

# Leisure in the lives and practices of Catholic Christians

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## Introduction

# General Religious Landscape of the United States

- Many empirical investigations have been conducted to determine religious preference in the United States
  - About 63% of U.S. Residents adhere to a specific religious tradition (Assoc. of Statisticians and American Religious Bodies, 2000)
  - About 66% of U.S. Residents have no doubts that God exists (Baylor Religion Survey, 2005)
  - About 56% of U.S. Residents feel guided by God on at least most days; 83.6% at least once and a while (General Social Survey, 2004)



## Introduction

# General Religious Landscape of the United States

- About 82% of residents identify with the Christian faith (The Association of Religion Data Archives, 2006).
  - The Baylor Religion Survey (2005) reports the following in regard to preferred religious tradition:
    - 22.5% Catholic
    - 2.3% Black Protestant
    - 30.3% Evangelical Protestant
    - 26% Mainline Protestant
- We suggest that religious and spiritual preferences influence one's life including leisure

# Objectives

- The objectives of this study:
  - To understand the organizational frameworks for providing leisure within the Catholic religious tradition
  - To determine whether Catholic Christians consider leisure as spiritual




## Review of Literature

# Leisure Research

- Investigations on religion, spirituality, and leisure are emerging in leisure scholarship
- Two different types of scholarship regarding religion, spirituality, and leisure
  - Conceptual pieces (Huizinga, 1950; Johnston, 1983; Kelly, 1987; Pieper, 1963).
  - Recent empirical investigations (Fox, 1997; Frederickson & Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2002; 2003; 2007).
- Recreation, leisure, and spirituality are similar in nature (Brightbill, 1965)

# Leisure Research

- Leisure and spirituality have been empirically connected (Heintzman, 2000; 2002; Heintzman & Mannell, 2003; Kelly, 1987; Godbey, 1989; McDonald & Schreyer, 1991; Teaff, 1994)
  - Recent research has focused on leisure in solitary settings and the natural environment
- Historically, religion and leisure have not always been viewed as congruent (Brightbill, 1965; Cross, 1990)



## Review of Literature

# Catholic Scholarship

- Much is written within the Catholic tradition regarding physical activity, sport, recreation, and leisure
- Philosophical views of physical activity and sport
  - Thomas Aquinas suggested that physical activity and recreation has recuperative qualities that can prepare one for his or her vocational duties. (Feeny, 1995)
  - The body is viewed as the Temple of the Holy Spirit
    - St. Ignatius of Loyola suggested that the mind and body function together glorify God (Feeny, 1995).

## Review of Literature

# Catholic Scholarship

- Papal advocacy of recreation and sport (Feeny, 1995)
  - Pope Pius XII maintained that physical activity helped followers maintain their body, which is a gift of God
  - Pope Pius XII also advocated against the “cult of the body”
  - Pope John Paul II was an avid athlete and suggested that sports could unite people from all areas of the world
- Family
  - Family recreation is viewed as a wholesome way for families to spend time (Kelly, 1959; Pontifical Council for the Family, 2005)

# Catholic Scholarship

- Education

- Academic and physical education are important within the Catholic education system
- School activities should include recreation activities, such as celebrations, competitions, walks, games, and parties (Pontifical Society of the Childhood, 2001)

- Sabbath

- Catholic Christians should celebrate the Sabbath day (Pope John Paul's II Apostolic Letter "*Dies Domini*")
- One can encounter Christ and enjoy fellowship with other Christians (Auer & Ratzinger, 1998)

# Methodology

- Qualitative Approach
- Semi-structured Interviews
  - Main questions remained the same
  - Order of questions varied
  - Asked follow up questions for clarification
- Snowball sampling
- 11 Interviews were conducted
  - Where: Southern Nevada area
  - When: November 2007 - August 2008
  - Length: 20 - 60 minutes
- Interviews were conducted in religious centers, work offices, participants' homes, and cafes

# Methodology

- Description of the participants
  - Sex:
    - 2 Females
    - 9 Males
  - Race:
    - 1 Italian
    - 1 African American
    - 9 White Americans
  - Ages:
    - Middle 20's - Middle 60's
  - Marital Status
    - 2 single, 3 re-married, 1 divorced, 5 married
  - Children
    - 3 without children and 8 had one or more child
  - Length of Association with Catholic Church
    - 1 person converted to the Catholic tradition
    - 1 person was not Catholic; however, she attended a Catholic Church regularly
    - 9 participants were Catholic their whole lives

# Methodology

- Interview questions
  - Question topics included:
    - Perceived Catholic philosophy of leisure and recreation
    - Types of leisure and recreation planned within Catholic Parishes or related organizations
      - The organization of leisure and recreation
    - The spirituality of leisure within the Catholic tradition
    - Perceived religious and spiritual leisure constraints

# Methodology

- Both researchers transcribed interviews
- Interview transcripts were sent to each participant for verification and feedback
- Inductive approach
  - Grounded Theory approach
  - Common themes were isolated
    - Constant comparison method by Glasser and Strauss (1967) was utilized
- Both researchers made notes and revisions to themes

# Findings

- Major themes
  - Little organized leisure within the local Parish
    - Most organized leisure occurred in the K-12 Catholic schools
  - Personal faith was not constraining to leisure participation
    - Moderation in all life activities was very important
  - Leisure was considered as similar and unrelated to personality spirituality



## Findings

# Leisure within the Parish

- When participants were asked whether recreation and leisure were planned within their Parish, many participants indicated that either a small amount to no leisure was planned.
  - A minority of participants mentioned developed leisure and recreation within their Parish
  - Others suggested that a majority of recreation is planned within the education system (K-12 and college)



## Findings

# Leisure within the Parish

**Mark, an administrator in his mid-60's:** “oh we do I mean there's programs across the board for seniors there's festivals there's bake sales there's charity drives there's scholarship types of things. Of course the Catholic Church probably was the first to have bingo.”

**Noah, an administrator in his mid-60's:** “There's sewing group, the Filipinos have their own group. Because a third of our parish is Filipino. The Italians get together and have some. You should come to our parish festival, it's in the Feast of St. Francis in October, and there is one booth there that is all Filipino.”




## Findings

# Leisure within the education system

**Luke, a university professor in his middle 60's:** “(...) I must confess that there aren't a lot of activities. I think at the Church, but see since they also run a school [Name of Church] school, there's all kinds of things [recreation and leisure] there and they're closely tied to [Name of School] ...”

**John, a church leader in his middle 60's:** [When asked whether a person was in charge of planning recreation within the parish] “No, not in the Parishes you find them probably in the like the Athletic Director in the Catholic School because in the Catholic school they have all the programs usually for boys and girls.”



Findings

# Leisure within the education system

**Samuel, a university professor in his late 50's:**


“America is sports crazy. In the contemporary scene, I don't know if Catholicism stands out. In the 1950's, you had several Catholic high schools, which would be feeder schools and the pinnacle of schools in terms of sports, Notre Dame.”



## Findings

# Faith-related constraints on leisure

- Most participants reported little to no constraints on leisure participation
- Many sub-themes emerged in regard to appropriate leisure participation:
  - Specific Activities were mentioned as inappropriate
  - Moderation in leisure
  - Community principles are considered when choosing leisure



Findings

# No constraints to leisure participation

**Mary, a director in her early 30's:** “I know it's not smoking or drinking in the Catholic Church, because everyone seems to do both.”

**Samuel, a university professor in his late 50's:**  
“Catholics are so well integrated in society it [inappropriate leisure] does not seem to be a major thing.”



Findings

# Specific leisure considered as inappropriate

**Noah, an administrator in his mid-60's:** “Yes. Part of this is being a critic. How much of it is because it is a mortal sin not to go to church on Sunday and how much is because I really want to go to church on Sunday. And the 3<sup>rd</sup> Commandment says to keep holy the Lords Day. But does it cut into leisure, there are times when I am on vacation, I have to make decisions about when I am going to get myself to church. We can go anytime from sundown on Saturday to sundown on Sunday.”



## Findings

# Specific leisure considered as inappropriate

**John, a church leader in his 60's:** “Quite a time, a few years ago, I read some article in some Catholic magazine about the immoral, that boxing is immoral there were a couple of deaths that happened in that time like in the 60's or 70's whatever a long time ago. And I cannot see, see us, people beating on each other I think it's immoral personally.”

**David, a university professor in his 40's:** “Singles groups are okay but not if you're divorced (...) Unless you've had an annulment, which you can't get anymore. They're not interested in having divorced people in their singles groups.”



## Findings

# Moderation in leisure

**Noah, an administrator in his mid-60's:** “Moderation. And the Jesuits again said, all things in moderation. St. Augustine, the answer is some place in the middle.”

**Mary, a director in her early 30's:** “And again, this is from that outside Catholic view looking in, I think everything is o.k. as long as it is in moderation to yourself. My father-in-law is a devout Catholic but he loves to gamble, within his means. They both drink, they have their happy hours every day and enjoy that. I've seen priests smoking outside and that's accepted (...)”



## Findings

# Community principles

**Mark, an administrator in his 60's:** “I’ll give you an example, years and years ago I’m growing up in a very small town 25,000 at the time a movie comes up that the Church considered to be very inappropriate and very risky going to the movies is a leisure activity right? The Church was so offended by it that at the time the Bishop came out with an edict if you will to all of the churches in the diocese that I guess they petitioned this theater to not show this movie. The theater went ahead and showed the movie and the Church banned parishioners from going to that theater for 6 months.”



## Findings

# Leisure and Spirituality

- Participants described that leisure and spirituality are connected.
- Sub-themes emerged:
  - General connections between leisure and spirituality
  - Spirituality was related to ethics in sport
  - Leisure in the neighborhood or community were considered as spiritual
  - Leisure related to cultural and ritual events were described as spiritual



Findings

# Spirituality and Leisure

**David, a college professor in his 40's:**

“Fishing for sure. Fishing I am at one with nature. And that my favorite place to go is so far where there's nobody else around. And I can get out way some place and typically I don't like going with friends, I like to go alone. You know I would say that's a spiritual experience for sure.”



## Findings

# Neighborhood and Community

**Paul, a student in his late 20's:** “Well I definitely think there (are) some similarities between Catholicism and organized sports in particular - there's a sense of community that's developed in both of them - they are both there for, they both have purpose - Catholicism is obviously there for the purpose of salvation that's what their primary objective is whereas with the sports team is to win.”

**Noah, an administrator in his mid-60's:** “On a local level more vibrant Catholic communities/parishes are really trying to instill a sense of community among the parishioners and that we are not just people that are going to church on Sunday, but should be operating as a family. Part of that are our pursuits of leisure, so you're going to do some cooking together, share meals together, have picnics, sports teams, bowling leagues, you name it.”



Findings

# Ethics and Sport

**Mark, an administrator in his mid-60's:** "(...) how do you define spirituality, a sense of well being a sense of goodness a sense of sportsmanship on the field and feeling good about that that somebody did good for another player. . . or (someone) did something right in the game, did it with honor, did it with integrity with sense of caring about a fellow player, I think yeah absolutely you can see that on the field or you can see that on ... sure and to me if that touched me and it does and it touched me in such a way that wow that was really good what that guy did."

## Findings

# Culture and Ritual

**Mary, a director in her early 30's:** “You know what’s really neat, at [name of church removed], the night before there’s a 3 hour service (...) We start outside, we bless the holy water and start the fire then we come in and the whole church is dark. I think it is meant to be with that nature (...). Everyone goes out and then comes in, we have candles that are lit, we come back into the church which is completely dark except for our candles. So it’s really really neat. Then when Christ rises at that part of the service the candles are blown out and the lights come on. It’s very spiritual. You know I’ve never had that when I’ve been doing any type of sports activity where I felt that euphoria. I think nature in general, but I’m more spiritual in music. Where things will make me think and inspire me.”

# Discussion and Conclusions

- This study offers an empirical investigation into the relationship between religion, spirituality, and the Catholic religious tradition
- The findings of this current study suggest that community is important to Catholic Christians, which is similar to Johnston, (1983), Kelly (1983), and Pargament, (1992), which maintain that leisure within religious contexts is social

# Discussion and Conclusions

- The findings partially supported Livengood's (2006) investigation on religious and spiritual constraints on leisure behavior
  - Participants in this current study did not indicate that their faith was constraining
- The findings do not support that empirical investigations regarding the leisure behavior of Protestant Christians (Emard, 1990; Ernce, 1987; Hensley, 1998; Livengood, 2006; Ogden, 1978)
  - No clear organization for recreation and leisure within local parishes
  - More developed K-12 and collegiate recreation programming

# Discussion and Conclusions

- Limitations
  - Major limitations related to using a qualitative framework
    - Generalizability
    - Emerging sub-field that requires exploratory frameworks
  - Both researchers were not members of the Catholic Church and had an outsider perspective
  - Social re-constructivism and recollection issues with participants

# Discussion and Conclusions

- This investigation is one of the first to explore the leisure behavior of Catholic Christians
  - Future research is needed to understand the leisure behavior of Catholic and Protestant Christians



# Discussion and Conclusions

## Future Areas of Research

- Comparative analysis between Protestant and Catholic Christians
- An analysis of sporting and leisure behavior at Catholic universities and the K-12 system
- The leisure behavior of other Christian traditions, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints
- The leisure behavior of non-Christian religious traditions such as Buddhism, Islam, or Paganism