

AMATEUR WIZARDS:
EXPLORING INVOLVEMENT IN MAGIC:
THE GATHERING AS SERIOUS LEISURE

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**AMATEUR WIZARDS:
EXPLORING INVOLVEMENT IN MAGIC: THE GATHERING AS SERIOUS LEISURE**

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Abstract

The framework of the serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 1992a; 1992b; 1998; 2006a; 2007a) was used to explore involvement in the trading card game *Magic: The Gathering*. The experiences, rituals, and practices of individuals who play the game were examined to answer the question; does involvement in *Magic: the Gathering* constitute serious leisure? Interviews were conducted with nine individuals who identified themselves as serious players. Analysis of the transcribed interviews was guided by constant comparison methods (Strauss and Corbin, 2008). Open coding was used to identify main themes, concepts, and ideas. Axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) was then used to explore any linkages. Emergent themes confirmed that for the participants of this study involvement in *Magic: the Gathering* constituted a form of serious leisure. The findings also suggest that involvement in the game served as a source of expression and personal identity for participants.

Keywords: Serious leisure, *Magic: the Gathering*, Identity, Expression

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Table of Contents

	Page #
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Tables	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Collectible Trading Cards	2
1.2 Magic: The Gathering	4
1.3 Experiential Context: <i>Magic</i> As A Leisure Activity	8
1.4 Serious Leisure	9
1.5 Purpose and Research Questions	11
1.6 Justification for the Study	12
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	14
2.1 The Serious Leisure Perspective	14
2.2 Serious Leisure	15
2.2.1 Amateurs	16
2.2.2 Hobbyist	18
2.2.3 Volunteers	21
2.2.4 Mixed Serious Leisure	22
2.3 Six Distinguishing Qualities of Serious Leisure	23
2.3.1 Perseverance	23
2.3.2 Career	24
2.3.3 Significant Personal Effort	24

	Page #
2.3.4 Special Benefits	25
2.3.5 Unique Ethos	25
2.3.6 Identification	26
2.3.7 Rewards	27
2.4 Casual Leisure	28
2.5 Project Based Leisure	33
2.6 Synthesizing Concepts	34
2.6.1 Organization	35
2.6.2 Community	38
2.6.3 History	43
2.6.4 Lifestyle	44
2.6.5 Culture	46
2.7 Existing Research on Magic as Serious Leisure	50
2.8 Summary	55
Chapter 3: Methodology	57
3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Study	57
3.2 Study Design	59
3.3 Sample	60
3.4 Recruitment	61
3.5 Participant Description	62
3.6 Research Procedures	62
3.6.1 Interviews	63

	Page #
3.6.2 Observation	64
3.6.3 Document Analysis	64
3.7 Data Analysis	65
3.8 Ethical Considerations	66
Chapter 4: Findings	68
4.1 Perseverance	68
4.1.1 Financial Costs	69
4.1.2 Personal Costs	73
4.1.3 Competitive Costs	75
4.2 Career	79
4.2.1 Learning the Game	79
4.2.2 Length of Time Playing	81
4.2.3 Stages of Achievement	82
4.3 Significant Personal Effort	85
4.3.1 Continual Learning	85
4.3.2 Deck Building	88
4.4 Benefits	89
4.4.1 Social Benefits	89
4.4.2 Expressive Benefits	90
4.4.3 Tangible Benefits	93
4.5 Unique Ethos	93
4.5.1 Distinctive Lifestyles	94

	Page #
4.5.2 Communications	95
4.5.3 Rituals	96
4.6 Identification	98
4.6.1 Informal Roles	98
4.6.2 Formal Roles	101
4.6.3 Summary	102
Chapter 5: Discussion	103
5.1 Overview	103
5.2 Existing Literature	104
5.3 Possible Future Research	114
5.4 Conclusion	116
References	118
Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter	129
Appendix B: Recruitment Poster	131
Appendix C: Study Information Sheet	133
Appendix D: Consent Form	136
Appendix E: Parental Consent Form	139
Appendix F: Assent Form	142
Appendix G: Interview Guide	144

List of Tables

	Page #
Table 1: Participant Information	62
Table 2: Emergent Themes	69

Amateur Wizards: Exploring Involvement in Magic: The Gathering as Serious Leisure

Chapter 1: Introduction

Fantasy games combine components of traditional board games with fantasy elements or narratives to create a unique gaming experience. Since their first appearance in the early 1970s, fantasy games have become a cultural phenomenon (MacKay, 2001). "There has been a steady growth of fantasy gamers over the last quarter century and a growing awareness and appreciation of fantasy in mainstream popular culture" (Williams, Hendricks, & Winkler, 2006, p.1). Williams et al. (2006) outline three significant factors that have led to the increased interest in, and popularity of, fantasy games in the last thirty years. Firstly, the emergence of three distinct subgenres of fantasy games: role-playing games, collectible trading card games, and video or online games. Secondly, the expansion of information technology, communications, and the Internet, which has allowed for expanded advertising campaigns and easier dissemination of information. This has resulted in the formation of online communities and networks that converse and share information about various games. Thirdly, the popularity of fantasy games is supported in recent years by the expanded interest in the fantasy genre. This is exemplified by the mainstream success of TV and movie franchises such as *The Lord of the Rings* and *Harry Potter* (Williams et al., 2006). The cultural significance of

fantasy games is further exemplified by the emergence of the academic field of study known as Ludology (Williams et al., 2006). Ludology, in its most basic form, is the study of games and gaming culture (Frasca, 2003).

Despite increased cultural significance, and general scholarly interest in fantasy games and gaming culture, little academic attention has been paid to fantasy games as a leisure activity. As noted by Williams et al. (2006), "there has been little systematic investigation of fantasy games in contemporary social life that attends to the social dimensions of fantasy gaming as a leisure activity" (p. 2). With respect to academic investigation, the subgenre of collectible trading card games appears more neglected than the others, particularly in relation to leisure studies.

Collectible Trading Cards

Trading cards (sometimes referred to as collectible trading cards or collectible cards) are small pieces of cardboard, heavy paper, or plastic that have images, pictures, and information printed on them (Finwall, Javier, & Clements, 2009). As the name implies, individuals often collect and trade these cards. The content printed on these cards varies from real individuals such as professional athletes, politicians, and even serial murderers to fictional content based on fantasy novels, comic books, and video games. Cards may also contain information such as statistics, trivia, interesting facts, and/or quotes. The content contained on a card and style or format of the card will vary depending on the manufacturer producing the card and the reason for its production (i.e.: promotion, collectable, as a game piece). Historically, the majority of trading cards produced have been associated

with sports, for example: baseball, football and hockey cards (Finwall et al., 2009). However, trading cards have evolved and are now produced for many purposes such as advertising, artistic expression, and as components of games (i.e.: game pieces).

The history of trading cards as a piece of popular culture can be traced back more than a 100 years (Kaufeld & Smith, 2006). As noted by Daniels (2003), trading cards were originally developed at the turn of the 20th century as an insert to prevent the contents of cigarette boxes from being crushed. Shortly after their inception pictures and other artwork were added to these cards as a form of advertisement and an enticement for people to buy certain brands of cigarettes (Lenarcic & Mackay-Scollay, 2005). Over time, the popularity of these inserts began to grow, people began to collect and trade the cards. Furthermore, people began to use these cards as toys substituting or integrating them with playing cards (Kaufeld, & Smith, 2006). From these beginnings, the modern conception of the collectible trading card game (TCG) evolved (Lenarcic & Mackay-Scollay, 2005).

Collectible trading card games use uniquely designed trading cards as game pieces. These cards are decorated with images that represent some element of the game to which they belong (i.e.: characters, weapons, scenarios). Moreover, each card contains a variety of additional text specifying the individual attributes and actions of the card within the context of the game. The cards are sold in randomly assorted packs similar to sports cards. Players obtain cards through purchasing and trading with friends. The conceptual origins of collectible trading card games lie in *Magic: The Gathering*, designed in 1992 by Peter Adkinson and Richard Garfield

(Lenarcic & Mackay-Scollay, 2005). *Magic: The Gathering* is often referred to as simply “Magic” or sometimes “The Gathering.” Henceforth, in this paper the term *Magic* will be used to refer to *Magic: The Gathering*.

Magic: The Gathering

In the game of *Magic*, two individual players compete against each other in a head to head competition¹. Within the context of the game players take on the role of a powerful wizard often referred to as a “Planeswalker”, battling for control of the fictitious world (i.e. plane) in which the game of *Magic* takes place². The object of the game is to defeat your opponent, thus driving them from the plane, leaving you in sole control (Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2011).

The cards a player uses during a game are referred to as a deck. A player’s deck must consist of a minimum of 60 cards³, with no more than four of any one particular card⁴ (Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2012). The cards represent sorcery, instants, or enchantments (all types of spell), artifacts (such as tools or weapons), creatures, planeswalkers (i.e. characters), and lands that each wizard can use in the battle (Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2011). Each year several hundred new *Magic* cards

¹ Multiplayer options are available but they are simply variants on the two-person game.

² *Magic* is set in a “multiverse” which consists of many different fictional worlds or planes in which the game takes place. The name of the plane will vary depending on the game edition and expansion card set used in play.

³ 60 cards is the minimum for standard gameplay, however, players may use more or less cards depending on the variation of the game they choose to play

⁴ The four card restriction only applies to named cards and not basic lands, as lands are used every turn.

are generated, for either the core game or various expansion sets⁵. Additionally, Wizards of the Coast, the company that produces *Magic*, issues a new core set of cards every two to three years. With more than 10,000 different *Magic* cards to choose from, constructing an individual playing deck is one of the most unique and challenging elements of the game (Bosch, 2000). As Lenarcic and Mackay-Scolly (2005) note:

Players choose which cards will make up their deck from the available pool of cards rather than from a predetermined set with limited content, as in the case of chess where each player is restricted to the six different pieces and a fixed number of copies. This freedom permits players to tactically adapt their decks so as to optimize productive card interactions, micro synergies, combinations and statistics as well as best fit the playing style of the individual (p.67).

Individual players can spend hundreds of dollars collecting *Magic* cards in order to customize their deck and obtain the most recent cards. Furthermore, a significant ancillary market for *Magic* cards has developed. On the secondary market, rare cards and misprints can sell for hundreds or even thousands of dollars (Marshall, Dreunen, & Wang, 2010).

A game begins with each player drawing seven random cards (referred to as their hand) from their pre-constructed deck. The first player is determined by a mutually agreed upon method such as the roll of a dice or flip of a coin. Each player

⁵ Expansion sets are distinct groups of *Magic* cards that relate to specific storylines or subplots in the world of *Magic*.

then takes turns playing cards from his/her hand (i.e. putting them in play), following the instructions printed on each card for its interaction in game-play. For example, a card may cast a spell, attack an opponent, or block an opponent from using a defensive card. The purpose of these card interactions is to achieve one of several win conditions, such as reducing a player's life point score to zero⁶, or causing an opponent to run out of cards (Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2011).

The tempo and flow of the game is determined by the individual playing styles (i.e. aggressive, passive, etc.) and the specific cards put in play. In many ways, *Magic* combines elements of chess and poker. "Like chess, the player that has rehearsed various plays or situations will have an advantage; however the additional poker skills of bluffing, reading players and convincing opponents to make bad plays also add frisson to the game" (Lenarcic & Mackay-Scollay, 2005, p. 68).

Since its inception in 1992, *Magic* has grown to become a worldwide phenomenon. It is estimated that there are more than 12 million *Magic* players around the world. The game is sold in over 70 countries, and is printed in nine languages, including English, Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Portuguese and Korean (Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2009). In 1999, Wizards of the Coast was sold to gaming giant Hasbro for \$325 million (Schoenberger, 2000). Trade association figures indicate that *Magic* has caught up to and in some cases overtaken more traditional games such as Monopoly and Trivial Pursuit in popularity (Pearlman, 1997). The growth of *Magic* has seen it expand its brand type

⁶ Each player begins a game with 20 life points that represents his/her well being in the game.

into other areas such as magazines, books, clothing, mobile apps, and an online version of the game. Also, an extensive online community of *Magic* fans has emerged on the Internet. This community consists of message boards and fan sites, where individuals share strategy, information, and general discussion about the game (Marshall et al., 2010). In addition to playing the game many people also collect magic cards for their distinctive fantasy-inspired artwork. Overall, *Magic* generates more than \$100 million in annual revenues (Hasbro, 2011).

A further illustration of the popularity of the game is that there is now a professional circuit (referred to as the Pro Tour) for *Magic* players. The *Magic* Pro Tour is structured very similarly to professional golf tours where players compete in a tournament structure. Since its inception the Pro Tour has awarded more than \$30 million in prize money to tour competitors. The largest tour event saw more than 38,000 players competing in a single tournament (Wizards of the Coast Inc., 2009). Furthermore, there is also a junior series (known as the *Magic* Junior Super Series) in which players 15 years and younger compete for college scholarships and other prizes. Events on the Pro Tour have garnered mainstream media attention, and have been covered by outlets such as Sports Illustrated and ESPN2 in the United States (Pearlman, 1997). Additionally, Pro Tour events are regularly streamed online, and watched by thousands of viewers around the world (Kaufeld, & Smith, 2006).

Experiential Context: *Magic* as a Leisure Activity

My first encounter with *Magic* occurred in 1998 at the bottom of a stairwell in my high school. I came across a group of people huddled underneath the stairs, pouring over what appeared to be an unorganized mess of playing cards. Upon closer inspection I realized that these were not normal playing cards. I asked the players what they were doing and they introduced me to *Magic*. As an avid fan of comic books and the fantasy genre in general, I became quickly captivated by the game. A few weeks after that initial introduction I purchased my first deck of cards and began playing on a semi-regular basis. My involvement in the game centered on a small group of friends from high school, as such, when I went to university my involvement in the game declined significantly. Without regular contact with this group I slowly stopped playing the game altogether. My reintroduction to the game came at a science fiction convention when I met the members from the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) Table-top Gaming Society. This is a group of students and alumni who meet on a weekly basis to play various tabletop games including *Magic*. I began attending regular meetings of the gaming society and as such began to play *Magic* again. However, my participation in the game is comparatively casual to other members of the gaming society, as I own few cards and play on an infrequent basis.

At roughly the same time that I began to attend gaming society meetings, I was completing my graduate course work and searching for a thesis topic. With a background in recreation and leisure studies, I have always been interested in the motivation for leisure participation. As I became more involved in the MUN gaming

society and spent more time around individuals who play *Magic* on a regular basis I began to observe that for them participation in the game had extra meaning. Players would spend hours talking about the game, discussing various cards and how they interact, talking about previous matches, and game strategy. Based on this observation I decided to undertake the study described herein and examine participation in *Magic* as a leisure activity. Specifically, I examined participation in relation to the concept of serious leisure as outlined by Stebbins (1992a)

Serious Leisure

Stebbins (1992a) defines serious leisure as the “systematic pursuit of an amateur, hobbyist, or volunteer activity sufficiently substantial and interesting for the participant to find a career there in the acquisition and expression of a combination of its special skills, knowledge, and experience” (p. 3). Serious leisure is characterized by six unique qualities: perseverance, the establishment of a career, significant personal effort to gain skills or knowledge, durable-self benefits, unique ethos, and identification (Stebbins, 1992a).

Perseverance with respect to serious leisure refers to an individual’s determination to complete or succeed at a given activity or in a given situation. Barriers such as monetary issues, excessive danger or negative feelings, often inhibit leisure participation. Overcoming, or persisting in spite of these challenges characterizes serious leisure participation.

The establishment of a leisure career is another distinguishing quality of serious leisure. A leisure career refers to an enduring pursuit with its own

background, contingencies, histories, turning points and stages of achievement, or involvement (Stebbins, 2007a). This career is often based on the acquisition and utilization of specially acquired knowledge, training or skill, and often times all three.

Closely related to the concept of a serious leisure career is the notion of significant personal effort in the attainment of skills or knowledge. Specialty skills or knowledge are often prerequisites for participation in serious leisure activities (for example, one needs to learn how to skate before she or he can play ice hockey).

Serious leisure is also characterized by the durable-self benefits associated with participation in the leisure activity (Stebbins, 2007a). These benefits can include: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, self-gratification, enhancement of self-image, social interaction, and physical products of the activity.

Another quality that distinguishes serious leisure is the unique ethos that evolves around the activity. Ethos, in this context, refers to the community or social world that develops around a serious leisure activity (Stebbins, 1998). This social world will have fundamental traits or characteristics shared by all its members. These traits are often expressed through attitudes, habits, and beliefs and are manifested in the formation of distinctive groups, communications, events, routines, practices, and organizations (Stebbins 2007a).

Finally, serious leisure is distinguished by identification. Often individuals who participate in serious leisure define themselves or feel defined by their pursuits. This identification can manifest itself in many ways including the way

people dress, the things they buy, the way they talk, and the social circles they associate with (Stebbins, 1998).

Purpose and Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study was to explore participation in *Magic* and in doing so determine if involvement constitutes serious leisure as outlined by Stebbins (1992a). This study examined the experiences of individuals who play *Magic*. Particular focus was placed on the rituals and practices associated with the game, and participants' beliefs, values, and motivations for participation. These experiences were evaluated in relation to the serious leisure perspective (Stebbins, 1992a).

Fundamentally, this study addressed a single question; does involvement in *Magic* constitute serious leisure participation? Within the context of this larger research question, a number of sub-questions were also considered:

1. Did involvement in *Magic* demonstrate the six qualities of a serious leisure pursuit?
2. What classification of serious leisure participants did individuals who are involved in *Magic* fit into?
3. What were some of the practices and rituals associated with *Magic*?
4. What did these practices and rituals mean to the subject?

Justification for the Study

One of the greatest criticisms of the field of leisure studies is its perceived lack of relevance. This perceived lack of relevance is rooted in the belief that the field has generated a limited amount of abstract theory. As Searle (2000) notes: “we cannot point to many theories that seek to explain leisure behaviour, leisure services management, or various other dimensions of leisure” (p. 138). To combat this perceived lack of relevance researchers in the field of leisure studies have worked to establish well-grounded theories on which to move forward on a conceptual basis. Searle (2000) argues that this increased emphasis on theory development and evaluation strengthens leisure studies’ place in the larger academic community. It was within this context that this study accepted the challenge issued by Stebbins (1992a) for researchers to explore the concept of serious leisure.

Stebbins in his book *Serious Leisure: A Perspective for Our Time* (2007a) affirms the importance of continual exploration of activities that may constitute serious leisure. The serious leisure perspective has emerged as an important concept for researchers in the field of leisure studies. “All of the sciences categorize the things they investigate, if for no other reason, than to render research there more manageable through generalization” (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 119). The field of leisure research is no different, although limited examples of such theoretic typologies exist in leisure studies (Stebbins, 2007a). The serious leisure perspective has emerged as a theoretic typology of leisure and as such has become an effective tool for classifying and analyzing leisure experiences (Stebbins, 2007a). “Typologies

simplify and organize an undifferentiated mass phenomena found to have one or more features in common, in the case of leisure, the [serious leisure] perspective has simplified and organized an undifferentiated mass of free-time core activities and experiences" (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 122).

The variety and nature of leisure activities and experiences continues to grow exponentially. It is important that leisure researchers continue to "test the comprehensiveness of the serious leisure perspective" (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 122) in relation to these new experiences. As Stebbins (2007a) notes "we must always explore; to ascertain how old activities and experiences have changed as well as to discover and explore the new ones that have been created" (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 122). Through the examination of new leisure activities continued theoretical development of the serious leisure perspective will occur.

This illustrates the significance of this study. This exploration of *Magic* in relation to the serious leisure perspective provides a contextual analysis of this leisure activity. Furthermore, it provides a greater base of knowledge about what constitutes serious leisure participation. This is beneficial not only to the field of leisure studies, but also to the larger academic community as a whole.

Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature

This chapter provides a literature review conducted to examine serious leisure and existing research regarding trading card games, specifically *Magic* as a serious leisure activity. First, the theoretical framework of the serious leisure perspective will be delineated. This includes an operational definition and description of serious leisure, including the various types of serious leisure participants and the six distinguishing qualities of serious leisure. Casual and project-based leisure will also be outlined. Furthermore, the synthesizing concepts that integrate the three forms of leisure as identified by Stebbins (2007a) will be described. Second, existing research that connects the trading card game *Magic* to serious leisure will be presented.

Serious Leisure Perspective

The serious leisure perspective is a theoretical framework that contrasts various forms of leisure participation. It emerged from Dr. Robert A. Stebbins' exploratory study of participants in the fields of archeology, music, and football (Stebbins, 2007a). It integrates three forms of leisure: serious leisure, casual leisure, and project-based leisure (Stebbins, 1998). All three forms exist along a continuum on which individuals are placed based on their level of involvement in a particular activity (Stebbins, 1992a). As such, the serious leisure perspective provides a method for classifying individuals for whom leisure plays a central importance in their life (Baldwin & Norris, 1999). This classification incorporates the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which the activity or experience takes

place and thus is an effective tool for classifying all leisure activities (Stebbins, 2007a).

The serious leisure perspective is entitled as such because its conceptual foundation emerged from the study of serious leisure pursuits. Casual and project-based leisure are often cast in a residual role as they are used to contrast serious leisure (Stebbins, 1997a). However, it is important to note their significance to the overall leisure experience. The serious leisure perspective views all three forms of leisure as distinct and important (Stebbins, 2007a). It is not which form is better, but how a combination of two or three of the forms coalesces to serve the individual and society as a whole (Stebbins, 2007a). Indeed both casual and project based leisure are valuable leisure experiences, that should not in anyway be disregarded because of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1997a). A description of the three forms of leisure will now be undertaken.

Serious Leisure

Activities pursued as serious leisure are sufficiently substantial and stimulating to engender within participants feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction (Stebbins, 1992a; 2007a). These feelings are a direct result of the establishment and maintenance of a leisure career related to the activity. The term serious is derived from the fact that serious leisure pursuits play a central role in the life of participants who pursue them. There are three categories of serious leisure participants: amateurs, hobbyists, and volunteers (Stebbins, 1992a).

Amateurs

Amateurs are found in leisure pursuits such as art, sport, and entertainment where they are linked with professional counterparts (Stebbins, 1992a). Stebbins (1992a) delineates amateurs as untrained or semi-skilled individuals who engage in an activity for the pleasure, or challenge of participation and not for formal compensation. Despite not being recognized as a professional, amateurs still approach their activity with great passion and commitment (Yoder, 1997). Often individuals classified as amateurs strive to become professionals by acquiring continuously more advanced skills or knowledge.

Differentiating between an amateur and a professional can be a difficult task as there are no definitive criteria that encompass all aspects of the amateur professional relationship across all fields (Stebbins, 2007a). However, an increasingly common method used to distinguish amateurs from professionals is formal compensation. One of the reasons professionals pursue an activity is to make a living at that pursuit. As Stebbins (2007a) notes a professional is “someone who is dependent on the income from an activity that other people pursue with little or no remuneration as leisure” (p. 6).

Amateurs, professionals, and the general public coalesce to form a three-way system of relations and relationships, known as the Professional-Amateur-Public (P-A-P) system (Stebbins, 1992a). This system outlines the relationship that exists between these three groups, and illustrates the structure of the social world in which they exist. The term “public refers to a set of people with common interests. People not served by but rather informed, enlightened, or entertained by

professionals or amateurs, or both, and who make active demands upon them" (Stebbins, 1992a, p. 59). Professionals look to the public (which for professionals also consist of individuals classified as amateurs) to provide financial support, feedback on the adequacy of products, and role support (Stebbins 1992a). Amateurs aspire to achieve the level or standard that has been established by professionals, while also looking to the general public for role support and feedback. Yoder's (1997) work on tournament bass fishing in the United States resulted in a significant variation to the traditional P-A-P system. His findings outline the important role that commodity agents can play in the overall leisure experience. They act as an outside influence that can define a leisure activity by providing products, services, role support, and feedback to participants. This results in a triangular model of relations that include commodity agents, professionals/commodity agents, and amateurs/publics (C-PC-AP) (Stebbins, 2007a). Findings in support this altered C-PC-AP model have been presented by Stebbins (1990; 1993a) and Wilson (1995). However, Stebbins (2007a) notes that for most amateur pursuits today the traditional P-A-P model still provides the most applicable explanation of social structure.

There are six specific types of amateurs: devotees, participants, pre-professionals, post professionals, conditional pre-professionals, and pure amateurs (Stebbins, 1992a). Devotees are highly dedicated to their pursuits and are analogous to professionals in almost every way except they do not receive any form of formal compensation. Participants are similar to devotees but are distinguished by their moderate interest in an activity or pursuit. They seek to achieve the

standards set out by professionals, but are not willing or able to commit as much time or resources as devotees. Pre-professionals are amateurs who intend to attain professional status and working to achieve that goal. Post professionals are individuals who have retired or left the professional ranks but wish to remain active in their vocation. Conditional pre-professionals are very similar to pre-professionals but will only make the move to the professional ranks if certain criteria are met. Pure amateurs are individuals who have no desire to achieved professional status. They take part in an activity for the pure enjoyment found therein.

Hobbyist

Hobbyists are like amateurs in almost every aspect except they lack a professional alter ego, and thus do not have pre-existing standards to aspire to (Stebbins, 1992b). Rather standards for hobbyist activities are established through interaction between the hobbyist and the public. This Hobbyist–Public (H-P) system is very similar to the P-A-P system. In an H-P system the hobbyist looks to the public for feedback on the adequacy of products, desire for products or goods, and role support (Stebbins, 1992b). Unlike in a P-A-P system the hobbyist has no professional counterpart to judge his or her performance against. However, hobbyists may have commercial equivalents such as a fishing equipment manufacture for the hobbyist fly tier. These commercial equivalents produce goods similar to the hobbyist, but unlike hobbyists they are dependent on the income they receive from the activity (Stebbins, 1992b). The hobbyist on the other hand would

pursue the activity whether there was financial gain or loss, because they enjoy doing it. Hobbyists can be divided into five categories: collectors, makers and tinkerers, activity participants, competitors in sports, games and contests, and liberal arts enthusiasts (Stebbins, 2007b).

Collectors are individuals who accumulate objects for their inherent interest, value, or beauty (Stebbins, 2004a). They develop a profound knowledge of the commercial, social, and physical circumstances in which the items are acquired. Additionally they develop a sophisticated appreciation and understanding of the historical background of such items (Stebbins, 1992a). Serious collectors are motivated by the experience of collecting and acquiring new items, not by their commercial value. This distinguishes them from commercial dealers who cumulate collectable items for their monetary value as investments or in resale (Stebbins, 1992a). Examples of serious leisure collecting include people who collect classic cars or rare stamps (Stebbins, 2004a). Casual collecting of such things as matchbooks or bottle caps would be considered a marginal form of collecting. There is no substantial aesthetic or technical appreciation possible; as such this form of collecting would be considered casual leisure (Stebbins, 1992a).

Makers and tinkerers are individuals who produce some form of good or product (e.g. a painting or a birdhouse) because of the sheer joy and entertainment they receive from doing it. While some makers and tinkers may receive some form of financial gain from their activities, it is not their main source of income nor is it a goal of the activity (Stalp, 2006). This category of hobbyist includes people who do

crafts, build model boats, knit clothes, and breed animals such as dogs (Baldwin and Norris, 1999).

Activity participants refer to people who take part in leisure activities that require “systematic physical movement, that has intrinsic appeal and operates within a set of given rules or guidelines” (Stebbins, 1992a, p. 12). These activities are generally non competitive in nature (e.g. bird watching, or hunting), however, in some circumstances the activities can also have a competitive element (e.g. competitive bass fishing, body building).

Competitors in sports, games, and contests share many similarities with individuals classified as amateurs. Individuals who fall into this category are essentially the same as amateurs except there is no professional level to aspire to. In general, when events or activities are competitive, hobbyists can be classified in this category. Examples include people who play Monopoly or who take part in spelling bees. This classification of hobbyist is continually in flux as new professional ranks develop where none had previously existed (Apostles, 1992). Activities once solely in the domain of the hobbyist develop a professional identity, and as a result, they are more closely aligned with amateur pursuits than with hobbies. The emergence of cash driven curling events and professional online poker players are two examples of this.

Liberal arts enthusiasts refer to individuals who study history, art, foreign language, philosophy, or some other academic pursuit as a form of leisure. These are primarily reading pursuits; however, they may also include more active or

physical elements (Stebbins, 1998). Individuals who participate in civil war re-enactment are an example of liberal arts enthusiasts (Mittelstaedt, 1990).

Volunteers

The final category of serious leisure participants identified by Stebbins (1992a) is volunteers. Volunteering is the action of offering unsolicited help, for the benefit of other people while receiving no or only symbolic compensation for this action (Stebbins, 1998). Motivation is a key element in the conception of volunteering as a leisure activity. An individual must feel they have the ability to accept or reject an activity on their own terms. This is what Stebbins (2007a) refers to as the felt absence of moral coercion. Participation should be predicated on altruistic as opposed to selfish reasons. When a volunteer activity is pursued for reasons, such as padding a résumé or as part of a school project, it would not be considered leisure volunteering.

The serious leisure category of volunteers refers to individuals who establish a leisure career in a volunteer activity. As Stebbins (1998) states: "in serious leisure volunteering, people find a (non-work) career in acquiring special skills, knowledge or training and, at times, two or three of these" (p. 20). It is the acquisition and utilization of these skills and knowledge that characterizes a leisure career and distinguishes serious leisure volunteering from casual volunteering. Additionally, serious leisure volunteering is characterized by delegated tasks. Delegated tasks refer to specific activities that people are asked to perform as part of their volunteer duties. Such tasks are normally just beyond the jurisdiction or mandate of the

organization. However, because of their unique role within an organization, volunteers are able to perform such 'inside' tasks while still remaining an 'outsider' (Stebbins, 1998).

Mixed Serious Leisure

Each of these categories of serious leisure participation is distinct unto itself; they have unique features that set them apart from one another. However, this is not to say that they are mutually exclusive. Stebbins (2007a) notes that the leisure activities of some individuals may see them classified in more than one type. This is what Stebbins (2007a) refers to as mixed serious leisure. Mixed serious leisure is defined as "the involvement in two or more types or subtypes of serious leisure that, together, constitute for the participant an integrated pursuit of a more encompassing free time activity than either of the two pursued alone" (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 34). Examples of mixed serious leisure are plentiful: the player in a recreational golf league (amateur) who also serves on the leagues board of directors (volunteer), an artist (amateur) who also studies the history of impressionist art (liberal arts hobbyist), or the fly fisherman (hobbyist) who works with a wetlands conservation group (volunteer). Additionally, works by Hunt (2004) in the area of civil war reenactment, and by Harrington, Cuskelly, and Auld (2001) in the area of motorsports further expound the concept of mixed serious leisure.

Six Distinguishing Qualities of Serious Leisure

In a serious leisure pursuit the participant is intensely committed to the activity. This intense commitment is what sets serious leisure participants apart from those who simply dabble (Baldwin & Norris, 1999). This commitment is illustrated through the manifestation of six qualities unique to a serious leisure pursuit. These qualities are: the need to persevere at an activity, availability of a leisure career, significant personal effort in the acquisition of skill and knowledge, realization of various special benefits, unique ethos and social world, and identification (Stebbins, 2007a).

Perseverance

Perseverance with respect to serious leisure refers to an individual's drive or desire to engage in an activity despite facing challenges. Serious leisure pursuits frequently present obstacles that the participant must overcome. These obstacles take the form of barriers or constraints such as monetary issues, confronting danger (Fine, 1988), negative feelings (Gibson, Willming, & Holdank, 2002), interpersonal conflicts, and other strains (Stebbins, 2007a). In most leisure pursuits such constraints would deter participation. However, when an activity is pursued as serious leisure, participants work to overcome these constraints and continue their involvement in the activity (Stalp, 2006). Such perseverance engenders positive feelings within participants and reaffirms their perception of and involvement in the activity. As noted by Stebbins (1992a), "it is clear that the positive feelings about an activity come, to some extent, from sticking with it through thick and thin, from

conquering adversity” (p. 6). It is the persistence and desire to carry on, even in the face of adversity that characterizes a serious leisure pursuit.

Career

The availability of a leisure career is another distinguishing quality of serious leisure. “From a sociological perspective, careers are not limited to the world of work; they can also be pursued in other complicated roles, including serious leisure roles” (Stebbins, 1998, p. 21). Within this context, a leisure career refers to a lasting pursuit that for the participant has its own history, background, specific turning points, and stages of accomplishment (Stebbins, 2007a). A leisure career is based on the acquisition and maintenance of specially acquired knowledge, training, or skill, and often times all three (Stebbins, 1992a). As such, the careers of serious leisure participants consist of their efforts to attain a high level of achievement in their chosen pursuit (Stebbins, 1998). It is this process of continual learning, development, and maintenance that typifies a serious leisure career.

Significant Personal Effort

Significant personal effort in the acquisition of skill and knowledge is closely linked with the concept of acquiring a leisure career. The acquisition of a leisure career is at least partially predicated on the acquisition of specially acquired knowledge, training, experience, or skill (Stebbins, 2007a). “Examples include such characteristics as showmanship, athletic prowess, scientific knowledge, and long experience in a role” (Stebbins, 2007a, p 11). This type of skill development often

includes intensive training in both formal and informal settings and consumes large amounts of both time and money. Furthermore, significant personal effort is displayed in the individual's perseverance to take part in a given activity, even if it is deemed as difficult or unpleasant (Stebbins, 2007a). In general, any participation in a leisure activity that constitutes serious leisure will require a person to commit or give more of him or herself than simple casual participation.

Special Benefits

Serious leisure is also characterized by the realization of various special benefits. These benefits refer to agreeable outcomes that individuals experience as a result of taking part in a leisure activity. They may be anticipated or unexpected and refer to both the durable-self benefits and broad outcomes (i.e. physical, social, psychological) of the leisure activity (Stebbins, 2007b). Some of the benefits as outlined by Stebbins (2007b) include: self-actualization, self-enrichment, self-expression, self-gratification, regeneration, feelings of accomplishment or pride, enhancement of self image, social interaction, feelings of belongingness, and physical products of the activity (e.g.: a painting, a book, improved physical well being).

Unique Ethos

Serious leisure is further distinguished by the unique ethos or social world that develops around a leisure activity. Stebbins (2007) refers to the unique ethos of serious leisure as "the spirit of community" (p. 12). Prolonged involvement in a

serious leisure pursuit often results in participation in a special social world (i.e. community) (Stebbins, 1998). Within this social world, members share fundamental traits or characteristics that are expressed through values, attitudes, habits, and beliefs, and are manifested in the formation of distinctive groups, communications, events, routines, practices and organizations (Stebbins, 2007a). For example, the phenomena of “Trekies”, who are avid fans of the Star Trek franchises (i.e.: TV shows, movies, and comic books), illustrate just such a social world (Lawrence, 2006).

Identification

An attractive personal and social identity emerging from participation in a leisure activity is the final distinguishing quality of serious leisure. “This quality revolves around the preceding five; participants in serious leisure tend to identify strongly with their chosen pursuit” (Stebbins, 2007, p. 12). This association serves as the basis for a distinctive identity, on which participants may define themselves, and the world around them. It manifests in the way people dress, the things they buy, the way they talk, and the social circles with which they associate (Stebbins, 1998). For example, Baldwin and Norris (1999) describe what they call the “dog person” (p. 11), these are people who are seriously involved in dogs as a form of leisure.

Rewards

In addition to the six distinguishing qualities outlined above, Stebbins (2007a) also identifies a distinctive set of rewards associated with serious leisure participation. These rewards are routine values that attract and hold an individuals interest in a leisure activity. They maintain interest by providing the participant with a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction (Stebbins, 2007a). Stebbins (2007a) separates these rewards into two groups: personal and social. Personal rewards include: individual enrichment, self-actualization, self-expression, self-image, self-gratification, re-creation, and financial return. The social rewards as delineated by Stebbins (2007a) are: social attraction, group accomplishment, and contribution to the maintenance and development of the group.

While each of these rewards may be gratifying in its' own right; they also serve as a source of motivation for participates in serious leisure pursuits. As noted by Stebbins (2007a), "every serious leisure career both frames and is framed by the continuous search for these rewards" (p. 13). It is this element of motivation that distinguishes these rewards from the durable self benefits mentioned earlier (Stebbins, 2007a). However, these rewards also serve as counterweights to the costs associated with participation in serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007a). Every serious leisure activity produces a set of costs; these are tensions, stresses, dislikes, or challenges that can threaten participation and dilute satisfaction and enjoyment. Though as previously noted serious leisure participants persevere through these costs to a large extent because of the power of the associated rewards (Stebbins, 2007a).

Casual Leisure

Casual leisure is defined as “an immediately intrinsically rewarding, relatively short-lived pleasurable activity requiring little or no special training to enjoy it” (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 58). In general, it is what most people think of when they think of leisure. It can most loosely be defined as “the practice of doing what comes naturally” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 18). It is a leisure activity or experience that an individual will participate in for the pure enjoyment, or pleasure, found there in. The defining characteristic of casual leisure is that, at its very core, it is hedonic in nature. As such, it often fails to produce a sense of optimal experience (Stebbins, 1997a). Furthermore, Stebbins (1998) notes that casual leisure generally does not serve as a basis for a distinctive identity, a characteristic of serious leisure, as it is “too fleeting, mundane and commonplace” (p. 21). That is not to suggest that there are not benefits associated with casual leisure participation. Stebbins (2003) notes that casual leisure often results in benefits such as creativity, rejuvenation, and social interaction for the participant. Casual leisure can be grouped into eight specific types; play, relaxation, passive entertainment, active entertainment, sociable conversation, sensory stimulation, casual volunteering and pleasurable aerobic activity (Stebbins, 2007b).

Play as a type of casual leisure refers to marginal or non-serious participation in a leisure activity. It results when people take part in activities often classified as serious leisure pursuits but only on a casual or informal basis, and with a carefree attitude toward the activity (Stebbins, 1997a). As Stebbins (1997a) notes “people often dabble in or play around at an activity pursued as serious leisure by

others" (p. 19). They do not strive to develop a leisure career or invest significant amounts of time and energy into the pursuit. Stebbins (1992a) identifies these people as "dilettantes" or "dabblers". Stebbins (1992a) defines a dabbler as "those whose activity involvement, technique, and knowledge are so meager as barely to distinguish them from the [general] public" (p. 42). A person who learns to play an instrument for his or her own enjoyment, but never develops their skills beyond a rudimentary level, or pursues any form of career in music exemplifies this type of casual leisure.

Relaxation is defined as "a release from mental or physical tension; especially by recreation or rest" (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 19). The defining feature of relaxation is the release of tensions that result in feelings of rejuvenation. We as human beings have a need to rest and revitalize ourselves; as such, we enjoy this form of casual leisure. Relaxation occurs in two basic spheres passive relaxation or rest and active relaxation (Stebbins, 2007b). Passive relaxation can take many forms including, sitting in a comfortable chair, or taking a nap in a hammock. Active relaxation requires more effort on the part of the participant but still results in a release of tension and a relaxed, rejuvenated feeling. This can include activities such as going for a leisurely stroll or taking a Sunday afternoon drive.

Passive entertainment is defined as "a type of casual leisure in which the diversion or amusement is delivered to its consumers" (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 19). The level of involvement required from its participants is the distinguishing characteristic of passive entertainment. In passive entertainment, there is no or only very little need to concentrate on its components, people simply take in what

they perceive and enjoy it for its own sake. The only requirement of passive entertainment is that the participant arranges for its delivery (e.g. turns on the TV, opens a book) (Stebbins, 1997a). Any activity that is a passively consumed diversion can thus be considered this type of casual leisure including such things as watching TV, reading a book, or listening to music.

Active entertainment requires the participants to work to achieve their own diversion. Unlike in passive entertainment, where the participant is on the periphery of the activity, in active entertainment the participant is centrally involved in the activity. Participants will make use of specific skills, experience, or knowledge in the pursuit of the leisure activity (Stebbins, 1997a). These skills and knowledge can manifest in many different ways from physical exertion to mental challenges. Examples of active entertainment include: doing riddles, assembling puzzles, and playing games of chance. It should also be noted that when involvement in active entertainment requires a substantial level of skill, knowledge, or experience, it ceases to be casual leisure and enters the domain of project based and serious leisure (Stebbins, 1997a).

Sociable conversation is a non-instrumental exchange between two or more people. It relates to human beings basic need for interaction. As sociable creatures, human beings desire to be around and to associate with others. The essence of sociable conversation lies in its intrinsic value; it allows the participant to experience feelings of joy, relief, and vivacity (Stebbins, 1997a). Sociable conversation is a unique casual leisure activity because it is dependent on interactions. As Stebbins (1997a) notes, "sociable conversation is a democratic

activity in that the pleasure of one person is dependent on the other person in the exchange” (p. 20). In addition to being reciprocal, sociable conversation must also be of a non-instrumental nature. If an individual introduces a completely personal interest or goal, it ceases to be sociable conversation (Stebbins, 1997a).

Sensory stimulation refers to activities people will take part in to excite or arouse their senses. “Human beings are aroused by a tremendous diversity of things and activities, among them creature pleasures, displays of beauty, satisfying curiosity, thrills of movement, and thrills of deviant activity” (Stebbins, 1997a, p. 20). These activities cause the release of endorphins that result in positive or happy moods. Creature pleasures include activities such as engaging in sexual intercourse, eating, and drinking. Displays of beauty include natural beauty such as a picturesque landscapes or manmade beauty such as artwork or architecture. Satisfaction of curiosity occurs when people seek to explore or observe events or things such as touring a museum, bird watching, window-shopping, or trainspotting. Thrills of movement take in activities such as riding roller coasters, rafting a river, or going bungee jumping. Finally, thrills of deviant activity consist of activities generally related to socially unacceptable or criminal behaviour such as vandalism or shoplifting (Stebbins, 1997a).

Casual volunteering is similar to serious leisure volunteering in many ways. However, casual volunteering has two distinguishing features that set it apart from the serious leisure variety. The first characteristic of casual volunteering is the lack of a leisure career. Casual volunteering is so fleeting that it does not require participants to acquire or use any special skills or knowledge. Furthermore, it does

not have a history of background contingencies or turning points and as such does not provide an opportunity to develop a leisure career (Stebbins, 2003). The second characteristic of casual volunteering is that it is generally a short term or one off occurrence.

Pleasurable aerobic activity “refers to physical activities that require effort sufficient to cause marked increase in respiration and heart rate” (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 39). The general term aerobic activity is used to describe all activities that necessitate such an effort. This includes both structured activities such as aerobics and less structured activities such as playing hide-and-seek. The fundamental characteristic of pleasurable aerobic activity, like all forms of casual leisure is that it requires little more than minimal skill, knowledge, or experience to participate in (Stebbins, 2004b).

While each of these types of casual leisure is conceptually different from one another, it should be noted that several types can be experienced simultaneously. Stebbins (2007a) states, “it is likely that people pursue the eight types of casual leisure in combinations of two or three at least as often as they pursue them separately” (p.39). For example, take an individual who plays a round of golf with a couple of friends. This activity would be considered a form of play; however, the individual may also find the experience very relaxing. The course they are playing might be very scenic and as such the participants may also be experiencing sensory stimulation. Furthermore, spending time with friends may also create an opportunity for sociable conversation. As such, this one leisure activity can result in four types of casual leisure taking place.

Project-Based Leisure

Stebbins (2005) defines project-based leisure as “a short-term, moderately complicated, either one-shot or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time” (p. 2). Project-based leisure shares many of the characteristics of serious leisure pursuits including significant personal effort, perseverance, the establishment of identity, and involvement in a unique social world. Project-based leisure often requires significant personal effort on the part of the participant. This can take many forms including the acquisition and usage of special skills or knowledge, and often requires great amounts of time and planning (Stebbins, 2007b). Furthermore, Stebbins (2007a) notes project-based leisure often originates from a sense of obligation or necessity, and thus may be considered unpleasant or tedious by the participant. Participants in project-based leisure demonstrate perseverance by overcoming these negative feelings. In doing so they often find enjoyment, personal enrichment, self-actualization, regeneration, and other various benefits (Stebbins, 2005). Also associated with project-based leisure is the establishment of a special identity and a unique social world. However, these exist in a less complicated and thus less developed manner than in serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007a).

The infrequent nature and creative element is what distinguishes project-based leisure from serious leisure. As well, the lack of availability of a leisure career sets project-based leisure apart from serious leisure. As the definition of project-based leisure implies, the activity occurs only on an infrequent or irregular basis. As such, the activity is not frequent or substantial enough for the individual to establish

a leisure career. Another characteristic of project-based leisure is that it is a creative undertaking. The term "creative" implies that the outcome of the activity will result in something new or different, showing imagination, skill, or knowledge (Stebbins, 2005). This outcome can be tangible such as a piece of art or a craft or intangible such as a well-organized party or social gathering. Stebbins (2005) identifies two types of project-based leisure: one-shot projects and occasional projects.

One-shot projects are leisure activities that draw on an individual's existing talents or knowledge. They have a definitive beginning and end and are not intended to carry on for an extended period of time. Once they have begun they are generally continuously pursued until completed (Stebbins, 2007a). However, in some cases, they may be interrupted or put on hold for significant periods of time (e.g. a puzzle is left sitting on a table while the participant goes on a week long business trip). Occasional projects are similar to one-shot projects but occur on a regular or more frequent basis. They are often the cumulation of creative activities and are likely to originate or be motivated by agreeable obligation (Stebbins, 2007a). Examples of occasional projects include participating in an annual art festival, playing in a yearly interoffice sports event, or planning a family member's birthday celebrations (Stebbins, 2005).

Synthesizing Concepts

Serious, casual, and project-based leisure are integrated within the serious leisure perspective by a number of social scientific concepts. These concepts help to

explain each form of leisure by illustrating its position within the larger social framework (Stebbins, 2007a). As noted by Stebbins (2007a) “each concept has its own place in the larger social scientific literature, while also finding a special place in one or more of serious, casual, and project-based leisure” (p. 53). Furthermore, these concepts help to explicate the three forms by showing their similarities, differences, and interrelationships. They also serve as a guide for exploration and research and in doing so make serious leisure a truly integrated theoretic perspective (Stebbins, 2007a). These fundamental concepts as identified by Stebbins (2007a) are: organization, community, history, lifestyle, and culture.

Organization

While leisure can inherently be a solitary activity (e.g. reading a book), it is more often than not organized in one or more of several ways (Stebbins, 2007a). Stebbins (2007a) defines leisure organization as “the range of collectivities that add social and psychological structure to leisure life” (p. 54). These collectivities vary from how a specific leisure activity is experienced (i.e. in small groups, large groups), to the larger formations (i.e. social worlds) that encompass a leisure experience as a whole.

Small groups are the first level organization identified by Stebbins (2007a). Small groups are a collection of individuals who get together in order to pursue a common goal or interest. They consist of two or more people and often result in the formation of social networks (Stebbins, 2007a). Social networks refer to a series of interconnections that exist between individuals with common interests.

Participation in a leisure activity will often result in the development of a network of contacts that in some way relate to that activity (Stebbins, 2007a). Social networks can vary in size depending on the activity and ones level of involvement. Understanding leisure networks helps explain how people socially manage and organize their leisure time (Stebbins, 2007a).

The second level organization identified by Stebbins (2007a) is large groups. Large groups are similar to small groups; however, they are differentiated by size and additional organization or structure. These groups include grassroots associations, volunteer organizations, and leisure service organizations.

The final level of leisure organization consists of tribes, social worlds, and social movements. "Tribes are fragmented groupings left over from the previous era of mass consumption, groupings recognized by their unique tastes, lifestyles, and social organization" (Stebbins, 2007a, p 63). In general, tribes refer to groups of leisure participants, who are recognizable as a group because of a shared trait or common interest (i.e. fans of a particular sports team).

Social worlds are defined by Unruh (1979) as "an internally recognizable constellation of actors, organizations, events, and practices which have coalesced into a perceived sphere of interest and involvement for participants" (p 115). Social worlds are unstructured social organizations generally larger than groups, are arranged around a common activity, and are characterized by different levels of involvement, meanings, and interactions (Unruh, 1980). They vary in size from local to international and have no definitive prescribed boundaries or specific membership; rather inclusion within a social world is voluntary and based on an

individual's perception and desire to be included therein. As such, people have the freedom to enter and leave social worlds as they see fit and often times can be members of several social worlds at the same time (Unruh, 1980). Social worlds are further characterized by the existence of various subcultures. These subcultures serve to connect the broad variety of individuals within the social world (Stebbins, 2006a). Each of these subcultures has a distinctive set of norms, values, attitudes, beliefs, and standards that both define the subculture and integrate its members within the larger social world (Stebbins, 2006a). Furthermore, social worlds are held together by semiformal communications (Unruh, 1980). The size and lack of formal structure within social worlds make communication difficult. For this reason, most communication is via mass media channels such as newsletters, posted notices, and mass e-mails.

Lastly, Stebbins (2007a) defines social movements as "a non-institutionalized set of networks, small groups, and formal organizations that have coalesced around a significant value, which inspires members to promote or resist change with reference to it" (p.57). Social movements vary in size and organization, depending on the movement on which they are based, and the amount of public support they receive.

While each of these forms of organization can be found in serious, casual, and project-based leisure, some activities lend themselves more readily to certain types of organization. For example, social movements encompass all three forms of leisure whereas tribes are found only in casual and serious leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 2007a).

Community

Community as a synthesizing concept is a broad subject area, and as noted by Stebbins (2007a) not all aspects of this concept have been applied to the serious leisure perspective. However, several aspects of community have been associated with serious leisure, they include: family, work, gender, social class, contributions to community, and deviance.

Family is a general term used to describe spouses, partners, boyfriends, girlfriends, and other members of immediate or extended family (Stebbins, 2007a). Harrington (2006) espouses that there is an increasing overlap in home life, family life, and leisure activities. As such, the role of family in the leisure experience is becoming increasingly important. Specifically, leisure is “the central social space for the development and expression of primary relationships” (Kelly, 1993, p. 6). Thus, leisure can have a significant impact on family relations and vice versa. Some forms of leisure can result in negative outcomes for families. Over the course of his research on serious leisure, Stebbins (2007a) found that on occasion, family relations became strained because of involvement in a serious leisure activity. This conflict often arose over contentious issues such as expenditure of time and money. In some cases this conflict was significant enough to result in the dissolution of marriages (Stebbins, 2007a). The nature of serious leisure makes it more likely to produce such conflict, as it often requires significantly more of its participants. However, Stebbins (2007a) suggests similar conflict may be found in varying degrees in both casual and project-based leisure. While leisure activities can be a source of conflict, they can also have a positive effect on families (Stebbins, 2007a).

When there is shared interest in a leisure activity, it can act as stabilizing force and create strong bonds between family members (i.e. "a family that plays together stays together"). Furthermore, leisure can act as a rallying point for creating unity within a family. A leisure activity pursued by one family member may act as a rallying point for other family members (Stebbins, 2007a).

Similar to family, work presents a unique set of relationships that can impact a person's leisure. Work plays a significant role in determining both the kind and frequency of leisure available to an individual. Obligations arising from work often dictate the leisure activities a person will pursue (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). For example, work may impose time constraints or other barriers such as not earning enough money that limit the leisure activities a person can participate in. Hence, the relationship between work and leisure can be contentious. Stebbins (2007a) notes that few serious leisure participants seem to experience conflicts between their leisure and work. This is because serious leisure participants often avoid jobs that might conflict with their leisure activities. Moreover, many serious leisure participants engage in occupations that, in some way, facilitate their free time activities (Stebbins, 2007a). For example, they may seek out employment that has flexible hours or that relates to their serious leisure. Furthermore, most people view work as a necessary evil; something they must undertake in order to earn a living (Beauschesne, 2005). Consequently, people take part in leisure activities as a release or escape from the stresses of work. However, as Stebbins (1992a) notes much of this leisure is of the casual variety. With respect to leisure, work can be a source of conflict; however it can also serve to foster leisure participation (Stebbins,

2007a). For example, a company might organize a bowling league for its employees that could be a serious leisure pursuit for some. Also, work can generate many opportunities for both casual and project-based leisure through activities such as the annual Christmas party or summer retreat.

Gender relates to the “social and cultural meanings and connections associated with an individual's biological sex” (Henderson, Bialeschki, Shaw & Freysinger, 1999, p 220). The meaning of gender is constructed within the larger societal context with specific attention given to class, sex, ethnicity, identity, and sexuality. Gender has been used as a framework to explore many different aspects of leisure including: behaviour, constraints, benefits, and satisfactions (Henderson et al, 1999). As noted by Henderson & Shaw (2006), gender has emerged as an organizing principle of leisure. It has been found to shape the leisure experience, from how an activity is viewed, to who will participate (i.e. some leisure activities are more gender specific, for example knitting is often viewed as a “women’s” activity). Stebbins (2007a) notes that while many aspects of gender have been brought to bear on the serious leisure perspective, overall it has tended to neglect the question of gendered experiences. Stebbins (2007a) affirms that when exploring serious leisure, it is important to examine the gender issues present, as this will provide greater context and understanding of the leisure activity as a whole.

Social class has surfaced as a distinguishing element within the serious leisure perspective. A social class is a distinctive category or grouping of people, who share common educational, economic, and social standings (Giddens, 2009). Different forms of leisure seem to be more amenable to different social classes.

Serious leisure has an inherent class bias that skews participation toward more prosperous and educated groups (Stebbins, 2007a). This is a result of the significant investment of resources required by most serious leisure pursuits. Individuals in more affluent social classes will have greater ability to give resources such as time and money to their chosen pursuit. Consequently most serious leisure participants come from middle and upper class backgrounds (Stebbins, 2007a). Parker (1996) contends that this leisure class bias is caused in part by the availability of a leisure career, arguing career is essentially a middle class concept. Stebbins opposes this notion arguing that this bias is a result of a lack of leisure education. Casual and project-based leisure do not appear to have a similar class bias, as people from all classes take part in them (Stebbins, 2007a). However, different social classes will pursue different expressions of casual and project-based leisure. Factors such as money and time, which can be associated with social class, will define the activities people pursue.

Participation in many forms of leisure can result in positive outcomes for the community. Many serious leisure participants culturally enrich their local community through expressions of their leisure pursuits (Stebbins, 2007a). For example, a local artist might exhibit some of their artwork in public spaces around town. In a broader sense, participation in serious or project-based leisure contributes to the community by generating community involvement or civil labor (Stebbins, 2007a). "Community involvement is local voluntary action, where members of a local community participate together in nonprofit groups or community activities" (Stebbins, 2007, p. 63). The goal of this involvement is to

improve community life (Smith, Stebbins & Dover, 2006). For example, members of a community may join together to form a citizen watch network, intended to deter crime in a community. Civil labor is similar to community involvement but emphasizes activities that result in the expansion of social capital (Rojek, 2002). In this context, social capital refers to the connections or relationships established among individuals within a community. Social capital is displayed in the social networks, trustworthiness, and acts of reciprocity that develop within a community (Putman, 2000). Casual leisure is too fleeting for the establishment of either community involvement or social capital. Thus, casual leisure rarely, if ever, contributes to the community, the exception being some forms of casual volunteering (Stebbins, 2007a).

Historically, the predominant view of leisure is that it contributes positively to both the individual and society. However, there is increasing acknowledgement that there are negative elements of leisure and that some leisure exists outside the margins acceptable to society (Sullivan & LeDrew, 2007). That is, some leisure activities may be considered deviant. What is considered a deviant leisure activity is entirely dependent on the society in which an individual lives. What is seen as deviant by one person may not be seen as deviant by another (Sullivan & LeDrew, 2007). Stebbins (1996) outlines two basic forms of deviant leisure: tolerable and intolerable. Tolerable deviance is an activity that contravenes of the moral norms of a society, but the perceived threat to the community it generates, is so low that it is generally tolerated or ignored. Examples of tolerable deviant activities include: cross-dressing, swinging, drinking, and gambling. Intolerable deviance refers to

activities that “violate powerful criminal and non-criminal moral norms” (Stebbins, 1996, p. 6). These are activities deemed so aberrant that society demands decisive controls be put in place to curb them (Stebbins, 2007a). Examples of intolerable deviant activities include: sexual assault, vandalism, and incest. With respect to the serious leisure perspective, deviant leisure may be classified as either casual or serious leisure. Stebbins (2007a) notes that no deviant leisure seems to fit the criteria of project-based leisure. Deviant casual leisure finds expression in activities that result in sensory stimulation and the pleasures that it produces (Stebbins, 2007a). These are activities people pursue because it makes them feel good; examples include recreational drug use and group sex. On the other hand deviant serious leisure is expressed through activities in which people find deviant leisure careers. It is primarily manifest in aberrant religion, politics, or science but can be seen in other activities as well (Stebbins, 2007a). Participation in serious deviant leisure results in a distinctive belief system and a special personal identity that sets participants apart from the rest of society.

History

The next fundamental concept that synthesizes the serious leisure perspective is history. Leisure activities have a history: a background of significant events or moments that shape that activity and what it means to its participants. By examining the history of leisure activities within the context of serious, casual, and project-based leisure, a greater understanding of those activities can be obtained (Stebbins, 2007a). Stebbins (2007a) states that, “where it is possible to frame an

activity within historical perspective, this should be done" (p. 67), as it provides a lens through which to describe and investigate that activity. Extensive leisure histories are most prevalent in serious leisure pursuits particularly in amateur fields; however, leisure histories can also be found in some hobbyist and volunteer pursuits (Stebbins, 2007a). Some activities classified as casual leisure may also be amenable to historical framing, but most are not (Stebbins, 2007a). Similarly, project-based leisure encompasses some activities that have significant histories. However, most project-based leisure presents only a chronology of personal decisions or actions, rather than a formal history (Stebbins, 2007a).

Lifestyle

The concept of lifestyle synthesizes the serious leisure perspective by examining how people choose to apportion their free time. Within the context of leisure, lifestyle is defined as:

a distinctive set of shared patterns of tangible behaviour that is organized around a set of coherent interests or social conditions or both, that is explained and justified by a set of related values, attitudes, and orientations and then under certain conditions, becomes the basis for a separate, common social identity for its participants (Stebbins, 1997b, p. 350).

How people allocate their free time is what Stebbins (2007a) refers to as a leisure lifestyle. A key component of leisure lifestyle is discretionary time commitment. This is the amount of time a person devotes, or would like to devote to, carrying out a particular activity (Stebbins, 2007b). Discretionary time commitment can take

many forms and as noted by Stebbins (2007b) is both process and product. "That is people either set (process) their own time commitments (product) or willingly accept such commitments set for them" (Stebbins, 2007b, p. 56). At times people will agree to carry out unfavorable or disagreeable activities, because of a sense of obligation or necessity, these are coerced time commitments (Stebbins, 2007b). Coerced time commitments include work obligations as well as disagreeable leisure commitments.

Both discretionary and coerced time commitments shape a person's leisure lifestyle by partitioning work and free time, thus delineating which activities constitute leisure (Stebbins, 2007b). The amount of discretionary time and the way in which it is allotted varies across and within serious, casual, and project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2007a). Serious leisure requires a greater commitment of discretionary time than either casual or project-based leisure. This is because serious leisure takes place over a longer period of time. Additionally, elements of serious leisure such as perseverance, significant effort, and career inherently require participants to commit more time to the pursuit (Stebbins, 2007a). Serious leisure pursuits engender a desire to pursue them; as such participants will do everything within their power to set aside enough time to engage in it (Stebbins, 2007b). By its very nature, project-based leisure may require significant discretionary time allocation. However, this time allocation is only for limited duration and has a specific end date (Stebbins, 2007b). As project-based leisure occurs on an infrequent basis the amount of required discretionary time commitment is significantly less than that required by serious leisure. Casual

leisure can also require time commitment, but unlike serious and project-based leisure where discretionary time commitment is allotted ahead of time, much of the time commitment for casual leisure happens spontaneously (Stebbins, 2007b). This spontaneous discretionary time commitment acts as a bridge between discretionary and coerced time commitments and works to stave off boredom (Stebbins, 2007b).

When forming a leisure lifestyle people allocate their discretionary time across all three forms of leisure. How time is allotted will depend on specific activities and how those activities are viewed (i.e. as serious or casual leisure). In general, people organize their free time in such a way that they can achieve an optimal leisure lifestyle (Stebbins, 2007a). Stebbins (2007a) defines optimal leisure lifestyle as: "a deeply rewarding and interesting pursuit during free time of one or more substantial, absorbing forms of serious leisure, complemented by judicious amount of casual and project-based leisure or both" (p. 70). An optimal leisure lifestyle results from an advantageous combination of leisure activities. These activities provide individuals with feelings of self-fulfillment and accomplishment as well as an enhanced well being and quality of life (Stebbins, 2007a). What constitutes an optimal leisure lifestyle will vary from person to person, as people find different meanings and levels of satisfaction from different activities.

Culture

The final synthesizing concept of the serious leisure perspective is culture. Stebbins (2007a) conceptualization of culture with respect to serious leisure draws heavily on Tomlinson's (1993) concept of a "culture of commitment". This concept

focuses on the products of intense involvement in and commitment to a leisure activity (Tomlinson, 1993). As noted by Stebbins (2007a), this concept can be generalized beyond commitment to also include a "culture of obligation, key values, and selfishness" (p. 71). Of note is the fact that this concept of culture does not apply equally to all forms of leisure outlined by the serious leisure perspective. As most casual leisure is only consumptive and not productive in nature, it does not produce the same level of commitment found in serious and project-based leisure (Stebbins, 2007a).

Stebbins (2007a) refers to commitment as "a consequence of leisure" (p. 71). People become committed to a leisure role as a result of a deep level of involvement in an activity. This involvement engenders profound feelings of attachment, fulfillment, and attraction towards the activity, and as such they become committed to it (Stebbins, 2007a). Empirically, commitment can be viewed as the amount of time, effort, or other resources invested in a pursuit (Stebbins, 2007a). The more committed an individual is to an activity, the more resources they will invest. Thus, an individual classified as an amateur will invest more time in an activity than an individual classified as a devotee. Different forms of leisure will also result in different levels of commitment. Casual leisure activities do not prompt the same level of commitment as serious or project-based leisure. There are two specific types of commitment that leisure participant's experience. Value commitment is when an individual takes part in a leisure activity because they value their involvement therein. Participation in the activity provides powerful rewards and benefits that thus engender participation (Stebbins, 2007a). Conversely

continuance commitment refers to taking part in a leisure activity because of a sense of obligation. This results when people feel they cannot leave or chose another activity. This feeling of being trapped results from the associated social penalties that comes from abandoning the activity (e.g. losing friends) (Stebbins, 2007a). As such, the activity stops being leisure and becomes just unpleasant obligation.

Within Stebbins' (2007a) conceptualization of culture, obligation does not refer to constraints or barriers to participation but rather to how a leisure activity is perceived (i.e. as leisure or as obligation). Many times leisure activities have an obligatory side. Some people experience this obligation as positive while others view it as detracting from the leisure experience (Stebbins, 2007a). The perception of obligations associated with a leisure activity will significantly affect participation. Obligations viewed as disagreeable will result in negative feelings and unpleasant memories and ultimately deter participation (Stebbins, 2007a). However, agreeable obligations will have an opposite effect. Agreeable obligations create feelings of pride and accomplishment and result in value commitment to an activity (Stebbins, 2007a). How an obligation is viewed (i.e. as disagreeable or agreeable) is dependent on the individual. Thus it can be argued that agreeable obligation is not obligation at all because the participants enjoy doing it (Stebbins, 2007a). This is the case for most serious leisure participants. Serious leisure inherently generates significant obligations for participants, but serious leisure participants are likely to view these obligations as positive (Stebbins, 2007a). This is because these obligations are an element of a serious leisure career and thus affirm participation in the activity.

Obligations in project-based leisure are also generally viewed as agreeable in part because of the short-term nature of this form of leisure (Stebbins, 2007a).

Through participation in leisure activities individuals find an opportunity for the expression and realization of cultural values (Stebbins, 2007a). These values include: success, achievement, freedom of action, and individual personality (Williams, 2000). What constitutes success will vary depending on both the activity and the participant. Success is inherently individualistic (i.e. what one person views as success another may view as failure). As such, success is achieving the goals or standards that an individual sets out to achieve. Similarly achievement is dependent on the participant and their perception of an activity and its outcomes. Success and achievement are not generally displayed in casual leisure. They are most prevalent in serious and some project-based leisure where they are exemplified by the use of specially acquired skill and knowledge (Stebbins, 2007a). Freedom of action refers to the ability to do what you want when you want. It is predicated on the fact that freedom in leisure is an essential quality for successful and satisfying leisure experiences (Stebbins, 2007a). Freedom of action can be seen in some degree in all three forms of leisure. Finally, individual personality relates to a distinct personality or identity that often results from participation in a leisure activity. This personality development is based on the procurement and use of special skills or knowledge and as such is most readily exemplified by serious leisure (Stebbins, 2007a).

Selfishness is the act of being selfish; demonstrating concern for one's (self-seeker) own welfare or advantage at the expense of another (victim) (Stebbins,

2007a). "The central theme running through the fabric of selfishness is exploitive unfairness; a kind of personal favoritism infecting our everyday affairs" (Stebbins, 2007a, p. 74). Stebbins (2007a) includes selfishness as an element of culture, because so many individuals in all three forms of leisure exhibit selfish behaviour. As Stebbins (2007a) notes, some forms of leisure create an environment that fosters selfishness. For example, the complicated nature of serious and project-based leisure make them more likely to generate selfishness, than casual leisure. Because serious leisure takes up large amounts of free time and requires significant effort and investment accusations of selfishness often arise (Stebbins, 2007a).

Existing Research on *Magic* as Serious Leisure

The serious leisure perspective has emerged as a formal grounded theory (Stebbins, 2001). It provides a unique lens through which to view free time activities and in doing so ties together the three forms of leisure and serves as a typology of all leisure experiences (Stebbins, 2006b). As such, the serious leisure perspective acts as a guide for the exploration and analysis of leisure activities (Stebbins, 2007a). It has been used to investigate a diverse range of activities such as: quilting (Stalp, 2006), football fandom (Gibson et al., 2002), dogs and dog sports (Baldwin & Norris, 1999; Gillespie, Leffler & Lerner, 2002), contact bridge (Scott & Godbey, 1992; 1994), firefighting (Benoit & Perkins, 1997), chess (Puddephatt, 2003; 2005; 2008), replica football shirts (Fawbert, 2006), and beekeeping (Ferguson, 2007), among many others. No literature directly linking serious leisure and trading cards games (specifically *Magic: The Gathering*) could be found.

However, several articles that explore *Magic* (or other trading card games) demonstrate that elements of serious leisure (i.e.: the six distinguishing qualities, synthesizing concepts) are associated with participation in the game.

The existence of a distinctive social world associated with trading card games such as *Magic* was evidenced in a number of studies. In his research on how individuals thematize the fantasy imagery associated with *Magic*, Brett Martin (2004) identifies an idiosyncratic social world that accompanies participation in the game. This social world encompasses the interactions of a small group of friends who routinely get together to play. These interactions include the incorporation of specific fantasy motifs, language, and images into game play. In outlining this social world, Martin (2004) also shows that involvement in *Magic* presents other characteristics of serious leisure. For example, participants in his study were noted to invest significant amounts of time and effort into playing the game and other activities associated with the game (i.e. reading the novels/comic books, and being involved in the online community of players).

Vuckovic (2003) who examined the community of individuals who play fantasy role-playing games (RPG) including *Magic* also noted the existence of a distinctive social world. She found that the community of RPG players constitutes a distinct subculture. As described by Vuckovic (2003), this subculture is a voluntary community of people that is neither class nor space specific but rather consists of individuals who share a deep seeded interest and affinity for RPG's. This conception of an RPG subculture closely parallels Stebbins (1992a) concept of a social world. As its members share fundamental traits, practices, beliefs, organizations, and

communications that set them apart from others in society. Furthermore, in his examination of the interrelationship between the culture of gaming and the gaming industry, Winkler (2006) also identified a distinctive subculture associated with trading card games. Similar to that described by Vuckovic (2003), this subculture displays traits that correspond to the qualities of serious leisure. Individuals in this subculture share distinct modes of dress, specific linguistic jargon, and a unique sense of solidarity all of which are similar to the social world of serious leisure (Stebbins, 1992a).

In the above noted studies the establishment of a distinctive subculture was predicated on the existence of a unique ethos. Vuckovic (2003) notes that the RPG subculture is characterized by a distinctive argot and set of rituals or practices. This is analogous to the unique ethos associated with serious leisure activities (Stebbins, 2007a). Additionally, Weninger (2006) examined the social reality of *Magic* players by exploring the role semiotic systems play in defining and shaping the game experience. Her research illustrates that there is a unique ethos associated with the game. She notes that players have a distinct manner of interacting with one another that is exemplified by the use of unique language (e.g. tapping⁷, mana⁸) (Weninger, 2006).

The presence of a unique subculture and ethos related to the game also served as a source of social and personal identity. Vuckovic (2003) notes that players were found to define themselves with respect to their involvement in RPGs.

⁷ Tapping is the act of turning a card 90° to indicate that it has been used or spent during a turn.

⁸ Mana is the fictional energy used in the game it is required to cast spells or play creatures. It is obtained by tapping land cards.

That is, members of the RPG subculture sought out other people who think, feel, and act the same as they do, and in doing so involvement in RPGs served as a source of social and personal identity (Vuckovic, 2003). Williams (2006) also found that playing *Magic* can serve as a source of identity construction. He explored the relationship between the consumption practices of *Magic* players and the construction of subcultural identities. He found that consumptive practices influence expressive dimensions (i.e. how players feel about the game and other players) of the subculture and result in participants forming distinctive identities (Williams, 2006). "These identities are visible through multiple symbolic markers including the items with which they play, knowledge of the game environment and history, and gaming style or the skills one has in building winning decks" (Williams, 2006, p. 89). They serve to separate the casual players from the serious or "authentic players", and in doing so show the serious nature of this leisure activity (Williams, 2006, p. 88). This demonstrates identification with a serious leisure pursuit as outlined by Stebbins (2007a). Moreover, Williams (2006) delineates the significant role commodity agents have in establishing and shaping both the leisure experiences and identities of *Magic* players. He notes that producers of the game shape the subculture by controlling the production and flow of material resources (i.e. new cards), developing social infrastructures (e.g. online community groups, sanctioned playing events, professional tour), and defining and redefining game mechanics (i.e. rules) (Williams, 2006). These findings are analogous to those presented by Yoder (1997) with respect to the role commodity agents have in shaping a participant's social world and leisure experience.

The presence of a leisure career (Stebbins, 1992a; 1998; 2007a) was also espoused by the literature. As noted above Winkler (2006) found that the subculture surrounding the game serves as a source of identity, observing that participants will identify themselves as 'gamers' or 'gamer-geeks' (p. 147). This identification is partially rooted in the significant personal effort that participants invest in learning and using distinctive knowledge about the game. This characteristic thus demonstrates that involvement in trading card games can result in a leisure career. Lenarcic and Mackay-Scollay (2005) who explored the social impacts associated with playing *Magic* noted similar findings. They found that once participants were introduced to *Magic* they felt compelled to work hard in order to master the basic concepts and strategies. This resulted in players investing considerable time and effort to learning and practicing the game (Lenarcic & Mackay-Scollay, 2005). Similar findings were presented by Weninger (2006) who describes what she refers to as "a teaching event" (p.65) that occurs during game play in which one player helps to educate the other about the nuances of the game. Both of these examples display the utilization of special skill or knowledge and thus demonstrate characteristic elements of a serious leisure career.

Finally, Lenarcic and Mackay-Scollay (2005) found that participation in *Magic* resulted in various positive outcomes that parallel durable-self benefits as outlined by Stebbins (1992a; 2007a). For example, they note that outcomes resulting from playing *Magic* include "personal expression, and exploration, as well as a scope for community involvement and spiritual growth" (Lenarcic & Mackay-Scollay, 2005, p. 73). These parallel findings presented by Martin (2004), Weninger

(2006), and Vuckovic (2003) who also note the presence of various benefits linked to participation in the game.

Summary

This chapter presents a literature review conducted to examine serious leisure and existing research regarding *Magic* as a serious leisure activity. The serious leisure perspective was outlined, including an operational definition and description of serious leisure, its six distinguishing qualities, and synthesizing concepts. A cursory discussion of casual and project-based leisure was also undertaken. Existing research connecting *Magic* to serious leisure was also presented.

In sum, the serious leisure perspective synthesizes three forms of leisure: serious leisure, casual leisure, and project-based leisure. It has emerged as an effective tool for analyzing leisure participation, by integrating leisure activities within the larger social context (Stebbins, 2007a). As noted above the increasing number of scholars who are using the serious leisure perspective to guide their research illustrates this. Furthermore, Stebbins (2007a) affirms that exploratory research on serious leisure will continue as many leisure activities have yet to be examined. Despite the ever increasing prevalence of serious leisure, no research could be located that directly links serious leisure to *Magic*. The works presented above illustrate that various elements of serious leisure are present in the game. However, no work explicitly states, that involvement in *Magic*, or collectible trading

card games in general is a serious leisure pursuit. This illustrates a gap in the literature and provides further context for the study described herein.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Rationale for Qualitative Study

Within leisure studies two primary research paradigms are foremost, quantitative and qualitative (Scott & Godbey, 1990). Both approaches seek to explicate complex human behaviour and causality within social life, but differ in their approaches and pragmatic assumptions (Scott & Godbey, 1990).

The roots of quantitative sociological analysis lie in logical positivism (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As noted by Scott and Godbey (1990), “two principle features characterize this paradigm: human action is explained by social facts, and the methodology utilized in discovering those facts is rooted in deductive logic and the empirical analysis of numbers” (p. 191). Social facts refer to ways of acting, thinking, and feeling that are systematically observable and transcends individual human experience. “That is, recurring patterns of behaviour are explainable in terms of acquired dispositions and role expectations” (Scott, & Godbey, 1990, p. 191). This implies that human behaviour can easily be explained in terms of cause and effect (Scott, & Godbey, 1990). Further, Merriam (1998) notes that quantitative research holds that for any event or phenomenon there is a single, objective reality that is quantifiable and measurable. This measurement is based on the use of deductive logic and empirical analysis of numbers (i.e. statistics). Deductive logic explains empirically described social facts by illustrating how they can be deduced from existing empirical conditions, and theoretical knowledge. As such, deductive logic describes what happens, but does not explain it (Schlick, 1958). This results in descriptions that are literal, unambiguous, and to a great

extent disregard the situational factors, symbols, and meanings (Scott, & Godbey, 1990).

Conversely, the qualitative research paradigm is grounded in interpretive models such as symbolic interactionism (Scott, & Godbey, 1990). As noted by Glaser and Strauss (1967), symbolic interactionism uses inductive logic, whereby insights, hypotheses, concepts, and theory emerge from the data. As noted by Blumer (1969), it is based on three guiding principles: (1) people act towards things based on the meanings that the things have for them; (2) personal meanings arise out of social interactions; and (3) people adjust or alter these meanings based on personal interpretations. In general, it acknowledges and embraces the role of human experience and seeks to preserve the form and essence of human behaviour (Lindlof, 1995). Qualitative research focuses on exploration, explaining developing patterns, and developing theory through in-depth analysis and detail. The qualitative researcher describes a situation beyond context and aims to uncover complexities of societies and behaviour (Henderson, 2000). Unlike the quantitative, the qualitative research paradigm does not view the world as having one objective reality. Rather, it views the world as containing multiple realities or facets that are highly subjective and in need of interpretation rather than measurement (Merriam, 1998).

Harper (1986) notes that the intrinsic nature of leisure makes it more amenable to qualitative than quantitative research methods. How an experience is viewed (i.e. as leisure or not as leisure) is entirely dependent on the individual's perspective, beliefs, situation, motivation, mood, feeling, etc. Leisure is a cumulative

phenomenon comprised of all the factors that make up an experience. As such, separating one from the other is not possible. Qualitative research methods are useful in synthesizing the subjective nature of the leisure experience and as such provide a richer understanding of leisure as a whole (Scott & Godbey, 1990).

Study Design

This study used a qualitative framework guided by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Samdahl, 1988) to explore the experiences of individuals who play *Magic* through the lens of the serious leisure perspective. This approach was used to create an in-depth understanding of *Magic* players and their experiences in relation to the game. Qualitative methods produce rich, contextualized data unattainable through quantitative methods (Thomas, Nelson & Silverman, 2005). Leisure researchers have expressed a belief that “interpretive research is most effective in revealing processes and meanings associated with leisure” (Samdahl, 1999, p. 126). Furthermore, the subjective nature of leisure inherently means that individual participant’s attitudes and perceptions impact their experience (Baldwin & Norris, 1999). Symbolic interactionism views human experience as something that is accomplished between people within a process of interpretation (Scott & Godbey, 1990). As such, it provides a framework that acknowledges and incorporates personal experience and understanding. As noted by Blumer (1969) understanding of human activity requires researchers are sensitive to the actors’ point of view.

Sample

Both purposive sampling and snowball sampling was used in this study.

Participants were selected based on their level of involvement in *Magic*. All participants met the following inclusion criteria:

- Identified themselves as being involved in *Magic* (i.e. *Magic* players)
- Played *Magic* on a regular or semi-regular basis (i.e. at least several times a month)
- Have significant experience with the game (i.e. have been involved in the game for a minimum of six months⁹).
- Live in the metro St. John's area, Newfoundland and Labrador

In addition to purposive sampling snowball sampling methods were also employed.

The population drawn from for this study included all *Magic* players living in the metro St. John's area of Newfoundland and Labrador. This population lacks any specific or formal organization, and as such, locating participants was a difficult task. I used my personal knowledge of the *Magic* playing community to locate initial participants. Participants obtained early in the recruitment process were then used to help identify and locate other potential participants. At no time during this research were participants offered any form of remuneration or compensation for taking part in this research.

⁹ This criterion was put in place to limit the sample to individuals who are involved in *Magic* as a form of serious leisure as opposed to casual leisure.

Recruitment

In addition to the snowball sampling methods described above, recruitment posters (see Appendix B) were also distributed in an effort to enlist participants. These posters were hung in comic book and gaming stores within the St. John's metro area, and throughout the campus of Memorial University of Newfoundland. Once preliminary contact was made, I forwarded potential participants a copy of the study information form (see Appendix C). This form provided participants with a thorough explanation of the study, outlined the nature and scope of their participation, and began the process of informed consent. Individuals who agreed to take part in this research were then provided with a study consent form (see Appendix D), and an interview session was scheduled.

When determining the sample size for a qualitative study it is imperative that the sample be neither too large nor too small. Sandelowski (1995) notes that an adequate sample size in qualitative research is one that is small enough to provide deep case-oriented analysis, yet large enough to provide a new and richly textured understanding of an experience, situation or phenomenon. Glaser (2001) asserts that sampling should continue until such time that theoretical categories are saturated (i.e. theoretical saturation). "Theoretical saturation occurs when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). Glaser (2001) goes on to state that the saturation of theoretical categories supersedes sample size, as such sample sizes may be very small. It should provide "representative coverage of all variables likely to be important in understanding

how diverse factors configure the whole” (Sandelowski, 1995, p.182). Thus, the sample size of this study was determined by theoretical saturation.

Participant Description

There were nine male participants in this study, ranging in age from 22 to 34 years old (mean age of 26.9 years), and all living in the metro St. John’s area (Table 1). Their length of time participating in *Magic* ranged from 4 to 17 years, with a mean of 7.7 years.

Table 1: Participant Information

Participant Number	Participant Name (Pseudonym)	Gender	Age	Years Playing <i>Magic</i>
1	Andy	Male	25	5 years
2	Bill	Male	23	5 years
3	Carl	Male	24	13 years
4	Dan	Male	22	4 Years
5	Egan	Male	34	12 years
6	Fred	Male	25	13 years
7	Greg	Male	31	17 years
8	Hugo	Male	31	16 years
9	Ian	Male	27	14 years

Research Procedures

The nature of qualitative research demands a range of methodologies be used in the collection of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Thomas et al. (2005) state that data collection methods in qualitative research must be flexible and relatively uncontrolled. “By flexible it is meant that specific methodological procedures are guided by judgments that are themselves informed by the exigencies within the

particular social world" (Scott & Godbey, 1990, p. 193). In general, specific methods of data collection should be guided by the questions to be asked and the intrinsic demands within a setting (Scott & Godey, 1990). Stebbins (1993b) supports the use of open-ended, exploratory investigations consisting of semi-structured interviews and observations when exploring new forms of serious leisure. Within this context, this research made use of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis.

Interviews

I collected data through the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews. The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes, and took place at a time and location deemed convenient for the participant and myself. The interviews were reflexive in nature; specific questions were not prepared in advance, rather a semi-structured approach using a basic interview guide (see Appendix G) was employed. This method was used to ensure participants' experiences and perceptions associated with playing *Magic* would be captured. Semi-structured interviews provide rich contextual descriptions and insight into phenomena (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Additionally, they allow for immediate probing of specific themes or concepts that arise during data collection. Stebbins' (1992a; 2007b) conceptualization of serious leisure (i.e. the six qualities, synthesizing concepts) was used as a general guide for the interviews. Thus, participants were asked to discuss their experiences playing *Magic* as it represents serious leisure. These personal meanings were then examined to assess the essence of the experience. With

participants' permission, the interviews were audio recorded and later transcribed for data analysis.

Observation

In addition to interviews, I also made use of participant observation. On several occasions, I attended meetings of the MUN Tabletop Gaming Society where I observed participants as they played *Magic*. Of note, I did not participate in these sessions as my presence was strictly for the purposes of data collection. The purpose of this observation was to view how the participants interacted with each other and how they conducted themselves during game play. During the observations, I made use of the narrative method of note taking (Thomas et al, 2005). Using this method I recorded participants' speech (i.e. specific sentences), body language, actions, and specific behaviour or occurrences I deemed relevant to the topic of investigation. As I am a regular attendee of the MUN Tabletop Gaming Society, my presence had no apparent affect on the players.

Document Analysis

Finally, I made use of document analysis pertaining to the participants' involvement in *Magic*. Several participants in this study brought their collection of *Magic* cards, or part there of, to the interview. I examined these cards, and on several occasions had conversations with participants about their favorite cards, and the size (i.e. number of cards) of their collection. I made basic field notes pertaining to these documents, but at no time did I retain or store them.

Data Analysis

As previously noted, for the purpose of data analysis, verbatim transcripts of the audio-recorded interviews were created. Constant comparison methods as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (2008) were used to evaluate the data. Constant comparison methods “combine systematic data collection, coding, and analysis in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough or further testing”(Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, & Scott, 1993, p. 280). Open coding was used to identify main themes, concepts, and issues that emerged. Additionally, reoccurring key words and ideas of importance that surfaced were also noted. Themes that emerged early on then served as a guide for subsequent interviews. The data was then subject to axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008) to explore any linkages or themes that arose from the initial coding. Throughout this process, memo writing was also used to establish connections between various codes or categories in the data set. This was done to ease the review of the data already coded and assist in the development and investigation of emerging themes or trends. Likewise, notes generated from the participant observation and document analysis were collected and organized for evaluation. The notes were coded in a similar fashion to the interview transcripts. The process of triangulation was used to integrate the data from the various sources.

The process of respondent validation or member checks (Charmaz, 2006) was used to increase the credibility of the data collected. I met with all participants after the coding procedure was completed. The purpose of this meeting was to allow the participants to review the interview transcripts and associated

interpretations and to attest to their accuracy. The participants and myself examined the findings (i.e. interview transcripts) and discussed areas of agreement, disagreement, patterns of responses, and common themes.

Moreover, as previously noted, the serious leisure perspective as outlined by Stebbins (1992a) was used as a framework to guide data analysis. Major themes and concepts that arose were assessed in relation to the categories of serious leisure participants, the qualities of serious leisure, and the synthesizing concepts. These also served as initial coding categories during data analysis.

Ethical Considerations

The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland approved this research (ICEHR NO. 2008/09-165-HK) (see Appendix A). Prior to involvement in the study I engaged participants in the process of obtaining informed consent. The outcome of the informed consent process was an ongoing exchange of information between the participants and myself. This continual dialogue ensured all parties involved in the research process understood their responsibilities and were comfortable and willing to participate. I went through the study information form (see Appendix C) with each individual participant prior to their involvement, to ensure they fully understood all the information contained within. To avoid coercion or undue influence, the participants were given time to consider the information and ask any questions or voice any concerns before making a decision about participation. Individuals who decided to participate in the research were then required to sign a consent form

(see Appendix D), which signified that informed consent had taken place.

Furthermore, participants were given the opportunity to consent to the following elements of the research: consenting to be interviewed, for the interview to be audio recorded, for the recordings to be transcribed, for quotations from the transcription to be used in a final report, and for me to examine any materials they may provide. No third party or parental consent was obtained as all the participants' in this research are over the age of 19¹⁰. All participants were provided with a copy of the signed consent form for their personal records.

Furthermore, steps were taken to ensure participant anonymity would be protected. All participants were assigned pseudonyms and will only be referred to in broad descriptive terms. At no time was any form of identifiable information included herein. If quotations or statements were used all identifying information has been eliminated or altered. In keeping with Memorial Universities policy on data retention and usage the interview transcripts, audio recordings, and notes pertaining to this research will be kept for a period of seven years. After the seven-year period is up, the data will be destroyed.

¹⁰ The legal age of consent in Newfoundland and Labrador is 19 years old

Chapter 4: Findings

Data for this study was coded using Stebbins (1992a) conceptualization of the serious leisure perspective as a guide. During data analysis patterns emerged that suggest for the participants in this study involvement in *Magic* constitutes a form of serious leisure. The six distinguishing qualities of serious leisure as identified by Stebbins (1992a; 2001; 2006a; 2007a) served as initial coding categories. These categories include: (a) perseverance; (b) leisure career; (c) significant personal effort; (d) durable-self benefits; (e) unique ethos; and (f) identification. Axial coding and memo writing were used to explore the concepts that arose during preliminary coding. This resulted in the identification several emergent themes for each of the distinguishing qualities. These themes are summarized in Table 2 and will be further delineated herein.

Perseverance

As previously noted, one of the distinguishing qualities of serious leisure as outlined by Stebbins (1992a; 2006b; 2007a; 2007b) is perseverance. In the pursuit of leisure it is inevitable that individuals will encounter constraints or barriers to participation (Mannell, & Kleiber, 1997). In most circumstances such constraints serve to deter involvement, however, when an activity is pursued as serious leisure the participant will persevere through or in spite of these challenges. Baldwin and Norris (1999) note it is difficult to separate cost from perseverance because both are defined by the respondent's perspective. As such, perseverance with respect to *Magic* is associated with three types of costs: financial, personal, and competitive.

Table 2: Emergent Themes

Distinguishing Quality of Serious Leisure	Emergent Theme
Perseverance	Financial Costs Personal Costs Competitive Costs
Establishment of a Career	Learning the Game Length of Time Playing Stages of Achievement
Significant Personal Effort in Acquiring Skills or Knowledge	Continual Learning Deck Building
Durable-Self Benefits	Social Benefits Expressive Benefits Tangible Benefits
Unique Ethos	Distinctive Lifestyles Communications Rituals
Identification	Informal Roles Formal Roles

Financial Costs

For people who play *Magic* perseverance is associated with negotiating substantial financial costs related to the game. Participants in this study identified financial strain as a significant factor that impacts their participation. Every player noted experiencing financial pressures directly related to purchasing new *Magic* cards. As Egan noted, "It's [*Magic*] pretty cheap to get into but it gets pricey pretty quick." The manufacturers of *Magic* issue hundreds of new cards each year in the form of expansions sets. Furthermore, a new core set of cards is issued every two to

three years. Each time new cards are issued they have the potential to affect card interactions and thus, gameplay and strategy. Furthermore, official tournament regulations outline that players must use cards from specific sets (often the newest core set and the last 2 or 3 expansion sets) when competing. This necessitates the continual purchase of new cards in order to remain competitive and participate in sanctioned¹¹ *Magic* events. This was identified as a significant source of frustration for the participants in this study. Andy noted:

I would like to play more tournaments but I don't have the expansion sets, [I] can't afford them and no one will let me borrow theirs so I can't... you would need to be a Doctor or Lawyer or something to be able to keep up with all the new cards that keep coming out.

Having to continually update their decks was a major barrier to participation identified by all respondents. Fred best illustrated this when he said, "I know people who have pretty much given up playing because they don't want to, or can't afford to buy the new cards." Lack of funds was also identified as a major impediment to competitive ability. It was noted that the likelihood of being successful in competition (i.e. *Magic* tournaments) is directly related to the amount of money an individual was willing to spend. "The more money you have the better cards you can buy, the better decks you can build... it will increase your likelihood of winning" (Greg). It should be noted that, while participants did indicate that more financial means with which to construct a deck is an advantage, knowledge of how to

¹¹ Sanctioned *Magic* tournaments are those that are run/organized by tournament operators, who are affiliated with Duelist's Convocation International (DCI), the sanctioning body for *Magic*.

effectively play that deck was also very important. In spite of these financial pressures, participants continued to purchase new cards partly out of a desire to be competitive, and partly because they enjoy collecting them. Andy who stated that every time a new expansion set is released, "I'm going to buy it irregardless [sic]... I feel like I need to get them [cards] to complete the set," epitomizes this.

An expanding secondary card market further exacerbates financial pressures related to purchasing new cards. *Magic* cards are sold in randomized packs known as boosters. Each booster contains 15 cards consisting of ten common cards, three uncommon cards, one rare card, and one basic land card. The uncommon and rare cards are the most sought after as they are generally the most powerful cards (i.e. they deal the most damage to an opponent or provide protection or extra life) and thus most advantageous in gameplay. However, the random nature of the booster packs makes obtaining certain highly sought after cards very difficult. When a player purchases a booster they are taking a chance on what cards they are going to get. The cards in the booster may work with their deck or they may not. Players may have to purchase many booster packs in order to find the exact cards they want. Participants in this study indicated that they rarely, if ever, purchase these booster packs. As one participant noted:

It's too random, it is taking too much of a chance that all you are going to get in that pack is a bunch of shit cards...and the way they seem to package the cards that is probably exactly what you are going to get (Ian).

As such, all participants identified using the secondary market to purchase cards.

On this ancillary market, players are able to acquire the specific rare/powerful cards

that they want and thus are willing to pay high prices for them. On the secondary market, cards sell for hundreds or even thousands of times their face value (Marshall, Dreunen, & Wang, 2010). However, for the respondents in this study, purchasing cards on the secondary market was rationalized as part of their "normal" routine, and thus downplayed. While it is clearly identified as an extraneous cost of participation, all participants identified this simply as the "cost of playing". Carl stated, "If you want a good deck you are going to have to pay for it," while Andy noted that to be truly competitive, "you have to have a good deck and that costs money". Still another affirmed:

I would much rather pay 50 times the prices of a booster pack for one card if I really thought that one card was what I needed for my deck... I want to be sure of what I'm getting, I'm looking for specific cards, and spells and the only way you can be sure to get the cards that you want is to buy singles (Ian).

The lengths to which participants will go to construct and customize a personal playing deck further exemplify perseverance with respect to financial pressures. Many players noted that, even when they were experiencing financial difficulties, they would take actions to ensure that they could still buy new *Magic* cards. Several detailed selling personal items online in order to acquire new cards. Other participants described skipping or being late with rent, eating Kraft Dinner for weeks on end, and borrowing money from loved ones to access the funds they required to purchase new cards. Ian summed it up best when he stated, "It didn't matter how much this card cost I was going to get I no matter what...it is what I needed!"

Personal Costs

In addition to financial costs, several personal costs associated with participation in *Magic* were also identified. Participants in this study acknowledged making choices concerning their involvement in the game that had major consequences in their personal lives. Some acknowledged involvement in *Magic* was a source of friction within their personal relationships. This friction was a direct result of the significant amount of money and time they dedicated to the game. As noted earlier, participation in *Magic* can result in significant financial costs. All participants in this study identified the financial costs, and their associated behaviours (i.e. buying *Magic* cards) as having an impact on personal relationships. Several noted that their parents or significant others were particularly unhappy with them spending so much money on *Magic*. These disagreements over spending habits often resulted in tension that would escalate to arguments, or in some cases verbal altercations. Fred recounted a story that illustrates this tension:

I would do odd jobs around the house for my grandfather. One summer I painted a fence for my grandfather and he gave me like 100 bucks for doing it and I used that money to buy the new Ice Age expansion, and my father flipped out. He said that I wasted the money, that I was irresponsible, that I needed to grow up, all that kind of stuff...he told my grandfather not to give me any more money for doing work because I was just wasting it. Pop still paid me though.

All participants noted that while spending money on *Magic* may not be the most “sensible choice” it was better than other alternatives. For example, with respect to the amount of money he spends on *Magic* Bill stated, “I could be out spending my money on beer or weed, but I choose play [*Magic*].”

In addition to tensions that arose as a result of spending habits, the amount of time players devoted to the game also served as a source of tension. In general, all participants acknowledged that to be a good *Magic* player requires significant time and effort. As such, they conceded allotting a considerable amount of their free time to the game. This includes the time they actually spent playing the game as well as the amount of time they spent reading about *Magic*, organizing playing decks, and contributing to online forums. This time allocation resulted in tension between several participants and their significant others. Dan described ending a long-term relationship partly as a result of the tensions arising from the time he spent playing *Magic*.

Participants identified dealing with ridicule as another personal cost. A common theme emerging from the interviews were participants “being made fun of” or “ridiculed” for playing *Magic*. For some, this derision began in school. Several respondents acknowledged that in high school, they were the targets of bullies who often used their participation in *Magic* as a “weapon” or justification for teasing. Andy described, “We would be sitting in the cafeteria and they [the bullies] would come along and mess with our decks.”

Furthermore, all participants noted experiencing some sort of derision in their daily lives. They noted that people often referred to them as “geeks” or

"nerds", and failed to understand why they enjoyed playing the game. Some participants felt that people "looked down" on them for playing. One lamented, "People don't understand, they think you are playing a kid's game." This was further exemplified by comments expressed by family members of participants such as "Are you ever going to grow out of this?" and "Don't you think you should grow up?" This disdain seems to be directly related to the fantasy motif inherent in *Magic*. Several participants expressed the belief that because the cards contain fantasy imagery, people assume it is a children's game. As Greg noted, "I think people look at it differently because of the imagery...some of the graphics are a little cartoony."

Similar to the financial costs associated with participation, respondents herein also rationalized these personal costs as an element of participation. They were viewed as an unavoidable consequence of regular involvement. Thus players accepted these costs and persevered through them.

Competitive Costs

Competitive costs refer to obstacles or barriers to participation that are a direct result of the competitive nature of *Magic*. Participants in this study indicated that they play *Magic* for a variety of reason including: fun, to relax, and to keep their mind sharp. While the majority of their participation was recreational in nature, (i.e. not in sanctioned tournaments) they also indicated that winning was an important factor in their involvement. One participant stated, "Part of what keeps

me interested in the game is competition," while another declared, "You play to win."

The first competitive cost identified by participants is learning to deal with the negative emotions associated with losing. Winning plays an important role in motivating continued participation, however, learning to cope with losing was also a significant factor. Respondents noted experiencing extreme frustration and even anger associated with losing. Fred recounted a story in which he "punched a hole in the wall" as a direct result of losing a game. Others recounted incidents in which cards were thrown, as well as verbal and physical altercations taking place as a result of losing a game. Participants stated that such behaviours were unacceptable. Hugo noted, "You have to be adult about theses things." Others observed that they actively avoid playing with people who are known to have bad tempers or act inappropriately.

Coping with losing was a common theme among all participants regardless of number of years playing. Because luck plays a significant factor in the game (i.e. cards are drawn randomly from your deck to your hand) even the most knowledgeable and skilled players can lose. Greg, who is also a nationally accredited *Magic* judge, said it best when he stated, "Losing at some point is inevitable...the game can be very humbling." Learning to deal with losing is even more significant for new players, who will inescapably experience significant losses in the process of learning how to play. The complexity of the game combined with the sheer number of cards available, results in a steep learning curve. All participants in this study indicated that when they first started to play, they

experienced limited success. One stated, "It took awhile...it was about three years before I won my first Draft¹²". Another noted, "When you first start to play you probably won't win very often." As such, all participants recognized the importance of coping with losing and rationalized it as an integral element of the learning process; a part of "taking your lumps."

Another competitive cost of note is the requirement to continually update or modify an existing playing deck. As previously described, new *Magic* cards are continually being developed. As new cards are issued, they often alter existing card interactions or how specific cards operate within the game. Furthermore, sanctioned tournament rules require participants to use the most recent cards. This necessitates players constantly updating and adjusting their playing deck, in order to remain competitive resulting in both a significant financial burden and a major source of frustration for players. As one participant noted, "You can buy a set of golf clubs and be good for 20 years...not [with] *Magic* because the cards are constantly changing." When talking about the challenge of keeping a deck up-to-date, Ian described this frustration:

You spend a lot of time constructing your deck one way, to be really good at one thing, say a really Mana intensive deck with lots of creatures that fly, because there is not a whole lot of cards that can block flying creatures and then Wizards [of the Coast] come out with some new expansion set that

¹² A Draft is a special format of *Magic* tournament in which players are not allowed to use pre-constructed decks. Players are required to use a deck comprised only of cards obtained from randomly selected booster packs purchased immediately preceding competition. These tournaments generally have cash limits thus limiting the number of booster packs any one player can purchase.

completely fucks you...you know maybe that set has a lot of creatures or artifacts that directly fucks with flying creatures, and then you are fucked. Several respondents stated that they considered giving up playing competitively because of this frustration. To counteract this frustration, participants often played variant formats¹³ of the game that allowed them to use older cards or would frequently play “house rules” games. These are games in which the players established their own guidelines for what cards could or could not be included. If players didn’t like certain expansion sets, they could choose to exclude them from the game.

The final competitive cost identified was the challenge of finding a game. Participants noted that the pool of *Magic* players in the St John’s area is relatively limited. Andy said, “Everybody who plays, pretty much knows everybody else around here.” As such, participants noted the competitive scene is somewhat limited. Another player stated, “You get tired of playing the same people over and over.” Additionally, because the community of *Magic* players is relatively small, nationally sectioned events rarely take place in the province. This necessitates considerable travel if participants wish to play in nationally sanctioned events. Greg wanted to attend a national *Magic* tournament held a number of years ago but was frustrated by the costs:

A while back they had a quote end quote ‘coast to coast’ open tournament, where anybody who wanted could play, you just had to show up and pay the

¹³ Variant formats include Vintage or Legacy formats, which allow players to use any published *Magic* card from any set or expansion with the exception of a small number of banned or restricted cards.

registration fee. But the only event in Atlantic Canada was in Halifax, so if I wanted to play I was going to have to get on a plane at my own expense (Greg).

While the challenge of finding a game served as a source of frustration, participants actively worked to overcome it. Several described traveling to events and tournaments in other parts of the country. While others underwent certification as *Magic* judges which would allow them to organize and run nationally sanctioned events in the province.

Career

A second quality of serious leisure is the establishment and maintenance of a leisure career (Stebbins, 1992a). According to Stebbins (1992a; 2007a) a serious leisure career is characterized by the procurement and upkeep of specially, acquired knowledge, training, or skill.

Learning the Game

For the participants in this study a leisure career was epitomized by the effort they committed to learning how to play the game. As noted by Williams (2006), *Magic* is unique among tabletop games, in that the gameplay mechanics are unlike any other game. As such, there are few, if any, transferable skills that players can incorporate from other gaming experiences. As one respondent stated, "When I first started playing, there really wasn't anything to compare it to...it is a creature all

onto its own.” Thus, it required significant effort on behalf of the participants to learn to play the game.

Most indicated that they were able to pick the game up relatively quickly (i.e. learn the basic rules within a few hours of first being introduced to the game). However, becoming “good” at the game and learning all the nuances and intricacies took considerable time and work. Fred noted, “It’s [*Magic*] pretty easy to get into, but it can take awhile to get all the ins and outs.” All respondents indicated that they spent many hours learning the game. This included time spent learning specific terminology and learning the various storylines associated with different expansion packs.

The upkeep of knowledge or skill is further illustrated by the amount of time participants spent rehearsing or practicing their playing abilities. All described spending considerable time practicing the game. Hugo stated, “I’ll just sit by myself for hours going over different cards and different cards interactions to see how they will work, or won’t work with each other.” Respondents also noted that they often play noncompetitive “recreational” games with their friends as a means of practicing or trying out a new deck composition:

The purpose of those [games] isn’t winning its more about learning how to play your deck... We aren’t really trying to beat each other, I mean yes you I want to win, but we are just there to try things outs to see they how will work before we would use them in competition (Greg).

This commitment to practice and continual learning demonstrates the maintenance of a specialty-acquired skill.

Length of Time Playing

In addition to the acquisition and maintenance of knowledge and skill, a serious leisure career is also distinguished by continued involvement. That is, participants have been involved in an activity long enough that it has its own history, turning points, and stages of achievement (Stebbins, 2007a). All participants in this study indicated that they have been involved with Magic for what they deemed to be a “significant” period of time. Length of involvement ranged from four to 17 years, with the majority of participants playing the game for more than ten years. In general, initial participation began in the mid to late teenage years.

Several participants noted this was also around the time that they began to get interested in the fantasy genre and other role-playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. When asked how and when they first became interested in the game, some participants stated that they had a deep fascination with the game from the moment they first heard of it. For example, Fred stated, “Since I first heard about the game...I was in.” Others described a slower process in which the game “grew on them” over time. For these individuals, interest in the game was directly related to their understanding of the game. One stated, “At first I didn’t really get it...the more I played and really figured out how the game works the more I liked it.” Another noted, “Well it’s like anything really, if you don’t know what you’re doing, you won’t have a good time...It was a bit confusing at first, but I eventually got it.”

Stages of Achievement

In addition to learning to play the game, participants identified other significant turning points or stages of achievement related to playing *Magic* that demonstrate a serious leisure career. A number of participants mentioned the first time they won a tournament as a significant moment for them, Dan stated:

I think the biggest deal for me, was the first time I won a tournament at Sword and Steele¹⁴. So I hadn't been playing for that long and I still wasn't doing that good and I wound up winning a Draft one day just from playing all flying creatures and stuff and everyone was kind of like "Wow, you won the tournament, good job." So I felt pretty good.

Other respondents noted that the first time they won a "serious" tournament; it served to boost their confidence, and in general, reinforce their participation in the game.

Many players also identified notable victories over specific opponents as a significant achievement. Participants talked about beating the person who taught them to play or defeating a player who has been playing much longer than them as a source of pride. One respondent recounted a story in which he beat an internationally ranked *Magic* player:

In either 2004 or 2005 I went to *Magic* Nationals, there tends to be a lot of waiting around at really big tournaments so often we end up playing side games as we wait for each round of the tournament to finish. On the second day of the tournament I am sitting in the conference room playing [a]

¹⁴ Sword and Steele is a local gaming store located in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador.

multiplayer game with some people and mutual friend introduces me to Paul McCabe¹⁵. We start talking about the judging certification and he asks if he can join in our multiplayer game... I didn't win that game but I was the player that knocked him out, I remember the card that I used, 'Spined Wurm', I had him sign it, which was very gracious of him (Greg).

Greg commemorated the achievement by asking his opponent to sign a card from his deck. Having an opponent sign a card is a common practice among *Magic* players. The signed cards act as a "trophy" or physical reminder of a particular moment in the player's career. In some cases, this may represent a significant win or simply involvement in an event, such as a regional or national tournament. I asked one respondent about several signed cards that he had in his deck. He stated that some of the cards represented wins, while others were reminders of losses, "I have asked people to sign one of my cards after they have beaten me... [As] proof you know that I was there that I was taking part in that tournament."

Participants in this study also identified earning "victory points", receiving a player ranking, participating in a national tournament, and becoming an accredited *Magic* judge as significant achievements. When *Magic* players participate in sanctioned events they earn "Planeswalker Points" or "victory points." These points are awarded to a player based on their performance in competition. The more a player participates in and wins sanctioned events, the more points they gain¹⁶. A

¹⁵ Paul McCabe is a Canadian *Magic* player who competed on the *Magic* Pro Tour and was named 'Player of the Year' for the 1996-97 season.

¹⁶ Planeswalker Points are awarded to players based on a formula related to wins and losses as outlined by DCI. DCI (formally Duelists Convocation International) is the sanctioning body for *Magic*.

player's point accumulation directly relates to their player ranking. The more points a player has, the higher he or she will be ranked on both a provincial and national scale. Several participants in this study indicated that being ranked provincially and nationally were significant moments in their playing career. Another significant achievement mentioned by respondents was competing in a national *Magic* final. The story of qualifying to play in the national *Magic* finals was recounted by one participant,

What stands out for me is my first Nationals, specifically the grinder tournament that I won on the way to Nationals. Even the very first match I played at that tournament was very close and I played it very well. There were other matches throughout that tournament as well, I think what stands out about the first one is it's a timed match and unlike in a normal tournament you can't have a draw. If you run out of time the highest life total wins, and we ran out of time before starting the third game. So what happens is you have to start the game and the first change in life total is the winner. So, I drastically changed my sideboarding strategy from what would be normal, we were both playing control decks and now I'm bringing in life spells and taking out my lands that do damage to me, a lot of strange things like that. I ended up winning off some strange effects that I wouldn't have saw coming... that's how I qualified for my first nationals (Greg).

The other significant achievement noted was becoming a nationally accredited *Magic* judge (i.e. a person who is certified to administer and adjudicate sanctioned

Magic tournaments). The process of accreditation involves a series of interviews and written tests that demonstrate an individual's knowledge and understanding of the game, as well as a familiarity with the most up-to-date rules. Furthermore, to maintain certification, judges are required to complete a judging workshop and be retested on a semi annual basis. As Fred stated, "it's [certification] a pretty rigorous process." Two participants in this study completed this certification. They described it as a source of pride as other local players now often looked to them for clarification of the rules or advice on how to play in certain situations because they are judges.

Significant Personal Effort

Stebbins (1992a; 2006a; 2007a) also affirms that significant personal effort grounded in the maintenance of a leisure career further distinguishes serious leisure pursuits. For participants in this study, significant personal effort was associated with the process of continual learning associated with the game and the construction of their playing decks.

Continual Learning

In addition to demonstrating the presence of a serious leisure career, the acquisition of specially acquired knowledge, training, or skill also illustrates the significant personal effort associated with playing *Magic*. One of the most common themes that emerged in this study was that of continual learning. Every participant in this study noted that with respect to *Magic*, they "are always learning." This

learning was most often related to skill development. Every respondent noted that when they first began to play *Magic*, they were self-described “newbies” and “mouth breathers.” Their knowledge and understanding of the game was minimal at best. Furthermore, they identified a significant learning curve associated with the game. For example, Andy stated:

I picked up the basic rules pretty quickly, it was all the other stuff like the side rules and sub games, like how to use a sideboard and stuff that was difficult, [also] learning how to incorporate instants into the game, and how different creatures will work in different situations.

Early in their *Magic* careers, all respondents described committing significant amounts of time and effort to learning how to play the game. Furthermore, many participants also acknowledged putting forth substantial effort and considerable hours of practice to better their playing skills.

For participants in this study practicing for *Magic* took several forms. For some individuals, it involved solitary study of various card combinations and deck makeups. This is where players play games against themselves to observe various card interactions and different in game scenarios. As Fred stated, “I will just play a game with myself, to try out things so I won’t get embarrassed.” Other players used the online version of the game for practice where they would play against the computer. For most, however, practice involved playing numerous recreational games whenever possible.

Players described social gatherings where they would get together to play in a noncompetitive environment. They acknowledged that these games weren’t about

winning or losing but about practicing different strategies and techniques.

Participants noted that, in these practice sessions, the skill or level of ability of the opponent was not important. Carl stated, "you can learn something from every opponent that you face...Even a novice player might teach you something, for example they might play a series of cards that you had never thought about before."

In addition to skill development, continual learning was also evident in participants' efforts to stay current with the game. This includes keeping abreast of newly issued cards and various rule changes. As stated earlier, the publishers of *Magic* release several hundred new cards each year. One of the significant challenges acknowledged by the respondents in this study was keeping track of all of these new cards. Each time a new expansion set is released, participants spent hours online reviewing the new cards, memorizing their actions, and strategizing how they might be incorporated into their decks. When talking about the release of expansion sets, Hugo stated:

...Each time a new [expansion] set comes out I like to sit down and look at it to see how it will impact my deck, what cards might be useful to me, what cards might cause me problems in a match.

Continual learning is further exemplified by the constant need for players to stay abreast of rule changes. The official rules of *Magic* are constantly changing. Each time Wizards of the Coast release a new set of cards, game mechanics, and thus gameplay, are altered. It is not uncommon that newly issued cards will conflict with existing rules (i.e. the card interactions as stipulated by the card text directly contravene an existing rule of the game), or require a certain level of interpretation.

As such, Wizards of the Coast are continually tweaking the rules of the game to accommodate new card sets. As a result, the official *Magic* rulebook is in constant flux with a revised version being issued online every few months. Therefore, players must keep up to date with the most recent rules. As Egan stated "in [*Magic*] the rules are always changing... to stay competitive you have to stay up to date otherwise you will get left in the dust pretty fast."

Deck Building

Significant personal effort is also displayed in the practice of deck building. Deck building is the process in which *Magic* players select specific cards to be included in their pre-constructed or "pre-con" decks. Players compile customized pre-con decks based on a variety of factors including: their playing style, personal preferences, and specific opponents they may be facing. Participants in this study noted that deck construction is one of the most important elements to success as a *Magic* player. One respondent noted, "Deck composition is paramount...the flow of the game will be dictated by the cards that you have in your deck, and certain decks have been proven to be most effective in competition."

Participants indicated that they will construct specific decks for specific situations or for specific opponents who they know have a certain playing style. This was part of their strategy to provide them an edge in competition. Because of its significance, players invest considerable effort into researching and constructing their decks. Take Carl, for example, who stated, "I've spent literally, like probably a 1000 hours or more putting together my main playing deck." Another respondent

stated, "I have spent hours on EBay just going over all the cards and seeing if I can find the exact card that I want for my deck" (Ian).

Players also indicated spending large amounts of money customizing their playing deck. All respondents in this study indicated that they rarely, if ever, purchase booster packs. Instead, they favor buying single cards on the ancillary market. As previously noted, this can be an expensive venture. When asked how much money he spent constructing his primary pre-con deck, one player stated that he did not feel comfortable disclosing the exact amount but disclosed, "It's high three figures."

Benefits

Stebbins (2007b) identified a variety of self-benefits associated with serious leisure. For participants in this study, these benefits can be grouped into three areas: social benefits, expressive benefits, and tangible benefits.

Social Benefits

Stebbins (2007b) notes that participation in a serious leisure pursuit often results in self-benefits such as social interaction, a sense of belonging, and self-enrichment. All respondents in this study reported social benefits, such as making friends, as being the major benefit of being involved in *Magic*. All discussed making new friends as a direct result of playing the game. For example, Fred stated:

...definitely I met people, game friends, through *Magic*, through going to tournaments, or through going to the social club gatherings, and meeting

people who have the same interests. [I developed] friendships that I definitely wouldn't have had otherwise because we just never would have met.

Other participants described making new friends online through *Magic* forums, message boards, and chat rooms. Many of the friendships that developed as a result of involvement in *Magic* grew into substantial long-term friendships. One respondent stated that the friends he made as a result of playing *Magic* are "some of [his] closest friends." These friendships also served as a source of identification and provided participants with a sense of belonging and social interaction.

When talking about friendships that resulted from playing *Magic*, Bill related, "We're kind of a close knit group ourselves...we all know each other very well, we go out together, and hanging out outside [of Magic tournaments], going to people's homes and stuff like that." Other participants described the group of friends with whom they play *Magic* as a "clique" or a "gang." For some respondents in this study, the social experiences accompanying participation in *Magic* have provided a wider sense of meaning to their lives. When talking about positive experiences surrounding the game, one respondent said, "A lot of them involve playing with my friends, the camaraderie, the memories, hanging out, and having that almost brotherhood."

Expressive Benefits

In addition to social benefits, involvement in *Magic* also provided respondents with expressive benefits such as self-expression and feelings of

accomplishment. For participants in this study, self-expression was primarily related to deck construction and playing style. As noted above, *Magic* players customize their decks based on a variety of factors. For respondents, deck composition represented a venue through which they could express their personality or style within the game. When asked about how he constructed his deck, Hugo remarked:

...there's a certain element of personalization in the deck building part, so it's not just the strategy when you're playing the game. Like if someone else had built my deck for me and just gave me this pre-built deck, I'd be gone, because this is someone else's, someone else put their heart and soul into this, not me. My deck, there's something personal about it, I know why I picked this card because it's a very me card it's a personal thing and I sort of have in my mind how this little engine works, once it gets going.

Other participants stated that their decks "represented them" or illustrated their "personal philosophy." Players indicated that they often constructed their decks based on personal preferences. For example, players often assembled their deck based on their favorite color¹⁷ or to make use of a certain kind of card such as creatures or potions.

Playing style also served as a source of self-expression for the participants in this study. Each indicated that he had a very specific playing style that was his own. This playing style was represented in the way players put together their pre-con decks. For example, several contributors stated that they had an aggressive style

¹⁷ There are five colors of cards in *Magic*, red, blue, white, black, and green. Each color represents different elements within the game.

and as such, preferred decks that are aggressive in nature (i.e. they contain a lot of cards that attack opponents). Others stated that they had a much more passive style of play and they preferred “control decks” that are more defensive in nature and ultimately slow the game down. When talking about his playing style, one player likened himself to a spider, in that he likes to set a trap for his opponents. He stated that he has constructed his deck in such a manner to “lull them (his opponents) into a false sense of security, and then pounce.”

Expressive benefits were also evident in the feelings of accomplishment respondents experienced in relation to the game. Participants described feelings of joy and elation after winning tournaments or other significant matches. They used words such as “ecstatic” and “excited” to describe how they felt when they won. Additionally, players noted positive feelings associated with being recognized for their achievements. For example, one player mentioned the first time his name was listed in the top 20 players in the province, he forwarded a link to the website to all of his friends. Another participant recounted the story of going out with friends to celebrate winning a tournament:

...it just felt really good [to win] because by this time I knew almost everyone at the Sword and Steele pretty good and I was totally the underdog. After [the tournament] me and five or six of my friends who had been playing together, we all went out to celebrate it was just an awesome party (Dan).

Tangible Benefits

Participants in the study also identified a number of tangible benefits that are directly related to their participation in *Magic*. Firstly, respondents noted winning various prizes as a result of taking part in tournaments. These prizes often included booster packs or gift certificates to various gaming stores around town. Secondly, participants talked about winning cards as a result of a bet or wager. It is not uncommon for *Magic* players to gamble on recreational matches (i.e. matches that are not part of a sanctioned *Magic* event). Participants would play for what they called “ante cards” or “bounty cards.” These are specific, often highly sought after, cards from the player’s deck that they would wager on a specific match. If the player lost, they would have to give their ante card to their opponent and if they won, they got to take their opponent’s card. Thirdly, participants outlined financial gains directly related to participating in *Magic*. In addition to playing for cards, respondents also disclosed that they often wagered money on recreational matches. Furthermore, some players noted that they have sold some of their cards online, often times for substantial profit.

Ethos

According to Stebbins (1992a; 2006a; 2007a) serious leisure is further distinguished by participants’ involvement in a distinctive social world that develops around a leisure activity. This social world is characterized by a unique ethos comprised of a set of values, attitudes, and norms. Stebbins (1993b) further affirms that the ethos associated with serious leisure is a combination of both social

structure and subculture. As such, involvement in this social world is characterized by the formation of distinctive lifestyles, communications, and rituals (Stebbins, 2007a).

Distinctive Lifestyles

There is much evidence to suggest that distinctive lifestyles exist among *Magic* players. Life for many of the participants in this study revolved around their involvement in the game. Respondents indicated that they spent significant time on the Internet reading about *Magic* and researching new cards or deck combinations. They also noted that they invested considerable time following the various storylines associated with the game. This included reading the comic books and novels linked with each expansion set. Furthermore, participants described organizing events centered on the game; they would regularly plan "release parties" around the issuing of new cards. They also described organizing "marathon" events during which a group of players would gather to play *Magic* for an entire day or weekend. These events generally included socializing, drinking, barbeques, or potluck dinners. Dan recounted one such event:

...the other big one that I always remember was there was an all day/all night tournament. It was Regatta day a couple of years ago, so we went in at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and we were in there until eight or nine o'clock the next morning... There were probably 40 people in all, and constant tournaments, there was like three or four finals going on the whole time it was pretty cool.

Participants also talked about arranging their schedules so they could play *Magic*. Every respondent in this study indicated they participate in at least one local gaming club in which they play *Magic*. They also experienced challenges or obstacles to attending these club meetings. However, they also noted doing everything in their power to attend. This included altering their personal schedules, canceling dates, and leaving work early to catch a different bus. As one respondent stated, "Well it's Wednesday night which means only one thing, I am at games club." Another participant stated that he once planned his vacation so that he could attend a national *Magic* tournament in Alberta.

Communications

One of the defining elements of unique ethos is distinctive communication. Distinctive communication with respect to *Magic* relates to the proprietary language and terms that players use in relation to the game. Because its storylines are based in fantasy, many of the terms and words used in the game are fictitious (i.e. they do not appear in a dictionary). For example, the term "Mana" refers to the magical energy used in the game. Mana is acquired by playing land cards and is required to play other cards such as creatures or spells. The amount of Mana required to play a specific card is referred to as the card's "Mana-cost". Other terms have also been adapted by the game. "Tapping" is the term used to describe when a player has used a card during gameplay. Once a card has been used, it is turned sideways or "tapped" to indicate it is no longer available to be played. Other terms used in the

game such as “planeswalker”, “dualist”, and “convoke” demonstrate the distinctive communication associated with *Magic*.

Additionally, Stebbins (2007a) notes that the social world surrounding serious leisure activities is often characterized by facilitated communication. Specifically, he noted the importance of the Internet as a means for developing and sustaining communication within a particular subculture. This is clearly demonstrated by the participants in this study. Players indicated spending significant amounts of time participating in online chat rooms and message boards that pertain to the game. They reported signing up for online newsletters from Wizards of the Coast and other online retailers who send them information about new *Magic* products. They also described using a *Magic* mobile application on their smartphones. This application provides them with information and news related to the game and informs them about upcoming competitions in their local area.

Rituals

Participants in this study practice various rituals pertaining to their involvement in *Magic*. Several reported superstitions they had with respect to the game including having a “lucky card” or a “lucky deck” that they had to use each time they played. Another noted that he always has to shuffle his deck in a particular fashion because “It’s the way I have always done it.” Yet another mentioned always wearing the same T-shirt when he plays in tournaments.

Respondents also talked about rituals related to the issuing of new *Magic* cards. When new cards are issued, several participants would gather at a local gaming store to go over the new expansion. Bill talked about just such a ritual:

The cards always come in by courier a few days before they are officially released so the stores can have them on the shelf the day of. But Chris Matchim there at Netherworld¹⁸ lets a few of us come down the day the cards arrive and sort through the booster packs... We help him by organizing the new cards so that he can sell them as singles, and it is advantageous to us because we get our hands on the new cards before they are officially released.

Each time a new expansion is issued, several players also noted that they would have informal tournaments using just that set as a way of familiarizing themselves with the cards. Another ritual related to familiarization with the cards was playing the game, "Mental *Magic*." This is an informal game in which players test each other's knowledge of *Magic* cards by asking them to recall from memory the gameplay mechanics and Mana cost of various cards. One participant stated that he would often play Mental *Magic* before playing in a tournament as a way of relaxing and because it was "tradition." Other rituals mentioned by contributors to this study include annual barbeques and others semi-regular gatherings where players get together to play.

¹⁸ Netherworld is a gaming store located in St. John's Newfoundland and Labrador

Identification

The final distinguishing quality of serious leisure as outlined by Stebbins (1992a; 2007a) is a personal and social identity that results from participation in the activity. Stebbins (2007a) notes that this identification is predicated on the earlier qualities and results because participants intensely identify with their leisure activity of choice. As such, it is epitomized in peoples' dress, language, consumption habits, and social circles (Stebbins, 1998). For participants in this study, identification was associated with the informal and formal roles they assumed in relation to the game.

Informal Roles

All respondents in this study constructed at least part of their identities around participation in *Magic*. This was evident in the fact that they actively identified themselves as "gamers." One participant stated, "I've been a gamer all my life." For participants herein, participation in *Magic* is part of the larger gaming culture as a whole. In addition to identifying as "gamers," participants also referred to themselves as "geeks," and "nerds." As previously discussed, these terms were often used to tease many of the players. For example Fred recounted:

I've [had] negative experiences with people who don't play, they don't understand the culture, they kind of negative stereotype you as a certain type of person... [they] label you as that geek, nerd, that weird guy...they say don't talk to him he's a nerd type guy and that game is stupid why would you play the game. You get a lot of, again because it's not really a popular game in the

sense that the vast majority [don't] play it, so socially you have a lot of people trying to maintain social control. They do that by trying to persuade you not to play and they'll do that by negatively harping and chirping at you and saying that's stupid why would you play that, they make you feel bad for playing, make you feel guilty.

However, participants in this study seem to have embraced these terms as a source of pride. One went as far as to state "Yeah, I'm a geek and I'm proud of that." This demonstrates that on some level participants internalized their perception of how others viewed them. This served to support their personal identities and increased their overall identification with the game. Often, this identification served as common ground for developing new friendships. One respondent stated, "We seem to gravitate toward each other...we share common interests so we will see each other in the same places." Others talked about developing friendships based on "geeky activities" such as playing *Magic*. For example, Andy described making friends through playing: "It's [*Magic*] a very social game, you know, you do need others [to play] and if you're a geek that's generally the type of crowd you'll run into."

Participants also demonstrated specific identification with *Magic*. Part of this identification was evident in the clothes that they wore. Several respondents took part in the interviews wearing t-shirts adorned with images from the game. Another proudly displayed a personalized messenger bag that he had purchased online. It had symbols from the game embossed on the cover and his name written

on the back. He noted that he only used the bag to transport his cards and other assorted *Magic* paraphernalia.

In addition to clothing, identification was also evident in participants' association with the artwork of *Magic*. They described about surrounding themselves with artwork from the game. This included hanging posters on their walls and putting stickers on their laptop computers, binders, and in other various places. One respondent talked about his desire to get a tattoo of artwork from the game on his back.

The purchasing habits of respondents also demonstrated identification with the game. As previously noted, players spend considerable amounts of money, and go to great lengths to buy *Magic* cards. As a result, participants in this study described amassing sizable collections of cards. Two respondents stated that their collection numbered more than 10,000 cards each. Fred acknowledged, "I have one of almost every *Magic* card ever produced...there are only four or fives cards, I think I don't have." When talking about his card collection, Fred humorously stated, "I had a plan that when my sister moved out of the house, I was going to take over her bedroom just for my cards." It should be noted that *Magic* related purchases were not only restricted to cards, respondents also described buying a variety of other items related to *Magic*: t-shirts, specially constructed binders and card-carrying cases, comic books, and novels.

Formal Roles

Identification is further evident in the formal role of working as a *Magic* judge. Two individuals interviewed actively participate as official *Magic* judges. This means that they have undergone testing and certification by *Magic's* sanctioning body DCI. As judges, they work with DCI on a volunteer basis to organize and run sanctioned events in the local area. They have responsibilities including: tournament organization, match making, administering games, refereeing games, and reporting the results to DCI. Additionally, one of the individuals noted that he has worked as a judge at the national level on three separate occasions. For these participants, becoming a judge was an extension of their identity. Both indicated that it was something that they wanted to do as a way of furthering their involvement in the game. They noted that it was a "natural progression" for them to become judges. Greg, a level two judge, exemplified this when he stated:

I got into judging because for a while I was the lead organizer here of weekly events, so then judging just seemed like a natural thing to do after. I was always interested in the rules; I was always a bit of rules guru you could say.

And becoming a certified judge was a natural progression to that.

Being a *Magic* judge also reveals identification in that individuals who are judges are required to follow a specific protocol as outlined by DCI. This includes wearing an official judges uniform, interacting with players in a professional manner, and completing certification requirements. Adhering to this protocol further demonstrates the player's identification with the game.

Summary

In this chapter findings were presented that indicate that for the participants herein involvement in *Magic* constitutes a form of serious leisure. Participants demonstrated each of the six distinguishing qualities of serious leisure including: perseverance, the presence of a leisure career, significant personal effort, durable-self benefits, unique ethos, and identification (Stebbins 1992a; 2006a; 2007a). Common themes that participants identified explicated the presence of these qualities (see Table 2).

Perseverance was displayed by participants' management of the financial, personal, and competitive costs associated with involvement in the game. The presence of a leisure career was revealed in respondents' efforts to be involved in the game. This included the time and effort they committed to learning the game, the length of time they have played, and various stages of achievement or accomplishment they have experienced. Effort in acquiring skill and knowledge was revealed in participants' efforts to continually learn about the game and construct their personal playing deck. Durable-self benefits were evident in the social, expressive, and tangible benefits respondents identified. The distinctive lifestyles, communications, and rituals players engaged in exhibited the presence of a unique ethos with respect to *Magic*. Finally, Identification was displayed by the formal and informal roles participants assumed. These findings will be discussed further in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter presents an overview of the study including its significance through an integrative discussion of how both the research questions and findings contribute to the existing literature. Finally, directions for possible future inquiry are discussed.

Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of individuals who play *Magic* and in doing so, determine if involvement constitutes serious leisure as outlined by Stebbins (1992a). Fantasy gaming is a growing cultural phenomenon that has received limited scholarly attention particularly as it relates to leisure (Williams et al, 2006). This study employed qualitative methods to examine the experiences of individuals who play the fantasy trading card game *Magic* as a leisure activity. Qualitative methodology guided by a symbolic interactionism framework was chosen for this study because it provided a deeper understanding of the subjective experience of leisure. Symbolic interactionism acknowledges that the human experience is a complex interaction between behaviour and interpretation (Lindlof, 1995). Thus, it provided an effective lens for examining the experiences of *Magic* players. Study participants took part in semi-structured interviews in which they were asked to describe their experience with the game. Their responses were then analyzed in relation to the serious leisure perspective.

Stebbins (1992a; 2007a) has repeatedly challenged the academic community to explore the serious leisure perspective. In the work entitled *Amateurs*,

Professionals and Serious Leisure he wrote, "Let us make sure that serious leisure has a prominent place on the research agenda of the next century" (Stebbins, 1992a, p. 135). Furthermore, Stebbins (2007a) continues to assert the importance of exploring new leisure activities in relation to serious leisure for continued theoretical development of the perspective. Many researchers have accepted this challenge, investigating a wide variety of leisure activities (Gibson et al, 2002). However, there is a paucity of research that has examined participation in fantasy gaming as leisure (Williams et al, 2006). For all respondents in this study, participation in *Magic* constituted a form of serious leisure and herein lays the significance of this study in that it provided a contextual analysis of *Magic* as a leisure activity.

Existing Literature

Serious leisure is characterized by several unique qualities that distinguish it from other forms of leisure. These qualities include: perseverance, the establishment and maintenance of a leisure career, significant personal effort, durable self-benefits, a unique ethos, and identification (Stebbins 1992a; 2007a). For an activity to be considered serious leisure it must exemplify all six of these qualities. Participants in this study exemplified the six distinguishing qualities of serious leisure on all accounts. As such, the findings support the conceptualization of participation in *Magic* as serious leisure.

For respondents in this study perseverance was expressed in their efforts to manage the personal, financial, and competitive costs related to the game. As

previously noted, these costs were rationalized as part of the playing experience. That is, players viewed these costs as being necessary evils associated with participation. As such, they were unable or unwilling to separate these costs from the rewards associated with involvement. Stebbins (2007a) identifies a series of personal and social rewards that are linked with participation in serious leisure. Rewards noted by the *Magic* players included: social interaction, self-actualization, self-expression, personal enrichment, recreation, and financial return. These mirror findings presented by Vuckovic (2003), Martin (2004), Lenaric et al (2005), and Weninger, (2006). In general, respondents viewed rewards and costs as intertwined, thus both were contextualized within their leisure lifestyle (Stebbins, 2007b). This contextualization also illustrates the marginality Stebbins (1992a) notes is associated with serious leisure pursuits. Baldwin and Norris (1999) who explored individuals who participate in the American Kennel Club presented similar findings.

Respondents' rationalization of these costs also supports Stebbins (2007a) conceptualization of culture. When speaking of culture, Stebbins (2007a) refers to a culture of commitment in which serious leisure participants allocate substantial resources to their pursuit. The time, effort, and other resources players contributed to *Magic* evidenced this. Stebbins (2007a) also speaks of a culture of obligation, a culture of values, and a culture of selfishness. By its very nature, serious leisure pursuits generate significant obligations. However, serious leisure participants view these obligations as positive (Stebbins, 2007a). This was not the case for respondents in this study. While the costs associated with *Magic* were rationalized

as a required element of participation, many of them did not become acceptable obligations. For example, all continued to complain about having to constantly purchase news cards even if they enjoyed playing with them.

Furthermore, respondents continued participation in spite of the various costs exemplifies value commitment. Participation in *Magic* provided respondents with feelings of achievement, satisfaction, and affiliation. These were expressed in their playing styles, deck construction, and the associations and friendships they developed as a result of the game. As such, this value commitment also demonstrates how participation in the game served as a source of personal identity. Respondents in this study identified themselves with the game, and for many of them, participation in the game served to reflect their values and lifestyle.

A culture of selfishness (Stebbins 2007a) resonated in findings presented in this study. This was epitomized in the manner in which participants dealt with various costs. Specifically, selfishness was expressed in the way they treated family members and significant others. As noted by Kelly and Freysinger (2000), leisure is a dimension of life that permeates all human domains. As such, family has a significant impact on leisure and leisure has a significant impact on family. Stebbins (2007a) notes that serious leisure participation can serve as a source of tension within a family. This tension frequently emerges as a result of disagreements arising from resource allocation (i.e. time and money), and often produces strained familial relations. The themes of family tension related to time and money were echoed in this research. All participants acknowledged experiencing strain with family members or significant others as a result of their participation in *Magic*.

Again, participants' efforts to manage these tensions expressed marginality as outlined by Stebbins (1992a).

Stebbins (1992a; 2007a) emphasis on the establishment and maintenance of a leisure career was supported by this study. Players acknowledged continual learning, skill progression, and various achievements as important elements of their participation. This illustrates both a culture of obligation and continual commitment to the game. Furthermore, it serves to illustrate the presence of a leisure career. Lenarcic et al. (2005) who studied the social implications of participation in *Magic* presented similar findings. The presence of a leisure career among *Magic* players is further supported by the educational or teaching opportunities respondents encountered. Participants acknowledged having various opportunities to share their knowledge and understanding of the game by teaching or helping novice players. This demonstrates skill progression and transfer of knowledge, both of which are elements of a leisure career. This corresponds with the findings of Weninger (2006) who conducted a semeiotic analysis of *Magic*. She outlines what she refers to as "teaching events" in which experienced players will teach inexperienced players about the game.

Significant effort as a quality of serious leisure was also supported by the findings of this study. For participants, significant effort was displayed in their management of costs and the establishment of a leisure career. In managing costs, respondents illustrated elements of discretionary time commitment. Specifically, it was manifest in participants' efforts to manage the personal and competitive costs associated with the game. As noted by Stebbins (2007b), discretionary time

commitment is both process and product. This was evidenced in the way participants apportioned their discretionary time. They would often set aside large amounts of time for activities related to the game. Also, participants voluntarily carried out menial, often time consuming tasks, such as sorting cards and organizing their decks all as an element of their participation.

For respondents in this study, these activities constituted coerced time commitments (Stebbins, 2007b). As such, these time commitments also illustrate the presence of a leisure career, in that players devoted large amounts of time and effort to developing their playing skills. However, much like other costs associated with the game, these were also rationalized. Respondents viewed them as a necessity part of participation and as such they were contextualized as part of an optimal leisure lifestyle (Stebbins, 2007a). These findings echo those of Winkler (2006), Lenarcic et al. (2005), and Martin (2004) who all note that the substantial effort *Magic* players invest in learning the game demonstrate the presence of a leisure career.

Stebbins (2007b) assertion that serious leisure participation is accompanied by durable-self benefits was reinforced by the findings of this study. Respondents identified experiencing benefits that can be grouped into three broad areas: social, expressive, and tangible. Social benefits included establishing and maintaining meaningful friendships as well as social interaction. Martin (2004) presented similar findings noting social interaction was one of the key factors related to involvement in the game. For players in this study, the social benefits associated with *Magic* afforded them an opportunity for identification and a sense of belonging.

The game served as a focal point for developing and maintaining relationships. As such, it served as a source of personal identity for participants. This further illustrates value commitment (Stebbins, 2007a) as players continued involvement in the game was related to the social benefits they received. In addition to social benefits respondents in this study also identified expressive benefits. Their involvement in the game served as an outlet for both creative and personal expression. Again, this served to engender a sense of identification with the game and functioned to reinforce players' personal identities. Studies by Martin (2004), Weninger (2006), and Lenarcic et al (2005) also found expressive benefits were associated with playing *Magic*. Participants' in this study also displayed tangible benefits. These were directly related to their participation in the game and included their personal card collections, making money from selling cards, and winning money or prizes from competitions. These findings echo those presented by Williams (2006) who examined the consumptive practices of *Magic* players.

The unique ethos and accompanying social world that develops around serious leisure pursuits (Stebbins 1992a; 2007a) was also confirmed by this study. Distinctive lifestyle choices, unique communications, and game related rituals demonstrated the unique ethos of *Magic* players. These findings also parallel those presented by Weninger (2006), who noted the presence of a distinctive jargon and a unique set of interactions (i.e. gameplay) connected with the game. Furthermore, the findings of Vuckovic (2003) also resonate in this study. In examining the community of people who play *Magic*, she identified distinctive language and rituals that served as the basis for an idiosyncratic subculture. This subculture was

predicated on involvement in the game and supported by actions such as playing in tournaments and discussing new cards with friends. Similar findings were also noted in this study, as participants' demonstrated involvement in a *Magic* subculture. Involvement in this subculture was epitomized by their commitment to the game and the rationalization of various costs. This study also affirms the presence of a distinct social world surrounding the game. Evidenced by distinct communications (i.e. language) and specific game related rituals. This is analogous to findings reported by Martin (2004), who noted that the distinct interactions and customs players engaged in, typified the social world surrounding *Magic*. For participants, immersion in this social world reinforced their involvement in the game by providing them expressive outlets and the opportunity for identification.

Identification with a serious leisure pursuit as conceived by Stebbins (1992a; 2007a) was reinforced by the findings of this study. Participants strongly identified with the game. This was shown in the way they dressed, their consumptive practices, and their participation in and contribution to the social world surrounding *Magic*. These findings echo those presented by Vuckovic (2003), Williams (2006), and Martin (2004).

However, an interesting finding emerging from this study was respondents' identification as "gamers." Noteworthy in this identification is the fact that participants in this study were more likely to identify themselves as "gamers" as opposed to specifically *Magic* players. While they did identify with the game, they also viewed themselves in the larger context of gaming culture. This can be attributed to the fact that they played a variety of other fantasy related games in

addition to *Magic*. While *Magic* may be their favorite and primary focus with respect to gaming activity, it is only part of the bigger picture.

Winkler (2006) presented similar findings; he noted a subculture associated with trading card games that served as a source of personal identity. This identity manifested itself in players labeling themselves “gamers.” In addition to categorizing themselves as “gamers”, participants’ identification with *Magic* also related to their fulfillment of formal roles such as two participants becoming accredited *Magic* judges. These roles provided respondents with a sense of meaning or purpose and membership in the social world surrounding *Magic*. As such, they served to further integrate the players into this social world by providing them with, and reinforcing their personal identities.

In general, participation in *Magic* would seem most appropriately categorized as an amateur pursuit. This is due to the presence of a professional rank and the existence of a P-A-P system. However, the findings of this study illustrate that for at least some of the participants, involvement in *Magic* is actually a form of mixed serious leisure.

The findings presented here demonstrate various categories of amateurism as outlined by Stebbins (1992a). All participants in this study can be classified as devotees. All were deeply committed to the game and sought to meet the standards (i.e. level of playing ability/proficiency) exhibited by those in the professional ranks without receiving any form of formal compensation. In addition to this commitment, respondents also acknowledged a lack of desire to pursue the game at a professional level. This is analogous with Stebbins (1992a) conception of a pure

amateur. When asked if they would like to pursue playing *Magic* as a profession, they indicated that they did not. However, it should be noted that this was not because they did not want to, but rather they did not feel that it was realistic to pursue a career as a professional *Magic* player. They said that it would be too hard to make ends meet given their geographic location and the earnings potential of professional players. However, several did note that if circumstances were different, (i.e. they lived in a larger center) they would like to pursue *Magic* as a profession. Thus, they demonstrated characteristics of a conditional pre-professional.

In addition to being an amateur pursuit, the findings of this study indicate that involvement in *Magic* can also be categorized as a hobbyist endeavor. Involvement, in *Magic* is unique because, in addition to gameplay, there is also a collectable element to the game.

All respondents indicated collecting *Magic* cards. For some, this was an element of their competitive nature (i.e. they wanted a larger number of cards to increase their competitive chances) for others it was an element of personal satisfaction (i.e. they wanted the cards to complete their collection). In both cases, collecting the cards was viewed as important as playing the game itself.

The collectible and competitive nature of *Magic* also presents a unique perspective on the H-P system. As noted by Stebbins (1992a), many competitive hobbyist activities are more "accurately categorized as amateur pursuits due to their location in the P-A-P system" (p. 14). A similar conception can be assumed for *Magic* because of its competitive nature and the emergence of a professional rank.

However, the P-A-P system is generally not associated with collecting, as such the collectible element of the game also situates it in the H-P system.

Findings in this study suggest that the traditional H-P system should be altered to recognize the unique position *Magic* inhabits. With respect to collecting *Magic* cards, participants in this study noted that they often look at the collections and deck constructions¹⁹ of professional players to determine the adequacy of their own (i.e. the standard they should be aspiring to). This demonstrates the presence and influence of a professional rank within a hobbyist pursuit. As collectors in this category have professional counterparts to look up to, I propose a P-H/A-P (Professional – Hobbyist/Amateur – Public) system would more actually represent the relationship of *Magic* players to both professionals and the public. However, more exploration of this relationship is warranted.

Additionally, the findings of this study show that involvement in *Magic* can constitute a volunteer pursuit. All respondents noted assuming volunteer responsibilities directly related to the game. These included organizing and running tournaments, and/or gaming clubs or other *Magic* related events. Furthermore, the efforts of two respondents who worked as nationally accredited *Magic* judges (which is an unpaid volunteer position) exemplify a serious leisure volunteer career as presented by Stebbins (1998). The fact that all three categories of serious leisure participation (i.e. amateur, hobbyist, and volunteer) were displayed by participants in this study illustrates that for them involvement in *Magic* was a form of mixed serious leisure. Moreover, the various roles and responsibilities associated with

¹⁹ Many professional *Magic* players post lists of their collections and various decks on online message boards and/or blogs.

each category of participation coalesced to form an optimal leisure lifestyle (Stebbins, 2007a) for the respondents.

Possible Future Research

As noted above, further exploration of the link between the hobbyist *Magic* player and professional *Magic* players is warranted. The findings of this study revealed that there is a link between professionals and hobbyists. This link extends beyond being just a commercial equivalent. Within the game of *Magic*, the hobbyist collector has a professional counterpart to look to, and as such, they have a standard to aspire to. This is unique within the context of hobbyist pursuits, particularly collecting. As such, the hobbyist *Magic* card collector may more suitably be categorized as an amateur. However, further exploration of this relationship is needed. Examination of this relationship would further expound on the traditional H-P system and answer Stebbins (1992a) call to continually explore and refine the serious leisure perspective.

The primary purpose of this study was to explore participation in *Magic* as it relates to serious leisure. In the course of exploring this participation, noteworthy findings that suggest a link between participation in the game and the formation or reaffirmation of personal identity were found. This parallels findings presented by Vuckovic (2003), Winkler (2006), and Williams (2006). The link between gameplay and identity formation was primarily related to the competitive and creative elements of the game. One avenue for future research is to explore the formation of identity and how it relates to the fantasy elements of *Magic*. For example, do *Magic*

players develop or assume unique in-game identities while playing? This is particularly relevant because of the emergence of the popular “Elder Dragon Highlander²⁰” format of play. Examining this element of the game could possibly expand Stebbins conceptualization of identification within the context of serious leisure.

Another possible area of investigation builds on the work of Williams (2006) in examining the impact and role of commodity agents in shaping the game. Specifically, exploring the role and influence that Wizards of the Coasts has in relation to the leisure experience. They are a unique form of commodity agent in that they not only influence the leisure activity, but also dictate it, by altering the rules or issuing new cards. They are able to achieve this level of control because they are the sole manufacturers of the game. But how does this dynamic impact a player’s identity formation? Williams (2006) noted that there is a link between players’ consumptive practices and the formation of identity. Findings of this study demonstrate that consumptive practices being dictated by a commodity agent can be viewed negatively (i.e. having to constantly buy new cards in order to be able to play). As such, how does this negative view alter both the players personal and leisure identities?

Exploring *Magic* in relation to deviant leisure is another avenue for possible future research. Findings of this study show that elements of deviant leisure are associated with the game. Specifically, deviant behaviour was displayed in the way the players managed the costs associated with participation (i.e. skipping on rent).

²⁰ Elder Dragon Highlander (AKA Commander format) is a playing format in which players assume an avatar or character that they play the game as.

Additionally, players' acknowledgement of wagering on the game also shows the presence of deviant elements. Future research could focus on exploring these deviant elements and determining if involvement in *Magic* constitutes deviant leisure participation.

Finally, a gender analysis of involvement in *Magic* might also be appropriate. In the process of recruiting participants for this research, no females came forward. Furthermore, during snowball sampling procedures no females that met the criteria for inclusion could be located. The question to be posed is why was this the case? Is involvement in *Magic* a male dominated activity? If so, then why is this?

Raisborough (1999) has suggested that many of the social worlds that emerge around serious leisure activities are gender biased (i.e. male dominated). Perhaps the social world surrounding *Magic* is this way. More exploration of this social world with specific focus on gender issues would be valuable. As Stebbins (2007a) notes when exploring activities as serious leisure it is important to consider any gender issue inherent to provide greater context and understanding of that activity.

Conclusion

Prompted by Stebbins (1992a; 2007a) provocation to explore various activities in relation to serious leisure this study presented a contextual analysis of involvement in *Magic*. Since Stebbins first challenged the scholarly community to explore serious leisure researchers from a multiplicity of academic fields have answered his call. However, exploration of fantasy gaming as a form of serious leisure activity is virtually nonexistent. This study sought to address this gap by

exploring participation in *Magic*. It was found that for the participants herein involvement in the game constituted serious leisure. Respondents displayed all six distinguishing qualities of serious leisure and in doing so illustrated the significant position the game held within their lives. For them, involvement in *Magic* was not just a leisure activity but also a source of personal expression, a creative outlet, and for some a source of identity. All participants herein took their involvement in the game very seriously; it is evident that they are not just *Magic* players but amateur wizards.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

100 St. John's Avenue
St. John's, NL A1B3X9
Tel: (709) 763-5800
Fax: (709) 763-5801

August 26, 2009

ICEHR No. 2008/09-165-HK

Mr. Earl Walker
School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Mr. Walker:

Thank you for your correspondence of August 24, 2009 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning your research project "*Amateur wizards: exploring involvement in magic: The Gathering as serious leisure*".

The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted and is satisfied that concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS), the project has been granted full *ethics approval* for one year from the date of this letter.

If you intend to make changes during the course of the project which may give rise to ethical concerns, please forward a description of these changes to the ICEHR Co-ordinator, Mrs. Eleanor Butler, at ebutler@mun.ca for the Committee's consideration.

The TCPS requires that you submit an annual status report to ICEHR on your project, should the research carry on beyond *August 2010*. Also, to comply with the TCPS, please notify us upon completion of your project.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Lawrence F. Felt, Ph.D.
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

Lf/bl

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Anne-Marie Sullivan, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster



School of Human Kinetics & Recreation

Do you play Magic: The Gathering?

If so we would like to hear from you!

Researchers from the School of Human Kinetics & Recreation at Memorial University are looking for individuals to participate in a study about the trading card game Magic: The Gathering.

Potential participants in this study should:

- Have a good knowledge of the game
- Play the game on a regular basis
- Have been involved in the game for a minimum of one year.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to take part in an interview about your experiences and involvement with the game.

This interview would take approximately 45- 60 minutes of your time and would take place at a time and location convenient for you.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,

please contact:

Earl Walker

at

ewalker@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research at Memorial University. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2528.

Appendix C: Study Information Form

STUDY INFORMATION FORM

Amateur Wizards: Exploring Involvement in Magic: The Gathering as Serious Leisure

You are invited to participate in a research study that will explore participation in the trading card game *Magic: The Gathering* as a leisure activity. This study is being conducted by Earl Walker, a graduate student at Memorial University, School of Human Kinetics and Recreation. The purpose of this study is to explore the behaviors, practices, and rituals associated with involvement in the game, and to investigate why people play and what this participation means to them.

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview lasting approximately 45-60 minutes. This interview will focus on your involvement in the game. The interview will be conducted in person, at a time and location that is convenient for you. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded, and later transcribed for the purpose of analysis. After the interview you will have an opportunity to meet with the investigator to review the transcription and make any changes you see fit. If you do not feel comfortable being audio recorded you have the option to take part in the interview without being recorded. It is also requested that you bring along any documents you feel show to your level of participation or commitment to the game. The investigator will review these documents, but they will not be kept after the interview.

Your participation in this study may result in an enjoyable conversation about playing *Magic: The Gathering* and an increased awareness of your playing style and behaviour. It may also result in a discussion of possibly detrimental or negative activities resulting in emotional discomfort or distress. If this occurs the interview process will be suspended, including audio recording. The interview will only begin again if and when you feel comfortable and are willing to proceed. If after the interview you have any concerns about your emotional state you can contact me and I will make arrangements for you to meet with a qualified counseling professional. Additionally, if you are uncomfortable with any specific question or line of questioning you are free to decline answering without repercussion. All information you provide during the interview will be kept confidential and will not be shared with any other participants in the study. It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in the research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

The results of the data collected during this research will be used as the basis for a masters' thesis. The investigator will take all necessary steps to ensure your anonymity and confidentiality at all times. Any information from this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. Your name will not appear in any report of this study. Furthermore, results of this study will refer to individual interviewees using pseudonyms and in broad descriptive terms only. If interview

quotations are used to illustrate results, all information that might identify you will be eliminated or altered.

In compliance with Memorial Universities policy on data retention and usage the interview transcripts, tape recordings, and notes taken by the investigator will be kept for a period of seven years. They will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in a secure location within the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation. No identifiable information will be stored in the same location. After the seven year period is up, the data will be destroyed. The only people who will have access to the data collected will be the primary investigator and the advisory committee members. At no time will the data collected for this study be used in any other research project.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2528.

If you have any questions, would like more information about this study, or would like to participate please contact:

Earl Walker B.Rec (Hons), MPE (candidate)
School of Human Kinetics & Recreation
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, NL, A1C 5S7

Email: ewalker@mun.ca

Thank you

Appendix D: Consent Form



Consent Form

Title: Amateur Wizards: Exploring Involvement in Magic: The Gathering as Serious Leisure

Researcher: Earl Walker B.Rec (Hons), MPE (candidate)
School of Human Kinetics & Recreation
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John's, NL, A1C 5S7
Phone: (709) 690 1022
Email: ewalker@mun.ca

Advisory Committie:

Dr. Anne-Marie Sullivan Ph.D.
School of Human Kinetics & Recreation
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Dr. T.A. Loeffler Ph.D.
School of Human Kinetics & Recreation
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Phone: (709) 864 8670
Email: tloeffle@mun.ca

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2528.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Your Signature:

I have read and understood the description provided; and as such I consent to the following: (please initial the items to which you give permission).

_____ To be interviewed

_____ To have the interview audio-recorded

_____ To have the interview tapes transcribed

_____ To have quotations from the transcription used in the final report

_____ To have the investigator examine any documents I may provide them

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Researchers Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix E: Parental Consent Form



Parental Consent Form

Title: Amateur Wizards: Exploring Involvement in Magic: The Gathering as Serious Leisure

Researcher: Earl Walker B.Rec (Hons), MPE (candidate)
School of Human Kinetics & Recreation
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The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2528.

Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research
- You have been able to ask questions about this study
- You are satisfied with the answers to all of your questions
- You understand what the study is about and what your child (ward) will be doing
- You understand that you are free to withdraw your child (ward) from the study at any time, without having to give a reason, and that doing so will have no ill affects now or in the future.

If you sign this form, you do not give up your legal rights, and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

The researcher will give you a copy of this form for your records.

Your Signature:

I have read and understood the description provided; and as such I consent to the following on behalf of my child (ward): (please initial the items to which you give permission).

_____ To be interviewed

_____ To have the interview audio-recorded

_____ To have the interview tapes transcribed

_____ To have quotations from the transcription used in the final report

_____ To have the investigator examine any documents my child (ward) may provide them

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent for my child (ward) to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

Parent/Guardian Name (Please Print)
(father, mother, legally guardian, or legally
authorized official)

Child/Wards Name (Please Print)

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Researchers Signature:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the parent/guardian fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that he or she has freely consented to their child's (ward) participation in this study.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix F: Assent Form



Assent Form

Title: Amateur Wizards: Exploring Involvement in Magic: The Gathering as Serious Leisure

Researcher: Earl Walker B.Rec (Hons), MPE (candidate)
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I understand that my parents or legal guardian have given permission for me to participate in this study.

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research (such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant), you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by telephone at 864-2528.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project, understanding that I may withdraw my consent at any time. A copy of this Assent Form has been given to me for my records.

Participant Name (Please Print)

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix G: Interview Guide

Interview Protocol

Free and Informed Consent

Carefully go through the consent form with the interviewee and/or their delegated third party, explaining all elements of the research. Ask if the interviewee and/or their delegated third party if they have any questions and if they are willing to participate in this study. Ask the subject and/or their delegated third party to sign the consent or assent form. Remind the subject that she or he can withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

General Demographic Information

- a) What is your age?
- b) Where are you from?
- c) How long have you played the game?
- d) How often do you play?
- e) How often do you buy cards?
- f) Approximately how many cards do you own?

The Game

- a) Tell me how you first got involved/interested in Magic: The Gathering
- b) What was it that attracted you to the game?
- c) What keeps you involved in the game?
- d) What does playing Magic mean to you?
- e) Do you keep up with the game? New expansion sets/storylines, etc?
- f) Tell me about your playing experiences, what is it like to duel with you?
- g) How do you feel when you play?
- h) Are you very competitive?
- i) Do you do anything to try and improve yourself as a player?
- j) What is your greatest achievement as a Magic Player?
- k) Have there been any specific high or low points in your playing career?
- l) If so can you tell me about them?
- m) Have you encountered any obstacles to you playing the game?
- n) If so can you tell me about them?
- o) Can you think if any benefits you may have received as a result of play Magic: The Gathering?
- p) Can you tell me a bit about the community of Magic players around here?

Closing

- a) Anything else would you like to add or any questions you wish I'd asked?
- b) Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?



