

## **Leisure Satisfaction in GLBT Sports Leagues**

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### **Abstract**

The understanding of what brings satisfaction to participants in an activity has provided parks and recreation professionals a window into how to better meet their recreation needs. One subculture that has lacked an extensive research focus has been the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgendered (GLBT) population. Understanding the satisfaction which GLBT individuals receive from participation in sports leagues opens a door to if they are unique to the general population and require specific programming or if programming can have the same focus. This study examined the leisure satisfaction of participants in a GLBT sports association. There were 581 subjects from a GLBT sport association who participated in an on-line survey and indicated a relatively high level of leisure satisfaction. ANOVA and T-test analyses indicated that there were no differences in leisure satisfaction based on gender or level of education, supporting research conducted on other populations.

**Key Words:** Leisure Satisfaction, GLBT, LGBT, Sports Leagues

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## Introduction

The focus of many modern day accrediting bodies has been to examine outcome based measurements. One outcome based measurement used in leisure and recreation over the past several decades has been to look at the satisfaction participants receive/feel through involvement in various activities. One underserved community in leisure research has been the GLBT community, particularly GLBT sports. The purpose of this study is to examine the leisure satisfaction of individuals who participate in a GLBT sport association. Understanding satisfaction outcomes provides the programmer guidelines in what to provide or revise to continue or increase satisfaction.

In understanding leisure satisfaction researchers have been divided on the meaning of this concept. As Beard and Ragheb (1980) note, this is because leisure satisfaction is not an observable construct. One definition and research focus has been on leisure satisfaction as external or as a concept focused on what one did during a leisure experience (Buchanan, 1983; Chen & Chen, 2010; Hazel, Langenau, & Levine, 1990; Mannell, 1989). A second definition and research focus is based on leisure satisfaction as those internal satisfactions associated with the experience. Beard and Ragheb (1980) offer this definition:

“Leisure Satisfaction is defined as the positive perceptions or feelings which an individual forms, elicits, or gains as a result of engaging in leisure activities and choices. It is the degree to which one is presently content or pleased with his/her general leisure experiences and situations. The positive feeling of contentment results

from the satisfaction of felt or unmet needs of the individual” (p 22).

Some researchers have conducted studies examining both external and internal factors. Noe (1987) examined the influence of internal and external factors in a raft-racing event. The results from that study indicated that internal factors were more salient in explaining variance in leisure satisfaction than external factors. A similar study was conducted by Graefe and Fedler (1986) examining the relationship of situational (external) and subjective (internal) factors in fishing satisfaction. Results from that study also support the concept that internal factors contribute more to satisfaction than external factors and focuses on the perceptions and feelings of the individual and not the external factors involved with the activity.

The most recognized and utilized measure of leisure satisfaction focuses on internal elements of the leisure experience and is the Leisure Satisfaction Scale (LSS) developed by Beard and Ragheb (1980). The LSS is comprised of 51 items and six factors or subscales that were identified using principal component analysis. The factors were psychological, educational, social, relaxation, physiological, and aesthetic. Beard and Ragheb explained the psychological component as the psychological benefits of the leisure activity such as enjoyment, sense of freedom, involvement, and challenge. Intellectual stimulation and how individuals learned about themselves and their surroundings represented the educational factor. Beard and Ragheb described the social dimension as rewarding relationships with other individuals and referred to the relaxation factor as the relief from strain and stress of everyday life. The physiological component refers to physical fitness, weight control, and well-being. How well individuals found the leisure environment to be pleasing, interesting,

beautiful and well designed represented the aesthetic dimension. The LSS has high alpha reliability coefficients ranging from .85 to .92 across the subscales and an overall coefficient of .96. Beard and Ragheb enhanced the efficiency of the instrument when they developed a short version of the LSS that included 24 items and had an overall reliability of .93 (Beard & Ragheb, 1980).

The short version of the LSS has been the instrument of choice in measuring leisure satisfaction over the years. Using the LSS, Iso-Ahola, Allen, and Buttner (1982) found that no differences existed in leisure satisfaction based on educational levels or gender among high school and college aged students. In a similar study, Riddick (1986) found that there were no differences in leisure satisfaction based on age, gender, or income. Brown and Frankel (1993) examined the relationship of leisure satisfaction and life satisfaction and determined that physical activity was associated with leisure satisfaction in younger age groups and that leisure satisfaction contributed to life satisfaction. Guinn (1995) also utilized the LSS to study older adults and found that the greater the leisure repertoire one has, the greater the level of leisure satisfaction.

In more recent studies, Kibler and Smith (2000) utilized the LSS to measure leisure satisfaction of adult males with HIV and AIDS and its relationship to social needs and stress relief needs. They found that leisure satisfaction was consistent with social needs and that leisure satisfaction was effected by stress related needs. Jinmoo, Junhyoung, & Young-Shin (2011) used the LSS to examine leisure satisfaction and Internet usage and found that older adults with an affinity for the Internet are likely to be satisfied with their leisure. Broughton and Beggs (2006) studied leisure satisfaction in older adults, utilizing the LSS, and found differences in satisfaction based on age, health status, and

whether an individual lives alone. Elkins, Beggs, & Choutka, (2007) used the LSS to examine leisure satisfaction in college students and found that subjects that had to overcome great constraints to participate in leisure activities were more likely to be satisfied in their leisure. Another study utilizing the LSS with college students determined that the best motivation predictors of leisure satisfaction were competence/mastery, intellectual, and stimulus/avoidance factors (Beggs & Elkins, 2010).

#### *GLBT and Leisure Satisfaction*

Pritchard, Morgan, Sedgley, Khan, and Jenkins (2000) examined tourism in the GLBT setting and found participants valued the ability to escape where they can find a sense of belonging and safety and the chance to be 'themselves'. The desire for many participants is to have social acceptance and a gay space where they can find community. Pritchard, Morgan, and Sedgley (2002) noted that "gay and lesbian spaces have emotional and psychological importance as empowering places in a 'straight world'" (p. 118). Iwasaki and Ristock (2004) also found having a subculture specific leisure space helped in coping with stress. Participants were found to value being able to get away (leisure travel) and outdoor leisure. This concept of leisure as a key space or context in which GLBT members can find a sense of inclusion is also common in regards to sport participation. Waitt's (2003) research of Gay Games participants found they appreciated the opportunity to socialize, play sports, and to have a "festival of sports that consequently produced an inclusive queer space devoid of boundaries that separated gays from lesbians" (p. 175).

The concept of gay sports through GLBT sport organizations has developed over the last 30 years (Pitts, 1988, Pronger, 2000). These organizations have been developed by GLBT communities for the purpose of providing friendly, social, and skill developing opportunities. Goals

for these efforts include inclusion regardless of ability, age, sexual orientation, class, and race. Pronger (2000) suggested that the effect of GLBT community sport has been the inclusion of the GLBT people in the established practices of sport. In a study of 40 organizations, Pitts (1988) found that one vision was to fulfill a need for sport and recreational leisure activity for the GLBT community. One example of an international gay sport opportunity has been the Gay Games. Founded in 1982, the Gay Games exist to organize an inclusive sports event, one free from prejudice (Waite, 2003). The most recent Gay Games occurred in Cologne, Germany (2010). In addition to the Gay Games, which exists on a national level, there are several cities in the United States with their own GLBT sport associations, the largest being the Chicago Metropolitan Sport Association (CMSA). Along with communities there are sport specific GLBT sport associations such as the North American Gay Athletic Alliance (softball) and the North American Gay Volleyball Association.

Symons (2007) noted the three main values or principles that came out of the first Gay Games was inclusion, participation, and doing one's best. This opportunity of sport and cultural participation also promoted self-esteem and healthy lifestyles. Pronger (1990) noted that most participants view gay sports as a social enterprise in which the athlete can be themselves and 'find a home'. Benefits of gay sports include such concepts as being helpful to coming out, providing a sense of security, a positive image, camaraderie, and a more intimate and familiar setting for socialization. Riemer (1997) found that for Lesbians the softball environment presented a place that allowed participants to see friends, come out to others, meet other lesbians in a safe environment, and enter the lesbian community. Similarly, Kivel & Kleiber (2000) found the benefit of sport participation to be socialization and a sense of identity. Specifically, for women the satisfaction came in discovering

there were other women like themselves and that their attraction to other women was okay.

Filiault and Drummond (2008) found benefits to GLBT sport participation to include enacting social change, combating homophobia, social opportunity to meet other gay people, and being able to be "normalized" by participation with other gay individuals. Therefore, the satisfaction for various individuals interviewed in this study was simply being able to be themselves in the sport of their choosing and not have to deal with any "complications" perceived or real. Similarly, Kivel & Kleiber (2000) found the benefit of sport participation to be socialization and a sense of identity. Specifically, for women the satisfaction came in discovering there were other women like themselves and that their attraction to other women was okay.

Leisure satisfaction has been studied in many different settings over the years. However, there is a limited amount of research examining it in the GLBT leisure environment. The purpose of this study was to examine the leisure satisfaction of individuals who participate in a GLBT sports association. More specifically, individuals who were participants in activities with the Chicago Metropolitan Sports Association (CMSA) were identified as subjects for this study.

## **Methods**

This study primarily utilized the short version of the LSS developed by Beard and Ragheb (1980) to survey CMSA members. Specifically, the survey instrument was developed combining demographic questions (gender, age, level of education) and the LSS. The CMSA sent an informational email and link to the on-line survey to their membership base. Those interested in participation utilized the link to access the web site which included an informed consent statement and the option to proceed to the survey. The survey email was received and opened by

1151 CMSA members with 581 participating in the survey (50.5% return rate). Satisfaction scores across demographic data were compared using t-tests and analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures. To account for multiple comparisons, a Bonferroni test was applied to the alpha level to adjust for error associated with multiple mean comparisons.

## Results

There were 581 individuals that participated in the study with an average age of 37.3 years old. Respondents consisted of 72% male (n=419) and 28% female (n=162). The highest level of education that subjects had completed included 13% high school (n=73), 46% bachelor's degree (n=265), 31% master's degree (n=182), and 10% doctorate or other higher level degree (n=61).

Reliability analysis of the Leisure Satisfaction Scale indicated a reliable instrument with a Cronbach's Alpha of .93. An analysis of all subjects resulted in a relatively high level of leisure satisfaction (M=3.74, SD=0.56), as seen in Table 1. The factor with the highest score was the social factor (M=4.12, SD=0.72) and the factor with the lowest score was the aesthetic factor (M=3.30, SD=0.78). The psychological (M=3.84, SD=0.69), relaxation (M=3.83, SD=0.72), and physiological (M=3.82, SD=0.79) factors were each also relatively high.

Further analysis of specific items revealed that leisure provides the opportunity for "social interaction" as the highest rated item (M=4.28, SD=0.80). This variable is subsumed in the social subscale. Two other items in the social subscale also rated very high. These items were the opportunity to "develop relationships" (M=4.18, SD=0.87) and "the people I meet in my CMSA activities are friendly" (M=4.14, SD=0.78). Another item that was rated high was "I engage in

CMSA activities simply because I like doing them" (M=4.25, SD=0.72) which is subsumed in the relaxation subscale. The item that rated the lowest was "the places where I engage in my CMSA activities are beautiful" (M=3.02, SD=0.96) and is included in the aesthetic subscale. Two other items that rated low when compared to the other variables were also from the aesthetic factor. They were "the places where I engage in my CMSA activities are interesting" (M=3.41, SD=0.89) and "the places where I engage in my CMSA activities are well designed" (M=3.15, SD=0.94). Another item that was rated low was "increase my knowledge about things around me" (M=3.19, SD=1.05) which is subsumed in the educational subscale.

T-test comparisons indicated no significant differences based on gender in overall leisure satisfaction, within any of the subscales, or with any specific items (Table 2). The social factor was the highest rated subscale for males (M=4.13, SD=0.73) and females (M=4.09, SD=0.70) and specific items within those scales were rated highest. As with the analysis of all subjects, males (M=3.32, SD=0.78) and females (M=3.23, SD=0.77) both indicated that the aesthetic factor and items subsumed within the aesthetic factor were rated the lowest. Similarly, ANOVA comparisons revealed no differences in satisfaction based on level on education (Table 3). Further, there were no differences in any of the subscales or items based on level of education.

Table 1

Leisure Satisfaction Mean Scores

Factor	M	SD
Overall Leisure Satisfaction	3.74	0.56
Psychological	3.84	0.69
interesting to me	4.06	0.74
self confidence	3.71	0.89
sense of accomplishment	3.89	0.81
use different skills	3.69	0.92
Educational	3.52	0.84
increase my knowledge	3.19	1.05
opportunities to try new things	3.64	0.93
learn about myself	3.39	1.03
learn about others	3.84	0.87
Social	4.12	0.72
provide social interaction	4.28	0.80
develop relationships	4.18	0.87
people are friendly	4.14	0.78
association with people	3.87	1.01
Relaxation	3.83	0.72
help me to relax	3.57	0.95
help relieve stress	3.76	0.92
emotional well being	3.77	0.93
I like doing them	4.25	0.72
Physiological	3.82	0.79
physically challenging	3.89	0.84
physical fitness	3.88	0.92
restore me physically	3.57	1.01
stay healthy	3.93	0.86
Aesthetic	3.30	0.78
places are fresh and clean	3.62	0.95
places are interesting	3.41	0.89
places are beautiful	3.02	0.96
places are well designed	3.15	0.94

n = 581

Table 2

Leisure Satisfaction by Gender

Factor	Male		Female		p
	M	SD	M	SD	
Overall Leisure Satisfaction	3.75	0.56	3.71	0.59	0.393
Psychological	3.86	0.69	3.79	0.70	0.279
interesting to me	4.07	0.75	4.03	0.74	0.575
self confidence	3.74	0.88	3.67	0.92	0.391
sense of accomplishment	3.92	0.80	3.85	0.85	0.323
use different skills	3.72	0.90	3.63	0.95	0.317
Educational	3.53	0.84	3.50	0.85	0.748
increase my knowledge	3.20	1.04	3.17	1.07	0.817
opportunities to try new things	3.67	0.91	3.59	0.98	0.355
learn about myself	3.41	1.02	3.35	1.06	0.532
learn about others	3.82	0.88	3.89	0.84	0.428
Social	4.13	0.73	4.09	0.70	0.635
provide social interaction	4.29	0.81	4.24	0.77	0.506
develop relationships	4.20	0.88	4.14	0.86	0.435
people are friendly	4.13	0.78	4.17	0.78	0.546
association with people	3.89	1.01	3.83	1.00	0.502
Relaxation	3.86	0.72	3.78	0.71	0.249
help me to relax	3.60	0.96	3.52	0.94	0.358
help relieve stress	3.76	0.93	3.75	0.89	0.906
emotional well being	3.81	0.93	3.67	0.93	0.103
I like doing them	4.28	0.72	4.19	0.73	0.210
Physiological	3.82	0.80	3.83	0.80	0.894
physically challenging	3.91	0.81	3.86	0.92	0.563
physical fitness	3.87	0.93	3.91	0.89	0.645
restore me physically	3.55	1.03	3.62	0.97	0.480
stay healthy	3.94	0.85	3.91	0.88	0.767
Aesthetic	3.32	0.78	3.25	0.77	0.299
places are fresh and clean	3.64	0.99	3.57	0.87	0.426
places are interesting	3.44	0.89	3.33	0.91	0.182
places are beautiful	3.04	0.96	2.94	0.93	0.265
places are well designed	3.16	0.96	3.14	0.88	0.865

alpha  $\leq$  .0015; Male n = 419; Female n = 162

Table 3

## Leisure Satisfaction by Education

Factor	High School		Bachelor's Degree		Master's Degree		Doctorate/ Equivalent	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Overall Leisure Satisfaction	3.87	0.50	3.73	0.59	3.72	0.56	3.77	0.53
Psychological	4.06	0.66	3.83	0.69	3.81	0.72	3.78	0.63
interesting to me	4.29	0.72	4.05	0.74	4.01	0.75	4.00	0.81
self confidence	4.00	0.85	3.68	0.91	3.69	0.93	3.71	0.73
sense of accomplishment	4.08	0.87	3.91	0.83	3.85	0.79	3.84	0.75
use different skills	3.88	0.82	3.70	0.91	3.68	0.93	3.57	0.89
Educational	3.67	0.76	3.51	0.86	3.51	0.81	3.45	0.84
increase my knowledge	3.52	1.00	3.18	1.09	3.12	1.04	3.27	0.89
opportunities to try new things	3.93	0.85	3.64	0.93	3.63	0.93	3.53	0.94
learn about myself	3.60	0.96	3.38	1.04	3.43	1.00	3.24	1.05
learn about others	3.97	0.81	3.84	0.91	3.85	0.82	3.73	0.91
Social	4.24	0.65	4.05	0.77	4.15	0.70	4.30	0.58
provide social interaction	4.43	0.67	4.22	0.86	4.30	0.77	4.43	0.61
develop relationships	4.21	0.86	4.11	0.92	4.24	0.85	4.39	0.64
people are friendly	4.25	0.65	4.09	0.85	4.16	0.76	4.22	0.72
association with people	4.07	0.89	3.77	1.06	3.90	1.00	4.17	0.86
Relaxation	3.91	0.73	3.85	0.73	3.79	0.72	3.89	0.69
help me to relax	3.75	0.95	3.58	0.98	3.51	0.93	3.61	0.93
help relieve stress	3.89	0.87	3.80	0.93	3.67	0.95	3.78	0.94
emotional well being	3.82	0.88	3.76	0.95	3.75	0.94	3.86	0.87
I like doing them	4.25	0.68	4.26	0.75	4.23	0.73	4.33	0.66
Physiological	3.90	0.79	3.80	0.82	3.81	0.79	3.89	0.70
physically challenging	3.90	0.81	3.89	0.85	3.88	0.92	3.96	0.61
physical fitness	3.92	0.89	3.84	0.96	3.90	0.91	4.00	0.82
restore me physically	3.72	1.04	3.58	1.04	3.53	0.98	3.63	0.95
stay healthy	4.05	0.78	3.91	0.90	3.91	0.82	3.96	0.82
Aesthetic	3.39	0.78	3.29	0.78	3.30	0.80	3.29	0.76
places are fresh and clean	3.72	1.06	3.66	0.94	3.56	0.99	3.57	0.87
places are interesting	3.54	0.84	3.33	0.91	3.48	0.93	3.43	0.76
places are beautiful	3.20	1.02	2.97	0.98	3.03	0.93	3.10	0.92
places are well designed	3.13	0.87	3.21	0.93	3.12	0.98	3.04	0.97

$\alpha \leq .0015$ ; High School (n=73), Bachelor's Degree (n=265), Master's Degree (n=182), Doctorate/Equivalent (n=61)

## Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that social benefits from participating in a GLBT sports league may be the most satisfying element of the leisure experience. As seen in Table 1, the social factor score was clearly higher than the other factors ( $M=4.12$ ,  $SD=.72$ ). This supports the findings of Pritchard et al. (2000). Pritchard studied gay tourists and determined that they were seeking places of gay space and social acceptance. The GLBT sport league provides a leisure environment with socially accepting individuals. This also supports the results of Iwasaki and Ristock (2004) who found that a subculture specific leisure space, such as a GLBT sports league, can be helpful in coping with stress associated with social issues. In addition, the finding that the LSS social subscale rated high supports the research of Riemer (1997) and Pronger (1990) in which both determined that GLBT sport participation provided a good environment for socialization. Filiault and Drummond (2008) also found that the social environment of GLBT sports participation provided individuals the satisfaction of being able to be themselves.

The social opportunity that a GLBT sport league provides is unique. Although many sport leagues provide opportunities for social interaction, it seems that this may be of greater importance in the GLBT community. As noted, this study determined that social interaction and developing relationships are of great importance in leisure satisfaction of GLBT sports leagues. It's also important to highlight the item "the people I meet in my CMSA activities are friendly". Previous research suggests that many leisure environments may create stress and not provide the level of social acceptance a gay individual seeks in leisure (Pritchard et al., 2000; Iwasaki and Ristock, 2004). The findings from this study suggest that the GLBT sports association environment includes friendly and accepting individuals.

It should also be noted that several other leisure satisfaction factors were rated high by participants. The psychological, relaxation, and physiological subscales were all rated highly. This is congruent with research examining leisure activities in college students and adults. Beggs and Elkins (2010) found that college students rated the psychological, relaxation, and physiological factors high, just below the leisure satisfaction associated with social factors. Broughton and Beggs (2006) determined that older adults also derived high levels of psychological satisfaction and if physically healthy, indicated high levels of physiological satisfaction. Brown and Frankel (1993) studied and found that physical activity was essential to leisure satisfaction in young age groups and the physical dimension of the subscale was highly rated. When compared to previous research, it appears that leisure satisfaction in GLBT sports associations is similar to that of young age groups, college students and older adults. However, further research is needed to directly compare various populations.

Another area where this study is similar to research in other settings is related to satisfaction associated with the aesthetics of the environment. The aesthetic factor consistently rates as the lowest subscale in research where the leisure environment is indoors and/or not natural (Jinmoo et al., 2011; Elkins et al., 2007; Broughton and Beggs, 2006). It should be noted that previous research in outdoor natural environments provides the exception to this finding (Buchanan, 1983; Graefe and Fedler, 1986; Hazel et al., 1990). This also supports the findings of Forrester and Beggs (2001) who determined that the fidelity of the environment can influence the leisure experience. This suggests that the aesthetic satisfactions associated with leisure may be of lower levels unless one is in a natural environment. The leisure environments utilized by the CMSA are in an urban area and

indoor spaces, which may have contributed to the lower scores in the aesthetic dimension of leisure satisfaction in this study.

The data from this study were further analyzed based on gender. Previous research in GLBT sports participation failed to consider gender differences in leisure satisfaction. The results from this study indicate that there are no differences in leisure satisfaction based on gender. This supports studies done on high school students (Iso-Ahola et al., 1982), college students (Beggs and Elkins, 2010; Riddick, 1986), and older adults (Broughton & Beggs, 2006) which determined that there are no differences in leisure satisfaction. The findings from this study, combined with the results of previous research, suggest that men and women experience similar levels of leisure satisfaction when engaging in like activities.

The results of this study also indicate that there are no differences in leisure satisfaction based on levels of education. This finding is supported by research in other environments by Iso-Ahola et al. (1982). However, no previous research exist examining leisure satisfaction in GLBT sports participation and level of education. It should be noted that research has been conducted examining leisure motivation and participation in GLBT sports league and differences are prevalent based on level of education (Place & Beggs, 2011). This might suggest that individuals with different educational backgrounds may be seeking different experiences in their leisure, which may result in differences in leisure satisfaction. However, that was not supported by the findings of this study.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine leisure satisfaction in leisure activities designed specifically for GLBT participants. In GLBT sport participation, it is clear that overall; participants

are satisfied with the experience. It is also apparent that the social elements of participating in GLBT sport associations are of great importance. The opportunity to be one's self and not have to deal with social pressures that exist outside of that environment can help create a satisfying leisure experience. Future research in this area should expand the population to consider other sports associations than just the CMSA. In addition, the satisfying components of GLBT sport participation should be compared to leisure satisfaction of adult sport programs that do not focus on a specific population.

The findings from this study suggest that GLBT sports associations are of great importance to the GLBT population. They not only provide an outlet for competition and relaxation, but that they also meet a deeper social need. From a programmatic perspective, it's important to understand this as GLBT sport associations grow and further develop leisure offerings.

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