A new conceptualization of leisure constraints emerged in the early 1990s. Previously, constraints had been conceived of as insurmountable obstacles to leisure participation. The alternative perspective viewed constraints as negotiable, i.e., as factors that shape the realization of leisure goals and benefits but do not necessarily preclude it (Jackson & Scott, 1999). The view of constraints as negotiable resulted partly from empirical studies, including Scott (1991), Shaw, Bonen and McCabe (1991), who demonstrated that there is not necessarily an inverse relationship between participation and constraints, and Kay & Jackson (1991), who showed that people often participate in leisure activities "despite constraint." The new perspective also emerged from a theoretical effort to integrate relationships among three categories of constraints posited by Crawford & Godbey (1987) - intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural (or intervening) -- into a single, hierarchical model (Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991). The concept of negotiation became more explicit in a second paper (Jackson, Crawford, & Godbey, 1993), which proposed not only that constraints are encountered in a linear, sequential fashion but that people negotiate through each type to reach their leisure goals.

Jackson et al. (1993) developed six propositions concerning the process of leisure constraints negotiation, of which the following two are most relevant to the present study: (1) Participation is dependent, not on the absence of constraints (although this may be true for some people), but on negotiation through them. Such negotiation may modify participation rather than foreclosing it; (2) Both the initiation and outcome of the negotiation process are dependent on the relative strength of, and interactions between, constraints on participating in an activity and motivations for such participation. Research conducted before and after the publication of Jackson et al. (1993) empirically supports the "negotiation thesis" and one or more of the distinct propositions. This work includes the aforementioned studies by Kay and Jackson (1991), Scott (1991), and Shaw et al. (1991), as well as Samdahl & Jekubovich (1993), Henderson, Bedini, Hecht, and Shuler (1993), and Jackson and Rucks (1995).

However, relatively little is still known about the nature of the leisure constraints negotiation process. The present study, conducted as part of a PhD research project by the first author, addresses the following questions: What strategies are adopted and by whom? How does interaction of constraints and motivations affect the negotiation process, including the effort and ability to overcome constraints and the choice of strategies? How are the intensity and type of activity involvement associated with constraints negotiation? How does the choice of strategies affect negotiation outcomes? What other variables are related to the perception and adoption of successful and partly successful strategies?

Methods

The data were collected in a self-administered questionnaire survey conducted in several communities in Edmonton, Alberta. In total, 500 questionnaires were delivered to randomly-selected households in the spring of 1996; 296 usable questionnaires were returned (response rate of 59.2%). The survey covered a wide range of questions related to people's leisure activities and associated variables, including the nature and strength of anticipated leisure benefits, experience of constraints, their negotiation, and socio-demographic characteristics. More specifically, questions related to the experience and negotiation of constraints included: (1) perceived importance of having leisure time; (2) perception of being constrained or not in leisure; (3) main aspect(s) of constrained leisure (e.g., inability to participate as frequently as preferred; activities ceased because of constraints;
(4) a 21-item scale of constraints, evaluated using a 4-part response scale of importance regarding negative effects on leisure; (5) a "yes/no" question designed to distinguish people who attempt to negotiate constraints from those who do not; (6) a 40-item list of possible negotiation strategies, to be answered "yes" or "no" depending on whether the respondent had adopted each strategy; and (7) a 4-level measure of perceived success in overcoming constraints.

The data were analyzed using simple statistical techniques to describe patterns within the findings and to assess relationships among key variables. As far as the scale-based measures are concerned, the data were manipulated to permit analysis at three levels of generalization: (1) specific items; (2) dimensions of items emerging from factor analysis; and (3) sub-groups of the sample identified by performing a K-means cluster analysis on respondents' scores on the factor-based dimensions.

Results I: The Basic Data: Constraints, Negotiation, and Success:

- The importance of leisure in people's lives is dramatically demonstrated by the finding that 52.6% of respondents said that having a certain amount of leisure time was "very important," while 35.1% said it was important, for a total of 87.7% at least "important." Only 11.9% described leisure as "somewhat important," and only one respondent checked "not at all important."

- About two-thirds (68.6%) of the sample described their leisure as being constrained in some way; only 31.4% saw themselves as being free from constraints to their leisure.

- When the data from three questions about constraints experience, negotiation and success were combined, the following pattern emerged: 93 respondents (31.6%) could be described as "unconstrained," 33 (11.2%) as "constrained non-negotiators," 103 (35.0%) as "relatively unsuccessful negotiators," and 65 (22.1%) as "relatively successful negotiators."

Results II: Negotiation Strategies: Items and Patterns

- Constraints negotiation strategies: The adoption of specific negotiation strategies varied from a high of 72% of negotiators to a low of 2%. Ranking at or close to the top of the list as preferred strategies were items such as "I try to plan ahead for things" (72%), "I try to better organize my time" (64%), "I set aside a specific time for recreation and leisure" (64%), "Sometimes I make my free time and favourite activities a priority" (55%), and "I have some equipment at home" (55%). Of roughly intermediate frequency were "I'd rather cut back the frequency of my participation than stop doing a recreation activity that I enjoy" (33%), "I try to find companions specially for certain recreation pursuits" (33%), "During the time that I work, I work hard so that I can have more free time" (33%), and "I save money to do certain things" (32%). Least frequently adopted were strategies such as "I use the bus" (11%), "I arrange rides with friends" (9%), "I borrow money to do things" (8%), and "I moved (or am planning to move) to a better location" (2%).

- Patterns within the negotiation data: Six types of constraints negotiation strategies emerged when the data were factor analyzed: (1) Making a stronger commitment to leisure (at least one strategy of this type being adopted by 95.3% of negotiators); (2) Modifying the way in which leisure is participated in (83.5%); (3) Adopting a more relaxed attitude to life (56.5%); (4) Adjusting to the costs of leisure participation (52.9%); (5) Adopting family-related strategies, such as sharing or re-allocating child-care responsibilities (50.0%); and (6) Adjusting to other externalities (34.1%).
Results III: Relating Constraints Negotiation to Other Variables

- **Importance of leisure and negotiation**: Respondents who described leisure as important were significantly more likely to attempt to negotiate constraints and to be successful in doing so than those who placed a lower value on their leisure.

- **Experience of constraints and negotiation**: The overall intensity of constraints experienced did not affect the attempt to negotiate constraints but influenced the perceived degree of success. However, both negotiation variables were associated with the type of constraint experienced. For example, respondents who reported being affected mainly by time constraints were more likely to attempt negotiation than those most affected by other categories of constraints, such as the costs of participating.

- **Anticipated benefits of leisure and negotiation**: The strength of anticipated benefits of leisure was positively and significantly associated with negotiation: mean scores on a large number of benefits items were significantly higher among respondents who attempted to negotiate constraints than those who did not, and higher among successful negotiators than among relatively unsuccessful negotiators.

- **Constraints negotiation and leisure activity**: There was a greater frequency of participation in leisure activities among people who attempted to negotiate constraints than among those who did not, and even higher among those who perceived themselves as "successful negotiators"; this finding emerged from analyses in which participation in specific activities and factor-based dimensions of activities was used as the dependent variable. Moreover, both the attempt at and success in negotiation were more frequent among physically and socially active respondents, compared with those whose preferences were for home-based and hobby activities.

Conclusions

Overall, this study lends empirical support to the conceptualization of constraints as negotiable. The majority of respondents stressed the importance of leisure in their lives, but also reported being constrained in some ways. Among constrained individuals, only a small percentage did not attempt some form of negotiation. Statistical analysis demonstrated that success in constraints negotiation typically resulted in unchanged or increased participation.

Research such as this contributes to knowledge by empirically supporting current leisure constraints theory (including Jackson et al.'s propositions) and adds new developments to the existing theoretical foundation, including the following findings: (1) Leisure motivations were positively related to attempting negotiation and success in this endeavour; (2) The overall intensity of constraints was not linked to the negotiation drive, but was negatively related to the perceived negotiation outcomes; (3) The negotiation potential was associated with the nature of anticipated leisure benefits, constraints, and activity involvement; (4) The choice of negotiation strategies was affected by the overall strength and character of constraints, but was not related to participation patterns or motivations. By introducing an extended set of variables into the analysis of the constraints negotiation process, the study enhances consolidation of otherwise fragmented research in leisure studies, thereby contributing not only to a fuller, empirically-based understanding of the nature of leisure constraints, but also to better knowledge of the leisure decision-making process in general.
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ABSTRACTS

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