUSIONS/IMPLICATIONS

The study found connections between how organizations were founded and run and current literature regarding serious leisure and the connection between recreation and coping with trauma. This relationship between the theoretical landscape and practical application offers promise in developing concrete, research-based measurements to evaluate the success and impact of these programs. By focusing on these three research questions, a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between the practical implications and the theoretical concepts

and how their intervention impacts the clientele's experience emerges.

These results demonstrated common themes regarding how specialized recreation organizations addressed the needs of participants who have experienced emotional and physical trauma. There are common techniques of tweaking programs towards the needs of the constituents, providing emotional workshops and programming and laying the groundwork to make any program accessible. These similarities offer a foundation with which to test and understand the ways in which these organizations serve their participants. The outliers also encourage further study in how the model and programming of the organization addresses the needs of participants who have experienced trauma.

Finally, the data pulls out the common characteristics that the specialized recreation organizations want their participants to gain during their participation and the ways in which they measure these outcomes. This final research question, defining and measuring the success of the study participants, found that organizations are first and foremost concerned with keeping their doors open. This could potentially skew the way they evaluate and measure the success of their program, as they are dictated by the grant deliverables and parameters. More research can help align the goals of each program (ideal client experience) with the necessary data points needed to prove their effectiveness (program measurements).

Limitations

As a qualitative, exploratory study these findings cannot be generalized to the sample population. As is always the case, the researcher has the potential to skew the qualitative results by infusing her own bias and overlooking certain other data (Stebbins, 2012). Due to the paucity of research in this field, there are questions raised about reliability. In focusing on practical implication research, ID is limited because of its inherent tension with theoretical integrity.

However, as Stebbins (2012) argues, this helps these studies, methods, and results create a depth of research that can be generalized and help build the field.

The present study built upon research in the areas of recreation and trauma therapy that informed the present study questions and processes. Current findings offer a starting point and should be built upon with more in depth studies. Further qualitative research can help gain reliable and valid concepts. These concepts in turn, can be used to create replicable and statistically significant studies that potentially can help the field understand the impact these programs have on people who have experienced traumatic events.

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