

Leisure-Spiritual Coping: A Model for Therapeutic Recreation and Leisure Services

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Abstract

This paper synthesizes theory and research findings on leisure, stress, and spiritual coping into a conceptual model of leisure-spiritual coping. Spiritual coping refers to the ways that people receive help from spiritual resources (e.g., higher power, spiritual practices, faith community) during periods of life stress, whereas leisure-spiritual coping is spiritual coping that takes place within the context of an individual's leisure. The model takes into account spiritual appraisals (e.g., attribution), person factors (e.g., religious doctrines, religious orientation), leisure-spiritual coping behaviours (e.g., sacralization, grounding, contemplative leisure, time and space, being away), leisure-spiritual coping resources (e.g., connections with nature, others, and transcendent other), and meaning making (e.g., life purpose, transformation, growth). The model, illustrated by a case study, will be of benefit to therapeutic recreation practitioners as they work with people experiencing stress, as well as to researchers as it can guide hypothesis development and provide a framework for the investigation of specific pathways that link the various spiritual and leisure constructs.

KEYWORDS: *Leisure, spiritual coping, stress, leisure-spiritual coping behaviours, leisure-spiritual coping resources, meaning-making, transformation*

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In a recent study on the relevance of spirituality for people with mental illness, participants identified not only public (e.g., formal religious services) and private (e.g., prayer, spiritual reading, meditation) spiritual activities as spiritual, but also recreational and social activities as spiritual (Bellamy et al., 2007). The authors noted that recreational and social activities are usually not classified as religious or spiritual and suggested that future research should explore the relationship of these recreational and social activities to spirituality and recovery for individuals with mental illness. Consistent with the authors' comments, few therapeutic recreation models reflect the spiritual dimension to life. An exception is Van Andel's (1998; see also Carter, Van Andel, & Robb, 2003) Therapeutic Recreation (TR) Outcome Model which has received considerable attention within the therapeutic recreation field (e.g., Coyle, 1998; Dieser & Peregoy, 1999; Parker & Carmack, 1998).

In Van Andel's (1998) TR Outcome Model, therapeutic recreation strives to sustain or enhance the health status, quality of life, and/or functional capacities of individuals through the use of recreation or experiential activities and processes. Van Andel included spirituality in his model "since therapeutic recreation practice seeks to address the needs of the whole person and spirituality has been identified as an important aspect of one's health and well-being" (p. 187). Noting that "we are seeing a resurgence in spirituality and support for its role in the healing process" the spiritual dimension of life was identified by Van Andel (p. 191) as being important to all three components of the outcome model—health status, quality of life and functional capacities. Health status, which includes spiritual health along with social, emotional, physical, and mental health, reflects a holistic understanding of health where there is an integration of body, mind and spirit. Quality of life, characterized by feelings of self-determination, joy, contentment, and satisfaction, is a subjective assessment of spiritual and psychological well-being (Carter, Van Andel, & Robb, 2003). Spiritual function, one of six functional capacities, refers to "the ability to find meaning and

purpose in life" (Van Andel, p. 187).

Although Van Andel observed in his 1998 paper on the TR Outcome Model that "discussions on the relationship of spirituality and leisure experiences are still somewhat speculative" (p. 188), during the last decade spirituality has received greater empirical research attention within the leisure studies community. Studies of leisure and spirituality have expanded beyond small-scale qualitative studies with a narrow focus on nature-based recreation experiences and spirituality (e.g., Fox, 1997; Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Stringer & McAvooy, 1992) to larger scale studies that have explored all types of leisure in all settings (e.g., Heintzman & Mannell, 2003; Schmidt & Little, 2005, 2007). Likewise, as demonstrated by a special issue on leisure, stress, and coping featured in *Leisure Sciences*, research on the role of leisure in coping with stress has evolved into an increasingly popular area of inquiry within the leisure studies field (Iwasaki & Schneider, 2003). Despite the growth in these two research areas, with the exception of one paper in the above mentioned special issue (Heintzman & Mannell, 2003), there has been little direct effort made to explore the relationship between leisure and spirituality as a contributor to coping with stress. In their paper, Heintzman and Mannell theorized how the major leisure coping strategies-- fostering a self-determination disposition, enhancing social support, empowerment, palliative coping, and mood enhancement (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000)-- may be associated with, and enhanced by, the spiritual dimension of life.

Recently, a number of studies (e.g., Goselink & Myllykangas, 2007; Iwasaki, MacKay, Mactavish, Ristock, & Bartlett, 2006) have identified the importance of spirituality in the leisure coping process. The purpose of this paper is to synthesize theory and research findings on leisure, stress, and spiritual coping into a conceptual model of leisure-spiritual coping, which is based upon the Spiritual Framework of Coping (Gall et al., 2005). This synthesis leads to the development of an overarching conceptual model that may be used by therapeutic recreation and leisure services practitioners as they work with people experiencing stress due to a variety of personal and/or structural stressors including disability, chronic illness, discrimination, marginalization, poverty,

or other challenges. The model may be used to enable persons to transcend life challenges and to enhance their quality of life. In one sense this Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model may be seen to build upon and extend the spiritual dimensions of Van Andel's (1998) TR Outcome Model. While the model presented in this paper may be focused more on spiritual health than mental health, which is the focus of this special issue of *Therapeutic Recreation Journal*, spiritual health has been conceptualized as both an elementalistic dimension of health as one component of holistic health, and as an integrative dimension of health wherein optimal wellness is dependent upon spiritual wellness occurring within each of the interrelated and interactive dimensions of wellness (Heintzman, 1997; Van Andel). Thus, when therapeutic recreation services bring about spiritual health outcomes that assist a person to cope with, adapt to, and transcend life challenges, they are also promoting mental health.

Before developing the model, we first need to provide definitions of key concepts. Spirituality may be defined as "the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred" (Larson, Swyers, & McCullough, 1998, p. 21). The search for the sacred refers to the search for God, a higher power, a larger reality and/or ultimate truth as perceived by an individual. Spiritual coping may be viewed as the ways that people receive help from spiritual resources (higher power, spiritual practices, faith community etc.) during periods of life stress (Olszewski, 1995). Empirically, spirituality and spiritual well-being have been found to be important coping resources that may mitigate the negative impact of stress on mental and physical health (Pargament, 1997). Leisure-spiritual coping in this paper refers to coping with stress through spirituality within the context of an individual's leisure whether leisure is defined as time, activities, experiences, or an attitude.

A Spiritual Framework of Coping

Based on the recent proliferation of empirical studies on spirituality, coping, and health, Gall et al. (2005) developed a conceptual framework of the role of spirituality in coping. This model uses the basic principles and structural elements of Folkman's (1997) transactional model of stress and coping as a

framework to organize findings from studies on spirituality and coping. According to this model, at any given point in time, spirituality may function on many levels of the stress and coping process: spiritual appraisals (e.g., attribution), person factors (religious denomination/doctrine, religious orientation, spiritual problem-solving or coping styles, hope), coping behaviour (e.g., prayer), coping resources (e.g., connections with nature, others, transcendent other) and meaning making (e.g. life purpose, transformation, growth). *Spiritual person factors* act as a contextual framework that orients a person in her or his reflection, understanding, and response to life events. Spiritual appraisals, along with coping behaviours, act as mediating factors in the coping process. *Spiritual appraisals* refer to first attempts to make sense of a stressor on the basis of one's spiritual beliefs. These appraisals may alleviate the first stages of distress sufficiently so that the individual may initiate coping behaviours. *Spiritual coping behaviours*, including organizational religious behaviour, private religious or spiritual practices, and nontraditional spiritual practices (Maltby, Lewis, & Day, 1999) refer to the actions a person uses to counter the stressor (problem-focused) or the resultant emotional responses (emotion-focused). Spirituality may play a major role in *meaning-making* (seeking significance in an experience), which may lead to a reappraisal of beliefs and attitudes concerning one's self, others, and the world. These beliefs and attitudes may impact on all areas of life. Due to this important role of spirituality in meaning making, it is frequently regarded as synonymous with meaning making.

The spiritual framework of coping developed by Gall et al. (2005) allows for broad integration with other elements of the stress coping process in various life domains. This is due to the fact that the framework uses Folkman's (1997) general model of stress and coping as a foundation. Thus, the framework is an appropriate model to use to discuss the role of spirituality in coping with stress through leisure. The model may be applied to various types of stressors such as a variety of personal and structural stressors, and has potential for cross-cultural application as it is applicable to people from diverse faith traditions or no faith tradition. In fact, Gall et al. illustrated how their framework is adaptable to Muslim, Jew-

ish, Christian, and Hindu faith perspectives. In the following section, most of the components of spiritual framework of coping will be described in more detail, and where possible, applied to therapeutic recreation and leisure

services (see Figure 1). Some components are not included (e.g., spiritual problem-solving or coping styles) as currently little literature exists on the relationship of these components to therapeutic recreation and leisure.

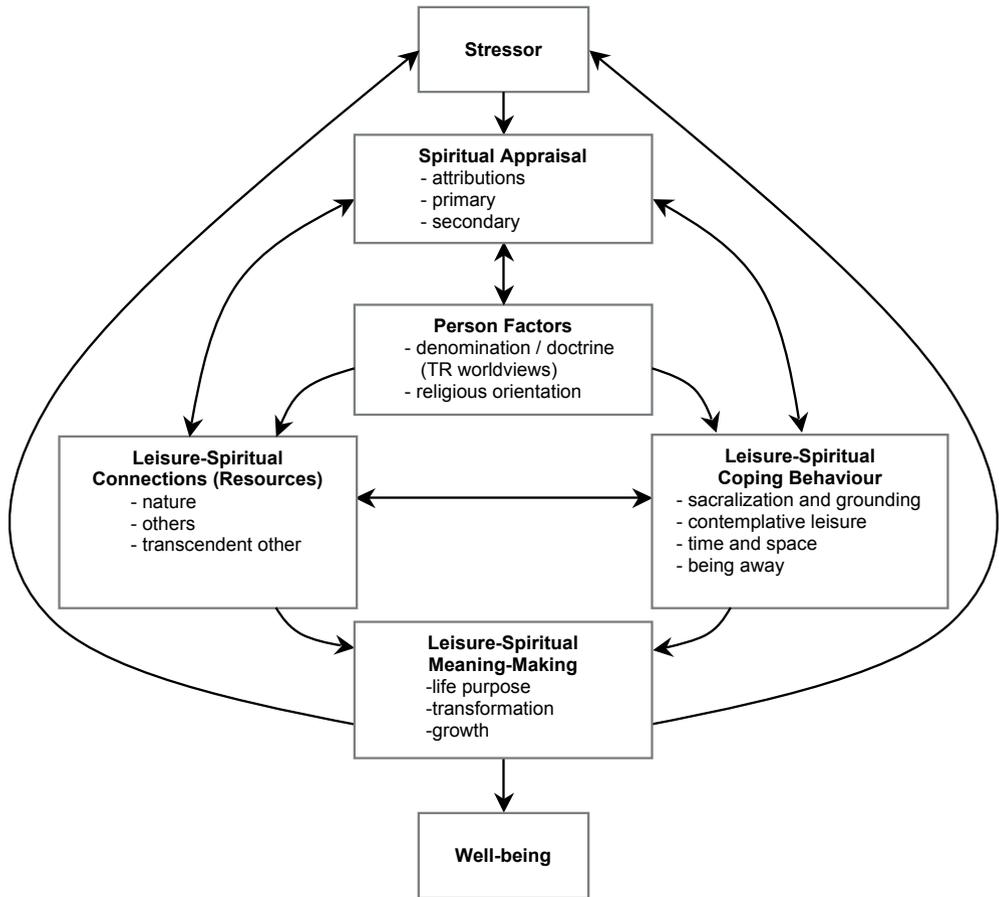


FIGURE 1: LEISURE-SPIRITUAL COPING MODEL
ADAPTED FROM GALL ET AL.'S (2005) SPIRITUAL FRAMEWORK OF COPING

Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model

Spiritual Appraisal

At the first stage of the appraisal process, spiritual causal attributions (e.g. God, the devil, fate) are a common way to understand stressful circumstances such as an injury or an illness (Gall et al., 2005). These spiritual causal attributions have been associated with the utilization of religious coping activities (Shortz & Worthington, 1994), as well as general coping strategies (Gall, 2003; Miner & MacKnight, 1999), and adaptation to negative situations (Pargament et al., 1990). Attributing cause to God may help people maintain a sense of justice in the world (Pargament & Hahn, 1986) that enables them to sustain a sense of personal control in the midst of an unmanageable circumstance (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985).

An example of primary appraisal is de-secration, that is, a spiritual evaluation of harm/loss: to what extent has an event negatively affected a dimension of a person's life that is considered to be sacred or related to God (Gall et al., 2005)? Secondary appraisal refers to a person's assessment of the accessibility and possible helpfulness of particular spiritual coping strategies that could be utilized in reaction to the stress (Gall et al.). Thereby, these appraisals have implications for the choice of particular coping behaviours (Pargament & Hahn, 1986). Application of this component of the Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model would involve including related spiritual appraisal questions, sensitive to cultural and spiritual traditions, to needs assessments used in therapeutic recreation and leisure services (Heintzman, 1997).

Person Factors

Religious denomination and doctrine (TR worldviews). Many people live their lives according to the beliefs of a specific religious group. Personal beliefs are integrated with beliefs of the religious group to create a source of social support and social norms that influence a person's behaviour. Thus, religious beliefs can affect how a person will cope with stress. Research has documented that religiously oriented lifestyles tend to be healthier (Gall et al., 2005). In the studies of Iwasaki and colleagues on the stress-coping of marginalized groups, it can be noted that the spirituality of participants is

rooted in different religious groups or traditions such as Aboriginal, pagan, and Christian religions (Iwasaki, Bartlett, MacKay, Mactavish, & Ristock, 2005; Iwasaki, Bartlett, & O'Neil, 2005; Iwasaki & Ristock, 2004; Mactavish & Iwasaki, 2005). For example, Aboriginal spirituality is important to First Nation people as it is "sacred," "fundamental," and "part of their heritage" (Iwasaki & Bartlett, 2006a; Iwasaki, Bartlett, MacKay, et al., 2005; Iwasaki, Bartlett, & O'Neil, 2005), is a key element of the Aboriginal worldview (Renfrey & Dionne, 2001), and has been recognized as a "cultural buffer" that mitigates the negative effects of stress and trauma (Walters & Simoni, 2002). Furthermore, symbolic healing during Aboriginal spiritual ceremonies is viewed as crucial to overall health (Waldram, 1997). Thus, for Aboriginals, spiritual coping through cultural leisure activities is consistent with all-encompassing world views valued and practiced by Aboriginal peoples (McDonald & McAvoy, 1997) and is part of a holistic way of life where the mind, body, and spirit are seen in harmony or balance (Iwasaki, Mactavish, & Mackay, 2005). In a review of literature on the major pathways that link leisure to quality of life across cultures and around the world, Iwasaki (2007) noted that spirituality/religion/personal beliefs are one of the six domains of quality of life and for many cultures spirituality plays an important role in leisure-like activities that contribute to quality of life. For example, Taoism influences the lives and leisure of Chinese people and, in the Indian vedantic perspective, the practice of yoga assists one in spiritual awareness.

Given the importance of religious and spiritual beliefs for many groups of people, incorporation of these beliefs into the therapeutic recreation process is appropriate for some groups. For example, in an investigation of how Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists managed cross-ethnic interactions in therapeutic recreation practice, Dieser (2003) found that family and spiritual involvement was vital for ethnic groups. In recent years, philosophical arguments have been made for the inclusion of spirituality in therapeutic recreation. Howe-Murphy and Murphy (1987) suggested a New Age spirituality and paradigm in which "the development of personal consciousness, leading to a lifestyle of wellness, and which incorporates the elements of mind, body, spir-

it, is the essential framework for our quest as therapeutic recreators” (p. 47). Van Andel and Heintzman (1996) used the model of Christian spirituality, “in which humans, created in the image of God, are viewed as a mind-body-spirit unity who have capacity to relate, not only with other human beings, but also with God” (p. 74) to illustrate how recreation practitioners might develop a more holistic approach. The authors of these two papers, which represent two of many different spiritual perspectives, stressed the need to include the spiritual dimension of life in therapeutic recreation. Heintzman (1997) explored how spirituality from a generic perspective, may be applied to therapeutic recreation, how it is related to recreation services for people with specific needs, and suggested practical implications for the integration of spirituality into recreation services and programs. This generic approach may be adapted by people of different religious and spiritual belief systems. Although therapeutic recreation models have not been developed for many of the world’s diverse religious and spiritual belief systems, leisure programs with a therapeutic focus do exist that incorporate spiritual beliefs. For example, the Cherokee Nation Youth Fitness Camp for Aboriginal youth with a family history of obesity, heart disease, or diabetes uses a holistic approach, which includes teaching on spiritual and inner strength, in addition to environmental knowledge, social and mental health, cultural awareness, and physical fitness (Perkins & Giese, 1994).

Religious orientation. A distinction may be made between extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientation (Allport, 1961; Hergenbahn & Olson, 1999). With an extrinsic orientation, religion is for the person’s own sake to gain personal benefits, religious belief is utilitarian in that it provides comfort and safety, and religious practices are not the result of faith but the result of guilt, anxiety, or external pressure. An intrinsic religious orientation is characterized by a selfless motivation to pursue purpose and meaning in life for its own sake and an internalized understanding of transcendence based on “faith, hope, and love for others, God, and self” (Gall et al., 2005, p. 92). An extrinsic religious orientation, which is thought to be less effective than an intrinsic orientation when coping with stress (Park & Cohen, 1993), has been found to be associated with a sense of inadequacy

when coping with a stressful situation and is less likely to be associated with the feeling that the stressful experience will be an opportunity for growth (Pargament et al., 1992). In contrast, during times of crisis, particularly times when a situation is beyond a person’s control, people with high intrinsic religiosity tend to rely on their religious resources (Park & Cohen, 1993). An intrinsic religious orientation is also associated with the perception of a stressful event as an opportunity for personal growth, reliance upon problem-solving coping during stress (Pargament et al., 1992), and a sense of meaning during severe stress (Park, Cohen, & Herb, 1990).

Little research exists on the influence of extrinsic versus intrinsic religious orientation upon therapeutic recreation and other leisure outcomes. Rancourt (1991a, 1991b), in studies of a comprehensive leisure education program for women that abuse substances, found that the women exhibited an external locus of control in regard to their relationship with a higher power or God. Given the above research on religious orientation, it would seem beneficial for therapeutic recreation programs to encourage movement from an extrinsic to an intrinsic religious orientation.

Leisure-Spiritual Coping Behaviour

Spiritual coping behaviour is a common response to stress and has significant relationships with a great diversity of adjustment factors (Gall et al., 2005). Spiritual coping behaviour includes a variety of emotion and problem centered strategies (Harrison, Koenig, Hays, Eme-Akwari, & Pargament, 2001) that may be classified as “organizational religious behaviour, private religious or spiritual practices, and nontraditional spiritual practices” (Gall et al., 2005, p. 93; Maltby et al., 1999). Organizational religious behaviour involves participation in a formal, religious organization and includes activities such as attendance at religious services and volunteer activity (Idler, 1999). Private religious or spiritual practices are personal and private behaviours such as studying sacred texts, prayer, watching religious television and singing (Levin, 1999). Nontraditional spiritual practices are those that differ from traditional religious expressions (Dyson, Cobb, & Forman, 1997). Examples include spiritually based mental exercises, relaxation techniques, guided

imagery, and introspection (Gall et al.).

As alluded to earlier, a recent study on the relevance of spirituality for people with mental illness by Bellamy et al. (2007) found not only that spirituality was important to the study participants, but that all three categories of spiritual coping behaviour were identified: public spiritual activities (i.e., formal religious activities such as church and bible study groups), private spiritual activities (i.e., prayer, reading the bible and other spiritual books, meditation), and other activities including both recreational activities (i.e., playing and watching sports, fishing, reading, social activities) and mutual support activities (i.e., Alcoholics Anonymous, helping others, community service). Bellamy et al. noted that while the activities in this last category are not normally viewed as religious or spiritual, they may include significant religious and spiritual elements such as social support and fellowship.

Similarly, in their research on marginalized groups, Iwasaki and colleagues found that all three classifications of spiritual coping behaviour have been useful in coping with stress for the groups they have studied. Spiritual coping behaviour ranged from praying, reading the Bible, or being connected with a church, to meditating with a long bath that offered the occasion to "think things through" (Iwasaki, Bartlett, Mackay, et al., 2005). Formal religious activities such as attending church services and bible study were found to be helpful stress-coping activities for individuals with disabilities (Mactavish & Iwasaki, 2005). With the same population, private religious or spiritual practices (e.g., meditation, prayer), which varied from person to person, were found to be "opportunities for 'clearing' one's mind and spiritual revival," and thereby helpful for stress-coping (Mactavish & Iwasaki, p. 25). Leading an active life spiritually, which included spiritual contemplation and prayer, was found by some middle-aged and older people suffering from arthritis to be an effective means to cope with stress (Iwasaki & Butcher, 2004). Another private spiritual practice helpful for stress-coping that was identified by Aboriginal persons with disabilities or with diabetes was the practice of smudging (Iwasaki, Bartlett, & O'Neil, 2005; Mactavish & Iwasaki). In terms of non-traditional spiritual practices, yoga was identified as a spiritual coping activity that facilitated

"concentration or focus of attention," which assists in determining direction in life (Iwasaki & Ristock, 2004, p. 34). Personal "pampering" activities such as a long bath were noted by women with disabilities as spiritual activities helpful in stress coping (Mactavish & Iwasaki), and massage, according to a Métis woman with diabetes, had the potential to be transformative since "it gives you the opportunity to go within yourself" through "talking in your mind." (Iwasaki, Bartlett, & O'Neil, 2005, p. 982).

The traditional organizational and private spiritual practices identified in the above research studies as being helpful in coping with stress are consistent with the activities and techniques suggested in models of spiritual well-being. From a therapeutic recreation perspective, leisure might be an area of life where a person may develop traditional organizational and private spiritual resources that help cope with stress in life. In a few cases, therapeutic recreation programs might offer programs focused exclusively on spirituality. These could include personal awareness workshops, spiritual renewal seminars/retreats, spiritual health support cases, spiritual health oriented lending libraries, and spiritual health workshops (Chapman, 1987). Dieser (2003) gives the example of how Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialists worked together with religious leaders in a case where religion was important to the client. However, in most cases, therapeutic recreation professionals would refer persons to these types of programs offered by other organizations such as religious institutions and retreat-spirituality centers (Heintzman, 1997).

Of particular relevance to this paper is the third category of non-traditional spiritual coping practices, which may include leisure activities with a spiritual dimension. The examples of non-traditional practices suggested in the Gall et al. (2005) framework include spirituality based mental exercises, relaxation techniques, and guided imagery. These activities may in some cases be considered as leisure (Heintzman, 2002), whereas many other leisure activities may also facilitate spiritual coping (Heintzman & Mannell, 2003). For example, dragon boat racing is an activity that has been associated with leisure-spiritual coping. Parry (2007) demonstrated that dragon boat racing acted as a coping mechanism for the stressful life event of breast cancer as spiritual and other

outcomes of this leisure pursuit contributed to spiritual health and enhanced survivorship following medical treatment for breast cancer. Specifically, dragon boat racing facilitated spiritual reflection and awakening, spiritual connections with others and the world, empowerment, as well as clarity and purpose in life (Parry, in press). Likewise, Unruh and Elvin (2004) found dragon boat racing decreased stress and gave a more positive perspective of having breast cancer through transcendence, connectedness, and oneness with others, which, as we will see shortly, are spiritual coping resources.

An important question to ask as we consider leisure as a non-traditional spiritual coping practice is how leisure functions as spiritual coping practice. We will consider this question under the headings of Sacrilization and grounding; Contemplative leisure; Leisure as space and time; and "Being away."

Sacrilization and grounding. The types of activities identified by Gall et al. (2005) as non-traditional spiritual practices are similar to the meditation, relaxation, rhythmic breathwork, creative visualization, imagery, and awareness exercises suggested by Chandler, Holden and Kolander (1992) as commonly used interventions in counseling and therapy to foster spiritual development through the process of sacralization (i.e., being sensitized to the spiritual). Leisure activities may also facilitate sacralization (Heintzman, 2002). Preliminary research by Heintzman and Mannell (2003) suggested that the spiritual function of sacralization (leisure sensitizes one to the spiritual) may serve as a coping strategy to ameliorate the negative influence of time pressure on spiritual well-being. Higher levels of time pressure were associated with greater use of leisure for the spiritual function of sacrilization that in turn was associated with higher levels of spiritual well-being. In stressful situations, leisure activities may also "ground" a person and divert his or her attention away from the stress and thus perform a function similar to palliative coping (Chandler et al.). Activities such as jogging, walking, tai chi, gardening, or anything that connects a person with the earth may function as grounding activities (Chandler et al.). T'ai Chi has been found to create the opportunity for meditation, which may lead to spiritual well-being and the development of inner strength and calmness

that helps participants cope with times of stress and adversity (Sandlund & Norlander, 2000).

Contemplative leisure. Historically, leisure has been considered not only as an activity but also as an attitude. Pieper's (1963, pp. 40-41) well known conceptualization of leisure as "a mental and spiritual attitude... a condition of the soul... a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude" reflects a contemplative leisure that can be traced back to Aquinas (1225-1274 CE) and Augustine (354-440 CE). In medieval monastic culture contemplative leisure was seen as the way to avoid the stress of busyness or *negotium* (Leclercq, 1984). Contemplative leisure has been viewed as one of the steps of the spiritual journey that empowers an individual through transcendent life-giving powers to cope with the stresses of the everyday world (Ward, 1999). As contemplation and celebration of life, leisure is a restorative remedy to burnout (Doohan, 1982). In support of this view, empirical research has shown that a leisure attitude of "being open" and "being aware" has contributed to spiritual well-being (Heintzman, 2000), whereas for older women with HIV/AIDS, spiritual transcendence has been facilitated by the quiet of contemplative leisure (Gosselink & Myllykangas, 2007).

Leisure as space and time. Some studies suggest that participants in their leisure deliberately create a leisure space or an oasis where they can renew themselves; these leisure spaces could be a spiritual leisure space (e.g., Iwasaki, Mactavish, & MacKay, 2005). This idea of a leisure space is consistent with findings that leisure may be viewed as time and space for spiritual well-being (Anderegg et al., 2002; Heintzman, 2000; Schmidt & Little, 2005, 2007). In a study on the experience and role of leisure in the life of counselors and psychologists, Grafanaki et al. (2005) discovered that leisure provided opportunity for spiritual experience thereby helping participants achieve balance and integration in everyday life, and cope with the demands of their work.

Leisure as time and space has been historically associated with religious holidays and the practice of Sabbath. Recently, the importance of holidays and the Sabbath for coping with stress has been noted in both therapeutic and psychology literature. Holidays or "holy days" which remember national, religious, or personal events are special and significant times that

provide a time-out from daily routines, present distractions from mental or physical problems, and let people express their inner selves (Luboshitzky & Gaber, 2001). These holidays may provide a buffer to daily stresses and help individuals fulfill their spiritual needs. As meaningful spiritual activities, holiday celebrations have four therapeutic implications. First, as a religious celebration, holidays enhance religious and spiritual expression by facilitating transcendence, which helps individuals cope with the uncertainty and conflict they face. Second, as cultural activities, holidays help people feel socially integrated into their community and society. Third, holidays can help people organize their time by facilitating time orientation through the notions of “before” and “after.” Fourth, as leisure, they provide meaning, enjoyment, entertainment, and satisfaction.

Related to holidays is the growing interest in North America to rediscover models of Sabbath keeping as a counterbalance to the stresses and fragmentation of life (Diddams, Surdyk, & Daniels, 2004). Sabbath keeping may take different forms: (1) Life segmentation where individuals deliberately segment their lives in order to create relief from stress; (2) Prescribed Meaning, where individuals give positive and spiritual meaning to life segmentation; and (3) Integrated Sabbath, where Sabbath keeping is observed as an integrated belief structure of reflection, rest, and relationship development on a daily basis.

Empirical studies are beginning to appear on the benefits of Sabbath keeping. Based upon the assumption that the Sabbath's cyclical rhythm of activity and rest helps fulfill the human need for spiritual renewal, Earickson (2004) concluded from a qualitative study that Sabbath keeping promoted spiritual well-being and psychological health. In a study of Sabbath keeping by Protestant ministers, Lee (2003) discovered that ceasing was correlated positively with autonomy, whereas rest was correlated positively with relatedness, competence, and autonomy. Both resting and ceasing were correlated negatively with emotional exhaustion. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) found that rest was the critical dimension of Sabbath keeping (Lee, 2003). Burian (1987) investigated the relationship between stress and the Jewish Sabbath amongst Sabbath observant and nonobservant groups. The Sabbath

keeping group had significantly lower Saturday (Sabbath) stress as compared to their weekday stress and also significantly decreased Saturday stress compared to the Saturday stress level of the nonobservant group. Research has also been conducted on the influence of Sabbath keeping upon human relationships and functioning. Boyd (1998) found individuals who were intrinsically motivated to observe the Sabbath experienced greater marital intimacy than individuals who were extrinsically motivated. Stern (2005) discovered that meaningful Sabbath ritual activities rooted in retained long term memories play a facilitative role in enabling meaningful engagements and sustaining personhood for persons with mild to moderate dementia.

Being away. Building upon the notion of leisure as time and space, leisure provides the opportunity to get away from the everyday world, consistent with the “being away” feature of restorative environments theory. This feature of the theory suggests that a conceptually or physically different setting from one's everyday environment is conducive to restorative experiences (Kaplan, 1995). For example, Iwasaki and Bartlett's (2006a, p. 331) study of Aboriginal individuals with diabetes found that getting away or having time-out was frequently identified as a means of spiritual or emotional renewal, as suggested by the following quotes: “I get away for a few days. It's good to get away to forget about everything in the city. I don't think about the awful things and try to think better afterward... I go to the reserves to get away from everything. It's just very peaceful and quiet...” Implicit in these quotes is a sense of getting away, physically and psychologically, from stressors and facilitating a sense of spiritual rejuvenation.

This notion of leisure providing an opportunity to get away in order to deal with the stresses in life and be spiritually renewed can also be seen in other studies. For example, studies by Ouellette and colleagues (Ouellette, Kaplan & Kaplan, 2005; Ouellette, Heintzman, & Carette, 2005) document how a monastery may function as a spiritually restorative environment for individuals who visit them as a leisure activity. Stringer and McAvoy (1992) found that for wilderness adventure participants, some of whom had disabilities, enhanced spirituality and spiritual experience were due to being in a

different setting, free from usual constraints on energy and time. Thus, leisure provided the opportunity to be away, which contributed to spiritual growth and development that ultimately could help in dealing with stress. Likewise, in Fredrickson and Anderson's (1999) study of women's wilderness experience, all of the women had experienced a major life change (deterioration of personal health, major career change, death of a loved one) so the trip provided the opportunity to leave the stresses of everyday life to have an experience of spiritual rejuvenation in the wilderness environment. A participant in Sweatman and Heintzman's (2004) study of outdoor residential camp experience noted that the camp was helpful for spirituality as it did not have the stress of the city:

...lots of people and buildings in a city can be very stressful at times when there is so much of it...there is so much white noise in the city like the buzzing in the background like the heater or the air conditioner... you don't get that here. (p. 26)

Another example is from Schneider and Mannell's (2006) study of the lived experiences, including the leisure experience, of parents whose children had cancer, which found that spirituality was a key coping mechanism for these participants. One participant referred to being away to their cottage: "Our cottage is up North...But when you go in there, it's just like Shangri-La you know. So that's our, that's my haven" (p. 17).

Leisure-Spiritual Connections (Resources)

Leisure-spiritual connections are spiritual resources that along with spiritual appraisals and leisure-spiritual coping behaviours act as mediating factors in the stress coping process. These leisure-spiritual connections take the form of connections with nature, others, and the transcendent other.

Nature. Spirituality is frequently associated with a connection to nature (Gall et al., 2005). One of the most frequently mentioned combinations of spiritual experience with leisure is the wilderness or nature experience (McDonald & Schreyer, 1991). In the previously mentioned studies on wilderness experience, it has been found that wilderness is conducive

to spiritual development (Stringer & McAvoy, 1992), and that an expansiveness of landscape and a consciousness of the absolute power of nature is a source of spiritual experience (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999). Burkhardt (1994) found that Appalachian women obtained a sense of groundedness as well as strength from their nature activities such as gardening. Gardening as a leisure activity has been found to be a spiritual enabler providing meaningfulness and stress reduction under extreme circumstances such as cancer (Unruh, Smith, & Scammell, 2000) and sustaining spiritual development and renewal in older people (Infantino, 2004-2005; Milligan, Gatrell, & Bingley, 2003). Schneider and Mannell's (2006) study of parents with children who had cancer discovered that one aspect of the parent's spiritual coping mechanism was a spiritual attachment to nature. Examples included enjoying the sunshine and trees while reading on the porch, visiting a remote cottage, enjoying the environment while driving the car, and appreciating the beauty of trees.

Others. Religious/spiritual communities can be a significant source of social support and care (Gall et al., 2005). Social support and care may be provided through religious leaders, other members of the religious or spiritual community, or the religious/spiritual community as a whole. Social support through religion and spirituality is related to a variety of health factors (Ferraro & Koch, 1994), and the absence of religious participation is associated with a number of health risk factors (Oman & Reed, 1998; Strawbridge, Shema, Cohen, & Kaplan, 2001).

Social support and care may also contribute to leisure-spiritual coping. In Fredrickson and Anderson's (1999) study of wilderness experience, where the women participants had all recently encountered a major life change such as ill health, major career change, or death of a loved one, a significant theme that contributed to spiritual meaning was group trust and emotional safety. Continuous verbal encouragement and on-going emotional support from other group members, which led to personal bonding and emotional safety, were mentioned as a significant contribution to the more meaningful elements of the trip and to the more spiritually inspirational aspects of the trip. Similarly in a men-only canoe trip the openness of informal discussions and conversations led to a bond-

ing which contributed to spiritual well-being (Heintzman, 2008). Therapeutic recreation from a Christian perspective, as in many other religious perspectives, encourages relationships with others through a love of one's neighbor, compassion and self-sacrifice; social relationships provide a sense of connectedness and play a significant role in restoring wholeness (Van Anandel & Heintzman, 1996).

Transcendent other. Research suggests that a connection with the Transcendent or God has a significant role in coping with stress (Gall et al., 2005), particularly if God is viewed to be available, protective, comforting, loving, and nurturing (Heller, 1986; Johnson & Spilka, 1991). A secure attachment to God has consistently been associated with positive forms of coping and positive outcomes (Belavich & Pargament, 2002). A relationship with God may fulfill a variety of functions such as: the creation of meaning; the reception of a sense of belonging, social support, and comfort; the reduction and elimination of emotional distress and fears; the provision of acceptance and inner strength; control; and empowerment (Gall et al.; Gall & Cornblatt, 2002). Furthermore, a negative relationship with the transcendent other (e.g., a God perceived as punishing and withholding) may be associated with a person experiencing higher levels of stress during stressful situations (Gall et al.; Gall & Cornblatt). The relationship with the transcendent other involves a complex process that may involve negative emotional states of doubt, questioning, disappointment, and spiritual struggle (Gall et al.). If left unresolved these struggles may lead to a negative influence upon well-being, but if resolved may lead to growth and development.

In a study on the potential of leisure to engage the human soul, Schmidt and Little (2005) observed that in leisure the participants "transcended the everyday assault of their lives":

In their time and space the co-researchers did not just recharge the body; they recharged the soul. Wholly engaged, not just one element of the self was involved. Rather their leisure allowed them to experience the spiritual...to know God...and to intensely be aware of a power beyond the individual. In the achieved moment of leisure, the co-researchers' experienced a transcendent real-

ization that there is more to life than the ordinary. (p. 548)

While the participants in Schmidt and Little's study were not necessarily experiencing stress, Gosselink and Myllykangas' (2007) study of older women living with HIV/AIDS found that leisure provided spiritual transcendence that strengthened over time as their disease progressed. The majority of women in a leisure education program for substance abuse believed that a Higher Power or God provided the strength necessary to carry on with life (Rancourt, 1991a). In terms of application to therapeutic recreation practice, any focus upon transcendence would be influenced by the spiritual belief systems of those involved (Rancourt). For example, Van Anandel and Heintzman (1996) explained in detail how a relationship with God is a vital component of therapeutic recreation from a Christian perspective.

Leisure-Spiritual Meaning-Making

Research has documented that spirituality and religion perform a significant role in discovering meaning in a stressful situation (Gall et al., 2005). Situational meaning may include perceiving positive characteristics to a stressful circumstance, realizing opportunities for positive benefits or change from the stressful situation, or recognizing that the stressful circumstance is less vital to one's life than originally thought (Park & Folkman, 1997; Park, Folkman, & Bostrom, 2001). A stressful situation can be reconsidered as an opportunity to obtain new ideas about life (Pryds, Back-Pettersson, & Segestien, 2000) and to experience benefits (Pargament, 1997).

In their studies on marginal groups, Iwasaki and colleagues have examined the role of leisure as a contributor to coping with stress (Iwasaki et al., 2006). They found that using active leisure to cope with stress included both spiritual activities and spiritual meanings. That is, spiritual activities (e.g., spiritual reading) were pursued in leisure to cope with stress, and active leisure also provided the opportunity to obtain spiritual meaning. For example, in a study of gays and lesbians, Iwasaki and Ristock (2004) found leisure to be a significant context to pursue spirituality and thus deal with stress. One lesbian explained that her leisure activity of pottery was meditative. Aborigines have been found to engage in culturally relevant

leisure to facilitate empowerment and spiritual coping when confronted by racism and other forms of stress (Iwasaki et al., 2006). In a study of Aboriginals with diabetes, many participants mentioned the role of culturally appropriate leisure in bringing about spiritual rejuvenation that had cultural meanings: "regardless of the type of activities described from escaping the city, going to reserves, and going to camping or the lake, to walking, reading, and sewing, one key stress-coping mechanism of leisure relevant to participants seemed to involve the facilitation of spiritual or psychological renewal in a culturally meaningful way" (Iwasaki & Bartlett, 2006a, p. 332). Iwasaki and Bartlett (2006b) noted that the realization and utilization of spiritual strengths through stress-coping had transformative potential. For example, one woman mentioned that a massage was not only stress-relieving, but facilitated positive physical, emotional, and spiritual feelings. She went on to mention that it provided an opportunity to go within her self, therefore having the potential to be transformative. This transformative process appears to be associated with the Aboriginal people's cultural and spiritual orientations.

Another illustration of meaning-making through leisure-spiritual coping is provided by a study of the leisure experiences of older U.S. Women who were living with HIV/AIDS (Gosselink & Myllykangas, 2007). The women in the study were disenfranchised and encountered economic, social, and structural constraints. Following HIV/AIDS diagnosis, the meaning of leisure was transformed for all of the women in the study. As their disease progressed the women experienced spiritual transcendence and developed a spiritual view of leisure, which became a metaphor for meaning in life. For some, church took on new meaning in terms of prayer, connecting with self and God or a higher power, and a place of acceptance of their disease. For others spirituality meant a stronger spiritual connection with self, nature, and others. At the same time, leisure advanced the women's well-being through therapeutic benefits, such as resilience in transcending systemic barriers they faced as a result of being female, over 50, and HIV/AIDS infected. As the disease progressed, the women's transcendence matured and their resolve to overcome obstacles increased. The newfound spiritual-

ity of all the women "continued to grow and provide meaning such that they viewed nature, animals, friends, family and advocacy as leisure vehicles through which they could express their spirituality" (Gosselink & Myllykangas, p. 16).

Interrelationships among Model Components

Similar to the Gall et al. (2005) Spiritual Framework of Coping, the Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model is viewed as process-oriented, transactional, dynamic, and relational. Spirituality can function and involve interrelated factors/components including: person factors, spiritual appraisals, leisure-spiritual coping behaviour, leisure-spiritual connections (resources), and leisure-spiritual meaning-making. Spiritual person factors in this model function as a contextual framework that guides a person in her or his interpretation, understanding and response to stressful experiences. Spiritual appraisals, leisure-spiritual coping behaviours, and leisure-spiritual connections are assumed to function as mediating factors in the stress coping process. Spiritual appraisals are early attempts to make sense of a stressor according to a person's spiritual beliefs. These initial attempts to make sense of the stressor may help a person diminish early levels of stress sufficiently to participate in leisure-spiritual coping behaviours. Leisure-spiritual coping behaviours are used to respond to either the stressor or associated emotional reactions. Leisure-spiritual connections act as resources that assist with coping. Together leisure-spiritual coping behaviours along with leisure-spiritual connections can then lead to meaning making and consequently to well-being. Although the leisure-spiritual model is, to some extent, hierarchical in that some components affect each other in a linear sequence, it is recursive like the transactional model. For example, leisure-spiritual coping can lead to leisure-spiritual meaning-making; however, the effects of meaning-making may feedback to the spiritual appraisal component and thus indirectly to leisure-spiritual coping as a person tries to adapt to a stressful situation (see Figure 1).

Case Study

The following case study is based on the personal experience of the author. While this

case study does not involve a therapeutic recreation service, a therapeutic recreation specialist, or a leisure services practitioner, it does illustrate the components of the Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model. In a similar situation, a therapeutic recreation specialist could facilitate a client to engage in leisure-spiritual behaviours and to develop leisure-spiritual coping connections.

Fourteen years ago the author was diagnosed with cancer, which was followed by surgery to remove a cancerous tumor and subsequently chemotherapy to eradicate the cancer that had spread elsewhere. At the time of diagnosis the author was experiencing multiple forms of stress. As executive director of an understaffed camp and conference center he was overworked and had no regular or consistent time off work. He had been experiencing overwork and burnout for a number of years. For the previous few years he had been also been taking care of the affairs of an uncle with Alzheimer's disease who lived 160 kilometers away. Although this uncle died 5 months prior to the cancer diagnosis, the author was now executor of the uncle's estate. He also had some responsibilities towards his father who was in his late 80s and lived alone in the family home 100 kilometers away. The author had been primary caregiver to his mother who had died 6 years earlier of cancer.

In regards to the *attribution* stage of *spiritual appraisal* the author was initially quite shocked and perplexed as he had been very healthy all his life. *Primary spiritual appraisal* involved the realization that death might be a reality in the near future. In terms of *secondary spiritual appraisal*, the author realized changes in his lifestyle were necessary and that spiritual resources were essential to bring about these changes. In terms of *Person Factors*, the author's beliefs (*religious denomination and doctrine*) were rooted in Christian spiritual faith, which provided the contextual framework for understanding and responding to this stress. The author had been brought up in a Christian home and during his teenage years this faith became personalized into a faith of his own (*intrinsic religious orientation*).

From the time of diagnosis until the completion of chemotherapy, the author drastically cut his hours of work to a normal work week. This allowed more time than usual for spiri-

tual practices of a traditional nature, but also *leisure-spiritual coping behaviours*. Although lacking the usual amount of energy, the author jogged 2 miles each day during chemotherapy, which acted as a *grounding* activity. Reduced working time led to opportunities to focus on spirituality through *sacralization* and *contemplation*. A specific example was participation in a weekend retreat on life changes at a spiritual retreat centre just prior to his surgery, which also offered the opportunity to *be away* to another setting. In terms of *leisure as space and time*, although the author strongly believed in the concept of *Sabbath* and had practiced it for most of his life, he had been unable to do so for the previous 4 years due to the nature of his work. During the period of cancer he returned to Sabbath keeping by abstaining from work on Sundays. Also during this time the author experienced *being away* from his usual work setting of the remote camp and conference centre to his father's home in an urban area. While this change of environment related mainly to work and living situation, it also affected the context for leisure activities and provided for leisure opportunities that were not available in the remote setting.

In regards to *leisure-spiritual connections*, although opportunities for *connection with nature* were less accessible in the urban environment, the author, when possible, continued to participate in nature-based recreation which usually provided opportunities for meditation, prayer, and reflection that strengthened the *connection with the Transcendent other* (God) and thereby played a significant role in coping with this situation. *Connections with others*, which were now easier to pursue due to the urban setting, were also enhanced during this time. Spiritual friendships that were a source of inspiration and comfort were renewed and strengthened. Some of the opportunities for connections with others were within the leisure context. A particular highlight was a weekly Saturday morning hockey game with others from the same faith community.

All of the components of the leisure-spiritual model had an influence upon *meaning making*, which led to a reappraisal of beliefs and attitudes, and the author's ability to cope. In fact the author sometimes refers to this period in his life as a holiday, as his stress level was drastically reduced from previous levels.

During this time the author re-evaluated the priorities in his life—developing connections with God and with others took on greater value while continuing in the job he held was questioned. He decided to resign from the position he held with no definite next step. Meaning making also fed back to spiritual appraisal: while others suggested possible reasons for the cancer, he accepted it as a mystery, and to some extent a gift, for which only God knew the reason why it occurred.

Conclusion

Spirituality is increasingly seen as a significant component of holistic health and well-being. Similarly, there has been a tremendous increase in research on the role of spirituality in coping with stress. Recent research suggests that leisure may be a fruitful context for spiritual coping to help alleviate, overcome, and transcend many of the stresses and challenges that people face. The Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model presented in this paper is an attempt to capture and organize the complexity of the factors involved in leisure-spiritual coping. Throughout the paper, implications and applications have been made to therapeutic recreation and other leisure services. While this model is tentative, it may be used as a guide by therapeutic recreation and leisure service practitioners to integrate specific religious/spiritual worldviews, leisure-spiritual coping practices and leisure-spiritual coping resources in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of programs when working with people who experience a variety of stressors and life challenges. As spirituality is an integrative, as well as an elementalistic, dimension of holistic wellness, therapeutic recreation services that promote leisure-spiritual coping can promote mental health through coping with, adapting to, and transcending life challenges.

The model also has potential to be applied and adapted to a wide variety of stressors experienced by people from different cultural and faith backgrounds. Unlike some models of spiritual coping that are based on specific religions (Nooney & Woodrum, 2002; Stolley, Buckwater, & Koenig, 1999), the Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model, like the Gall et al. (2005) Spiritual Framework of Coping, is based on a broad concept of spirituality and thus can be adapted to different faith and cultural traditions.

In fact, the framework of Gall et al. was reviewed by chaplains and/or spiritual care workers from Muslim, Jewish, Christian and Hindu faith perspectives, and each of them found the framework applicable to their faith tradition, although the relative importance of each of the components and aspects of the framework varied amongst the faith traditions. Similarly, the Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model may need to be modified or adapted according to one's faith or spiritual tradition. The examples from a variety of spiritual traditions, such as Aboriginal, Christian, and New Age that have been included in the description of the model illustrate the model's relevance to a range of different traditions. Consistent with the suggestions of Dieser and Perego (1999) concerning multicultural sensitivity, the model is not premised upon a specific spiritual tradition, but can be adapted to the therapeutic recreation client's tradition and worldview. For example, when describing the *Religious Denomination and Doctrine* component of Person Factors, the model does not assume one particular belief system but introduces different TR worldviews. Likewise under the component of *Spiritual Appraisal*, the model suggests the use of spiritual appraisal questions in TR needs assessments that are sensitive to the client's cultural and spiritual tradition.

The model can also serve as an initial roadmap or framework for researchers to guide hypothesis development and to provide a framework for the investigation of specific pathways between specific person factors, leisure-spiritual coping practices, leisure-spiritual coping resources, and meaning-making. This Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model integrates theory and research on leisure to the Spiritual Framework of Coping (Gall et al., 2005); however, some elements of the Gall et al. framework (e.g., spiritual problem-solving, coping styles) are not developed in this Leisure-Spiritual Coping Model simply because leisure literature does not exist on how leisure relates to these elements of spiritual coping. Thus, future research is needed not only to test the pathways in the model, but also to complete and fill in missing parts of the model.

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