SOCCER REFEREEING AS SERIOUS LEISURE AND WHETHER IT LEADS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEISURE IDENTITY

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SOCCER REFEREEING AS SERIOUS LEISURE AND WHETHER IT LEADS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEISURE IDENTITY

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Abstract

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SOCcer REFEREEING AS SeRIous LEISure AND WhETHer IT LEADS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A LEISURE IDENTITY

by

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This exploratory study analyzed the activity of soccer refereeing in the context of serious leisure. Soccer refereeing is an activity that requires an individual to exert considerable effort in order to participate, and participation is not always enjoyable or well compensated. In spite of this, many referees return to the activity on a regular basis.

Using serious leisure and symbolic interaction theories, this study explored the hypothesis that soccer refereeing is a form of serious leisure that contributes to a leisure identity. Using a quantitative approach, 196 soccer referees from the California North Referee Association were surveyed with an online survey tool. Survey items included demographics, questions related to soccer referee activities, as well as 54 statements from the Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure developed by Gould, Moore, McGuire and Stebbins. Responses were analyzed to see if soccer refereeing qualified as serious leisure and contributed to a leisure identity.

Soccer refereeing appeared to fit the characteristics of serious leisure more closely for those at more advanced referee grade levels. Grade level also was the strongest predictor of refereeing as a serious leisure identity.

________________________________________, Committee Chair
Ellen Berg, PhD.

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Date
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

It is a hot day, over one hundred degrees in the shade. He has been alternately running and sprinting for the past ninety minutes or more, refereeing a soccer game. The outcome of the game means much to the players, but little to him. Depending on the circumstances, he may have been cursed at, insulted or questioned at every turn. Yet he will come back and begin the process again next weekend. For the past 15 years, I have asked myself one question: Why?

The World of Soccer Referees

The game of soccer in the format recognized today began in 1863 (“FIFA” n.d.). With the addition of rules, it became necessary to have someone to enforce the rules. The referee can be one of the most hated people on the field during a soccer game. The act of refereeing is a delicate balance of managing personalities and enforcing the rules without disrupting the flow of play. The referee is a critical person on the field, but ideally, his or her presence is barely noticeable. The pressure is high to be accurate and do well, as it is quite easy for the referee to influence the outcome of the game with a single decision.

Many articles and books have been written related to the physical aspects and decision making of referees. Numerous technical manuals have been written on precisely how to referee (in terms of laws of the game, proper uniform, etc.). However, there has been little written about why a person chooses this activity and what the benefits are. As one of the world’s most famous referees, Pierluigi Collina states, “Everyone knows us because of what we do for ninety minutes, yet few, very few, know who we are, what we
do, what we think about when we’re off the pitch,” (Collina 2003:xi). Many referees will state that the main reason they referee is for the love of the game. One study of referee motivation found that in addition to love of the game, referees continued to be a soccer referee to become better at it. They placed high demands on themselves. This motivation kept them involved in this leisure activity despite the criticism from players, coaches and fans (Folkesson 2002). As will be discussed further, this study proposes that referees pursue this activity as a form of serious leisure that leads to a serious leisure identity.

Some argue that studying leisure is difficult because it is not seen as the “serious business of life” (Parker 1975:92). I propose to examine this topic using a framework of serious leisure initially developed by Stebbins. Stebbins’s theory on serious leisure lends credibility to this topic not only because it resonates so well in many leisure pursuits, but also because it focuses on leisure that is structured in a more acceptable, work-like fashion. Stebbins theory of serious leisure fits particularly well with the leisure activity of soccer refereeing because soccer refereeing is also a very work-like pursuit.

My observations of referees of varying levels of skill and involvement lead me to believe that being a soccer referee is not only a form of serious leisure, but also one that generates a particularly salient leisure identity. My role as the spouse of a soccer referee in the California North Region has provided me a unique opportunity to observe this social world from the outside looking in, without the distracting task of actually being a participant. I have 15 years of observation to draw from encompassing youth soccer all the way to the professional levels, though until now it has not been an official study,
rather a thought process used to place this social world in the context of my own marital relationship. The purpose of this study is to investigate soccer refereeing as a serious leisure activity and determine whether it proves to be a salient leisure identity. This study seeks to move from qualitative observation to quantitative analysis using the Serious Leisure Inventory and Measure (SLIM), developed by Gould, Moore, McGuire and Stebbins in 2008, which will determine whether soccer refereeing meets the criteria as serious leisure, and whether it contributes to a leisure identity. Demographic variables related to refereeing will be used to demonstrate whether refereeing commitment levels increase identity salience.

Referee Motivation

In order to referee effectively, one must devote sufficient time to attain a certain degree of skill, and learn how to manage interactions with players, coaches and fans. The experience is not always entirely enjoyable, yet week after week, the referees return to the field for another game. The question becomes, what is the motivation for a person to continue with this task, which at times is so unrewarding?

One motivation for people to do a task that is not entirely pleasurable is to do so in the capacity of work. In the act of work, a person performs a task in exchange for money. Soccer referees usually receive pay for the games they officiate. The simple answer to why a person is a soccer referee is because they can earn money by doing so. This answer may be correct for those just starting out, or perhaps for those who have no other source of income (such as youth referees). However, this would not necessarily hold true for all referees. In fact, referees come from all backgrounds including many
relatively lucrative professions such as attorneys, higher-level government workers, financial planners, etc., where referee income is not a necessity. The amount of money paid to soccer referees varies widely, but more often than not, the amount of time and dedication put in by many of the referees makes the game fee paid barely worth it. For example, some games require the referees to travel up to three hours one way, arrive one to two hours in advance to prepare the field and teams for the game, referee two games for ninety minutes each or more, and travel back up to three hours. This is about 11 hours of time for a game fee that could be as low as $100. This is not necessarily a bad hourly rate, but may not come close to what a person makes with their regular job. Things other than the hourly rate or game fee must be also considered by the referee when determining whether it is worth it. For the game situation I just described, the referee is experienced, or he or she would not be assigned so far away. In order to gain the experience a referee has spent numerous weekends officiating youth soccer for as little as $15 per game. If a referee declines assigned games, the next games may not come, so family and work commitments must be managed around soccer. In addition, to start refereeing a person must pay for and take a class, pay to register as a referee each year and pay for uniforms in both short and long sleeved versions in four different colors (a single referee shirt costs $40 and different leagues may require different brands or colors, so they are not always interchangeable). The investment to become a referee can be quite high. The amount of money made per year as a referee is not very much, and there are only four full time professional referees in the United States so advancement opportunities are limited (“U.S. Soccer’s Full-time Referees” n.d.). The majority of
referees are unable to make refereeing their sole source of income. For those that do choose to become a referee despite the costs, or even just to earn some money, the steps to doing so are yet another deterrent in pursuing this activity.

Becoming a Referee

Becoming and progressing as a referee is a detailed process. One does not simply walk out to a soccer field and announce his or her intentions. The first step into this world is through a course where participants learn the rules of the game, which they are then tested on. After successfully passing the written test, the participant becomes an entry level referee. Referee levels have grades, with Grade 8 as the entry level, and Grades 1 and 2 reserved for those qualified to officiate in international games both domestically and abroad. In order to progress through the various grade levels, referees must officiate increasing numbers of games and be evaluated by referee assessors. As a referee moves up the levels, it becomes more difficult to advance. Skill in decision-making and application of the laws of the game, as well as physical performance on the field are critical. There are far more referees than there are available games at the most competitive or professional levels of soccer. Not only must a referee develop his or her own skills to the maximum extent possible, but also the referee must compete with his or her peers for choice game assignments. Referee tests become more difficult and incorporate both physical abilities and knowledge of the game. Failing a test can derail a person’s referee career. Sometimes a referee only gets one chance at the next level, and a single mistake can end any hope of advancing. Advancement is not solely in the control
of the individual referee. Yet still, many people are participating in this activity. This leads back to the initial question of why?

Identity Theory: Work and Leisure

I propose that the reason why is the development of a soccer referee leisure identity. When looking at the concept of identity in this study, the theory of identity that will be used is the symbolic interactionist approach of George Herbert Mead. In this approach, the self is defined as both a mental and social process (Ritzer 2000). Humans have the ability to be both subject and object, where a person puts himself into the place of the other, in order to examine himself as others would examine him (Ritzer 2000). It is through this reflexivity that the self is defined. According to Mead, “The self, as that which can be an object to itself, is essentially a social structure, and it arises in social experience,” (Mead 1934:130). The self cannot emerge without social experiences (Ritzer 2000). In developing the self, the individual takes the role of the generalized other, which encompasses the attitude of the entire community. In the realm of the individual there are multiple generalized others therefore the individual has multiple selves (Ritzer 2000). The individual takes on the self that most appropriately responds to the particular social situation that he is facing at the present time (Mead 1934). In the process of taking the attitudes of various societal groups the conduct and thinking of the individual is being subjected to community control (Mead 1934). For example, current attitudes toward working in America serve as a type of community control. American society highly values work. Based on the responses of others, work can contribute to the
development of a work identity because the other person assesses the responses as positive. Therefore, working can contribute to a positive sense of self.

Work is defined as an activity that demands exertion, but that may be creative and rewarding. It needs extrinsic justification (Kando 1980). Work relates to the development of self-identity and it may also provide status (Kando 1980). In fact, it was argued in the 1970’s and 1980’s that work’s most important reward was becoming prestige rather than money (Kando 1980). Hochschild’s study of working families revealed that the work environment provided people with feelings of triumph and confidence. There was recognition and support in the workplace. Working outside the home was valued by society (1997). In the work environment people knew what was expected by the generalized other; acting in accordance with these expectations was rewarded and contributed to a positive sense of self. However, there were drawbacks to using work as the sole source of self. Workers experienced conflict, stress and guilt. All of their time was being spent at the workplace and people were living one life while imagining another where things did not revolve around work (Hochschild 1997). This aspiration towards a different self is aligned with Mead’s theory. While the Hochschild study focused primarily on the impact of working long hours on families, she also touched on the subject of lost time for involvement in leisure activities and recreation such as volunteering or playing on a softball team. This lack of participation can have detrimental effects on communities and individuals.

Despite the drawbacks associated with it, work is such a part of American life, that as a general rule, Americans do not really spend much time participating in leisure
activities. In fact, “the absence of work produces anxiety, meaninglessness,” (Kando 1980:104). It is safe to apply this statement not only to those without jobs, but also to people with jobs who are attempting to deal with the life they lead outside of working hours. That time, typically spent at home, is often stressful to the point that people go to work early or stay late simply to avoid the uncomfortable feeling of being away (Hochschild 1997). If people do take part in an activity outside of work, most take part in recreation as opposed to leisure. This is noteworthy because it again leads to work. Recreation is defined as activity that restores human beings, rests them and prepares them for work (Kando 1980). Recreation activities are generally passive activities such as watching television or going to the movies. Recreation does not separate the sense of self from the work environment. In fact, increasingly it is possible to find the incorporation of recreation into the work environment (such as on site gyms, company softball teams, etc.). Looking at the Hochschild study and the arguments of Mead, one might argue that this approach will only lead to further devotion to the workplace at the expense of other relationships or selves that may be more rewarding. It is possible that soccer refereeing as a form of serious leisure may be particularly useful in bridging the gap between work and recreation.

Because refereeing is performed in a more work-like fashion than other leisure pursuits, it may be a perfect arena for the development of a serious leisure identity. In order to be good at soccer refereeing, a person who chooses this activity must work hard and rise to the challenges that each game brings. This can contribute to a positive feeling of having done a good job, or performing to the best of your abilities. This hard work
may result in positive feedback from others in the referee community, or others who know the person is a referee. By choosing a leisure pursuit that requires considerable effort, the soccer referee may be able to claim that his or her leisure activity is more worthy because it is harder to do. They may even feel a sense of superiority when comparing their chosen leisure activity to other activities, for example most anyone can join a soccer team, but you have to prove yourself to be a referee (through assessments, tests, classes, etc.). A sense of power, or being in charge, is inherent in the activity itself. During the game, what the referee says must be adhered to. Feeling powerful and important may generate positive feelings associated with this identity. Similar to identities associated with work, the positive feedback received from having an important and challenging serious leisure role could be enough to outweigh the negatives of the experience (such as being yelled at by players) and encourage further development of this self.

Studies of serious leisure are of particular importance given the current state of affairs in America. Serious leisure is a timely solution to a nation facing the convergence of multiple events potentially leading to an identity crisis for an increasing majority of the population. Americans (as with people in all capitalist societies) currently face the threat of alienation due to postindustrial work (Marx 1967), loss of self due to unemployment or underemployment, and loss of self due to retirement of the Baby Boomer generation (Kleiber and Kelly 1980). In addition, serious leisure can be useful for those facing other role crisis or transitions between roles. In America today, if you pass most any park on a Saturday during soccer seasons, it becomes evident that soccer is a sport that is
commonly played, and that drives a high need for referees. If being a soccer referee is in fact a form of serious leisure that leads to a salient leisure identity, this activity may prove useful for those facing role or identity challenges or a loss of self.

Losing Work as an Identity

As discussed earlier, work is a method in which people develop a sense of self. Ideally, when working, people develop and extend their powers and capacities and acquire new skills. This is argued to be the real basis for freedom and individuality (Sayers 1989). However, with the advances in technology, freedom is stifled and people can only “take part in a limited range of activity” (Seligman 1965:341). The stifling of freedom in the workplace has created a universal condition of alienation that is so universal it “is now a social syndrome,” (Seligman 1965). Those alienated from work may find relief in serious leisure.

For those who are able to develop a sense of self in the workplace, the ending of the working career, whether voluntary through retirement or involuntary through layoffs and inability to find a new position may create a loss of an important identity that needs to be replaced. Those in this situation may benefit from participating more in, or beginning serious leisure activities as the means to a replacement or compensatory identity. For August 2009, the U.S. unemployment rate was 9.7% (“Latest Numbers” n.d). This percentage is the highest it has been since the early 1980s (“Employment Status” 2009). In addition, by 2016 the Baby Boomer generation, which is a large portion of the population, will be between the ages of 52-70 which is a time in which many people choose to retire from the workforce (Toossi 2007). The unemployed and
retired do not adjust easily to a life of leisure as leisure is seen as enjoyable only in conjunction with work (Parker 1975). In retirement, people may face a crisis. Identity and self-acceptance may have been tied primarily to the job. Retirement leads a person to a perceived nonproductive role in society. After retirement people may feel anxious or meaningless (Kleiber and Kelly 1980). Identity continuity through leisure can account for smoother transitions from work to leisure (Teague 1980). Results from a study of older, retired people in New Zealand indicated that satisfaction in leisure came from activity and achievement as opposed to idleness, and that people were happiest when occupying themselves in a work-like way that was enjoyable (Mansvelt 1997). Work-like leisure helped people feel useful, less of a burden on society, and not the stereotypical representation of “old” (Mansvelt 1997). Seligman (1965) claims that people are not good at dealing with unstructured time, that it causes a sense of panic and therefore is filled simply for the sake of being filled. Soccer referees may have discovered a serious leisure pursuit that can be used as a solution to many of the problems mentioned above.

Serious Leisure as an Identity Solution

Serious leisure contains the benefits of leisure without causing a panic, as it is often structured in a work-like fashion. This is particularly true of soccer referees as the activity is paid and is work-like. As the intermediate position between work and casual leisure serious leisure may be a good method to improve one’s life (Stebbins 1982). Stebbins (1982) cautions that alienating work plus large blocks of unserious leisure will lead to nothing more than further alienation. Stebbins defines serious leisure as “the
systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity that participants find so substantial and interesting that in the typical case, they launch themselves on a career centered on acquiring and expressing its special skills, knowledge, and experience, ”(2001:3). Serious leisure is profound, long lasting, and based on skill, knowledge or experience. It is complex and may include challenges (Stebbins 2001). Serious leisure offers a lifestyle and an identity. Participants of a serious leisure activity are members of a particular group or network of people who recognize each other and are recognized by the larger community (Stebbins 2001). This group can become for the participant, the generalized other that finds value in the activity, thus making it possible for the leisure activity to create a self. In comparison to work, serious leisure provides more pleasant expectations and memories, less obligation and broader choice; it is not a livelihood (Stebbins 2001). Like work, serious leisure can include conflicts, disappointments and tension. There is a need for intense participation and often a major commitment. While there are costs involved, the rewards and benefits usually outweigh the costs. Rewards can include opportunities to express one’s skills and knowledge (Stebbins 2001) or as Mead would put it, superiority.

That is why serious leisure is currently of such critical importance. It has the elements of work, which can be seen as a good thing, thus generating a positive identity or sense of self for those not employed. “As underemployment and early retirement increase, more people may seek life satisfaction through leisure experiences” (Yoder 1997:407).
Even when people are not facing such critical events as unemployment or retirement, individual role transitions either as a result of progression of the life course or from crisis events (such as divorce) can lead to a search for a new identity or self, or a reorganization of selves. Social identities change throughout the life course, which requires that role-identity and self-definitions be adjusted and revised. Leisure identities are not immune from this process (Kelly 1981). As other roles such as work and family rise and fall in salience and satisfaction, leisure roles can be a source of new associations as well as recovered social identities that have been put to the side to make room for other roles (Kelly 1981). Kleiber and Kelly (1980) found that leisure roles are helpful throughout the various stages of life. In adulthood, leisure roles may be selected to help a person find an intimate partner. Leisure roles may allow adults to enjoy adult association without obligation (such as a family role). As family structure changes, leisure roles may take on greater significance. This can be helpful in middle age when children are leaving home and parents are seeking a new purpose. The leisure role can fill this need as well as reconnect the individual to the community. Freedom to choose in leisure roles allows people to relate without sacrificing identity (Kleiber and Kelly 1980).

Regardless of whether it is the loss of identity due to the absence of work through unemployment or retirement, alienation from the workplace or other life events that lead to identity crisis, serious leisure is an approach that has promise of being able to fill the identity gap. The purpose of this study is to expand the field of serious leisure studies by empirically demonstrating that serious leisure can fill the gap when a new self is necessary. While there are many types of serious leisure to choose from, I propose to
address this topic by examining soccer referees. Being a soccer referee may bring feelings of power and accomplishment similar to those found in the widely accepted work identities. Given the negative feedback that referees may receive from players on the field, this identity may be more difficult to develop as the rewards may be fewer than the rewards in other serious leisure activities. Questions remain about what motivates referees to continue in their pursuit of this activity. However, using the serious leisure activity of soccer referees with the assumption that not all aspects of serious leisure are pleasant, I will investigate whether this particular serious leisure activity will prove to be a salient leisure identity, and whether commitment levels influence the level of identity salience.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND OBSERVATIONS OF REFEREES

Leisure in General

Many studies have identified the benefits of leisure and it appears that leisure goes beyond the pleasure of the activity itself. Kelly suggests that leisure can be a social space to work out new role identities with lower risk to economic or familial roles and that meaning found in leisure is a mix of “intrinsic satisfaction, social meaning and identity development,” (1981:317). For Sayers, leisure has value as it complements work and contributes to society as well as developing the mind (1989). Leisure is a different way of being that gives us privacy and grants us a world of our own (Davies 1989). Leisure also helps to bring different types of people together, and can break through distinctions of class or social status, establishing a different type of public sphere. A person with low status in all other spheres of life can benefit from a high status in a leisure organization (Davies 1989). This is evident for soccer referees. The players know very little about the referee outside of his or her role on the field. It is possible that an 18-year-old college student could discipline a 40-year-old police officer for breaking a rule on the soccer field, and it would be acceptable. Soccer in general and the roles between players and referees are very different than they might be in other spheres. Through this leisure activity relationships may emerge that would not otherwise be possible, and participants may be able to gain a portion of an identity that is lacking in another sphere.
When a person is making a leisure choice, he or she compares alternatives in deciding which activities to pursue. Satisfaction gained from leisure has an impact on future leisure choices. If the activity stops meeting needs, the satisfaction is low and the activity participation will lessen or discontinue (Ragheb and Beard 1980). A study of leisure attitudes revealed that society’s role in leisure planning, self-definition through leisure or work, the amount of perceived leisure, affinity for leisure, and the amount of work or vacation desired were all important factors to a person’s overall leisure attitude. Most respondents to this study felt it was more important to be good at work than leisure (Neulinger and Breit 1976). Research has also revealed that leisure roles are not really taught. If leisure is to be an important role in life, it is important that leisure competence is learned early and if it is not learned by middle age it may never be learned (Teague 1980). If leisure is not taught, it may fail to be a helpful identity tool not only throughout the lifecycle, but particularly in those times of change and crisis.

Despite the evidence that leisure is not being taught, it still appears as though leisure pursuits may be taking root in our society. Studies show that an increasing number of people are working primarily because they need money to sustain their serious leisure interests and that serious leisure interests are beginning to occupy more of their time (Stebbins 1982). This is a natural occurrence as people begin to realize the benefits of leisure, particularly serious leisure. Historically, work is considered serious and leisure is the “happy, carefree refuge from our earnest pursuit of money and social standing the paying job supposedly provides,” (Stebbins 1982:251). In leisure, participants are freer to stop participating than they would be with work, and more
inclined to keep participating than those who do leisure in a less serious fashion (Stebbins 1982). Stebbins further states that if leisure is to be a way of identity enhancement, the goal should be to adopt serious leisure activities as they have the greatest payoff (1982).

As a basis to study serious leisure activities, Stebbins puts forward three main types of serious leisure. The three types include amateurism, hobbyist pursuits, and career volunteering (Stebbins 1982). Amateurs are found in art, science, sport and entertainment and are linked with their professional counterparts. Hobbyists are collectors, makers, tinkerers, activity participants in non-competitive and rule based pursuits, players of sports and games where no professional counterparts exist, and enthusiasts of the liberal arts. Volunteers are those who engage in volunteering or helping in such a way that does not directly correspond with a gain for the volunteer (Stebbins 1982, 2001). The activities of a soccer referee start as a hobbyist pursuit, but the current climate is slowly changing toward the development of a professional referee class, which may someday move this activity into amateurism. I would argue that for many referees the professional class is so unattainable as to be somewhat irrelevant.

In his studies of serious leisure, Stebbins identifies ten rewards that have emerged in the pursuit of serious leisure: personal enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, self-image, self-gratification, recreation, financial return, social attraction and association, group accomplishment, and contribution to the maintenance and development of the group (which includes feelings of being needed, helping)(2001). Stebbins has also identified six distinctive qualities of serious leisure: perseverance, finding a career in the endeavor (which is shaped by turning points, stages of
achievement and involvement), significant personal effort (based on special knowledge, training and/or skill), durable benefits or outcomes, distinctive identity/leisure identity, and unique ethos or social world that develops surrounding the activity (2001). As will be discussed below, I have observed that soccer refereeing as a leisure activity has evidence of all six qualities.

Stebbins Six Qualities of Serious Leisure

Using the six qualities defined by Stebbins as guides, many researchers have found examples of serious leisure identities. Examples of discoveries in the six qualities are discussed below.

1. Perseverance

A study of college football fans demonstrated perseverance by the fans being there for their team win or lose, even though they felt the losses were traumatic (Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak 2002). For soccer referees, perseverance is demonstrated in several ways. Accepting assignments on a regular basis and officiating game after game, even in inclement conditions are some examples.

2. Finding a Career in the Endeavor

Stebbins states that finding a career in serious leisure comes from monitoring one’s personal growth and development, and that career roles will change over time. The stages of career include beginning, development, establishment, maintenance and decline (Stebbins 2001). Gibson found support for this quality in a qualitative study of college football fans. These fans demonstrated career by moving up to better seats, changing participation levels by beginning to attend away games, improving their tailgating skills,
and eventually declining by having to alter their participation due to old age or mobility issues (Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak 2002). Baldwin (1999) also found evidence of career in the social world of those who show dogs, with roles changing as the people aged and began to participate in different capacities from showing or competing with their dogs.

Career is strongly demonstrated by soccer referees. Referees gain increasing knowledge of the laws of the game and learn how to apply those laws correctly in increasingly complex situations. Referees improve their physical fitness levels. Through passing game assessments, referees are able to change grade levels and begin to receive more prestigious game assignments. It is also possible for referee career roles to change over time. A referee that no longer is satisfied with officiating games or someone who cannot physically participate anymore may choose to become a referee assessor or instructor, or may choose to accept the status of emeritus referee. The career path of referees is part of what makes this activity seem so similar to work.

3. Significant Personal Effort

The study of college football fans also found evidence of significant personal effort. The amount of time the football fans devoted to their leisure activity was considerable; they had no time on the weekends to do other things and for the weekday games, they would use vacation time to take off work. They also put great effort and money into successful and complex tailgate parties. Both of these examples demonstrate the tenet of significant personal effort (Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak 2002).
For soccer referees, significant personal effort is demonstrated by learning complex rules and undertaking strenuous physical training in preparation for games. Skills are improved through the effort of practicing in many game situations over time.

4. Durable Benefits or Outcomes

A study of participants in the realm of living history provided an example of durable benefits. The participants in this serious leisure activity identified that the social life and camaraderie were important aspects for why they chose to participate (Hunt 2008). The football fans identified psychological benefits when their team wins, and special friendships that were formed in the pursuit of their activities to be durable benefits (Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak 2002).

Durable benefits and outcomes are also present in the activities of soccer referees. This can be in the form of fees received for officiating the game, free equipment such as uniforms or shirts (which is much appreciated by most referees), physical fitness, lasting friendships, and status as one moves up the ranks.

5. Distinctive Identity/Leisure Identity

Leisure identity is the focus of many investigations into serious leisure activities. When evaluating leisure literature for connections to identity it is important to determine if the leisure used in the research study is a better fit for the definition of serious or unserious leisure. For example, Shaw’s survey of adolescents suggests that leisure activities do have effects (both positive and negative) on the identity formation process (1995). However, the results were not strong. This study did not focus on serious leisure and included such things as watching television, so its outcomes are questionable for
these purposes. Findings from a study of motivations for continuing participation in fitness activities (more closely related to serious leisure) revealed that the lower the identity salience of a given activity, the lower the motivation to participate (Laverie 1998).

For those activities that are truly serious leisure a stronger identity salience will be present. As jobs disappear and people work fewer hours of their lives, something will need to fill the lifestyle and identity gap once filled by a working career and because serious leisure can be a lifestyle and does contribute to identity, it will be a solid substitute (Stebbins 2001). Drawing from Robert Dublin’s definition of a Central Life Interest (CLI), which is sociologically associated with a major role in life, Stebbins, states that serious leisure activities generate lifestyles and identities centered on a form of leisure that is a central life interest to the participant. Leisure identity rises in parallel with a person’s CLI. The activity forms the basis for a personal and community identity. He goes further to state that serious leisure may be the only area in the future where people can find an identity related to their own unique qualities (Stebbins 2001).

Individuals will categorize themselves as a participant in a serious leisure activity and then they have a social identity as a member of that group even absent direct interaction and once the individual takes such a social identity “it will become a key component of the individual’s self-concept,”(Jones 2000:285).

This is supported by a study of museum volunteers. Museum volunteers practice heritage as a self-generated serious leisure activity. They make their own culture and construct their own identities (Orr 2006). Constructing and negotiating an alternative
identity is also central to the attraction of living history as serious leisure (Hunt 2008). For the football fans, Gibson reports “All of the fans in this study had constructed a large portion of their identities around being a Gator football fan,” (Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak 2002:408). For those involved in the world of showing dogs the leisure identity became a core component of the ‘dog person’ lifestyle. In fact, the connections were so strong that even when a ‘dog person’ stopped competing they maintained their membership with their club to stay connected to the subculture (Baldwin 1999). A separate study of ‘dog people’ revealed that this leisure identity extended into a shadow family, where the dogs were referred to as children and human relatives were considered aunts, uncles and grandparents to the dogs (Gillespie, Leffler, and Lerner 2002).

This concept of identity is also supported by soccer referees. Referees live for soccer. They frequently watch soccer games live and on television and critique the other referees. They also form strong connections with other referees, staying in constant contact about upcoming events. Many participate in associations for various groups of soccer referees. The internet has opened a whole new realm for shared experiences, where referees can send each other game clips and have discussion forums online about whether or not the other referee made the correct calls. Being a referee is a central part of their lives.

6. Unique Ethos or Social World

Going a step further than the ‘dog person’s’ shadow family or the referee who lives for soccer, serious leisure activities also have a separate social world or subculture. Social world and ethos are other areas heavily focused on in studies of serious leisure. In
a social world, the members have unique norms, values, beliefs, lifestyles, moral principles, performance standards and shared representations (Stebbins 1982, 2001). Within the social world are various types of participants.

Unruh (1979) describes four types of participants in social worlds codified by social proximity to knowledge about their social worlds and the activities within. The first level of participant is the stranger. The strangers are naïve and try to interpret the new social world using a system of relevance from another world. They are disoriented and do not know the rules or procedures. Their involvement is superficial and not fully integrated into the world. They remain detached in terms of commitment. Tourists are next, placed between strangers and regulars. Tourists will only stay in the world as long as it is enjoyable. They are in the beginning stages of the leisure activity. The regulars are characterized by habituation, integration, familiarity and attachment. Those in this category make this serious leisure activity a regular activity; they know how the world is supposed to fit together and how to make adjustments if necessary. They are committed and are on a first name basis with other regulars (however, they may only know the aspect of the person relative to their shared social world). Insiders are those that know the intimate details of how the world works and seek to control, direct and create experiences for others. The existence and worldview of the insider may be centered on the social world and they are committed to recruiting other participants. Friendships and close associations are formed from this social world (Unruh 1979).

For soccer referees, the participants described by Unruh are very relevant. As referees begin and advance in their referee careers they move in and out of the categories
as appropriate. I would describe myself and other non-referee family members as strangers. The tourists would be the beginning referees who cease to participate when it becomes more difficult than they anticipated, as when they fail an assessment or the game assignment they desire does not materialize. The regulars would encompass the core group of referees who appear week after week, in multiple leagues and continue to participate over many years. The insiders are the leaders of the referee world. They are the ones who get the most difficult games and obtain the highest grade levels. They are a much smaller group of individuals and their connections will cross state lines. Sometimes the borders of categories for referees are blurry. For instance, someone could be considered an insider as a referee instructor, but only a regular as a referee.

Using a similar logic, Baldwin (1999) found four distinct categories of participants in the ‘dog person’ realm: beginners, supporters (those who participate primarily due to spouse’s interest), active club members, and associates (those who have previously performed a number of roles in this social world and gained recognizable skill, but are reducing level of involvement).

The evaluation of college football fans revealed a unique ethos relative to the social world. Life revolves around football, special rituals are performed before and after the games and there is a set of values that revolves around loyalty to the team (Gibson, Willming, and Holdnak 2002). A study of the social world of mushroom gatherers addresses the issue of transmitting information to new members. The study found that experienced members took the time to teach the novices due to a set of social and normative pressures and the belief that you re-pay your own socialization by socializing
someone else (Fine 1996). In the world of the mushroom gatherers there was also evidence that competition within a serious leisure subculture did not have to negatively affect group cohesion and that it could provide a basis for competence on which to build status (Fine 1996).

In the referee subculture as well, there is also a strong belief in mentoring and teaching the newcomers. While competition is certainly present, there is little risk in teaching newcomers as they will not immediately be competing for the same assignments. Even if they do ultimately become a source of competition, the sense of paying back the referee community by serving as a mentor to a new referee is still prevalent. There is also value in making sure that newcomers are proficient as the more seasoned referees will be reliant on them when officiating games with them in the future.

The literature also supports the concept that serious leisure social worlds can either be connected to other social worlds or be completely separate from them. For example, within the living history social world, social status from other worlds was completely irrelevant (Hunt 2008). However, involvement in a serious leisure social world shapes other life realms in the areas of how time is used, how money is spent and how kin are defined (Gillespie, Leffler, and Lerner 2002).

Commitment and Obligation in Serious Leisure: The Unpleasant Side of Leisure

Another key aspect of identity in serious leisure relates to commitment. The only time that leisure seems to work as a solution to lack of fulfillment outside of the work sphere is in activities such as serious leisure where commitment is present (Shamir 1988). The presence of strong commitment is also the only time that a single social world will
make up a significant portion of a participant’s total identity (Unruh 1979). External commitment to an activity is less valuable in the study of serious leisure than internal commitment because if a person is only externally committed there will be little social cost in abandoning the activity (Shamir 1988). Internal commitment has to be accompanied by a valued self-identity and it “exists when the person defines himself or herself in terms of the line of activity, role or relationship he or she is committed to,” (Shamir 1988:244). The culture of commitment shapes identity in part through the money and time demands that being involved creates (Gillespie, Leffler and Lerner 2002). Therefore, if leisure commitments are to be used to fill the gaps in identity, they may have to follow the logic that the more costs, the greater the return (Shamir 1988). However, cultures of commitment (or social worlds of serious leisure) create conflicts with other social worlds.

For example, serious leisure activities make time demands that can conflict with other things such as work and family life. Every type of leisure has the possibility to be undertaken in a selfish manner and every type of serious leisure contains costs that each participant must resolve in his or her own way (Stebbins 2001). Serious leisure is characterized by flexible organization, however it also has a sense of obligation to it, in that those participating wanted to do so, but at some level were also required to do it (Stebbins 2000). This obligation could cause friction with other commitments and has the potential to dilute the rewards of the activity. This clash between cultures, identities and roles is evident in much of the previous research. Family and work identities and commitments were two areas in which serious leisure seems to clash the most. A study
of women’s participation in the Sea Cadet Corps revealed that the participants’ jobs and home life took second place to their Sea Cadet Corps commitment (Rainsborough 2006). The same was true for ‘dog people’ who structured other activities (including the culture of religion) around dog events (Gillespie, Leffler, and Lerner 2002). The ‘dog person’ culture also contained a unique clash between gender roles and gender freedoms. For example, the women participants competed in highly athletic events while wearing makeup and skirts (Gillespie, Leffler, and Lerner 2002).

Soccer referees also experience the conflicts and participation costs discussed above. Disappointment is a common occurrence, whether with one’s own performance or due to not being chosen for the level of game one would like to referee. Financial costs exist to purchase the required uniform and equipment and register for the privilege of participation. Conflicts with family life are common due to the large weekend and evening time commitments required for participation.

The resolutions of the conflicts were varied. Baldwin’s study of ‘dog people’ revealed a rather circular conflict resolution technique. The identification as a ‘dog person’ itself seemed to justify devoting large amounts of time and money to the leisure pursuit (Baldwin 1999). This approach seems to be reflective of a statement of “This is who I am, so this is how I will structure my life.” For the women in the Sea Cadet Corps, the justification was sequential. Because their involvement in the leisure activity came before the involvement in the competing activity or relationship, the Sea Cadet Corps was justified to be in the first position (Rainsborough 2006). More direct techniques included lying about schedules (Rainsborough 2006, Gillespie 2002) and avoiding or dropping
demands or relationships that could not be managed around the leisure activity (Rainsborough 2006). For the living history participants, public display of battle re-enactments served as a method of legitimizing the serious leisure lifestyle (Hunt 2008). One study of the spouses of runners revealed that the positive relationship between running commitment and leisure-family conflict was higher among spouses who were less supportive, thus indicating that spousal support can mitigate leisure-family conflict (Goff, Fick and Oppliger 1997).

In the past, I have discussed the issue of costs and resolving conflicts with family commitment with various referees. Resolutions to this conflict have ranged from turning back game assignments to attend family events to the extreme indicated by one longtime referee who tells his wife not to schedule any family commitments on weekends during soccer season (the season can last well over eight months of the year). Other families cope by making it a family activity either through other family members watching the games from the stands, or through all family members becoming referees.

The final concept for this literature review returns to the basis of my longstanding initial question of why anyone continues participation in a leisure activity that looks like it is difficult, uncomfortable or just plain unpleasant. The answer is simply that if the activity qualifies as serious leisure, it is not always going to be fun. Stebbins argues that agreeable obligation is appropriate in leisure, but not disagreeable obligations and that if the costs of participation outweigh the rewards a person will cease to participate (Stebbins 2000). However, in the serious leisure of ‘dog people’ Baldwin (1999) argues that strong identification and belief in the value of the lifestyle outweighs any costs. This
finding is also evident in the study of soccer fans in England. Those fans took such pride in belonging to their group that they used in-group favoritism to compensate for a consistently losing team and facilities that were less desirable than those occupied by fans of other teams (Jones 2000). For a leisure group to remain stable, benefits of belonging begin with the activity for which an individual joins but then must transcend the activity itself. It is not necessarily the activity that binds the group together (Fine 1996). For soccer referees, the benefits may include positive feelings of accomplishment, power, and a sense of making progress or improving a skill set. The soccer referee group provides validation for the individual’s accomplishments in these areas. Other benefits seem to include strong friendships centered on a love of soccer.

**Hypotheses**

The purpose of this exploratory study is to expand the body of research on serious leisure by using a combined approach of observation and empirical data on soccer referees to see if serious leisure can be used as a tool to fill the crises of identity that Americans are currently facing. To say that a form of serious leisure shapes identity also requires that you establish that the activity qualifies as serious leisure (Gillespie, Leffler and Lerner 2002). Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed for this study:

**Hypothesis 1:** Soccer refereeing is a form of serious leisure.

**Hypothesis 2:** For soccer referee participants, the role of the soccer referee will be a salient identity.

**Hypothesis 3:** The more committed a person is to the soccer referee role, the more salient the identity will be.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Method of Contact

The data used for this exploratory study comes from a random sample of adult referees in the California North Referee Association (CNRA). The CNRA is the organization that referees living in the Northern part of California (extending as far south as Inyo, Tulare, Kings and Monterey counties) register through in order to referee games under the jurisdiction of the United States Soccer Federation. The referees in the CNRA referee youth soccer leagues, amateur soccer leagues and some professional level soccer leagues as well. The referees in this association may also participate as referees in high school, college, and indoor soccer, however findings from this study will not necessarily be generalizable to those populations, because different associations are responsible for the referees and therefore not all referees for those leagues may be captured in the population from which the sample is drawn. In addition, the data is not generalizable to other youth soccer organizations such as the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) as the refereeing structure is different.

Contact was initiated with the participants through an email request with a link to the online survey site. The time frame to complete the survey was two weeks, with a reminder after the first week passed. For the 2009 registration year, the CNRA had over 12,000 members spanning all referee grade levels. Based on observations and conversations with soccer referees, it was determined that beginning with referee grade level 6 and continuing through grade 1 (with 1 being the highest grade level it is possible
to achieve), the nature of the activity changes and becomes more difficult and competitive. For purposes of this study, those referees that achieved these “higher” referee grade levels (regardless of active or emeritus status) will be called “higher-level referees” and those who achieved grades 7, 8, and 9 will be called “lower-level referees”. Because it was anticipated that the group of higher-level referees may have different responses, and due to the fact that as referee grade levels become more difficult to achieve the number of referees in each level decreases, higher-level referees were intentionally oversampled so that they would be included in the study in meaningful numbers. For 2009, there were 139 referees in grades 1-6 and 141 referees who hold emeritus status having retired from grades 1-6. All 280 of these higher-level referees were selected to participate in the survey.

Due to the fact that the data collection was done online, it was necessary to remove the youth referees as it was not possible to determine whether a parent or guardian had provided consent for the youth to participate in research. In addition, removing the youth from the study allowed the findings to more accurately reflect adult leisure identities, which is the intended focus of this research. The most current member list did not include birth date information. To remove as many youth referees as possible, the 2007 member list (the last year birth date info was collected) was merged with the 2009 member list. As this did not capture all youth, the first question of the survey instructed those less than 18 years of age to discontinue the survey and requested a yes or no answer to whether or not the participant was at least 18 years old. If a “no” answer
was selected, then the survey skipped to the end page and no additional data was collected for that participant.

After removing the known youth referees and those without email addresses, the population size was 9,488. With a population of 9,488, a sample size of 369 would have been sufficient to keep the error to about 5% (Krejcie 1970). The higher-level referees were also removed from this list since it had been decided to contact all of them. Using the list of 9,208 referees remaining, an initial random sample of 500 referees in grades 7, 8, and 9 was selected. Because of the number of invalid email addresses, the nature of online surveys and the tendency for first year referees to cease participating in the activity relatively quickly (and therefore would not be anticipated to respond to a survey on the topic), the response rate was not very high. To increase response rate, approximately two weeks after the first 500 participants were contacted, a second random sample of 500 referees in grades 7, 8, and 9 were contacted. The second group of 500 also received a reminder email approximately one week after the first contact.

The overall response rate was lower than desired both for the group as a whole and for each of the two groups (upper and lower level). Some respondents completed less than half of the survey and the data from those respondents was excluded. For the group as a whole, 196 useable responses were received (response rate of 15.3%). Of the 280 higher-level referees, 89 useable responses were received (response rate of 31.8%). Of the 1,000 lower-level referees, 104 useable responses were received (response rate of 10.4%). Three respondents did not identify their referee grade level and as a result are excluded from some of the analysis. Due to the low response rate, results of this study
are limited to the sample groups only and are not necessarily generalizable to the population as a whole.

Data

The data collected for this study was done by an online survey. The survey consisted of two main parts. The first part of the survey asked respondents basic demographic questions including the participant’s gender, race, employment status, number of hours worked per week, whether or not the participant was in school and the number of hours per week devoted to school. Additional demographic information specific to soccer refereeing was also collected, including how long the participant has been a referee (in months), the current referee grade level, gross amount made each year refereeing, amount spent each year in order to referee, and number of hours per week spent on soccer referee related activities. The survey did not request information that would reveal a participant’s identity. Gender was not included in the analysis as only 6.6% of respondents were female. The demographic questions asking whether or not a person was attending school and/or employed were ultimately not included in the analysis as refereeing activities can take place without conflict with either school or work. With no research identifying whether work and school interfere with refereeing, it was premature to look at these items.

The second component of the survey used the short version of the Serious Leisure Inventory Measure (SLIM) (Gould et al. 2008). The SLIM in its short form includes 54 statements related to refereeing and asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with the statement on a nine point likert-type response scale. Response choices ranged
from “Completely Agree” to “Completely Disagree”. Due to a transcription error, only 53 of the statements were usable in the data analysis.

*Evaluating Soccer Refereeing as Serious Leisure (Testing Hypothesis #1)*

Until very recently, studies of serious leisure participation were done in a qualitative manner. The recent development of the SLIM has opened up opportunities to evaluate larger social worlds and gather data that may be easier to generalize to a particular type of serious leisure activity. The SLIM is derived from the six qualities conceptualized by Stebbins in which 18 different dimensions are identified (Gould et al 2008). This measure is still in its early stages of development, though the authors have reported strong reliability and validity of the SLIM as a comprehensive assessment of the 18 serious leisure factors (Please see Appendix B).

To determine whether soccer refereeing was considered serious leisure, an index was created for each of the 18 dimensions measured on the SLIM. Each dimension was scored by calculating the average score of three of the individual statements, with the exception of the Significant Effort Dimension, which used the average score of two statements. In keeping with the suggestion from the authors of the SLIM, six dimension scores (Perseverance, Significant Effort, Career Progress, Career Contingencies, Unique Ethos and Identity) were used to comprise an additive index reflecting a serious orientation, referred to in this study as “Serious Orientation Score” or “SOS” (Gould et al 2008). There is no cut point in this measure at which an activity is classified as either serious or non-serious leisure, so the results show a general answer to the question and discuss mean comparisons between different groups of referees. The other 12
dimensions measured by the SLIM were considered part of the Durable Goods quality of serious leisure, which is not considered an additive indication of seriousness but provided other information that was explored when examining the overall results of the study (Gould et al 2008).

**Evaluating Soccer Referee Identity Salience (Testing Hypothesis #2 and #3)**

Identity salience was measured using data from the Identity and Unique Ethos dimensions of the SLIM. These areas were pulled out for analysis with demographic data and specific questions targeted at level of commitment (such as hours spent in this leisure activity, financial commitment, etc.). To address the second hypothesis, which states that soccer refereeing will be a salient identity for the respondents, the mean scores on the Identity Dimension and the Unique Ethos Dimension were examined, with higher scores proposed to indicate higher identity salience.

The third hypothesis that the more committed a person is to the soccer referee role, the more salient the identity will be, was examined using regression analysis. Two regression analyses were performed to see if any of the demographic variables had predictive value for a higher score on the Identity Dimension of the SLIM or the Unique Ethos Dimension of the SLIM. The independent variables in each regression included referee grade level, amount of time spent on soccer referee related activities, length of time in months as a soccer referee, average amount spent per year in order to referee, and whether or not the respondent’s race was white or other. The independent variables were chosen primarily as they seem to indicate a level of commitment to refereeing (though race was used purely as a control variable). The dependent variable for the first
regression was the Unique Ethos Dimension score from the SLIM, and for the second regression was the Identity Dimension score from the SLIM. Unique Ethos was tested as it would not seem possible to have a referee identity without a referee community from which to take the generalized other.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

As was mentioned previously, while the response rate for this exploratory study was relatively good, the resulting sample size was too small to generalize the findings to the population as a whole. However, the results of the survey do show some support for the hypotheses when limited to the sample.

The sample was predominantly male (86.7%) and most respondents were white (77%). Higher-level referees comprised 45.4% of the sample and lower-level referees accounted for 53.1%. Length of time as a soccer referee ranged from 5 to 600 months, with the mean number of months equal to 168. Respondents spent between $0 and $9000 per year in order to referee, with the median amount spent equal to $554. The average amount of time per week spent refereeing ranged from 0 to 60 hours with the median number of hours equal to 8.

*Hypothesis 1: Soccer refereeing is a form of serious leisure.*

The scores on the 18 dimensions of the SLIM were relatively high. On a nine point scale from zero to eight, the mean scores ranged from 5.42 to 6.71, depending on the dimension (See Appendix C). For the six dimensions that comprise the Serious Orientation Score (SOS), mean scores ranged from 5.76 to 7.71. The mean SOS for the group as a whole was 111.42 with a standard deviation of 17.5. The total possible score on the SOS was 136.
Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for the SLIM (dimensions comprising the SOS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious Orientation Score</td>
<td>111.42</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Progress</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Contingencies</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Ethos</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were grouped by higher and lower-level referee grades to see if the dimension scores or the SOS was different for different types of referees. An independent samples t-test was performed and in all dimensions, the mean score was higher for higher-level referees. There was a significant difference in SOS scores, with \( t(176) = 6.328 \), and \( p < .001 \). The difference between groups was also significant in all dimensions except for Financial Return.

Table 2: Select Independent Samples t-test Results by Higher and Lower-Level Referees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Higher Level Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Lower Level Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>( t ) value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serious Orientation Score***</td>
<td>119.39</td>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>104.27</td>
<td>19.59</td>
<td>6.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Progress**</td>
<td>7.84</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>3.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort***</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>6.94</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>3.535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance***</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>7.29</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>4.679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Contingencies***</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>6.260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity***</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>4.93</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>7.073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Ethos***</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>3.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Return</td>
<td>6.18</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>5.80</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>1.531</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\* \( p \leq .05 \), \*\* \( p \leq .01 \), \*\*\* \( p \leq .001 \)
Hypothesis 2: For soccer referee participants, the role of the soccer referee will be a salient identity.

To test this hypothesis, mean scores on the Identity Dimension of the SLIM were examined. For the sample group as a whole, the mean score was 5.76 with a standard deviation of 1.91. Of the six dimensions that measure serious orientation, this dimension scored the lowest.

When comparing higher-level and lower-level referees with an independent samples t-test, the mean scores for the Identity Dimension were significantly different with \( t(187) = 7.073 \), and \( p < .001 \). For higher-level referees the mean score was 6.70 with a standard deviation of 1.16; for lower-level referees the mean score was 4.93 with a standard deviation of 2.07.

As was discussed previously, when developing the self (an identity), the individual takes the role of the generalized other, which encompasses the attitude of the entire community and in that realm there are multiple generalized others therefore the individual has multiple selves (Ritzer 2000). To examine whether the soccer referee role could in fact be a self it was necessary to determine if there was a soccer referee community that would provide the community attitude. To test this, the Unique Ethos Dimension of the SLIM was used. For the group as a whole, the Unique Ethos Dimension mean score was 5.81 with a standard deviation of 1.55.

As with the Identity Dimension, the differences between higher and lower-level referees in the Unique Ethos Dimension was significant, with \( t(185) = 3.501 \) and \( p = .001 \).
The mean score for upper level referees was 6.22 with a standard deviation of 1.28, and for lower-level referees was 5.44 with a standard deviation of 1.69.

Hypothesis 3: The more committed a person is to the soccer referee role, the more salient the identity will be.

Two regression analyses were performed. The dependent variable for Model 1 was the score on the Unique Ethos Dimension score of the SLIM. The dependent variable for the Model 2 was the Identity Dimension score of the SLIM. For each of the two analyses performed, the independent variables were the same. The independent variables included four different measures of refereeing commitment levels: referee grade level, average number of hours per week spent refereeing, length of time in months as a soccer referee, and average amount spent per year in order to referee. Race (coded as white or not white) was included as a control variable.

The regression equation used to test Model 1 and the hypothesis that referee commitment levels would influence the Unique Ethos Dimension did not result in any significant findings. None of the independent variables had predictive value (results not reported).

The means and standard deviations for the variables in Model 2 (Identity Dimension as the dependent variable) are shown in Table 3.
Table 3: Means and Standard Deviations for Variables in Regression Model 2 (N=171).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity Score</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referee Grade Level&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Hours per week spent refereeing</td>
<td>8.23</td>
<td>8.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time as a referee (in months)</td>
<td>168.11</td>
<td>116.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. dollars spent per year to referee</td>
<td>524.73</td>
<td>957.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>1</sup>Reverse scored so that higher scores on referee grade level equals more experience

Table 4 reports the correlations among the variables in Model 2. As shown, the correlations are significant between the Identity Dimension score and all of the soccer referee related commitment variables. The soccer referee related variables are all significantly correlated with each other.

Table 4: Pearson Correlations for Variables in Regression Model 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Identity Score</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Referee Grade Level&lt;sup&gt;1&lt;/sup&gt; (reverse-scored)</td>
<td>.497***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Avg. Hours per week spent refereeing</td>
<td>.274***</td>
<td>.430***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Length of time as a referee (in months)</td>
<td>.393***</td>
<td>.620***</td>
<td>.297***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Avg. dollars spent per year in order to referee</td>
<td>.281***</td>
<td>.486***</td>
<td>.252***</td>
<td>.157*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*<sup>p</sup><.05, **<sup>p</sup><.01, ***<sup>p</sup><.001
The results of the regression equation predicting changes in the Identity Dimension score appear in Table 5. Only referee grade level was a significant predictor of the Identity Dimension score ($b = .408, p < .01$). For the regression model as a whole, 26.7% of the Identity Dimension score is explained by the independent and control variables. The Beta values indicate that referee grade level ($\beta = .336$) had a greater relative impact on the identity score than length of time as a referee ($\beta = .154$). Both average number of hours spent refereeing ($\beta = .065$) and average amount spent per year in order to referee ($\beta = .078$) appear to have little relative impact in comparison to the other commitment variables.
Table 5: Regression Coefficients, Standard Errors and Standardized Beta for Model 2 with Identity Dimension Score as Dependent Variable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Regression Coefficient (standard error)</th>
<th>Standardized Beta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R is White</td>
<td>-.012 (.346)</td>
<td>-.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referee Grade Level$^1$</td>
<td>.408** (.126)</td>
<td>.336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. hours per week spent refereeing</td>
<td>.015 (.017)</td>
<td>.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time as a soccer referee in months</td>
<td>.003 (.002)</td>
<td>.154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. dollars spent per year in order to referee</td>
<td>&lt;.000 &lt;.000</td>
<td>.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.753 (.402)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Square</td>
<td>.267</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>12.060***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Cases</td>
<td>171</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p<.01, ***p<.001

$^1$Reverse scored so that higher scores on referee grade level equals more experience
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Because the SLIM is so new, there is no other published research outside of the initial study done to develop the instrument that would indicate what types of scores directly identify an activity is serious leisure. However, in the development and testing of the SLIM, the sample that was used to represent those participating in serious leisure had scores ranging from approximately 5.5 to 6.2 on an eight point scale for those dimensions that make up the SOS score (Gould et al. 2008). In this study of soccer referees, scores for dimensions comprising the SOS score for the group as a whole were higher (5.76 to 7.71) than those for activities reported in the development of the SLIM. When looking only at the upper level referees, the scores looked even higher, ranging from 6.22 to 7.84. Based on the high mean scores for the eighteen dimensions of the SLIM, as well as the overall SOS score, it appears that for this sample, the hypothesis that soccer refereeing is a form of serious leisure is supported. As there were significant differences between higher and lower-level referees, the results show that for those referees achieving higher grade levels, this activity is undertaken with a more serious orientation. In order to achieve the higher levels of refereeing a person must put forth more effort and work harder at participating. Thus, the resulting difference in SLIM scores for the two groups of referees makes sense. For the higher-level referees, this activity must be pursued in a more serious manner if this activity is to remain a leisure choice since it would appear that the costs to participate become higher. Referees must exert more effort, perform better under increasing levels of pressure and scrutiny, and
work at their soccer referee career progression. For some, it may cease to be worth the effort. Using Stebbins theory, if an activity is framed in the context of serious leisure one expects to encounter and cope with unpleasant aspects of the activity (Stebbins 1982, 2001). That this activity appears to be a serious leisure activity would help explain why people choose to do it, when on the outside it does not look like very much fun.

The three highest mean scores on the SLIM were in the areas of career progress, effort and enjoyment. Career progress and effort seem to indicate a work-like structure for soccer refereeing. As was mentioned earlier, refereeing may be a good choice of serious leisure because it is similar to a work activity. For those who are struggling with the loss of a work identity, becoming a soccer referee may still be seen as a worthy identity since it is less frivolous than other leisure identities may be perceived as. The high score on the Enjoyment Dimension is of note, but is not thoroughly explored in this study. While it is logical that participants enjoy the voluntary activities they choose, having this dimension receive one of the higher mean scores is a bit surprising. Perhaps some of the unspoken benefits of refereeing, such as power and sense of a job well done, contribute to an overall sense of a person enjoying the activity.

Gould et al, when discussing how best to utilize the SLIM, indicate that the durable goods quality of serious leisure is not appropriately used in determining if an activity is pursued in a serious manner and provide the example that “a score low on financial return would not reflect a lack of seriousness” (2008:63). The finding that the Financial Benefit Dimension score was not significantly different between upper and lower-level referees when all other dimensions were, supports this approach. Further,
responses for referees were particularly interesting on this dimension. In most instances, referees are paid for the games they officiate. However, when asked to rate agreement to statements such as “Financially, I have benefitted from my refereeing involvement,” “I have received financial payments as a result of my refereeing efforts,” and “I have received monetary compensation for my refereeing expertise,” respondents did not always indicate the highest level of agreement. This would suggest that either games are refereed on a volunteer basis, not all refereeing efforts are paid (and the respondent extends efforts outside the limits of the game), or that there is a value judgment being placed on whether the compensation is adequate or relevant for this activity. One respondent, through an email message sent in response to the survey, indicated that money is only a motivator for young referees. This shows that the question may have been interpreted as looking at motivation while others may have simply based responses on whether or not money was received regardless of how that motivated their involvement.

There is limited support for the second hypothesis. The role of soccer referee appears only to be a salient identity for those referees in the higher grade levels. Of all the dimensions measured by the SLIM, this was the area in which differences in mean scores between the two groups was the most evident. As with overall SOS scores, it makes sense to see this difference between the two groups. For those who do not perform the activity in serious manner, a leisure identity may not be as fully developed if it is developed at all. However, for those who do referee in a serious manner, there does appear to be a unique ethos, or referee community, which could allow referees to take on
the role of the generalized other for the soccer referee community and thus develop a sense of self. This finding of agreement that there is a unique ethos is stronger for upper level referees.

The regression results with the Unique Ethos dimension as the dependent variable showed no relationship between refereeing commitment levels or race and the Unique Ethos dimension score. The questions that comprised this dimension asked the respondent their level of agreement with three statements indicating that the respondent shared the same ideals and sentiments as other referees. It is possible that the questions used to measure this dimension are too broad. Had the question been more specific to refereeing situations the results may have been different. Using the theory that a person can have multiple selves, when thinking of overall sentiments and ideals, the respondents may have nothing in common with other referees outside of the soccer referee realm. The unique ethos may be limited. However, even with limits, the unique ethos would still be able to serve in the capacity of the generalized other while a person was in the referee role. It would be interesting to see if this was a common trend in all serious leisure activities as it may provide understanding of how important the leisure identity is as one of many selves.

Finally, the results of the regression analyses for the third hypothesis, that commitment levels will influence identity salience showed limited support. Referee grade level was a significant predictor of the score on the Identity Dimension; however, none of the other variables that were used to measure commitment were significant. This may indicate that commitment is measured differently by referees than by the survey
questions, or it may be that the best measure of commitment as it relates to soccer referees is solely referee grade level. Relative to each other, the commitment variables had varying degrees of impact on the Identity Dimension score. Referee grade level had more than twice the impact as length of time as a referee. Both the average amount spent per year in order to referee, and the average number of hours spent on referee activities showed far less impact, with referee grade level having nearly five times the impact of either of these variables, and length of time as a referee having more than twice the impact of either of these variables.

Strengths and Limitations

The purpose of this exploratory study was to look at soccer refereeing as a serious leisure activity that would lead to the development of a soccer referee identity. The study design had both strengths and limitations.

One of the major strengths of the study is that it used a quantitative approach in an area, serious leisure, which has primarily been studied qualitatively. Due to the quantitative design, this methodology could be easily replicated with more representative samples of CNRA referees, with referees in other states, or for other serious leisure populations to see if the results are consistent. Another strength of the study is that it provides information on how the SLIM performs with a group of respondents who, based on observation, are reasonably suspected to be participating in serious leisure. The measure is new and repeated use will help determine its usefulness. The email method of contacting participants allowed for feedback on the measure itself. Many respondents made unprompted comments by email on the design of the SLIM. This information
(presented in limitations and areas of future study below) could be used to further refine the measure.

The use of the SLIM is also a limitation as the measure has not been refined. Initial results proved promising, however, so if the results are interpreted within the limitations of the measure the information gathered can still be valuable. Several respondents wrote back expressing concern, confusion or frustration with the repetitive nature of the SLIM. In order to encourage participants to complete the survey it may be useful to further refine the SLIM to pare down the number of items included. The length of the survey may have discouraged participation. In the future, it may even be best to quantitatively examine only those six dimensions that comprised the SOS and evaluate the other dimensions in a more thorough qualitative manner. This would address the length of the survey and examine the other dimensions more meaningfully as the reasons for scores on those dimensions are not necessarily evident from the scaled questions. In addition, respondents seemed to have much more to say about their referee participation than was covered by the survey questions. This was a major limitation as it seems to indicate that there are more factors to consider. The final limitation, as was mentioned before, is that the response rate was too low to generalize the results to all referees in the CNRA. There may be a correlation between those who chose to respond and those who approach it with a more serious orientation, or identify more strongly with it. A more representative sample is needed to explore this fully.

While the study may be somewhat limited by the reasons mentioned above, it is still useful for the exploratory purposes for which it was intended.
Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies of soccer referees and serious leisure identities may wish to start with a qualitative approach, perhaps by interviewing higher-level referees, as this seemed to be where the serious orientation was most prevalent. A series of interview questions would allow respondents to provide more information as to why they choose to participate in this activity. It is also recommended that this study methodology be replicated in a different in-person setting, such as a soccer tournament or multiple tournaments, to see if response rate can be higher so that the results can be generalized to CNRA as a whole. Respondents provided input that suggests several other areas for exploration including grouping referees by whether or not they have children that play soccer, looking at different referee groups (for instance AYSO compared to USSF referees), and using the same approach with soccer coaching as the serious leisure pursuit. Finally, the issue of financial return should be examined using different questions for this particular group. The questions should relate to how financial return interacts with involvement, and not merely inquire as to whether or not it is present. This may help explain the unusual results to the Financial Return Dimension.

Overall, it appears that soccer referees are in fact participating in an activity that is considered serious leisure and that a soccer referee identity seems to be present, but is more applicable to higher-level referees. The SLIM appears to function as its authors intended it to in measuring serious leisure, but for this particular topic more qualitative research seems warranted. This study has revealed that the SLIM is useful for quickly identifying serious leisure activities, particularly when looking at large groups. It may be
even more useful if researchers use the results of the SLIM not solely as a measure of serious leisure, but as a tool for conducting preliminary studies to identify the areas (or dimensions) that warrant further exploration. Further, this study has revealed that the activities of soccer referees are complex. Motivation and identity need to be examined through other theories as well. Further study into this topic through a serious leisure perspective, or even through another perspective may be able to shed further light on this increasingly popular activity.
APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

Hello,

Thank you for taking a moment to read this email. I am contacting you to ask you to participate in a research survey that will assist me in completing my Master’s degree in Sociology at California State University, Sacramento. The purpose of my study is to learn more about soccer referees and how refereeing fits into your life.

If you choose to participate you will be asked to complete an internet survey. You will be asked to answer questions about your participation in, and experiences with soccer refereeing. The questionnaire may require up to 20 minutes of your time.

Some of the items in the survey may seem personal, but you don’t have to answer any question if you don’t want to. You may stop participating in the survey at any time.

You may gain additional insight into the role that refereeing plays in your life, or you may not personally benefit from participating in this research. It is hoped that the results of the study will increase general understanding about the importance that different roles play in people’s lives.

The survey will be conducted through an online survey tool called SurveyMonkey.com. SurveyMonkey.com has very strict security protocols to protect data, including Secure Socket Layer (SSL) encryption (SSL is a protocol initially developed for transmitting private documents or information via the Internet. With SSL encryption you see an https URL as opposed to just http.). Your responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology used. However, no absolute guarantees can be given for the confidentiality of electronic data. To further protect the confidentiality of your responses, the data analysis from this survey will be done in aggregates and no individual responses will be presented.

You will not receive any compensation for participating in this study. If you have any questions about this research, you may contact me at (916) 425-1986 or by e-mail at bk634@saclink.csus.edu.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. By clicking on the link below and completing this survey, you are agreeing to participate in the study. Again, thank you for your time in considering this request.

Sincerely, Barbara Kampmeinert
Graduate Student
APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument

Section 1 – Age verification

If you are under the age of 18, please discontinue this survey. Thank you.

Month and Year of Birth: ___/____

(On the online version of this survey, a response indicating a person less than 18 years of age will skip the respondent to the end of the survey without allowing for responses to any of the remaining questions.)

Section 2 – Demographics

Gender: M/F

American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Black or African American, Hispanic, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, and Two or More Races

Ethnicity/Race (check all that apply):

- American Indian/Alaskan Native
- Asian
- Black/African American
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- White

Marital Status: Single Married Divorced Widowed

Are you currently a registered soccer referee? Y/N

How long have you been a registered soccer referee? _____ Years and _____ Months

What is your current soccer referee grade level? __________

On average, how much do you spend per year in order to referee (include uniforms, registration fees, and all other expenses)? __________

On average, how much gross income do you earn per year from refereeing activities?
- $0-$500
- $501-$1000
- $1001-$1500
- $1501-$2000
- $2001-$2500
$2501-$3000
$3001-$3500
$3501-$4000
$4001-$4500
$4501-$5000
$5001-$5500
$5501-$6000
$6001 and above

On average, how many hours per week do you spend on soccer referee related activities? ______

Are you a soccer referee assessor? Y/N
On average, how many hours per week do you spend on soccer referee assessor related activities? ____
Are you a soccer referee instructor? Y/N
On average, how many hours per week do you spend on soccer referee instructor related activities? ___

How long (in minutes) are you willing to drive/travel one way to referee a soccer game? ______

Are you currently employed? Y/N
How many hours per week do you work (not including time spent refereeing soccer)? ______

Are you currently attending school? Y/N
How many hours per week do you devote to school? ________

Section 3 – Serious Leisure Inventory Short Form

Instructions (**on the online version of this survey, the scale will appear with each question**)

Please indicate your response to the following statements using this scale:

Completely Agree
Mostly Agree
Moderately Agree
Slightly Agree
Neither Agree nor Disagree
Slightly Disagree
Moderately Disagree
Mostly Disagree
Completely Disagree

1. If I encounter obstacles in refereeing, I persist until I overcome them.
2. I try hard to become more competent in refereeing.
3. I have improved at refereeing since I began participating.
4. For me, there are certain referee related events that have influenced my referee involvement.
5. I have been enriched by refereeing.
6. I make full use of my talent when refereeing.
7. Refereeing is a way to display my skills and abilities.
8. Refereeing for me is an expression of myself.
9. My image of self has improved since I began refereeing.
10. Refereeing provides me with a profound sense of satisfaction.
11. Refereeing is enjoyable to me.
12. I feel renewed after refereeing.
13. Financially, I have benefited from my refereeing involvement.
15. A sense of group accomplishment is important to me in refereeing.
16. The development of my referee group is important to me.
17. I share many of the sentiments of my fellow referee devotees.
18. Others that know me understand that refereeing is a part of who I am.
19. By persevering, I have overcome adversity in refereeing.
20. I try hard to become more competent in refereeing.
21. Since I began refereeing, I have improved.
22. There are defining moments within refereeing that have significantly shaped my involvement in it.
23. Refereeing has added richness to my life.
24. I reach my full potential in refereeing.
25. I demonstrate my skills and abilities when refereeing.
26. My individuality is expressed in refereeing.
27. Refereeing has enhanced my self image.
28. My refereeing experiences are deeply gratifying.
29. Refereeing is fun to me.
30. I feel revitalized after refereeing time.
31. I have received financial payments as a result of my refereeing efforts.
32. I value interacting with others that are also involved in refereeing.
33. Having helped my referee group accomplish something makes me feel important.
34. I contribute to the unification of my referee group.
35. Other referee enthusiasts and I share many of the same ideals.
36. I am often recognized as one devoted to refereeing.
37. I overcome difficulties in refereeing by being persistent.
38. I am willing to exert considerable effort to be more proficient at refereeing.
39. I feel that I have made progress in refereeing.
40. There have been certain high or low points for me in refereeing that have defined how involved I am in refereeing.
41. My refereeing experiences have added richness to my life.
42. Refereeing has enabled me to realize my potentials.
43. My knowledge of refereeing is evident when participating.
44. Refereeing allows me to express who I am.
45. Refereeing has improves how I think about myself.
46. Refereeing is intensely gratifying to me.
47. I enjoy refereeing.
48. Refereeing is invigorating to me.
49. I have received monetary compensation for my refereeing expertise.
50. I prefer associating with others that are devoted to refereeing.
51. I feel important when I am part of my referee group’s accomplishments.
52. It is important that I perform duties which unify my referee group.
53. I share many of my referee group’s ideals.
54. Others recognize that I identify with refereeing.
APPENDIX C

Table 6: Means and Standard Deviations for All Dimensions of the SLIM, for All Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Progress</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Gratification-Enjoyment</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Express Abilities</td>
<td>6.70</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>6.65</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Enrichment</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Contingencies</td>
<td>6.44</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Attraction</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Gratification-Satisfaction</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Maintenance</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Accomplishments</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Actualization</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Return</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>1.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique Ethos</td>
<td>5.81</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Express Individual</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Image</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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