

## Gender differences in leisure-need activity patterns.

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### **Abstract:**

A gender-by-leisure choice model predicting four different leisure-choice-by-need patterns, based on gender restricted or unrestricted choice by same or different needs, is described and tested. Assessment of leisure-choice-by-need patterns was made by determining the relevance of a set of 13 need attributes for 16 different leisure activities. Gender differences in need attributes for each activity were identified using stepwise discriminant analysis. Results revealed significant discriminations for 12 of the 16 activities. Analyses further indicated that somewhat different clusters of need attributes were associated with each activity. Results provided tentative support for the proposed model, suggesting that participation in some activities is related to the same needs for males and females, while participation in other activities is related to different needs.

**Keywords:** gender stereotypes | gender studies | leisure activities | leisure needs

### **Article:**

Both prevailing sex-role stereotypes and research have supported the assumption that males and females differ in the extent to which they manifest certain needs (Veroff, Depner, Kulka, & Douvan, 1980), including the need for social approval (Clancy & Gove, 1975), need for power (Steward & Winter, 1976), need to achieve (McClelland, 1961), need to affiliate (Hoffman, 1972) and sensation-seeking (Zuckerman, Eysenck, & Eysenck, 1978). Beyond demonstrating that gender differences in needs exist, however, there is little evidence to indicate whether the bases of such differences are biological and/or the result of differential socialization experiences. The fact that there are male-female differences in the expression of various social and identification needs has important implications regarding the kinds of activities and experiences males and females seek in their lives.

One area of considerable practical and social interest is male and female leisure activity involvement. To date, it has been well established that there are gender differences in leisure preferences (e.g., Gentry & Doering, 1979; Gruber, 1980) and participation (Bishop & Witt,

1970; Ragheb, 1980), and these gender differences may be related to personality (Kleiber & Hemmer, 1981). In general, studies of leisure-need patterns have demonstrated that participation in various activities is related to the need fulfillment capabilities of these activities (Becker, 1976; Tinsley, Barrett, & Kass, 1977). It also has been suggested that leisure choice is related to an individual's personality (Iso-Ahola, 1976). These relationships suggest that a greater understanding of gender preferences in leisure activities might be achieved if a gender-by-leisure-choice-by-need-fulfillment perspective is adopted. From this perspective there appears to be at least two principles governing leisure choice. The first of these principles is that participation in at least some leisure activities is restricted by gender. The second principle is that leisure participation is motivated by the desire to fulfill certain needs that are a function of individual difference variables, one of which is gender.

**Table 1 is omitted from this formatted document.**

Because all leisure activities are not gender-restricted (see Gruber, 1980, for a listing), and because women and men do not differ in all of their needs, a model is needed to explain when gender differences will occur. Such a model needs to account for two important influences on leisure choice: (1) whether choice of leisure pursuits are perceived as restricted or not restricted by gender, and (2) whether choice of leisure activities provide for the same or different needs for males and females. The resultant combination of these two influences is a two by two matrix that designates four ways in which choice of leisure activities may be explained (Fig. 1). It should be noted that this model does not rule out other influences on choice, such as age, income, model of employment, or year of education (Ragheb, 1980). The same needs gender-restricted cell of the matrix (Cell 1) includes leisure activities that would be chosen appropriate to one's gender, though the same underlying needs would be involved. This is similar to Stein and Bailey's (1973) argument that males and females differentially manifest their need for achievement, males through masculine career choice and females through a feminine career choice. In the leisure domain, we can speculate that males might satisfy their need for sensation-seeking by sky diving, while for the same need females might take a cross-country trip. Cell 2 in the matrix reflects the likelihood that males and females probably engage in some activities for the same underlying needs, such as reading for pleasure. Since some leisure choices may be related to different needs, Cell 3 would include those activities in which males and females differentially participate because of different underlying needs. For example, females cook more than males, perhaps to feel creative, while males play football more than females, perhaps to meet a competition need. Finally, Cell 4 suggests that males and females may choose the same activity for different reasons. For example, both may attend sporting events, females doing so for the social interaction, males for the vicarious experience of competition. Obviously, those examples cited to illustrate each cell in the matrix are speculative and based on prevailing stereotypes of male and female behaviors and needs. Nevertheless, the examples do suggest the utility of approaching the study of leisure needs and leisure activity involvement from a gender by leisure

choice by need fulfillment perspective, in particular, within the framework of the model presented.

In an effort to demonstrate empirically the utility, and to some extent the validity of the category system delineated by the proposed model, in the present study males and females were presented a list of leisure activities and needs relevant to leisure involvement. The list of leisure activities and needs used in the present study was adapted from a study conducted by London, Crandall, and Fitzgibbons (1977). In their study, London and his colleagues selected both leisure activities and needs that earlier research had identified as representative of factors describing a broad range of leisure activities and needs. A sample of individuals then rated the extent to which each of several activities met a variety of needs. Using a factor analytic procedure London et al. demonstrated that the activities tended to fall into one of three clusters--Sports, Cultural-Passive, and Productive-Intellectual- and that the needs also reflected three factors--Feedback, Liking, and Positive Interpersonal Involvement. Similar to their procedure, we had males and females identify the extent to which each of the needs was relevant to each of the activities. Subjects were also asked to indicate the extent of their participation in each of the activities during the past year. Based on the past year's participation, activities were categorized as gender restricted (i.e., there was a significant difference between males' and females' rated participation) or nongender-restricted (i.e., no significant differences). To determine whether or not the same or different need patterns were present for male and females, a discriminant function analysis was performed for each activity, similar to a procedure used successfully by Campbell (1969) to examine profiles of leisure time patterns for different age groups. It was inferred that a significant discriminant function analysis would indicate the presence of a different underlying need pattern for males and females for the activity in question.

## **METHOD**

### *Subjects*

The total sample was comprised of 76 individuals, 56 of which (17 males, 39 females) were introductory psychology students, eight were student members of a campus outing club (five males, three females) and 12 (eight males, four females) were members of a local Sierra Club chapter. The introductory psychology students were recruited from their introductory classes and received course credit for participating in the study. The outing club students' and Sierra Club adults' voluntary participation was solicited by the first author. While in attendance at regularly scheduled meetings, the first author briefly explained the purpose of the study and passed out data collection materials to all members present. Approximately 60% of the members in attendance completed and returned the questionnaires.

### *Data Collection Materials*

Ratings of 13 need attributes for a set of 16 popular leisure activities (modified from the sets of needs and activities reported in London et al., 1977) were collected. Subjects were asked to rate

on 7-point scales (1 = *applies quite a lot*, 7 = *applies very little*) each leisure activity in terms of the extent to which each of the 13 need attributes applies to participation in the activity. Subjects were also asked to indicate their level of participation in each of the activities for the past year. This latter rating was also made on a 7-point scale.

## RESULTS

### *Overview of Analyses*

The mean ratings for all activity-need pairs were computed as a function of gender. In addition, the mean ratings for the amount of participation during the past year were calculated. Comparison of individual mean ratings of past year participation as a function of gender were made via t tests. Assessment of differences in need attribute leisure activity patterns of males and females was made via stepwise discriminant analyses (Nie, Hull, Jenkins, Steinbrenner, & Bent, 1975). For each of the 16 activities separate discriminant function solutions were computed using the 13 need attributes as the discriminating (independent) variables. 3

### *Participation*

Mean ratings of respondents' amount of participation during the past year are presented in Table I. Comparison of ratings of past participation by gender indicates only a few significant differences. Females reported greater prior-year participation for attending sports events; cooking, baking, sewing, knitting, or crocheting; shopping; and visiting friends than did males ( $p < .05$ ). For none of the activities did males report significantly greater amounts of past participation than did females.

### *Need-Activity Clusters*

Need clusters which significantly discriminated females from males were identified for each activity. Of the 16 activities, 12 yielded significant discriminant function solutions (Wilks's Lambda associated with  $p < .05$ ). The four activities that were not significantly discriminated by the need attributes were attending concerts, snow skiing, swimming/water-skiing, and playing records/watching television. The need attributes that contributed to each of the 12 discriminant function solutions along with their associated discriminant coefficients and level of significance are presented in Table II in their order of entry into the equation. Mean ratings by gender of each contributing need attribute for each of the 12 activities are also provided in Table II?

### **Tables 1-2 are omitted from this formatted document.**

As a way of summarizing which need attributes contributed to the significant discriminations, a tally of the number of activities for which the attribute contributed to the discriminant solution was made. Taking into account which need attributes were given higher endorsement ratings (perceived as more applicable) by males and females, males apparently felt involvement in the leisure activities that provided greater levels of "feeling secure" and "seeing the results of your

efforts." Females, on the other hand, reported that involvement in the activities led to greater levels of "feeling satisfied," "cooperating with other people," "responsibility for making decisions," and "significantly affecting the lives and well-being of others."

## DISCUSSION

A main objective of this study was to compare leisure-need patterns of males and females via stepwise discriminant function analysis in order to assess the relevance of 13 need attributes to male and female participation in 16 different leisure activities. The results revealed that the level of relevance of various need attributes significantly discriminated females from males for 12 of the 16 activities and that each activity was associated with a different cluster of significant need attributes. It was also found that none of the needs contributed significantly to the discriminant function solution for all of the activities. In fact, the maximum number of activities for which any one of the need attributes was significant was eight. Considered together, these two findings suggest that not only is participation in different leisure activities related to differential need fulfillment for both males and females, but that participation is influenced at least in part, by gender-distinct patterns of need fulfillment.

As a test of the efficacy of the model of gender influence on leisure activity choice proposed in the introduction of this paper, subjects' ratings of the need relevance of their participation in each of the leisure activities was compared with the four influence possibilities comprising the gender-choice model presented in Fig. 1. In order to evaluate the results in terms of the four influence possibilities delineated by the model, the activities were grouped according to the following criteria: (1) whether there were significant differences in male-female past-year participation, and (2) whether there were significant differences in need-relevance patterns. The results of this grouping procedure are presented in Fig. 2.

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Examination of Fig. 2 indicates that the resultant groupings suggest tentative support for three of the four influence patterns identified by the overall model. The pattern of participation and need-fulfillment capacity of five of the activities (attending concerts; playing chess; playing records or watching television; snow skiing; swimming or water skiing) corresponds to the same needs-non-restricted choice influence pattern (Cell 2). Males and females had comparable past-year participation ratings which indicated that the activities provided for similar levels of the same needs. This indicates that males and females do participate in at least some activities for the same reasons. Participation and need-fulfillment patterns of six of the activities (camping; going to movies; painting, drawing, or playing a musical instrument; playing softball, volleyball, or basketball; playing tennis or golf; reading) suggest support for the different needs-non-restricted choice pattern (Cell 4). For these activities comparable past-year participation was reported, but males and females indicated that the activities provided for significantly different need-relevance patterns. The influence pattern, different needs-gender-restricted choice (Cell 3), also received

some support from the data. Differences in past-year participation and differences in relevance of specific needs endorsed by males and females for four of the activities (attending sports events; cooking, baking, sewing, or crocheting; shopping; visiting friends) suggests that participation in some activities is probably guided by gender-specific factors. It is interesting to note that this cell is the one in which the most gender-typed activities occurred. None of the data patterns suggest support for the influence pattern representing same needs-gender-restricted choice (Cell 1). Support for this pattern may not have been obtained since need patterns rather than individual needs were examined. It is possible that although males and females may have the same needs singularly, they rarely show the same need patterns, at least when gender-restricted activities are involved. This interpretation is supported by the finding that the univariate comparisons (see t test results in Table I) revealed very few needs significantly different singularly as a function of gender. However, the discriminant function analysis indicated many significantly different need profiles (see Table II).

While it seems apparent that a gender-by-needs analysis of leisure activities can increase our understanding of leisure participation, it is not clear at this point why certain activities and needs clustered as they did for males and females. The present study was not designed to examine how this categorization might occur. An analysis of what factors underlie the sex-appropriateness of activities and needs is necessary. For example, the factor of physical risk may deem an activity appropriate for males but not for females. Similarly, certain needs may be more salient than others in determining choice of leisure activities by males and females, such as the sense of security. It will be fruitful for future research to examine a large number of activities in order to identify the factors that determine whether or not an activity is considered gender restricted. This will provide an opportunity to develop a typology of both leisure activities and needs as they relate to gender. Past efforts to identify the dimensions that underlie leisure, whether by factor analysis (Beard & Ragheb, 1980; Duncan, 1978; Pierce, 1980; Yu, 1980), multidimensional scaling (Richie & Brent, 1974), factor-pattern plotting (McKechnie, 1974), or multidimensionally scaled correlations (Holbrook, 1980), have not paid sufficient attention to the importance of individual differences. For example, as Beaman (1975) has pointed out, factor analysis is most suited to cases in which the factor structure is expected to remain invariant for all subgroups of the population under study. Unless individual differences, such as gender, are considered as a grouping variable, resulting leisure and need patterns may not provide a truly representative characterization of males' or females' leisure activity needs and preferences. If there are distinctly different subgroups based on gender, it is likely that a composite or average characterization of activity needs and preferences will be applicable only to the larger subgroup under study.

Another consideration for future research is whether the leisurability of activities are comparable for males and females. In the present study, shopping, for example, may have been substantially less of a leisure activity for males than females. As a result, some of the reported differences in patterns-of-relevance-of-needs may be less due to gender differences in leisure needs and more

because males' and females' general motivation for participation (i.e., pleasure vs. necessity) is different. Finally, there remains the issue of "stimulus similarity" --whether males and females interpret the same stimulus in the same way. For example, for males "doing different things, using a variety of skills" for the activity playing softball, volleyball, or basketball may mean something different than the same need when applied to painting, drawing, or playing a musical instrument for females. Hence, future research should establish whether or not males and females mean the same thing when they endorse the same need attribute (see Abbey, 1982, for a discussion of gender differences in attributions of comparable behavior). Also, since a moderate amount of participation, in softball for example, for females may mean once a month, but for males may mean once a week, future explorations of the leisure choice-need satisfaction model should examine frequency rate of participation rather than ratings of a qualitative nature, i.e., highly, moderately, slightly, etc. One additional caution in a study such as this in which the sample is both nonrandom and relatively small is that the results can only be considered suggestive in regard to reliable gender differences in participation rates in and preference for leisure activities. Future studies will need to more carefully address problems of sample bias and adequate sample size.

The major thrust of the present research examined a gender-by-leisure-choice-by-need-fulfillment interaction using a multiple discriminant function approach. The results emphasize the complexity of activity-need patterns and indicate that at least for some patterns there are significant gender differences. The model holds the potential of predicting when participation in a leisure activity will be gender-related. The basis of the prediction lies in identifying whether or not the activity is considered appropriate for one or both sexes and whether or not the underlying needs met by the activity are relevant for males, females, or both.

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## Notes

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3 Factor analyses were not used as a basis for identifying a reduced number of composite scores to be used in subsequent analyses, since it was not assumed that the underlying factor structure would remain invariant as a function of gender (Beaman, 1975).

4 In stepwise discriminant function analysis the order of entry for each variable into the final solution is determined on the basis of the variable's discriminating power. Only variables that contribute sufficiently to the discrimination (explain a minimum amount of variability, associated with an F value of 1.0) are included in the final discriminant solution. Order of entry reflects degree of discriminatory power from most to least. Significance associated with discriminant coefficients is related to the amount of remaining variability not accounted for by the preceding variables. Hence, order of entry and associated significance may not follow the same order.